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PARTRIDGE

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND JOHN KEATS:
ON SELECTED WORKS OF THE LEGENDS.

Rituparna Ray Chaudhuri



PARTRIDGE

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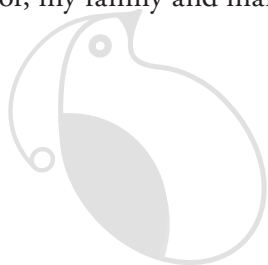
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Preface

Realization is a compiled work on *self analysis* with my solitary feelings and epistemology on literature containing **Shakespeare's Othello and Hamlet, John Keats' Ode to a Nightingale** and **Tagore's short story 'The Lost Jewels'** among many of his classics. I hope the book will work out for teachers, students and on research purpose.

Acknowledgement

On compliance of the book, I like to have gratitude to my mentor, my family and many of my students.



PARTRIDGE

ON THE TEXT

The book provides respectively the theme of following documents:

The Moor of Venice... (Shakespeare's Othello)

"My husband?" she asks and twice more, as if she cannot trust her ears, she repeats "My husband?" and then says incredulously "My husband say that she was false."

John Keats' Ode to a Nightingale

"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:"

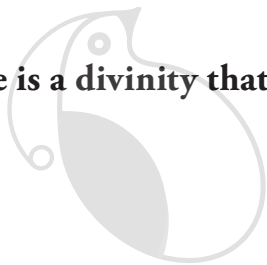
Rabindranath Tagore's 'The Lost Jewels'

"A man need not necessarily be ugly or poor to be cheated of his wife's love; but he is sure to lose it if he is too gentle."

The Play Opens at Elsinore... (Shakespeare's Hamlet)

"...I'll have grounds More relative than this. The play's the thing Where I'll catch the conscience of the King."

“There is a divinity that shapes our ends.”



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Part One

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Document One

THE MOOR OF VENICE..

(Shakespeare's Othello)

SELF ANALYSIS

“Sure there's some wonder in this handkerchief, I am most unhappy in the loss of it.”

**“Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this
blood Clean from my hand? No, this my
hand will Rather the multitudinous seas
incarnadine, Make the green one red.”**

(Macbeth)

**~“Man is not the creature of circumstances
Circumstances are the creatures of man.”**

What are the causes responsible for the acute painfulness and pathos in “Othello”?

The introduction of the supernatural agency in the tragedies also gives us an impression of the strange and unseen power. The witches in Macbeth seem to have foreknowledge of the future and their prophetic saying comes to be true. The operation of chance or accident is another factor which contributes to this feeling of fatality. It is a mere chance that Edgar arrives in the prison too late to save Cordelia. The attack by the pirate ship in Hamlet is also an accident which brings back

Hamlet to Denmark. We find that a mere accident sometimes exerts a very great influence on the future course of events. At the same time, the importance of character or responsibility cannot be minimized. The tragedy of Hamlet is due to his inability to adjust himself to his surroundings. The tragedy of Macbeth is due to his ambitious nature and not to the prophetic saying of the witches. Shakespeare's tragedies are therefore tragedies of character.

“By the world,

**I think my wife be honest, and think she is not,
I think that thou art just, and think thou art not:”**

A number of factors combined to make the tragedy so excruciatingly pathetic and moving. In the first place, the secular atmosphere of the play had much to do with the element of pathos in the play. In “Othello” we are circumscribed to a narrow and limited world of worldly value without any feeling of spirituality coming to our relief. There is practically no allusion in the play to a spiritual significance of human sufferings and sorrows. The feeling of painfulness and unhappiness experienced at the tragic spectacle of misery would have considerably allayed if Shakespeare had established even some distant relationship between human sufferings and some higher

reality or super-human fate crushing human beings. “There is nothing in the play which would make us aware of a vaster significance enveloping the tragic experiences embodied in it.” Secondly, in “Othello” there is very little of dramatic relief. In other tragedies of Shakespeare, scenes of suffering and pathos alternate and this change brings relief to our frayed and jagged nerves. This device is very skilfully used by Shakespeare in Macbeth. But at, in Othello the action of the tragedy after the third scene of the Third Act advances in a mounting crescendo of tragic painfulness without any pause and with ever accelerated speed to the final catastrophe. The tension after Othello’s firm resolve to murder Desdemona is kept on a very painful height and it never descends. It eventually ends in the tragedy of Othello and Desdemona. Thirdly, the subject of sexual-jealousy is in itself very ambition might have been that of a guilty man, but there is something of nobility and dignity about it. The element of sexual-jealousy appears to be very revolting and disgusting. “What spectacle”, says Dr. Bradley, “can be more painful than that of this feeling turned into a tortured mixture of longing and loathing, the ‘golden purity’ of passion split by poison into fragments, the animal in man forcing itself into his consciousness in naked grossness, and he writhing

before it but powerless to deny its entrance, gasping inarticulate images of pollution and finding relief only in a bestial thirst of blood.”

Macbeth, throughout the play, is presented as one much above the ordinary beings, and, as such, he fulfils the basic-requirements of being a tragic hero. Shakespeare introduces him as a brave general, a bold, resolute man of action as also referred to “Valor’s minion”, “Bellona’s bridegroom”, the king’s “valiant cousin”, a very “eagle” among “sparrows”, a “lion” among “hares”. It is a play, which is depicting a complete destruction, wrestling with creation. It is a study of the disintegration and damnation of a man. And yet, Macbeth is a ‘tragic hero’. Here presents, the hero’s complete symbolic life-journey in a reflective pattern to ensure the only operation of evil in this world.

Othello’s stabbing of himself makes the tragic story of his life extremely pathetic. Fate and character act and react upon each other in every Shakespearean tragedy. Both of them contribute to the final catastrophe. Opinions may differ about the relative importance of fate and character. We can arrive at a decision only after a careful study of the part played by them.

**“Pray thee, no more; let him come when he will
Will deny thee nothing.”**

The Witches, merely prophecy certain things for Macbeth : They do not influence him in any concrete manner, but the effect of the prophecy is to make Macbeth, start as if he were already guilty of harbouring dangerous ideas. It is a fact that his ambition impels him towards “the swelling act of the imperial theme”, though his conscience fills him with horror at the idea that has come to him about how to gain the throne. The pathos and painfulness in “Othello” is profound and intense, and no play of Shakespeare, even “King Lear”, oppresses us with the same feeling of acute painfulness as does the tragedy of Desdemona and Othello. There are certain scenes in “Othello” which are intensely pathetic and painful and far excel the pathetic scenes of “King Lear”, “Macbeth”, and “Hamlet”. “Othello” is undoubtedly, the most painfully exciting and the most terrible of Shakespeare’s tragedies. It is a painful, gloomy and harrowing tragedy.

**“I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano,
A stage where every man must play a part, and
mine a sad one,”**

Let us now study this problem with special reference to Othello. Let us at first examine the part played by fate in shaping the tragedy of Othello. There is no supernatural element in Othello, but the part played

by accident is so great that our minds are haunted by a sense of fatality. We feel that some strange and unseen power is driving Othello to his doom from which no escape is possible. For example, Desdemona drops her handkerchief just at the time when Othello's mind has been clouded with suspicion against her. Chance seems to be working against Othello and not in favour. A chance meeting of Othello and Cassio would have revealed Iago's plot and thus saved the life of Desdemona but this never takes place till the very end when it is too late. Cassio comes in the presence of Othello only when he is in a trance. Had he arrived a few moments earlier, Othello would certainly have put questions to him about the handkerchief and the whole plot would have been revealed. Again we find that Bianca arrives with the handkerchief in her hand just at the time when Othello is watching Cassio from a distance. The sight of his own handkerchief in the hand of Bianca completes his misunderstanding of the real situation and transforms his jealousy into extreme fury. Even the innocent words of Desdemona are uttered at a time when they are liable to misinterpretation. When Othello says, "Who can control his fate?" we find that he is voicing our own sentiments. Even in the last scene, we find that Emilia comes and knocks at the door just

after Othello has strangled Desdemona in bed. It is the cruel irony of fate that she should have come a minute earlier. Had she come a bit early her severe knocking on the door might have disturbed Othello and things might have taken a different course. All these things taken together produce a strong impression on our minds that fate plays a considerable part in bringing about the tragedy of Othello. Stopford Brooke remarks, "Fate dominates Macbeth but here in Othello chance or unreason, blind and deaf, is at the centre of human life. The conception of the play, the movement of it, the events in it, the bringing about of the catastrophe, are all apparently in the realm of chance."

'Macbeth: "Come, let me clutch thee: I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible to feeling as to sight?"

The suffering of Desdemona was almost unendurable because it is intense and undeserved. It is not of her creation. It is thrust upon her by the sinful machinations of an arch-villain. She is pure and innocent, and yet she has to go through slanderous attacks on her fair name and suffer all this timidly and submissively without raising a voice of protest against her oppressor. She is innocent, pure, helpless, has to undergo unmerited

suffering without any reasonable cause at the hands of the man whom she loves so dearly. "She is" says Mrs. Jameson, "a victim consecrated from the first, 'an offering' without blemish, all harmony, all grace, all purity, all tenderness, all truth but alas to see her fluttering like a cherub in the talons of a friend!-to see her-O poor Desdemona." The smothering of Desdemona-in her bed by Othello without permitting her to live till the next day is truly very moving. The murder scene of Desdemona is intolerable and unbearable. Dr. Johnson was repelled by it and simply could not stand it. It is so tragic and so pathetic. The helplessness of Desdemona and the spectacle of tragic pity produced by her suffering find nice expression in the words of Dr. A. C. Bradley, who says: "Desdemona is helplessly passive. She can do nothing whatever; she cannot retaliate even in speech, no not even in silent feeling. And the chief reason of her helplessness only makes the sight of her suffering more exquisitely painful. She is helpless because her nature is infinitely sweet and her love absolute. I would not challenge Mr. Swinburne's statement that we pity Othello even more than Desdemona; but we watch Desdemona with unmitigated distress. We are never wholly uninfluenced by the feeling that Othello is a man contending with another man; but Desdemona's

suffering is like that of the most loving of dumb creatures tortured without cause by the being she adores.”

“To th’ most of men this is a Caliban, and they to him are angels.”

Almost all the tragedies of Shakespeare are characterized by the element of pathos and painfulness. By its very nature the basis of a tragedy is pathos. The tragedy of the hero and the heroine melts our hearts and stirs us deep enough to pity them. The atmosphere of a tragedy is composed of pathos and pity, and pathos wring tears from our eyes for the unfortunate sufferers. Pathos and painfulness are experienced owing to the magnitude and intensity of the sufferings of Othello and Desdemona. Othello’s speeches, when he is in a state of excruciating pain and suffering, are painfully pathetic and the villain Iago gloats over them.

“...Confusedly through every sensitive part Till not a thought or motion in the mind be free from the black poison of suspect!” (Edited)

The last words of the above quotation are significant because they suggest an important aspect of Othello’s character. We should remember that Iago’s plot would not have succeeded in the case of any other person than Othello. If we closely study the Third Scene of the Third Act, we shall find how Othello arrives at

the conclusion about the disloyalty of his wife without a proper investigation of the case. Othello's peace of mind is completely disturbed by the mere suggestion of Iago about the possible infidelity of Desdemona. Othello cries out, "Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content...Othello's occupation is gone." These words reveal a bitter agony in his mind. But of, we know that he has not yet received any concrete evidence of his guilt of his wife. He demands a living reason from Iago that his wife is disloyal. The only living reason that Iago offers is the story of Cassio's dream and his mutterings. Othello is terribly upset to hear about this dream of Cassio. The next evidence that Iago gives is that he saw Cassio wiping his beard with the handkerchief which Othello had given to his wife. These, two so-called, 'living reasons' are sufficient evidence to Othello to convince him about the guilt of his wife. He cries out: **"O that the slave had forty thousand lives! One is poor, too weak for my revenge."** This is about Cassio.

"Second Witch: "By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes; Open locks, whoever knocks."

Let us now consider the tragedy of Othello in the light of the ideals as set forth above. It has been spoken of by competent critics as the most tremendous tragedy

even among the masterpieces of Shakespeare. The tragedy involves the ruin of three characters- Othello, Desdemona and Iago, the former two giving rise to true tragic pathos, the later only involving the ruin of evil by the force of evil itself. The central character of the hero Othello is as important as the character of Desdemona. It is doubtful if the latter is not more inherently tragic than the former. Othello is a noble-minded, generous soldier, utterly ignorant of the world of wickedness and its mean designs. His gross stupidity is irritating, his blind trustfulness is appalling; but far from being vexed at his simplicity or enraged at this blindness, we are numbed by the infinite pathos of his situation and the malice of chance which puts him in the hand of the one man in the world who could have the heart to ruin him. Desdemona is pure as a saint, innocent as a child, generous as the fruitful earth. She does not know even to defend herself in circumstances which irritate even the simplest lamb to rebel. The force of evil- causeless envy, cold intellectual malice, and heartless delight in egoism- is made concrete in the person of Iago. He takes the meanest advantage of the noble trustfulness of the Moor, abuses his simplicity, and out of the single weaknesses of his character forges the weapon which kills the souls of two of the noblest in imaginative creation.

The noble Moor is subjected to an external conflict between his love and his sense of honour. He finds himself in situations which seem cruelly determined to undo him. Chances array themselves against him and poor Desdemona; while not a single chance that might at one stroke bring down the whole fabric of Iago's plot favours him by timely occurrence. He discovers everything, but discovers a bit too late. It is as if fate had appointed the inexorable tragic catastrophe for him only to relent when it was sure that the discovery of his mistake would lead him to end his own life by violence.

'An owl shrieks

Lady Macbeth: ..“It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman Which gives the stern'st good-night.”

When we meet the Witches again in Act I, Sc.iii, we get to know of their physical aspects. They are withered and not dressed like earthly beings; their fingers are choppy and lips skinny. They look like women, and yet they are bearded. They can at will vanish into air, can foresee the future, and possess more than mortal knowledge. They are by no means the ordinary witches of popular superstition; they are more powerful beings, resembling rather the “Goddesses of Divine” as Holinshed calls them. Shakespeare has endowed them with power over Nature, but that power is not

-absolute. They may have power over a man's soul but that power is not absolute either. It is when a mortal mind is tainted that they can have an influence on it. Their prophecy only gives a definite shape to the dark thoughts that have already been smouldering in Macbeth's mind. The thought of assassinating Duncan occurs to him independently of 'them'-without any hint from 'them'. Macbeth reads into the prophecies a "supernatural soliciting", to murder and, Lady Macbeth looks upon them as "metaphysical aid." The Witches in Macbeth never solicit nor aid- this is nothing -but a wishful thinking.

"Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more; it is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing."

Thus, we find that Othello has not only decided that Desdemona and Cassio are guilty of adultery with each other but also has finally determined to put both of them to immediate death. We should also remember that Othello has not yet met Desdemona and demanded the handkerchief from her. The fateful meeting takes place in the next scene. The man who can decide about the disloyalty of his wife and thinks of putting her

to death even before asking her a single question is extremely rash and impulsive in temperament. This rash impulsiveness is the tragic trait in his character which is really responsible for the tragedy. But for, this tragic weakness in his character all the accidents in the play and all the evil designs of Iago combined together could not have destroyed the peace and happiness of Othello's life.

“O heaven! How got she out? O treason of the blood! Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds By what you see them act. Is there not charms By which the property of youth and maidhood May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo, Of some such thing?”

The first time that Othello accuses Desdemona of presenting the handkerchief as a token of love to Cassio is in the closing scene of the play. But of, at that time his mind is already made up about killing Desdemona. He accuses Desdemona not to find out the truth but only to give her a chance for confession and prayer. All the denials by Desdemona of her guilt cannot convince Othello about her innocence. This is the man who once said to her father, “My life upon her faith!”

When Shakespeare was at work at Othello, i.e., about 1604, he had before his mind certain ideals of

tragic effect which he sought to achieve, of course, with varying diversity of details in different cases, but with a certain common artistic method. The ideal and the artistic method may be put in the following general terms, more or less applicable to “the four scheme tragedies and the three only less wonderful Roman plays”:

The focus of the tragic interest is always the character of the central figure, the hero. “Where Shakespeare in his conception of tragedy,” observes Herford, “went beyond his predecessors (and his own early efforts) was above all in the character of the hero.” (b) The hero is generally a man of lofty and almost superhuman dispositions, thinking and doing great things in a sordid world which is opposed to him. (c) he is one who has some inherent weakness- may be the weakness of excessive greatness or goodness, may be the weakness of personal ambition or personal pride, through which his ultimate fall is to come about. (d) He is subjected to both external and internal conflicts which oppress his soul and madden him into what the world always calls folly. (e) The situation and circumstances in which he is placed are such as are specially suited to work upon his peculiar weakness, bringing about his ultimate ruin. (f) There is always a sinister, mysterious force, call it

chance or fate or destiny, or accident which seems bent upon undoing him and against which he is powerless. (g) The fall of man is calculated to excite pity, horror, fear etc., but pathos and sympathy of the audience are never lost by him; the moral order of the universe is rather justified than violated by the tragic end. (h) The death of the hero and that of some others mark the close of the drama; but death is of little account in accounting for the tragic feeling because it is the defeat of ruin of the soul which precedes the death that is the real culmination of the action issuing from character.

**“Sure there’s some wonder in this handkerchief,
I am most unhappy in the loss of it.”**

The strongest drawback in Othello’s character is that he is primarily a man of action who is totally incapable of calm and cool reflection. He is not suspicious by nature but once he is excited he has neither the capacity nor the time for cool and calm consideration. It is this drawback in the character of Othello that is finally responsible for the tragedy.

**“Damn her, lewd minx; O, damn her! Come, go
with me apart;**

**I will withdraw to furnish me with some swift
means of death, for the fair devil.”**

Othello is a tragedy of character and this is the reason why it has been regarded as tragic master-piece of Shakespeare. Let us see how the success of the intrigue depends upon the characters of Othello and Iago. Othello undergoes terrible emotional and spiritual suffering. He sheds tears of heart-rending agony and he murders Desdemona, the object of his love because for him it is not a murder but a sacrifice.

‘Macbeth: “Why sinks that cauldron? And what noise is this?”

A study of the Shakespearean tragedy always fills our mind with a feeling of the presence of a mysterious power which governs human actions. There are many passages in the tragedies which also give an expression to this feeling. For example, we find the following passage in King Lear:-

“As flies to wanton boys, so are we to gods; They kill us for their sport.”

Thus in the tragedy of Othello Shakespeare has made his characters fight in the dark, and Fate has brought each to his destined end. But at the close of tragedy raises us “above despair, Desdemona’s adhesion to her husband and to love survived the ultimate trial. Othello dies upon a kiss. He perceives his own calamitous error, and he recognizes Desdemona pure and loyal as she was.

Goodness is justified of her child. It is evil which suffers defeat” (Dowden). The villain Iago does not turn out victorious in the end; he is caught at last in his own toils and is led to his trial.

IAGO “O villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years; and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself.”

Macbeth is the starkest and the least discursive of Shakespeare’s tragedies as Granville-Barker has pointed out. The deterioration of Macbeth’s character illustrates the theme of conscience and its decline. From a brave soldier and noble person Macbeth reaches a state when he is a soulless man, a beast chained to a stake like a beast!

**“We are such stuff
As dreams are made of; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.”**

Shakespeare is a consummate artist and his technique in his tragedies is unique. The plot construction in Othello is different from the other Shakespearian tragedies. In Shakespearian tragedy, the action develops through conflict. The conflicts are of the kinds- external and internal conflict. In an external conflict, the conflict may occur between two persons or group of persons

representing different interests or points of view. In an internal conflict, there may be a conflict between two ideas in the mind of an individual. This individual who is generally the hero is torn within himself and as a result he suffers immensely. Through the conflict, the soul of the hero is laid bare before us and his sufferings arouse terror and pity in our hearts. The conflicts begin rather late in Othello but once it begins, it advances without pause to the final catastrophe which is horrible and extremely painful.

“They eat us hungrily, and when they are full they betch us.”

Some critics are of the opinion that Othello's suffering is more intense than that of Desdemona. In Othello, Shakespeare has presented before us the torn soul of Othello. In our mind's eye we see the agonies which he suffers. There is chaos within him and torture he undergoes in his mind is beyond expression. When Iago's villainy is revealed he kills himself because the pain is unbearable to him. According to Swinburne, Othello offers more textual and editorial problems than most of the other plays of Shakespeare. So it is not surprising that Swinburne thinks so because the conflict that the play has within itself and the conflict that causes within us, is so profound that it is not surprising

that it arouses conflicting emotions in our minds and it leads to the difficulty to interpret the play.

The forces of evil are always ready to ensnare man; but they have their limitations. They do not, indeed cannot, force man into evil; they can merely tempt man to choose to follow evil ways. Macbeth, deliberately choose- not once, but several times in the play-the evil path. At every stage of Macbeth's degeneration we witness the choice being made deliberately, at the same time there is a sense of inevitability, about Macbeth's choices.

'Second Witch

**"Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good."**

In Othello, the external conflict occurs between Brabantio and Othello in the early part of the play. Here, Brabantio opposes the marriage between Othello and Desdemona. He says that the daughter has no right to choose her own husband. We see that Roderigo and Iago arouse Brabantio from his sleep at midnight and inform him of the elopement of his daughter with Othello. Brabantio sends his party in search of Othello and Desdemona. We find that there are two opposite groups- the supporters of Brabantio and the supporters of Othello who face each other with drawn swords.

Othello succeeds in preventing the clash between two groups. In the council chamber of the Duke of Venice, Brabantio accuses Othello of practicing witchcraft upon his daughter. Othello replies to the charges of Brabantio by narrating how he had won the heart of Desdemona through the romantic tales of his adventures. In this conflict Othello wins because Desdemona supports Othello. This external conflict, however, does not add to the crisis of the play. Othello and Desdemona then leave for Cyprus and we witness the enormous joy of Othello as he is reunited with Desdemona and in honour of his marriage, Othello proclaims public revelry and festivity. Thus the external conflict reaches climax.

**“Sweet soul, take heed, take heed of perjury;
thou art on thy death-bed.”**

In the final analysis, we find that the plot of Iago is successful because of the characters of Iago and Othello. Othello trusts Iago because he is universally reputed honest. Besides, Othello is a man of action who cannot think calmly over the problems which face him. Character plays a more prominent part than fate in every tragedy of Shakespeare and Othello is no exception to this rule. Dr, Bradley has beautifully summed up the whole position in the following words; “Iago’s plot is Iago’s character in action; and it is built

on his knowledge of Othello's character, and could not otherwise have succeeded."

**"She loved me for the dangers I had passed
And I loved her that she did pity them."**

Othello's spiritual agony and suffering is terrible and intense as he wavers between love and honour. He thinks himself to be the priest of honour and justice. As he is convinced of his wife's faithfulness, he finds no option but to kill and sacrifice her. For him, the murder of Desdemona is a sacrificial ritual. When Othello comes to know that Iago has cheated him and that Desdemona was in fact chaste and virtuous, the sacrifice seems to him the murder of his innocent wife. It is now no more a religious act. It is a sin and a crime and in order to expiate for his sins, he coolly directs his dagger into his own mortal body. His death finally relieves the tragic tension. We are owed by the rise and fall of a noble soul. The terrible cost, at which the sins are expiated, if we can judge that they indeed are, fills us with revulsion and horror.

"...I never found a man that knew how to love himself: ere I would say I would drown myself, for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon."

The real conflict and crisis of Othello differs from other Shakespearian tragedies because in this tragedy the real conflict that sends the hero to his doom begins rather late. The real conflict comes to life in the Temptation Scene i.e., Act III, Scene iii and then it moves forward without any intermission till it reaches its catastrophe in Act V. the action is so thrilling and horrible that we tend to shrink. When in the final catastrophe a completely maddened Othello murders Desdemona, our revulsion is complete. We are simply driven by the whirlwind movement in the action. Like other Shakespearean tragedy, there is no tragic relief. The internal conflict in the play is seen in the mind of Othello and he wavers between love and jealousy and between loyalty and honour. Othello is frank, honest, truthful and confiding and Iago works upon his noble nature inflames his passion and instigates him to murder both Desdemona and Cassio. The Moor is of a trusting nature which leads him to be susceptible to suspicion and he falls an easy prey to the scheming of Iago. Othello suffers the torments of hell in the process. The thought of Desdemona's love and beauty haunt him and her purity and virtue are in conflict with what Iago tells him. When his faith in her is shattered, life seems to be meaningless for him. Finally he comes to

the conclusion that she cannot live and he must sacrifice her to the cause of honour and chastity. He utters:

“It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul;

Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars! It is the cause.”

In Othello, Shakespeare has given us a realistic picture of life; he is not a pessimist giving us an unclear picture of life. The sexual jealousy and lop-sided passions have resulted to greater catastrophes in everyday life through centuries. What makes Othello such a painful and terrible tragedy is the conflict in Othello's mind which causes tremendous suffering and agony in his mind. Othello is also a tragedy of misunderstanding; Othello is deceived by one whom he considers to be his true friend. Othello trusts nature and his inability to reason out things by his own faculty to think leads to the tragedy. The same thing can occur in anybody's life that is driven by blind passion, impotent rage and brutality. Shakespeare thus conveys the message that we should be guided by our existing capacity to think, which in turn can only be based on an inviolate moral code of conduct.

“And nothing can nor shall content my soul, Till I am even with him, wife for wife,

**Or, failing so, yet that I put the Moor, At least,
into a jealousy so strong,**

That judgement cannot cure:”

Othello is a play about sexual jealousy. As a result, the conflict is of a gigantic proportion. The burning passion of sexual jealousy is the most tormenting one and this passion of revenge. Macbeth has the passion of ambition; Lear has the passion of fatal ingratitude. But at, no other passion can come close to that of sexual jealousy. The passion of Lear, Hamlet and Macbeth is not contemptible and their jealousy does not bring with it a sense of hatred. But in, Othello's jealousy i.e. sexual jealousy brings with it a sense of humiliation and shame. If it is not hidden, it arouses in us a sense of hatred than pity and as we are faced with it, we turn our eyes away. In Othello, the effect of sexual jealousy is so overwhelming that it transforms Othello's human nature into something bestial and the moral world is disintegrated into total chaos and it liberates the beast in the human being. The purity of passion of love is destroyed by the suspicion in the mind of Othello. As Othello suffers within himself from the pain of jealousy he also suffers from hatred. We disgust the witness of the degradation and downfall of a man who was once noble and 'great at heart'. As a result our moral world is

polluted and we have to witness the most heart-rending spectacle that Othello finds relief in his animal thirst for blood. In the scene of Othello's striking of Desdemona in public and in the 'brothel scene' where she is treated as an inmate of a brothel, our sense of hatred reached its culminating point- and the pain is much more intense than when Othello finally murders her. Desdemona, who is so innocent and vulnerable and loyal towards her husband has to suffer without any fault of her and her passive suffering is the most painful and terrible spectacle that Shakespeare ever offered.

'Macbeth: "How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags! What is't you do?"

All the Witches: A deed without a name."

A close examination of Othello, however, makes it clear that it is not the correct interpretation of the tragedy. In the ultimate analysis we shall find that Othello is the tragedy of character and not the tragedy of intrigue. It is quite true that there is a considerable element of intrigue in this play. What is remarkable about this play is that Shakespeare by his dramatic art transmutes a tragedy of intrigue into a tragedy of character. The reason is that the intrigue cannot possibly succeed without the help of characters.

"One that lov'd not wisely, but too well:

**One not easily jealous, but being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme;”**

We remember how even after the revelation of the ghost Hamlet manages to stage a play in order to catch the conscience of King Claudius. Hamlet would have surely questioned Desdemona and Cassio about their supposed love-affair before coming to the final conclusion. Othello behaves rather foolishly in many respects. Iago himself says that the Moor has a free and open nature and he ‘will as tenderly be led by the nose as asses are.’ Emilia expresses our sentiment when she says “What should such a fool do with so good a wife?” thus we find that the free and open nature of Othello, his incapacity for calm contemplation and his rash impulsiveness are responsible for the tragedy. It is ultimately the tragic flaw in Othello’s character that brings his ruin and destruction.

**“Men must endure their going hence, even as
their coming hither, Ripeness is all.”**

The tragedy of Othello is brought about as a result of action and counter-action of Othello, the hero and Iago, the villain. The character of Iago also makes a great contribution to bring about the ultimate ruin. Iago is not an ordinary villain. He is a shrewd observer of human character. He has an acute intellect and has also

the wonderful capacity to utilize which helps him to tide over difficulties and make the best use of every occasion. We know how he is placed in a difficult situation as Cassio comes to meet him when Othello is in a trance. Iago sees the danger and at once drives away Cassio. The meeting between Othello and Cassio would have foiled his plan but Iago is always successful in preventing such a meeting. We know again how the timely appearance of Bianca is also used by Iago to his own advantage to convince Othello about the guilt of Desdemona. Iago's plot is therefore his character in action and so it is his character which brings about the tragedy. Besides, we should also remember that Othello should put absolute confidence in the honesty of his friend. Had Othello been less credulous or if Iago were not reputed to be honest perhaps the tragedy would not have taken place. So we find that the success of the intrigue depends on the character of both Iago and Othello.

**“Of one whose hand, Like the base Indian,
threw a pearl away Richer than all his tribe; of one
whose subdued eyes, Albeit unused to the melting
mood, Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees Their
medicinal gum.”**

As against the opinion that Othello is inherently or easily jealous, there is another point of view held

by S.T. Coleridge and Dr. A.C. Bradley, Dowden, Herford, etc., that Othello is not jealous by nature, but he falls a prey to the insinuations of a subtle villain. "Othello", says Coleridge, "Does not kill Desdemona in jealousy, but in a conviction forced upon him by the almost super human art of Iago; such a conviction as any man would and must have entertained, who had believed Iago's honesty as Othello did." Coleridge further defends Othello in the following words- "I have often told you that I do not think there is any jealousy, properly so called, in the character of Othello. There is no predisposition to suspicion, which I take to be an essential term in the definition of the word. Desdemona very truly told Emilia that he was not jealous, that is, of a jealous habit, and he says so as truly of himself. Iago's suggestions, you see, are quite new to him; they do not correspond with anything of a like nature previously in his mind." Prof. G. Brandes also subscribes to the same opinion. He says-"Othello's is no jealous nature: jealous men and women think very differently and act very differently. He is unsuspecting, confiding, and in so far stupid- there lies the misfortune; but jealous in the proper sense of the word, he is not." There is great deal of difference between the noble agony of Othello caught

in the snares of a villain and the wrecked jealousy of Leontes in the “Winter’s Tale”.

**“Reputation is an idle and most false imposition
oft got without merit, and lost without deserving.”**

It is quite true that the element of intrigue plays an important part in the tragedy of Othello. This is the special feature of this play which distinguishes it from Shakespeare’s other great tragedies. The fundamental difference between the other tragedies and Othello lies in this that in the former the hero is fully aware of his hostile circumstances and he tries to face them as best as he can. His failure to adjust himself successfully to the circumstances is due to the weakness or one-sidedness of his character. Hamlet knows well that King Claudius is the villain who killed his father. He knows that it is his duty to take revenge by killing the villain as soon as possible. He has promised to do so to the ghost of his father. In spite of all this, he fails to achieve his object on account of his contemplative habit of mind and excess of idealism. The character of Hamlet is therefore, responsible for his tragedy. Macbeth is fully aware of the fact that by killing Duncan he would arouse the hatred and anger of the people against him. He takes the risk at his own responsibility. It can therefore be said that Macbeth’s character is responsible for his tragedy. This

is not the case with Othello. Othello does not know the adverse circumstances in which he is placed. He does not know that Iago is a villain. He is ignorant of Iago's hatred and the spirit of revenge against him. He is blissfully unaware of Iago's devilish plan to bring about his ruin. His actions are therefore not controlled by his own character but by the evil suggestions of another person i.e., Iago. In these circumstances we cannot say that Othello is responsible for his tragedy. We should say that the intrigue of Iago brings about his ruin and not any defects in his character. The German critic Ulrici remarks, "In short, the distinguishing peculiarity of our drama consists in its being a tragedy of intrigue, whereas all Shakespeare's other tragedies are rather tragedies of character."

The question whether Othello is really jealous or not, has not been finally decided, but we would like to subscribe to the view held by Coleridge and Bradley that Othello was not jealous by nature. Jealousy was not the chief motivating force of his character as it is presented by Shakespeare in the character of Leontes in "The Winter's Tale", or by Ben Jonson in the character of Killaspy, the jealous husband in "Every Man in his Humour." Iago also recognizes it well and therefore he craftily, carefully, and cautiously proceeds injecting the

germs of jealousy into Othello's mind by such remarks as:

“O beware, jealousy;

**It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
That meat it feeds on.”**

It would not have been at all difficult for Iago to incite Othello's jealousy, if he had known that the Moor was a man of jealous temperament. Iago is quite sure of the fact that the Moor is not of a jealous mind, and possesses nobler qualities of character. He bases his intrigue on the belief that:

“The Moor is of a free and open nature:

**That thinks men honest that but seem to be so
too...”**

Charlton aptly remarks: “Iago is a consummate master of villainy; but he shows it not so much by subtlety of intrigue as by astuteness in diagnosing the situation and in doing then to put his whole trust in a device appropriate to the occasion, but to that occasion alone., knowing full well that what will infallibly trap Othello would be ineffective against any other man.” Thus we find that in spite of the element of intrigue in this play, Othello should be regarded as a tragedy of character. Dr. Bradley says “His tragedy lies in this that his whole nature was indisposed to jealousy, and

yet was such that he was unusually open to deception, and, if once wrought to passion, likely to act with little reflection, no delay, and in the most decisive manner conceivable.” This is the fundamental tragic trait of Othello’s character which is responsible for the tragedy. We agree with Dr. Bradley who says that we must not call the play a tragedy of intrigue as distinguished from a tragedy of character. Iago’s plot is Iago’s character and it is built on his knowledge of Othello’s character and could not otherwise have succeeded.

Othello is a man of an open mind and simple nature. As he is simple hearted he believes others also to be simple and honest. He easily trusts others and does not allow any suspicion in his mind. This is a weakness in his character. Besides, he is hasty in judgement and rash in action. Othello sums up his own character in the following words: “One not easily jealous, but, being wrought, perplexed in the extreme.” Once there is a feeling of excitement in Othello’s mind he cannot sit down and think about pros and cons of the whole affair in a cool and calm manner. Had Hamlet been in the circumstances of Othello, there could have been no tragedy in spite of the best efforts of Iago. Hamlet would not have so easily believed the story of the handkerchief and that of Cassio’s dream as Othello does.

**“Why the tomorrow night: or Tuesday morn;
On Tuesday noon, or night; on Wednesday morn;
I prithee, name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days:”**

Besides describing the jealousy of Othello, Shakespeare brings out the jealousy of Roderigo against Cassio and Othello. Roderigo is thoroughly infatuated with the beauty of Desdemona and desires to possess her. So he is extremely jealous of his rivals. He is prepared to kill Cassio under the instructions of Iago. The villain himself is jealous of Othello because he believes that the Moor had been false with Emilia and between his sheets he had done his work. But of his jealousy is merely pretence. Iago tolerates adultery and is not angry with Emilia on that score. Cassio and Desdemona are the two characters who are not jealous and they are tortured and persecuted by jealous persons.

**“In Venice they do not let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands: their best
conscience**

Is not to leave undone, but keep unknown.”

In the Fifth Act a few minutes before his death, Othello makes his position clear by pointing out that he was not jealous by nature; but was wrought to that jealous state by Iago, who worked the poison of jealousy

quite craftily in his simple soul. Othello presented a true picture of his life when he stated- “One not easily jealous, but, being wrought, perplex’d in the extreme;’ (Act V. Scene II 346-347). Had Othello been endowed with penetrating intelligence of Hamlet or his infallible insight into men, he would not have fallen a prey to Iago’s sinister suggestions. He was a man of simple, sincere, credulous nature and it was his easy gullibility and faith in the honest Iago that occasioned the tragedy of his life.

“So will I turn her virtue into pitch, And out of her own goodness makes the net That shall enmesh ’em all.”

Since we have exonerated Othello of charge of jealousy, we should now discuss the second part of the question regarding the growth and development of the feeling of jealousy in Othello’s mind and its final culmination in the murder of Desdemona. When we study the element of jealousy in the character of Othello, we will also have to take stock of various other characters in the play who is governed by the feeling of jealousy, and who provide an interesting study of this instinct of jealousy in the play. So far as Othello is concerned, the feeling of jealousy begins to work in him in the Third Scene of the Third Act. It begins at

the time when Cassio, after soliciting Desdemona for his restoration, is returning to his cabin. He has been noticed by Iago as well as by Othello. Iago utters a few words at this stage which at once hold the attention of Othello. In a very cunning fashion Iago says-“Ha! I like not that.” Othello is attracted by the words of Iago is –What dost thou say? Iago makes pretence of innocence and in his next remark he pours the poison of jealousy into the ears of his general. When Othello asks Iago whether it was not Cassio who had parted from his wife, he cunningly replies- “Cassio, my lord! No, sure, I cannot think it, that he should steal away so guilty-like seeing you coming.” In these words of Iago there is the veiled suggestion that Cassio is guilty and his leaving the place quietly and stealthily is an indication of the fact that he is guilty of secret meetings with Desdemona. Othello leaves Iago and meets Desdemona after a few minutes. His mind is slightly disturbed on account of Cassio and it is all the more prejudiced when Desdemona presses unreasonably for the restoration of Cassio as lieutenant.

‘All the Witches:

**“Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.”**

The question whether Othello was jealous by nature or as he himself-“one not easily jealous, but being wrought, perplex’d in the extreme;” (V.ii.347-347)-has not been conclusively answered so far, and critics are divided on the question whether jealousy was ingrained or inherent in Othello’s nature or was forced upon him by the cunning insinuations and suggestions of Iago. Frank Harris is of the opinion the passion of jealousy is deeply rooted in Othello and the moment Iago drops the hint “Ah! I like not that” (III. iii), it flares up and Othello is in a receptive frame of mind to swallow the suggestions of Iago. It is contented by the critics of this school that if Othello had not been jealous by nature, he would not have given ears to Iago’s crafty insinuations, and would not have cared to listen to his suggestions incriminating Cassio and Desdemona. But of, Othello is thoroughly inclined to listen to the remarks of Iago and proceeds ahead with the inquisitive question- “What dost thou say?” When Iago replies- “nothing, my lord; or if- I know not what”, the jealous nature of Othello is much in evidence when he himself makes the remark- “Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?” Frank Harris says that this question clearly indicates that Othello is jealous and he begins to feel jealous of the lady. And even when they admit that Othello

is not by birth a man of jealous temperament, they think that he is 'easily jealous', because in their opinion that if Othello had not been inclined or proved to jealousy, "the slightest enquiry, the exercise of common judgement, the smallest thought, would have, in a moment, undone Iago's net." This is one view about the question of Othello's jealousy. It is the opinion of these critics that "Othello's jealousy of Desdemona is almost inevitable. It is reason-founded on difference of colour, education, and surroundings, and is whipped to madness by vile and envious suggestions."

"...I am even the nature fool of fortune. Use me well;

You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons;

I am cut to the' brains."

Desdemona also has a high opinion of the character of her husband. When Emilia asks the question-"Is he not jealous?"-Desdemona replies-"Who, he? I think the sun where he was born drew all such humours from him", and in support of her opinion she says: "**My noble Moor/Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness/ As jealous creatures are."** The following words of Desdemona: "Why the tomorrow night; or Tuesday morn; On Tuesday noon, or night; on Wednesday morn; I prithee, name the time, but let

it not Exceed three days: “, *create a suspicion in the mind of Othello*, and he dismisses her with the remark:

**“I will deny thee nothing,
Whereon, I do beseech thee grant me this,
To leave me but a little to myself.”**

After the departure of Iago, Othello feels greatly disturbed. He is extremely confused and deeply troubled but at this stage “he is not yet jealous in the proper sense of the word.” (A.C. Bradley) He still believes in the chastity and honesty of Desdemona. But at, Iago cunningly keeps back his thoughts by pointing out to Othello:

“The more Iago refuses to tell his thoughts, the more he sharpens the desire of knowing them.”

When Iago meets Othello again, he has in his possession the handkerchief of Othello which Iago’s wife Emilia had picked up when it had inadvertently fallen from Desdemona’s hand. Iago finds Othello in possession of great anger. His words against Desdemona have made the moor very angry, and before Iago once again begins his malicious campaign, Othello rebukes him very severely.

“My noble Moor Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness As jealous creatures are.”

Iago feels hurt at these words, but he continues to slander Desdemona. He narrates the concocted story of his lying with Cassio and how he heard Cassio say—"Cursed fate that gave thee to the Moor." Othello is further asked to demand from Desdemona the handkerchief which he had given to her as a token of love. She has handed over the handkerchief to Cassio. When Othello hears about the handkerchief, he experiences a shock and he resolves to chastise Desdemona if she is found guilty.

"Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio;"

Othello might be slightly jealous, but the monster of jealousy did not make its presence fully felt at this stage. As Othello watches Desdemona going away, his passion of sublime love for the lady asserts itself, and in the ecstasy of his overpowering love he utters these endearing words:

**"Excellent wretch, perdition catch my soul;
But I do love thee, and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again."**

Now Iago continues with his business of creating jealousy in the mind of Othello because now he feels confident that Othello is well prepared to pay heed to his words. He does not come forward with some

tangible or visual proof of Desdemona's infidelity and unchastity, but advises Othello.

**“There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough hew them as we will.”**

Then in order to poison the mind of the Moor against Desdemona, he traduces Venetian women may not be applicable to Desdemona. Hence, Iago makes a direct hit at Desdemona by pointing out that she is very proficient in the art of deceiving people. She had deceived her father by marrying Othello. She had rejected proposed matches of her own clime, complexion, country, and degree. These words of Iago, greatly upset Othello and bids farewell to Iago with the remark- “if more thou dost perceive, let me know more; set on thy wife to observe.”

**“Old Man: ‘On Tuesday last
A falcon tow'ring in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.’ ”**

Othello asks Desdemona to produce the handkerchief. She fails to do so, and pleads the case of Cassio in a foolish and tactless manner. This confirms Othello's doubts against Othello. Then Iago manages to show to Othello that Cassio had a poor opinion of Desdemona. Iago arranges a discourse with Cassio, and talks about Bianca. Othello, standing at a distance,

misunderstands allusions to Bianca as references to Desdemona. Now he feels sure that Cassio has illicit relations with Desdemona and he is now perfectly convinced of her infidelity. Now he resolves to tear Desdemona to pieces and gives an order to Iago to put an end to Cassio's life. He appoints Iago as his lieutenant and on his advice he murders Desdemona in cold blood. Iago's machinations are eventually successful in poisoning the mind of the Moor, and in paving the way for the ruin and tragedy of Desdemona and her husband. Othello was not jealous by nature but the poison of Iago made him suspicious and jealous of Desdemona. He was, as he acknowledged in his last speech- "not easily jealously but, being wrought, perplex'd in the extreme." This is the whole truth about the jealousy of Othello.

"Tis not to make me jealous

To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,

Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well;

..."

Othello made this significant and pregnant statement in his last speech in Act V. He asserted that he loved Desdemona very well and intensely though not wisely. There is a great of truth in what he says. If we study the play between the lines, we will be able

to discover that Othello's love for Desdemona was profound and intense, though his approach to the lady under the infernal insinuations and sinful suggestions of Iago, was not wise and reasonable.

Gradually Iago comes out with the thought, but at the very beginning he makes the remark- "As I confess, it is my nature's plague to spy into abuses and oft my jealousy shapes faults that are not," but Othello is so much after Iago's hidden thoughts that he does not take these remarks seriously. Iago exalts "good name in man and woman" and this is done by the villain not out of appreciation for good name but to bring home to the mind of Othello "that nothing but tenderness for others restrains him from uttering what would blast them." In this way, Iago encourages Othello to press him to disclose his thought, and Othello demands a frank disclosure of it by saying- "by heaven I'll know thy thoughts." Then Iago indirectly warns Othello to guard against jealousy, the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on. Iago seeks to pour the poison of jealousy into the ears of Othello, but the Moor rebukes Iago by pointing out that he is not likely to fall an easy prey to jealousy.

**"...Where virtue is, these are more virtuous:
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw**

**The smallest fear, or doubt of her revolt,
For she had eyes, and chose me.**

**No, Iago, I'll see before I doubt, and when I
doubt prove."**

During this extremely happy meeting with Desdemona, Othello, in spite of the malicious intentions of Iago, "expresses the spiritual exaltation of love with an intensity nowhere surpassed in literature." (Herford)

**"She loved me for the dangers I had passed
And I loved her that she did pity them."**

Othello loved Desdemona sincerely and the sympathetic ways in which she listened to his tales of high adventure and heroism attracted the Moor towards the charming lady. Othello bound himself to Desdemona in bonds of marriage because he had genuine and sincere love for her. Othello always referred to Desdemona as "My gentle love" and talked endearingly with his wife. Even when Iago had poured the poison of jealousy into the ears of Othello, he called back, in a reminiscent mood, his old love for Desdemona with an anguished wail. Othello did not believe the sinful insinuations against Desdemona readily, and it was on account of his deep and intense love for Desdemona that he cried out. At a later stage he rebuked Iago for slandering Desdemona whom he loved dearly.

Othello loved Desdemona with great intensity and earnestness and the anguished feelings of his heart at the visible proof of Desdemona's infidelity; show how profound and strong was his love for his wife.

**“O, you are well tun'd now,
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.”**

Othello was appointed the Governor of Cyprus. He was forced to leave behind Desdemona, who was later escorted to the island of Cyprus by Iago on a separate ship. When Othello met Desdemona in Cyprus after their short separation, he was elated and beside himself with ineffable joy at the happy union with his beloved Desdemona, and the words that emanated from his mouth at this time exhibits his deep and intense love for his deep and intense love for his extremely charming and lovable wife.

“Alas! he is betray'd and I undone.”

Tears welled out of Othello's eyes at the thought that he was about to put an end of the life of his dear wife, but he proceeded with his cruel business as a vindicator of honour, chastity, justice, and honour.

After committing the murder, Othello grew mournful and sorrowful; indicating by his words how profound was his love for the lady whom he had stabbed.

His uncountable sorrow at the death of Desdemona, after he had known his mistake, was genuine, heart-rending, melting, and heart-stirring. He was very greatly tortured at the thought that he had murdered an innocent lady.

He revealed his lack of wisdom and his coarseness in traducing an honest, chaste, and faithful lady. He had absolute faith in Iago and he never doubted his suggestions. He allowed the poison of jealousy to course through his blood because he was black and lacked these soft and gentle parts of conversation that chamberers had. He subjected himself to unnecessary self-reproach and allowed those thoughts to take roots in his mind which a wise man would not have allowed to germinate.

**“But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.”**

As the forgoing remarks and quotations bear out, Othello loved Desdemona too well. But at, he exhibited a singular lack of wisdom and insight into the proceeding against the lady. He allowed himself to be guided by the villain Iago who poured the deadly poison of jealousy into his ears and thus prepared him against his wife. He put greater faith in the words of Iago than in chastity, fidelity, and devotion of his innocent wife who had left

her father for his (Othello's) sake. His behaviour with Desdemona grew to be harsh and rough, so much so that he even struck her in the presence of men who had come from Venice. He did not act wisely in hitting Desdemona and in rebuking her in the presence of Lodovico and Iago. His behaviour with Desdemona was unwise and his words.

“Give me a living reason she's disloyal.”

In the Second Scene at the Fifth Act when he got ready to murder Desdemona, his old love was awakened in his heart, and her beauty and fragrant breath almost persuaded him not to kill her. He kissed her several times before inflicting the fatal injury on her person.

“The truth is “, says the editor of the Warwick edition of the play, “that Othello's love has all the traits of a deep and noble passion save one- insight into the soul of the woman he loves.” Othello's love was deep and intense, but of a credulous and gullible fool who readily believed without any ostensible and palpable foundation every infernal insinuation that emanated from a crafty and double-dealing villain.

Iago is the embodiment of wickedness and evil, and Dr. A.C. Bradley calls him “a bad man of supreme intellectual power.” Richard III and Edmund pale into insignificance before this monster of villainy.

The nearest approach to Iago's evil-mindedness is furnished by Goethe's Mephistopheles." Here there is something of the same deadly coldness, the same gaiety in destructions. But then Mephistophilis, like so many scores literary villains, has Iago for his father. And Mephistophilis besides, is not, in the strict sense, a character. He is half person, half symbol. A metaphysical idea speaks through him. He is earthly, but could never live upon the earth." (Dr. Bradley)

Othello has his weakedness' which are, in certain circumstances, dangerous. In the first place, his intellectual power is nowhere near at par with other qualities. He is not an intelligent child, whenever Othello rusts his instinct, he is almost invariably right. For instance, he is right when he says "If she be false, oh then Heaven mocks itself. I'll not believe it." But of whenever he thinks, or supposes himself to be thinking, he is almost invariably and ruinously wrong. For instance, he is ruinously wrong when he compares her to "a cistern for foul toads to knot and gender in", or to **"summer's flies in the shambles, which quicken even with the blowing."**

Some critics are of the view that Othello's choice of Desdemona as his wife was not wise. He, being a foreign adventurer and a black Moor, should not have chosen the

beautiful and young daughter of a reputed and popular Venetian Magnifico. He should have felt that they could not, in all fairness, unite and live peacefully as husband and wife for long. As Bodenstedt writes: "We see before us perfect womanhood in the most graceful shape, and perfect manhood in a form most repulsive; and it is as if, day and night came together; the two cannot unit." Othello should not have married Desdemona, because there was the difference of age, colour, and clime, and the young passions in Othello had grown defunct. It was not an act of wisdom for a middle-aged man to have united himself with a beautiful and bashful maiden with whom he had no community of taste, complexion, and country.

**"O, you are well tun'd now,
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am."**

For all his dignity and calm, he is by nature full of the most vehement passion. Shakespeare emphasizes his self control, not only by the wonderful pictures of the First Act, but by references to the past. Lodovico, amazed at his violence, exclaims:

**"In this the noble Moor whom our full Senate
Call all in all sufficient?"**

Iago is thoroughly unscrupulous. He advises Roderigo to murder Cassio. At a later stage, Iago himself stabs Roderigo to death when he finds that the dupe cannot serve his purpose any more. The crookedness and villainy of Iago are unmistakably manifested when he makes this remark:

**“Now: whether he kill Cassio,
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
Every way makes my game:”**

His control, though strong, is far from unbreakable. He knows this himself, as appears in the scene of his dismissal of Cassio. He swears that, if he is not immediately told the truth, his blood will rule his safer guides and his passion will cloud his judgement.

Undoubtedly Othello is the most romantic and poetic of Shakespeare's heroes. Macbeth and Hamlet too are poetic, but in their case it is not poetry that is always in the ascendant in their utterances. Othello's speeches are surcharged with a romantic and poetic glow and in his speeches we discover the sparkling vivacity and romantic fervor of an adventurous hero nourished in the thick of romance, adventure, war, and dangers of life.” He does not belong to our world and he seems to enter it we know not whence almost as if from the wonderland.” He is not an ordinary soldier but a man of

royal lineage “who fetches his life and being from men of royal siege.” His life from the days of his childhood had been of a romantic adventurer, who had seen the dangers of life and had undergone most thrilling and adventurous experiences in remote and distant lands. He had seen a life of “moving accidents by flood and field, of hair-breadth escapes in the imminent deadly breach.” Several times in his life he had been taken prisoner by the “insolent foe and sold to slavery.” Like a romantic adventure, Othello had undertaken dangerous and perilous voyages in remote and uninhabited parts of the world. He had seen strange sights and met strange people who were couched in a romantic glow. He had been among “cannibals that each other eat, the Anthropological and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.” These adventures of Othello in deserts and far off lands make him a romantic figure among Shakespeare’s tragic heroes.

Othello is simple and straightforward himself, and he demands simplicity and straightforwardness in others. He wants to be certain about things and does not like a state of doubt. He cannot bear to feel perplexed or baffled. It is this desire for certainty that makes him say to Iago: “Villain, be sure thou prove my love.” even that black certainty would be better than

doubt. His “free and open nature” carries unsuspecting trust to the point of folly. Iago is right when he expresses the view that Othello will “as tenderly be led by the nose as asses are.” Othello listens to Iago throughout with unsuspecting confidence. His trust, where he trusts, is absolute. Hesitation is almost impossible to him. He is extremely self-reliant, and decides and acts instantaneously. If stirred to indignation, as “in Aleppo once”, he answers with one lightning stroke. Love, if he loves, must be to him the heaven where either he must live or bear no life. If such a passion as jealousy seizes him, it will swell into an almost uncontrollable flood. Even Iago is surprised and asks: “Can he be angry?” indeed, his temper once excited is uncontrollable.

Iago works against and tries to ruin Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio in the play and the chief aim of his life is to destroy the happiness of all these three honest and innocent people. He is eminently successful in the plans and schemes which he engineers against these three sinless victims. The question that naturally rises is: what are the motives of Iago’s actions and schemes against his enemies? Apparently and so far as all outward appearances are concerned; Iago has certain definite and well-defined motives for the action which he undertakes against Cassio and Othello.

If we closely examine the progress of action in this play, we shall find that the tragedy despite many chances and accidents is ultimately due to the characters of Iago and Othello. In the first place, we should remember that Iago is reputed to be extremely honest. Everyone in the play refers to him as 'honest Iago'. It is natural that Othello reposes trust and confidence in his honest friend. Iago is also an expert in utilizing every possible occasion to his own advantage. He has a wonderful presence of mind which saves him from every difficult situation. For example, Cassio arrives at the time when Othello is in a trance. His stay till the recovery of Othello would have brought them face to face. That would have revealed the plot of Iago and brought about his death and ruin. Iago therefore manages to send Cassio away from the place. Had Iago been less tactful and astute in dealing with the situation, the plot would not have succeeded. The success of the plot against Othello, therefore, depends not so much on chance or accident but on Iago's mastery in utilizing those chance occurrences and accidents to his own advantage. It is not the dropping of the handkerchief that brings about the tragedy but it is the way in which Iago utilizes this accident to his own advantage and to the misfortune of Othello. Charlton rightly remarks:

“Iago is a consummate master of villainy, but he shows it not so much by subtlety of intrigue as by astuteness in diagnosing the situation and in daring them to put his whole trust in a device appropriate to that occasion, but to that occasion alone, knowing full well that what will infallibly trap Othello would be ineffective against another man.”

“My only love sprung from my only hate!”

The main cause of complaint and grudge which Iago has against Othello is that instead of appointing him as his lieutenant, he has chosen Cassio for this post, and has given to him (Iago) the humiliating and low rank of the ensign or the ancient or the standard-bearer. The appointment of Cassio as lieutenant in preference to his own valiant self gnaws deep into the heart of Iago and makes him angry with the Moor because he has chosen a mere arithmetician, a debtor and creditor, and a counter-caster, meaning thereby Cassio, as his lieutenant and has ignored his claims, when he knows that Michael Cassio:

**“Never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the devising of a battle knows,
More than a spinster”...**

Why all these critics have come to the same conclusion that the motives of Iago are other than what

he states to the audience? Dr. A.C. Bradley enumerates his reasons. He says, "A man moved by simple passions due to simple causes does not stand fingering, his feelings, industriously enumerating their sources, and groping about for new ones, but this what Iago does. And this not all these motives appear and disappear in the most extraordinary manner. Resentment of Cassio's appointment is expressed in the first conversation with Roderigo, and from that moment is never mentioned in the whole play. Hatred of Othello is expressed in the First Act alone. Desire to get Cassio's place scarcely appears after the first soliloquy, and when it gratified, Iago does not referred to it by a single word. The suspicion of Cassio's intrigue with Emilia emerges suddenly, as an after-thought, not in the first soliloquy but in the second, and then disappears forever."

"Once more,

**Be thus, when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after:"**

Iago is incensed because the Moor who had seen him fighting on the battlefield at 'Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds, Christian and heathen', should completely ignore him and give the post of the lieutenant to Cassio who was not half so brave and experienced in military matters as Iago was. Another reason for Iago's

hatred for the Moor is that he has established illicit relation with his (Iago's) wife.

Furthermore, Othello is unduly sensitive and humble about his own deficiencies in certain fields, particularly his own inexperience in the world of society. He thinks that he is rude in his speech and is lacking in "those soft parts of conversation" which young gallants possess. Othello from self-examination and is not given to reflection. Emotion excites his imagination, but it confuses and dubs his intellect. Besides, he has little experience of the corrupt products of civilized life, and is ignorant of European women. He hates Othello for under-estimating him and preferring Cassio him. He engineers cunning plots to penalise and chastise Othello for the wrong which he has done to him. But in, all the same there is a deep seated malignity in Iago. It is not possible for him to endure the sight of happy people. He cannot tolerate the happiness and martial bliss of Othello and Desdemona. He must try to undermine their happiness and destroy their lives. The malignity of Iago is visible in his wicked remark.

Later on, he derives morbid delight out of laying out his plan for destroying Cassio and Desdemona. He feels extremely happy at the prospect of turning Desdemona's virtues into her ruin.

There are some motives, which Iago professes to have, which are motivating him to act against Othello and Cassio. Actuated by these motives he seeks to bring about the ruin of these people. But of, these motives are too feeble for the kind of action that Iago actually takes against his victims. Prof. C.H. Herford is of the opinion that the motives which Iago had made out for the satisfaction of the audience are, in fact, not his real motives, because he is not the kind of man whom offences like these goad into action. He is too profoundly immoral to feel the sting of wounded honour, and too conscious of his power to be gravely concerned about office and rank. In his soliloquy he gives us the above stated motives of action against Othello and Cassio, but, in fact, they are not his true motives. He is simply trying to hunt motives in order to justify his malignity against virtuous and innocent people. As Dr. A. C. Bradley points out, 'Iago did not clearly understand what was moving his desire, though tried to give himself reasons for his action, even those that had some reality made but a small part of the motive force.' Brandes is of the opinion that Iago's apparent motives of action against Othello and Cassio are not his real motives. His real motives lie elsewhere and are deeply rooted in his inherent malignity and evil-mindedness. "This demi

evil”, says Brandes, “is always trying to give himself reason for his malignity is always fooling himself by dwelling on half motives, in which he partly believes, but disbelieves in the man.”

Then Iago meets Othello and begins to abuse Roderigo in his presence. A few moments back he had been talking in a very friendly manner with Roderigo, but at the first opportunity, he begins to abuse and scandalize Roderigo in the presence of the Moor. This indicates his villainy and wickedness. Denouncing Roderigo, Iago says to Othello:

**“...Nay, but he prated
And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
Against your honour, That with the little goodliness
I have,
I did full hard forbear him:”**

What Coleridge actually means by the “motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity” is exactly what Dr. Bradley has explained so clearly in the above quotation. Iago’s malignity is deep-seated. He simply tries to hunt out motives for vindicating his malignity. He fishes out flimsy motives to convince the audience that he has reasonable grounds to work against the Moor. But of, as a matter of fact the grounds on which he proceeds are vague and well-defined and nebulous in their nature.

The maliciousness and malignity of Iago does not spring from the causes to which he himself alludes in his speeches and soliloquies.

The following remarks about Iago's villainy, wickedness and evil mindedness will bear out the truth of Dr. Bradley's remarks that evil has nowhere been delineated with such mastery as in the character of Iago.

What does Iago's villainy or wickedness consists? In several ways Iago is wicked, evil-minded, and villainous. It is his character and activities that provide an interesting study of villainy in the drama. With these general remarks about Iago's villainy and evil-mindedness, let us study his villainous activities and wicked actions in the play.

But at, in the end Iago is exposed and all his acts of wicked villainy are disclosed to Lodovico and Othello. Then all of them wonder at his wickedness and the malicious evil-mindedness of the subtle villain. Othello is thoroughly disillusioned and disenchanted, and he discovers that his honest Iago is a perfect and thorough going villain. Lodovico regards Iago as a:

**"...Spartan dog,
More fell than anguish, hunger or the sea!"**

This is Iago, the faithful ensign of Othello, planning revenge against the Moor. His villainy is apparent in

his move. His plan at the end of the First also shows his villainy and wickedness of character.

**“O, what a world is this, when what is comely
Envenoms him that bears it!”**

Sometime after Iago meets Roderigo and he wins him to his side. He inspires him with the hope of winning Desdemona and so asks him to follow him to Cyprus with money in his pocket. He proposes a plan of taking revenge against Othello, their common enemy. He says to Roderigo:

**“...let us be communicative in our revenge
against him: if thou canst cuckold him, thou doest
Thyself a pleasure, and me a sport.”**

The first direct move that Iago makes against Cassio is to make him drunk. Cassio had already taken a cup of wine, and Iago prevails upon him to have another. Iago has, at the same time, tutored Roderigo to provoke Cassio into a quarrel when Cassio is drunk. Iago's plan goes very well. The drunken Cassio chases Roderigo and strikes him. The consequence of this brawl is the dismissal of Cassio by Othello. Iago's purpose of discrediting Cassio and having him cashiered (or dismissed) has been fulfilled.

Iago's wickedness and villainy do not cease or come to an end here, but make a further advance, this time

with greater energy, strength, and force. Iago consoles Cassio and advises him to approach Desdemona, to supplicate her to plead his case with her husband. Cassio is advised to go direct to the wife of the General because she is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested. Cassio does not smell a rat in this advice of his friend Iago and he goes to Desdemona. In the meanwhile, Iago meets Othello and brings him to the place where he finds Cassio supplicating his wife. Othello notices that Cassio stealthily slinks away at his approach. Iago, the villain, makes use of this incident to pour poison of jealousy into the ears of Othello. He makes a cunningly suggestive remark- "Ha! I like not that." This remark does not fail to catch the ear of Othello; and finding the Moor well inclined to receive his judgement and suggestions, Iago poisons the mind of Othello against Desdemona and Cassio. He traduces both these innocent and guiltless persons, and so directs the Moor that he begins to suspect both Cassio and Desdemona. Iago manages to get Desdemona's handkerchief through his wife Emilia, who, at this command, steals the handkerchief. First of all, he fabricates monstrous lies that he had once slept with Cassio and he had heard Cassio murmuring

in his sleep- “cursed fate that gave thee to the Moor”. This incites jealousy in the mind of Othello, and then he brings him round to the place where he can hear him talking to Cassio about Desdemona. The villainy of Iago lies in the fact that he silently speaks the word Bianca to Cassio, and then loudly talks with him in such a manner that the stray remarks of Cassio alluding to Bianca might be construed by Othello as referring to Desdemona. Iago’s plan succeeds very well and the Moor gets ready to kill Desdemona. At this stage, Iago advises Othello to strangle Desdemona. He says- **“Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.”** (Act IV. Scene1). Those words of Iago show how wicked and evil-minded he is. The readers are apt to ask as to what harm Desdemona had caused to Iago that the villain provokes Othello to strangle her in her bed! This is nothing but pure villainy to involve an innocent and guiltless woman and be indirectly responsible for her murder.

It is Iago’s wicked nature that he experiences great happiness at the suffering and misery of other people. He derives a diabolical pleasure of the frustration and ruin of his victims, and it is merely a sport for him to watch his victims squealing owing to pain. The words that come out of his sinful lips at the disturbed and

agitated state of Othello are devilish and disclose his inherent malignity.

Iago intends to take revenge against Othello and he desires to be 'even'd with him, wife for wife'. So far as Cassio is concerned, Iago has the suspicion of illegitimate sexual relationship between the lieutenant and his wife Emilia. He says:-“For I fear Cassio with my night-cap, too-”

Then in the Second Act he directs his villainy against Cassio whom he denounces as 'pestilent knave' though outwardly he is very friendly to the lieutenant. He invites Cassio to drink wine and much against his (Cassio) will he fastens another cup on the lieutenant. Then he incites Roderigo to pick up a quarrel with Cassio, who is on duty, by up raiding and criticizing his discipline. His villainous plan meets with success. Cassio is provoked in his drunken state and the drunken lieutenant beats Roderigo. He hits Montano also. Montano is the ex-governor of the island. In this way, the wicked plan of Iago is eminently successful.

Then he manages to get Othello on the scene, and presents the picture of Cassio's guilt in such a subtle, cunning, and knavish manner that Othello dismiss Cassio who no more remains lieutenant. Iago's wickedness and villainous plotting brings about the

humiliation and disgrace of Cassio, his rival in the office of the lieutenant and to the satisfaction of Iago, Cassio is cashiered as lieutenant.

At the very beginning it should be remembered that Iago is a self-seeking, self-aggrandising villain who cares more for his own benefits than for anything else in the world. He serves his own ends and feathers his own nest in any exploit or activity which he undertakes in his life. Supreme selfishness is the chief maxim of his life. Altruism and fellow feeling do not form part of his character. Then Iago is a liar and a hypocrite. He is conscienceless and not governed by moral scruples. He behaves according to a philosophy that vindicates evil means to gain one's ends. Ends justify means in the case of Iago. He is not governed by moral scruples. He is unscrupulous and he is prepared to sacrifice even his best friend if by sacrificing him he can achieve his ends. He knows no bounds or check on his moral and immoral actions. He is equally proficient in the act of telling lies and manufacturing monstrous fabrications to ensnare and entice innocent people. He feels no twitching of conscience in telling glaring lies and abusing innocent and simple-minded persons in whom virtue predominates. He can be hypocritical in his approach and utterances and can assume dissembling airs to

deceive persons. He can sneak into the confidence of his friend and betray the trust and confidence reposed in him. Such is the general frame and texture of Iago, the villain, whose every action in the drama is an exhibition of his wickedness and evil-mindedness.

In Othello, Iago is the principal character though we cannot assign him the title of the hero. From the very beginning, he takes full control of the plot and arrogates himself the coveted role of the director of the play. Iago not only determines the course of the plot but also the destiny of the other characters. Like an expert puppet-master he holds the strings of all and makes them dance to his tune. In other tragedy of Shakespeare, the villain is so conspicuously omnipresent and omnipotent as in Othello. The only possible exception is Macbeth where the hero himself transforms into a villain. But at, in case of Macbeth, there is no hero against whom his villainy works-Duncan is not cast for heroism of the type we find heroes.

‘Enter OTHELLO

OTHELLO

....

Kissing her

**“Ah balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword!**

One more, one more. Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee, And love thee after. One more, and this the last: So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep, But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly; It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.”

Iago makes use of Roderigo as his chief instrument of action. He professes friendship with Roderigo, but he is not at all sincere to his dupe. He simply makes him his agent and supplier of money. Iago mulches Roderigo dry and deceives him with false hopes of winning Desdemona for his sexual gratification. When Roderigo fails to serve his purpose, he stabs him and brings about the end of the life of the man who had all through been his benefactor and supplier of money. Iago is such an inhuman and unthankful dog. True, he is what he is not! At an earlier stage he had said about himself-“I am not what I am”-and his activities show that he is actually not what he apparently appears to be. The usual formula for tragic conflict might be said to be the hero planning and fighting against the villain. In Othello, the hero is a passive agent on whom Iago practices his villainy. It is he who is active, diabolically active from the beginning to the end. The play opens with his entry and he announces his motives and intentions most clearly. The story of Othello is nothing, if it is

not the story of Iago's scheming and plotting against Othello and others. Aesthetically, Iago's plotting is most entertaining, though morally, it is most reprehensible. The villainy of Iago is delightful in its own way, regarded as an intellectual feat of extraordinary subtlety.

Iago uses Cassio and his own life, Emilia in the second stage of his conspiracy. Iago has no grudge against Desdemona and has no intention to ruin her, although he hates Desdemona's rash act of running into the sooty bosom of Othello. But at, Desdemona's ruin is incidental and necessary for Othello's destruction. But in, Iago is without any feelings of pity and sympathy for his victims and is not governed by feelings of compunction. He cannot bear the sight of happy persons and it is ever his intention to spell ruin in their life. When Iago finds Othello and Desdemona happy at their reunion after the storm, the first words that come out of his lips show his wickedness and evil-minded nature.

Even Milton's Satan is not as wicked and malignant as Iago. Satan shed tears at the sight of goodness and pined for the loss of heaven. The sight of Adam and Eve, whom he was out to ruin, brought soft feelings of pity in his heart. Iago's activities, machinations, and villainous wickedness provide an interesting study of villainy

in the play and open the eyes of all those who desire to prosper by means of villainous activities. Nemesis eventually overtakes the evil-doers and the villain is ensnared in the very coils which he lays for his victims. This is the moral of the play "Othello".

His malignity is very deep-seated. It is founded on envy and jealousy. It torments Iago that Cassio, who is far inferior to him in every respect including military prowess, should be appointed lieutenant and be happier than himself. He is jealous of Iago on account of the gifts and qualities which the latter possess. His charming and handsome personality makes Iago look ugly in his comparison. So Iago resolves to wreck his vengeance on the man who is superior to him every way. In the First Act of the play, Iago professes great devotion to Othello and addresses him as "My lord" and so on. He pretends to be Othello's most devoted and dutiful standard-bearer. But of, actually his designs and inclinations are against the betterment of Othello. He says to his dupe Roderigo:-

**"In following him, I follow but myself
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end."**

Iago has a grudge against Othello; Iago hates Othello so much because he thinks that Othello has overlooked

his merits. Iago also hates Othello because he is a Negro a thick-lipped Moor. In Othello, racial basis is nowhere demonstrated clearly, but it can be seen from the vulgar and foul language he often uses against Othello. But at, racial basis is not a logically justifiable explanation for Iago's motive in his villainy against Othello. But of, the more important cause for his grudge against Othello is that Othello has not promoted Iago to the post of lieutenant to which Iago had a strong claim and to which he had been aspiring. But in, instead of Iago, Othello has made Cassio his lieutenant. Even this denial of promotion would not be sufficient to motivate him in view of the fact that Cassio is better qualified in the matters of policy-making. Iago has to invent more plausible motives to justify his concept for Othello and his perverted imagination quickly creates another motive. Iago has a suspicion that the Moor has slept with his wife and his rumour is taken to be true by Iago and a sufficient cause to take revenge against Othello. His dislike for Cassio has no logical basis, though his intention to rob Cassio of his job and to get the same for himself appears to be a sound explanation. From his earlier conversation, we come to know that Iago belongs to the category of the opportunistic servant. We also see that his interest in lieutenantcy is not for the job itself,

but he wants to get closer to Othello whom he hates. The position can bring him closer to the victim, i.e. Othello and thus he can be able to hit him closer to the victim, i.e. Othello and thus he can be able to hit him at will. But of, he must have a sounder cause to act against Cassio. So Iago invents not one but two causes: Cassio is extremely handsome and popular with women. And Iago also expresses his suspicion that Cassio too has slept with his wife –a cause sufficient in itself. Iago's contempt towards Cassio and his determination to kill Cassio has other motives also; he says that the 'daily beauty' in Cassio's life 'makes me ugly' and he thinks that if Cassio remains alive, he might expose him to the Moor. On the basis of this true or self-invented and imaginary causes that Iago prepares to launch a fierce battle of wits, a strategy which ultimately ruins all his victims- Othello, Desdemona, and even Roderigo whom he had so dexterously used to attain his selfish goal.

**“O, you are well tun'd now,
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
As honest as I am.”**

If there is any character that stands on the level of Iago in villainy and wickedness, it is Wordsworth's Oswald in the play "The Borderers". It is said of Oswald

that “where he cannot govern, he will destroy.” The same is applicable to the character of Iago. He takes delight in destruction and it is a part of his nature to bring his characters on the rack and sting them so fiercely that they may shriek and pine in grief. He is thus serpent-like and in the words of Dowden,” the same malignant powers that lurks in the eye and that fills with venom, the fangs of the serpent would seem to have brought into existence of Iago.”

Iago is infuriated against Cassio primarily because of his appointment as lieutenant and secondly because he thinks that he has illicit sexual relations with his wife.

Iago is very angry with Othello and Cassio, possibly because the Moor has chosen Cassio as his lieutenant and has bypassed Iago who has been appointed his Ensign or standards-bearer. This is his grouse against Othello and Cassio. Iago nurses a bitter grudge both on this score and it becomes the object of his life to ruin them both and all those who are connected with them. Innocent Desdemona must also suffer because she is the wife of Othello, and the happiness of Othello cannot be destroyed without the suffering of Desdemona. Hence, in his evil-minded scheming he must implicate Othello, Desdemona and Cassio and bring about their ruin.

Then alone he will be satisfied. This is his evil-minded motive, and for the gratification of his evil designs he employs all kinds of base, low, and ignoble methods. The fact is that Iago is motivated by malignity and evil mindedness. It is his nature to seek delight in tormenting and persecuting his victims. The more they smart under pain and suffering, the greater grows his happiness. This is the malignant nature of Iago, and to rationalise this malignity of his nature he hunts for motives. Even if there had been no motives to direct him to these revengeful misdeeds against Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio, he would have proceeded against them merely for the joy of watching their ruin and discomfiture. This is the essential malignity of Iago and the motives which he enumerates to vindicate his malignity are simply based on vague and non-descript grounds and hardly justify the actions that Iago had taken against his victims. The fact is that the actions against his victims are motivated by a sense of pride in self and contempt for persons inferior to him in intelligence and will. Othello's ruin and the death of Desdemona are hardly commensurate with the supposed injury they had caused to Iago by choosing Cassio in preference to him for the post of lieutenant. Perhaps Iago himself had not originally planned to work their ruin to the extent

it takes place in the play. When Iago first cultivated hatred against Othello he had no idea that it would be pushed to such frightful extremity. He was led on to the ultimate catastrophe by the current of deceit and in iniquity on which he had embarked himself: "Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Roderigo, Emilia, proved other than he had expected, and taking their games into their own hands forced him to play out as tragedy what he had begun as a comedy of self-gratification." (Donovan).

**"Plague him with flies: though that his joy be joy,
Yet throw such changes of vexation on't,
As it may lose some colour."**

There is no doubt that Emilia is loyal and devoted to Desdemona. If she had the least notion of her husband's intentions, she would never have given him the handkerchief. As far as she is concerned, she gives him the handkerchief just to satisfy his fancy. She knows that Desdemona loves that token intensely, but the desire to please Iago's fancy is at the moment uppermost in her mind. She feels very uneasy when Othello speaks to Desdemona in a taunting manner about the loss of the handkerchief and asks, "Is not this man jealous?" And, if she does not even now disclose the fact about the handkerchief, it is not because she loves Desdemona less but she fears Iago more. Or, perhaps

she is just stupid. She feels genuinely distressed when Othello uses such terms as “strumpet” for Desdemona. Seeing Othello insulting and humiliating, Desdemona Emilia replies that it is but natural for her to weep when she, who sacrificed everything for the sake of Othello, calls her a “cheap woman”. She would like the villain to be punished who slandered Desdemona and wishes that Desdemona had never met the Moor: “I would you had never seen him.”

Discovering that Cassio is mentally shaken and disturbed, Iago advises Cassio to plead Desdemona who is the general’s general and she would certainly help him and get him reinstated. He assures Cassio that his dismissal is a matter of policy, not a matter of malice. According to a Iago’s plan, Cassio goes to Desdemona. A little earlier, Iago himself had removed Othello on some pretext. So when Cassio is seriously pleading his case with Desdemona, Iago brings the General back to the scene. Cassio then slips out through the side exit. It is at this moment that Iago shoots the first arrow- “Ha I like not that!” And then he starts his insinuations to arouse jealousy and suspicion in the mind of Othello. He explains the infidelity of the Venetian women in general. Then he invents the story of having spent a night at Cassio’s and relates how

during his sleep Cassio is muttering about his intimacy with Desdemona; in his dream, Cassio is supposed to have spoken to Desdemona in passionate terms and to have cursed the Moor for having married her. Othello is terribly shaken. As chance would have it, Iago gets hold of the handkerchief through Emilia. He now refers to the handkerchief and tells Othello that he had seen a similar handkerchief with Cassio. Immediately thereafter, he brings about a scene between Cassio and himself with Othello in the hiding. Iago speaks the word 'she' louder though the entire conversation is about Bianca. But of, Othello thinks that the two are talking about Desdemona. Cassio's remarks which actually pertain to Bianca have the effect of maddening Othello. All of a sudden Bianca appears on the scene with the handkerchief which is at once recognized by Othello. Othello's mind is so poisoned and he needs further proof as to the infidelity of Desdemona. He orders Iago to murder Cassio within three days and that he would decide the fate of Desdemona himself.

“Cassio, I love thee; but never more be officer of mine.”

These comments of Othello indicate that though he has begun to respect Cassio, yet he does not harbor any doubt about Desdemona's chastity and fidelity in his

heart. He feels a little disturbed when Iago, during his next meeting, resumes the thread of Cassio- Desdemona meeting and puts the cunning question- “Did Michael Cassio, when you woo’d my lady, know of your love?” this question “stealthily creates the impression in Othello’s mind that there is some darker mystery behind, some monster in his thought too hideous to be shown.” When Iago learns from Othello that Cassio had already been acquainted with Desdemona and had served as a go-between them, he utters that mysterious single word “Indeed!” which upsets Othello, and he seeks to find out from Iago what the underlying mystery is between Cassio and Desdemona. But of, Iago is nobody’s fool. Instead of expressing his views at the first enquiry, he keeps back his thoughts from Othello. He excites curiosity in the mind of Othello and the Moor presses him to disclose what lies concealed in his mind.

Emilia is “one of those ordinary people whom Shakespeare was fond of introducing, with reasonable perceptiveness and much common sense, acting as a foil to one or more of the leading characters, and acting also on occasion as chorus or commentator.”

Emilia is a worldly woman having adequate knowledge of human beings and their nature, like her husband. She is capable of making generalizations

which carry conviction and go home to the reader's heart. For instance, she is perfectly realistic in her description of husbands who, she says, enjoy their wives' love for sometime and who, after they are satiated, neglect or ignore their wives. Her analysis of the jealous mind is realistic, too. Jealous natures, she says, do not need any grounds to feel generated and without any external origin. She gives apt reasons why wives may prove unfaithful to their husbands. Men make love to women other than their wives either because they want fun, or because of their passions and they too have their frailties, her argument may be on the side of bad morality but its logic or consistency is undeniable. Again, her description of a rogue who might have instigated Othello against Desdemona does her credit. It shows how well she understands human motives and the villainy that some human beings are capable of: The insinuating rogue, some cogging, cozening slave, some outrageous knave, some base notorious knave, some scurvy fellow. She feels that this rogue has "devised this slander" in order to get some office (and that, no doubt, was one of the motives of Iago).

This is Iago's villainy and evil-mindedness. Outwardly, he is the most obedient and servile servant of Othello, but at heart he is most insincere and faithless

to him. He provokes Roderigo to create unhappiness in the life of Othello and let not enjoy his life of love with his beloved wife Desdemona-

“I peace?

No, I will speak as liberal as the north:

Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,

All, all, cry shame against me, yet I’ll speak.”

Emilia nowhere shows any signs of having a bad heart but she is common, sometime; vulgar, in minor matters almost unscrupulous, blunt in perception and feeling, and quite devoid of imagination. There is a certain coarseness about her which is seen not only in her repeating Othello’s words “strumpet” without any hesitation but also in her conversation with Desdemona about the infidelity of wives. Nor should we forget that Iago suspects her of having slept with both Othello and Cassio.

“...but, O, vain boast,

Who can control his fate?”

But at, though she has enough knowledge of the world and enough common sense to understand that some rogue has been at work against Desdemona, she does not have insight enough to perceive, or even to suspect, that her own husband is the culprit. She gave him the handkerchief, indeed, but it could not have

occurred to her what evil use he would make of it. Nor is it possible for her to believe that her husband was the one who slandered Desdemona. When told about it by Othello, she is amazed and stunned. **“My husband?” she asks and twice more, as if she cannot trust her ears, she repeats “My husband?” and then says incredulously “My husband say that she was false.”**

For our purposes we may divide the action of the story into three stages: Desdemona’s marriage with Othello, the inception and development of Iago’s plot, and its consequences. Shakespeare’s artistic genius is portrayed throughout these stages. During the first two stages of the action, he generally accepts the external circumstances as they are given in Cinthio’s narrative, but rearranges them so as to bring out his original conception of the characters of Othello and Desdemona both before and during the crisis. In the last stage, he departs from his original altogether, and devises a catastrophe more in keeping with his tragic conception.

Thus we see that Iago like an expert in criminology, leaving no proof of his involvement in the crime. His planning is meticulous. But of, even the biggest criminals do sometimes make fatal mistakes and Iago too makes such a mistake. He makes use of his own fatal mistakes

and Iago too makes such a mistake. He makes use of his own wife whom he trusts too much; he thinks that the affair of the handkerchief would remain a secret. Emilia, like a good wife does not reveal the truth even when Desdemona weeps over the loss of the token. She hardly takes the matter seriously and thinks that her grief is due to some disturbance in domestic relationship. But of, when she discovers that the handkerchief is the chief cause of her expose him. Though Iago kills Emilia, his villainy is exposed. Thus, ironically the trick of the puppet-master is exposed by his own wife who seals his fate, though in the process she too suffers the same fate as that of Othello, Desdemona and Roderigo.

There is, therefore, Shakespeare would make us understand, something more inimical to humanity than suffering-namely, an incapacity for noble pain. To die as Othello dies is indeed grievous. But of, to live as Iago lives, devouring the dust and stinging-this is more appalling.

“The Italian novelle”, from one of which Shakespeare borrow story of the Moor, were usually tales of bourgeoisie’s life, breathing an almost domestic atmosphere and therefore suitable to the purposes of realistic comedy. But at, for tragedies Shakespeare needed protagonists of greater stature- persons

considerably above the common level of life in their ways of feeling and thinking- in order that the tragic impression may be of a sufficiently high magnitude. In the words of Dr. Bradley, some of Shakespeare's heroes "are not merely exceptional men, they are huge men; as it were survivors of the heroic age living in a later and smaller world." Othello is one of them.

**"If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself!
I'll not believe it."**

In short, it is Iago who dominates the play from the very beginning to the end. It must be stated clearly that but for Iago's cunningness, the plot could not have taken such a tragic turn as it does. It is because of Iago that we feel the pity and terror at the tragic ending. Both Othello and Desdemona are passive victims of the villainy of Iago. Thus we see whatever turn the plot takes, Iago's hold on all characters is evident. He makes them dance to his tune; but his "tune" proves ultimately to be his own "swan song" too.

**"....to you, lord governor
Remains the censure of this hellish villain,
The time, the place, the torture:"**

It is interesting to inquire how Shakespeare has changed the original story of common domestic life,

so as to bring out the new conception of Othello's character.

The other difficulty that would have been raised had Shakespeare followed his original faithfully in the matter of Desdemona's struggle against parental opposition, he would have found it difficult to preserve our sympathies for her. Even as it is, her peremptory reply to her father in the Council scene has prejudiced some critics against her. A third advantage of the secret marriage is that it makes us feel how utterly indifferent to the world around them their mutual love has made them, how completely regardless of the consequences of their action how they could have their being only in each other's affections and could spare little thought for external realities. Lastly, had Shakespeare represented Desdemona's struggle against her parents in accordance with Cinthio's narrative, one of the principal causes of Othello's easy acceptance of Iago's vile suggestions would have been removed, namely, his lack of an intimate knowledge of Desdemona's character. A protected struggle against her parents would have been felt as a sufficient test of Desdemona's faithfulness. Othello would not then have so readily listened to Iago's insinuations, unless he were a common jealous husband which Shakespeare did not intend to make him.

“As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him, but as he was ambitious, I slew him....Who is there so base that would be a bondman? If any speak, for him have I offended.”

The main changes in the first stage concern the circumstances of the marriage and Iago's conduct. In the original story there is no mention of a secret marriage. Besides, the Italian writer speaks of Desdemona's is having consented to marry Othello in spite of parent's opposition. Shakespeare has made the marriage secret because, for one thing, he did not want to introduce Desdemona as struggling against parental opposition previous to her marriage. Had he done so, he would have been faced by two difficulties. In the first place, the play would have lost the unity of interest which at present it possesses. The play then would have consisted of two almost independent actions, the marriage of Othello and Desdemona in spite of parental opposition and destruction of their love and happiness through the deception practiced by Iago. But at, in the play as it is, our interest in the consequences of the runaway marriage is interwoven with our interest in Iago's action, for it is Iago who brings the marriage to light. Shakespeare has thus linked up the representation of

marriage with the development of Iago's plot which forms one of the principal factors in the tragic conflict.

Ransom presents another point of view about this play. He shows that Shakespeare in *Othello* was trying to deal with the problem of the intermingling of the races. According to him, the basic cause of the tragedy may be traced 'in the unsuitability of the marriage itself. That like should wed like is a fundamental rule of Shakespearean morality. For setting aside the mere external differences of colour, age and the like, what is at the bottom of *Othello's* misfortune. Surely it is this: "*Othello* and his wife have and can have no real community of feeling.... I feel most strongly the existence of a want of complete unison of feeling between the two. Perhaps it is more a want of unison on the mental than on the moral side. Nor have they lived in the same social sphere. *Desdemona* is a girl accustomed to move freely in Venetian society—a society never remarkable for the strictness of its etiquette. She carried with her the freedom of the Western woman. *Othello*, on the other hand, though himself a Christian, is essentially an Eastern. His violence of passion, his innate disposition to jealousy, his inability to realize the existence of Platonic affection between the sexes, stamps the man. Shakespeare knew well enough that

the prejudices of race are not eradicated in a moment. He was well aware, too, that there is no quality which the Eastern finds so hard to cast off as suspicion. It is part of the very blood of the uncivilized man.”

Another important change which Shakespeare has introduced in this first stage of the action- a change the technical effects of which have been already noticed-is the conduct of Iago. In the original story, the Ensign (Iago of the play) falls in love with Desdemona after she is married to Othello, and tries various means to win her heart. Failing in this object, he determines to destroy the Moor's love for Desdemona by way of taking revenge on her, and to plot the death of the Captain (Cassio in the play) whom he imagines to be the lover accepted by Desdemona. In the play, Iago's motives for his conduct are entirely different. He mentions his love Desdemona only casually, and never refers it again. What his real motives were has been discussed elsewhere. What we have to notice here is that whatever they were, they were working in his mind before Othello's marriage, so that he utilizes the secret marriage as the first step in the pursuit of revenge. From the technical point of view, Iago's conduct in the First Act secures dramatic continuity between it and the remaining course of the action. From the point of view

of character delineation, the effect of Iago's conduct is to make him appear less human than he would have done if he had pursued his revenge out of disappointed, even though illegitimate, passion. The Iago of the play is incapable of any warm passion: either of love or of hatred. This lack of human passion endows his character with diabolical strength, proportionate to the heroic stature of Othello's personality.

But of, the crowning proof of her loyalty to Desdemona comes when she discovers that Othello has murdered Desdemona because he thought her unchaste. At this stage she becomes reckless. She uses very strong and abusive language for the Moor. To her husband she speaks with equal bluntness. She is no longer afraid of him: "You told a lie, an odious damned lie, a wicked lie". She goes almost crazy with grief: "**Villainy, villainy, villainy; I'll kill myself for grief.**" She speaks with a "glorious carelessness of her own life" and her outbursts against Othello lighten our hearts because she is voicing our feelings when she rebukes him. She calls the Moor a "murderous coxcomb" who has killed the "sweetest innocent that ever did lift up eye"; and she dies a martyr's death.

"But look, the morn in russet mantle clad,

**Walks o'er the dew yon of high eastern hill;
Break we our watch up.”**

It is not a question of conscience to Iago, whether Roderigo kills Cassio or Cassio kills Roderigo. Since Cassio is not killed Iago kills Roderigo and hits Cassio in the leg so ferociously that Cassio is mutilated for the rest of his life. And the villainy lies in the fact that after hitting Cassio and killing Roderigo, he professes absolute innocence in the matter and claims to be friend of Cassio. The villain has hit Cassio and killed Roderigo, but in the presence of Lodovico and others, he assumes saintly airs as if he is absolutely ignorant of all that has taken place. This is the wickedness and villainy of Iago. Later on, the villain stabs his wife Emilia to death when she discloses his guilt to Lodovico and Othello.

Iago knows well that as long as Cassio is around Othello, he would not be able to cause any harm to Othello because Cassio is intelligent and he would easily see through Iago's game. Iago's ultimate aim is to ruin Othello. But at, to achieve his goal, it is essential for him to ruin Cassio also.

‘Macbeth: “Why sinks that cauldron? And what noise is this? “

Iago is subjected to torture for the rest of his life. Lodovico makes Cassio responsible and gives him the charge of tormenting and torturing Iago.

Shakespeare had also to adapt the original story from another point of view. All great tragedy concerns itself not with the mere course of external events but with human characters and passions displayed through those events. This is especially true of Shakespeare's tragedy. In it, it is not merely the defeat of the hero in his external conflict which makes us purposes, which engross our attention. The plots of his tragedies are therefore, so adapted as to bring out these movements of passions most effectively. Let us now discuss the changes made by Shakespeare of the original story so as to raise it to a tragic height, and to bring out the most effectively the tragic conflict within Othello's own mind.

“It is hypocrisy against the devil:

They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,

The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.”

If again, Othello had succumbed to the practices of a less artful villain, he would have appeared a smaller man. It was there more necessary to make Iago an impenetrable villain, one whom no one in the play could recognize for what he was. He was, therefore,

to be deprived of ordinary human qualities, so that he could not be represented as pursuing his revenge out of disappointed love.

The third change, concerning the part played by the Ensign's wife in the plot, has an obvious advantage. In the original story, the wife is in the Ensign's confidence throughout the course of the deception, though she is Desdemona's friend. She does not reveal to Desdemona anything out of her fear of her husband. In Shakespeare's plays, Emilia is one of the dupes of Iago. Though she serves as an instrument in the undoing of Desdemona, she does it all unknowingly. She is so attached to Desdemona that she resents Othello's treatment of her more than Desdemona herself does. She therefore, very often echoes our own indignation. But of, her supreme function is to expose Iago's full confidence from the beginning. She has no knowledge of the depth of her husband's wickedness and this fact renders Iago's powers of dissimulation all the more awful.

“I am not merry, but I do beguile

The thing I am, by seeming otherwise.”

The chief grievance of Iago against Cassio is that the latter has superseded him by having been promoted to the rank of lieutenant in preference to himself. In his opening dialogue with Roderigo, Iago refers to

Cassio contemptuously as an 'arithmetician', a 'counter-caster' who has absolutely no knowledge or experience of military affairs. In soliloquy, Iago makes up his mind to get the office of the lieutenant by poisoning Othello's ears against Cassio and thus displacing that man. Cassio's handsome looks and smooth manner are the very qualities that will help Iago because Iago sees that the readiest means of discrediting Cassio is to rouse Othello's suspicions of Cassio's illicit relations with Desdemona.

The moment doubt enters his mind concerning the virtue of his wife, he is thrown off his balance. What we have to notice here is that his behavior during and after the deception, which, by the way, is effected during a very short time, reveals him not as a jealous husband, but one who was so secure in his possession of Desdemona that the very thought of her possible guilt produced a violent commotion in his mind. Shakespeare does not allow Desdemona any opportunity to explain herself.

**“And I was going to your lodging, Cassio;
What, Keep a week away? Seven days and nights?
Eight score eight hours and lovers' absent hours,
More tedious than the dial, eight score times? O
weary reckoning!”**

Consistently with his new conception of Othello's character, Shakespeare could not use the device of the overhead conversation and the sight of the handkerchief as they are used in the original. These incidents have been severely censured as being grossly improbable. Othello, it is pointed out, must have been an egregious fool not to have seen through the imposition. But at those who regard the scene in this light do not appreciate Shakespeare's intention in it. that Othello appears an incredible fool is the measure of Shakespeare's success and not a defect in his art; for he did not want to use the overhead conversation and the sight of the handkerchief as means of proving Desdemona's guilt in Othello's eyes, but to bring out the utter chaos which has come to prevail in Othello's mind as a result of his having listened to Iago. He becomes fully convinced of Desdemona's guilt much before Iago has thought of making Othello overhear a conversation between himself and Cassio. The whole of the first scene of the Fourth Act is intended to depict the state of Othello's mind under his new conviction.

The second change, concerning the discovery of the crime, has been the source of a relief as intense as the painful tension of preceding scenes. In the original story, it is the Ensign who betrays the Moor, for the latter,

filled with remorse after the murder of Desdemona, had deprived the Ensign of his rank, thinking him to be the cause of his unhappiness. In Shakespeare's play, it is Emilia, Iago's wife, who reveals the truth about the handkerchief and so ruins Iago's plot at the very moment when it has attained its highest point of success. Her defiant exposure of the Moor and of Iago immediately after the consummation of the latter's intrigue gives us so tremendous a sense of relief as could never have been given by a delayed and gradual revelation of crime, as in the original story.

In the last stage of the action, namely, the consequences of Iago's intrigue, Shakespeare completely abandons his course. The main changes concern the manner of Desdemona's murder, the discovery of the crime, and the nature of the punishment. Iago uses Roderigo to get Cassio dismissed. He convinces Roderigo that there is intimacy between Cassio and Desdemona and that Cassio would come in the way to his, achieving Desdemona. Iago asserts that unless Cassio is not removed out of the way, Roderigo would never achieve Desdemona's love. Iago says that Othello will soon get fed up with Desdemona and so will Desdemona. Desdemona will seek some younger man and she may choose Cassio. According to Iago

plot, Iago's would make Cassio drink. Iago instigates Roderigo to pick a quarrel with him or to provoke him to such extent that Cassio hurts him. The foolish Roderigo enacts the dramatic scene where he himself is hurt and when, one citizen, Montano tries to intervene, gets a serious wound. In the meantime, Iago raises a hue and cry while Roderigo rings the danger bell. The noise arouses everyone and Othello and Desdemona comes to the scene. Pretending to be Cassio's friend, Iago narrates the incident. Othello finds Cassio drunkard as is expected, the drunken Cassio misbehaves and is dismissed by Othello from his post. Thus Iago succeeds in his first stage of conspiracy.

The contrast between the noble Othello of the earlier scenes and the incredibly foolish dupe and almost raving 'madman' of this scene cannot but heighten the tragic impression.

The tragedy would lose all its meaning if the reader's sympathies for Othello were to disappear even during the murder-scene, for it is the essence of the tragic impression that we should feel unhappy for the hero even though we may realize his mistakes and errors. Shakespeare has preserved our sympathies in the murder-scene by accompanying the act of murder with an inner conflict in the mind of Othello which causes him intense misery

and unhappiness. He does not commit the murder in the same mood of blood-thirstiness in which he had vowed revenge, but kills her by way of executing justice upon her for her supposed misconduct. He intends her death to be a sacrifice and not a murder. In the original tale, on the other hand, Desdemona is murdered by the Ensign with inhuman cruelty while the Moor watches with delight from another room the execution of his revenge. Such a character could only excite in us an acute feeling of disgust and hatred. Shakespeare has changed all this, and has made out of the act of murder one of the most poignant scenes, in which we feel acute unhappiness for the murdered person, and yet do not in any way hate the murderer.

The exposure of Iago through the instrumentality of Emilia and Cassio has been cited as an instance of poetic justice in Shakespeare. The phrase "poetic justice" usually means a kind of ideal justice, such as is seldom found in real life, but is represented in secondary works of literature in which the good are rewarded and the bad punished. But in, that is not the sense in which the phrase can be used in the present context. As applied to the manner of Iago's exposure, what the phrase "poetic justice" signifies is that Iago's being brought to justice not only satisfies our moral sense,

but also heightens our pleasure in his downfall through the manner in which it is brought about. Iago's downfall would have pleased us in any case. But at, it gives us keener pleasure when we find that his intrigues to ruin the conjugal happiness of Othello and Desdemona were in the end brought to ruin by his own wife, who was actuated by unselfish devotion to her mistress, an attachment which her husband could not even conceive of. Similarly Cassio, who had been one of the victims of Iago, and had also been used to further his plot against Othello, escapes the fate intended for him and completes the exposure of Iago begun by Emilia. It is on account of this extraordinary manner of Iago's downfall that it gives so keen a satisfaction and is regarded as an instance of poetic justice.

Othello's suicide, by way of self-punishment, is an equally significant change. In the original story, the Moor, when accused before the Council of Venice, refuses to confess his crime even under the most painful torture, and is therefore banished. The Ensign meets with a painful death later on in connection with a further crime. How immeasurably above the original Moor is Othello of the play who realizes his mistake, he loses all interest in life. He had punished Cassio and Desdemona for what he believed to be their misdeeds.

He punishes his own errors of judgement even more sternly, so that we cannot but echo Cassio's words after Othello's suicide, "...**he was great of heart.**" By that act of suicide, Othello has recovered all our original admiration for his noble personality which has been so painfully impaired in the course of the play.

Iago has yet to drive the Moor mad with jealousy. He has yet to create in the Moor a suspicion, amounting to conviction, that Desdemona had adulterous relations with Cassio. He now directs his efforts to that end. He advises Cassio to approach Desdemona and beg her to intervene on his behalf and secure his reinstatement from Othello. The trustful Cassio acts upon that advice. When Othello sees Cassio speaking to his wife and then withdrawing from her presence at his approach, Iago seizes the opportunity he was waiting for. By his clever insinuations, he creates a doubt in Othello's mind about Desdemona's relation with Cassio. Then he invents a dream in which Cassio is supposed to have spoken lovingly to Desdemona and to have cursed Moor for having married her. On hearing the dream, the Moor says "O monstrous, monstrous." Next, Iago refers to the handkerchief (which he has already dropped in Cassio's apartment) and says that he has seen Cassio's guilt Othello calls upon Iago to kill Cassio within three

days while he will himself put an end to the life of “the fair devil” (that is, Desdemona). And with that Othello appoints Iago to the post of lieutenant also. Thus Iago has secured not only the dismissal of Cassio but the post to which he aspired.

According to the original story, the assault on the Captain and the murder of Desdemona were planned in cold-blooded deliberation and were carried out by the Ensign with revolting cruelty.

It is not just for money that Iago spends time and argument upon this fool of a man. With his shrewdness and cunning he would like to use him as a tool for other ends. Accordingly, he instigates him to rouse Brabantio from sleep and to inform him about Desdemona’s elopement and marriage with the Moor. Roderigo promptly obeys Iago and rouses Brabantio to tell him that Desdemona is gone to “the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor.” Acting upon Iago’s instructions again, he leads Brabantio and party to the Sagittary to find Desdemona and the Moor. Iago’s obvious motive here is to bring about a clash between the Moor and Brabantio or at least to create a very awkward and embarrassing situation for the Moor and to bring him into disrupted with the duke and the nobles.

It will thus be seen that the changes made by Shakespeare in the original story were inspired mainly by three purposes to interrelate the various incidents so as to preserve unity of interest to bring out his enlarged conception of Othello's character, to reveal his inner conflicts and the movements of his passions under the stress of his disillusionment, and to preserve our sympathy and admiration for him even during the darkest moments of his life and finally provide adequate relief to the painful feelings produced in the reader's heart during the course of the conflict.

The main changes in this stage concern the occasion of Cassio's dismissal, the arrangement of the arguments used to prove Desdemona's supposed guilt, and the part of Emilia in the plot. In the original story, the Captain happens to strike a soldier on his own account, and is consequently deprived of his rank by the Moor. But of, Desdemona pleads his cause so insistently that the Moor feels compelled to reinstate him. He communicates the whole matter to his Ensign, as yet without the slightest suspicion concerning his wife's fidelity; and the Ensign utilizes the opportunity for insinuating his dark suggestions. In Shakespeare's play, Cassio's falling out with Roderigo is a result of Iago's contrivance, and so is also his solicitation of Desdemona's influence on

his behalf. The effect of this change is to be viewed from a technical standpoint as also from a psychological one. By representing Cassio's disgrace as brought about by Iago's contrivance, Shakespeare has linked it up with the other events of the play. Our interest in the incident is not merely on its own account, but on account of its being the initial stage of Iago's elaborate plot. The incident is thus taken up as a part of a single dramatic design, so as to preserve unity of interest. This is a purely technical advantage. Another advantage of the change is that the success of Iago's plot at this stage prepares us for his further success with Othello. During the scene of the quarrel he has demonstrated to all his truthfulness and his concern for Cassio. These points could not but have weighed with Othello when he was forced to consider the value of Iago's insinuations against Desdemona.

**“.. 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy...”**

The second change, concerning the arguments used in proving Desdemona's supposed guilt, is of greater significance with reference to Shakespeare's dramatic method. It is this part of the play which, more than any other, Shakespeare's original conception of Othello's character. In the original story, the Ensign is more direct in his accusations against Desdemona from the very

beginning; and the Moor broods over these charges, alternately seeking explanation from Desdemona and demanding proof from the Ensign. The latter mentions by way of proof the Captain's own confessions to himself, and undertakes to produce more convincing proofs. He manages to steal Desdemona's handkerchief and drop it in the Captain's room. The Captain, finding it, attempts to return it to Desdemona, but his knock is answered by the Moor instead of by Desdemona, so he has to slip away stealthily. The Moor becomes more suspicious and again consults the Ensign. The villain then arranges a conversation between himself and the Captain, with the Moor watching them from a distance; and finally makes the Moor see the Captain's wife taking out upon her own handkerchief the embroidery of Desdemona's. In the original story, then, the deception of the Moor takes a considerably long time, and reveals the Moor as a mean of jealous husband. It did not suit Shakespeare's purposes to represent the original material in the same manner for he did not conceive of Othello as a common jealous husband. He therefore makes Iago a more subtle villain than the Ensign of the original story. But in, what is more important, he does not represent Othello brooding over his suspicions for any length of time.

This unfortunate phrase is interrupted by Othello as a confession and seals her fate. All her pleadings for mercy are in vain. Not a night, not an hour will he grant-not even time for the saying of prayers. She must die in her sin, and furious with anger, he stifles her.

At Cyprus, before Othello has arrived, Cassio greets Desdemona by kissing her fingers. Iago, in an aside, thinks that this gesture of Cassio will serve his purpose very well. Referring to Cassio's kissing of Desdemona's fingers, Iago says that **“as little a web as this will ensnare as great a fly as Cassio.”** He proposes to use Cassio's courtesies and gallantries towards Desdemona as material for poisoning the ears of Othello against Cassio. He would, by using this material, strip Cassio out of his “lieutenancy”. Thus he confirms his motive, which has already been stated, of getting Cassio dismissed from office and obtaining for himself the post of lieutenant. In a soliloquy that soon follows, Iago adds another motive against Cassio. He expresses his suspicion that Cassio too has slept with his wife Emilia and he would, therefore, like to have Cassio “on the hip” (that is, completely at his mercy or in a position from which he can give Cassio the decisive blow).

The next move of Iago against Roderigo proves fatal to the latter. Having been deprived of most of

his money and his jewels and having got nothing in return, Roderigo demands an explanation and threatens to reveal the facts to Desdemona. Iago would not like to face an awkward situation. So he contrives a plan by which he may not only get rid of Roderigo but also of Cassio. He suggests that Roderigo should attack Cassio and kill him. If Roderigo does that, he can enjoy Desdemona “the next night following.” The offer is too tempting for Roderigo to resist. As for Iago’s motive here, this is how he states it “Whether he kill Cassio, / Or Cassio kill him, or each do kill the other/ Every way makes my game.” Roderigo, the fool and the dupe, ways lays Cassio, attacks him and is himself seriously wounded. Minutes later, he is stabbed by Iago and dies with the words “O damn’d Iago, O inhuman dog” on his lips. At Cyprus, Iago not only obtains jewels from Roderigo on the plea that they are to be passed on to Desdemona but makes further use of him for his evil purposes. He wishes to discredit Cassio and he forms a plan for the purpose. Roderigo can well fit into that plan. Accordingly, he tells Roderigo that Cassio is the only impediment between him and Desdemona, and that he (Roderigo) can have a shorter journey to his purpose of the impediment (that is, Cassio) can be eliminated from the picture. After a little resistance,

Roderigo believes Iago and carries out Iago's behest by provoking the drunken Cassio dismissed from the post of lieutenant and Roderigo's role as a dupe in the play is confirmed.

When a little later, Iago tempts Roderigo to go to Cyprus in order to cuckold the Moor, his only purpose is to have Roderigo at hand for money and to make a tool of him again if the need arises. He cannot be serious about his proposal that Roderigo should cuckold the Moor ("if thou canst cuckold him, thou doest thyself a pleasure, and me a sport"). He knows full well that the seduction of Desdemona is impossible and he merely offers what is bait to Roderigo to lure him to Cyprus. In a soliloquy, Iago reveals that his main purpose in his dealings with Roderigo is money and another is fun. "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse/ For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane/ if I would time expend with such a snipe/ But for my sport and profit." It is obvious, too that he holds Roderigo in contempt. Othello contains three well-defined intrigues-against Roderigo, against Cassio, and against Moor and his wife. The villain in each case is Iago.

That does not, however, mark the end of Iago's intrigue against Cassio. Iago has yet to take his revenge upon Othello. He now invents the falsehood that Cassio

had admitted having illicit relations with Desdemona. A few moments later he questions Cassio about Bianca while Othello, overhearing this dialogue thinks that the two are talking about Desdemona. Cassio's remarks (which actually pertain to Bianca) have the effect of maddening Othello who thinks that Desdemona is the subject of the conversation. Othello has also seen his handkerchief in the hands of Bianca who returns it to Cassio in a mood of anger.

When Cassio has been dismissed from his post as a result of Iago's machinations, Iago's planning becomes wider in scope and more vicious in character. He has suggested to Cassio that he should seek Desdemona's help and in a soliloquy, he tells us that while Cassio "plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes", he will pour this poison into Othello's ears that Desdemona wants the reinstatement of Cassio "for her body's lust". In this way he will not only drive Othello mad with jealousy but also turn Desdemona's virtue into pitch and "out of her own goodness wake the net/ That shall enmesh "em all'. He now decides to make use of his wife in urging Desdemona to speak to the Moor. He also decides to draw the Moor apart and to bring him exactly when he may see Cassio soliciting Desdemona for her intervention on his behalf.

We meet Roderigo in the very opening scene and we find that Iago has been spending Roderigo's money as if it were his own "That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse, as if the strings were thine." Thus one of the motives of Iago against Roderigo is mercenary. Roderigo is a fool and a gull who can easily be exploited. The mercenary motive is confirmed later when Iago asks Roderigo (with an amusing iteration) to 'put money in thy purse', and to 'follow these wars' to Cyprus. Roderigo has been a suitor of Desdemona and though Desdemona is now married to the Moor, his passion for Desdemona has neither dissolved nor diminished. Iago has been feeding him with hope in this respect and feeds him with hope still. He talks in a very plausible manner to convince Roderigo that soon Desdemona will be tired of the Moor and that the field will then be clear for him. And Roderigo feels easily convinced.

"So foul and fair a day I have not seen."

From the opening dialogue between Iago and Roderigo, in which Iago in Act I we learn that Othello has promoted Cassio to the lieutenant's post but Iago had a strong claim. Iago says that Cassio knows nothing about military affairs and that Cassio's appointment to the lieutenant's post is a great injustice to him (that is Iago). With this grievance against the Moor, Iago

will follow him only “to serve my turn upon him”, and not “for love and duty”. Iago’s first move against Othello is to instigate Roderigo to rouse Brabantio from sleep and to acquaint Brabantio with the fact of Desdemona’s elopement from home and her marriage to Othello. Iago’s object in doing so is to bring about a clash between Brabantio and Othello, or at least, to create a most awkward situation for the Moor. In a soliloquy that soon follows, Iago tells us that he hate the Moor and that he suspects the Moor of having slept with his wife Emilia (“that twixt my sheets/ He’s done my office).

**“I saw Othello’s visage in his mind,
And to his honours and his valiant parts Did I
my soul and fortunes consecrate.”**

At this stage his chief concern is to discredit Cassio and to oust Cassio from the office of lieutenant, and his plan is to poison Othello’s ears against Cassio by telling the Moor that Cassio is “too familiar with his wife”. In his second soliloquy Iago tells us that he must get even with the Moor, “wife for wife” or failing that, he “put the Moor/Atleast, into a jealousy so strong, That judgement cure”, and practice “upon his peace and quiet, Even to madness.” Thus his purpose is merely to

drive Othello mad with jealousy. His plan does not yet go further than that.

Everything seems to be working into Iago's hands. Hearing from Desdemona of Othello's anger Iago hurries off to ply with his lies. Cassio, he tells Othello, has confessed all and he has no longer any room for doubt. Again, Othello fails to distinguish between probability and proof and in the miserable condition of his disgrace falls into a trance. Then Iago convinces that Othello should play the eavesdropper to a conversation between Cassio and himself. He draws gestures of a loose temptation from Cassio by his talk of Bianca and distracted Othello applies them all to Desdemona. As this juncture, by an incident Bianca comes in at the moment and flings down the very handkerchief at the feet of Cassio. He asks Desdemona to leave him alone for a little while. She obeys and leaves along with Emilia. One phrases of Desdemona "What! Michael Cassio, that came a wooing with you" especially catches the observant ear of Iago. He enquires from the Moor if Cassio had been the confidant of his love-making days. Othello replies in the affirmative and asks reason for this question. Iago with the skill of a consummate hypocrite partly by unconnected suggestions, and partly by an apparent reluctance to answer inquiries,

but more than all by the subtler devices of manner and expression, to instill into Othello the idea that he himself is the possessor of some secret about Cassio's character which makes him doubt the perfect honesty of his present intentions. By subtle steps, he draws from Othello his views on matrimonial jealousy and learns to his delight that Othello, confident of the complete integrity of Desdemona, regards jealousy of her as an absurdity.

From now on, Iago's intrigue against Othello and Desdemona becomes grimmer. In a most subtle manner, Iago exploits the trustful nature of Othello and leads him, by his clever reasoning, to believe that Desdemona is having illicit relation with Cassio. His wife having found Desdemona's handkerchief, Iago takes it away from her and drops it in Cassio's department. The handkerchief becomes afterwards a vital piece of evidence against Desdemona. Othello's jealousy has been roused by Iago's reasoning to such an extent that he becomes almost mad, but he demands proof of his wife's disloyalty. Iago invents a dream in which Cassio is supposed to have been making love to Desdemona: And to have cursed the Moor for having married her. He then tells the Moor that he has seen Cassio wiping his beard with Desdemona's handkerchief. Othello's

suspicion now turns into a conviction and he swears to kill Desdemona, changing Iago with the task of murdering Cassio. Othello now appoints Iago to the post of lieutenant ('now art thou my lieutenant')

Having gone so far, it is now impossible for Iago to retreat. Both aims of Iago's original "double knavery" have now been achieved, but Iago cannot stop here without endangering his own position. He is propelled forward by the very situation he has created. Othello is obsessed with thoughts of his wife's adultery. Iago becomes bolder and cruder in his references to adultery which he has alleged against Desdemona. He tells Othello that Cassio has been talking about his love-affair with Desdemona and that he has admitted her or to have laid with. Othello over-powered by his grief and anger, faints while Iago congratulates himself on the success of his designs ("Thus credulous fools are caught, / And many worthy and chaste dames, even thus/ All guiltless, meet reproach". When Othello recovers, Iago executes another of his vile schemes. Iago questions Cassio, in Othello's hearing, about Bianca. Othello completely misunderstands the conversation, thinking that Desdemona is the subject of it. Othello also sees his wife's handkerchief in the hands of Bianca who throws it at Cassio. Othello can bear no more. He says that he

will chop his wife into pieces for having cuckolded him. Othello carries out his plan and strangles his wife in bed. Iago gives several reasons for hating Othello. He accuses him of being unfair to his merit and promoting above him Cassio, an obviously incompetent person, as his lieutenant. He has a suspicion, grounded on nothing but his own foul thoughts, that by Othello he has been wronged in his wedded life.

“I’ll see before I doubt.”

The first accident is the circumstance of Desdemona’s dropping of her handkerchief. Iago had several times urged his wife Emilia to steal that particular handkerchief but Desdemona had always kept it in her possession with great care. And then, by chance Desdemona drops it after having offered to bind Othello’s aching head with it. If Desdemona loses the handkerchief by chance, it comes into Emilia’s possession by chance too. Hardly Desdemona leaves after dropping the handkerchief when Emilia enters by chance and discovers it. The accidental loss of handkerchief by Desdemona and the accidental discovery of it by Emilia are vital to Iago’s intrigue against Othello. When, subsequently, Desdemona cannot produce the handkerchief, he thrice repeats the words “the handkerchief” in a tone of great and disappointment. His insistence on the handkerchief

makes Desdemona say to Emilia “Sure there’s some wonder in this handkerchief, / I am most unhappy in the loss of it.”

The second important accident occurs when Cassio blunders into the presence of Othello only to find him in a swoon. If Cassio had happened to meet Othello at any moment, Othello would definitely have burst into rage and holding the man by his neck, would have asked him how he had got the handkerchief, and Iago’s falsehood would have been exposed. But of, Cassio comes when Othello happens to be in a fit and then it is an instant’s job for Iago to get rid of him by any means. Here, again, accident serves the purposes of Iago. Not only that, Iago makes positive use of Cassio’s accidental appearance on the scene. He sends him away and asks him to come back a little later. By the time Cassio comes again, Iago has already prevailed upon Othello to hide himself and be ready to overhear his conversation with Cassio. Iago asks Cassio cleverly-worded questions and Cassio’s answers have for Othello a meaning which is far from Cassio’s thoughts.

The part played by chance or accident in this play strengthens in us a feeling of fate. The influence of accident is incessant and terrible. It gives us the feeling that for these star-crossed mortals there is no escape

from fate. Not only that; we also get the feeling that fate has taken sides with villainy. Who is responsible for accidental happenings? If accidental happenings favour Iago, it means that fate has sided with the devil. This feeling gives us a shock. It disturbs our faith in Divine Justice. It makes us believe that our lives are governed by the forces of unreason and evil. Human goodness is overpowered and crushed not merely by the human evil which opposes it but also by the unseen supernatural forces which join hands with evil human beings like Iago. Thus, the element of chance or accident does not give rise to any elevating or cheering thoughts which we but live to depressing and morbid thoughts about the universe in which we live.

Othello's beliefs in his wife's guilt are deep enough to give this act the deliberateness of justice. Desdemona's protestations of innocence are met with:

**'Sweet soul, take heed, Take heed of perjury;
thou art on thy death-bed.'**

'Here is fine material for an intrigue and Iago works upon it with the consummate skill of an artist. Iago's villainy in the play Othello is considerably helped by the part played by chance. The skill of Iago was extraordinary, but chance too operated in his favour. Again and again, a chance word from Desdemona, a

chance meeting. Of Othello and Cassio, a question which anyone in Othello's place might have asked, would have destroyed Iago's plot and ended his life. In their stead, a series of chances or accidents occur to abet Iago's schemes and to bring about the ruin of Iago's victims.

“Cry havoc! And let slip the dogs of war.”

Thus Iago has cleverly drawn in Othello to put the trust of Desdemona to an intellectual test. And we know it well that he (Othello) is incapable of any intellectual distinctions. Othello has now staked his peace of mind upon the hazard that in any given case he could distinguish satisfactorily to himself between probability and proof. Having achieved this success, Iago carries his attack on Othello's faith a step further. As if glad that Othello was slow to believe ill of his lady, Iago frankly declared that he had no proof, but begged Othello to observe her behavior well when Cassio was by, not to be jealous, nor too secure neither, for that Iago knew the disposition of the Italian ladies, his country-women, better than Othello could do. He artfully insinuates that Desdemona deceived her father in marrying Othello and almost broke his heart. This argument moves Othello much and a suspicion passes

his mind that is she deceived her father she may deceive him also.

At this point, another accident occurs to help Iago's plot. Bianca appears on the scene. She scolds Cassio for having given her a handkerchief which, she says, must be a love-token from some mistress of his. Bianca's references to the handkerchief further confirm Othello's suspicion when Cassio is gone. Othello advances from his hiding place and asks Iago, "How shall I murder him, Iago?" Having seen the handkerchief being returned to Cassio by Bianca, no doubt is left in Othello's mind as to Iago's account of how the handkerchief had originally come into Cassio's hands.

The general intention is clear. He leaves the details of his plot to be worked out or modified as circumstances arise. The first necessity of the situation is that Cassio be retained about the head-quarters of the General. To effect this he represents himself to be the friend of the cashiered officer and advises him to make his appeal to Desdemona to intervene for his restoration. By doing so he draws Cassio into a course of action which may be represented to the Moor as compromising both himself and Desdemona. "For while this honest fool plies Desdemona to repair his fortune, and she for him pleads strongly to the Moor" he will under the guise of

a friend, pour into Othello's ear the poisonous notion that Desdemona's real object is guilty love for Cassio.

Hearing the approach of the General, Cassio cuts short his meeting with Desdemona and slinks away. Iago maliciously draws the attention of Othello to the identity of the departing figure.

We know that Desdemona's inability to produce the handkerchief has confirmed Othello's suspicion against her. Indeed, Desdemona's accidental loss of the handkerchief came at a moment most favourable to Iago.

Othello enters his wife's bed-chamber with alight in his hand. Desdemona is in bed, asleep. Othello is speaking to himself in a soliloquy. Desdemona's unchastity, he says, is the cause for what he is going to do. But at, he would not kill her by shedding her blood, nor strain her skin which is whiter than snow. Yet she must die, because otherwise she will ensnare more men as she did Cassio. But of, he would like to kiss her before he extinguishes the light of her life. He kisses her once, twice and a third time. Tears begin to flow from his eyes. His sorrow over her is divine because she is going to die. Desdemona sees his eyes rolling and conveying the signal of death. He speaks about the handkerchief which he gave her and changes her with having passed it

on to Cassio. She swears by her life and soul that she did no such thing. She swears that she never loved Cassio in an improper manner and that she never gave him a love-token. Her answer, which is in Othello's eyes only the denial of a false woman, enrages him. He will have to kill her with the rage of a murderer when he had thought of sacrificing her to justice with the calmness of a priest. When, on being told that Cassio is already dead, she says "Alas, he is deceived and I am ruined", her remark has for him a meaning opposite to what she wished to convey. He is now more convinced than ever before and he strangles her.

The impression that we get is that Iago did not, from the outset, aim at Desdemona's murder. It is just that, having achieved a certain purpose, he is in no position to withdraw from the whole affair. The murder of Roderigo, the murder of Desdemona and the attempted murder of Cassio are a logical development of Iago's achievement of his original purpose. His motives against Othello are not so strong or compelling as to cause him to bring about such suffering and bloodshed. But of, he is carried away by his own sense of power over his victims and by his intellectual superiority over them to go much beyond the original purpose he had in mind.

**‘.. Second Witch: “When the hurly-burly’s done,
When the battle’s lost, and won.**

Third Witch: That will be the ere the set of sun.

First Witch: Where the place?

Second Witch: Upon the heath.

Third Witch: There to meet with Macbeth.”

He calls Desdemona to his presence. Gesture and word alike are terrifying to Desdemona. His ‘horrible fancies’ transform the whole man. It is in vain that she protests herself as his ‘true and loyal wife’- Othello is far past the stage of investigation. His mind is all confusion. He interprets Desdemona’s innocent beauty as making the deeper sin.

With perfect innocence Desdemona chooses this somewhat inopportune moment to press Cassio’s claims upon her husband. That the vanished suitor was Cassio she makes no concealment. With honest eagerness she presses her suit. Othello, apparently glad for an excuse to relax his severity, readily complies. Worse than all, Othello learns from Bianca’s mouth that the magical handkerchief had been given to her by Cassio, but then, this is no evidence against Desdemona, for it has not been proved that she had given it to Cassio. Othello once again stakes suspicion for evidence and resolves that no punishment can be too severe for the culprits. He

would' have Cassio one years a killing'. Desdemona he would chop to pieces- kill her with poison-strangle her in her bed. Iago himself will undertake the punishment of Cassio.

Before killing Desdemona Othello thinks it well to cross examine Emilia, his wife's maid. Emilia denies utterly the truth of his suspicion. He treats Emilia's honest indignation as a procuress's braze-facedness. He will not kill her unconfessed. But of, Desdemona has no confession to make. Othello for the first time accuses her of guilt with Cassio and she denies it utterly. But in, denies comes too late and serves only to exasperate him. He tells her that Cassio has confessed, Desdemona is horrified at these words. She asks him to send Cassio but is told that he is dead: "Her mouth is stopped." On hearing, this Desdemona cries: **"Alas! He is betray'd, and I undone."**

Then Iago makes Othello's sure ground of trust-Desdemona's strange preference for himself-a suggestion of rank intemperate nature. Othello is distracted with jealousy. Chaos has come and he does not know what to do and what to believe.

There are two groups of characters in Othello. One group of characters consists of those who are self-deceived or the victims of deception practical on them

by others. In the other group, there are characters that deceive others and thus bring and tragedy in their life. In *Othello*, Iago deceives the other characters and thus he achieves his own selfish goals. He is an arch-villain and he ruins the life of others. Iago is the intriguer and deceptor and other characters in the play are duped by him.

Emilia comes, shouting for Othello, Othello hears Emilia's cries and presses Desdemona's throaty once again. He then opens the door to let Emilia in. She tells him that Roderigo has been killed and that Cassio is yet alive. Othello is surprised that Cassio is alive. It means that murder has missed its proper mark. At this point Desdemona; who was not yet dead, mumbles the words "O falsely murdered; murdered on a false charge." She dies wishing her husband well. Emilia is shocked by Desdemona's death. At first Othello says that he does not know who killed her but presently he declares himself as her murder. He says that she was a wanton. Emilia calls him a devil for telling such lies about her. He tells her that her own husband will confirm what he has said. Emilia is unable to imagine what her husband had to do with this affair. She shouts for help saying that the Moor has murdered Desdemona.

The innocent remark from Desdemona to Lodovico, as to the will between Othello and Cassio, is “A most unhappy one. I would do much to atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio,” ends Othello mad and he slaps her in public. He imagines unspeakable things and flings himself from the room.

**“If that the earth could teem with woman’s tears,
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile:”**

The poison has entered Othello’s soul. In his torment he sees various ways to relief, sometime abusing Iago for opening his eyes, sometimes fiercely demanding ocular proof. Iago tells him that in such a case circumstantial evidence only is to make up his mind by weighing of probabilities. He produces two pieces of evidences (i) Cassio in his dream has talked of loving Desdemona; (ii) Othello’s handkerchief has been seen in Cassio’s hands. Both are fabrications but the falseness of the first is beyond detection. As regards the second, Iago has secured the handkerchief from Emilia who had picked it up from Desdemona’s room, and had left it in Cassio’s chamber. No more is needed. Othello in a sublime poetic image declares that his purpose is fixed. He vows vengeance and Iago kneeling down by his side places himself at the Moor’s service. Othello orders Iago to put Cassio to death within three days and appoints

him his Lieutenant. He adds that he himself will kill Desdemona.

Allardyce Nicoll's views on Othello illustrate how a fundamentally moralistic approach to literature warps one's judgement. He believes that "throughout the play runs the keynote of deception and self-deception". He reminds us that Desdemona is shown to us first in the play as deceiving her father. Did she not tell that unfortunate lie about the handkerchief? And "she ends her life on a lie." Othello has smothered her and when help arrives, she can summon only sufficient breath to murmur "Nobody I myself". It is a pitiful lie, but all our pity for her should not blind us to the fact that this is entirely characteristic of her lack of self-respect, her tendency towards concealing of truth by prevarication. In this way, she is responsible for her doom." Nicoll proceeds to point out how Desdemona deceives herself. She lives in a world of romance and idealism, ignorant of the existence of evil. When reality rudely bursts into her world of dreams, she is bewildered and at a loss, and tries to persuade self that it does not exist. Othello too is an idealistic living in a world of illusions. Prof. Nicoll holds that Othello was prone to jealousy.

This scene arouses a number of feelings in our hearts: pity, horror, disgust, grief, etc. when Othello makes

his soliloquy over his sleeping wife, we feel impressed by his poetic eloquence and by his “heavenly sorrow”. Subsequently, he creates in our hearts the feelings of disgust and horror. The words **“O strumpet”** and **“Down, strumpet”** addressed by him to Desdemona are foul to our ears and for a moment we hate the Moor. But of, we also pity this man who is the victim of his own nature. The predominant feeling in our hearts, however, is one of profound grief over the extinction of one of the finest specimens of womanhood. The fate that Desdemona meets is both pitiful and dreadful. Some critics have found this scene unbearably painful and so it is.

**“Me thought I heard a voice cry ‘Sleep no more!
Macbeth doth murder sleep!”**

In the play, Roderigo belongs to those groups of characters who are deceived by Iago. He is a tool in the hand of Iago and is duped by Iago. Roderigo loves Desdemona and Iago makes him believe that one day he will be able to attain Desdemona’s love because Desdemona’s love for Othello is a temporary phase and her love for the Moor cannot last forever. Iago tells Roderigo that Othello is black and there is much age differences between them and so Desdemona will be tired of him very soon. In this way Roderigo is deceived

and duped by Iago. Iago uses his money as his own and makes him hope that one day he will be able to enjoy the love of Desdemona. Iago promises to help Roderigo to attain Desdemona's love and takes jewellery from Roderigo as gifts to Desdemona. Iago continues to dupe him and at the end he uses him to murder Cassio. Cassio does not die but Roderigo is fatally wounded by Iago. Roderigo is a character who is not only the victim of Iago's deception but is self-deceived also. He is self-deceived because he believes that he can get the love of Desdemona even after her marriage, only if Iago helps him. He is not able to understand the noble and virtuous nature of Desdemona.

Othello questions Desdemona as to the handkerchief unfortunately, she evades the question as she knows not what has come of it. Othello's suspicion throws and he talks wildly which further bewilders Desdemona. Not knowing what to do foolishly press Cassio's case with a passionate persistence which makes the situation worse.

There is, therefore, Shakespeare would make us understand, something more inimical to humanity than suffering—namely, an incapacity for noble pain. To die as Othello dies is indeed grievous. But of, to live as Iago lives, devouring the dust and stinging—this is more appalling.

**“She had a song of “willow”,
An old thing ‘twas, but it express’d her fortune,
And she died singing it;”**

“Othello perhaps cheats himself, certainly cheats others in his affirmation that he is ‘rude of speech’... presenting instead of ‘a round unvarnished tale’ one of the most subtle pieces of oratory outside of Antony’s similar harangue.”

**“Who has that breast so pure,
But some uncleanly apprehensions
Keep leets and law-days and in session sit
With meditations lawful?”**

Hardly has her panting ceased when Emilia arrives at the ghastly scene. Desdemona makes last efforts to save her murderer and tells Emilia that she has done it herself and asks her to command her to ‘my kind lord.’ Othello, however, confesses and when he tells Emilia the cause, Emilia wild with anger calls him a ‘gull and a dolt’-and tells him that he has been befooled by Iago. She shouts murder and people rush in. Othello and Iago are surrounded by them. Iago makes a vain attempt to shut the mouth of his wife and when she does not heed he stabs her to death.

**“I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour in a dungeon,**

**Than keep a corner in a thing I love,
For others' uses: yet 'tis the plague of great ones,
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base,
'Tis destiny, unshunnable, like death:
Even then this forked plague is fated to us,
When we do quicken:"**

Iago's final step against Cassio is intended to prove fatal to that man but it fails. At Iago's instigation, Roderigo attacks Cassio in order to kill him, but is himself seriously wounded (and then stabbed to death by Iago). Cassio is wounded by Iago from behind in the leg but he survives the attack. Iago's motive to kill Cassio was twofold: (i) The daily beauty of Cassio's life made Iago look ugly and (ii) Othello might have directly spoken to Cassio and this might have led to an exposure of Iago's wicked schemes.

**"We that are true lovers run into strange capers;
But as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in
love mortal in folly."**

The discovery comes like a thunder stroke to Othello who now plainly sees that he is no better than a murderer and that Desdemona has ever been faithful to him. He falls upon his sword and throws himself upon the body of Desdemona and "dies upon a kiss".

Brabantio is a victim of self deception. He is a character who is entirely self-deceived. He is of the opinion that his daughter Desdemona “is a maiden never bold”, one who blushes at her own motion. There are many suitors of her own country who want to marry, but she has not paid any attention to them. So it is impossible for him to believe that she would have fallen in love with the black Moor. He cannot believe the news of his daughter’s elopement and secret marriage with Othello. When Roderigo awakens him to inform him of his daughter’s secret marriage, he becomes furious at having been awakened at this odd hour. He does not believe even a single word uttered by Roderigo. But of, before the Duke and his council, Desdemona boldly declares that Othello has not used any charm or witchcraft to win her. She admits her love for the Moor and says that she is half the wooer. She declares Othello’s black complexion did not come in the way of her love because she loved him for his nobility and generosity. Now Brabantio’s disillusionment is complete and he accepts his defeat.

Nemesis turns upon Iago. He is caught in the toils of his own villainy and is left in the hands of Cassio who “remains the censure of this hellish villain.”

**“There are more things in heaven and earth
Horatio,**

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

Thus, we see that Iago is the arch-deceiver and all the other characters in the play are deceived by him. But at, ironically enough, he himself is self –deceived because he cannot understand the true nature of his own wife, Emilia. She lacks imaginative power and at first fails to understand her husband’s devilish nature. But of, Emilia is brave and honest and at the same time loyal to her mistress, Desdemona. Iago is self-deceived because he never imagines that his own wife Emilia would be the means of exposing his villainy. It is Emilia who tells the true story of the handkerchief. As a result she is killed by her own self-deceived husband. Iago is self-deceived also in the sense that he does not realize that the power which rules on high, is a moral one and wicked people like him are bound to be destroyed in the long run.

**‘Banquo : ..“Merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to repose.”’**

It is true that character is the source of tragedy. As we have noticed, the credulousness of Othello and the simplicity of Desdemona largely account for their

sufferings, and their weaknesses spring from their very greatness. But, Allardyce Nicoll pushes too far the viewpoint 'Character is destiny', and appears to be prompted by a desire to identify the tragic trait with a graver moral aberration in the light of which the tragedy is justified. Anyway, it is difficult to share his view that Othello deceives himself and others when he says that he is not inclined to jealousy. His whole tragedy lies in the fact that he was not easily jealous and yet fell a prey to jealousy through the simplicity of his character and the machinations of a villain. Whatever may be the truth about Desdemona's lie regarding the handkerchief, it is impossible to see in her last angelic lie any attempt at, or effect of, deception. To regard it as characteristic of "her tendency towards concealing of truth by prevarication" is to miss some of the most concealing of truth in her character. Nor does she deceive her father in any but a very narrow formalistic sense of the word. It was not certainly out of timidity that Desdemona concealed her love for Othello from her father. The experience of a strange love had made her unexpectedly bold. Simple though she was, she must have realized that her father would never approve of the marriage. Her behavior emphasizes her extraordinary courage rather than her timidity or deception. It looked like

deception to a father who had not fully understood his daughter, and to villain who saw in it a potent means of furthering his plot. One may suggest that Prof. Nicoll is deceiving himself and others when he attaches so much importance to deception and self deception in Othello as to find in it the keynote of the play which gives it unity.

It has always been a matter of controversy whether or not Shakespeare wanted tragedies. In the opinion of Dr. Johnson, Shakespeare “sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose. Shakespeare’s plays are not certainly inspired by any special moral purpose they are not designed to be moral treatise. He is not a preacher, but a poet. Still, it would be incorrect to say that he is indifferent to morality, he was a poet and, as such, he sought to render imaginatively his experience of and reaction to life through the symbols of his characters. There is no direct moral purpose in his works, he does not answer the riddles of the universe but he certainly helps us to see them better.”

Loosely, it may be defined as that ideal judgement which rewards virtue and punishes vice among the characters of a drama...Poetic Justice, in the higher

sense, is however, something greater than the mere rewarding of virtue and the punishment of vice it is the logical and motivated outcome of the given condition and terms of the tragic plan as presented in the earlier acts of the drama even though, from a worldly sense, virtue meets with disaster and vice seems temporarily rewarded. So in the modern sense poetic justice may be considered as fulfilled when the outcome, however fatal to virtue however it may reward vice, is the logical and necessary result of the action and principles of the major characters as they have been presented by the dramatist.

Othello and Desdemona are duped by Iago and he deceives both of them. In the guise of honesty, Iago ruins both of them and brings tragedy in their life.

Another character who is deceived by Iago is Cassio. Cassio becomes a victim of Iago's deception and thus he ruins Cassio. Iago has a grudge against Cassio and so he decides to work against him. In Cyprus, Iago makes Cassio drunk and thus bring about Cassio's disgrace. Cassio is dismissed from the post of the lieutenant by the Moor as a result of Iago's intrigue. To achieve his purpose, Iago suggests Cassio to plead Desdemona so that he can regain Othello's favour. Then he insinuates to Othello that Desdemona wants Cassio's reinstatement in order to satisfy her lust. As a result

of Iago's insinuation, the more Desdemona pleads for Cassio, the more the Moor's jealousy is excited and he grows more and more suspicious. Iago plans to kill Cassio and instigates Roderigo to kill Cassio. But of, Cassio is not killed and at the end he becomes the Governor of Cyprus.

Both Othello and Desdemona considers him "Honest, honest Iago". But of, in reality he deceives them from the very beginning and is an arch-enemy of their happiness. It is due to Iago's insinuation that Othello's mind is poisoned against Desdemona and as a result he murders Desdemona who is innocent and loyal to Othello. When Othello discovers the truth that Desdemona is innocent and realises that he is deceived and duped by Iago, he commits suicide.

To quote Verplanck, "Were Othello but the spirited portrait of a half-tamed barbarian we should view him as a bold and happy poetical conception, and as such, the poet's work might satisfy our critical judgement; but it is because it depicts a noble mind, wrought by deep passion and dark devices to agonies such as every one might feel, that it awakens our strongest sympathies. We see in this drama a grand and true moral picture we read in it a profound ethical lesson for while the matchless

work is built up to the noblest height of poetry, it rests upon the deepest foundations of true philosophy.”

Othello offers a great variety of conflicting opinions and this fact accounts for the complex nature of the play. Critics after critics have proposed conflicting interpretations of the play and so we see that the play is very difficult to interpret. As we go through the representative criticism of the play, we feel that we are walking placidly down a quiet corridor and after opening a door, suddenly encountered with a crowd of people who are arguing with one another at the top of their voice. In all of Shakespeare's four tragedies, Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and Othello; the dramatist continually surprises his audience with the complexity of his character portrayals. The personality and temperament of Hamlet, for example, has probably generated more critical debate than any other single figure in English Literature. And this is almost equally true of the other three heroes- the nature of Macbeth's ambitions, the problem of Lear's state of mind, the riddle of Othello's jealousy, all provide never ending sources of interest and discussion. The problem of character presented by Othello's behaviour has been approached by the critics in two ways: according to the traditional view, Othello is the victim of Iago's villainous schemes

but remains essentially the 'Noble Moor' throughout the action. But of, according to more recent critics, Othello himself possesses serious defects of character which are the basic reasons for his downfall. There are one section of critics who praises Othello attributing to him a generous share of every virtue under the sun; another section is busy in destroying his character and they opines that Othello is a coarse, vain, lustful, and a brutal ruffian who would be apt, Iago or no Iago to murder his wife on some delusory grounds. Critics are horrified to see the wickedness of Iago; at the same time some of them are full of admiration at his villainy. In another corner, he is dismissed as a mere creature of the plot, a shallow liar and braggart who could never have taken in anyone less stupid and self-centered than his master. Others again dwells on the wrongs and murmur that revenge is, after all, a kind of wild justice. Some critics are full of praise and adoration for Desdemona and shed tears at the suffering and tragic end of such an innocent creature. There are other critics, who become narrow and suspicious at the mention of her name.

According to Stopford Brooke, Shakespeare had lost his moral hold on life at the time when he wrote his tragedies. He suggests that this was perhaps due to some bitter experiences of his life. "His belief in a

divine justice is shaken in Hamlet, is almost mocked at in at in Measure for Measure, is really absent in Macbeth, is replaced by a belief in Chance as at the root of the universe in Othello, and in King Lear it is altogether gone... He has a deep and personal sympathy with the sorrows he records and this is mistakable... but it is a sympathy which sees but little light beyond; and which at least in Othello and King Lear, walks in darkness and weeps as it walks...The noble, the good, and the beautiful are there sacrificed without any good arising from their sacrifice... Cordelia perishes by a villain's love of cruelty; Desdemona dies of her frank innocence; Othello of his love and of his foolishness, the blind victim of a miscreant. And there is no explanation, no reason why such things happen in the world; nor is there any use, any far-off interest in these tears. That, I, believe, was now the temper of Shakespeare...Everywhere in Othello we seem to feel in the writer's opinion should his dark consciousness of the inexplicable aspect of the world, of the answerless problem of evil and sorrow; of his doubt with dismay that accompanied it, whether all that happened was by soulless Chance or by Unreason, blind and deaf, is at the centre of human life...something of such questioning

and the temper which arises from it seems to have been in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote Othello."

**"Bounteous madame,
Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio,
He's never anything but your true servant."**

So far as Othello's race and complexion is concerned, he is vastly different from Desdemona and others and this fact also seems to have something to do with the tragic outcome. Brabantio believes that Othello has applied witchcraft on his daughter and thus has persuaded her to do such an 'unnatural' act of marrying a black man. We see that throughout the play the characters that dislike Othello tend to make it an additional point against him that he is a Negro. Those who like him tend to make no fuss about his colour one way or the other. However, there is nobody in the play who says that he is all the more admirable because of his race.

**"Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag, and sign of love, Which
is indeed but sign."**

In comparison to the other plays of Shakespeare, Othello offers more and textual and editorial problem. At the surface level, Othello seems to be very simple to the interpretative critics. If we compare Othello with

the other Shakespearian plays, it seems to us Othello has nothing to dispute about; the dazzling complexities of Hamlet, the cloudy sublimities of King Lear or the delicate poetic symbolism is not seen in Othello. The play makes its terrific impact on us and we respond to it deeply or shallowly according to our deep or shallow natures and there, it may seem, is the end of it. It appears that our response to play is enough and the critics have nothing to do with the play. But of, in reality Othello is a difficult play to interpret.

**“He has a person and smooth dispose,
To be suspected, fram’d to make women false:”**

Othello is interpreted as a tragedy of misunderstanding by some critics. No character in the play understands the other; nor is they, for the most part understands them either. If Othello was strong enough to understand Desdemona, he would realise that she is not the kind of girl who would start a love-affair with his lieutenant Cassio during their honeymoon. If Desdemona was speculative enough, she would understand that Othello does not yet see her as a real human being, but as something magical that has happened to him and that he will go mad if anything should happen to make him believe that her white magic has turned to black. Emilia is also unable to understand

her husband. If she understood Iago, she would certainly know that he is not only a domineering husband who has forced her into endless petty compromises for the sake of peace but also is an arch-villain who is the source of tortures for others. Iago himself is not strong enough to understand his own nature. Unaware of the power of love, he cannot imagine the suffering into which he will plunge Othello by slandering Desdemona, and therefore cannot imagine the destruction and disaster at the end. Even he cannot foresee the transformation that will occur to him. The 'Temptation scene' is convincing because it presents authentically the downfall of both Iago and Othello. At the beginning of the scene Othello and Iago are both sane where they turned out to be insane at the end.

In the case of Othello, critics have expressed different opinions regarding the spiritual import of the play. Let us give brief extracts from some of these critics.

It is to be noted that not only the characters, but the play as a whole is interpreted in a variety of ways e.g. that the idea of magic is central to it, or that it is not central to it. Many other interpretations of the play are offered: Othello is a Christian tragedy and the fall of Othello is a version of Adam's fall; the fate of Desdemona is an inversion of Eve's. According

to some critics, the plot of Othello is incredible or that the plot has 'surrealistic rightness'. It is also said to be the part of the response to James I's heroic poem *Lepano*. It is also claimed that the play is a diagram of Spanish political history and Othello is Philip II and Iago is his enemy Antonio Perez. One critic is of the opinion that Othello is "Perhaps the greatest work in the world", whereas another critic describes the play as "A bloody force without salt or savour"!

**"So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh 'em all."**

The difference of race and complexion seems to be responsible for causing an underlying sense of insecurity in Othello. This sense of insecurity seems to influence his conduct at crucial moments. It is an outward symbol of his isolation. Throughout the play, whether in Venice or in Cyprus, he is surrounded by people who are different from himself in every way, just as he was on that far off day that comes back to his mind in the last few seconds of his life, when in the Turkish city of Aleppo he intervened to protect a visiting Venetian businessman who was being beaten up in the street; a street full of people whom he chose to defy and dominate, whereas the Venetians were people

he had chosen to serve him. In each case it was a choice, a conscious decision of the will, not the blind natural instinct that makes a man fight for his own hearth and his own gods. Othello willed himself into a relationship with Venice and the will is terribly limited in what it can achieve. Hence his insecurity ; hence his pride in the way has carried out his side of the bargain ('I have done the state some service'); hence the fact that Desdemona's love, which provides him an intimate, living link with Venice and promises to break down his unfamiliarity is central to his whole being. So when he thinks that Desdemona's love is withdrawn, he despairs of going on with anything, even his trade of fighting.

Now, a question arises: how do these misunderstandings arise? But of, Shakespeare has provided sufficient explanation in each case. Desdemona, who is young and inexperienced, is overprotected by her father and that is why she has less knowledge of life and people. Roderigo misunderstands because in any case he is rather stupid and is always misled by Iago. Iago misunderstands because when it comes to anything that concerns the more generous emotions, he turns out to be a fool and a brute. Othello is duped by Iago because Iago's previous record shows that he is honest and so everybody including Othello regards him to be

trustworthy; and also because in spite of all his power and importance in Venice, Othello is an alien. Venice needs him. His acceptance in Venice is partial and this fact becomes clear at the behaviour of Brabantio. Brabantio has been glad to have Othello as a guest in his house and he loves Othello, but he feels betrayed when the same Othello marries his daughter. The justification for the elopement of Othello and Desdemona is that if Othello had asked in a normal way for Desdemona's hand in marriage, Brabantio would certainly have refused the marriage proposal.

“Welcome mistress:

**Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
That I extend my manners; 'tis my breeding
That gives me this bold show of courtesy.”**

Iago, the matador, is excited of his fight with the bull. Iago abandons all thought of motives from that point onwards and works from contingency to contingency. Of course, Desdemona must die, for if she lives, Iago's lie would be detected and as a result Othello will never trust him again and chase him throughout his life. Cassio has to die for the same reason. It is due this same reason, Roderigo must die because he knows too much, though like everyone else in the play, Roderigo understands too little. Whatever be the motives of Iago,

his original intention is do as much harm as possible to Othello and Cassio as his perverted imagination can suggest. But of, that harm turns out to be as far beyond his original conception as Othello's love for Desdemona is beyond his vulgar notion of love as 'a lust of the blood'. Once he realises the huge suffering and destruction he has caused, he cannot stop or even slow down because it is too late. Thus we see that Iago is the erect type of all those insignificant little man, who all at once feel the urge to destroy another human being and get drunk on the realisation that his large, important action is suddenly and incredibly in their power.

Prof. Dowden: "The central point of its spiritual import lies in the contrast between Iago and his victim. Iago, with keen intellectual faculties and manifold culture in Italian vice, lives and thrives after his fashion in a world from which all virtue and all beauty are absent. Othello, with his barbaric innocence and regal magnificence of soul, must cease to live the moment he ceases to retain faith in the purity and goodness which were to him the highest and most real things upon earth. Or if he lives, life acknowledge that self-slaughter is a rapturous energy- that such a prolonged agony is joy in comparison with the earthly life –in-death of it is noble. Iago suspects his wife of every baseness but

the suspicion has no other effect than to intensify his malignity. Iago would not him captured and constrained to heroic suffering and rage. The shame of every being that bears the name of woman is credible to Iago, and yet he can grate from his throat the jarring music:

**“And let me the canakin clink, clink I
And let me the canakin clink I”....**



PARTRIDGE

Complete Self Analysis and Editing with collection of quotes from Shakespeare's Works, and Dr. S.Sen's Words.

Document Two

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

JOHN KEATS

SELF ANALYSIS

“The poetry of the earth is never dead.”

**“Thou wast not born of death, immortal
bird. No hungry generations; tread thee
down.”**

(Ode to a Nightingale)

**~“Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight
With wings of gentle flush o’er delicate
white, And taper finger catching at all
things To bind them all with tiny rings;”**

Keats’s attitude towards nature developed as he grew up. In the early poems, it was a temper of merely sensuous delight, an unanalyzed pleasure in the beauty of nature. “He had away”, says Stopford Brooke, “of fluttering butterfly-fashion, from one object to another, touching for a moment the momentary charm of each thing... he would let things flit in and out of the brain not caring to ask anyone to stay and keep him company, but pleased with them and his game of life.” His attitude was one of unthinking pleasures and enjoyments without thought.

**“To laugh a while at her so proud array;
Her waving streamers loosely she lets play,
And flagging colours shine as bright as smiling
day.”**

Sensuousness is the key to Keats's attitude towards nature. He looked with child-like delight at the objects of nature and his whole being was thrilled by what he saw and heard. The earth lay before him tilled, spread out with beauties and wonders, and all his senses reached to them with delight and rapture. Everything in nature for him was full of wonder and mystery—the rising sun, the moving clouds, the growing bud and even swimming fish.

**“Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf!”**

The lines also reveal Keats's idea that our imperfect nature is not framed to enjoy the eternal joy and beauty for long. In Ode to a Nightingale Keats in his attempt to share the eternal joy and happiness of the nightingale, escapes into the idyllic woodland where the bird sings. The escape brings him the bliss he ever longs for, but he cannot enjoy the imaginative reverie in which state alone he can enjoy this bliss. When Keats is recalled from the world of the nightingale's song to the actual world, he realizes that fancy cannot make a man forget

the realities of life so thoroughly as it is believed to do. In other words, the illusion produced by fancy or imagination is after all, evanescent.

“Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:-Do I wake or sleep?”

As a poet Keats is enchantingly and abundantly sensuous. His poetry has rarely been equaled in descriptions of the beauties perceptible to the senses. Ode to a Nightingale amply illustrates Keats's sensuousness -his delight in the sights, sounds, colours, smell and touch. He will 'taste' wine "cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth", he will 'see' the beaker "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim" and "purple-stained mouth", he 'hears' the nightingale singing in "verdurous glooms", and the flies buzzing "on summer eves", while his 'smell' is gratified by the "soft incense" that "hangs upon the boughs" and the fragrant flowers at his feet. In other words, the poem offers a rich feast for all the senses.

“There is a place beyond that flaming hill,

From whence the stars their thin appearance shed;

A place beyond all place, where never ill

Nor impure thought was ever harboured;”

Keats says, "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive

- a thing which enters into one's soul and does not startle it" to make beauty, says Bradley, is his (poet's) philanthropy. He must be unselfish; by refusing, that is, to be diverted from his poetic way of helping by his desire to help in another way. Hence there is no didacticism in Keats as there is in Wordsworth. There is no moralizing in *The Eve of St. Agnes* as there is none in *King Lear*; in both, the poets leave their works to speak for themselves.

**"Ite domum impasti, domino iam non vacat,
agni,**

***Go home unfed, my lambs, your master now has
no time for you,"***

Keats often says that the poet must not live for himself, but must feel for others, and must do good but he must do so by being a poet- not by being a teacher or moralist. He must have a purpose of doing well by his poetry, but he must not obtrude it in his poetry-that is, he must not show, that he has palpable design upon us. One of the most striking notes of romantic poetry is that of supernaturalism. Just as the romantic poet looks backward from the present to the distant past, he looks beyond the seen to the unseen. His imagination is lured by the remote, shadowy and the mysterious among the romantic poets. Coleridge felt the spell of

the supernatural the most, and his Ancient Mariner and Christabel are two of his important poems which dealt with 'supernatural'. Keats dealt with the supernatural in his La Belle Dame Sans Merci, and in that little poem he has condensed a whole world of supernatural mystery.

**“Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death.
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;”**

Ode to a Nightingale is an escape into the dreamland cast up by Keats's romantic imagination. The poet hears their song of a nightingale. The song fills his mind with intense joy which borders on pain. Drunk with the delight the nightingale brings him he longs to escape to the cloudland of the nightingale's song to forget the anguish caused him by **“the weariness, the fever and the fret”** and the evanescence of youth, beauty and love. At first he seeks the aid of wine to escape from reality, but the next moment he gives up the idea of taking wine as a means of escape into his dream world, and mounts on the viewless wings of poesy to land on the nightingale's romantic bower. The song of the nightingale perches him on the height of his happiness and he wants to “cease upon the midnight” painlessly

with the nightingale still singing to him. The paradox gets resolved when he says that Melancholy

**“Dwells with Beauty, Beauty that must die;
And Joy whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu.”**

There are, thus, a variety of topics introduced in the flow of thoughts that constitute the related-poem, but to think that it has no central theme or unifying motif is to betray indifference to the wonderful power of poetic imagination that sustains the entire ode and the unique artistic design that gives an undeniable coherence to its structure. It is true that Ode on a Grecian Urn concentrates only on the pictures of the urn, their effects and significance; and Ode to Autumn is dedicated on the opulence and beauty of Autumn, without much philosophic reflexion, but Ode to a Nightingale, in spite of being more passionate in mood, more complex in psychological probe and more full of sudden twists and turns of thought by way of dramatic reactions to what may follow, does not in any way forfeit its unity of appeal. But of, his escape to the dreamland of his own doesn't endure long - Reality soon asserts itself and sets his excursion to the cloud land of the nightingale's song at naught. He is stranded on the hard shores of reality and left to lament. Ode on Melancholy dwells

primarily on two fundamental experiences of human life, the experience of joy and the experience of pain. Paradoxically enough he says that real melancholy is there in all that is joyful and beautiful.

**“Save what from heaven is with the breezes
blown**

**Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy
ways.”**

Though Ode to a Nightingale should be read as a poem of escape, we cannot ignore the reflection of human experience in it. Indeed the poet escapes to the romantic bower of the nightingale to quite forget the ills and evils of life which the bird “among the leaves hast never known”. The poem reflects the tragic human experience that human life is a tedious tale of sorrow, of hopes baffled and efforts disappointed. In this world few men live up to old age, and even those who are fortunate to live up to that age are struck with paralysis agitans, and with a few grey hair on their heads, they hobble along trembling and tottering. Youth is transient and repeated shocks to premature death. The world is so full of miseries that no thinking man can reflect on human life, even for a single moment, without being filled with despair. The lot of man is misery even for the best and fairest. The charms of a loveliest woman fade away very

soon, and the love of a woman for her lover does not last longer than a single day.

“Swelter in quiet waves of immortality”

The realization that happiness in this world is but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain is too much for them to bear. So to forget their own painful experience and that of others they escape to the ideal land of their imagination. Thus Wordsworth escapes to Nature, the vast world of flowers, trees, mountains, valleys etc; Coleridge to the mysterious world of the supernatural and the Middle Ages; and Shelley to the Golden Millennium of the future.

**“Think what a present thou to God has sent,
And render him with patience what he lent;
This if thou do, he will an offspring give
That till the world’s last end shall make thy name
to live.”**

We read Ode to a Nightingale primarily as a poem of escape, Ode to a Nightingale is a glory of Romantic poetry, and escapism is the distinctive feature of Romantic poetry. The Romantic poets are all fed up with the hard stern realities of life – “its din and bustle, fever and fret”.

**“... the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.”**

The allegory in *Endymion* relates the 'divine essence' with concrete, sensuous loveliness but by the time we reach Hyperion his conception of beauty has widened. In the first place, beauty has become the symbol of power born of perfection, which explains the victory of the new creation of Gods over the old one; secondly, beauty has become blended with sorrow in the picture of Thea.

**“But saintly heroes are for ever said
To keep an everlasting sabbath’s rest,
Still wishing that, of what they’re still possessed,
Enjoying but one joy-but one of all joys blest.”**

The treatment of Keats’s poetic growth will be only half-sided if we omit to trace the influence of other poets on the development of his poetic genius. Keats was educated almost exclusively by the English poets. In the early part of his poetic career the influence of Spenser was immense. “It was the *Faerie Queene*” says Brown a friend of Keats’s later years, “that first awakened his genius.”

**“Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,**

Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!”

Now his imagination invests the nightingale with immortality with the result that it ceases to be a bird to flesh and blood and becomes a thing of beauty, a voice of romance, regaling the ears of kings and clowns, and women in distress and captivity from time out of mind.

**“But Oh: how unlike marble was that face,
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty’s self.”**

In Spenser’s fairyland, he was enchanted, breathed in a new world and became a new being. It is significant that Keats’s earliest composition is the Imitations of Spenser, written probably in 1813; and Spenser never lost hold upon his imagination. There was indeed an essential kinship between the two poets, and that brooding love of sensuous beauty, that frank response to charm of nature and romance, that luxuriance of fancy and that felicity of expression to which the Faerie Queene owes its irresistible fascination, were soon to be re-echoed in the poems of Keats. He also came under the influence of Chatterton. Early in 1815, he came under the influence of Chapman’s translation of Homer. Spenser and Hunt gave a great impetus to his spirit of romanticism. “Keats was introduced by Leigh Hunt,”

says Elton, “to the enchanted gardens of romantic poetry.” -He saw “beautiful things made new.”

A marvel of English lyrical poetry, Ode to a Nightingale is one of the greatest odes Keats wrote. It illustrates all main features of Keats’s poetry, namely, his concept of Beauty, his Sensuousness, his Meditation, his Hellenism and his Verbal magic. The Odes of Keats are not only sensuous, but also deeply meditative. Ode to a Nightingale turns on the thought of the conflict between the ideal and the real -between the joy, beauty and apparent permanence of the nightingale’s song, and the sorrow and the transience of joy and beauty in human life, which lends a deep philosophic interest to it. It embodies the thought that however distressful the human condition is, man still possesses the capacity to respond to immortal beauty and thus to establish communion with the unchanging world beyond flux and mutability.

**“As, on a rugged hill, when twilight darkens,
The young shepherdess, familiar with the place,
Keeps watering a strange and beautiful little
plant
Which feebly spreads its leaves in the unfamiliar
clime,
Far from its native fostering springtime.”**

Thus in different ages men of different classes and social positions - “emperor and clown”, Ruth, captive princess -had, in certain fleeting moments, glimpses of this unchanging world of beauty. The poem also contains the reflection that death means the denial of sensory experience. In the Ode the poet is still sensuous, but his sensuousness is now touched with “the still, sad music of humanity” and shot through and through with the stirrings of an awakening intellect.

“The same that oft-time hath

**Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”**

It is true that his poetry does not express the revolutionary ideas of his time, as Shelley’s poetry does. But for, Keats was not a revolutionary idealist like Shelley, nor had he Shelley’s reforming zeal. Keats was a pure poet, who expressed in his poetry the most worth-while part of himself and this worst—while part of great poet must follow the bent of his genius:-he has his own vision of life, and he expresses it in his own way. Wordsworth has a spiritual vision and he expresses it in simple style; Shelley has an idealistic vision and he expresses it in musical verse; Keats had the artist’s vision of beauty everywhere in nature, in art, in the deeds of chivalry, and truth were identical.

**“...the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside
Their scantily-leaved and finely tapering stems.”**

This was the profoundest and innermost experience of Keats's soul, and he expressed it most emphatically: “Where swarms of minnow show the little heads/
Staying their wavy bodies against the stream.” The very idea of joy and beauty make one melancholic because the duration of joy and beauty is very short. They must die one moment or the other. Thus we see that in Ode on Melancholy, Keats is purely realistic and there is no question of making an escape into a different world. The poem deals with purely human emotions of pain and joy.

For Keats, therefore, senses were creative as they set Imagination into play and what the imagination gasped as beauty was also Truth. Thus the Ideal was only a sublimation of the real. He sums up the whole matter in one of his letters: “Adam's dream will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as human life and its spiritual reflection...The Prototype must be hereafter.” Shelley soared above the earth in search for the light that never fades but Keats contemplated the dark earth against the

polar light of heaven, the two being the opposite sides of the same coin.

The Nightingale also embodies the age-old human experiences that however distressful the human condition is, man still possess the capacity to respond to immortal beauty and thus to establish communion with the unchanging world beyond flux and mutability. Thus in different ages men of different classes and social positions-“emperor and clown”, distressed women, captive princesses-had, in certain fleeting moments, glimpses of this unchanging world of beauty. The poem also contains the reflections that death means the denial of sensory experience.

**“Like as a ship, in which no balance lies,
Without a pilot, on the sleeping waves,
Fairly along wieth wind and water flies,
And painted masts with silken sails embraves,
That Neptune’s self the bagging vessel saves,”**

To conclude, though we should read Ode to a Nightingale as a poem of escape, we should not neglect the reflection of human experience in it.

**“When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shall remain in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,
“Beauty is truth, truth beauty?’ that is all**

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” ”

The tale of Keats's development from his feeble poetic beginnings to the magnificent odes is open of the great stories of literary history. It is remarkable that this achievement is contained in four years. The development, by necessity because of the short period of time, may be incomplete. In Keats's work, beginning from 1816 and culminating in 1821, we see the growth of a high poetic intelligence.

**“Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
O folly! For to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstances all calm,
This is the top of sovereignty.”**

Like Wordsworth's lark he is –“Type of the wise who soar but never roam/True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.” But of, this instinctive or sensuous and intuitional perception of the feelings, joys and sorrows of theirs must be balanced and steadied by an intellectual self-awareness.

**“Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain
As though a rose should shut and be a bud again.”**

In the last book of the fragmentary epic Keats presents the transformation of Apollo through the sudden rushing in of knowledge into his impulsive heart.

**“Where we such clusters had
As made us nobly wild, not mad;
And yet each verse of thine
Outside the meat, outdid the frolic wine-”**

Keats's concern for Man simultaneously brings in mind. T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats have got to say about the chaotic state of affairs in the world around us, in their famous poems *The Waste Land* and *Sailing to Byzantium* respectively. Unfolding deeper mysteries of life, finding the truth of being and the meaning of existence are as much a rhyme of Keats's poetry as recurrently we see them finding place in the poetry of modern poets. He has in him Wordsworth's fundamental goodness of human-heart and it is this basic goodness of heart that generates in us a sense of oneness with Keats. He feels for us and in return we feel for him and this accounts for his ever-continuing appeal to his readers. His poetry shows a deep concern for Man, the problems of Man and his pains and joys. We find much of the same thing in the poets of our times. Another feature of Keats's poetry which has also been employed to a much greater degree by modern poets is Symbolism. Keats has made use of the Nightingale as a symbol of permanence and immortality and the Grecian Urn as a symbol of artistic perfection. There are inspired moments when

the present beauty of nature with all its sensuous appeal gives him a fleeting vision of deeper reality. He then in his imagination passes from the world of time to the world of eternity. These mystic experiences are indicated in his Ode to a Nightingale. As Keats hears the song of the nightingale, the barriers of time and space seem to vanish away. He has imaginatively passed through death, flown on the wings of imagination to the nightingale; the barriers of time and space seem to vanish away. He has imaginatively passed through death, - **“flown on the wings of imagination to the nightingale’s immortality”**. The nightingale will be singing on while he will become a sod. “Then”, says Middleton Murry, “with a magnificent sweep of the imagination, he sees the song and the bird as one. The bird becomes pure song, and inherits the eternity of beauty.”

Keats often asked himself the question, **“Where are the songs of spring?”** Indeed, the songs of spring do not stay; beauty does not keep her lustrous eyes for long. So beauty is transitory, fleeting -it remains for a time and passes away. It is experience of his senses, but his imagination revealed to him the essential truth about beauty. Though poetry came naturally and spontaneously to him,” as leaves to a tree”, yet

he felt that poetic composition needed application, study and thought, and with regard to many passages of his works he took considerable pains to shape his verse. The observation that *Ode to a Nightingale*, unlike Keats's other odes, has no single central theme is neither true nor desirable. Keats was a conscious artist and his poetry, apart from its other qualities, is marked by its artistic workmanship. He wrote rapidly and many of his happiest phrases came to him in the flush of inspiration; still he carefully reviewed his work, and made alternations, where necessary, to give his conceptions the desired shape. "Keats's sureness of touch in the corrections of his verse reveals is sense of consummate artist."

“What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?”

This is why Keats laid so much emphasis on the 'negative capability' of the poet: 'A poet is the most unpoetical thing in the world because he has no identity he is continually filling some other body...it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated...capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable

reaching after fact and reason.’ Again, he is with his fellow human beings to sit with them and hear their groans. He always has a warm corner in his heart for those sufferings from “the fever, and the fret” and palsy.

**“Sitting careless on a granary floor,
Her hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind,
Or on a half reaped furrow sound asleep
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while her
hook**

Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers.”

In Ode to a Nightingale, we find that Keats has been deeply grieved by the mental strains of humanity at large. These strains have resulted from the intricate complexities of human life. Some are suffering from palsy, the others are dying young. Everyone has one problem or the other so much so that “Men sit and hear each other groan.” In nutshell, man is suffering from so many that the world has become a place, “Where but to think is to be full of Sorrow”. In order to find relief from the heavy burden of human worries, Keats wants to fly far away into the world of the Nightingale who, “Among the leaves hast never known” as to how miserable is the life of man in the world of reality. The natural beauty of the world of Nightingale also subdues Keats’s mental strain to a large extent. The happy lot of

the Nightingale also generates a death wish in Keats and he puts it very clearly, "Now more than ever seems it rich to die", but finally Keats comes back into the world of reality with the sound of just one word, 'Forlorn', a word that reminds him of the human lot.

**"In the very temple of Delight,
Veiled Melancholy has her sovereign shrine."**

So, imagination reveals a new aspect of beauty, which is; sweeter' than beauty which is perceptible to the senses. The senses perceive only external aspect of beauty, but imagination apprehends its essence, and "what the imagination seizes as beauty (Keats says) is truth".

**"Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,
No hungry generations tread thee down."**

In so far as they fail to do this, in so far as they are thoughts and reasoning, they are no more than a means to an end, which end is beauty-that beauty which is also truth. This alone is the poet's end and therefore his law (Bradley). Keats was led to this conviction by the poetic instinct in him. He was more than Wordsworth or Coleridge or Shelley, a poet and simple.

**"Follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow,
Though thou be black as night,
And she made all of light,**

Yet follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow.”

But of, Keats’s aestheticism was not only sensuous -it had an intellectual element. He was constantly endeavouring to reach truth through beauty; he had a conviction that “for his progress towards truth, thought, knowledge and philosophy were indispensable, but he felt also that “a poet will never be able to rest in thoughts and reasoning, which do not also satisfy imagination and give a truth which is also beauty.”

“And ask no questions but the price of votes.”

The ode is an exquisite example of the imaginative adventure of Keats. Nature takes him away from the weariness, the fever and the fret of the present world to the eternity of beauty represented by the song of the nightingale. Here is the highest nature poetry of Keats, where the inspired imagination of the poet gives him a fleeting glimpse of eternal beauty.

**“Hear melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but more endear’d,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.”**

Keats was a conscious artist in the matter of producing musical effects in his verse. He consciously used language as Spenser, the Elizabethan poets, and Milton had used it, employing all its resources to make

his verse musical. He frequently uses alliteration, but it is used with the sure tact of an artist, so that it contributes to the music of his verse: “the marble men and maidens”, “the winnowing wind”, “fast fading violets covered up in leaves”. In his Odes, vowels are artistically arranged so that they do not clash with one another; they bear the burden of the melody, and are interchanged, like the different notes of music, to prevent monotony. Many are the devices employed by the poet to make his verse musical, one of them being to make the sound echo the sense.

**“But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Me thought I heard one calling, Child:
And I replied, My Lord.”**

The focus is predominately on the ephemeral character of all that is valuable and desirable in life. Human sorrow and suffering and loss are mainly due to the decay and fickleness of youth, health, beauty and love. The quickly perishable charms of life under the ruthless domination of devouring time only leave an inevitable sense of inconsolable gloom and despair. The destructive process in the life of reality is also expedited by ‘hungry generations’ treading on the existing beings and things.

**“...for heaven’s smiling brow
Half insolent for joy began to show:
And the brag lambs ran wantonly about,
That heaven and earth might seem in triumph
both to shout.”**

The Middle Ages have been said to be a vast storehouse of romance, and some of the romantics freely drew upon this storehouse for their inspiration. Distance lends enhancement to the view, and so the distant days of the medieval past made a strange appeal to the romantics. Pater says that the romantic quality in literature is addition of strangeness to beauty, and this strangeness, the romantic poets-Coleridge, Scott and Keats, is one of those, who revealed in the past, in which his imagination, loved to dwell are the Middle Ages and the days of ancient Greece, with its beautiful mythology.

**“A! fredome is a noble thing.
Fredome maiss man to have liking:
Fredome all solace to man gives:
He livis at ease that freely livis.”**

In Ode on a Nightingale, there is sorrow, but Keats, an untiring worshipper of beauty, would not allow his personal sorrow to interfere with his pursuit of beauty. In one of his letters Keats writes: “The setting sun will

always set me to rights, or if a sparrow were before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.”

**“Knowledge enormous make a god of me
Names, deeds, grey legends, agonies etc.
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain
And deify me.”**

Every poet is a lover of beauty-but he may have, and often has, other interests and affections. Shakespeare was interested in the drama of human life and in the play of human passions. Milton’s dominant interest was religion, though he was passionate lover beauty. Wordsworth and Shelley had other interests than mere beauty, but to Keats passion “with a great poet, the sense of beauty overcame every other consideration”. Beauty was, for Keats, the moving principle of life; in fact, beauty was his religion. He loved beauty in all its forms and shapes-in the flower and in the cloud, in the song of a bird and in the face of a workman, in a work of art and in tales of romance and mythology. And all his poetry from Endymion to Hyperion has one dominant theme- viz. Beauty.

**“O cheeks! Beds of chaste loves
By your showers seasonably dashed;
Eyes! nests of milky doves**

**In your own wells decently washed;
O wit of love! that thus could place
Fountain and garden in one place.”**

Like the ancient Greeks, Keats often presents the objects of nature as living beings with a life of their own. As Leigh Hunt said of him, “he never beheld the oak tree without seeing the Dryad.” The moon is Cynthia, the sun Apollo. Keats’s observation of Nature is characterized by minuteness and vividness. Keats’s eye observes every detail, and presents it with a mature touch. He has the knack of capturing the most essential detail and compelling our attention. His descriptions of nature are thus marked by a fine pictorial quality.

Keats remained untouched by the idea of the Revolution which filled the atmosphere of Europe at the time; at least from his poetry we do not find any indication of his interest in the Revolution. Though the contemporary facts of history have not left any impression on his poetry, he deeply realized and expressed in his poetry the fundamental truths of life. Keats was a pure poet, and would not allow any extraneous things like politics or morality to disturb the pure waters of poetry. And poetry is the expression of the poet’s own experience of life. Keats as he developed mentally and spiritually- and his development was very rapid- was

searching for truth in his soul. The earlier hankering for the world of Flora and Pan- for unreflecting enjoyment of sensuous delights- is past; he now subjected himself persistently and unflinchingly to life. He faced life with all uncertainties and contradictions, its sorrows and joys.

**“Eheu quid volui nihil floribus austrum
Perditus...”**

**(Alas, what wretchedness have I brought upon
myself!**

**I have let loose the south wind upon my
flowers....)**

Ode to a Nightingale begins by pitting the poet's heart-ache against the 'full-throated ease' of the nightingale's song whose joyous melody is symbolic of the undying beauty of art; and by suggesting a reconciliation of the contraries by 'being too happy in thine happiness,' but nevertheless the intensity of the contrast between the nightingale's forest world and the painful, troubled and decaying human world is brought into sharp focus in Stanza Third: the nightingale 'among the leaves' is completely free from

“What is love? 'tis not hereafter.

Present mirth hath present laughter;

What's to come is still unsure.

**In delay there lies no plenty;
(....Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Yoth's a stuff will not endure.)"**

The contrast between the imperishability of the world of art or the emblem of imagination and the transience of life, is a common theme in romantic poetry and analogies are frequent in Shelley and Yeats, but what gives greater depth to, and accounts for the subtler effect of Keats's presentation of those contrast is his ironical and paradoxical awareness of the other side of things. The moment, when Keats listens to the superb spell of the nightingale and glorifies its song as well as the singer as 'immortal', is not measured in terms of clock-time or calendar-time, it is an 'eternal moment' as Foster calls it; and once 'eternal', it remains so even after the fading away of the 'plaintive anthem', with the flying away of the bird to the other side of the hill.

**"The weariness, the fever, and the fret,
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes of few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow."**

Melancholy arises from transience of joy is transient by its nature. Therefore, Keats accepts life as a whole-with its joy and beauty as well as its pain and despair. It is this alternation of joy and pain, light and shadow,

that gives life its harmony, his is the truth of life- and truth is beauty. The poet is wholly in the time and with the things of which he wrote. He lives wholly in the present, and does not look back to the past or forward into the future.

The Greeks were lovers of beauty, and so is Keats. To him, as to the Greeks, the expression of beauty is the aim of all art, and beauty for Keats and Greeks is not exclusively physical or intellectual or spiritual but represents the fullest development of all that makes for human perfection. It was the perfection of loveliness in Greek art that fascinated Keats, and it was the beauty and shapeliness of the figures on the Grecian Urn that started the imaginative impulse which created the great Ode. The instinctive Greekness of Keats's mind lies in his passionate pursuit of beauty, which is the very soul of his poetry. It is a temper of unruffled pleasure, of keen sensuous joy in beauty. To him a thing of beauty is a joy forever. Keats enters fully into the life of nature, and does not impute his own feelings to her. He is completely absorbed in the momentary joy and movement of things in nature. He enters into-

**“Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor**

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;”

The Greeks did not burden their poetry with philosophy or spiritual message. Their poetry was incarnation of beauty, and existed for itself. Similarly Keats was a pure poet. He enjoyed unalloyed pleasure in nature, which for him did not carry any philosophical or spiritual message. Keats did not know anything of Shelley’s enthusiasm for humanity, or his passion for reforming the world. Keats’s poetry had no palpable design; it existed by its right of beauty. For Keats the sense of beauty overcame every other consideration.

**“Go, soul, the body’s guest,
Upon a thankless arrant
Fear not to touch the best;
The truth shall be thy warrant.
Go since I needs must die,
And give the world the lie.”**

Graham Hough perceived that Keats’s major odes ‘are closely bound up this theme of transience and permanence.’ It is his romantic urge that forces him, after acutely feeling the tragic loss of all that is lovable and precious in life in the inevitable flux of the world of reality, to discover an imaginative resource of permanent beauty and happiness, which would defy the decaying power of time. And in his poetry he continually makes

an 'attempt to reconcile the contradiction' between mutability of human life and permanence of art.

The four major odes of Keats, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode to Autumn' and 'Ode On Melancholy' yield a very interesting study if they are read one after the other. The total impression of these Odes constitutes a very solid and compact whole. There is an element of unity in the final impression that they leave upon the reader and this unity springs primarily from the oneness of themes in these odes. The basic theme, underlying all these Odes can be summed up very briefly like this: The Odes deal with the fundamental human problems of finding a solace from the naked and merciless realities of life. The solace can be found in the objects and beauties of nature, in the world of art, in the world of imagination and in a wish for death but with Keats the solace is always temporary in character and a final come back into the world of realities is very important and essential. In the Ode to Autumn, he asks, the past or forward into the future. The acceptance of life- this triumph over despair attained through deep spiritual experience is expressed most forcibly in his Ode on a Grecian Urn.

“Beauty is but a flower

Which wrinkles will devour:

**Brightness falls from the air,
Queens have died young and fair,
Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
I am sick, I must die.
Lord, have mercy on us!"**

The ode begins and ends in real time and is in a very profound way bound by time. Living in real time and is in a very profound way bound by time. Living in real time, the nightingale provides the plot by impinging on the poet's consciousness, so provoking the reflections that make up the poem, before flying away...'. This is the fact, as observed by John Barnard in his John Keats that accounts for the thematic unity of the ode. The thought of soporific drug in the first stanza leads to the thought of wine in second stanza and the thought of flight from reality. The reason for this desire to escape is given in third stanza. The escape is achieved through imagination in fourth stanza and this and the next stanza dwell on a peaceful, relaxed enjoyment of the sensuous beauty of nature. The topic of death in six stanzas is allied to the desire to escape already mooted in the earlier stanza. Robert Bridges has complained of an unexpected shift of thought in seventh stanza, but of the key-line, 'Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!' has own and of man's, mortality, a

contrast, which is very much the central theme. It is a moment which is timeless, this impression is created by the magical voice of the nightingale and the same spell is conveyed on us by the wonderful song of the poet. So, it is idle to complain that the poem lacks a definite central theme. Rather the unity of the basic inspiration is felt again and again in the depth of our hearts and it is clearly betrayed in the diction as well. The 'fade away' of second stanza is echoed by 'Fade for away' in third stanza, and **'Away! away! for I will fly with thee'** in fourth stanza. The 'hungry generations' in seventh stanza recalls the sordid picture of life in third stanza. It is the last word, 'forlorn' in sixth stanza which is repeated like a refrain at the beginning of seventh stanza to mark a bridge between the land of fancy and the solid ground of reality. What more could be expected by way of thematic unity in a genuine romantic poetry where passion and imagination enjoy the right to blossom fully?

**"Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft place."**

In his Ode to Nightingale, the luxuriance of his fancy carries him far away from the fever and fret of the world to a faery land, where the song of the nightingale can be heard through "charmed magic

casements opening on the seas". He is carried away by his imaginative impulse, but his artistic sense soon prevails. The exuberance of his fancy does not blind him to his classical sense of form and order. He realizes that **"fancy cannot cheat so well as she is famed to do,"** and he comes back to the world of realities.

**"A little lowly Hermitage it was,
Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side."**

All romantic poets except Keats see in nature a deep meaning, ethical, moral, intellectual or spiritual. For Wordsworth, Nature is a mother, a nurse, an educating influence. He regards it as a living spirit. He sees in it the presence of God. Shelley, too, finds in Nature Intellectual Beauty, but while Shelley intellectualizes nature and Wordsworth spiritualises it, "Keats is content to express her through the senses; the colour, the touch, the scent, the pulsing music; these are the things that stir him to his depths; there is not a mood of Earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer or inspire him."

**"Forlorn; the very word is like a bell
That dolls me back from thee to my sole self..."**

Thus we find here a happy blending of the romantic ardour with Greek restraint of romantic freedom with classical severity. Thus "there was in Keats the keenest

sense and enjoyment of beauty, and this gave him a fellow-feeling with the Greek masters”, but of it was one side of Greek art he saw. He saw its beauty, but he did not see its purity, its self-restraint and its severe refinement. His poems-barring *La Belle*, the *Odes* and the *Hyperion* fragments are characterized by over-refinement and looseness. They have romantic ardour, but lack classical severity. It is in the *Odes* that we find a fusion of romantic impulse with classical severity. Here we notice Keats’s sense of form, purity and orderliness. The *Odes* show an amazing sense of proportion in the Greek manner and present well-designed evolution of thought. They have a close texture and are marked by severe restraint, but at the same time they have all the spontaneity and freedom of imagination that characterizes romantic poetry.

“Mori mihi contingat, non enim alia

Liberatio ab aerumnis fuerit ullo pacto istis.”

**(Would I were dead, for nought, God knows,
But death can rid me of these woes.)**

The poem ends by admitting in a very sensible manner the impossibility of achieving freedom from the tethers of the struggles and pains and frustration of life through imagination forever, because ‘the fancy cannot cheat so well/As she is fam’d to do, deceiving

elf'. The implication in 'so well' includes a stress on 'so long' too, but the quality and intensity of this joy and freedom achieved through artistic fancy has an eternal value. John Barnard has rightly observed: "The paradox of the poem is that by admitting failure it, as if inadvertently, demonstrates the grandeurs of the human singer, who within his limits, gives the bird immortality-an immortality that exists only in the human mind." It is our capacity of thought which makes our mortality so palpable to us and makes us 'full of sorrow'. But for, the nightingale is unthinking, so it cannot possible comprehend the advantage of immortality and accompanying feeling of superiority.

**“For Love is lord of truth and loyalty,
Lifting himself out of the lowly dust
On golden plumes up to the purest sky
Above the reach of loathly, sinful lust
Whose base affect through cowardly distrust
Of his weak wings dare not to heaven fly.
But like a mold warp in the earth doth lie.”**

Same is true of the Ode on a Grecian Urn, Keats is acutely aware that in real life everything is short-lived and fleeting, but when he looks at a beautiful pieces of art, the Urn, he is all praise for its artistic worth which has lent a torch of immortality, not only to the Urn itself,

but also to all that has been carved upon it, the piper, the trees, the lover and the maidens. Even earthly objects have been immortalized just because they are there on a piece of art that has been very beautifully named by Keats as the “Still unravish’d bride of quietness” and the “Sylvan historian.” Analysing the contents of Keats’s Ode to a Nightingale according to prosaic logic, one may naturally think that the poem is full of diverse thoughts. It begins with an expression of dull pain suffered by the poet which seeks a relief in the joyous song of the nightingale. It draws a contrast between his deep drowsiness and the bird’s full-throated song and Dryad like charm in the beech-green forest. The second stanza records a picture of Dance, and Provencal song, and sun burnt mirth in summer in Southern France, born out of the poet’s desire for a beaker full of wine which he needs to drink in order to forget the world of reality and escape from it to the nightingale’s world. The third stanza concentrates on the misery and plight of human beings on earth, where suffering and death are the only certainty, and youth, beauty and love are constantly facing extinction. The fourth and fifth stanzas contain the poet’s imaginative experience of sitting on the leafy tree with the nightingale in the embalmed darkness and anticipating the beauty of the moonlit sky above and the

charm of the fragrant flowery garden below. The sixth stanza brings back his focus on the nightingale's song itself and triggers off his constitutional desire for death, which flares up at this opportune moment, when the bird's song can serve as a requiem. The seventh stanza contains an emphatic assertion of the nightingale's immortality, and the poet, flying on the wings of imagination, traverses an unending amount of space and time to affirm that the same nightingale sang from days immemorial to persons of all kinds, in life and in fiction. Finally, in the last stanza the poet wakes up from his dream, at the fading away of the nightingale's song, as the bird flies across the hills. He is faced with stark reality and realizes that fancy cannot prolong its spell on human mind.

The beautiful sensuous lines on the Queen Moon, 'Starry Fays' and the scented flowers of the season, bear eloquent testimony to his love for and intense appreciation of the gifts of nature which he wanted to explore and cherish. The spirit and attitude betrayed here is positively youthful and enthusiastic. His whole being is involved in this eternal celebration of life. No idle escapist has the capacity to think, as Keats has done in this ode, about the relation of ideal art, represented by the nightingale's song and transient, ever-changing

life of reality. The nightingale was ‘not born for death’, he asserts and immediately re-asserts his conviction by calling it ‘immortal Bird!’, but man is simply mortal and in his world of mortality nothing lasts long, being devoured by time and treaded down by ‘hungry generation.’ Moreover, if the escapist mood had become dominant for some moments due to frustrations and vexations of life, Keats finally does not fail to realize that escape from reality is absurd and realistically he can feel that the nightingale’s song is nothing as joyous as it pretended to be, but a ‘plaintive anthem’. At the end of the poem he wakes up from his indolent dream to face actual life on its terms.

**“Love, the delight of all well-thinking minds;
 Delight, the fruit of virtue dearly loved;
 Virtue, the highest good that reason finds;
 Reason, the fire wherein men’s thoughts be
 proved;
 Are from one world by Nature’s power bereft,
 And in one creature, for her glory, left.”**

Moreover, it is the bard, a human creator, who invests the nightingale with immortality by glorifying its song in his song that hopes to attain immortality. In reality a nightingale’s life-span is much shorter than a man’s and its song survives only in the sense of a kind of

song by successive generations of nightingales; whereas in case of a great poet like Keats, his individual song endures.

**“Ecce novo campos Zephyritis gramine vesit
Fertilis, et vitreo rore madescit humus.”**

(See, the bountiful daughter of Zephyr dresses the fields in new grass, and the earth is moist with glistering dew.)

In Ode to a Nightingale Keats shows his deep sense of awareness for “the fever, and the fret” of men and women of the world of reality. The poet thinks of forgetting his personal loss and suffering in life by drinking and sleeping under the influence of the liquor. He thinks that the sweet song of the nightingale is a sure testimony of the absolutely happy world of the bird. The poet, therefore, eagerly wants to escape from the life of reality, which has given him a surfeit of torment and misery in the forms of ill health, unsuccessful in poetic career and in love and bereavement of a younger brother and seek refuge in the forest world of the nightingale. His personal afflictions are also seen as part of the sad lot of humanity as a whole. The general picture of malady is undeniably moving in its pitiful starkness. Thus, Ode to a Nightingale may truly be described

as a wonderful poetic record of the poet's reflection of human experience.

**“The Lord thy God I am,
That Johne dois thee call;
Johne representit man,
By grace celestially.”**

The pattern of thought in the Ode is apparently complex and not smoothly linked in parts, but the occasion as well as the basic impulse and atmospheric effect, externally spelt through the music and the imagery, secure unity and solidarity of this creative artistic production. It starts with a feeling of drowsiness and ends with the final clearing of that smokiness of the brain. The entire period in between was a spell cast by the nightingale's melody on the highly sensitive and imaginative mind of the poet. One of the main ideas in this romantic poem is a sincere yearning to get away from the miseries and frustrations of life, to escape 'the weariness, the fever and the fret', which the poet experienced from his failure to achieve fame, love and health. What he generalizes as the lot of humanity is authentically based on his personal afflictions. It is therefore impossible to escape from inevitable pain in life. Shelley says of the dead Adonias:

“He lives, he wakes-his Death is dead, not he.”

It is the thought of death or mortality that naturally leads to its opposite thought, that of immortality. It enables the poet to highlight the contrast between the world of man and that of the nightingale in a climactic manner. With a philosophical imagination Keats calls the nightingale 'Immortal Bird'. The phrase has been variously interpreted; the most common of them being that the poet is called not a particular bird, but the nightingale as a species, immortal. Some think that it is not the bird, but its song which is immortal in its appeal, but it is more reasonable to agree with Farrod who points out that the particular nightingale is addressed as 'Immortal' because Keats has called it 'light winged Dryad of the trees' at the outset, a creature of myth, like nymphs and fairies, which being purely imaginary, are not subject to death.

“Who brought me hither

Will bring me hence, no other guide I seek.”

Ode to a Nightingale has a note of searching melancholy and is inspired by the poet's personal sufferings and disappointments in life, the latest of which was the death of his brother, Thomas Keats. Not only does he want to escape to the nightingale's forest, but he also yearns for death. Life's torture has taught him to love Death and call him 'soft names'. The wish

'to cease upon the midnight with no pain' and with the nightingale's song in his ears, is a purely romantic wish. The beginning of the next stanza, contrary to the opinion of some critics, is not at all abrupt.

**“Now more than ever seems it rich to die
To cease upon the midnight with no pain
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad.”**

The thirst for wine brings in the beautiful sensuous image of a 'beaker full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene/With beaded bubbles winking at the brim/And purple-stained mouth'. Allusions and concrete imagery reinforce each other to produce the whole sensuous impact as unforgettable. We not only have the rich colour of the wine, but also the emphatic suggestion of its poetic efficacy. The small bubbles with their bead-like shapes and restless movement are compared to curious children peeping at the outside world from the rim of the container and winking. It will be difficult to find in the whole range of English poetry a more truly romantic lyric and a better penetration into the mysteries of life and death in a mood of complete absorption in beauty. The ode is intensely lyrical, yet its thoughts are elaborate enough to form a comprehensive philosophy in combination with imagination and sensuous experience. Keats's poetic genius attains maturity to

find its most perfect expression in a few wonderful odes, and Ode to a Nightingale is undoubtedly at the centre of the selected band. The nightingale's song, heard by the poet in the Hampstead Garden, triggers a series of sensations and thoughts and builds up imaginative situations, in the mind of the poet. It produces myths, gorgeous imagery, and subtle psychological perception and takes us through momentous experience of personal memory and historical imagination.

In the fourth stanza of the poem he realizes that with all its immortality with it, the Urn will remain speechless. It will remain empty and desolate and the desolation of the Urn, once again brings back on the hard crust of earth on which average man lives. This vivid depiction of the negative side of life makes all readers acutely feel a desire to escape from here. And the poet passionately and emphatically cries out: He decides to fly on the wings of poetic imagination and stays in the company of the nightingale on the shady branch of a leafy tree. He indulges in the contemplation of nature's beauty and pleasures. "Or new love pine at them beyond to-morrow", are "thrilled with aching hopelessness", but this hopelessness, this despair, Keats met squarely. In Ode to Melancholy, he points out how sadness inevitably accompanies joy and beauty. The rose

is beautiful indeed, but we cannot think of the rose without its thorn.

**“Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in...”**

The nightingale, the source of the purely joyous music, is a symbol of perfect happiness and beauty; and its world amidst the forest is the ideal world offering a total contrast to the sordid, painful and morbid world of man. This purely romantic conception of aspiring for the ideal and bewailing the fact that it cannot be achieved by mortal man, is comparable to the attitude of Shelley in *To a Skylark* and of Yeats in *The Stolen Child*. Keats calls the nightingale ‘light-winged Dryad of the trees’, who sings of the joyous summer and whose song is imaginatively associated with the warm Southern countries of ‘Dance and Provençal song’ and ‘sunburnt mirth’.

**“So every spirit, as it is most pure,
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,
So it the fairer body doth procure
To habit in, and it more fairly dight
With cheerful grace and amiable sight.
For of the soul the body form doth take:
For soul is form and doth the body make.”**

All through the poem, we are keenly alive to Keats's sensitive study of nature's charm and beauties, while a poignant sense of melancholy pervades the atmosphere, but above all and, superintending other elements, is the astonishing flight and magical power of imagination. "This joy in present, this absorption in the beauty of the hour, this making of it a divine possession and losing in its loveliness, the pain of life is one of the chief makes of his genuine." The richly sensuous stanza on flowers where the sense of smell is most exhaustively exercised is justly famous. The poet at once takes us into the enchantingly fragrant atmosphere of the dark garden, where we inhale and identify white hawthorns, eglantines, violets and the musk-rose, astonishingly mythed as 'Mid-May's eldest child'. At the same time a unique melodious effect is achieved by the ultimate verse of this stanza: 'The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.'

**"Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought
That one might almost say, her body thought."**

Since the bird is immortal its song is literally timeless and defies the barrier of space. The poet imagines that the same nightingale which is singing to him now had gladdened the hearts of monarchs as well as fools in

ancient days, relieved the gloom of Ruth's mind in the biblical times and even had consoled the captive princess of the fairy tales. The powerful imagination thus sweeps all over the universe and blends together the real and the imaginary. The drab world of reality is linked by its aerial ray with the 'faery lands forlorn.' But of, though the wings of imagination float the poet wherever he wishes to fly Keats retains artistic control over his creation. The quick succession of thoughts, spontaneous, rich and colourful, is beautifully stranded together as the colours in a rainbow. The whole effusion is occasioned by the nightingale's song and at the end, the poet is waking up to reality from his 'vision' or reverie when the bird files away and its song fades into silence. Meanwhile his mind has ranged from the garden bench to the farthest 'charmed casements, opening on the foam of perilous seas', only to return to the starting point, after completing a circle. Structurally the poetic frame-work, containing the feelings, thoughts and fancies, is admirably sound.

**“I envy no man's nightingale or spring;
Nor let them punish me with loss of rhyme
Who plainly say, My God, My king.”**

In sharp contrast to this, the nightingale is called 'immortal', 'not born for death' and its song, which

represents ideal beauty of art, has an eternal and universal appeal. It is omnipresent in all times and places and casts its spell unflinching on John Keats as well as on kings and Ruth and the captive princes of the medieval Romances and fairy tales. The romantic imagination has lifted the poet far away from the nightingale whose song is the theme of the poem.

“The same that oft-times hath

**Charmed magic casements, openings on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”**

Here there is romantic suggestiveness and mystery. The nightingale’s song is the voice of eternity, and the poet longs to die in the hope of merging with eternity. There is, behind the expressed words, a world of mystery. This is a romantic style. The word ‘rich’ is infinitely suggestive-suggestive of the sensuous delight of the poet, his physical comfort as well as the soul’s ardent longing to escape the fever and fret this world.

**“And my soul from out that shadow that lies
floating on the floor**

Shall be lifted-nevermore!”

The beginning of the next stanza, contrary to the opinion of some critics, is not at all abrupt. It is the thought of death or mortality that naturally leads to its opposite thought, that of immortality. It enables

the poet to highlight the contrast between the world of man and that of the nightingale in a climactic manner. With a philosophical imagination Keats calls the nightingale 'Immortal Bird'. The phrase has been variously interpreted the most common of them being that the poet is calling is not particular bird, but the nightingale as a species, immortal. Some think that it is not the bird, but its song which is immortal in its appeal, but it is more reasonable to agree with Garrod who points out that the particular nightingale is addressed as 'Immortal' because Keats has called it 'light winged Dryad of the trees' at the outset, a creature of myth like nymphs and fairies, which, being purely imaginary are not subject to death.

“Where are the songs of spring?

Ay, where are they?”

He answers, “Why talk of spring? We are in autumn.”

From this stark and gruesome reality the poet wants to escape on the 'viewless wings' of imagination to the world of the nightingale. By virtue of his unfettered romantic fancy he can lose himself in the midst of the dark foliage of the trees and sit beside the nightingale. It has a miraculous power to deport him through time and space anywhere in the universe. It is this imagination

which immediately leads to the creation of a mythical image of Spenserian sweetness. The note of escapism asserts more strongly in the death-wish of the poet. The soothing darkness brings up his desire for dark death.

**“With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim.”**

Drowsiness steals over him as if he has drunk an opiate. He wishes for a draught of vintage, which would carry him out of the world into the abode of the nightingale. He would thus leave behind him the sorrows of the world. He thinks of the universal, sorrows of man, and his own particular and personal griefs. The youth that grows pale and spectre-thin and dies, is his own, dearly loved brother Tom who had died few months before, and beauty's lustrous eyes are according to Middleton Murray, the eyes of Fanny Brawne, whom Keats loved. “This stanza is tense with the emotion of personal suffering controlled by poetic genius.”

**“..for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,**

To cease upon the midnight with no pain...”

A highly imaginative and purely romantic poet like Shelley or Keats cannot be reconciled with the real life which they feel as oppressive and restrictive in every way. In all their representative creations an urge for getting rid of the tyranny and bondage of social life must be inevitably betrayed. Ode to a Nightingale being one of Keats's most significant poetical utterances, does illustrate an escapist trend of the poet. However before making any final appraisal of this feature in the poem, we have to consider what the term 'escapism' implies and whether in Keats's poetry it is a passing mood or a permanent obsession. 'Escapism' is usually a pejorative term; it is used to denote a strong reproof, a criticism of the habit of shrinking or avoiding duties, a failure to face life's trials. Escapists run away from harsh, unpleasant acts and duties and try to hide themselves in their idle world of dream and peace, like an ostrich hiding its head in the sands during storms on the desert. It implies cowardice and spinelessness.

The first and foremost quality of his odes is their unity of impression. The major odes of Keats-Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn and Ode on Melancholy have a common subject and theme. They

have a common mood to depict and last but not the least in all these odes the development of mood is more or less similar and the mood develops, in the shape of a drama, i.e. first the mood takes birth, it develops, reaches a climax and finally the anti-climax takes place. Thus when we read Keats's odes, we feel that we are reading an abridged drama, and in this lay the secret of their success. In so short a form of writing, Keats been able to give an impression of the kind that plays of Shakespeare produce, but for it shall be an over-simplification of facts if this statements of ours is taken to mean that Keats has reached the Shakespearean heights of literature's perfection. No doubt it was Keats's most cherished desire to be remembered with Shakespeare in the rank of men of letters, but unfortunately Keats could not perform this feat. Might be, if he had not died young, he could have had been able to probe better into his poetic wealth.

**“She found me roots of relish sweet
Of honey wild and manna dew.”**

Yes, a note of escapism is sounded clearly in Ode to a Nightingale because the poet wants passionately to 'leave the world unseen' and with the nightingale 'fade away into the forest dim." The setting of the poem, La Belle Dame Sans Merci is medieval. We have here

also medieval accessories—the knight-at-arms, the cruel mysterious, lady, ‘a faery’s child’, the elfin grot, and the spell and enchantment and general supernatural atmosphere. *La Belle* is one of Keats’s great achievements. It is medieval in its setting and atmosphere and has the simplicity of the medieval ballad. *The Eve of St. Agnes*, on the other hand, is overloaded with excessive details and is marked by gorgeous, high-flown style. *La Belle* is in the simple style of a ballad, and tells a supernatural story with a medieval atmosphere.

**“Since then ’tis centuries; and yet each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses’ heads
Were toward eternity.”**

The other element of drama to be found in the odes of Keats is their drama-like development. A mood takes birth, it develops and reaches its point of pinnacle and finally it drops from that high point to its lowest position. The climax is reached when the mood of escape goes to the extent of a wish for death and at that moment Keats finds it richer than ever to die but the word ‘forlorn’ reverts the whole process and the anti-climax takes place with Keats’s return to the world of reality.

“Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,

Ease after war, death after life does greatly please.”

This temper of spontaneous joy changes with the coming of pain and sorrow in the poet's life. He has his brother die and his love doomed to disappointment. The temper of the poet becomes grave and imaginative, and his note towards nature is mixed with sorrow, which seeks to lose itself in joy. Now there is deep spiritual union between the soul of the poet and the soul of nature. Nature does not merely gratify his senses -she now goes deep into his soul. In the joy of nature, Keats forgets his sorrow. This is the spirit that informs the Ode to Nightingale. The poet has felt the burden of sorrow in his own personal life and the whole world of full of sorrow, but of then there is the nightingale also in the world, and the nightingale is the very symbol of joy. The imagination of the poet is set aglow by the song of the bird, and he forgets his sorrow and joins the nightingale in spirit. This is the moment when nature, with her moon and stars and flowers, enters into his soul, and his soul is merged in nature. Keats and nightingale are one; it is his soul that sings in the bird, and he sings.

In one of his lad poems- Ode to Autumn, he describes the sensuous beauty of the season-but here the tone is one of joy mixed with the sadness of thought.

The poet is and to think of the passing away of beauty, though he soon overcomes the feeling of sadness.

**“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-Friend of the maturing sun.”**

The most characteristic quality of Keats's poetic art is power to paint pictures by means of words. His poems may be said to have been painted with words. His words and epithets call up vivid pictures to the mind: “beaded bubbles winking at the brim; anguish moist; full throated ease; soft conched hushed, cool-rooted flowers fragrant eyed.” The abstract ideas in Keats's poetry assume a concrete, corporeal form; for instance, he gives a concrete living image to express the idea of earthly joy which is transitory;

“Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.”

Keats was extraordinarily endowed with a native gift- viz. that of feeling acutely with his senses. All his five senses reacted quickly to the beauties of the external world, and these sense-impressions are transmitted into poetry by his imagination. The first line of *Endymion* strikes the keynote of Keats' poetry.

Even in the midst of his pains of disease and his sufferings and disappointments of life, this joy of beauty came to him through his senses. In one of his early poems-Sleep and Poetry, he wrote-

**“First the realm I’ll pass
Of Flora and of Pan, sleep in the grass,
Feed upon apples, and strawberries
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees.”**

So Keats drank in the beauty of the external world with all his senses, and his whole being was excited by it and he sang out with wonder and delight,

**“The Ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears
Its voice mysterious.”**

Thus throughout his brief career, Keats’s poetry reveal sensuousness aspect of his love of beauty.

**“How sould I rewill me or in quhat wys,
I wad sum wyse man wald devys;
Sen I can leif in no degree,
Bot sum my maneris will dis pys.
Lord God, how sould I governe me?”**

The poetic genius transports him. Not with the help of wine but on the wings of poetic imagination, he flies to the realm of forgetfulness-viz, the romantic world of the nightingale. This world is “a heaven of joy”, where the poet listens to the song of the nightingale. Now more than ever it seems to him rich to die, and cease upon the midnight with no pain. But if, he was indeed to die, he would not hear the song. Thus, morality has

its poor advantage, in that he, while living, can hear the enchanting song of the bird. "Morality is re-asserted against the immortality of which the bird's song is at once the symbol and the elixir."

**"Joy whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu."**

The poetic equivalent for an emotion with Keats is commonly a picture; he hardly expresses a thought or feeling in abstract terms; his thought leaps into visual forms the chill of winter is thus expressed by means of picturesque images.

"A dram of sweet is worth a pound of sour."

Keats is a Greek in his manner of personifying the powers of nature. The attitude of the ancient Greeks in the presence of nature was one of childlike wonder and joy, and they defined the powers of nature. This imaginative attitude of the Greek created their "beautiful mythology". They felt the presence of Proteus in the sea, of Dryads in the trees and of Naiads in the brooks. Keats's instinctive delight in the presence of nature led him to the heart of Greek mythology. What Greeks felt, Keats also felt. The rising sun for Keats is not a ball of fire, but Apollo riding his chariot. He sees the moon as the goddess with a silver bow coming down to kiss Endymion. Infact, the world of Greek paganism lives

again in the poetry of Keats, with all its sensuousness and joy of life, and with all the wonder and mysticism of the natural world, Autumn to Keats is not only a season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, but a divinity in hunshape. Autumn sometimes appears as a thresher.

“St. Agnes’ Eve- Ah, bitter chill was:

The Owl for all his feathers was a cold,

**The hare limp’d trembling through the frozen
grass**

And silent was the flock in woolly fold.”

The imagination of Keats came to be elevated by his sense perception and sense –impressions. His poetry is not a mere record of sense-impressions. It is a spontaneous overflow of his imagination kindled by the senses. He hears the song of nightingale and is filled with deep joy which at once kindles his imagination. He has been hearing the actual song of a nightingale, but when his imagination is excited, he hears the eternal voice of the nightingale singing from the beginning of time. He sees the beauty of the Grecian Urn and of the figures carved upon in. His imagination is stirred, and he hears in his imagination the music of the piper.

“Because I could not stop for Death,

He kindly stopped for me;

The carriage held but just ourselves

And Immortality.”

Indirect contrast to this is the world of the Nightingale who, “Among the leaves has never known” what it is to sad and unhappy. The nightingale is singing the happy and melodious songs of summer “in full-throated ease.” She is an immortal bird as compared to man who is ever prone to death. It is here that the real drama takes place. The poet, already quite tired of the worries of the real world, wants to fly away to the world of the Nightingale “on the viewless Wings of Poesy.” He wants to make an escape to the care-free surroundings of the Nightingale, but the drama does not end with the escape. It touches their heights of climax with the sound of a single word; and that word is “forlorn!”, the very word is like a bell. “To toll me back from thee to my sole self” with this the poet is back on the hard crust of earth. He accepts the world of his fellow beings with all its pains and worries. In nutshell, he does not allow the deceiving elf, and fancy to cheat him. The ode presents a living picture of Keats’s state of mind. It shall, therefore be in fitness of things to say that the ode takes birth from the inner conflicts of Keats’s mind.

Sometimes, as a reaper, sound asleep on a half reaped furrow, or as a gleaner, steadying the laden head across a brook. This is the typical attitude of the Greeks,

who attributed human qualities and shapes to gods and demi-gods. The Pan of Greek myth was half human - any one wandering in the lovely woods, may expect to meet him playing on his pipe. The Pan of Keats's ode is also half human, and he sits by the riverside, wanders in the evening in the fields and meadows.

**“Heard melodies are sweet, those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on
Not to the sensual ear, but more endear’d,
Pipe to the spirit, ditties of no tone.”**

Keats's greatest achievement, however, is in his presentation of pure beauty. Beauty itself was his interest, not beauty to point a moral or to carry a message. Keats had no lesson to teach. He did not want to call his readers' attentions to social wrongs as Shelley did; to the corrupt state of society as Byron did, to nature as a great moral teacher as Wordsworth did. Because of this lack of bias, his poems have an objective beauty which is especially attractive to young people. But for, to readers of all ages Keats sings enduring music.

**“I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows.”**

Keats's influence has been very strong from Tennyson to the present time. His emphasis upon craftsmanship has had excellent following. Many a poet has been led through the example of Keats to perfect verse that might otherwise have been carelessly written. Keats also turned attention to richness of verse, unlike the simplicity of Wordsworth. Again, he taught a new use of the classics. Instead of finding in the classics models for restraint he found a highly coloured romanticism. Restraint of form he did emphasize, but for his material he chose the legends of Endymion and Lamia rather than the tales of Greeks and Romans of inspiring deeds.

**“Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.”**

The underlying principle of all Keats's poetic thought is this: “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty”. In one of his letters he says: “I have loved the principle of beauty in all things”. But of, his “passion for the beautiful “was not that of the sensuous or sentimental man, it was an intellectual and spiritual passion. There was a deep melancholy about him, too; pain and beauty were the two intense experiences of his mind. “Do you not see”, he writes, “how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school intelligence and make it a soul?” Keats studied the Elizabethans, and “caught their turn

of thought, and really saw things with their sovereign eye.. He rediscovered the delight and wonder that lay enchanted in a dictionary” (Lowell). “There is something innermost soul of poetry in almost everything he wrote.” (Tennyson).

“Away! away! for I will fly to thee,”

The English Romantic Movement was the movement in literature which started towards the end of the 18th century and continued till the thirties of the 19th century. It can be roughly dated from 1780 and it ended round about 1830. Of course, there were poets of 18th century who showed romantic tendencies in their writings before 1780. Thomson, Dyer, Akenside etc. wrote in a manner which anticipated some features of romantic poetry. But of, true romanticism, though it sometimes flings our imagination far into the remote and the unseen, is essentially based on truth- the truth of emotion and the truth of imagination. Keats was a true romantic-not a romantic in the hackneyed sense of dealing with the unrealities of life. He loved not merely beauty but truth as well, and not merely the world of imagination but that of reality; and he saw beauty in truth and truth in beauty. He never escaped from the realities of life in pursuit of the beautiful visions of his imagination; in fact, the visions of his imagination

are based on reality. He persistently endeavoured to reconcile the world of imagination with the world of reality. Therefore, Middleton Murray calls Keats “a true romantic.”

Shakespeare and Wordsworth developed his intellect and style though in different ways. The vocabulary and phraseology of *Endymion* differ from that of the 1817 volume in the influx of Shakespearian words, allusions and reminiscences, drawn from a large number of plays while the influence of Shakespeare’s poems is shown in the fact that though the large number of Keats’s sonnets are in Italian form, all the best, with the exception of the Chapman’s sonnet which belongs to an earlier date, are written upon the model of Shakespeare. At the same time that he was finding in Shakespeare the greatest examples of the imaginative presentation of life, he was turning to Wordsworth whose teaching had seemed to Wordsworth a pretty piece of paganism, yet it was Wordsworth’s interpretation of Greek mythology which revealed to Keats the spirit which informed the poem. Furthermore, Keats owed much to the spirit and vocabulary of the old English poets especially those of the Renaissance. The influence of *Paradise Lost* is visible in *Hyperion*.

“Thou wast not born of death, immortal bird.

No hungry generations; tread thee down.”

Written in the spring of 1819, this Ode “was inspired by a song of a nightingale that had built its nest close to the house” of a friend in Hampstead. The bird’s song, we are told often threw Keats into a sort of trance of tranquil pleasure. The proper subject of the poem is not so much the bird itself as the poet’s “aspiration towards a life of beauty away from the oppressing world”- a beauty revealed to him for a moment by listening to the bird’s song. This glimpse of the Infinite, revealed to Keats for a moment by the song of the nightingale, is also suggested in that bold line, Then with a magnificent sweep of the imagination he sees the bird and the song as one. “The bird becomes pure song and inherits the eternity of beauty.

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.”

Like all romantic poets, Keats seeks an escape in the past. His imagination is attracted by the ancient Greeks as well as the glory and splendour of the Middle Ages. Most of his poetry is inspired by the past. It is rarely that he devotes himself to the pressing problems of the present. Endymion, Hyperion and Lamia are all classical in theme, though romantic in style. The eve of St. Agnes, Isabella and La Belle Dame Sans Merci are medieval in origin. Keats thus finds an escape to the

past from the oppressive realities of the present. The poetry of Keats shows a process of gradual development. His earlier experiments in verse are products of youthful imagination, immature and overcharged with imagery. The youthful poet has abnormal sensibility, but lacks experience of life. *Endymion* opens with the famous line—‘A thing of beauty is a joy for ever’, it is full of glorious promise, but it is lost in shadows and uncertainties, because it is not based upon experience of real life. In the tale that follow—*Isabella*, *Lamia* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the poet has not come to grips with real life: his imagination plays with the romance of love. In the *Odes*, Keats’s poetry assumes a deeper tone. There he faces the sorrows and sufferings of life. He would wish for a life of joy and happiness, like that of nightingale.

**“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:”**

The effect of listening to the song of the nightingale is that the poet’s heart is full of aching pain and his senses are dulled, owing to the very happy participation in the happiness of the bird. The pain is the outcome of excessive joy of the poet to think that the nightingale

should thus sing in full throated ease in the care-free manner. The poet longs to lose himself into the happy spirit of the bird, and leave the world unseen and fade away into the dim forest. At first proposes to do with the help of a cup of wine that has been cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth, and is rich with all the associations of the songs and dances of Provence, its country of origin. If he can do so, he will leave behind him all the woes of the world, the weariness, the fever and the fret of the world where we sit and hear each other groan, where youth grows pale all too soon, and beauty fades in no time. But in, on second thought he understands, wine is not potent enough to transport him into the ideal region. Poetry alone shall transport him. For a moment he mistrusts his own power, but the next moment he finds himself in imagination by the side of the bird, listening to the bird's song in the woodland. The poet describes the romantic forest into which he has flown on the viewless wings of poetry. In the darkness he cannot see the flowers, but can guess each of them by its peculiar fragrance-the hawthorn, the eglantine, the violet and the musk rose. The illusion is broken; the poet comes back to his daily consciousness and regrets that imagination has not the power to beguile him forever. In this beautiful romantic scene

the poet thinks of many associations of the bird's song as he listens to it. "In his joy he remembers how often the thought of death has seemed welcome to him, and thinks it would be more welcome now than ever." The nightingale would not cease her song- the poet will die but the bird will sing on-the contrasts the transitory of the individual human life with the permanence of the song-bird's life, meaning the life of this type. The bird was not born or to die; the voice that the poet hears was heard in ancient times by damsel kept captive in some medieval castle. The Ode to a Nightingale is "a poem of midnight, and sorrow and beauty". The poet hears the song of a nightingale when the night is tender.

**"That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead and a parching tongue,
Thou, silent form: doth lease us out of thought
As doth eternity; Cold Pastoral:"**

The stanza-form, with its intricate rhyme-plan is a beautiful invention of the poet. It has a sustained melody the rolling music of the lines being variegated by the introduction of a short line in each verse. The rhyme scheme of each stanza is a b a b c d e c d e. There is a Shakespearian felicity of expression in the telling epithets and picturesque compounds throughout the poem.

**“Where palsy shakes a few, sand last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale and spectre-thin and
dies,
Where but to think if to be full of sorrows
And leaden-eyed despairs.”**

To Wordsworth, the cuckoo becomes a wandering voice, which turns, this world into a faery unsubstantial place. In the Immortality Ode, Wordsworth passes from the finite to infinite when he says:

**“Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither.”**

The nightingale whose song the poet hears is suddenly transported in a flash from the world of time to the world of eternity; it has been singing for ages and ages. Thus to the poet in that moment of imaginative ecstasy the nightingale is not a solitary bird swinging from its hiding place in the tree; the bird is turned into song; the bird and the song are one- therefore the bird is immortal, “not born finite, from the world of the time to the world of eternity is a marked feature of the greatest romantic poetry. Blake expresses his imaginative vision of eternity in a wonderful manner:

“To see a world in a grain of sand

**And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.”**

Some superficial critics have complained of the logical fallacy involved in the contrast between the transitory life of the individual man with the permanent life of the nightingale, conceived not as an individual but as a type of the race; but such critics, led by their prosaic method of criticism, have missed the real significance of the great line—“Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird.”

**“And haply the Queen Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by her starry rays.”**

“I could not name”, says Bridges, “an English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this Ode.” Middleton Murray says: “For sheer loveliness this poem is unsurpassed in the English language.” It reaches the peak of romantic poetry in the lines.

The poetic style of Keats reaches its peak of glory in the Ode to a Nightingale. As an example of almost perfect execution, the ode is one of the very greatest that has been written in the English language. It shows a perfect blending of classical balance and romantic inspiration. Every word is in its place, and there is a restraint of expression from the beginning to the end; yet

it grows with emotion, which is romantic to the extreme. Starting in a mood of despondent contemplation of life, in which beauty perishes, the poet has a fleeting glimpse of a world- the world of eternity- where beauty does not perish. Behind the seen world, he has a vision of the unseen-and this is the verb quintessence of romance.

**“Provencal song and sunburnt mirth,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden –eyed despair.
Now more than ever seems it rich to die.”**

The poem represents the fleeting experience of the poet- an intense imaginative experience in which sorrow is fused into joy, and the world of time merges into the world of eternity. It is a romantic poem, but it denies nothing of human experience; it tells of the sorrows of life and it reveals also that the bitterest human experience can be transmuted into beauty, which is truth. The Ode to Nightingale is one of the greatest lyrics in the English language.

**“So hand in hand they pass’d, the loveliest pair
That ever since in love’s embrace met,”**

Keats is pre-eminently a poet of sensations, whose very thought is clothed in sensuous images. The epithets he uses are rich in sensuous quality- watery clearness,

delicious face, melodious plot, azure-lidded sleep, sunburnt mirth, embalmed darkness, anguish moist. Not only were the sense perceptions of Keats quick and alert, but he had the rare gift of communicating these perceptions by concrete and sensuous imagery. How vivid and enchanting is the description of wine-bubbles in the line:

“With beaded bubbles winking at the brim.”

He contemplates the sorrows of the world to which all mankind is subject, and longs to get away from them. How? By means of his imagination which reveals to him the truth of beauty, he at once passes from this physical world –the world of time-to the world of eternity. The song of the nightingale represents beauty- ideal beauty that never fades. It is the eternal spirit of beauty; it is the voice of eternity that transcends the bounds’ of space and time:

“Thou wast not born of death, immortal bird.”

Keats was passionate lover of Greek literature, mythology, sculpture and almost anything Greek. It has influenced his attitude to nature and life immensely. The temper of the soul with which he has looked on nature betrays all the simplicity, the same feeling of joy and worship wrought together, which a young Greek might have had before Socrates. In his world of poetry

the sun is not a mere ball of fire, but Apollo himself burning in with ardour; the moon is the sweet love of Endymion. Pan's sweet pipings are heard among the oaks and olives, along with choirs of fauns. Trees and brooks are full of dryads and naiads. This Hellenism accounts for the charm of concrete beauty and mythical loveliness of his lyrics, narrative poems and odes alike.

“Insuffishance of cunningg & of wyt

Defaut of language & of eloquence,

This work fro me schuld have withholden yit...”

This delight in pure sensation was, however, but a passing phase with Keats. As his mind mature, his sympathies broadened, and he felt at one with the human heart in travail. Sensuousness is still there, weaving its fairy tissues as before but the colouring is different. In his mature poems, it is gradually manifested with the stirrings of an awakening intellect, and is found charged with pain, charged with the very religion of pain. His yearning for passing for the beautiful is transformed into an intellectual and a spiritual passion. He sees things, not only in their beauty, but also in their truth. And it is partly by reason of his perception of truth in sensuous beauty that Keats has become the, “inheritor of unfulfill'd renown.”

This mood of serenity is expressed in the Ode to Autumn which according to Middleton Murry, is “the perfect and unforced utterance of the truth contained in the magic words (of Shakespeare): ‘Ripeness is all.’ The Ode to a Nightingale is a vivid portrayal of the drama of pulls and strains, taking place in Keats’s mind. On the one hand, like Shelley he is bleeding after having a fall on thorns of life. “The fever, and the fret” of the world of Man are making him feel uneasy. His dissatisfaction with the world of reality is clearly reflected in what he has got to say about it.

**“Songe and prison han noon accordaunce;
Trowest thou I wol synge in prisoun?
Songe procedith of ioye and of pleasaunce
And prison causith deth and distructioun...”**

That “sensuousness is a paramount bias” in Keats’s poetry is largely true; even as it is true that he is more a poet of sensuousness than of contemplation.” Yet, like all generalized statements, these remarks are only partly true. Keats’s mind is mainly sensuous by direct action but it also works by reflex action, passing from sensuousness into sentiment. Certainly, some of his works are merely, extremely sensuous; but this is the work in which the poet was trying his material and his powers, and rising towards mastery of his powers, and

rising towards mastery of his real faculty. In his mature performances in the Odes, for example, and in *Hyperion*, sensuousness is penetrated by sentiment, voluptuousness is permeated by vitality, and aestheticism is tempered by intellectualism. In Keats's palace of poetry, the nucleus is sensuousness; but the superstructure has chambers of more abiding things and more permanent colours.

**“The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown”**

The other predominant feature of Keats's poetry that holds our attention is its masterly handling of the world of reality and the world of escape. He does not remain uninfluenced by the delights of the world of the Nightingale. He relishes in the carefree life of the bird. At the same time he enjoys the pleasant and beautiful natural surroundings in which the Nightingale has her abode. The sweet fragrance of the white hawthorn, the fast fading violets and the musk-rose fascinates his sense of smell. So he makes an escape into the Nightingale's world. He fades far away flying “on the viewless wings of poesy, but right after a very brief escape, the anticlimax follows. The very sound of the word ‘Forlorn’ falls heavily upon Keats's ears. It is really terrible for Keats to stand the sound and he cannot afford to remain in the world of escape any longer though the world

continues to remain as beautiful as ever. He tossed back into the world of naked truth. In a sonnet he wrote: “How fevered that man who cannot look upon his mortal days with temperate blood.” Keats was trying to attain serenity of mood in the midst of all the sufferings which he was undergoing in his own life and which he saw all around him in life. Further Shelley passes beyond the bounds of space and time, and expresses his poetic vision of the Infinite when he says:

**“The one remains, the many change and pass:
Heaven’s light for ever shines, earthy’s shadows
fly.”**

Complete Self Analysis and Editing with collection of quotes from original poem, Daiches and Dr. S.Sen's Words.

Part Two

PARTRIDGE

Document Three

THE LOST JEWELS

(RABINDRANATH TAGORE)

[The **perception on *self-edited images*** from different sites **using hold on certain norms of public rights on web images to permit as mentioned**, is based on Rabindranath Tagore's Original Story 'The Lost Jewels' and direction of legendary director Satyajit Ray of his film 'Monihara' (Teen Kanya, 1961).]

“As he looked his blood froze in his veins. He tried hard to close his eyes but could not; they remained open, staring like those of a dead man...”

(The Lost Jewels)

THEME OF THE STORY AND CHARACTERS:

“The story ‘**THE LOST JEWELS**’ presents an example of a story within a story. The outer story which is related by the narrator leads to another inner story which is told by the schoolmaster. The outer, i.e. frame story has the narrator and the schoolmaster, as the main characters. Both are enigmatic, and their characterization leaves us largely puzzled.

The story as related by the schoolmaster has three important characters named **Phanibhusan Saha** (Bhusan Saha) and his beautiful wife **Mani** (Monimalika) who

looks much younger than her age. She has always maintained her remarkable and youthful liveliness, not spoiling or losing even an iota of her beauty over the years.

Modhu, an assistant steward on Bhusan's estate who is a distant cousin of Mani manages to retain his salary and even more, by dint of his position in the family.

The local schoolmaster is telling the narrator about the history of Bhusan Saha, a rich heir and about a strange supernatural incident associated with him. The ambiguous ending of the story marks Tagore's postmodern narrative style where the end is left 'open' for the readers' response."

MONIMALIKA-AN INSATIATED SOUL...

(Edited Title)

(In Bengali, Moni means 'Jewel' and Monimalika is
'The Queen of Jewels')

“MY BOAT WAS MOORED BESIDE AN OLD
BATHING GHAT OF THE RIVER, ALMOST IN
RUINS:”

(Meaning of ‘Ghat’- landing place of the river; ferry.)

‘On the roof of the boat the boatmen were at their evening prayer. Against the bright background of the western sky their silent worship stood out like a picture. The waning light was reflected on the still surface of river in every delicate shade of colour from gold to steel-blue.

‘A huge house with broken windows, tumbledown verandas, and all the appearance of old age was in front of me. I was alone on the steps of the ghat, which were cracked by the far-reaching roots of a banyan tree. A feeling of sadness began to come over me, when suddenly I startled to hear a voice asking: ‘Sir, where have you come from?’

‘I looked up, and saw a man who seemed half-starved and out of fortune. His face had a dilapidated

look such as is common among my countrymen who take up service away from home. His dirty coat of Assam silk was greasy and was opened at the front. He appeared to be just returning from his day's work, and to be taking a walk by the side of the river at a time when he should have been eating his evening meal.

'I said in answer to his question: 'I come from Ranchi.'

'What occupation?'

'I am a merchant.'

'What sort?'

'A dealer in cocoons and timber.'

'What name?'

After a moment's hesitation I gave a name, but it was not my own. Still the stranger's curiosity was not satisfied. Again he questioned me: 'What have you come here for?'

I replied: 'For a change of air.'

My cross-examiner seemed a little astonished. He said: 'Well sir, I have been enjoying the air of this place for nearly six years, and with it I have taken a daily average of fifteen grains of quinine, but I have not noticed that I have benefitted much.'

I replied: 'Still you must acknowledge that, after Ranchi, I shall find the air of this place sufficient of a change.'

‘Yes indeed,’ said he, ‘More than you bargain for. But of where will you stay here?’

Down the subject pointing to the tumble house above the ghat,

I said: ‘There.’

‘My friend did not pursue. I found, that he was a school master of the place. From beneath an enormous bald head, his two eyes shone out from their sockets with an unnatural brightness in a face that was thin with hunger and illness. The boatmen, having finished their evening prayer, turned their attention to their cooking. As the last night of the day faded, the ruined building stood silent and ghostly above the deserted ghat.

The schoolmaster, I think had a suspicion that I had come in search of hidden treasure. He only began to describe, what had happened in this dark and empty house; some fifteen years before.

‘Nearly ten years ago, when I came to this place, Phanibhusan Saha used to live in this house. He was the heir to the large property and business of his uncle Durga Saha, was childless. But at, he was modern. He had been educated, and not only spoke faultless English, but actually entered sahibs’ offices with his shoes on. In addition to that he grew a beard; thus he had not the least chance of bettering himself so far as the sahibs

were concerned. You had only to look at him to see that he was a modernized Bengali. 'In his own home, too, he had another drawback. His wife was beautiful. With his college education on the one hand, and on the other his beautiful wife, what chance was there of his preserving our good old traditions in his home? In fact, when he was ill, he actually called in the assistant surgeon. And his style of food, dress, and his wife's jewels were all on the same extravagant scale.

'Sir, you are certainly a married man, so that it is hardly necessary to tell you that the ordinary female is fond of sour green mangoes, hot chillies, and a stern husband. A man need not necessarily be ugly or poor to be cheated of his wife's love; but he is sure to lose it if he is too gentle.

The Schoolmaster

'If you ask me why this is so, I have much to say on this subject, for I have thought a good deal about it. A deer chooses a hardwood tree on which to sharpen its horns, and would get no pleasure in rubbing its horns against the soft stem of a plantain tree. From the very moment that man and woman became separate sexes, the wife of a man who is of his own accord, submissive,

is altogether out of employment. She has been exercising all her faculties in trying to fascinate and bring him under her control-all those weapons which she has inherited, from her grandmothers of untold centuries are useless in her hands : the force of her tears, the fire of her anger, and the snare of her glances lie idle.

‘Under the spell of modern civilization a soul man has lost the God given power of his barbaric natural desire, and this has loosened the social conjugal ties. The unfortunate Bhusan had been turned out of the machine of modern civilization, an absolutely faultless man. He was therefore, never successful in his home, nor even in his business. The harmless and foolish husband, used to imagine that to give is the way to get. The fact was just the contrary.

‘Moni was Bhusan’s wife. As such, she used to get her caresses without asking, her Dacca muslin saris without tears, and her bangles without being able to pride herself on a victory. In this way her woman’s nature became atrophied, and with it her love for her husband. She simply accepted things for without giving anything in return. The result of this was that Mani looked upon her husband as a mere machine turning out her Dacca muslins and her bangles.- **so perfect a machine, indeed, that never for a single day she need to oil its wheel.**

‘Though Bhusan’s birthplace was Phulbere, here was his place of business, where, for the sake of his work, he spent most of his time. At his Phulbere house he had no mother, had plenty of aunts and uncles and other relatives, from which distraction he brought away his wife to this house and kept her to himself alone. But there is this difference between a wife and one’s other possessions that by keeping her to oneself one may lose her beyond recovery.

‘Bhusan’s wife did not talk very much, nor did she mix much with her neighbours. To feed Brahmins in obedience to a sacred vow, or to give a few pice to a religious mendicant, was not her way. In her hands nothing was ever lost; whatever she got she saved up most carefully, with the one exception of the memory of her husband’s caresses. The extraordinary thing was that she did not seem to lose the least atom of her youthful beauty. People said that whatever her age was, she never looked older than sixteen. The schoolmaster remarked, suppose youth is best preserved with the aid of a heart that is an ice-box.

‘But of, as far as work was concerned Mani was very efficient. She never kept more servants than were absolutely necessary. She thought that to pay wages to anyone to do work which she herself could do was

like playing the pickpocket with her own money. Not being anxious about any one, never being distracted by love, always working and saving, she was never sick nor sorry.

‘For the majority of husbands this is quite sufficient, - not only sufficient, but fortunate for the loving wife is a wife who makes it difficult for her husband to forget her, and the fatigue of perpetual remembrance wears out life’s bloom. It is only when a man has lumbago that he becomes conscious of waist. And lumbago in domestic affairs is to be made conscious, by the constant imposition of love, that you have such a thing, as a wife. Excessive devotion to her husband may be a merit for the wife but not comfortable for the husband, that is my candid opinion.

‘I hope I am not tiring you, sir? I live alone, you see; I am banished from the company of my wife, and there are many important social questions which I have leisure to think about, but cannot discuss with my pupils. In course of conversation you will see how deeply I have thought of them. ‘Just as, he was speaking when some jackals began to howl from a neighbouring thicket. The school master stopped for a moment the torrent of his talk. When the sound had ceased, and the earth and the water relapsed into a deeper silence,

he opened his glowing eyes wide in the darkness of the night, and resumed the thread of his story.

‘Suddenly a tangle occurred in Bhusan’s complicated business.’...What exactly happened it is not possible for a layman like myself either to understand or to explain. Suffice to say that, for some sudden reason, he found it difficult to get credit in the market. If only he could, by hook or by crook, raised lakh and a half of rupees, and only for a few days rapidly flash it before the market, then his credit would be restored, and he would be able to sail fair gain.

‘But at, the money did not come easily. If the rumour got about that he was borrowing in the market where he was known, then he feared that his business would suffer even more seriously. So he began to cast about to see whether he could not raise a loan from some stranger. But for, in that case he would be bound, to give some satisfactory security.

Monimalika and the River

‘The best security of all is jewellery, for that saves the signing of all sorts of complicated documents. It not only saves but is a simple process. Even the hero of a

high-class romance does sometimes, when hard pressed have to mention, to his beloved such things as mortgage deeds and promissory notes.

‘So Bhusan went to his wife. But of unfortunately he was not able to face his wife as easily as most men are. His love for his wife was of that kind which has to tread very carefully, and cannot speak out plainly what is in the mind; it is like the attraction of the sun for the earth, which is strong, yet which leaves immense space between them. Unfortunate Bhusan was totally powerless to say: “Look here, I am in need of money; bring out your jewels.”

‘Bhusan did broach the subject to his wife at last, but with such extreme delicacy that it only excited her opposition without bending it to his own purpose. When Mani set her face hard, and said nothing, he was deeply hurt, yet he was incapable of returning the hurt back to her. The reason was that he had not even a trace of that barbarity which is the gift of the male. If anyone had upbraided him for this, then most probably he would have expressed some such subtle sentiment as the following: “If my wife, of her own free choice, is unwilling to trust me with her jewellery, then I have no right to take them from her by force.”

‘Has God given to man such forcefulness only for him to spend his time indelicate measurement of fine-spun ideals?’

‘However this may be Bhusan, being too proud to touch his wife’s jewels, went to Calcutta to try some other way of raising the money.’

‘As a general rule in this world, the wife knows the husband far better than the husband ever knows the wife; but extremely modern men in their subtlety of nature are altogether beyond the range of those unsophisticated instincts which womankind has acquired through ages. These men are a new race, and have become as mysterious as women themselves. Ordinary men can be divided roughly into three main classes; some of them are barbarians, some are fools, and some are blind; but these modern men do not fit into any of them.’

‘Mani therefore called her counsellor for consultation. Some cousin of hers was engaged as assistant steward on Bhusan’s estate. He was not the kind of man to profit himself by dint of hard work, but by help of his position in the family he was able to save his salary, and perhaps, **even a little more....**

‘Mani called him and told him what had happened. She ended up by asking him: “Now what is your advice?” He shook his head wisely and said, “I don’t like the look

of things at all.” He added, then, “Babu will never be able to raise the money, and in the end he will have to fall back upon that jewellery of yours.”

“The fact is that wise men never like the look of things. From what she knew of humanity she thought that this was not only possible but likely. Her anxiety became keener than ever. She had no children to love, and though she had a husband she was almost unable to realize his very existence. So her blood froze at the very thought that her only object of love, the wealth which like a child had grown from year to year, was to be in a moment thrown into the bottomless abyss of trade. She gasped: “What, then, is to be done?”

‘Modhu said: “Why not take your jewels and go to your father’s house?” In his heart of hearts he entertained the hope that a portion and possibly the larger portion of that jewelry would fall to his lot.

‘Mani at once agreed. It was a rainy night towards the end of summer. At this very ghat a boat was moored. Mani, wrapped from head to foot in a thick shawl, stepped into the boat. The frogs croaked in the thick darkness of the Cloudy Dawn. Modhu waking up from sleep, roused himself from the boat and said: “Give me the box of jewels.”

Modhu and Monimalika

‘Mani replied: “Not now, afterwards. Now let us start.”

‘The boat started, and floated SWIFTLY down the current. Mani had spent the whole night in covering every part of the body with her ornaments. She was afraid that if she put her jewels into a box they might be snatched away from her hands.

‘But, if she wore them on her person no one could take them away without murdering her. Insecure Mani did not understand Bhusan, it is true; but there was no doubt about her understanding of Modhu...

‘Modhu had written the letter to the chief steward to the effect that he had started to take his mistress to her father’s house. The steward was an ancient retainer of Bhusan’s father. He was furiously angry, and wrote a lengthy epistle, full of misspellings to his master. Although the letter was weak in its grammar, yet it was forcible in its language, and clearly expressed the writer’s disapproval of giving too much indulgence to womankind.

Bhusan on receiving it understood what the motive of Mani’s secret departure was. What hurt him most was the fact that, in spite of his having given way to the unwillingness of his wife to part with her jewels in

this time of his desperate straits, his wife should still suspect him.

“When he ought to have been angry, Bhusan was only distressed. Man is the rod of God’s justice, to him has been entrusted the thunderbolt of the divine wrath, and if at wrong done to himself or another it does not at once break out into fury, then it is a shame. God has so arranged it that man, for the most trifling reason, will burst forth in anger like a forest fire, and woman will burst into tears like a rain-cloud for no reason at all. But of, the cyclone seems to have changed, and this appears no longer to hold good.

“The husband bent his head, and said to himself: “Well if this is your judgement, let it be so. I will simply do my own duty.” Bhusan, who ought to have been born five or six centuries hence, when the world will be moved by psychic forces, was unfortunate enough not only to be born in the nineteenth century, but also to marry a woman who belonged to that primitive age which persists through all time. He did not write a word on the subject to his wife, and determined in his mind that he would never mention it to her again. What an awful penalty!

Some ten or twelve DAYS LATER.

.....

‘When, one evening all hope had been abandoned of ever finding His wife, the protagonist Bhusan entered his deserted bedroom. It was, I say the festival of Lord Krishna’s birth, and it had been raining incessantly from early morning....

‘In celebration of the festival there was a fair going on in the village and in a temporary building a theatrical performance was being given. The sound of distant singing could be heard mingling with the sound of pouring rain. Bhusan was sitting alone in the darkness at the window there which hangs loose upon its hinges. I took no notice of the damp wind, the spray of the rain, and the sound of the singing. On the wall of the room were hanging a couple of pictures of the goddesses Lakshmi (God of Wealth) and Saraswati (God of Learning), painted at the Art Studio.; on the clothes-rack a towel, and a bodice, and a pair of saris were laid out ready for use.

On a table in one corner there was a box containing betel leaves prepared by Mani’s own hand, but now quite dry and uneatable. In a cupboard, with a glass door and all sorts of things that were arranged eternally with evident care –her china dolls of childhood’s days, scent bottles, decanters of coloured glass, a sumptuous pack of cards, large brightly polished shells, and even

empty soapboxes. In a niche there was a favourite little lamp with its round globe. Mani had been in the habit of lighting it with her own hands every evening. One, now who goes away, leaving everything empty, leaves the imprint of his living heart even on lifeless objects.

The Schoolmaster was silent a little.

‘In the dead of the night when heavy rain had ceased, and the songs of the village opera troupe had become silent then Bhusan was still found to sit in the same position as before. Outside the window there was such an impenetrable darkness that it seemed to him as if the very gates of oblivion were before him reaching to the sky,- He had only to cry out to be able to recover sight of those things which seemed to have been lost forever, and nothing else was left to him.

‘Just as he was thinking thus, a jingling sound as of ornaments was heard. It seemed to be advancing up the steps of the ghat. The water of the river and the darkness of the night were indistinguishable. Thrilling with excitement, Bhusan tried to pierce and push through the darkness with his eager eyes, till they ached,-but to his dismay he could, see nothing. The more anxious he was to see, the denser the darkness became, and the more shadowy the outer world. Nature, seeing an

intruder at the door of hall of death, seemed suddenly to have drawn a still curtain of darkness.

‘Although the whole thing was a dream, Bhusan felt to his thought for some very small obstacle he had been cheated of the wonderful realization of his impossible hope. The incessant patter of the rain seemed to say to him: “This awakening is a dream. This world is vain.” The disturbed soul in form of cloudlets seems like rustling leaves of the intertwined branches of the trees of Moon and Earth. The stormy sea and the sky now seem to be meeting over here too. The clouds flying with the storm look like the monster air flying in the wind. Are these furious clouds are continuous the signals of the coming of furious storm and rain! The sound of the Nature is like the funeral song of the time of defeat. The moment is fleeting.

The house is like the dome of the grave of the dying moments. The members of the funeral procession are accompanied as if, with nothing but the cried words of Bhusan Saha... “Come ... Mani, come back again, light your lamp, fill your room with light once more, ... come and standing before your mirror, put on your sari which has been prepared with such care, See all your things are waiting for you. No one will claim anything more from you, but only ask you to give a living unity once more to

these scattered and lifeless things, by the mere presence of your imperishable youth and unfading beauty.

‘Alas, make the inarticulate cry of these mute and lifeless objects again, that has made this room into a realm of things have lost their world!-

‘The sound reached more the top step of the bathing ghat. And now, began to come towards the house. It stopped in front of the door, which had been locked by the porter before he went to the fair. Then upon that closed door there fell a rain of jingling blows, as if with some ornaments. Bhusan was not able to sit still another moment, but, making his way through the unlighted rooms and down the dark staircase, he stood before the closed door. It was padlocked from the outside, so he began to shake it with all his might.

The force with which he shook the door and the sound which he made woke him suddenly. He found he had been asleep, and in his sleep he had made his way down to the door of the house. His whole body was wet with sweat, his hands and feet were icy cold, and his heart was fluttering like a lamp just about to go out. His dream being broken, he realized that there was no sound outside except the pattering of the rain which had commenced again.

‘The festival was continued on the following day, and the doorkeeper again had leave. Bhusan gave orders that hall-door was to be left open all night, but the porter objected that there were all sorts of suspicious characters about who had come from other places to the fair, and that it would not be safe to leave the door open. But at, he did not listen, whereupon only, the porter said he would himself stay on guard. Bhusan would not listen to allow him to retain. The porter was puzzled, but did not press the point. ‘Having secured the necessary loan, Bhusan had returned to his home. He imagined that Mani, after completing her mission, had by this time come back from her father’s house. And so he approached the door of the inner apartments, wondering whether his wife would show any signs of shame or penitence for the undeserved suspicion with which she had treated him. To his dismay, he then found that the door was shut.

Breaking the lock, he entered the room, and saw that it was empty. It seemed to him that the world was a huge cage from which the bird of love had flown away, leaving behind it all the decorations of the blood-red rubies of our hearts, and the pearl pendants of our tear drops. ‘That night, having extinguished the light, Bhusan took his seat at the open window of his

bedroom as before. The sky was dark with rain-clouds, and there was a silence as of something indefinite and impending. The monotonous croaking of the frogs and the sound of the distant songs were not able to break that silence, but only seemed to add an incongruity to it. **‘Late at the night the frogs and the crickets and the boys of the opera party became silent, and a still deeper darkness fell upon the night.**

IT SEEMED THE TIME HAD COME...‘Just as on the night before a clattering and jingling sound came from the ghat by the river but this time Bhusan did not look in that direction, lest, by his over anxiety and restlessness, his power of sight and hearing would become overwhelmed. He made a supreme effort to control himself, and sat still. ‘The sound of the ornaments gradually advanced from the ghat, and entered the open door. Then it came winding up the spiral staircase which led to the inner apartments. It became difficult for Bhusan to control himself, his began to thump wildly, and his throat was choking with suppressed excitement. Having reached the head of the spiral stairs, the sound came slowly along the veranda towards the door of the room, where it stopped just outside with a clanking sound. ‘It was only just on the other side of the threshold. ‘Bhusan could contain

himself no longer; it was now only just on the other side of the threshold. His pent up excitement burst forth in one wild cry of "Mani", and he sprang up from his chair with lightning rapidity. Thus startled out of his sleep, he found that the very window panes were rattling with the vibration of his cry. And outside he could hear the croaking of the frogs and patter of rain. 'At first Bhusan did not trouble about his wife's absence. He thought that if she wanted to come back she would do so. His old Brahman steward, however, came to him, and said: "What good will come of taking no notice of it? You ought to get some news of the mistress." Acting on this suggestion, messengers were sent to Mani's father's house. The news was brought that up to that time neither Mani nor Modhu had turned up there. 'Then a search began in every direction. Men went along both banks of the river making inquiries. The police were given a description of Modhu, but all in vain. They were unable to find out what boat they had taken, what boatman they had hired, or by what way they had gone. 'Bhusan struck his forehead in despair. 'Next day the fair broke up, and the stall-keepers and the players' party went away. Bhusan gave orders that night no one should sleep in the house except himself. The servants came to the conclusion that their master was going to practice some

mystic rites. All that day Bhusan fasted. 'In the evening, he took his seat at the window of that empty house. That day there were breaks in the clouds, showing the stars twinkling through the rain-washed air. The moon was late in rising, and, the fair was over, there was not a single boat on the flooded river. The villagers, however tired out by two nights' dissipation, were sound asleep. 'Bhusan, sitting with his head resting on the back of his chair, was gazing up at the stars. He was thinking of the time when he was only nineteen years old, and was reading in Calcutta; how in the evening he used to lie in College Square, with his hands behind his head, gazing Mani in his father-in-law's house. The very separation from her was like an instrument whose tense-drawn strings those stars used to touch and waken into song. '.....As he watched them, the stars one by one disappeared. From the sky above, and from the earth beneath, screens of darkness met like tired eyelids upon weary eyes. To-night Bhusan's mind was full of peace. He felt certain that the moment had come when his heart's desire would be fulfilled, and that Death would reveal his mysteries to his devotee. 'The sound came from the river ghat just as on the previous nights and advanced up the steps. Bhusan closed his eyes, and sat in deep meditation. The sound reached the empty hall.

It came winding up the spiral stairs. Then it crossed the long veranda, and paused for a long while at the bedroom door. 'Bhusan's heart beat fast; his whole body trembled. But at, this time he did not open his eyes. The sound crossed the threshold. It entered the room. Then it went slowly round the room, stopping before the rack where the clothes were hanging, the niche with its little lamp, the table where the dried betel leaves were lying, the almirah with its various knick-knacks, and, last of all, it came and stood close to Bhusan himself. 'Bhusan opened his eyes.

He saw by the faint light of the crescent moon.....A skeleton standing right in front of his chair. ..It! had rings on all its fingers, bracelets on its wrists and armlets on its arms, necklaces on its neck, and a golden tiara on its head,- in fact its whole body glittered and sparkled with gold and diamonds.....the ornaments hung loosely on the limbs, but did not fall off.Most dreadful of all was the fact that the two eyes which shone out from the bony face were living-----.....two dark moist eyeballs looking out with.... a fixed and steady stare from between the long thick eyelashes. As he looked his blood froze in his veins. He tried hard to close his eyes but could not; they remained open, staring like those of a dead man.

‘...Moni descended to the river, and Bhusan, following it, placed one foot in the water. The moment he touched the water he woke with a start. His guide was no longer to be seen. Only the trees on the opposite bank of the river were standing still and silent, and overhead the half moon was staring as if astonished. Starting from head to foot, Bhusan slipped and fell headlong into the river. Although he knew how to swim, he was powerless to do so, for his limbs were not under his control. From the midst of dreams he had stepped, for a moment only, into the borderland of waking life—the next moment to be plunged into eternal sleep.’ ‘Having finished his story, the schoolmaster was silent for a little. For a long time I also remained speechless, and in the darkness he was unable to see my face what expression.

‘At last he asked me: “Don’t you believe this story”

‘I asked: “Do you?” ‘He said: ‘No; and I can give you one or two reasons why. In the first place, Dame Nature does not write novels, she has enough to do without—‘I interrupted him and said: “And in the second place, my name happens to be Bhusan Saha.”

‘The schoolmaster without, the least sign of discomfiture said, “I guessed as much. And what was your wife’s name?”

I answered: 'Nitya kali'. (Rattle of God's upheaval)

Nitya kali: 'The skeleton, fixing its gaze upon the face of the motionless Bhusan, silently beckoned with its outstretched hand, the

Mani and 'The Lost Jewels'

diamond rings on its bony figures glittering in the pale moonlight. 'Bhusan stood up, as one who had lost his senses, and followed the skeleton, which left the room, its bones and ornaments rattling with a hollow sound. The skeleton of Monimalika crossed the veranda and, winding down the pitch –dark spiral staircase, reached the bottom of the stairs. Crossing the lower veranda, they entered the empty lampless hall and, passing through it, came out to the brick paved path of the garden. The bricks crunched under the tread of the bony feet.

The faint moonlight struggled through the thick network of branches, and the path was difficult to discern. Making their way through the flitting fireflies, which haunted the dark shadowy path, they reached the river ghat. By those very steps, up which the sound had come, the bejewelled skeleton went down step by step, with a stiff gait and hard sound. On the swift current of the river, flooded by the heavy rain, a faint streak of moonlight was visible.

Illustration of narrative story with **Self-perception and self editing images** on words of Original Text and reference.

Document Four

THE PLAY OPENS AT ELSINORE..

(Shakespeare's Hamlet)

SELF ANALYSIS

“The question of ‘to be’ or ‘not to be’ is finally answered...”

“My words fly up, my thoughts remain below; Words without thought never to heaven go.”

(Hamlet)

~“It is not by what he does that he appeals to us, but by what he sees and feels...”

Shakespearean tragedy is essentially the story of one man and depicts his sufferings and misfortunes leading to his death. Shakespeare's hero is a man of noble birth and holds a lofty position in society. He has certain exceptional qualities which command respect and make him a man above the common run of mankind. His sufferings are also of an exceptional kind to produce strong feelings of pity, awe and terror. Shakespeare's heroes are noble and large-hearted-Macbeth, Othello, King Lear- and they occupy an important position in society. Hamlet also deals with the tragedy of one

man, Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark. He is popular among the people and is regarded as the “beloved of the distracted multitude.” He is noble in his thoughts and dealings and has a sensitive conscience which prevents him from doing evil acts.

“What, has this thing appear’d again tonight?”

Goggin’s remarks on Hamlet that it “is not to be regarded as a tragedy of revenge, but as a tragedy of the human soul” is true, for Shakespeare has portrayed Hamlet as a man of irresolution in spite of his extraordinary intellectual genius and personality. Whenever he is called to act upon the Ghost’s injunction, he vacillates due to the conflict which is going on within his mind. He meditates upon each of his actions and reflects on life- this makes him an inactive man. A man of deep thought is less man of prompt deeds. Whenever he acts, he does on impulse, but he is incapable of pre-planned action. Only in his soliloquies do we come to know his real nature. It is Shakespeare’s skill in the presentation of the character of Hamlet that distinguishes his play from the conventional Revenge Tragedy.

The play continues to entertain the people for there exists a co-ordination between character and plot. A perfectly shaped plot has a perfect ordering of events. It

is not a play of events alone but also of characters. The characters account for plot development. The widespread appeal of his appeal of this play lies in the skill with which Shakespeare weaves plot and character. An old woman complained that Hamlet was merely a string of popular quotations: nothing could more clearly speak for the play's popularity. The play is full of beautiful, poetic lines that have passed into the sphere of common everyday proverbs. The image of weeds, touched upon in the word "unweeded", is related to the imagery of sickness in Shakespeare's work. It appears three times in Hamlet. Images of rot, decay and corruption are especially numerous in the long second scene of the second act. There are, for example, Hamlet's remarks on the maggots which the sun breeds in a dead dog, on the deep dungeons in the prison Denmark, on the strumpet Fortune, who reappears in the speech of the first player his comparison of himself with a drab, and a scullion. Seen individually, such images do not seem to be very important. But of, in their totality they contribute considerably to the tone of the play. Hamlet is the most contemplative of the plays of Shakespeare. Says Verity: "the play's meditative element is one of the factors of its popularity." The speculative questions that are posed by the play have a universal appeal and are of

much interest to mankind. The problem “to be or not to be”, the mystery of life” of something after death”, the problem of evil and injustice, the disproportion between wrong-doing and punishment,-all these are resolved in the realization that ‘there is a divinity that shapes our ends’; these are things that interest every man.

The scene itself is named by critics after Hamlet’s repeated cry to his betrayed love to join a ‘nunnery’. It throws more light on the characters of Hamlet and Ophelia. It brings to light the gentle, child-like, innocent nature of Ophelia, her love for Hamlet, her lack of understanding of her lover, her humble obedience to her father. Hamlet speaks harshly to her. Yet his love for her is seen in his very advice to her to join a nunnery and not to marry anyone else. It is the only love-scene in the play and the love ends at the end of the scene. It shows the shrewdness and cunning of Claudius. He is ready to adopt any means to safeguard his own life and reputation. In this nunnery scene Claudius is not convinced of Hamlet’s assumed madness and immediately conceives plans to send Hamlet away from Denmark. Thus it enhances the action of the play. Thematically, Hamlet’s words in this scene are of great significance. Hamlet is deeply affected by the evil and corruption he witnesses in the world. He is aware that

he is part of it all and yet wants to leave it. Both his delay in revenge and his rejection of marriage show Hamlet's denial of his own nature, his refusal to act out the part that life purposes for him. It is significant that in the last Act, a wiser Hamlet repudiates his denial of loving Ophelia by asserting "I lov'd Ophelia". This is in keeping with the maturity of vision he develops by the end of the play, when he has understood that "the readiness is all."

**"If a steal aught the whilst this play is playing
And scape detecting, I will pay the theft."**

Perhaps the most delightful contrast in Hamlet is the contrast between Hamlet and Horatio. Like Hamlet, Horatio is noble, sympathetic, scholarly, understanding and intellectual. In short, Horatio appears to be like Hamlet on many counts. Hamlet admires him, a pure and noble soul like himself. There exists a natural affinity of souls between the two young men. Hamlet's description of Horatio is the best comment on Horatio's character. The very lines bring out the contrast with Hamlet. While Hamlet is sometimes quickly moved to impulsive action, and yet is inactive in executing the main duty of revenge, Horatio follows a golden mean of thought and action. Horatio is a man of endurance and not passion's slave. He is calm and serene, and remains a

cheerful and happy person even when encountered with troubles and difficulties, whereas Hamlet is subject to ungovernable fits of passion. Overwhelmed with surge of passion that passes over his mind like a tempest, he seems to lose self mastery or even self-consciousness. Thus Horatio in many ways is a contrast and counterpart of Hamlet.

“Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.

Here’s yet some liquor left.”

It is not only the impossible work which is laid upon Hamlet, nor his capability to execute the entrusted duty, nor his flaw in his character which accounts for his failure but also external difficulties to a certain extent account for it. He kills Polonius inadvertently and gives a chance to Claudius, his antagonist to conceive plans against him. His two schoolfellows Rosencrantz and Guidenstern spy upon Hamlet and thereby betray him. Hamlet has to overcome all these external difficulties to execute his duty. In spite of all this, he still prefers to be a justifier rather than an avenger and awaits the working of Providence.

“I’ll have grounds More relative than this. The play’s the thing Where I’ll catch the conscience of the King.”

As the son of a murdered father Laertes is all the situation asks for. He appears indeed to have been conceived to exhibit, even to the verge of caricature, all that Hamlet as revenger might have been; and no soliloquy is needed to point the difference out. Here is a man whose resolution does not pale with thought. Hamlet knew 'the dread of something after death' and the 'conscience' that makes men 'cowards'; but Laertes consigns 'conscience to the profoundest pit' of hell and says 'I dare damnation'. What we see of Laertes as revenger, unhesitant and violent, with neither awe nor scruple, careless both of the safety of the realm and of his own salvation, makes Hamlet's deficiencies in his part such as we can hardly wish away. In the end both meet their deaths because Hamlet is too magnanimous to 'peruse the foils', Laertes is mean enough to take advantage of it.

Hamlet is the centre of action in the play. This is a play so dominated by one character that Hamlet without the 'Prince' is impossible to imagine. The play, deals with his suffering and tragic death. The other characters in the play serve as foils to him. Hamlet's tragedy is a particular example of a universal predicament; action is necessary, but action in a fallen world involves us in evil. To attempt to shuffle off responsibility by refusing

to act, or by shuffling off this mortal coil-by 'handing god back his ticket', as Dostoevsky puts it-involves us equally in guilt.

“I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i’ th’ Capitol. Brutus killed me.”

In Act IV, Sc V, Ophelia appears distracted, and Laertes has returned from Paris to be revenged for Polonius' death. An interval of time must have passed since Hamlet sailed for England, an interval sufficient to permit Laertes to receive tidings of the death of Polonius and to reach Elsinore. In the next scene, letters arrive announcing that Hamlet is again in Denmark; before he was two days at sea he became the pirates' prisoner. On the day of the arrival of the letters Ophelia is drowned. Her flowers indicate that the time is early June. Ophelia's burial and Hamlet's death take place on the next day. Yet the time has been sufficient for Fortinbras to win his Polish victory, and be again in Elsinore, and for ambassadors to return from England announcing the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. We might obligingly imagine that the pirate ship conveying Hamlet to Denmark was delayed by baffling winds; but his letters are written after he has landed, and they describe his companions as holding their course for England.

Life is mysterious and unpredictable in Hamlet. Appearances are deceptive, and little is what it seems. Hamlet is a complex play which deals with several interrelated themes. The theme of revenge is prominent but it is no simple revenge tragedy. It deals with the problem of action in an evil world. When the hero comes to terms with the world, it is too late; his death is inevitable, aesthetically if not morally.

The character of Hamlet is the chief attraction of the play. The personality of Hamlet is as perplexing as an undetected murder. Hamlet is seen in the company of all characters and this interaction intensifies Hamlet's character and his refinement of nature. He is contrasted with the obedient knee crooking knaves, prying Polonious, smiling but villainous Claudius, sheepish Gertrude, poor, loveable and angelic Ophelia, Osric, faithful Horatio, Laertes and the strong-minded brave Fortinbras. In each character's company Hamlet retains unique nobility. The audience and the readers too share his feelings. We laugh with him at Osric, reprove with him Gertrude, curse with him Claudius, speak friendly with him Horatio. He is at his best when he is with the players with him with Horatio. He is at his best when he is with the players and the grave-diggers, the representatives of the common people and his witty and

humorous nature is also revealed. He is kind to the kind and wicked to the wicked. Through his soliloquies we come to know more about Hamlet's own nature and feelings, his feelings about others and others' feelings for him. The development as well as deterioration in his character is brought to light through his soliloquies.

Apart from the above mentioned elements, there is the melodramatic element also. There is bloodshed: violent, terrifying scenes are depicted or described in keeping with the Revenge tragedy tradition. For example there is the eavesdropping-scene, Hamlet's assumed madness, Ophelia going mad and drowning, Polonius being killed by Hamlet, Claudius plotting against Hamlet and sending him to England with orders to execute him on English soil, an enraged Laertes attacking Claudius' castle and demanding justice, Laertes and Hamlet leaping into the grave of Ophelia and grappling with each other, the ship in which Hamlet travels to England being attacked by the pirate vessel and finally in closing scene several deaths taking place. Gertrude dies having drunk the poisoned wine, followed by Claudius who is wounded by Hamlet with the envenomed sword and compelled to drink the remains of the poisoned wine: Hamlet and Laertes die with the wounds of the same poisoned sword at

each other's hands. The staging of the 'Mouse-trap' play represents all the horrors on the stage.

Shakespeare's use of prose cannot be summarised in a few mathematical formulae. He employs prose mainly as the medium of pedestrian conversation, when he finds it desirable to lower the dramatic pitch. When a scene falls to the level of ordinary life Shakespeare reverts to prose as we see in the conversation with the actors in Act II, Sc. II. Comic characters like the grave-diggers and persons in humble position like the actors in Act II, Sc. II, and the sailors in Act IV, Sc. VI generally speak in prose. It is used for conveying messages and writing letters as that of Hamlet to Ophelia, Horatio and Claudius. It is sometimes used to break the tension that is likely to result after a very long Scene in verse, and also for the speeches made by insane people. One of the most celebrated poetic passages in Hamlet in Act II, Sc. II, is found to be in prose and not in verse. It is indeed an excellent example of the highest thoughts expressed in prose. Thus Shakespeare uses mere conversational prose and a prose that savours of a poetical quality as required and shows his perfect command over his medium of expression. **“There is a divinity that shapes our ends.”** The Gonzago play puts both Claudius and the Ghost on trial, the former

for 'fratricide' and the latter for its 'honesty'. Hamlet's doubts are removed. Still he hesitates to act. Hence this play emphasises Hamlet's procrastinating nature. Hamlet is inspired by the play with greater desire to act but it fails to have the effects to make him act. It only shows him as a 'pigeon-livered' man who shrinks from action on moral grounds. To Wilson the play-scene is undoubtedly central structure of Hamlet. It allows hamlet and Claudius to know exactly what the other feels. It is a climax and a crisis, and the pivot of the action in Hamlet. Now Hamlet has no excuse for delay; Claudius will set forth his own machinations to destroy Hamlet: and with the unseen hand of fate, Hamlet will grow to self realization.

A Shakespearean tragedy is 'cathartic' and depicts the suffering and misfortunes of the hero in an exceptional way to produce in the spectators' hearts the feelings of pity, sympathy, wonder and fear. Hamlet too suffers terribly throughout the play. Hamlet is introduced as a man grieving over the death of his father. But of, even more than that his mother's hasty marriage with Claudius, a man in every way inferior to Hamlet's father has been a shock to him. The revelation that his father was poisoned by Claudius and the task imposed on him by the Ghost to take revenge drive him to greater mental

agony as he is aware of his temperamental inability to avenge the murder. He has too many moral scruples and the realisation of it makes him undergo a greater mental suffering till his death.

Eliot is one of the opinion that more people thought hamlet a work of art because they found it interesting, than have found it interesting because it is a work of art. He even goes to the limit of calling it the “Monalisa” of literature, for in several ways the play is puzzling, and disquieting as none of others is. Though Hamlet is the longest play Shakespeare has left in it superfluous and inconsistent scenes. In Hamlet both workmanship and thought are in an unstable position. Hence Eliot says “so far from being Shakespeare’s masterpiece, the play is most certainly an artistic failure.”

“Your noble son is mad

Mad I call it; for, to define true madness,

What is’t but to nothing else but mad?”

The problem of Hamlet’s madness is as difficult to solve as that of his irresolution. Much has been written over Hamlet’s madness whether it is real or feigned. Though this treatment of madness varies from that of the original story, it suits Hamlet in the circumstances and situation in which he is placed. It is the only device in which Hamlet could give vent to his feelings. He

assumes madness. Still at times he seems truly mad. However, these contradictions add to the beauty of artistic quality rather than spoil it.

Though the play is considered an artistic failure by Eliot, we find that the play has a definite form and obeys the laws of dramatic construction and is regarded as a well constructed play. The action of the whole play falls into three movements. The first movement exposes the crime and the culprit; the second shows the development in Hamlet's character and the enacting of the play to confirm Claudius's guilt, and his two tragic errors; the final movement brings the action to an end along with the deaths of Hamlet, Laertes, Claudius and Gertrude.

**“As by God wot
and then you know,
It came to pass, as most like it was.”**

The immense variety of the play also accounts for its popularity. As Dr. Johnson points out, “In Hamlet, the scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity...New characters appear from time to time in continual succession, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth, the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness and every personage produces the effect intended,

from the Apparition in Act I that chills the blood with horror, to fop in the last, that exposes affectations to just contempt.”

Stopford Brooke gives an account for the universally of Hamlet in a nutshell: “Hamlet is supposed to be entirely different, both in intellectual power and in strangeness of phantasy and feelings, from the common run of educated men, to be in a class apart. It is not really so, and one proof of that is that so many hundreds of thousands of men and women, when they listen to him, listen to their own souls. The thoughts he has, they have had; the imaginative dreams and fancies he expresses have passed through their minds. The questions he cuts to life, the questions he has had about death, those he has about suicide when he is alone; the impatience he has with the troubles he is called upon to face, and the demands which they make upon him! The impulses under which he has to perform the demands and to battle with the troubles; the fading of those impulses as fresh thoughts occur to him and make him glad to forget them- are all common to millions of men and women who belong to the pensive, sensitive, imaginative, contemplative, idealising type of humanity which thinks rather than acts, is quiet rather than stirring, dreaming rather than practical; to whom the

soul is more than the body, the mystic than the material life. Wherever persons of that type exist, in poverty or in riches, among peasants or princes we find Hamlet, and they find themselves in Hamlet. And the owner of the play consists not in the mental apartness of Hamlet from the rest of the world, but in the amazing power of the poet who made him, who embodied in him the representation of one million people type of humanity, who made him so act, so speak, that he set before us not only the type, but almost all the variations without that type, almost all the main directions of their thoughts and feelings about the life of man. The thoughts of Hamlet expresses are not of exceptional range or excellence. They do not set him on a pinnacle above to her men. They are, as thoughts alone, the ordinary thoughts of his type in cultivated youth with a turn for philosophy. What does make his thoughts apparently greater and deeper than those of other young men of his temperament is the noble passion of their clothing, the splendour of wards.”

“Heavens make our presence and our practices Pleasant and helpful to him.”

Tragic flaw plays an important role in the sufferings of a character in Shakespeare’s tragedies. Hamlet’s tragedy is mainly due to defect-‘irresolution’-in his

character. He is capable of impulsive action but not pre-planned action. He kills Polonius on an impulse. The result is that the crime turns against himself and gives an opportunity to Claudius to send him to England. The consequence of his irresolution is that he delays his action of avenging his father's death. He thinks too much and meditates upon his own action. Hence he postpones the idea of killing Claudius, who is at prayer, for he thinks that if he murders him at this present moment, instead of suffering for his evils in hell his soul would go to heaven. He wants him to suffer in this world as well as in the next world. Earlier he wants to confirm Claudius' guilt before punishing him. So he gets the play enacted. The play reveals Claudius' guilt. In spite of that he still hesitates to avenge the murder and the enemy takes the initiative. The consequence is that he avenges his father's death at the cost of his own death. Had he been active and avenged the murderer at the time of the prayer, Hamlet would have avoided his own tragic death as well as the death of others. Ophelia is meant to be used as a decoy to find out the cause of Hamlet's madness. But of Shakespeare has made her the sister of the avenger of Hamlet to intensify the tragic effect. Hamlet's love for Ophelia is genuine but he suppresses it after his mother's hasty marriage for he

has been enjoined with the duty of revenge, and has also a poor opinion of woman's fidelity.

**“How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of the world!”**

Hamlet's soliloquies stand out as essential pillars of the dramatic structure. Such 'Tragical speeches', in which the characters give vent to their feelings, were accepted by Elizabethan audiences very much as, in later times, were arias of grand opera in which the chief characters gave expression to their passions. A character given to speculative thought would be more prone to indulge in soliloquies in Hamlet than in any of the other tragedies. In these speeches Hamlet, with relentless sincerity, settles accounts with himself in thoughts that spring from the very depths of his being. There are a number of soliloquies in Hamlet, most of these by the hero and a few by other characters.

**“Now could I drink hot blood
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.”**

Hamlet is a man who in the face of life and death can make no affirmation, and it may well be that this irresolution- which goes far deeper than irresolution about the performance of a specific act- this fundamental doubt, explains the great appeal of the play in modern

times. Mr. James dismisses the play as “a man caught in ethical and metaphysical uncertainties”. Hamlet is after all intellectual man. His intellectuality, the working of his mind, is largely at the service of attitudes of rejection and disgust that are indiscriminate in their working. He is not inactive throughout. At times he is active but it is mainly due to his impulses. In the character of Hamlet, everyone is tempted to see an evocation not simply of Hamlet’s world but of their own. Man in his aspect of bafflement, moving in darkness on a rampart between two worlds, unable to reject, or quite accept, the one that; when he faces it, “shakes” his disposition with thoughts beyond the reaches of his soul-comforting himself with hints and guesses. **“The air bites shrewdly, it is very cold.”**

Like other plays of Shakespeare this play too can be criticised on various grounds. Chance plays an important role in this play for most of the important incidents happen by chance. Hamlet’s downfall and his tragic death is also mainly due to this chance. The relationship of Horatio to Denmark is also puzzling. He creates a feeling of both a friend and a stranger. Above all, the question of Hamlet’s age is still a mystery. He appears to be eighteen at the beginning of the play but the grave-digger’s words create an impression of

his being thirty years old. But at, in the truth none of these 'problems' bother us when we witness the play in the theatre. If there are loose ends, they vanish in the overall sense of mystery evoked by the atmosphere of the play. Far from being an artistic failure, Hamlet is a well constructed play which appeals to the imagination and intellect of the audience and reader alike.

Hamlet: "Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?"

Polonius: "By th' mass and 'tis-like a camel indeed."

Hamlet's images exhibit a peculiar closeness to reality. His first monologue expresses the short space of time between his father's death and his mother's remarriage in terms of a series of pictures taken from real life. These are no poetic similes, but keen observations of reality. Hamlet's images are mostly very concrete and precise, simple and, as to their subject matter, easy to understand. His images may not be beautiful, poetic magnificent, but they always hit their mark, the matter in question, with surprisingly unerring sureness. Hamlet is capable of scanning reality with a keener eye and of penetrating the veil of semblance to the very core of things.

"At such a time, I'll loose my daughter to him,

**Be you and I behind an arras then,
Mark the encounter.”**

Hamlet is much praised for Shakespeare's treatment of themes rather than for anything else. The main theme is revenge- son avenging the murder of his father. This theme depicts the character of the hero, the development or deterioration in his character; the success or failure in carrying out the work; the means he adopts to attain his aims etc. Hamlet has to avenge his father's death. His irresolution and procrastination make him delay in his action. He gets a play enacted to confirm Claudius' guilt. Claudius's guilt is confirmed; still he delays until the enemy takes the initiative. He fulfils the task at the cost of his own life. So evil is punished in the end but it involves the wastage of good also. This central theme is treated with elemental passions as well as secondary themes and gives aesthetic satisfaction to the audience.

**“Marry, I'll teach you; think yourself a baby,
That you have ta'en these tenders a for true play;
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more
dearly;**

**Or-not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus-you'll tender me a fool.”**

The sense of mortality in Hamlet-not simply taken to mean death, but also the heartache and thousand

natural shocks that flesh is heir to- is conveyed to us in three ways. First there is the emphasis on human weakness, the instability of human purpose, the subjection of humanity to fortune- all that we might call the aspect of failure in human life. Hamlet opens this theme when he describes how from a single blemish, perhaps not even the victim's fault, a man's whole being may take corruption. Claudius dwells on it again when he tries to seduce Laertes into disposing of Hamlet by a trick. Time qualifies everything, he says, including love, including purpose. Fortune is the harlot of goddess in whose secret part men like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern live and thrive. Horatio suffers the slings and arrows of the outrageous foe with composure as he is one of the blessed few. For Hamlet the task is of greater difficulty.

**“My father's spirit in arms! All his not well;
I doubt some foul play.”**

But in, the chief form in which the theme of mortality reaches us, according to Maynard Mack, is as a profound consciousness of loss. Hamlet's father expresses something of the kind when he tells Hamlet how his **“most seeming-virtuous queen,”** betraying a love which **“was of that dignity/That it went hand in hand even with the vow I made to her in marriage,”**

had chosen to “decline, /Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor/ To those of mine...O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!” Ophelia expresses it again, on hearing Hamlet’s denunciation of love and woman in the nunnery-scene. Time was, the play keeps reminding us, when Denmark was a different place. The garden is **unweeded** now, and “grows to seed: things rank and gross in nature/ Possess it merely.”

**“O what a noble mind is here o’erthrown! The
courtier’s soldier’s, scholar’s eye, tongue, sword,
Th’ expectancy and rose of the fair state, The
glass of fashion, and the mould of form,
Th’ observed of all observers.”**

The problem of appearance of and reality is central to Hamlet and written deep into its idiom. Thus there are images of apparel or clothes. In the world of surfaces to which Shakespeare exposes us in Hamlet, clothes are naturally a factor of importance. “The apparel oft proclaims the man”, Polonius assures Laertes, cataloguing maxims in the young man’s ear as he is about to leave for Paris. Oft, but not always and so he sends his man Reynaldo to look into Laertes’s life there—even, if need be, to put a false dress of accusation upon his, the better by indirections to find directions out. On the same grounds, he takes Hamlet’s vows to Ophelia

as false apparel. This breach between the outer and the inner stirs no special emotion in Polonius, because he is always either behind an arras or praying into one, but it shakes Hamlet to the core. His mother's mourning is all clothes but in Hamlet's case appearance and reality are attuned.

“And thus the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought.”

Hamlet poses several unanswerable questions—and this symbolises, not loose ends in the play, but its unrivalled imaginative power. Hamlet is a ‘problematic play’ and in this fact lays its enduring appeal. Eliot says that the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective correlative”; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that ‘particular’ emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate as sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. The artistic “inevitability” lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in Hamlet. Hamlet is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear. Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disquiet is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate

equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her. It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand; he cannot objectify it, and it therefore remains to poison his life and obstruct action. None of the possible actions can satisfy it; and nothing that Shakespeare can do with plot can express Hamlet for him. Any art form which cannot reveal to us a state of human consciousness, whether emotional or intellectual, fails in its object. Surprisingly new possibilities of language are explored by Shakespeare in Hamlet. Indeed, Hamlet's nature can only find expression in a wholly new language. This, as Wolfgang H. Clemen says, applies to the imagery in the play. It is Hamlet who creates the most significant images, images marking the atmosphere and theme of the play. Hamlet's way of employing images is unique in Shakespeare's drama. Hamlet's imagery shows us that whenever he thinks and speaks, he is at the same time a visionary, a seer for whom the living things of the world about him embody and symbolise thought.

The penetrating power of Hamlet's vision is revealed in his use of imagery that shows up the real nature of men beyond the walls raised by hypocrisy. Rosencrantz is pithily called 'sponge' that 'soaks up the king's countenance.' Hamlet's comparison of his father with Claudius is remarkable for the effective imagery

bringing out the opposite qualities. So Hamlet sees through men and things. He perceives what is false and visualizes his recognition through imagery. “Act”, on the other hand, is the play’s radical metaphor. It distils the various perplexities about the character of reality into a residual perplexity about the character of an act. What, this play asks again and again, in an act? What is its relation to the inner act, the intent? **“The funeral baked meats Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.”**

To this network of implications, the third term, “play”, adds an additional dimension. “Play” is a more precise world, in Elizabethan parlance at least, for all the elements in Hamlet that pertain to the art of the theatre; and it extends their field of reference till we see that every major personage in the tragedy is a player in some sense, and every major episode a play. The court plays, Hamlet plays, the players play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern try to play on Hamlet though they cannot play on his recorders—here we have an extension to a musical sense. And the final duel, by a further extension, becomes itself a play, in which everyone but Claudius and Laertes plays his role in ignorance.

**“There are more things in Heaven and earth
Horatio Than are dreamt of in your philosophy...”**

A second pattern of imagery springs from terms of painting: the paints, the colourings, the varnishes that may either conceal, or, as in the painter's art reveal. Art in Claudius conceals. Ophelia, is more complex. She looks so beautiful-'the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia," Hamlet has called her in his love letter. But at, now what does beautified mean? Perfected with all the innocent beauties of a lovely woman? Or "beautified" like the harlot's cheek? "I have heard of your paintings too, well enough God hath given one face, and you make yourselves another. Yet art, differently used, may serve the truth. By using an "image" of a murder done in Vienna, Hamlet cuts through to the king's guilt, holds "as 'were, the mirror up to nature," shows "virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time"-which is out of joint-"his form and pressure." Next, and intimately related to the matter of instability, is the emphasis on infection and disease. The idea of an ulcer, says Caroline Spurgeon, dominates the imagery infecting and fatally eating away the whole body; on every occasion repulsive images of sickness make their appearance. A real event described at the beginning of the drama has exercised a profound influence upon the whole imagery of the play. The picture of the

leprous skin disease, which is in the first act described by Hamlet's father, has buried itself deep in Hamlet's imagination and continues to lead its subterranean existence, as it were, until it reappears in metaphorical form. Hamlet's father describes in that passage how the poison invades the body during sleep and how the healthy organism is destroyed from within, not having a chance to defend itself against attack. But of, this now becomes the locomotive of the imagery; the individual occurrence is expanded into a symbol for the central problem of the play. The corruption of land and people throughout Denmark is understood as an imperceptible and irresistible process of poisoning. And, furthermore, this poisoning reappears as a leitmotiv in the action as well-as a poisoning in the "dumb show", and finally, as the poisoning of all the major character in the last act. Thus imagery and action continually play into each other's hands and we see how the term "dramatic imagery" gains a new significance. Hamlet's imagery reveals his wide educational background his versatile mind and his extraordinary range of experience. He can attune his imagery to the situation and to the person to whom he is speaking. The images that he expresses under 'antic disposition' have a function similar to the images of the fool in King Lear. The imagery in

Shakespeare's tragedies often shows how a number of other images are grouped around the central symbol which express the same idea, but in quite other terms. Several degrees, as it were, of the metaphorical expression of a fundamental idea may be distinguished. Besides images which express a motif with the greatest clarity and emphasis, we find others which utter the thought in a veiled and indirect manner. An examination of the way in which the images are spread over the play, can reveal how subtly Shakespeare modifies and varies them according to character and situation.

“Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell.”

The opening words “who's there?” of the play itself creates a suspicion that something is wrong. From the continuing dialogues we come to know that something is wrong at Elsinore. The words and feelings of the guards also reveal the tension that is prevailing in Denmark. Francisco is relieved at Barnardo's arrival and it is bitter cold and he is 'sick at heart'. Barnardo who takes his charge of the duty is frightened and a bit nervous for he asks Francisco, “Have you had quiet guard?” and asks him to send Horatio and Marcellus very quickly. These words of Barnardo sound that of a frightened person who is afraid to stay alone. No soldier

would be so scared to be alone unless there is the feeling of danger. At this critical moment the Ghost appears.

The normal medium of Shakespeare's play is blank verse. The regular blank verse line is in iambic pentameter. A strict iambic pentameter has ten syllables with the stress falling on the even syllables. Shakespeare frequently varies the rhythm. He uses weak stresses to break the monotony of the regular pattern, and at times substitutes a trochee for the iambus and occasionally inserts lines of irregular length. Additional unstressed syllables are occasionally used to eke out the decasyllabic line. He rarely confines himself to the 'end stop' variety and writes run-on-verse. He usually uses verse for a highly poetic pitch of emotion. The soliloquies of Hamlet are all in verse. For instance the soliloquies beginning with "It is now the very witching time of night" and "To be or not to be" are in verse for Hamlet's mind is excited and thoughts are elevated in soliloquies and verse is then the proper medium of expression. Wherever there is a certain emotional excitement, the speech naturally runs into poetry. Thus the whole scene of Hamlet's interview with his mother is in verse; the King's prayer is in verse and Gertrude's description of Ophelia's drowning is in beautiful verse. Another curious specimen of verse is Polonius' advice to Laertes

in Act 1, Sc. III. It is a string of moral maxims and these moral maxims are generally expressed in a brief and pithy style. So the verse with its antithesis and clear-cut finish is quite suitable for the purpose.

“Unhand me, gentlemen!

By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me...”

Now coming to the question of Hamlet's death, why must he be destroyed? His death cannot be accounted to his delay in destroying Claudius first. Providence has a hand in his death; hence it is inevitable and rightly justified. The providence which has a hand in the fall of a sparrow must have a hand in Hamlet's death. Hamlet is a noble young man endowed with the finest sense of propriety and susceptible of noble ambition. Yet he has his own faults- the principle one is his hesitation to carry out the revenge in time. But in, Shakespeare emphasis the fact that this one fault alone does not ruin Hamlet. Something else has a hand in his tragedy. The evil that prevails in Denmark inevitably destroys indiscriminately the good and the bad. The destruction of evil involves the wastage of good. Hence the man of reason becomes mad, loses his power of action and becomes impotent; his religion is dragged down to knavery and his excellence as that of Ophelia's virtue

and beauty is brought to nothing by evil. Thus the evil let loose in Denmark continues to work by bringing about the deaths of eight persons until none is left.

**“A little month, or ere these shoes were old
With which she follow’d my poor father’s body,
Like Niobe, all tears:”**

The most pervasive of Shakespeare’s image patterns in this play, however, is the pattern evolved around the three words, “show”, “act”, “play”. “Show seems to be Shakespeare’s unifying image in Hamlet. Through it he pulls together and exhibits in a single focus much of the diverse material in his play. The ideas of seeming, assuming and putting on; the images of clothing, painting, mirroring the episode of the dumb show and the play within the play; the character of Polonius, Laertes, Ophelia, Claudius, Gertrude, Rosencratz and Guildenstern, hamlet himself—all these at one time or another, and usually more than once, are drawn into range of implication flung round the play by “show”.

“What a piece of work is a man.”

Occasionally Shakespeare uses rhyme also. But of gradually he outgrows the use of rhyme. While there are two rhymed lines to every one of blank verse in Love’s Labour’s Lost, there are only two rhymed lines in the whole of The Tempest. In a play of the middle period

like Hamlet, rhyme is used mostly for the purpose of denoting the termination of a scene. Examples of such usage may be found at the conclusion of Act I, Sc II, and Act II, Sc. II. It sometimes indicates the climax of a speech or a train of reflections, as at the end of Act I, Sc. VI. Hamlet's love letter is in rhyme. Shakespeare writes the play within the play in rhyme as he deliberately initiates the old rhymed tragedy. The songs of Ophelia and the grave-digger are also in rhyme.

“I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw.”

Crime means breaking the laws of God. When we go against God's laws and wishes we become sinner, crime leads to crime and disaster, until the original impulse works itself out and guilty get their deserts. Hamlet too is such a play which centres round the theme of evil or crime. The play begins with the haunting of the Ghost on the battlements of Elsinore. It indicates that the 'time is out of joint' and 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark' and evil hangs over Denmark. The rotten state of Denmark is revealed by the Ghost of Hamlet's father. The King who is the representative of God, and who is expected to show divine justice on his subjects, does the first crime of murdering his own brother to achieve the 'divine right of kings'. This crime which has

taken place before the beginning of the play becomes the source of the deaths that take place in the course of the play. Claudius, the smiling damned villain who commits crime after crime, is justified at the end by his tragic unexpected death at the hands of Hamlet. What accounts for Ophelia death? She is exposed to corruption though uncorrupted and is unjustly destroyed as the evil encoils her. She is more or less an innocent victim to this situation though it could be said that she contributes to her own doom by her docile character.

Professor Kitto's view is "Like a tragedy of Sophocles, Hamlet is also a religious play in the Greek sense. Sophocles wrote many revenge plays, and Hamlet shows striking similarities and differences. The similarity lies in this that a sinful deed is shown as leads to others. The difference is that Shakespeare portrays sin or evil as a spreading infection. Hamlet is not merely the tragedy of an indecisive mind; the Prince's delay is an effect and not the cause of the tragic motif in the play." Hamlet is not primarily a play about its hero and his indecision which accounts for his tragedy, it also portrays the tragic destruction of two families which cannot be accounted solely to Hamlet's indecision. The element of evil too has an influence in the disasters of the characters. "If there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow,

there surely must be a special providence in the fall of character.”

“The time is out of joint; O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right.”

When we think about the present demoralised world we are reminded of the moral world which was ruled by Hamlet’s father before his death. It was like a Garden of Paradise and was ruled by a god-like man, Hamlet’s father, who had “Hyperion’s curls, the front of Jove himself, an eye like Mars.” He was very brave and met the threats of the elder Fortinbras in an open battle and slew him. It was a weeded garden with happiness and peace everywhere. Thus the world of Denmark was like a paradise before the senior Hamlet’s death and before Hamlet’s mother betrayed her husband. But at, now such a garden has become a Garden of Eden after the fall of Adam and Eve. The serpent –like Claudius has tempted the “Eve”, Gertrude, who falls a prey to him leads to the loss of the country’s purity. The martial and moral values are ignored and the garden is ruled by Claudius who meets the threats of young Denmark and Hamlet by policy, cunning and wicked agents. Though Hamlet was born to a Hyperion-like man still he feels he is the son of Gertrude. He is called upon to set right the moral confusion of such a world. Shakespeare has

an unrivalled mastery over the English language. He makes effective use of words to express the wonderful variety of human feelings and thoughts. Prose and verse are given equal prominence in his plays. Generally verse is used where the emotion rises to a higher level, and prose is employed to lower the dramatic pitch.

**“The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue,
sword,**

Th’expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,

Th’ observed of all observers.”

Hamlet’s own language stands apart from the others: he has the mind of a scholar, a satirist, and a melancholic poet; his scholarly approach is perhaps best illustrated in the Scene in which he and Laertes throw themselves into the grave of Ophelia; he can no longer tolerate the anaemic ranting of Laertes, and comes forward to show in his own cascade of rhetoric how the thing should be done, if indeed one wants to do it at all; in the speech which follows in Act V, Scene 1. Hamlet so outdoes Laertes’s phrase that they appear by comparison the puny products of an underfed imagination. Thus we find Shakespeare makes use of verse and prose with great discrimination and appropriateness. Shakespeare differentiates the style of

speaking of each of his major character, although in Hamlet this differentiation is not carried throughout with the same precision as in Macbeth. Polonius is given a style of speech in keeping with his personality of a pedantic councillor who has some wisdom of the world and delights in verbal conceits; to Claudius's words particular attention seems to have been paid, and these show him as a man of quick and lively intelligence, in spite of his capacity for evil.

**“Ere yet the salt of most righteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,”**

The death of Polonius can be justified in two aspects. It is a sudden unpremeditated attack made by Hamlet and at the same time it is the will of Heaven. Though Hamlet can be blamed for his death yet Polonius deserves this death for his ‘wretched, rash, intruding’ nature. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were once friends of Hamlet but they give their service to a wicked King and to his guilty wife. They become the tools of Claudius and Gertrude and are much bound by them. Thus Guildenstern shows his loyalty. They are to be true, commanded by Claudius to bring about the death of Hamlet. But of, Heaven wishes otherwise. Hence Guildenstern and Rosencrantz meet their doom. The death of the elder Hamlet leads to their death of

other major and minor characters. This truth accounts for these two baser characters' death. Laertes, who is a noble young man, remains the last to be tainted by Claudius. Due to poor understanding, unguarded virtue and the evil suggestions of Claudius he falls to treachery and he realizes it at the time of his death.

**“Eternally yours, well beloved one,
Whilst this body remains his own,”**

There are three soliloquies of Claudius which throw more light on his villainous and wicked behaviour and we get a glimpse of his conscience which is still alive, his first soliloquy is exactly an 'aside' in which he reflects upon the heavy weight that lies upon his heart. This aside shows that memory of the murder he has committed still haunts him and he is not at peace. So for the first time we come to know that his conscience is not completely dead. In the next soliloquy, we get a more vivid picture of his pricking conscience. The King, for the first time, repents for his sins and wants to pray to God to purge his sins. He kneels down to pray. But of, his guilty conscience would not allow him to do so. Through Claudius' soliloquies Shakespeare shows that Claudius is not a hardened criminal, but an ordinary man with no peace of mind on account of his evil deeds. In the third soliloquy he schemes to kill

Hamlet in England through his sealed orders to the King of England. He plans a second murder even before he succeeds to come out of the guilt of his first murder. Gertrude is the first to be tainted by Claudius. Though she is not responsible for the elder Hamlet's death and does not have any cruel motive yet the mad passion that swept her into the hands of Claudius condemns her to endure all its devastating consequences. Her son loses his reason, kills Polonius, and denounces her in cruel terms. This change in Hamlet and her father's death drive Ophelia mad and she meets her death. Gertrude meets her death by the will of Providence for it is not pre-planned but an unexpected death. She is left to heaven's justice. Hamlet follows the Ghost to hear its revelation. Marcellus immediately observes: "Something is rotten in the State of Denmark." The Ghost discloses what is rotten in the land. It explains to Hamlet how his father was murdered by his uncle, and how that incestuous, the adulterate beast was able to win his mother's love and affection and seduce her. It further imposes on him the duty of avenging his father's death and requests him not to allow the royal bed of Denmark to be "a couch for luxury and damned incest". Hamlet in the succeeding soliloquy sees his mother as the 'most pernicious woman' and his uncle

as the 'smiling, damned villain.' He is confirmed that at least in Denmark "one may smile, and smile, and be a villain." Hamlet is born in such a land in such a situation 'to set it right.'

**"Whose blood and judgement are so well coming
led**

**That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please."**

Hamlet has always believed that heavenly justice will prevail among men: "Foul deeds will rise. Though all the earth o'erwhelm them to men's eyes." Murder, though it have no tongue, "will speak with most miraculous organ." Nevertheless, man's perception of that divine revelation and his role in aiding the course of justice are obscured by man's own corruption and blindness. Whenever Hamlet moves violently, he moves in error. Horatio, in summing up the play, speaks tellingly-of "accidental judgements, casual slaughter, and of "purposes mistook/ Fall'n on th' inventors' heads." The judgement applies to Hamlet as much as to Laertes. Hamlet has already realized that he must pay the price of heaven's displeasure for killing Polonius, just as Polonius himself has paid the price for his own meddling. "Heaven hath pleased it so, /To punish me with this, and this with me." Such fitting reciprocity

can be brought about only by the far-reaching arm of Providence. The engineer must be “Hoist with his own petard.” In the light of these views David Bevington finds Hamlet a religious drama. Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark is born ‘to set right the time which is out of joint’. Being a Prince, it is his stately duty to see his country at peace and in order. But at, his fate deprives him of the right to the throne. Yet it imposes on him the duty of asserting a moral order in the world of moral confusion.

**“The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!”**

This soliloquy occurs on his way to meet his mother in the closet. He sees the King at prayer and gets an opportunity to kill him, an opportunity for which he has been longing so far. And yet he does not act. Just at the moment when he should act, he begins to think. Claudius killed his father without even giving him any time to pray or repent for his sins and hence he must be paying the divine penalty for his deeds and sins. So Hamlet should also kill Claudius not while he is doing a good act like praying which would send him to heaven but when he indulges in some evil deeds.

Hamlet has got a vivid picture of the present condition of Denmark. He has to play an important

role to avenge his father's death as well as to restore the old merits to his land, to bring back the old paradise into his country. The whole garden is overgrown with cankerous weeds that eat into the state of Denmark. His immediate task is to weed the garden and to plant new trees of happiness, peace and moral virtues but the tragic flaw—'irresolution' and 'inaction' in his character—makes him a man of inaction. He delays in his action of avenging his father's death. When alone in his soliloquies, he calls himself a coward and chides himself for his delay. He spurs himself towards action with the wicked nature of Claudius, - 'Bloody, bawdy villain remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindles villain' to take vengeance against him. But he consoles himself to confirm Claudius's guilt for "he is very potent with such spirits". So Hamlet feels that he should have strong grounds to prove his guilt and finds 'the play is the thing, wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King'. By enacting the play, Claudius's guilt is confirmed. He makes up his mind to act and decides: "O, from this time forth, my thoughts be bloody." In spite of all these words, he is still inactive and delays his action. He gets an opportunity to kill Claudius, but he postpones that idea on the grounds that by killing him at his prayer his soul would go straight to heaven. He wants the

murderer to suffer in both the worlds. Even though he has been enjoined to perform an important task he is incapable of doing it due to his procrastinating nature which accounts for his tragic death. The tragedy of Hamlet arises because the Prince feels being called upon to set right the very times and not just kill Claudius. The revenge motif symbolises the process of bringing moral order back to the state which has degenerated into an 'unweeded' garden. Hamlet cannot rely on the conventional code of the rotten society in which he lives, nor accept without thinking the crude imperatives of the revenger's ethic. He is wrung by the anguish of choice, because he knows that on him depends the fate of the kingdom to which he is rightful heir.

“...What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?”

Denmark becomes an un-weeded garden where lies full of corruption, disloyalty, insincerity and wicked deeds: He then thinks over the purpose of man's creation by God. If the aim of men is to sleep and feed, he considers them not more than a beast. He realizes finally that God has not endowed us with such “capability and god-like reason / To fust in us unused.” Hence he determines, “from this time forth, my

thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!” In spite of this determination we see him inactive until the enemy takes the initiative. Thus this soliloquy too emphasises his irresolution and procrastination. What Hamlet philosophises in this soliloquy are universal truths and it strengthens his generalising nature. Even though his conscience pricks him and urges him to execute the revenge, the natural deficiency in him prevents him from prompt action. Through the Ghost’s revelation Hamlet gets a clear picture of the distortion of moral values. His mother who ‘hanged on’ her first husband “As if increase of appetite had grown /By what it fed on”; has committed adultery with a ‘satyr’-like man Claudius; ‘the smiling, damned villain’ has murdered his own brother, has married his own sister-in-law and has usurped Hamlet’s throne. The land is now reigned over by Claudius, who spends his time in drinking and merry-making. He is a corrupt and is assisted by Polonius, the Lord Chamberlaine, in his evil doings. He is safely guarded by Swiss-guards and the whole court supports him. But of, Hamlet is alone without any supporters except Horatio. Hamlet’s old school-fellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern turn spies to watch his movements. Hence Hamlet has to do double work. He has to avenge his father’s death as well as to purify the

evils of Denmark. He realizes his duty to be “their scourge and minister”. At the same time he realizes his own incapacity to carry out the work successfully and remarks: “The time is out of joint; O cursed spite, / The ever I was born to set it right!”

“We are such stuff

As dreams are made of; and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep.”

Its appearance at this dark midnight heightens the tension. When Horatio tries to talk to the Ghost it goes away offended. So Horatio suspects that appearance of the Ghost foretells some danger to their country. The Ghost also looks offended. Hence he fears “this bodes some strange eruption to our state”. Thus in the opening scene itself we get a glimpse of Denmark in utter moral confusion.

At the end of the nunnery-scene occurs Ophelia’s soliloquy where she expresses her grief over the ‘overthrown’ condition of Hamlet and her own pitiful condition “of ladies most deject and wretched” for she is deprived of her love and her lover has lost his senses. This soliloquy throws more light on the character of Hamlet, as he used to be before his father’s death and his mother’s over-hasty marriage. It further throws light on his insanity-that such an “observed of all observers

is quite, quite down!” and “the noble mind is overthrown”. Soliloquies are used to reveal the inner mind of a character. There are occasions when a person cannot openly express the feelings in the presence of others. The soliloquy then becomes his useful device by means of which the dramatist lays bare before the readers the secret thoughts and feelings of a character while at the same time preserving it as a secret to other characters in the play. Through the soliloquy the dramatist reveals the development of the character and also the mental progress or deterioration in the character. Further it shows more light on other characters through the speaker’s opinion of others. It also contributes to the development of the plot and tells of events which have happened off the stage. Some critics point out that this dramatic device is artificial and unnatural, but then so is drama which is only an imitation of life and not actual life. So such dramatic devices should be appreciated on their merits if they contribute to the interest and suspense of the play. Whether we accept the dramatic value of this device or not we have to accept Shakespeare’s skill in using it in his plays, especially in his tragedies. Shakespeare makes such an effective use of this device that if we were to remove the soliloquies from his tragic plays, the plays would be left the poorer.

“Yes, by heaven! O most pernicious woman! O villain, villain, smiling damned villain! My tables.”

Yet another, perhaps the most important reason for the popularity of Hamlet is that it presents an experience which has a universal appeal and significance. The belief that ‘there is providence in the fall of Sparrow’ and earthly objects are subject to this power appeals to all. Hamlet is placed in such a situation that he is impotent and his actions prove ineffective. Hamlet finds that men are not what they think are: the world is so mysteriously composed of good and evil and “there is a divinity that shapes our ends.” This is the most celebrated of soliloquies and occurs at the beginning of the nunnery-scene. Hamlet again reverts to the thought of suicide. Hamlet is torn within his mind. He does not know which he should choose-whether silently to suffer the cruelties of fate or to fight against the misfortunes of life. He reflects on the mysteries of life and death. He wishes to commit suicide for he thinks that in sleep he can forget all the evils of life. But of, what scares man and prevents him from committing suicide is the thought of the unexplored and unknown life after death. The known, however bad it is, is not as terrifying as the unknown. The fear of this thought makes men cowards

and “Thus the native hue of resolution/ Is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought.” This soliloquy constitutes one of the finest poetic passages and a masterpiece that reveals the universal fear of death. Spoken in a moment of dejection and despair, this soliloquy gives us an insight into the character of Hamlet. It reveals Hamlet’s cynicism, his melancholy, and his scrupulous nature. It further shows his speculative mind and his incapability for any premeditated or pre-planned action. Above all it emphasizes his delay and to some extent shows the mental torture he is undergoing due to his incapacity.

**“..We do it wrong, being so majestic,
To offer it the show of violence
For it as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.”**

We find distress and moral confusion not only in Denmark but in Hamlet’s heart too. Hamlet is introduced in the second scene as a depressed man brooding over the death of his father and is disgusted at his mother’s over-hasty marriage. In his soliloquy he expresses his feeling towards his mother’s indecent action of marrying Claudius, who is in no way equal to her old husband, within two months of her old husband’s death. This action of Gertrude makes him generalise “Frailty, thy name is woman!”. Still he has no suspicion

that his father has been murdered or his mother has committed adultery. But of, the very thought of his mother's second marriage has affected him so much that the whole world seems to him "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable." He even goes to the extent of comparing the world to the Garden of Eden after the Fall of Adam and Eve. He condemns his mother's attitude of violating nature's law and the distortion of moral values. Through Horatio's answer to Marcellus' question about the war-like preparations that is going on in Denmark we come to know of the physical disturbance and confusion of the land. The Ghost tells Hamlet about the murder and his mother's frailty. The Ghost's revelation comes as a shock both to Hamlet and to us. Even before the Ghost's revelation Hamlet senses some foul play and he hints "My father's spirit in arms! All his not well; / I doubt some foul play."

Hamlet's failure to seize the occasion and put an end to Claudius, leads us on to this final soliloquy by a gradual process. From his talk with the captain, Hamlet comes to know that young Fortinbras is prepared to risk his life and the lives of his twenty thousand soldiers for the sake of his honour. This nature of Fortinbras again stirs up his revenge motive and his conscience pricks him as it does often. When young Fortinbras does all

these things for the sake of honour, why has he not done anything when he has “cause and will and strength and means to do it.” He tries to find out the cause for his delay. Such is his reasoning. Bradley says that this reasoning is now generally recognised as an unconscious excuse for delay, for his reasoning sounds unconvincing. Anyhow, as usual, this soliloquy too further emphasises his delay and procrastinating nature. This soliloquy forms the crisis of the play. He compares the world to an “unweeded garden” in which rank and gross things grow in abundance. He no longer wishes to live in such a world and wishes to have his “too too solid flesh” melt into dew. He wishes that if only God had not set his canon against self-slaughter, he could have killed himself to get rid of the persisting grief and the wicked world. This soliloquy reveals Hamlet’s tendency to universalise an idea from a particular instance. This thought speaks of a philosophic mind which delights in speculating without the urge to action. This speculating nature accounts for his delay in executing the order of the Ghost for revenge. His thinking reveals that Hamlet has lost faith in the goodness of human nature. It throws light on the character of Hamlet’s dead father who was an affectionate husband and an excellent king. Hamlet’s filial attachment towards his dead father is also

revealed. It further makes us look down upon Claudius and Gertrude, their illicit relationship and incestuous marriage. Hamlet's reference to mythological characters portrays him as a well-versed man in classical literature. Thus the first soliloquy itself paints a vivid picture of Hamlet's character which would account for his tragedy. His generalisation, world-weariness, apathy, disgust with life, all appears again and again in his soliloquies.

Dowden explains: "He assumes madness as a means of concealing his actual disturbance of mind. His over-excitability may betray him; but if it be a received opinion that his mind is unhinged, such an excess of over-excitement will pass unobserved and unstudied." Richardson too supports his view and says: "Harassed from without, and distracted from within, is it wonderful, if during his endeavour to conceal his thoughts, he should betray inattention to those around him; incoherence of speech and manner... Hamlet was fully sensible how strange those involuntary improprieties must appear to others; he was conscious he could not suppress them; he knew he was surrounded with spies; and was justly apprehensive, lest his suspicions or purposes should be discovered." To prevent these consequences, and at the same time to afford himself breathing time-for no plan of action

immediately occurred to his mind, and he was always reluctant to perform actions--he counterfeits insanity.

“Meet it is I set down That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain-

At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark. So, uncle there you are.”

Hamlet accuses himself for his delay in executing the Ghost's order. No one can be harsher on Hamlet on the subject of neglecting his duty than Hamlet himself. For, having seen the emotion which the players can put forth about the death of Priam, a mere figure from the Greek legend of many centuries past, he cannot but ask himself what emotion the players would have expressed had they, like him, lost a father at the hands of a cruel and cunning murderer. He regards himself as “a dull and muddy mettled rascal” and “a rogue and peasant slave”, for he has done nothing to avenge his father's death. He calls himself a coward and declares that he should act and not, “like some cheap woman, unpack my heart with words and fall a-cursing like a very drab.” He feeds his anger with wicked thoughts of his uncle as a “a bloody, bawdy villain, remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindness villain!” so that he could execute the vengeance immediately. Thus at the end of the soliloquy we see him planning to enact the **‘Mousetrap’ play to**

“catch the conscience of the King.” The plot makes further progress here. Hamlet is going to get the play enacted to confirm Claudius’ guilt and test truth of the Ghost’s on Claudius’ treachery. This doubt regarding the honesty of the Ghost is totally inconsistent with his previous thoughts. A.C. Bradley emphasizes that “Hamlet’s self-reproaches, his curses on his enemy, and his perplexity about his own action, one and all imply his faith in the identity and truthfulness of the Ghost. Evidently this sudden doubt of which there has not been the slightest trace before, is no genuine doubt, it is an unconscious fiction, an excuse for his delay- and for its continuance.” This soliloquy thus emphasises Hamlet’s speculating and inactive nature. It reveals his self-contempt, but this disgust only leads to his inaction.

**“The spirit that I have been
May be a devil, and the devil hath power
‘T’ assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me.”**

The second soliloquy occurs after Hamlet’s meeting with the Ghost. It expresses the rude shock he has sustained. The Ghost has not only made shocking revelations but has also imposed upon him the duty of

avenging his father's death. Hamlet determines to wipe out all other thoughts from his mind and to preserve only the Ghost's commandment. He then deplors the villainous nature of Claudius as 'smiling damned villain' and the inconsistency of Gertrude as 'most pernicious woman'. Hamlet's determination to remember only the Ghost's words creates an impression of active and ambitious Hamlet. But in, we are only deceived by his words, for the more he thinks the less capable he becomes of direct action. This soliloquy introduces the element of a revenge for the first time. Hamlet is one of the most popular and famous plays in the English language. It is one of the great tragedies written by Shakespeare, enduring through the centuries because of its mysterious appeal, and the character of the Prince. John Bailey praising the play says: "There is no play which is read with such breathless eagerness and the eagerness is not satiated by old acquaintance."

"My father's spirit in arms! All his not well; I doubt some foul play."

Hamlet's comments on Yorick the court jester's skull: "I know him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times"...and his generalisation, 'Where are your gibes now? Your gambols? Your songs? Your

flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar',...along with the comments on other skull, which could have been the skull of politician or a lawyer, are too full of sense and meaningful thought to come from an insane man. Schucking says the first soliloquy is the first soliloquy is the most important of all for offering a clear understanding of Hamlet's character. The first soliloquy takes place after the King and Queen have commented on his brooding melancholy over the death of his father. They ask him to cast off his deep melancholy and Hamlet in this soliloquy gives vent to his grief that has been gnawing at his heart for quite a long time. More than two months have passed. Still Hamlet is mourning the death of his father. He deplores his mother's character. Not even two months have passed and even before "those shoes were old with which she followed his poor father's body", she has married a man who is much inferior to her old husband. Her over-hasty marriage, which he considers 'an incestuous affair' makes him believe that women are weak and inconsistent creatures; he voices "Frailty thy name is woman!" This "most wicked speed" of his mother plunges him into a mood of deep depression and loathsome disgust with the world and affairs of the world.

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When he castigates his mother for her frailty, and her wickedness, Gertrude's conscience is awakened. No madman's words could be so effective, for she confesses "O Hamlet, speak no more; /Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul, / And there I see such

black and grained spots/And will not leave their 'tinct;
...His coherent speech portrays him as a man of sanity with enormous power to bring about a change in the Queen. For the third time he reveals the truth of his madness being feigned. All the above given evidence does quite prove his madness to be real. There is more evidence that his madness is assumed, for he acts normally when he chooses to and in the presence of those with whom it is safe to do so. We agree with Deighton when he says, "in every single instance in which Hamlet's madness is manifested, he was good reason for assuming that madness: while, on the other hand, whenever there was no need to hoodwink anyone, his thought, language and action, bear no resemblance to unsoundness of intellect." He talks rationally and shows great intellectual power in his conversations with Horatio. He receives the players with kind courtesy and his refinement of behaviour towards them showed that he is not mad.

Hamlet enacts the "Mousetrap" play to confirm Claudius' guilt. He asks Horatio to watch Claudius and the players leave the hall, he discusses with Horatio about the whole thing and expresses his feelings and views of Claudius and his future plans of avenging murder. This does not sound like a mad man's action

but that of a normal man. Only a man of wisdom could plan everything systematically and arrive at the expected conclusion. The fact that he wants to let the King betray himself would sufficiently strengthen the view that he is not only sane but also wise and cunning.

The problem of madness is perhaps the most maddening problem in Hamlet. The question is asked, **‘Was Hamlet really mad, or did he merely assume madness?’** Certain critics believe that Hamlet is really mad whereas certain other critics believe that Hamlet is only pretending to be mad. Even those critics who argue that Hamlet is pretending to be mad are not in agreement with each other about the motives of Hamlet in pretending madness.

In the first Act we are told by Hamlet himself that he is going to feign madness to carry out his entrusted task of avenging his father’s death successfully. In his talk with Polonius, where he calls him a “fishmonger” and insults him further with satirical remarks, Polonius observes “Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.” However, as he is fool he is deceived by Hamlet’s feigned madness. Then there is Claudius, the shrewd man, who suspects the authenticity of Hamlet’s madness. When Polonius reveals ‘the very ecstasy of love’ as the cause of his madness, Claudius after observing Hamlet

says in Act III, Sc I: **“Love? His affections do not that way tend; / Nor what he shake, thought lack’d form a little, / Was not like madness.”** So Claudius strongly suspects, as we all do, that Hamlet’s madness is feigned and not real. The next to suspect the real nature of his madness is his own school fellows Guildenstern and Rosencrantz. Guildenstern finds ‘a crafty madness’ in him and Hamlet himself reveals the truth to them.

Belief in the supernatural and wonder at the inexplicable mysteries of death was largely shared by people during the Elizabethan age. Shakespeare makes effective use of these popular superstitions and beliefs of his time., but at, the most wonderful; thing about Shakespeare was that, unlike his contemporaries, his use of supernatural agencies was neither crude nor gross, nor was it extraneous to the action, a mere object of horror brought in to create sensation. To Moulton, “Supernatural agency has a place in the world of Shakespeare. Among the forces of life, it has no power except to accentuate what already exists: but it has great power to illuminate life for those who are life’s spectators. Shakespeare’s supernatural agencies are what Banquo calls them-instruments of darkness: of no significance except in the hands that consent to use them.” In Hamlet, the supernatural appears in the

form of the Ghost. The Ghost in Hamlet has at least a three-fold dramatic significance. It contributes to the general tragic atmosphere of the play, motivates the entire action of the play and finally it shows up the characters and drives home a certain moral effect.

Before the play begins Hamlet is clearly a sensitive and idealistic young man. He is a scholar, a philosopher and a poet too. He is gentle and genial to those below his station. He is a noble man who conceives the finest thoughts and has a high intellectual quality. We get a vivid picture of Hamlet as he was from the words of Ophelia. This shows Hamlet was once a master of his own self and had full command over his mind and senses. But at, we do not see the normal Hamlet in course of that tragedy. After his mother's hasty marriage and the Ghost's revelation, Hamlet's "noble and most sovereign reason" is all out of tune and harsh. The observed of all observers is quite, quite down and the noble mind is overthrown. Hamlet loved Ophelia before the Ghost's revelation of his father's murder. Now the duty imposed on him by the Ghost of which he feels incapable and his mother's guilt have driven all thoughts of love away. In his rebellion against nature and in his want to escape the burden of life, he rejects Ophelia and tells her to go to a nunnery. When he learns that Ophelia has met with

a tragic death, his true feelings come to life and being provoked by Laertes' action; he too leaps into her grave and admits his love. So these incidents cannot for his madness being real.

Some critics are of the opinion that under the pressure of these two circumstances-his mother's hasty marriage, and the Ghost's revelation- Hamlet loses his reason. When he appears for the first time in Act I Sc II he is not in a normal state of mind. More than the sudden death of his father, his mother's 'frailty' shocks him and this produces in him a disgust for the affairs of life, an apathetic and moody inclination to put an end to his misery by self-slaughter. After the Ghost's revelation, he sinks into a morbid state of mind, so that he finds no interest at all in the world or mankind. The goodly earth appears a "sterile promontory." The bright firmament appears only a "foul and pestilent congregation of vapours." Man delights him not, nor woman either. This state of mind is very near insanity. Ophelia's description of Hamlet to Polonius when he called on her in her closet further strengthens the idea of madness to be real. She adds that Hamlet in such an appearance took her by the wrist; and holding her hard, scrutinised her face and raised a sigh so piteous and profound as if it did seem to shatter all his bulk. This

description gives Polonius the idea that “the very ecstasy of love” is the cause of the present condition of Hamlet, for under her father’s instructions and advice Ophelia had returned his gifts and had refused to meet him.

Another instance quoted in support of the view of Hamlet’s madness being real is Hamlet’s act of killing Polonius. When he is having an interview with his mother, he hears the words ‘help’ from behind the arras. Not knowing the identity of the person who is hiding there he takes it to be Claudius, and draws his sword and kills the person. Only afterwards does he find out it is Polonius; but with least remorse he remarks: “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell; / I took thee for thy better; take thy fortune, / Thou find’st to be too busy is some danger.” Had he been in his real senses, he would not have acted in this heartless manner.

Finally, his strange behaviour at Ophelia’s funeral is supposed to show the genuineness of his madness. When he sees Laertes leaping into Ophelia’s grave, he too follows him and they grapple with each other. Hamlet rages with fury, speaks ill of Laertes and warns him with danger of his life. The Queen tries to explain Laertes the nature of Hamlet’s outburst of passion. Above all in Act V Sc. II, Hamlet repents for his actions in the grave of Ophelia and he confesses to Laertes, “**Who does’t**

it, then? His madness: if'tbe so, /Hamlet is of the faction is wrong'd." Thus the surest proof of Hamlet's madness comes from his own lips.

Hamlet's advice to the players on the art of acting is too sound to come from the lips of a madman. He advises them on how to act with quiet dignity and moderation. He advises them against extravagant gestures, and melodramatic exhibitionism. They should "suit the action to the word, the word to action" and hold the mirror up to nature. Such an advice, by all means, comes from a sound man.

**"...a midew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother"**

The conversation between Hamlet and Polonius in Act II, Sc. II, is also quoted to support the theory that Hamlet is really mad. He calls Polonius a fishmonger and further insults him with his remarks on his daughter, Ophelia: "Let her not walk i' th'sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to it." His talk with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on the honesty of the world; his talk with Ophelia in the nunnery-scene in which he insults her and advises her to join a convent to escape breeding sinners and his obscene talk with her in the play-scene- all are taken to prove him to be a man who has lost reason.

Ophelia herself says: **“O what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!”**

We get a complete picture of the Ghost and its strange behaviour. These erring spirits are free to wander about in the darkness. But at, when the cock crows heralding the dawn, wherever they are, ‘in sea or fire in earth or air’, they hurry back to their prison-houses. This first appearance of the Ghost has a terrifying effect on the readers. The real appearance of the Ghost on the stage fills the audience with fear and wonder. We are kept in suspense about the purpose of the Ghost. It creates an atmosphere of mysterious foreboding also.

Hamlet sees the Ghost of his father and what he has all along felt about ‘some foul play’ proves to be true. The Ghost makes a shocking revelation. It reveals its identity and the secret of its murder. It tells that Claudius had murdered his brother by pouring poison into his ear when he was asleep and then announced that the King died of the bite of a serpent. He then usurped the Kingdom and seduced his mother. It further imposes upon Hamlet the duty of avenging his father’s death and advises him **“Let not the royal bed of Denmark be/ A couch for luxury and damned incest.”** Thus the Ghost motivates the entire action of the play. It is solely through the Ghost that ban unsuspected

murder is brought to light, and the subsequent course of action owes its motive-power to the foul fratricide thus revealed. Verity points out: "Without the Ghost's initial revelation of truth to Hamlet, there would be no occasion for revenge; in other words, no tragedy of Hamlet."

Granville-Barker points out: "when he is alone, we have the truth of him, but it is his madness which is on public exhibition." All of his soliloquies show his wisdom and deep thinking for they are coherent and logical. His reasoning and generalizations portray him a scholar and a philosopher. The thoughts which he reveals in these soliloquies have a universal appeal and are remarkable for their poetic quality and excellence of language. Through his soliloquies we come to know about the inner Hamlet, his feelings for others, and his feeling for himself. He reveals his plans and actions and acts according to them. The words, ideas and feeling expressed in these soliloquies cannot be those of a mad man.

The first thing that a dramatist should do when introducing the supernatural is to create the necessary atmosphere which makes it possible and plausible. Such an atmosphere is provided in the early part of the opening scene. It is a cold and dark night and Francisco

is 'sick at heart'. The Ghost had appeared to them two nights in succession. It was a dreaded sight. Horatio, the sceptic does not at first believe his friends' words. He attributes it to their "fantasy". Marcellus comments on Horatio's scepticism. Horatio comes with Marcellus to witness the appearance with his own eyes and they with bated breath wait for the apparition. The chilly and dark night along with the talk about the Ghost creates an atmosphere of tension and fear.

The main theme of the play is revenge. The motive for this revenge theme is provided by the Ghost. The awful revelation of the Ghost forms the source of the tragedy and the spring of the action. Thus the supernatural is made the starting point of the play, even as the supernatural soliciting of the Witches becomes the starting point of Macbeth. In both cases, it is the hand of the supernatural that sets in motion the machinery of the plot. Without the prophetic greetings of the Witches, there is no Macbeth. Without the initial revelation of the Ghost there is no Hamlet. The revelation of the Ghost intensifies the horror that Hamlet felt at the over-hasty marriage of his mother with Claudius. The foul play that Hamlet suspected becomes a reality, and he is charged by the spirit of his dead father to avenge his father's murder of which he is incapable. The duty

thus imposed on Hamlet and his failure to carry out in proper time form the substance of the tragedy. When Horatio describes the appearance of the Ghost in the late King's manner, he accepts "Such was the very armour he had on/ When he the ambitious Norway combated: / So frowned he once, when, in an angry parly, / He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice. / 'Tis strange." Horatio, the sceptic who disbelieved in the existence of the Ghost, after witnessing its appearance believes in its forebodings. To support his views, he refers to the supernatural things that occurred before the death of Julius Caesar. Hence he senses some danger to the state of Denmark in the form of young Fortinbras. He gives an explanation for the warlike preparations that is going on in Denmark-because of the threat of war to Denmark. Horatio suggests that Hamlet should be informed of the appearance of the Ghost. They inform Hamlet of the haunting of the Ghost and Hamlet too believes in some calamity or evil about to befall.

**"And it must follow as the night the day
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell, my blessing season this in thee."**

Shakespeare might or might not have believed in the supernatural but he certainly makes effective dramatic use of it in his plays. He not only gave his audience

what they wanted; he was able to rise higher. It is a tribute to his unequalled dramatic gifts. Through the introduction of the Ghost of the dead King, Shakespeare creates a suitable atmosphere for unnatural deeds about to happen. "The Ghost indeed reminds us that even the greatest earthly strength is still subject to the controlling influence of a spiritual power beyond the laws of man."

When most of the critics break their heads in attributing the cause of Hamlet's delay in killing Claudius to the nature of his character, Dr. Flatter tries to lay the responsibility neither on Hamlet's own character nor on Shakespeare's craftsmanship but squarely on the shoulders of the Ghost. It is true that the Ghost lays a fairly impossible task on Hamlet. But of, it is not the Ghost which is solely responsible for his failure; it lies within Hamlet's own character. Hamlet has doubts about the honesty of the Ghost and the guilt of Claudius. Moreover he wants to know how much his mother is involved in this evil. Hence his attention, most of the time, is on Gertrude and not on Claudius. Finally he stages the play and Claudius' guilt as well as the Ghost's integrity is confirmed. Still he delays in his action. As soon as the play is over, Hamlet is called upon by his mother to her closet. Hamlet finds it the best opportunity to induce her to confess her guilt. When

he starts with his abuses and when he is about to receive the proper response, the Ghost intervenes. It comes to “whet his blunted purpose” and thereby prevents him from proceeding further with his charges to find out her guilt. He is forced to give up the ideas of making Gertrude confess her guilt.

The Ghost’s appearance accounts for two other important developments in the play. Hamlet’s mind is occupied with the thought of the Ghost’s reality. To confirm the truth of its words and to carry out the entrusted task he at first instance, puts on ‘an antic disposition’, and then he gets enacted the Mousetrap play to “catch the conscience of the King.” The question whether the Ghost is a subjective or an objective entity still remains an unsolved problem like many other problems in Hamlet. In Macbeth the Ghost of Banquo is clearly subjective, because it appears only to Macbeth and to no one else in the large gathering. In Julius Caesar, the Ghost of Caesar appears only to Brutus. There is a rational explanation why ghosts appear only to some persons and not to others. But at, this distinction is not clearly maintained in Hamlet. In the beginning Hamlet, Marcellus, Branardo and Horatio see the Ghost. They have occasion to observe and even to address it. It is not the hallucination of a single individual. It is

objective and has a “real existence outside the sphere of hallucination”. But of, this view which is justified in the beginning is contradicted when the Ghost makes its second appearance in the closet-scene. Hamlet sees the Ghost as he did formerly, but to Gertrude it is invisible. If the Ghost here had also an objective reality, it should have been seen and heard by the Queen also. Either the Ghost is real, or it is a product of Hamlet’s fancy. If it is a product of Hamlet’s fancy other people could not have seen it and heard simultaneously. If it is real, while others can see it why can Gertrude not see it? It is still an unsolved problem. Some critics aver that the Ghost not being seen by the Queen has its moral suggesting that the woman has strayed so far from the path of honour that she is unable to receive spiritual vision. Further it indicates that there is a close and intimate relationship between father and son, and therefore Hamlet alone is admitted to the inner secrets; it illustrates also the lack of any such close affinity Hamlet and his mother.

Hamlet is melancholic by nature. His mother’s hasty marriage and the Ghost’s revelation along with the duty imposed upon him, to whom he is capable of, deepen his melancholy and deprive him of his balance of mind. He becomes depressed and disgusted with life. The uses of the world seem to him “weary, stale,

flat, and unprofitable”. Love is no longer, says Bradley, “an absorbing passion, it does no longer occupy his thoughts.” The Ghost speaks of the horrors of its prison-house, but it is forbidden to reveal what they are for the ‘eternal blazen’ is not for mortal ears. Shakespeare combines classical and Christian concepts with the popular superstitions of his age and country and by his own imaginative power creates a picture of wonderful awe and impressiveness. In Ghost’s first appearance, Hamlet is given the duty of avenging his father’s death. Due to his irresolution and procrastination he delays in his action. Hence the Ghost makes its second appearance in the closet-scene, when Hamlet is talking with his mother, to ‘whet his almost blunted purpose’. But at, the Ghost is invisible to the Queen and hence she interprets Hamlet’s action “This is the very coinage of your brain. /This bodiless creation ecstasy/ Is very cunning in.”

Thus the second appearance not only emphasises Hamlet’s delay in executing the Ghost’s order but also Gertrude’s conviction about Hamlet’s madness. Verity says that the Ghost’s second appearance hastens the denouement by whetting Hamlet’s blunted purpose and, “exciting in him, through the bitterness of self-reproach, a mood of increased desperation which

alarm Claudius and stimulates him to bring matters to a speedy crisis.” The Ghost has also great symbolic significance. “It diffuses an atmosphere of awe through which the tragedy looms more impressive. It is a reminder of the existence and immanence of the more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our daily philosophy, a warning that at all times, but most in its lapses, humanity has to reckon with not flesh and blood alone but principalities and powers of the unseen world. The Ghost, we feel, is a representative of that-hidden ultimate power rules the universe and the messenger of divine justice.”

When Hamlet is about to meet his mother he speaks this soliloquy. Hamlet is angry with his mother and his disgust with her makes him feel thus. He thinks it is the best time for him to ‘drink hot blood’ which even the day ‘would quake to look on’. He wants to be cruel to his mother and to kill her. At the same time he wants to respect the Ghost’s words and does not want to follow the action of Nero. But of, he determines to ‘speak daggers’ to her and wishes ‘his tongue and soul in this be hypocrites’ in that he will not use any daggers. This soliloquy throws light on Hamlet’s refinement of nature, respect for his father’s Ghost words and his love for his mother. The aim of drama is to create characters

of different types and to expose their actions in the changing circumstances of life. A dramatist's genius at best is revealed in the treatment of characters. In this respect, Shakespeare surpasses his contemporaries and his genius is inexhaustible. Never are two characters alike in his plays. Hamlet is centred round the destiny of the Prince of Denmark. He is brought in contrast with several other characters to intensify his tragic character as well as emphasise his growth.

Hamlet loved Ophelia truly and sincerely. He probably fell in love with her when he was staying at Elsinore before his father's death. In his love letters he had addressed her in exaggerated terms of affection, just as a young man is likely to do in the first flush of affection. Ophelia too tells Laertes and Polonius, he "had importuned her with love in honourable fashion", and "had given countenance to his speech with almost all the vows of heaven." Fortinbras furnishes Hamlet with an example. He is ready to risk the life of twenty- thousand men along with his own for the sake of honour. It is this campaign of Fortinbras that sets Hamlet thinking again about his neglect of his duty in avenging his father's death. Since, he is honest and prompt in his dealings he is honoured with much more than his expectation and lives to restore the lost paradise; but he is also a

straightforward character as compared to Hamlet who is a complex character. Dowden gives a vivid picture of Fortinbras: "With none of the rare qualities of the Danish prince, he excels him in plain grasp of ordinary fact. Shakespeare knows that the success of these men who are limited, definite, positive, will not do dishonour to the failure of the rare natures to whom the problem of living is more embarrassing, and for whom the tests of the world are stricter and more delicate." The love story of Hamlet and Ophelia has some importance among the other problems of the play. Hamlet loves Ophelia. According to some critics, when he comes to know that Ophelia has been set up as a decoy to spy on him, he ceases to love her. Her disloyalty causes depression and overcome with passion he behaves cruelly towards her. She lacks the understanding power and her obedience deprives her of her love.

Although she never declares her love in so many words, yet we know Ophelia's heart is entirely given to Hamlet for she had 'sucked the honey of his music vows' and that his loss of reason has made her 'of ladies most deject and wretched'. However, though she observes his depression, she fails to reason out the cause. While Hamlet and Horatio are in some respects complementary in character, Laertes is a complete

contrast to Hamlet. Hamlet is a far more impressive figure than Laertes. The many-sidedness of Hamlet is not to be found in Laertes. Hamlet's nobility and generosity are absent in his opponent. Laertes wants in delicacy and refinement. Shakespeare intentionally creates a situation in which Hamlet and Laertes are placed in a contrasting position. Hamlet's father is murdered, so is the father of Laertes. Laertes is a man of action. Unlike Hamlet, he has no scruples and needs no evidence to support his course of action. This is clear from his readiness to believe that Hamlet is responsible for all the tragic events that have taken place at the court during his absence; he is willing to go further than the king to make sure that Hamlet is killed in the fencing match. Hamlet on the other hand, goes for evidence and even when he 'catches the conscience of Claudius', he hesitates to act, think and procrastinates. The vehemence of Laertes is in clear contrast with the speculations of Hamlet. He is ready to murder Hamlet in a church and defy damnation. Laertes by foul or fair means wants to avenge his father's death. In fact the injury suffered by Hamlet is far greater than that of Laertes. And what Laertes could do in getting the support of the Danes, Hamlet might have done with greater ease and surer success against Claudius. But at,

he does not attempt it. Laertes, unlike Hamlet who in spite of his fewer obstacles neglects every opportunity, overcomes every obstacle and uses every opportunity. With Hamlet revenge is a religious duty; with Laertes it is a matter of honour only. And what a contrast there is between the murdered fathers; the one “A combination, and a form, indeed, / where every god did seem to set his seal, / To give the world assurance of a man.”; The other a “foolish prating knave”, a ridiculous, tedious, prying self-complacent sinner.

Fortinbras is another character who presents a vivid contrast to Hamlet. Fortinbras is a son who initially sets out to avenge his father’s wrongs; he is the nephew of the reigning king of his country; the similarity to Hamlet is obvious, but in character he is a contrast. Fortinbras is a man of action whereas Hamlet is a scholar and philosopher. He is an ardent militarist and is never at ease and happy unless he is occupied with some campaign or the other. Hamlet perceives and admires his promptness in action. “Examples gross as earth, exhort me,” says Hamlet, “ Witness this army, of such mass and charge, / Let by a delicate and tender prince;/ Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed, /Makes mouths at the invisible event;”

Ophelia's betrayal and her willingness to act as decoy bring about a marked change in Hamlet. He has lost all his love for Ophelia and when he gets opportunities in the play scene and the nunnery scene he shows his contempt and disgust for her. Even before this, Hamlet's attitude to her has completely changed. He calls Polonius a "fishmonger", and his question "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing Carrion...Have you a daughter?" is equally profane. He uses very cruel language to Ophelia and his remarks are full of sexual innuendoes. In the nunnery scene he is very offensive. He cries out to her "Get thee to a Nunnery". He hurts Ophelia because he feels that she has hurt him. While both love each other truly and sincerely, what accounts for love's failure? To a certain extent, circumstances play an important part. Hamlet's father dies suddenly and Hamlet returns to Denmark to mourn his father's death. While he is still a mourner, his mother marries his uncle, who is described by the Ghost as 'that incestuous, and adulterate beast', even before "those shoes were old with which she followed by the Ghost's revelation of the frailty of Gertrude towards her dead husband even when he was alive. Hamlet feels disgusted at this thought and transfers his feelings from his mother to all women and hates all women kind. He

figures: "Frailty, thy name is woman!" He looks upon Ophelia also in the same light and feels Ophelia can be no exception. Moreover the Ghost imposes upon him the duty of revenge and he feels the time is out of joint and he is called upon to set them right. The pressure of these circumstances and the realisation of his incapability to carry out the task compel him to put aside all thoughts of love.

Some critics point out that something must have happened for Hamlet's harsh attitude towards Ophelia in the nunnery-scene. Prof. Dover Wilson explains that Hamlet's in Act II, Sc II is timed so as to make him over-hear the plot hatched between Claudius and Polonius to use Ophelia as a decoy for ascertaining the truth of Hamlet madness. Having heard Polonius' words, Hamlet comes to the conclusion that Ophelia is a willing tool in the hands of her father. This explains his utter contempt for Ophelia, and the shocking vulgarity of the nunnery-scene becomes the natural consequence of the unfortunate situation. When Ophelia carries out the instructions of her father and plays the part of a decoy against her lover, Hamlet suspects she is being used as a decoy. To test her honesty and innocence he questions her about her father's whereabouts, and she lies. This strengthens his suspicion and he puts on

‘an antic disposition’ to deceive the eavesdroppers. His disgust over women also deepens and in the nunnery scene he reveals his contempt for Ophelia.

In Act I, Sc. III, we both Laertes and Polonius with their ‘worldly’ wisdom suspect the intentions of Hamlet in courting Ophelia. Laertes considers it merely “fashion and toy in blood”. Polonius regards Hamlet’s honourable vows of love as “springes to catch woodcocks”, and as “brokers” and “mere implorators of unholy suits.” They poison the mind of Ophelia with their suspicious. Polonius goes one step further and advises her to return Hamlet his love tokens and reject his further courting. Ophelia does not possess the strength of character of a Rosalind or a Desdemona. Questioned in the presence of the Duke how a young Venetian girl could choose to love a black moor, Desdemona rises to the occasion and asserts the truthfulness of her love. She says: “I saw Othello’s visage in his mind.” She rejects a father to be faithful to her lover. Ophelia cannot do that because her nature is too soft and tender. She carries out the instructions of her father with utmost obedience. In the nunnery-scene she rejects his love.

Bradley felt that Shakespeare restricted his scope with Ophelia so that too great an interest should not be given to the love story. Schuking even felt that the

Hamlet-Ophelia affair is superfluous to the design of the play. But at, Shakespeare's sub-plots never distract from the main plot; they serve to highlight or illumine the central theme. In this context Harold Jerkins observes: "Hamlet's revulsion from love and marriage and from whatever would perpetuate a loathed life is the observe of that wish for release from life's ills which opens his first soliloquy and has its fullest expression in the soliloquy which the meeting with Ophelia interrupts. His own nature of man, including bestial lusts and lethargies as god-like reason, mingles good and evil; and he is placed in a situation- his ideally virtuous father destroyed by a wicked brother who is now in possession of his kingdom and his queen-which shows evil prevailing over good. So although he sees the nobility of man, the beauty of women, the majesty of the universe, what his imagination dwells on is the quintessence of dust, the reason unused, the mutiny in the matron's bones, the nasty sty, the prison. His vision of the world may be said to exemplify the process which a famous speech of his describes whereby 'some vicious mole of nature' in a man extends itself in the general view till 'all the noble substance' is obscured. Hence he can only tell Ophelia, to go to the nunnery."

An interesting and perhaps most acceptable view of Hamlet's feelings for Ophelia is that it is part of his rejection of life itself. Unable to bear the 'burden of life', Hamlet turns his face from that emotion, basic to life, namely love. Hamlet as a play is concerned not only with the task of revenge but also with the universal mysteries of man's being- the questions which occupy the hero's mind. Hamlet feels it is his incumbent duty not merely to kill his father's killer but also to set right the time which is "out of joint". The world is corrupt, an "**unweeded garden**", in his eyes at the beginning of the play. The two actions which are of equal importance in the play are those of revenge and marriage. For not only is Hamlet depressed by the revelation that his father has been murdered by his uncle who now sits on the throne of Denmark, but he is also horrified at his mother having married to this 'satyr'. The nunnery-scene assumes a fresh significance in the light of this view. Hamlet declares "I say we will have no more marriage. Those that are married already- all but one- shall live; the rest shall keep as they are." These words simultaneously tell Ophelia that Hamlet will not marry, and the King that he will revenge- note "all but one- shall live". Ophelia is the woman Hamlet might have married and did not. There is no doubt about his love

for her or his endeavours to woo her as we learn from the final act. However, after the Ghost's revelations especially, Hamlet is sharply aware of the corruption in the world and even more conscious of his own part in this world. One should not miss what Hamlet says about himself—he is one “crawling between earth and heaven” with unrealised “offences at my beck”. With the example of his mother, who has made “marriage vows as false as dicers' oaths”, it is not difficult to see why he should reject marriage with Ophelia. Even more than this, he is horrified that she has valued his love. In his state of mind he cannot bear the idea of the procreation inevitably associated with marriage for what will be bred will be “sinners”. Hamlet wishes to have no part in a world where he sees fertility manifesting itself in vile forms of life—weeds, mildew'd ear, maggots. Thus Hamlet denies his own nature, declining to act out the part that life purposes for him. Thus he consigns Ophelia to a nunnery where she will breed no sinners but preserve her virginity. It is only in the final Act that Hamlet, with his maturity of vision about the divinity that shapes our ends, admits “I lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers/ Could not with all their quantity of love/ Make' up my sum”; but for the fulfilment of love and marriage it is now tragically too late.

It seems that to a certain extent Hamlet's delay is due to the conscience theory. Ulrich argues: "In Hamlet... we behold the Christian struggling with the natural man, and its demand for revenge in a tone still louder and deeper by the hereditary prejudices of the Teutonic nations." Most of the time he is torn between Christian scruples and the obedience to fulfil his father's desires. In his soliloquies he wishes to commit suicide. But at, he puts aside this thought on the ground of Christian ethic that committing suicide is a sin. Hence he blames himself: "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all." Some critics even point out that he delays partly due to the command of Christ. "Resist not evil" and the fear of the consequences of evil in the next world after death, but all this only strengthens the view that Hamlet is against murder. We notice, however, that Hamlet hesitates to kill Claudius not on grounds of a Christian spirit but because of a most revengeful thought that his soul should go to hell straight and not to heaven. In addition he feels no remorse at the deaths of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. So this theory also does not account for his delay.

The Ghost makes a shocking revelation of the murder of the previous king by Claudius and imposes upon Hamlet the duty of killing the incestuous murder

who has usurped the kingdom of Denmark. At the same time, it wants Hamlet to contrive nothing against his mother for she should be left to Heaven and the stings of her own conscience. This revelation and the duty imposed upon him come as a shock to Hamlet and affect his nature. He is much troubled by the various implications of the duty and his will to act is weakened. He becomes a melancholic character and broods over his actions in the process of which he loses the power of action. Some critics feel that when he meets her in her closet, Hamlet must have come there to seek consolation from his beloved and support and help in the great crisis of his life for he has just learnt terrible things about his uncle and his mother. His strange appearance frightens her. Instead of questioning Hamlet about his behaviour, and gently drawing from him the secret cause of his sorrow, Ophelia remains mute, and after he goes away, she runs to her father and reports what has happened. She fails to understand the situation and the feelings of Hamlet.

Even the critics, who agree there is delay, disagree about the cause of delay. Both internal and external causes account for Hamlet's delay. The internal cause is within his character, and the conflict between his moral scrupulous nature and act of revenge. The

external causes are the difficulties that he encounters. The external causes of Hamlet's delay are the physical difficulties in the situation. Claudius is not a weak king. He is a shrewd man who does everything to protect his life from unforeseen attacks. He is not only surrounded by courtiers but also strongly protected by his Swiss body-guards. Hence Hamlet would find it difficult to meet his enemy alone. Also he does not in the beginning have any strong proof of Claudius' guilt except for the Ghost's story. With this he cannot hope to win the people's help in deposing the king. Hence he gets enacted the play and the King's guilt is confirmed. However, the enactment of the play also puts Claudius on guard. The enemy takes the initiative and plots to do away with Hamlet. However, these external difficulties are not major hindrances: Hamlet himself does not speak as if there were external difficulties in the way of his killing Claudius. In Act III, Sc. III, when he sees Claudius at prayer, he postpones the idea of killing him for he wishes eternal damnation for the victim. He feels he should kill Claudius. Again, Shakespeare shows Laertes easily raising the people against the King. If Laertes could do that, Hamlet as a popular prince could more easily have raised the people against Claudius and seen to his destruction. Above all Hamlet gets the play

enacted not to prove to the people Claudius' guilt but to convince himself of the Ghost's words. Hence the external difficulties do not account for his delay.

Internal causes which make Hamlet delay his action are within his own character. Some attribute the cause of delay to his cowardly nature which dares not act for fear of consequences. There is ample proof to show that Hamlet is not a coward and is capable of fearless acts of heroism in the face of danger and difficulty. Goethe describes Hamlet as "a beautiful, pure and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero" and therefore he sinks beneath a burden which he cannot bear. This view of Goethe represents Hamlet as a weak, delicate, sensitive, nerveless creature unfit to be the hero of a tragedy. But of, the play does not show Hamlet as a weak hero. When the Ghost beckons him to follow it, Horatio and Marcellus try to restrain him; but he threatens then saying, "Unhand me, gentlemen. By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me." These brave, terrifying words do not sound as if they come from a frail and weak person. Again he is no timid weakling when he speaks sarcastically and insultingly to Claudius and Polonius. He kills Polonius in an instant, sends his school fellows to their death, boards the pirate ship, returns to Denmark only to meet his tragic death,

rushes on the king and kills him with the poisoned sword, forces him deliberately to drink the remains of the poisoned wine and seizes the cup from his friend's hand to prevent him from committing suicide. All these do not square with the sentimental, weak Hamlet of Goethe's conception. Hamlet due to his procrastination and irresolution delays his action until the enemy takes the initiative. Claudius arranges the fencing match in which he plans for Hamlet's downfall. Hamlet is deceived and when he has only few minutes to live he stabs Claudius and justifies his action as well as Claudius' death. Thus he fulfils the duty at the cost of his own life. Hence Dr. Flatter is not quite right when he says that the Ghost is squarely responsible for Hamlet's failure.

Since the above given reasons do not account for Hamlet's delay, some feel that the cause of his delay is irresolution, which is due to an excess of thinking and reflection. The energy that should have gone out as action is spent in the process of cogitation. Coleridge analyses Hamlet's character and pointed out; "we see a great, an almost enormous intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare places in circumstances

under which he is obliged to act. Hamlet is brave and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve.” What Coleridge has said is perhaps true to some extent, for Hamlet’s soliloquies are full of thought and feeling, but after that instead of becoming a man and action, he becomes a man of no action, exhausted by the energy of his own thoughts and feelings. Hamlet confesses it.

If, however, we analyse the action of Hamlet, we find the cause of delay linked to the theme of the play. The avenger’s role is difficult, especially if he is a character like Hamlet. Hamlet is not merely concerned with the killing of his father’s killer, in doing so he feels he must set right the decay in the world around him and in heart of man. Shakespeare has endowed Hamlet and the action of the play with a complexity in the context of which the delay is understandable and, inevitably, has tragic consequences. Hamlet’s world is a world of good and evil and Hamlet’s error is his initial refusal to be involved in this world and life. His major question is “To be or not to be”, to act and taint oneself in the evil one seeks to eradicate or to withdraw from action altogether. But of, the withdrawal from life does not solve problems; it only creates more difficulties. Hamlet

is a character with potentialities of evil as well as good, as such he assumes a complexity lacking in the traditional revenge play hero. In his passionate impulsive manner Hamlet had in the earlier part of the play assumed an egocentric role- he must set everything right. Thus at a point where he might easily-indeed should have killed Claudius, he forbears to do so because he wants the king to suffer in the next world also. He as an ordinary mortal should have done what opportunity offered without assuming a divine power of deciding whether another man deserves salvation. This is a mistake which proves the turning point of the tragedy; now the tragedy is inevitable.

“If it be now, ’tis not come; if it be not come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all.”

Goethe views Hamlet as “a beautiful, pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve that makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off, every duty is holy to him- this is too hard. The impossible is required to him- not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again

recovering his peace and mind.” The delay in revenge, then, is linked to the basic conflict in the play-how does a man who aspires to virtue partake of action in a world which unavoidably involves him in evil. Hamlet’s delay rises from his blindness to the truth that there is “A divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will.” Hamlet has been a source of endless speculation to critics and readers and the main interest has been almost exclusively fixed on the problem of delay; why does Hamlet delay carrying out the task entrusted to him by the Ghost? Some critics like Werder argue that there is no delay at all. Werder, the German critic, says: “The piece (Hamlet) knows of no delay. It drives ahead in a storm, for the King is murdered even earlier than Hamlet and the reader can foresee.” Critics like Stoll are of the opinion that if at all there is any delay it is Shakespeare’s and not Hamlet’s for they believe if Hamlet had killed Claudius at once, there would have been no play at all, and so the dramatist is bound to delay the hero’s revenge. But of, Bradley strongly objects to these critics’ views and says, “certainly there is delay. Two months elapse and Claudius still lives,” the Ghost specifically appears in the closet-scene to whet Hamlet’s blunted purpose. Hamlet himself realises that he is guilty of delay and irresolution.

The delay is inherent to the very story. It is not merely that the story requires revenge to be deferred till the end-this does not demand procrastination- but that it leads the hero towards a destiny which a man who aspires to virtue does not willingly accept. Hamlet is a tragic hero whose role it is to punish and be punished, and in this dual role he muses on the nature of man. He delays his action because he shrinks from the very burden of living. But of, in the final Act he is able to come to terms with life and death. He realizes that the "readiness is all"; but the effect of the delay must inevitably take place. Hamlet is a man of remarkable qualities. He is a noble-hearted scholar, an eminent soldier 'the observed of all observers'. In spite of all these noble qualities he suffers from the fatal defect of indecision. He is reflective by nature and speculates over his actions. If he acts quickly, he does so, on impulse. But at, it is not only his tragic flaw which accounts for his downfall; the external circumstances or the Supreme Power of Fate also plays an important role in the tragedy of the hero. If we are to believe only in the tragic flaw of a character what is to account for other happenings in the play? For instance, if we are to believe that Othello's jealousy is the cause of the downfall, what are we to say about the motiveless, evil designs of Iago? How

are we to account for the three witches in Macbeth? Similarly, Fate has an important role in the downfall of the character of Hamlet. The very appearance of the Ghost strikes the note of some ominous power of Fate. It is Hamlet's fate that his father has been murdered by his uncle and his father's Ghost reveals the secret and lays the task of taking revenge upon Hamlet- a task which Hamlet feels inadequate to accomplish. The Ghost appears for the second time only to emphasise Hamlet's delay in carrying out his task. However, it is really the ominous atmosphere built up by Shakespeare rather than the Ghost itself which gives us a sense of supernatural power in the universe. Shakespearean tragedy presents the tragedy of a hero in terms of tragic flaw in the character of the hero. Shakespeare himself lays emphasis on this fact: "the fault, dear Brutus, lies in ourselves and not in our stars". Lear is a man of remarkable qualities but he lacks discretion and wisdom- the ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong, the just and the unjust. Othello is a great and noble man, but he is jealous and impractical and he falls. Macbeth is a brave and noble man but he is ambitious. His vaulting ambition overleaps itself and brings about his fall. Hamlet too meets with a tragic end because of his irresolute nature and inability to

accept the role ordained by nature for him. Thinking too precisely on the event is one aspect of Hamlet's delay. He broods unnecessarily over each and every action and is lost among his thoughts. E.K. Chambers diagnoses the delay in these words: "It is the tragedy of the intellectual, of the impotence of the over-cultivated imagination and the over-subtized reasoning powers to meet the call of everyday life for practical efficiency." It is true that his 'disgust' makes his life a burden. Hamlet receives a violent shock from his mother's over-hasty marriage. As a result of that he suffers from melancholia. At this time the Ghost reveals the secret of his father's murder and imposes upon him the duty of revenge of which he is incapable. The additional burden with the realization of his incapability to carry out the entrusted task successfully further weakens him and makes him a melancholic character. The consequence is disgust with life, a longing to end his life and a wish not to have been born at all. His consideration of the world and its uses also changes. Nothing in the world could entertain him and he loses interest in everything. He hates women and generalises their nature as 'frailty'. Thus his whole mind is poisoned because of his melancholy. Unnatural melancholy destroys the brain with all his faculties and disposition of action and thus results in his delay.

Verity points out that feeling less Hamlet would have less inclination to act; thinking less he would have more power to act. The contest between these tendencies prevents action.

**“Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth O’erwhelm them, to men’s
eyes.”**

Like other tragic heroes of Shakespeare he is also endowed with exceptional qualities like royal birth, graceful and charming personality and popularity among his own countrymen. “He is essentially a scholar and a thinker, and his noble brain conceives the finest thoughts. He has a high intellectual quality as Ophelia observes. He is religious-minded and is very sensitive. In spite of possessing all these high qualities which rank him above the other characters the flaw in his character, named as ‘tragic flaw’ by A.C. Bradley, leads to his downfall and makes him a tragic hero. The external conflict is with Claudius-‘the mighty opposer’- and the murderer of Hamlet’s father. To Hamlet, Claudius is a smiling damned villain, a seducer and a usurper of his rights to Denmark’s throne; he is one against whom he has to take revenge. The other external conflicts are with Laertes, his friend and the brother of his beloved Ophelia, with Guilenstern and Rosencrantz, his former

school fellows and friends but present enemies. Indeed Hamlet succeeds in overcoming his foes but only at a dreadful cost.

**“There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will..”**

The tragic flaw in the character of Hamlet is that he thinks too much and feels too much. He is often disturbed by his own nature of ‘self-analysis’. He is forever looking into himself, delving into his own nature to seek an explanation for every action, and giving vent to his own thoughts in soliloquies. Coleridge says that his enormous intellectual activity prevents instant action and the result is delay and irresolution. Bradley gives his own explanation for his delay and irresolution. According to the learned critic, he suffers from melancholia, a pathological state only a step removed from insanity. His thoughts are diseased thoughts. What is required of Hamlet is prompt action, whereas he broods over the moral idealism which leads to his delay in action. When he gets an opportunity to kill Claudius, he puts aside the thought because he cannot strike an enemy while he is at prayer. Again he allows himself to be taken to England although he knows well that the plan is part and parcel of Claudius’ evil intent. Hamlet himself is fully aware of own irresolution. Macbeth or Othello

in Hamlet's position would have averted the tragedy by swift action but even they could not have overcome the powers of cruel destiny. The movement towards Hamlet's regeneration begins with his reflections on the player's speech about Hecuba; it advances further in the closet-scene, and it reaches its culmination in the grave-diggers' scene. In the churchyard scene we find Hamlet meditating on death. But at, death is not now something to be longed for as a release from the ills of the flesh, nor something to be shunned from the dead of what comes after. Born on the day that the gravedigger began his occupation, Hamlet has lived all his life under death's shadow; and in the skulls thrown up by the grave-digger he sees quite simply the common destiny of men. It is a destiny he appears now to accept. Just before the fatal fencing-match he says: "If it be now, 'tis not to come...if it be not now, yet it will come." And adds "The readiness is all." Ready for the death which completes the universal pattern, he is also reconciled to the pattern of life which death completes. Hamlet has become aware of a supreme, if mysterious, design in the universe embracing all its apparent good and evil. Thus instead of lamenting that he was born to set right what was 'out of joint', he now asserts his faith in "a divinity that shapes our ends,/Rough-hew them how

we will.” Horatio’s words, “Flights of angels sing thee to thy rest” command a man who, after questioning the meaning of creation, to accept a design in it beyond our comprehending, and who, therefore, after seeking to withdraw from life through an abhorrence of all that is ugly and vicious in it, is finally- and tragically not until death approaches-content to live life as it is.

Several causes account for Hamlet’s inaction. By nature he is prone to think rather than to act. He is man of morals and his moral idealism receives a shock when his mother remarries Claudius after his father’s death. Chance too plays an important part in shaping his character. Chance places him in such a position in which he is incapable of doing anything. He feels sad at his position and says “The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, /That ever I was born to set it right.” He becomes inconsistent and is no longer a person who reaches a conclusion only by reasoning. He cannot quite accept the role that nature has prescribed for him-that of a revenger-and thus he is unable to act quickly. Like other tragic heroes Hamlet too has to face conflict, both internal and external. The internal conflict is between his moral scruples and the act of revenge which he is called upon to perform. Love of his father, the dishonour of his mother, and the villainy of his uncle prompt him

to take revenge while his nobility, his moral idealism, his principles and his religion revolt against such a brutal act. The result is that, torn within himself, he suffers mental torture. Character is not the only factor that is responsible for the tragedy of Hamlet. External circumstances are also responsible for making Hamlet tragic hero. Shakespeare creates a feeling that there is a mysterious power in this universe, which is responsible for every small happening. The appearance of the Ghost and its revelation is a manifestation of Fate. Many of the things that take place in Hamlet's life are by chance but none of these is improbable. He kills Polonius by chance. The ship in which he travels is attacked by pirates, and his return to Denmark is nothing but chance. Gertrude drinks the poisoned wine, by accident and dies. So fate in the shape of chance shapes the future of all characters including Hamlet. But at the sense of fate is never so overwhelming as to cast character in shade; after all, it is Hamlet himself who is responsible for his tragedy.

Shakespeare with his creative imagination and artistic skill could not make his Hamlet a conventional avenger. Hamlet has to become a different kind of revenger. Instead of the hero of concealed and unswerving purpose, celebrated for his courage and virtue, we have a hero who in seeking to right a wrong

commits one, whose aspirations and achievements are matched by failures and offences, and in whom potentialities for good and evil hauntingly coexist. And this is what transforms the single-minded revenger into the complex representative of us all. In a tragedy the hero normally comes to the realization of a truth of which he had been hitherto unaware. Aristotle called it “a change from ignorance to knowledge.” Shakespeare’s tragic heroes indeed undergo a transformation, a growth in vision and understanding which makes them gain further nobility and stature, but this growth and its accompanying self realization come too late to avert to the tragedy. Thus from the state of melancholy and depression that he is in at the beginning of the play when he sees Denmark as an “unweeded garden”, Hamlet regains his composure to become a truly philosophical and noble soul by the end of the play. He had once been an ideal personality as Ophelia tells us; by the time of the final act of the play, he is before us with a greater stature than he ever had before.

Shakespeare paid less attention to working out detailed or coherent time-schemes for his plays. Though he gives hints to denote the passage of time, yet he does not stick to any ordered schedule. Shakespeare has handled this element of time scheme with such

skill and intelligence that when we watch the play we are conscious only of the movement of the plot and a vague passage of time and are unlikely to notice any tricks with time. Though he possesses all the qualities of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, yet Hamlet is different from the others. He is the only tragic hero who evokes the sympathy of the readers at all times. As Hazlitt puts it "The distress of Hamlet are transferred by the turn of his mind, to the general account of humanity. Whatever happens to him we apply to ourselves, because he applies it to himself as a means of general reasoning. He is a great moralizer, and what makes him worth attending to is that he moralises on his own feelings and experience. He is not a common place pedant." If Lear is distinguished by the greatest depth of passion Hamlet is the most remarkable for the ingenuity, originality and unstudied development of character. To Coleridge, "Shakespeare intended to portray a person, in whose view the external world, and all its incidents and objects, were comparatively dim, and of no interest in themselves, and which began to interest only when they were reflected in the mirror of his mind. Hamlet beheld external things in the same way that a man of vivid imagination, who shuts his eyes, sees what has previously made an impression on his organs."

Hence the poet places him in the most stimulating circumstances that a human being can be placed in. He rightly judged for Hamlet, after still resolving, and still determining to execute and still postponing execution, he should finally in the infirmity of his disposition, give himself up to his destiny and hopelessly place himself in the power and at the mercy of his enemies. Shakespeare wished to impress upon us the truth that action is the chief end of existence- that no faculties of intellect, however brilliant, can be considered valuable, or indeed otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from or render us repugnant to action and lead us to think and think of doing, until the time has elapsed when we can do anything effectually. In enforcing this truth, Shakespeare has shown the fullness and force of his powers: all that is amiable and excellent in nature is combined in Hamlet, with the exception of one quality. He is a man living in meditation, called upon to act by every motive, human and divine, but the great object of his life is defeated by continually resolving to do, yet doing nothing but resolve.

What is the problem in Hamlet's character that he cannot act in the main concern, whereas he shows promptitude in other matters such as killing Polonius, sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death, and

jumping on to the pirate ship to grapple with the pirates single-handedly? Hamlet's problem is the problem of the avenger, not just in terms of creating political and social repercussions, but also in moral terms of becoming involved in the every evil the avenger is trying to eradicate. This problem is especially great in the case of Hamlet who sees the whole of Denmark and the very nature of man as corrupted and rotten. He sees his task not simply as killing his father's killer but, by doing so, ridding the world of the satyr and restoring it to Hyperion. What Hamlet shrinks from is not the act of vengeance, but the whole burden of living. His questions- witness the soliloquies-concern not so much the nature of revenge as the nature of man; but these questions he is impelled to ask by reason of what in his revenger's dual role he has become. He is a hero whose tragic role it is to punish and be punished, to do evil alone with good; as such his reluctance to act and become a part of the evil is understandable. The world to which the hero's human destiny commits him is one in which Hyperion and the satyr is brother, sprung from the same stock, which also lives in him. Seeing Claudius, the satyr, apparently triumphant, he is possessed by a sense of the all too fertile viciousness of the life in which his own life shares. It is a life in which he

must yet is reluctant to participate. He longs for death, refuses marriage and procreation (in rejecting Ophelia's love). His nature resistant to what nature wills. This, as Harold Jenkins points out, is the fundamental conflict in Hamlet. It is what gives complexity to his character and raises him to the stature of a Shakespearian tragic hero, much above the conventional Revenge play hero.

Shakespeare employs an artistic device involving the use of two parallel time schemes, one real and the other dramatic in Hamlet. The 'dramatic time is used for reinforcing suggestions of quick movement' but some argue that Shakespeare, 'who always wrote in a hurry and never blotted out a line', was deliberately careless in matters which were not likely to disturb his audience. To solve this controversy one shall have to resort to Bradley who goes to the root of the matter and says that Hamlet is not mad, he is fully responsible for his actions. But at, he suffers from melancholia, a pathological state which may well develop into lunacy. His disgust with life can easily assume the form if an irresistible urge for self-destruction. His feeling and will are already disordered, and the disorder might extend to sense and intellect. His melancholy accounts for his nervous excitability, his longing for death, his irresolution and delay.

Hamlet receives the shocking revelations of the Ghost and sinks into melancholy. Hamlet puts 'an antic disposition' to execute the order of the Ghost successfully. The King and the Queen are amazed at his strange behaviour and the King wants to find out the cause of his madness. Polonius comes out with a plan to use Ophelia as a decoy. Ophelia falls in with the idea and meets Hamlet while Claudius and Polonius hide. Hamlet suspects Ophelia's attitude. The first scene of a play is always important; it must succeed in catching the attention of the audience. Coleridge says: "Shakespeare's opening scenes strike at once the key note and give the dominant spirit of the play, as in *Twelfth Night* and in *Macbeth*-or finally, the first scene comprises all these advantages at once, as in *Hamlet*." The first scene gives the audience a number of facts, introduces the source of the action of the play, creates an atmosphere and excites suspense and curiosity.

Hamlet, by enacting the 'Gonzago play' is confirmed of Claudius' guilt. He is now in a mood 'to drink hot blood'. At this moment he receives a call from his mother to meet her in her closet. He prepares himself for the interview and chooses to "speak daggers but use none", for he wants to be "cruel, not unnatural." He meets the Queen and immediately rebukes her for her frailty and

incestuous marriage. Alarmed by his words she cries for help. Polonius, who is hiding behind the arras, according to plan, to eavesdrop on their conversation reveals his presence and is slain by Hamlet. Regretting the action, Hamlet, however, continues with his accusations and the Queen's guilty conscience is pricked. She confesses her guilt of having given into base impulses and promises to be a secret friend of Hamlet. The Ghost makes its second appearance to whet Hamlet's desire for revenge against Claudius. The Ghost is invisible to the Queen's eyes. Hence she thinks that Hamlet is speaking to the air and suspects his madness. The chief purpose of the opening scene in Hamlet is not to introduce characters but to create a suitable atmosphere for the emergence of the supernatural to expose the action of the play. It provides information-the King has died, the son of the former King has not succeeded to the throne and there is danger of an attack from Norway. It also establishes an atmosphere of intrigue and possible danger. It further introduces one of the principal characters, Horatio, a close friend of the hero, and reveals his scepticism. It provides a certain amount of background information on Denmark and the court-neither the Kingdom nor the dead King is at peace. It makes room for the action of the play and prepares the audience to look forward

to more excitement and strange events. Dowden analyses the time of action thus: "The duration in the play presents difficulties. It opens at midnight with the change of sentinels. Next day Horatio and Marcellus, with Barnardo, inform Hamlet of the appearance of the ghost; it cannot be forenoon for Hamlet salutes Barnardo with 'Good even sir'. On the night of this day Hamlet watches and meets his father's ghost. The season of the year is perhaps March; the nights are bitter cold. The second act occupies part of one day. Polonius despatches Reynaldo to Paris, Ophelia enters alarmed by Hamlet's visit, her father reads Hamlet's letter, the players arrive, and when Hamlet parts from them, his words are, "I'll leave you till to-night" but before this day arrives, two months have elapsed since Hamlet was enjoined to revenge the murder. It was two months since his father's death when the play opened, and now it is 'Twice Two Months'. Next day Hamlet utters the soliloquy, 'To be or not to be', encounters Ophelia as arranged by Polonius, gives his advice to the players, is present at the performance of his play, and, night having come, he pleads with his mother, and again sees his father's spirit. Here the third act closes, but the action proceeds without interruption, the King inquires for the body of Polonius, and tells Hamlet that the bark

is ready to bear him to England. We must suppose that it is morning when Hamlet meets the troops of Fortinbras. Two days previously the ambassadors from Norway had returned, with a request that Claudius would permit Fortinbras to march through Denmark, against the Poles. Fortinbras himself must have arrived almost with the ambassadors, and obtained the Danish King's permission.

The conversation between Hamlet and Osric constitutes the final comic element in the play. Hamlet well understands Osric's pompous manner of speaking and use of inflated vocabulary. Hence he makes fun of him and calls him "water-fly". Also he makes him nod his head to whatever Hamlet says, treating him as a fool. In Osric, Shakespeare satirises the affected language and euphemistic fashions of the Elizabethan courtier. While Hamlet's wit is an indicator of his moods throughout the play, it also serves to highlight the disturbed mental state he is in. The scenes which highlight Polonius as a ridiculous character are so placed as to tone down the tension of an earlier scene or to prepare for the intensity of the scene to come. Many of the words used by Polonius or about him serve an ironic purpose and offer a grim kind of humour. The grave digger scene is placed with superb imagination and skill where it

is. It comes immediately after Laertes and Claudius have plotted Hamlet's death and before the final scene of the play in which Hamlet, we are now assured, is to meet his death. It affords the audience a view of a changed Hamlet whose musings on death are now more philosophical than bitter, more wise than confused. The clown's comments exhibit a shrewd insight which is relevant to the context of the play's theme. Moreover, the tempo builds up from the trivial to a more serious level till the shock of Ophelia's death breaks upon Hamlet and he comes face to face with the grim reality of death. And we the readers or the audience can appreciate the grim and tragic irony all the better.

Hamlet treats Polonius with contempt, playing before him the part of a lover turning mad through jilted love. He sharpens his wit at Polonius' expense. Polonius intends to test his madness and asks him, "Do you know me, my lord?" and Hamlet replies "Excellent well; you are a fishmonger." Hamlet pretends to be mad and enquires of him if he has a daughter. When Polonius says that he has one, Hamlet insults him saying: "Let her not walk i' the sun; conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive: Friend, look to it." This is how he refers to Polonius in front of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "That great baby you

see there is not yet out of swadding clouts.” He has great contempt for him and when Polonius says that he once acted the role of Julius Caesar and was killed by Brutus, this is how he makes fun of his boasting nature: “It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.” Next we have his conversation with Reynaldo. He wants his servant through whom he sends some paper and money to Laertes, to spy on his son’s behaviour and his mode of life in Paris. He advises Reynaldo to adopt any means, even to charge Laertes with false charges, to elicit the truth from his friends. The method that he wants Reynaldo to adopt to find out Laertes’ mode of life is amusing and his talk with Reynaldo makes people laugh at him and his worldly wisdom. Polonius’ love for his own voice and his manner of talking with long ornamental speeches often become objects of fun and laughter. He always declares that he wants to be brief in his speeches. But at, unconsciously he lengthens his speech and once it offends the Queen too. The Queen asks him to give her “more matter, with less art.” Still he is lengthy and cannot cut short his speeches. The mixture of comic element in a tragic theme serves various purposes. The comic element in a tragic play serves to relieve the tragic tension of the play. Thus it offers dramatic relief. Secondly earthly life is a blend of

both happiness and sorrow. Nobody is blessed either with happiness alone or with sorrows only. Hence a blending of both comedy and tragedy makes the play more realistic. Finally it heightens the tragic effect of the play. The classicist believes in what we call 'the purity of genres'. Hence the classical dramatist either wrote a comedy or a tragedy; he never mixed the comic and the serious. However, life is not purely comedy or tragedy; it is a mixture of laughter and tears. Shakespeare's aim was to hold the mirror up to nature- as Hamlet declares the purpose of a play to be. Hence he violated the classical theory and mingled comedy with tragedy. All his tragedies have a tinge of comedy. In Macbeth, for instance, we have a comic element in the person of the Porter. In King Lear, we have the Fool. In Othello, though we do not have any comic element as such, yet we have some light-hearted conversation between Desdemona and Emilia. In Hamlet, we have a number of comic elements.

Act III Scene II thus has a dramatic significance which cannot be ignored if we are to understand the thematic issues of the play. The play-within-the play serves to emphasise that Hamlet is not traditional revenge play hero- after the Ghost's words have been confirmed he yet spares Claudius' life because the King

is praying. The problem is that Hamlet sees himself as one who is to ensure the victim's punishment in the next world also. He is overestimating his role, and it is only towards the end that he will truly understand that man must accept certain conditions and act within them readily. However, it would be wrong to consider the scene the central act and the crisis of the play. It is important as far as bringing Claudius and Hamlet to a full awareness of one another's true nature. From this point there can be no averting the revenge or the tragedy.

**“I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.”**

The grave-diggers are the professed Clowns of the play and they provide a unique kind of humour in the play. The humour provided by the grave-diggers serves to lighten the tragic stress and strain caused by the shock of Ophelia's death. But at, humour is not out of place. In keeping with the sombre spirit of the play, they jest about graves and corpses, bones and skulls. As they discourse on death they comment on growing in the most light-hearted manner: “Here lies the water-good. Here stands the man-good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he will he, he goes, mark you that. But if the water come to him, he

drowns not himself.” Then the first grave-digger says there is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditches, and grave-makers,” because “they hold up Adam’s profession.” He then puts forth a riddle to the second grave-digger. “What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the ship wright, or the carpenter?” he solves it himself. “A grave-maker; for the houses he makes lasts till doomsday.” When Hamlet and Horatio arrive the witty talks are intensified with more humour. Hamlet asks, “Whose grave is this, Sir?” the first clown answers, “Mine, Sir.” When Hamlet tells him, “Thou liest in it”, the grave-digger replies, “You lie out on’t, Sir”. When Hamlet asks for whom he is digging the grave, the grave-digger replies “one that was a woman, Sir, but rest her soul, she is dead.” Polonius, the garrulous old fool with an element of the knave in him is regarded as a comic character in the play, but it is by no means certain whether Shakespeare intended him to be so. He has a worldly wisdom which is shallow and superficial and this is vividly seen in his advice to his son who is leaving for France. He advises him to be familiar by honest means, to beware of quarrels, to dress carefully, to strengthen honest and reliable friendship, never to give vent to his feelings and opinions but to accept others’ opinions, and to be true to himself, so

that he may be true to others. This speech of Polonius is an epitome of worldly wisdom but it has become an object of ridicule to others for it appears trivial and platitudinous. Four distinct elements of comedy may be found in Hamlet. These are: The Humour Provided by Polonius, The Mordant Wit of Hamlet, The Humour in the Grave-digger Scene and The Humorous Talk of Osric. His skill of punning on the words too is amusing. He has a tendency to play on words and is ready to share his knowledge with anyone who is willing to listen. Hence when Ophelia says that Hamlet has been making “many tenders of his affection” to her, Polonius begins to play on the word “tenders”. Even the royal people become a victim to his long ornamental speeches and playing upon words. When speaking to the Queen, he plays upon the word “mad”. Thus Polonius’s manners and talk amuse the audience and provide a comic element to the play.

After the exit of the Player Queen, Claudius appears to be cowed. Hamlet’s assertion that the play is titled ‘The Mousetrap’ is a veiled threat of which the King is perfectly aware, especially as ‘mouse’ is his term of endearment for Gertrude. When Lucianus enters, Hamlet’s comment that he is ‘nephew to the King’ is taken as another threat, and Claudius suspects that

Lucianus' lines are written by Hamlet himself. Claudius watches for the second time the re-enactment of his crime and is about to reveal himself, and when Hamlet gives a last twist to the knife by explaining, 'You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife,' the King rises, 'frighted with false fire'. The Ghost's story is confirmed. Hamlet has been entrusted with the duty of avenging his father's death by his father's Ghost. He learns that his father has been murdered by Claudius, but he hesitates to execute the command of the Ghost. He has doubts about the genuineness of the Ghost and Claudius' sin. He wishes to have strong proof before taking revenge and allows time to lapse until the arrival of the players. Their arrival inspires him with a sudden idea. He conceives of the plan of staging a play to put Claudius on trial. The dumb-show is followed by the actual play. The Murder of Gonzago with its deliberately artificial style, full of repetitions and circumlocutions enables us to concentrate on the real drama which is being enacted, with Hamlet's eyes riveted on his uncle's face with the King trying hard not to show by his face what he is feeling. The words of the Player Queen emerge with dreadful clarity from the surrounding verbiage: "In second husband let me be accurst! / None wed the second but who killed the

first/....A second time I kill my husband dead/When second husband kisses me in bed.” Hamlet by his interjection makes it certain that the point shall be understood: “That’s wormwood, wormwood”...”If she should break it now!”... “O, but she’ll keep her word.” Far from being an artistic failure, Shakespeare’s Hamlet is a well constructed play. Theoretically, objections might certainly be brought against play. Critics may say that emotions in it do not find their objective correlative as T.S. Eliot said. However, a perusal of the play is sufficient to remove all doubts regarding its success as a well constructed play. In Hamlet there are twenty scenes and every scene in it is a masterpiece. They are constructed in such a way that they perform several functions. They provide contrast between courtly and humble life and between tragic possibilities and humorous activities. They help to advance the story, to create and resolve mystery and tension. They show the development of characters and allow individuals to travel from Denmark to Norway, Poland to England, from the court to the countryside. The division of the play into scenes also helps to give the impression that time is passing. Finally it encourages the audience to contrast the prompt actions taken by Fortinbras and Laertes with the delayed action of Hamlet. In brief,

the construction of scene itself gives an impression of a coherent plot. Revenge still has its ruthlessness, as witness what it does to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; but reluctance and submits to a universal order, is at an end. The question of 'to be' or 'not to be' is finally answered. In the final contest between the two sons avenging their fathers, each tainted with the very evil he would destroy, punish one another, yet die forgiving one another. With evil in the person of the King there is of course no reconciliation. The avenger who kills him when he has himself received his own death-wound at last fulfils his dual role. The plot and theme have finally been resolved in quite a masterly manner. Hamlet is organized about the crime which is already past when it begins but which is re-enacted in its central scene, and this re-enactment is plausibly motivated by Hamlet's thought that the Ghost may be a deceiving spirit. The fundamental problem in Hamlet, if the play is to be revealed as a coherent dramatic design, is to find a relation between Hamlet's task of revenge and the universal mysteries of man's being which occupy his mind. In the plot of a son's revenge Shakespeare found the basis of a structure linking beginning, middle and end. As Harold Jenkins points out, "An exposition opening with the ghost of the father already dead and

then presenting his successor has its tremendous climax in the revelation of the murder to the son, who accepts the charge of revenge. In the big central scene the murder is not once but twice re-enacted on the stage and the murderer confronted with his crime. But as this also alerts him to the threat of vengeance, it precipitates counter-plots which lead to a catastrophe in which the hero at length achieves revenge at the moment of his own death. In the three ceremonial court scenes in which at the beginning, middle, and end, son and uncle face one another in mutual but undeclared hostility, there is a kind of theatrical symmetry.”

Hamlet ‘speaks daggers to her, but use none,’ not being able to entirely leave his mother alone “to heaven and to those thorns that in her bosom lodge to prick and sting her.” The scene marks the second appearance of the Ghost. This further emphasises Hamlet’s delay in action. The Ghost is seen only by Hamlet. This indicates a close and intimate relationship between the father and the son and the Queen’s inability to see it may indicate the lack of such close affinity between the mother and the son. It may also indicate that the Ghost is really an aspect of hamlet’s own mind, as he knows that he is delaying the true revenge. Above all, Hamlet’s act of killing Polonius in this closet-scene hastens his trip

to England on the very same night and drives poor Ophelia mad. By killing Polonius, Hamlet has become a killer himself and clearly the victim of another avenger. Poignantly enough, the punisher and the punished, the avenger and the avenger's victim now coalesce into the same character. The killing of Polonius makes the action go ahead. It is an act bound to have repercussions, as indeed, it has.

This play-within-the-play further helps the dramatist to reveal his own theories of play-acting. Hamlet acts as a mouth-piece of Shakespeare, through whom he expresses his ideas of play-acting and shows his contempt for the contemporary actors. To Shakespeare, the aim of drama is to hold the mirror up to nature, with the actors not indulging in extravagant passions. They should "suit the action to the word, the word to the action, and should not "overstep the modesty of nature". This piece of advice given by Shakespeare through Hamlet shows Hamlet at his best; He is playing the part of Deputy Providence, plotting, arranging, baiting the trap etc. His making fun of Ophelia, his darting sarcasm at his mother and playing the part of a Chorus, his mocking the King, all show his versatile genius.

Hamlet has been entrusted with the duty of avenging his father's death by his father's Ghost. He learns that his father has been murdered by Claudius, but he hesitates to execute the command of the Ghost. He has doubts about the genuineness of the Ghost and Claudius' sin. He wishes to have strong proof before taking revenge and allows time to lapse until the arrival of the players. Their arrival inspires him with a sudden idea. He conceives of the plan of staging a play to put Claudius on trial. Laertes, as the young son of a murdered father, is the entire situation asked for. He is the typical 'revenger'- all that Hamlet is not. His every word and gesture invites comparison with Hamlet. He would cut his enemy's throat in Church while Hamlet spares the King at prayer. If Hamlet feels conscience makes coward of men, Laertes consigns conscience to the devil and declares: "I dare damnation". But of, the contrast does not disparage Hamlet. What we see of Laertes as revenger, unhesitant and violent, with neither awe nor scruple, careless both of the safety of the realm and of his own salvation, makes Hamlet's deficiencies in this part glaring. But of, the revenge of Laertes involves Hamlet as its object. The situation of revenge is revealed as one in which the same man may act both parts; and the paradox of man's dual nature,

compound of nobility and baseness, god and beast, is exemplified in the hero's dual roles. And a hero whose tragic role it is to punish and be punished, to do evil along with good, might well be reluctant to perform it. Thus the delay in the action required of Hamlet. The dumb-show is the prelude to the actual staging of the play. Hamlet chooses to sit at Ophelia's feet rather than next to the Queen, partly to encourage the idea that his madness is caused by disappointed love, but mainly because he could not watch the King's face if he sat next to the royal pair. Hamlet plays the part of the commentator too. The dumb-show is the first part of the King's ordeal. The dumb-show itself represents very closely the crime of Claudius. Yet it is surprising that he does not betray his feelings. Some critics feel that Claudius, being lost in his conversation with the Queen, missed the dumb-show. Certain other critics feel that Claudius does see the show, but he hopes that it is only an unlucky coincidence that 'The Murder of Gonzago' resembles his own crime or he naturally suspects that the choice of the play is deliberate and knows that Hamlet is watching his reactions. As the remarks about second marriages, which he has heard, are grossly offensive, he pretends not to have noticed them. The dramatic importance of staging this dumb-show is that as the

play is stopped before the end, Shakespeare, in order to inform the audience of the full plot, uses the dumb show for the purpose.

By enacting the play Hamlet has confirmed the Ghost's story, but at the expense of revealing his own knowledge to the King. His own fate is sealed unless he follows up his victory. The victory is imperfect, in any case, because Hamlet's behaviour during the performance, as well as the apparent gross lack of the taste in his choosing a play with such a theme can allow the King to cover up his guilt with a show of anger. On the other hand, Hamlet is extremely happy at having discovered the truth. Now he gives more weight to the words of the Ghost. He says to Horatio, "O Good Horatio, I'll take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound." He intends to act immediately and reveals his fury. Thus situation leads to the crisis or turning point of the play. Hamlet has to act now. But of, when he gets the opportunity to carry out his work, he fails to act as he finds Claudius at prayer. In his soliloquy he justifies his lack of action by saying that if he kills Claudius who is at prayer, his soul would enjoy the pleasures of heaven, instead of suffering the tortures of hell.

With Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet is at first friendly, but after working out their secret, he

is crafty, and occasionally, openly hostile. His sharp and cutting sarcasm begins with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's spying attitude. When Hamlet finds out that they have come to spy upon him Hamlet says: "You were sent for: and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour. I know the good King and Queen have sent for you." When Guildenstern asks, "Good, my Lord, vouchsafe me a word with you", Hamlet replies, "Sir, a whole history." Again when Guildenstern informs him of Claudius' sickness Hamlet tells him that this should be conveyed to the King's physician and not to him. When Rosencrantz tells him that his mother is surprised at his behaviour, then again he speaks in a comic vein: "O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother!" He then calls them a sponge "that soaks up the King's countenance, his reward, his authorities." Not only these but more examples could be cited to prove the comic elements provided by Hamlet.

Hamlet receives the players with enthusiasm and plans with them to stage a play called 'The Murder of Gonzago', with some modification in the speeches. On the day of staging the play Hamlet prepares the players well in advance to make the play a great success. He advises them to "suit the action to the word, the word

to the action” so that they would not “overstep the modesty of nature”, for the aim of a play is to hold the mirror up to nature. He then seeks the help of Horatio, to whom he has already revealed the secret of the Ghost’s revelation, to watch the King’s feelings while the play is staged. Thus he prepares the players: Horatio and himself to ‘catch the conscience of the King’. The play is to be the mainspring for further action. The King, the Queen and the courtier are invited to see the play.

What Shakespeare stresses from the first is the bond between Hamlet, the son and his father. An antithesis between the brother kings- the senior Hamlet and Claudius- is part of the moral and dramatic structure. The situation in which Hamlet finds himself before he as yet knows anything of the murder is one in which the god-like man is dead and supplanted by the beast-like. The very vocabulary of Hamlet’s speech beginning “O that this too sullied flesh” with alternating words like ‘angel’ and ‘celestial’ with verbs of animal connotation suggests, a descent from heavenly embraces to bestial feeding as far as Hamlet’s mother is concerned. This descent from the heavenly to the bestial extends to the whole state of Denmark which has become “rotten”, an unweeded garden. Hamlet’s task, when placed in the widest moral context, is not simply to kill his father’s

killer but by doing so to rid the world of the satyr and restore it to Hyperion. With the appearance of the Ghost a second time, the structure of the action emphasizes that the ‘command’ that made the climax of the exposition has failed to be performed.

A dramatist writes for the audience unlike the poet. Shakespeare, being a man being a sophisticated audience and it had a penchant for crude and rather melodramatic spectacle. So to entertain such an audience he had to introduce melodramatic scene such as the ghost scene, the play within the play, the graveyard scuffle, the duel between Hamlet and Laertes, Ophelia’s madness and her drowning and the tragic death of Polonius. Such incidents were admired by his audience and Shakespeare was possibly influenced by such taste. The “groundlings” had a great love for themes involving revenge and bloodshed. What is noteworthy is that Shakespeare with his genius inter-relates all these elements into a cohesive whole and makes Hamlet a well constructed play. Each of these elements has some relation to the overall theme or idea. What is rarely emphasized, yet is vastly important, is that the revenge of Laertes for his father involves Hamlet as its object. The hero charged with a deed of vengeance now also incurs vengeance. The situation of revenge is revealed

as one in which the same man may act both parts; and the paradox of man's dual nature, compound of nobility and baseness, god and beast, repeatedly placed before us in the words of the play and represented in its action in the contrasting brother kings, is also exemplified in the hero's dual role. The hero who is both punisher and punished finally kills the King only on receiving from Laertes his own death-wound. And unless we perceive the significance of Hamlet's guilty deed-the revenger of his father killing another man's father-it is difficult to see how the ending of the play can be understood.

The meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia simultaneously tells Ophelia that Hamlet will not marry, the King that he will revenge. What one crisis means for Ophelia a later act will show. In the other, just when revenge brings its threat to a climax as the King is confronted with his guilt, it begins to recoil upon itself. Hamlet has his moment of triumph, which strengthens his grim resolve (Now could I drink hot blood"), but his eagerness to kill the King is first paralysed in the prayer scene and then in the Queen's chamber frustrated by his killing Polonius instead. When the Ghost now suddenly returns and Hamlet stands convicted of neglect, the corpse of Polonius lies before them and the second revenge action is ready to begin. This, along

with the fate of Ophelia, occupies most of the fourth act. The Fortinbras episode looks both ways: it closes that part of the play which emphasizes the inactive hero; but it simultaneously serves to introduce the counter-action which will present his opposite. 'Young Laertes', however, has apparently absorbed the fiery role originally envisaged for 'young Fortinbras'.

“A countenance more in sorrow than in anger”.

Thus there is a gradual development in the progress of the plot. Hamlet, a witty and energetic genius deteriorates in character as the play progresses, but regains his lost balance of mind with an added strength at the end of the play before he dies.

In the dramatization of the Hamlet story, it is the role that determines the character, not the psychological make-up of the man that determines what he will do. So Hamlet has to become a different kind of revenger. Instead of the hero of concealed but unswerving purpose, celebrated for his courage and virtue, we have a hero who in seeking to right a wrong commits one, whose aspirations and achievements are matched by failures and offences, and in whom potentialities for good and evil hauntingly coexist. And this is what transforms the single-minded revenger into the complex representative of us all. It is a principal of Shakespeare's dramatic art

to combine his plot with sub-plot which will repeat or contrast with it. And his explosion accordingly has been ready with other sons besides Hamlet. Fortinbras -son of a dead king and nephew of a reigning king- invites obvious comparisons with Hamlet. The other son is Laertes. Fortinbras contrasts with Hamlet as a man of action; Hamlet realizes that he is neglecting his action. Hamlet is not simply a tragedy of revenge in which the crucial deed has to be deferred until the end: it is a play about a man with a deed to do who for most of the time conspicuously fails to do it. The play-within-the-play, which re-enacts the murder and also contains an image of the Queen as an inconstant wife, is at the centre of Hamlet. After the play the King is shown confessing, if not repenting, his sin and the Queen is taxed with her sin. Hamlet's verbal onslaught on his mother after the play balances his denunciation of Ophelia before it. In the central sequence the movement of events intertwines the two actions of revenge and marriage and brings them to their crisis together. The essential subject of Hamlet, suggested by and focused in the old story of a son's revenge, is then, the intermingling of good and evil in all life. The world to which the hero's human destiny commits him is one in which Hyperion and the satyr are brothers, sprung from the same stock, which also

lives in him. Seeing the satyr apparently triumphant, he is possessed by a sense of the all too fertile viciousness of the life in which his own life shares. It is a life in which he must, yet is reluctant to, participate. He longs for death, refuses marriage and procreation, his nature resistant to what nature wills. This is the fundamental conflict the play exhibits in Hamlet. In the last act, there comes a change. Hamlet has lived all his life under death's shadow; and the skulls the grave-digger throws up he sees quite simply the common destiny of men. It is a destiny he appears now to accept. In the final scene, just before the fatal fencing match, he says: "If it be now, 'tis not to come; ...if it be not now, yet it will come," and adds "The readiness is all". The 'nunnery' scene, as it is called, and indeed Ophelia's whole part in the play, has generally been misunderstood. The essential of her story is that she is the woman Hamlet might have married and did not. The dialogue with Ophelia only brings to the surface what has been in Hamlet's mind before, as the 'method' of his madness has been used to show. He has associated Polonius' daughter with ideas of mating and breeding and the sort of life they may bring forth. In the third and final movement the action comes to an end. Laertes wants to avenge his father's death and is misled by Claudius into adopting foul means to

kill Hamlet. Meanwhile a change occurs in Hamlet's character. After his escape from the pirates, Hamlet returns to Denmark, as a wiser, more mature and truly philosophic man. The short scuffle in the graveyard leads immediately to the fencing match and hastens the end of the action. The action of the play comes to an end with the death of almost all the important characters except Horatio and Fortinbras.

Chance plays an important role in the life of Hamlet. Some critics are of the views that the role of chance in the play operates within a larger design. Most of the events the action forward happen by chance—the players' arrival, killing of Polonius, the attack of Hamlet's ship by the pirates' vessel and Hamlet return to Denmark, and the arrival of Fortinbras in the last scene to maintain order in the closing of the scene and action. Some people object to use of chance, but we must admit that the chance happenings are plausible, never improbable. What Hamlet shrinks from is not the act of vengeance but the whole burden of living. The questions we find him asking, as Shakespeare takes us into Hamlet's mind and imparts to him his own intellectual curiosity, concern not so much the nature of revenge as the nature of man; but they are questions

which he is able, and indeed impelled, to ask by reason of what in his revenger's dual role he has become.

The first movement is an act of exposition. It exposes the murderer, the villainy of the murderer and the duty of an avenger. It may even be called the Ghost's Act for the ghost, predominates it and it is through this supernatural power that everything is exposed and revealed to the avenger as well as the audience. It lays the foundation of the revenge to be taken by the next of kin of the murdered person. It also presents Claudius as the 'mighty opposer' of Hamlet. The domestic life of Polonius is portrayed in contrast to the royal and political life. Thus the Polonius family is linked to the main action. Finally it voices the secondary theme, **"Frailty, thy name is woman."** There is a proper link between the first and second movements: the first movement ends with Hamlet's realization of his duty to avenge his father's death as well as his inadequacy. Hamlet has its origin in the dramatic tradition of Revenge Tragedy. Revenge implies the wronged individual taking the law into his own hands in order to satisfy an inner passion though in civilised society this function of punishing the wrong-doer is entrusted to the government of the state. The motive for revenge is a primitive emotion to be found in natural man,

though it is a dangerous emotion. Revenge- the action of retaliating for an injury done-proved a popular theme for dramatists for it enabled them to depict human passions, render rhetorical speeches, and present violent action. The dramatic value of these features was great in the secular theatre. Early dramatists as well as early audience considered vengeance to be a pious duty laid on the next of kin: it was wild justice, but for drama to be satisfactory and successful something more than strict justice was needed. The old Law claimed an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: vengeance demanded both the eyes, a jaw full of teeth, and above all that the victim, after exquisite torments of body and mind, should go straight to Hell there to remain in everlasting torment. A perfect revenge required, therefore, great artistry.

In the second movement we find the development of the personality of Hamlet, the full exposition of the secondary theme, and Hamlet's tragic errors. Hamlet shows a gradual development in character. He feigns madness to find out the truth and enacts the 'Mousetrap' play to confirm Claudius' guilt. The play confirms the king's guilt. In spite of that Hamlet is inactive due to irresolution. With Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia in the nunnery scene where he condemns

her 'frailty' and advises her to join a convent, and his interview with his mother in the closet scene where he condemns his mother's 'frailty' and awakens her sleeping conscience, the secondary theme "Frailty, thy name is woman" comes to a climax. Hamlet delays in his action of avenging the murder. He refuses to kill Claudius at prayer, and kills Polonius on an impulse. This error of Hamlet accounts for his journey to England. Furthermore, by killing Polonius Hamlet, who has to avenge his father's death, becomes a victim of revenge by another son, for killing a father.

**"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport."**

Hamlet has a definite form. The whole play falls into three movements and abides by the rules and regulations of dramatic form with a beginning, middle and an end. A hero whose tragic role it is to punish and be punished, to do evil along with good, might well be reluctant to perform it; that is not of course to say that Hamlet at the beginning of the play, as he mourns his father's death and his mother's marriage, can be prophetically aware that before the play is done it will be his destiny to kill Polonius and be killed by Laertes. But of, the play itself is aware of the destiny it is preparing for him and of that larger destiny of

which the dual revenge becomes the symbol; and as the play shapes itself in the dramatist's imagination it is able to communicate to its hero a reluctance- not indeed to kill Polonius, which Hamlet does not show, but to live the life required of him in a world which seems dominated by evil, which he does show from the beginning. It is in this sense that it is possible to say that delay is inherent in the story. It is not merely that the story requires revenge to be deferred till the end but that it leads the hero towards a destiny which a man who aspires to virtue does not willingly accept. Such a destiny in a tragic play is best suited by a reluctant hero, and not the less to because it leaves him saying 'I do not know Why...' An important feature of the revenge tragedy is the ghost of the dead which reveals the crime committed and the identity of the culprit and lays the duty of avenging the murder. The role of the ghost is to urge the avenger to action and the avenger encounters many impediments in achieving the goal. Finally he avenges the murder with much difficulty and perishes in the encounter. Hamlet, no doubt, conforms to the tradition of revenge play in the light of these points. Hamlet is enjoined by his father's ghost with the duty of avenging his father's death. When it finds him inactive it appears again to "whet" his action and exhort, him to

a speedy revenge. Hamlet, though, finds the time 'out of joint' and determines to set it right. He considers the entrusted work of the ghost as something sacred but he also thinks about the action required of him. Hence he avenges the murder at the cost of his own life as well as the lives of many others. Thus, the revenge becomes the central theme of Hamlet, and the supernatural element is fully exploited. The action of a Shakespearean tragedy progresses through conflict which is both internal and external. The external conflict is between the hero and other characters and the internal is within the mind of the hero. In Hamlet we find the external conflict between Hamlet and Claudius, and Hamlet and Laertes. Hamlet wants to kill Claudius to avenge his father's death and Claudius wants to get rid of Hamlet to ensure his own safety. Laertes wants to take revenge against Hamlet for killing. His father and at the end of the play we see the fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet in which both are wounded and meet their deaths. The internal conflict is within the mind of Hamlet, and is revealed to us through his soliloquies. Throughout the play we witness this conflict of Hamlet in which he broods over his incapability to act, his irresolution, and hence his wish to die to escape from the worldly tortures and sufferings. Hamlet undergoes

this internal conflict which is a mental torture and the consequence is that at time he takes recourse to madness as an escape. The revenge theme was very popular during Elizabethan era, for it offered much scope for the display of passions, ranting speeches and bloody actions. The revenge theme deals with exciting plots which arouse the people's emotional excitement to a much greater level than an ordinary theme could. Such plots are found in the revenge tragedy and they have an immediate appeal for the audience. Hence Shakespeare, in his Hamlet, adopted the dramatic tradition of the revenge tragedy, but his artistry lifted the play much higher than any plan treating this theme. During the Elizabethan era, the Greek and Latin classics were of much interest and dramatists found the theme of revenge quite imitable. They adopted not only the bloody action and ranting speeches of those early plays presenting the revenge theme but also the supernatural figures and the madness brought on the characters by desperation. Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's own *Titus Andronicus* are the best examples of the dramatic use of this revenge theme in the early Elizabethan age. In both, the plays are pictured with the difficulties which are faced by an injured man in identifying the murderers and punishing them. But of, they avenge the

murders successfully and are satisfied with their revenge. In Hamlet Shakespeare presents a revenger who is both ruthless and reluctant. As a revenger he must act, on behalf of outraged virtue, to restore a violated order, set right what is 'out of joint'. But of, the act he is impelled to do, involve him in evil of the kind which he would punish. As the ruthless revenger he exemplifies in his own person the evil which is inseparable from the good in human nature; as the reluctant revenger he can symbolize the good's abhorrence of it.

The theme of revenge is extended beyond the main character. There are other revenges also. Fortinbras wants to take revenge on Denmark for the losses sustained by his father in a duel with Hamlet's father. Fortinbras is frank and openly expresses his motives. His actions too are honourable; hence he manages to vindicate his father and to win back much more than his father lost. Laertes too seeks to avenge his father's death and the insanity of Ophelia. He succeeds in punishing the murderer at the cost of his own life for his indulgence in foul deeds. Hamlet wants to take revenge against Claudius, the murderer of his father, the usurper of his rights to the throne and the seducer of his mother. He too avenges the death of his father at the cost of his life due to his 'irresolution' and 'inactiveness'. Thus there is

the element of murder, adultery, incestuous marriage, insanity, faithfulness-all elements of Revenge Tragedy. The very name Revenge Tragedy brings to our mind Seneca, the ancient Roman dramatist, who in turn was indebted to Greek mythology for his material. But at, he varied in his treatment of the themes and produced tragic effect by horrifying incidents, bloody actions and ranting speeches. The Revenge Tragedy has a set pattern. Firstly, it deals with crime, usually murder, with varying motives. Secondly, the duty of vengeance is laid on the next of kin or near relative. Thirdly, invariably a ghost is involved, generally the ghost of the dead which reveals the crime committed and lays upon the hero the duty of avenging the murder. Fourthly the person who is charged with the duty of avenging the murder encounters many impediments to vengeance. Fifthly the duty is accepted as something sacred and the murder is avenged with disastrous consequences. Sixthly there is much blood-shed and crude physical horrors and when the murder is avenged, the avenger and all others closely concerned perish together in one gory ruin. Seventhly, the language is generally astounding and bombastic.

Horatio reveals his disbelief: "Tush, tush, twill not appear." When Barnardo begins to describe his experience, the Ghost makes its appearance. It is the

Ghost of the late King of Denmark. It comes clad in armour and has the same “...fair and warlike form/ In which the majesty of buried Denmark/ Did sometimes march.” The appearance of the Ghost “harrows Horatio with fear and wonder.”, and he accepts the fact that it resembles the late King in every respect. Horatio trembles and looks pale with fear. When he tries to talk with the Ghost, it disappears with an offended look. It reappears after sometime. Horatio again urges the Ghost to speak. When it is about to open its mouth the cock crows and the Ghost disappears. In Hamlet there are twenty scenes and every scene in it is a masterpiece. The most celebrated of these are the opening scene, the nunnery scene and the closet scene. These scenes help to advance the story, to create and resolve mystery and tension. Further they show the development of character. The truth is, as stated by Professor Hall Graffin, “Shakespeare is at fault”; he did not trouble himself to reconcile...inconsistencies which practical experience as an actor would tell him do not trouble the spectator.” He is more cruel and obscene in his attitude towards Ophelia. He advises her to join a nunnery so that she may not become “a breeder of sinners.” He satirises the feminine sex as: “I have heard your paintings too well enough: God has given you one face,

and you make yourselves another; you jig, you amble and you lisp, and nickname god's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance." In the play-scene he makes witty remarks which are also obscene. He tells her that is "a fair thought", "to lie between maids' legs", and when Ophelia questions: "Will a' tells us what this show meant?" Hamlet replies: "Ay, or any show that will show him. Be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means!" When Hamlet gives her a clear picture of everything that is staged, Ophelia appreciates his skill in interpreting: "You are as good as chorus, my lord." Immediately Hamlet replies: "I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying."...**"The funeral baked meats Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables."**

The theme of revenge is seen in no narrow sense in Hamlet; it is part of a much broader, much more universal vision- the issue of the human condition. 'To be or not to be' is a question that Hamlet muses upon. It is the premise of Shakespeare's Hamlet as of the traditional Hamlet legend, that a son should avenge a father's death. But of, Shakespeare's concept of revenge is not simple. If the play imposes on its hero the duty of revenge, it does not follow that revenge has unqualified approval. The question of revenge is caught up with

issue of 'good' and 'evil'. Evil is implicit in the very task of revenge which nature imposes on Hamlet. Thus, the theme of revenge becomes part of the fundamental conflict the play exhibits in Hamlet. He must participate in life, though reluctantly. However, in the last act there comes a change. Hamlet has come to terms with the destiny of man. He is ready for the death which completes life's universal pattern. He perceives that the universe is governed by some supreme, mysterious design. Revenge still has its ruthlessness, as witness what it does to Rosencrantz: but reluctance, now that he recognizes and submits to a universal order, is at an end. He has accepted his place in this mortal world, and instead of recoiling from what life involves, he is willing to play his part. In the final contest between the two sons avenging their fathers, such tainted with the evil he would destroy, punish one another, and yet die forgiving one another. The avenger who kills the King when he has himself received his own death would at last fulfil his duel role. The avenger has recognized a truth which goes beyond all petty revenges and conflicts in "the readiness is all." **"For this same Lord, I do repent; but Heaven hath pleased it so To punish me with this and this with me..."**

In Shakespeare's tragedies we have an element of melodrama which contributes to the feeling of terror. Hamlet too has tinges of melodramatic elements. In the first Act itself we notice this element. The Ghost has been seen twice by the guards before the play opens. Horatio, the sceptic, is frightened and trembles at the sight of the Ghost and calls for the help of the angels to guard him. He is shocked even more when the Ghost reveals the true nature of his father's death and imposes on him the duty of avenging his father's death. But of more than these melodramatic elements, the feeling of unease and sadness is evoked by the sense of moral disorder and chaos in the world of Hamlet-the time is out of joint, and the state is an unweeded garden. All through the play, we along with Hamlet are faced with the issues of human corruptibility and morality. Fate paces the hero in such circumstances in which the hero is helpless to act. It is mere accident that Hamlet kills Polonius and has been sent to England the very same day for this act of killing. Thee again fate intervenes and Hamlet's ship is attacked by a pirate vessel and he returns to Denmark to meet his tragic death. Hence Fate plays a major role in the downfall of a tragic hero. Hamlet too is a fatalist and remarks of his own fate. "There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" and

“there’s a divinity that shapes our ends.” His end has already been shaped to avenge his father’s death at the cost of his own and others’ lives. **“The cress of majesty Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw What’s near it with it;”**

Thus the soliloquies in Hamlet serve the dramatic purpose of revealing the hero’s character. There can be little doubt that Shakespeare uses the soliloquy effectively and artistically in Hamlet. Nowhere does it seem out of place or palpably artificial. Indeed, practically in every instance, it appears inevitable and necessary. If Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark is the husk without the grain, the Prince of Denmark without the soliloquies will be an elusive shadow, a character without a personality. It will be noticeable that the soliloquies are also indicative of advance in action in the sense that they let the audience know what the next step is to be. Shakespeare’s Hamlet has all the elements of a Senecan revenge play; however, his treatment of the revenge theme makes the work much more than a mere Revenge Tragedy. Though it is a tragedy of “blood and horror” the treatment of the theme is not as crude and gross as that of the conventional Revenge Tragedy. These elements have been refined to raise Hamlet far above cheap melodrama. The supernatural element

is not crude but acts as an instrument of justice to punish the evil-doer. Again Shakespeare's treatment of the theme of duty-a son's duty of avenging his father's death- is more complex than others. In avenging the murder, in other plays, the material considerations act as impediments. But at, Hamlet it is Hamlet's own conscience, and his psychological refinement that are the impediments. Above all, the language lessens the tone of cruelty and violence and makes Hamlet a higher work of art.

“I'll have grounds More relative than this.

The play's the thing Where I'll catch the conscience of the King.”

Hamlet is a play of great scenes and every scene in it is a masterpiece. These scenes help to advance the story, to create and resolve mystery and tension. The scene in which Hamlet sees the Ghost or the one in which he talks to the Ghost creates an atmosphere of awe and terror in the most artistic manner. The nunnery scene, the play scene, the closet scene, the fencing match which precedes the final catastrophe is impressive and contributes to the overall thematic effect. Various other melodramatic events take place in the play. The murder of Polonius by Hamlet takes place on the scene before the very eyes of the audience. Laertes revolts against

King Claudius and in his furious mood make angry speeches and demands justice for his father's death. In the graveyard scene Laertes leaps into the grave of Ophelia and is followed by Hamlet and a short scuffle takes place. The play closes with the death of the Queen, having drunk the poisoned wine, the death of Claudius at the hands of Laertes and Hamlet at each other's hands. All these add to the melodramatic element of the play.

Shakespeare's tragic heroes are so noble and exceptionally honest and virtuous that when they suffer we feel that the element of good is wasted. This wastage of good is found in all Shakespearean tragedies. In Hamlet, Hamlet is presented as a Prince of nobility, with greatness of honour and genius. In spite of this he is not able to fulfil his father's ghost's wishes successfully without killing himself and hence the element of goodness is wasted; for if he is alive and the circumstances are different he could have as a Prince, done something good to his country. But now, it has come to nothing. So in tragedies the expulsion of evil involves the waste of good.

Shakespearean tragedy is essentially the story of one man and depicts his sufferings and misfortunes leading to his death. Shakespeare's hero is a man of noble birth

and holds a lofty position in society. He has certain exceptional qualities which command respect and make him a man above the common run of mankind. His sufferings are also of an exceptional kind to produce strong feelings of pity, awe and terror. Shakespeare's heroes are noble and large-hearted-Macbeth, Othello, King Lear- and they occupy an important position in society. Hamlet also deals with the tragedy of one man, Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark. He is popular among the people and is regarded as the "beloved of the distracted multitude." He is noble in his thoughts and dealings and has a sensitive conscience which prevents him from doing evil acts.

**“When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in th’ incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At game-swearing, or about some act.”**

T.S.Eliot argues that the ‘madness’ of Hamlet lay in Shakespeare’s hand; in the earlier play a simple ruse, and to the end. We may presume, understood as a ruse by the audience. “For Shakespeare it is less than madness and more than feigned”, by pretending to be mad, Hamlet kept open the safety valve and could speak anything, and do anything, could insult and accuse Anybody in order to relieve the pressure on his mind. This is

what T.S.Eliot means when he uses the words ‘;more than feigned.’ The phrase means that such pretence is psychologically inevitable and necessary, and is not a mere practical trick or a device of the old revenge play as critics like Stoll would have us believe. Aristotle defines tragedy as “The imitation of an action that is serious, and also as having magnitude, complete in itself, in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear; wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. With Shakespeare, as Dr. A.C. Bradley says, “Tragedy...is concerned always with the leaders of the state- like Coriolanus, Brutus, Antony at least as in Romeo and Juliet with members of great houses whose quarrels are of public interest. It may be called a story of exceptional calamity leading to the death of a man in high estate. But no amount of calamity which merely befell a man descending from the clouds like lightning could alone provide the substance of its story.”

Hamlet’s wit most of the time finds expression in puns and quibbles. At times it seems as though quibbling is a habit of thought with Hamlet. It is part of Hamlet’s malady that, while his power to act is paralysed, his intellect functions with unusual strength. When he

lacks the capacity of prompt action, he tries to derive satisfaction by engaging in verbal duels. It is in such contests that we find examples to Hamlet's wit. His talk with the King is deliberately puzzling and provocative. When the King addresses him as "my cousin Hamlet, and my son", Hamlet in an aside says: "A little more than kin, and less than kind." When the **King asks him "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" Hamlet replies, "Not so, my lord. I am too much in the sun."** He speaks with the same tone of insulting humour to the Queen. When she finds fault with him, "Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended", Hamlet answers, "Mother, you have my father much offended". The Queen immediately begs him to speak directly; "Come, Come, you answer an idle tongue". To this Hamlet replies: "Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue." His wit scintillates us with a hard brilliance. After Hamlet has murdered Polonius, the King asks him where Polonius is. Hamlet replies: "At supper". The King is puzzled and asks: "At supper? Where?" and Hamlet replies: "Not where he eats, but where he is eaten; certain convocation of polite worms are even at him." The King is provoked at his words and once again asks him where is Polonius. This time Hamlet replies: "In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger find him

not there, seek him i' th' other place (hell) yourself." He indirectly hints at Claudius' wicked nature and says the reward for his wicked nature is only hell and not heaven. He also teaches him the moral value of marriage. While bidding farewell to the King he addresses him as "dear Mother". When the King tries to correct him as "Thy loving father, Hamlet", Hamlet insists. "My mother-father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh, and so, my mother."

The character of Hamlet has universal appeal and significance. His figure, as Brandes puts it, "is one of the very few immortal figures of art and poetry...like Cervantes' Don Quixote, and Goethe's Faust." Hamlet still lives in the hearts of many and is significant for his experiences in ourselves. He creates an impression that if we are to be kept in similar situations; we are likely to react to them in the same way in which Hamlet reacts to his predicaments. Hamlet is imposed upon with the duty of avenging his father's death. The awareness of his uncle's guilt and his mother's frailty change his whole outlook on life. Further he wants to verify these accusations. Even after the verification he hesitates to act. He is beset by universal questions on the nature of man and fate. Finally he is forced to kill Claudius at cost of his own life. Thus he becomes an epitome of human

nature for everyone finds oneself in the character of Hamlet. To call Hamlet Revenge Tragedy would be to do the work a great injustice; it would ignore the play's artistic superiority over other plays of this genre. The language which evokes a special world befitting great tragedy, the universal issues it takes up and tries to resolve, the complex nature of its hero- all these qualities lift Hamlet much above what is conventionally termed 'Revenge Tragedy'. It is a standing example of what a great artist can do with a conventional theme. It is only fitting that its avenging hero Hamlet dies to the beautiful heavenly benediction of Horatio, his friend: "Flights of angels sing thee to thy rest..." rather than to be satisfied gloating of a ghost as in other revenge plays.

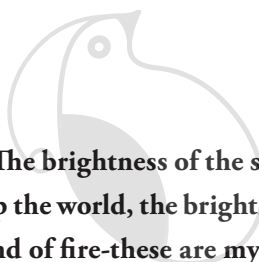
"O villainy! Ho! Let the door be lock'd.

Treachery! Seek it out."

Hamlet is no simple Revenge Tragedy. Shakespeare has woven into the play complex threads of contrast of character and ideas on the efficacy and value of revenge to elevate it much above the common plays of the Revenge genre. Shakespeare has broadened the vision of the play to a consideration of the universal mysterious of man's being. Hamlet's task, when placed in the widest moral context, is not simply to kill his father's killer but by doing so to rid the world of the satyr and restore

it to Hyperion. The theme of revenge is repeated and contrasted in case of Fortinbras and Laertes. Fortinbras, the son of a dead king and nephew of a reigning king is actively campaigning to set right his father's alleged wrongs. He is all 'hot' for action. Even when his efforts for his father's lands are over, and his soldiers are diverted 'against the Polack', Fortinbras is a contrast to Hamlet as a man of action in a daring enterprise. The sight of his army risking death for a worthless patch of ground comes to Hamlet as a rebuke. Hamlet's soliloquies point out that he is aware of delaying rightful revenge, but he cannot help it. Fortinbras finds a quarrel in a straw: hamlet, having a powerful and genuine incitement, yet delays his revenge. When he does act, he kills Polonious in mistake for the King, and the second revenge action is ready to begin...

Complete Self Analysis and Editing with collection of quotes from Shakespeare's Hamlet, Dr. S.Sen's Words and another book.



**“The brightness of the sun, which lights
up the world, the brightness of the moon
and of fire-these are my glory.”**

(Bhagavad Gita)



