Chapter VI

SHAKESPEARE'S 'HAMLET'
We have endeavoured to give in chapter IV a critical general survey of the various works of Shakespeare. Now, we take up 'Hamlet' for a separate treatment in the present chapter, as we have treated Kālidāsa's 'Śākuntala' separately in the last chapter. And, as we have earlier observed, we propose to consider 'Hamlet' from the points of view, mainly, of its theme, its characterization and its emotional effect, as we have done in the case of the 'Śākuntala'. In all this our critical consideration of 'Hamlet', we shall, of course, remember that 'Hamlet' is a drama, literary work or piece of art that has been most discussed and commented upon and is the most controversial of all as to its true meaning and significance. As Eliot says, "It is the 'Mona Lisa' of literature". Almost all great critics of drama or literature of the world have had something or other to say on it, and we have made ourselves necessarily acquainted with some of them. We, however, in our present study, propose, in all humility, to follow our own humble judgment in this matter which may or may not sometimes agree with the judgment of the celebrated critics. As before, we shall not enter into the innumerable details, but shall confine ourselves only to the essentials. We should do well also to remind ourselves, at this stage, that 'Hamlet' is a drama or literary work or piece of art that has been widely known as the most universally popular work of ever-

1 T.S. Eliot - Selected Essays (Faber & Faber) P144
lasting appeal in the world and also as Shakespeare's most typical or representative work, if not his greatest dramatic masterpiece. In this our somewhat detailed consideration of 'Hamlet', we shall generally draw upon Coleridge, Dowden, Bradley, etc. and upon Verity who has given an admirable summary of the more important views of the celebrated critics.

Before we take up the theme of 'Hamlet', we think it is important to note that Shakespeare, who was generally a very fluent writer, as tradition testifies, devoted much care and attention as well as time to complete the composition of 'Hamlet' as to no other of his works. Whatever the sources and model upon which Shakespeare worked, he worked seriously and hard, wrote a first draft and then revised and enlarged it to almost double its original length and also made many important changes in it. Now, this must be significant. We know 'Hamlet' is his first great tragic masterpiece and this is his most representative work where he revealed himself most. We are also told that Shakespeare, who had earlier lost his young and only son Hamnet, lost his father, besides losing his two patron friends, one executed and another gaol, before he began to write 'Hamlet'. Whatever some scholars might say, it is impossible to conceive that this had no relation whatsoever with the drama. On the other hand, it is most probable that the profound shock Shakespeare had to undergo at

1 'Hamlet' - Ed. by Verity, Introduction.
this great calamity in his personal life at this time had its inevitable impress upon the tragedy, and that may explain, to a considerable extent, the personal involvement of Shakespeare — if we are permitted this phrase — in this. Besides, Hamlet's advice to the players on the art of acting (Act III, Scene II) has been accepted by almost all as Shakespeare's own. We are also informed that the Ghost of 'Hamlet' is one of the two roles in his dramas he is known to have himself played, and is the top of his performance, the other being old Adam in 'As you Like It.' It is true, as modern Shakespearian scholars, say, that Shakespeare had to live on writing plays for the stage and had to please his audience, and so whatever theme came handy to him he had to take up and deal with. It is also true that the objectivity of Shakespeare as a dramatist has never been surpassed. Nevertheless, the above opinion does not seem to be the whole truth. It is not certainly psychologically possible to entirely obliterate the least personal or subjective reference of an artist from his art. As a matter of fact, as the science of psychology will testify, the subjective and the objective aspects are inter-woven and one cannot be completely dissociated from the other. Similarly, we have some personal reference to the poet himself in 'The Tempest', in particular in its final scene — a fact which has been almost universally acknowledged. All this shows the importance of 'Hamlet' even to its own creator, not to speak of its importance to others who may deal with 'Hamlet'.
Regarding the title, we may observe that the present simple, bare title of the drama does not appear to me altogether insignificant. The First Folio (as also the second Quarto) called it - 'The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke'. It was also sometimes called 'The Revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke'. Thereafter the unnecessarily lengthy and expressive title has been dropped in favour of the latest 'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark' or simply 'Hamlet'. While the former of the two current titles puts Hamlet succinctly in his evil environments thus pointing to the tragedy together with its circumstances, the latter simply puts the bare name of Hamlet and lets it alone suggest the inscrutable, agonising tragedy befalling an unique personality called Hamlet. Of course, 'Macbeth', 'Othello', 'King Lear', etc. or 'Romeo & Juliet', 'Antony & Cleopatra', etc. have all been similarly titled with an eye to pointed significance being laid on the bare name or names of the protagonist or protagonists, where the name itself, to an acquainted ear, seems to suggest the tragedy. But, in this, both Shakespeare himself as well as his editors and publishers, even long after he was no more, were responsible - each to what extent we do not know precisely. But the original names of Amleth or Hamblet have been well transformed by Shakespeare himself into the perfect English 'Hamlet' having a powerful and perhaps significant sound — significant in that the portions 'Ham' and 'Let' both have certain meanings not unconnected with what the name 'Hamlet' signifies, and we hope it will not sound
incongruous or curious to suggest this. For example, 'Hamlet' means 'the back of the thigh', 'the thigh of an animal' and 'Let' means 'to slacken or loose restraint upon' or 'to allow, permit, suffer' or 'delay'.\textsuperscript{1} Now, we know that Hamlet referred, in his satirical speech to Polonious, to the 'most weak hams' of 'old men', and elsewhere despised his own 'bestial oblivion'\textsuperscript{#} and his tragic indecision and delay in avenging his father's foul murder and mother's dishonour are too well-known. It appears, therefore, though we have not seen as yet any critic say so, that Shakespeare possibly intended the name also to be significant. In fact, we should remember that 'Hamlet', in particular, is a work of Shakespeare which has an unique style of poetry in that in it almost every word or phrase is suggestive and has more than one meaning. In terms of Sanskrit critical literature, it may be said it is an entirely suggestive work (vyangyapredhāna) both as a whole and almost in its every part. So it is no wonder that the name itself should have some significance attached to it relevant to the tragedy that it is.

Now, regarding the theme, as to the possible sources of 'Hamlet', without going into much details which scholars have already furnished, we propose to point out, in brief, Shakespeare's exercise of the power of invention as well as imagination in this. As it is well-known, he had a number of possible sources, viz., first, possibly at least an earlier model of 'Hamlet' by the

\textsuperscript{1} Chambers's 20th Century Dictionary.
English dramatist Kyd, next, possibly an English version, now lost, of the French Belleforest's 'Histoires' or Belleforest's version itself and perhaps also the Danish Saxo's Latin 'Historia', which is the original of Belleforest's version of the most popular mythical hero-story. If, however, Shakespeare had 'small Latin and less Greek', as old Shakespearian scholars believed, and at the same time no French, then Kyd's play (if not also the lost English version) probably has been his only source. Some scholars seem to think that the earlier model of 'Hamlet' may be by Shakespeare himself. But, now, the consensus among scholars seems to be that Shakespeare worked upon Kyd's play, if not also other sources, and himself made a first draft, revised and enlarged it and then finally arrived at our present 'Hamlet'. If it is so, he did not invent much substantially different from this current and popular story, in so far as the story element is concerned; though he certainly invented some new characters and incidents in the story. But, what is more essential, he did give a few turns and twists, so to say, to the story - which must be deemed substantial, indeed, from the view points of characterization and significance, besides imparting his inspired poetry to it. And this has made of the story an immortal drama wherein the character of Hamlet has suddenly assumed a stature of universal appeal and significance. While the original story was a primitive, horrible revenge theme, Shakespeare's drama has become a great modern
tragic masterpiece of universal import and significance. The original play, we may presume, furnished the general outline of the legend; the Ghost, elaborated by Kyd from Saxo's reference to it (there is no ghost in Belleforest) and (if it may be judged from the parallel case in Kyd's 'The Spanish Tragedy' and the final plan of revenge in it) the hint of Hamlet's procrastination, the device of the play within the play, and the death of the hero. Whether Shakespeare actually drew upon any other source cannot be determined. But, as it is well-known, in the case of Shakespeare, the word 'source' or 'origin' is entirely misleading unless we ask ourselves what constitutes the greatness of his plays. How else to account for the unique gifts of his characterization, which is ever known to be the crown of his dramatic art, his humour and wit, his pathos and tragic intensity, his deft manipulation of plot and underplot, his varied relief, and, of course, his extraordinary over-all poetry. It is only Shakespeare's unique imagination or inspiration that made this wonder possible - as in the Greek tragedians of old. Though Shakespeare did not follow the models of Greek tragedy but created a new world in his tragedies, this high-charged imagination or inspiration was one of those things he had in common with the Greek tragedians. Whether it was an English chronicle or a French collection of tales or a romance or an old play, he appropriated it for his own purpose and exercising a sovereign liberty of appropriation, he turned it to an inspired account - like the Greek tragedians. In this, his age was aidant. The Elizabethan feeling on the subject of originality and invention of the
plot was not the modern feeling. And Shakespeare fully demonstrated the justness of such feeling in almost all his plays, especially in his 'Hamlet'.

To be more concrete, the original Saxo's Historia, written about four hundred years earlier than Shakespeare's drama, relates the story of Hamlet (there it is Amleth) as a tale very much characteristic of the age, and the land to which it belonged. The story had a still earlier origin; there is an allusion to Hamlet in Icelandie literature about two hundred years before Saxo, and to this day 'Amlothe' (i.e., Hamlet) is synonymous with 'fool' among the folk there. According to the Saxo's story - the names have all undergone a gradual change - Hamlet's father was murdered by his brother who seizes the throne and marries the victim's widow. The Brince, summoned to revenge by his father's ghost, feigns madness and is narrowly watched by his uncle and a courtier. The murder of this courtier by mischance, Hamlet's voyage to England and the death of his companions follow as in the drama; but then, unlike the drama, in the original version, Hamlet marries in England the king's daughter and returns to Denmark where he kills his uncle and is chosen King. He, then, revisits England, where he marries two wives, by one of which he is finally betrayed to his doom. Further, in line with the drama, again, in order to test whether Hamlet is really mad, a beautiful girl is thrown in his way, but a foster-brother and friend of him reveals the plot
to him; and the girl, too, had an old affection for him, and so nothing is discovered. From this Shakespeare created his Ophelia and Horatio. Polonious, too, has been created out of the said courtier who also played eaves-dropper to Hamlet's conversation with his mother. Hamlet runs his sword through him and throws the body to the pigs, while in the drama he drags the body out with him. Then follows Hamlet's speech of reproach to his mother which in its purport resembles that in the drama. The exchange of the swords is also there in the original - but in a different situation. Hamlet, on his return, finds the king's men assembled at his own funeral feast. He goes around with a drawn sword and on trying its edge against his nails he once or twice cuts himself with it. Then they mail his sword fast into its sheath. When Hamlet has set fire to the hall and rushes into the king's chamber to kill him, he takes the king's sword from its hook and replaces it with his own, which the king in vain attempts to draw before he dies. The legend has no prototypes of Laertes and Fortinbras, whom Shakespeare added as necessary foils to Hamlet. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern also are his creations - not one, but two courtiers with their individual distinctions, as observed by Schiller. So, this original Hamlet story, is a mere primitive tale of revenge, a chronicle of the typical deeds of a Northern blood-feud, based on local tradition - only influenced greatly by Saxo's familiarity with the classical story of the 'madness'
of a Roman hero called Brutus (not the Brutus of 'Julius Caesar'), who expelled his enemies from Rome. Now, as already observed earlier, the miracle of Shakespeare's achievement consists in transmuting such crude material into a drama like 'Hamlet'. And this magic transformation has been affected through the one characterization of Hamlet, besides his obviously extraordinary poetry. The Hamlet of the old story is a straight-forward character, marked by bravery and by wit in assuming madness and keeping up the pretence. He is, there, 'quite sane and quite resolute'. But Shakespeare's Hamlet does not admit of these or any other 'neat definitions'.

In so far as Shakespeare worked upon Kyd's drama on Hamlet, we have indicated before, to what extent he drew upon his model. Besides, Shakespeare also had before him 'The Spanish Tragedy' of Kyd, which was probably the most popular of all pre-Shakespearian plays. Now, both these dramas of Kyd were full of 'tragical speeches' on the models of Seneca and Marlowe, and Shakespeare most probably satirised that style of poetry in his Player's speeches in 'Hamlet'. This sort of 'tragedy of blood' or 'tragedy of horror' he had no mind to follow - as we have seen in the case of 'Titus Andronicus'. This was, no doubt, his tradition and his inheritance; but he surpassed this fettered tradition and poor inheritance and created a new type of tragedy, which is neither the Greek type nor the Marlow type - but the Shakespearian type, as the world now knows it to be.
Two of the prominent features of the old 'Hamlet' were the revenge-motive and the supernatural machinery and these are characteristic features of Kyd and were very popular with the Elizabethan audience. So, Shakespeare did not spurn them, but accepted them as they were and created out of them, by the magic touch of his imagination, the unique play that 'Hamlet' is. 'The Spanish Tragedy' has a strong resemblance to Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' in two parts. Its main theme is the inversion of the situation in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' — the character on whom lies the duty of revenge is the father, not the son, and the means by which vengeance is ultimately executed is a Play within the play. In fact, Shakespeare's first draft contains some similarities of phrase and sentiment to both the Kyd's pieces. So, Shakespeare substantially 'borrowed' from his models and sources, and yet created something substantially unique in this his great tragic masterpiece. There is a German Hamlet play, which probably followed Shakespeare's and not vice versa. The exercise of imagination by Shakespeare upon this Hamlet theme will be made more clear with respect to his characterization in the play as also in its emotional effect which will be considered next.

Now, we take up the most difficult question in connection with the consideration of 'Hamlet' i.e., the character of Hamlet. Bradley and others have observed that the entire theme of 'Hamlet' has been so re-arranged and devised by Shakespeare
as to portray the one unique character of Hamlet, other characters only surround him and exist, as it were, to throw light on the character of Hamlet and only for the sake of Hamlet. Of course, according to the general conception of a 'nāyaka' or hero in Sanskrit critical literature, this is as it should be. But the point is, in the case of 'Hamlet' this is so in an extraordinary sense. In fact, probably it can be safely said without fear of contradiction from any quarter that Hamlet is the greatest plus the most mysterious character ever created in any literature. There are a few other characters, no doubt, that approach or equal him in greatness, as characters created in literature; but if we apply the test of mystery also along with greatness, Hamlet is unsurpassed. It has no rival, nor anyone approaches him as a literary creation. Shakespeare's own Falstaff is a great character, no doubt, and it is also not devoid of mystery, and critics do not agree whether Falstaff is a fool or no, a coward or no, a gentleman or no, etc. Faust is another such character being both a great and mysterious creation by Goethe. There are a few other similar characters in world literature. Of course, every great character generally has a certain element of mystery in it. But Hamlet's mystery seems to be ever baffling to anyone who is interested in him, even to the ablest of critics.¹ Some believe Shakespeare probably intended him to be so i.e., a mysterious character difficult to understand. In Sanskrit literature, we have our 'vyāsakūṭas' i.e. mysterious words, phrases or whole verses intentionally

¹ Dowden in 'Shakespeare- His Mind and Art'. P/26
inserted by Vedavyāsa in his 'Mahābhārata', which carry more than one meaning, that meaning or meanings being difficult to gauge. Similarly, Shakespeare has created a whole character which has been deliberately made difficult to understand. Others do not think so and they interpret the character of Hamlet in their own light. Each seems to think, no doubt, that his interpretation is the correct interpretation and yet each seems to be not very much sure about his interpretation as the most satisfactory one in every respect. This difference among even the most penetrating critics of 'Hamlet' is a measure of its great mystery. We may remember, in this connection, that a character in a literary work is always suggested or vyangya and not directly expressed. Hence there is a scope for interpretation, more or less, in every such character as regarding the meaning of any such part and the whole of any such work. But this is so in 'Hamlet' in a most extraordinary sense. In terms of Sanskrit critical literature, the character of Hamlet not only evokes the sentiments of vīre and karuṇa, which we shall elaborate later, but also abhuta in an extraordinary measure, as it profoundly strikes the feelings of wonder, mystery and awe in us. Eliot observed that he did not understand 'Hamlet' and also that 'Hamlet' was most certainly an artistic failure. Unfortunately, we are not able to agree with Eliot in this matter nor do we think there are many who will hold Eliot's opinion on

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1 Eliot — 'Selected Essays' (Faber) Hama p. 143
'Hamlet'. We think Eliot probably made a confusion between the play 'Hamlet' and the character of Hamlet. What was Hamlet's failure as a character to properly fulfil his duty of revenge has been wrongly imposed by Eliot upon Shakespeare as an artist in his creation of the drama 'Hamlet'. It was Hamlet's failure, not Shakespeare's. It may be very difficult to understand Hamlet i.e., the reasons for his procrastination, but this element of mystery has definitely enhanced the poignancy of the tragedy. In fact, there is hardly any artistic success in all literature comparable to Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'. So, where Eliot misunderstands, Bradley is not certain about many points, even Coleridge is not unchallenged and even Goethe is not universally accepted — where even wise and seeing critics seem to falter ('muhyanti yat sūrayah'), we should be naturally very cautious in our opinion, and we think we should best try to avoid the contending controversies and concentrate, in the main, on the agreed common grounds.

This element of mystery in the character of Hamlet has been due, it seems, to its extraordinary complexity and conflicting tendencies as well as its intense inwardness. The words that he speaks to others are seldom to be taken in their face value; they are somewhere spoken in zest, wit or humour, somewhere in bitter irony or self-reproach, which may or may not be true, somewhere as deliberate exaggeration and so on. Hence the importance of Hamlet's soliloquies on which Shakespeare seems
to have given special stress and which have been composed with special care. Naturally, Hamlet revealed himself more in these soliloquies than in his speeches to others. Of course, given a proper understanding of these speeches together with their precise contexts and his attitude to the persons concerned, it should be possible to find out their suggested meanings and true imports. Yet it is comparatively easier to follow his soliloquies which must be accepted as giving vent to his true thoughts and feelings. So, critics are seen ultimately to keenly search in his famous soliloquies for clues to the mystery of his character. But here, again, when Hamlet himself is puzzled and is at a loss to see his 'course' through the maze of strongly contending possibilities (as in the case of the famous 'To be, or not to be' — soliloquy) his expression takes to this puzzling character of his thought and makes it very difficult to be clearly understood. Hence, we have so many interpretations of that single line 'To be, or not to be' —. The extraordinary nature of Hamlet's character in the play is due to the unique character of his personality together with the unique character of the problem thrust upon him. To this should be added the unique character of his circumstances, as Bradley has done, when he is smitten with extreme grief and melancholy and his very will is sapped.

Hamlet 'is a prince, a born prince ... the model of youth and the delight of the world - a beautiful, pure, noble and most moral nature ... (to whom) every duty is holy'. This,
in brief, is Goethe's estimate of Hamlet as quoted by Verity in his Introduction. Some, however, regard this picture of Hamlet as too flattering. They contrast, for instance, what Hamlet says of himself to Ophelia. But certainly this is in self-reproach born of bitter irony and therefore should not be taken in its face value. More important is the testimony of other characters in the play like the testimony of Hamlet himself as when he thinks aloud in his soliloquies. Horatio's friendship and the admiration of Fortimbras are witness enough. With his fine moral sensibility, Hamlet has a horror of things evil. His deep filial piety, shown equally in his reverence and affection for his father and in his passionate pleadings with his mother, his gentleness and geniality with his friends and social inferiors (like that of Shakespeare himself), his generous spirit in recognising the merit of others (Fortinbras) and the rights of others (Laertes), most of all, his excessive conscientiousness demanding absolute proof of the guilt of the king, his contempt of shams and conventions—these moral qualities speak for themselves, no less than his rich gifts of intellect and imagination. He was certainly 'the expectancy and rose of the fair state'—we mean the Hamlet of his heyday. In fact, he has all the fine and rare gifts of head and heart—intellectual, moral, emotional, and imaginative—that we can conceive of in a man or prince; and Shakespeare has bounteously endowed him with all these save and except one i.e., a strong, active and sustained will. And that is the one defect in his otherwise noble character—the one 'tragic flaw' that,
through unnecessary procrastination, brought doom upon himself and others.

It is not, however, true that Hamlet entirely lacks will or the capacity for positive, timely action. Any such extreme theory is belied by his activities in arranging the play within the play and also during and immediately after it, in dealing with the eaves-dropper Polonious, during his scuffle with the sea pirates, in disposing of the two courtier-spies, in his grappling with Laertes in Ophelia's grave and in his final act of revenge on the king, his last burst of real action in the play. But these cannot be described as actions proper in so far as they are made on the spur of the moment and so are better called impulsive actions as opposed to actions that are properly meditated upon and willed. They cannot be called actions for which Hamlet, as their agent, has to bear full responsibility. On the other hand, these occasional bursts of hasty and hot deeds clearly testify to his lack of a proper will. This momentary flash of will and then its immediate dying out are evidences of the weakness of his soul. These may be the virtues of imagination, not of will. These are no substitutes for a strong, active and sustained will. These may be described rather as manifestations of a passive, blind will that can only act when it is goaded to act and that has no purpose, design or initiative - in fact, a will that ceased to be will but takes to the nature of mere whims or caprices. A Fortinbras or
a Laertes or even a gentle Horatio would have easily done the deed in a day, while Hamlet, with his great nature and greater possibilities, failed tragically but for this lack of will.

Again, it is not that Hamlet does not altogether possess such will, but that his will is now paralysed. Now, he only thinks and thinks and thinks, and cannot act properly and in time. He thinks on the pros and cons - the possible justness or unjustness - of his action, cause and consequences, and procrastinates and ultimately cannot do the deed. There is a certain likeness in Hamlet with Macbeth. Macbeth also cannot do the deed, being conscience-striken. It is the same with Hamlet, in so far as Hamlet himself seems to think so. Whatever be the real reason or reasons for Hamlet's procrastination, Hamlet himself says, in his famous 'To be, or not to be' - soliloquy, 'Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.' But critics have interpreted this word 'conscience' differently. Most of them interpret 'conscience' as meaning 'speculative reflection', from the sense consciousness, and 'not the moral sense'. Even if it is so, we think there is an express and positive reference to the moral sense in the same 'To be, or not to be' - soliloquy - we refer to the very next line - 'Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer ...' Hamlet here pointedly refers to nobility, and this nobility must necessarily be understood with reference to certain moral principles. These moral principles may be either
those universally accepted or now acceptable to Hamlet personally. Horatio also, at the end, says simply and pointedly, 'Now cracks a noble heart', and these last word of Horatio about Hamlet are not without significance. At any rate, when Hamlet thinks of 'suicide' as a possible solution of his problem (which is, substantially, the most accepted interpretation of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy) he naturally grounds his thoughts on certain moral principles. He ultimately desists from committing suicide and is apparently ready to 'bear the whips and scorns of time' because of 'the dread of something after death'. But this 'conscience' makes him 'coward' and his 'resolution' being 'sicklied over with the pale cast of thought' his 'enterprise' loses 'the name of action'. So, his reflective thought - extremely painful and penetrating - is based on certain moral principles, as they must be. As we have seen earlier in Goethe's estimate of Hamlet as also in the play itself, he is of a most moral nature, and this moral nature coupled with his keen reflective thought has made his task most difficult for him.

Is 'Hamlet', then, a moral tragedy or, as we call it now, a tragedy of 'moral crisis', or a tragedy of thought - a tragedy of reflection? In other words, what is it that makes Hamlet procrastinate? Most critics, however, agree on one point that Hamlet never felt any great moral scruple about the justness of revenge, as judged from the play itself. The answer
to the second part of the most vital question has been given in
the affirmative by the most powerful group of critics viz. Goethe,
Schiller, Coleridge, Dowden, etc. and a host of others. We know
Shakespeare's plays have been variously described as, Tragedy of
Ambition ('Macbeth'), Tragedy of Passion ('Romeo and Juliet'),
Tragedy of Folly ('King Lear'), etc.etc. So 'Hamlet' has been
described as 'Tragedy of Thought or Reflection'. Not only this,
Schiller, Coleridge and others have developed this idea into a
positive theory that excessive thought or reflection is the real
cause of Hamlet's procrastination and failure to carry out his
mission properly. For example, Coleridge says, '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 ... he vacillates from sensibility,
and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action
in the energy of resolve.' Also, 'He is a man living in medita-
tion, 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.' This has been, however,
contested by Bradley and others. For example, Bradley has ob-
served that the Hamlet of Coleridge's description very nearly
resembles Coleridge himself - rather than the true Hamlet. He
further says that the real cause of procrastination and failure
is not excessive reflection but 'melancholy' to which reflection
may be an indirect cause and which has been further aggravated by
reflection. We do not, however, like to enter into such controversy among the great critics themselves. Whether thought is the cause of melancholy - at least in the case of Hamlet - or vice versa i.e., in the case of Hamlet, again, whether melancholy caused by the shock at his mother's dishonour besides the foul murder of his father caused the chain of his paralysing thought is difficult to determine precisely. In this connection, we may possibly refer to the case of Arjuna in the 'Gītā,' who had to experience a similar - though not exactly similar - condition, the paralysis of the will and consequent inaction. Of course, there are vital differences between the two cases. Of these, one is immediately apparent, viz., while Arjuna would not kill his dear relatives and superiors out of sheer pity and compassion even for the sake of the whole world or for his own life, Hamlet who feels it is his bounden duty to avenge the murder of his father and his mother's dishonour, is unable to fulfil this duty because his will, for whatever reason or reasons it might be, is paralysed. While Arjuna is in a moral crisis and he thinks he ought not to kill, Hamlet is in a crisis of will, and though he feels he ought to kill, he cannot do the act. In the 'Gītā,' this has been described as 'Arjunaviṣādayoga'; and Bradley has pointed out 'melancholy' as the cause of Hamlet's paralysis of will. So it may seem Bradley's explanation has been supported by the 'Gītā.'

Whether it is so or not, we think Hamlet's case may
probably be explained in the following way: Hamlet's most moral nature coupled with his habit of excessive reflection when received the extreme shock of his father's foul murder and his mother's dishonour, especially his mother's dishonour (and especially as revealed by his father's ghost and by the manner of this revelation) immediately paralysed his will (but not his thought, emotion and imagination) and hence the tragedy leading to the final catastrophe. In this collocation of causes what is the relative importance of a particular cause over another is difficult to determine. In fact, any one of these i.e., either his most moral nature or his nature of excessive reflection or his extreme melancholy, may be emphasised and held up as the real cause, as it has actually been done by one critic or another. And the consequence of such theorisations has also varied from one another. For instance, while Bradley has observed that Hamlet would not have failed at any other time, others have held that he would have, at all times, failed. So, while Bradley has put emphasis on the immediate circumstance, others have pointed to the essential tragic flaw in his very nature.

It appears the poignancy of the universal appeal of Hamlet's tragedy is enhanced if it is held that Hamlet would have never succeeded in doing his duty — especially in the present circumstances when he sinks under extreme melancholy. This view increases all the more the absurd nature of what to him is now a most impossible task. He is never a man for it the
least in his present mood of hopelessness and despair which only makes him bid his time in fruitless speculation and futile resolve and self-condemnation at the futility of such resolve. Even if he would have succeeded at any other time, all the possibilities of his character and endowments are now made null by his peculiar circumstances. For the circumstances with which he is now confronted are precisely such as to bring out all that is weak in him and to give no scope for a man of his type. Therein lies the pity of Hamlet's lot. He is born to set right hideously abnormal conditions and succumbs under the fatal yoke, his very merits proving hindrance. It is not his vice, but virtue that kills him - rather an overgrown virtue, especially in the present context, that but paralyses his will and sets his task to naught. "The time is out of joint; 0 cursed spite,/ That ever I was born to set it right!/ " - such is the heart-rending cry of his agonised soul. And Goethe says, "In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces." "A beautiful pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off; every duty is holy to him, - this too hard. The impossible is required of him -
not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him."

Yet the pity of it all must not blind us as to the measure of Hamlet's failing. His procrastination costs ultimately the lives of his mother, Ophelia, Polonious, Laertes, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and himself. Only the king has been rightly killed - but killed too late and at too great a cost to Hamlet himself and the state. We have earlier spoken of morality. Bradley and others have shown that the play never hints at the possibility of any great moral scruple on the part of Hamlet as to the justness of revenge. Others think - and probably they are right - that there is an undertone of this moral scruple in the mind of Hamlet which, to a certain extent, caused his procrastination. It may not be expressly stated, but it is always there. As we have seen before, when Hamlet philosophises on the issue of life and death, he expressly refers to the concept of nobility and hence to certain moral principles being the guiding force of his thought. When we climb down from his high 'Question' and come to his specific task of revenge, we think the moral scruple does not at once evaporate, but lies hidden in his moral nature under all speculation. In fact, for him his 'question' and his task are now inseparable. He seems, no doubt, to resolve that he ought to take revenge, as urged by his father's Ghost; but there seems to be some moral hesitancy behind this resolve, as even Bradley remarks that Hamlet does not like the idea of suddenly falling upon the king from
behind. Possibly, he is out to find a better or the right way to revenge. Anyway, his failure, howsoever it has been caused, is the measure of his profound tragedy.

Hamlet thinks too much and 'he who reflects too much will accomplish little' (Schiller). And being of a most moral nature, his endless thought is sustained by a keen moral sensibility. Again, as he thinks, he generalises and universalises any particular issue and so his intensity of thought as well as feeling grows ever more.

For he not only thinks too much, he also feels too much. Here, again, as everywhere, he is self-conscious. So, he admires most in others the qualities which he knows he himself lacks. Horatio, he says, is his ideal of the man 'that is not passion's slave'. He himself is a passionate soul - he thinks passionately, imagines passionately, but alas! does not will passionately. The tragic hero is always passionate. And so Hamlet has also something of Romeo in him. Feeling strongly, he is prone to act; but thinking strongly, he has no power to act. Thus through the conflict of these contending tendencies his soul is tossed about in a restless ecstasy of self-torture. But when feeling does not translate itself into action, the expression of it is apt in the end to become a substitute for action. So, Hamlet, along with Richard II, 'unpacks his heart with words', and yet condemns himself for this.
This his most moral and reflective and passionate nature accompanied by his present melancholy has blunted the edge of his will. A dreadful gloom now settles down on him (as in Macbeth), lit only by flashes of spasmodic and ineffectual resolve. The inner world of his early dreams is now changed to a 'centre of indifference' and helplessness. His self-distrust — and this is the deadliest of all 'diseases'— deepens, till his wearied spirit finds refuge in the fatalism, which is quite the outstanding feature towards the close of the play — that accepts the accidents of the moment as the over-rulings of an irresistible Providence and disclaims responsibility for its own action or inaction. Towards the end, he has become a stoic, and what is worse, a fatalist. He has wasted time and now time wastes him, as it is the case with Richard II. Also, 'he plays with chance till finally chance plays with him,' and 'dies the victim of mere circumstance and accident.' At last, his soul rests in silence.

His melancholy and gloom have reduced him almost to a morbid condition which is not very far from madness. And we know he feigns madness apparently as a measure of self-defence. He does this, as all the few actions in the play, impulsively or instinctively. The Ghost's horrible revelation shows him the danger to his own life, and on his life depends his father's avengement. So, he assumes an 'antic disposition' as a screen under which he can watch the king and wait for his
opportunity of revenge without exciting the suspicion of the
king or anybody else. And this device seems to succeed up to
the Play-scene. But here the question is whether Hamlet is re-
ally mad in any degree. Some think he is and some think he is
not. But if he is really mad at any time of the play, then he
cannot really be, as Bradley has rightly shown, a character in
a Shakespeare's play fit for a dramatic or literary criticism.
He would, then, be a case fit for medical pathology and treat-
ment. He, especially as the agent and hero in a Shakespearian
tragedy, must be held responsible for his action or inaction.
Otherwise, the whole concept of a Shakespearian tragedy collapses.
A Shakespearian tragic hero is not a human guineapig completely
subject to the whims and caprices of a blind and cruel fate,
as in the Greek tragedies. He is, substantially, responsible
for what he does or what he does not. Though Fate or chance
is also there, it is not absolute. And the tragedy issues forth
from the action and inter-action of these two as well as other
forces. The fact appears to be this: Hamlet's intense melanc-
choly and feigning of madness are not very far from real mad-
ness and sometimes possibly border on madness, but it is never
madness proper. Thus Shakespeare saves his tragic hero from
being a puppet in the hands of Fate, as he saves him from spiri-
tual failure, though he does fail materially and physically,
it is a noble failure so that 'flights of angels', we feel sure,
will sing him to his rest. What is this spiritual import of
Hamlet's tragedy we shall see in our consideration of its emotional
effect at the end of this chapter.

So far we have said something about the character of Hamlet and yet so much remains to be said. Of the difficult questions regarding Hamlet, which have been described as the 'problems' of 'Hamlet' that constitute its mystery, we have considered two, viz. what is the real reason behind Hamlet's procrastination? and was Hamlet really mad? But there are other problems equally mysterious and difficult to solve. For example, what is the age of Hamlet? That he is a young man no one probably seriously doubts — but how young? Here, again, critics contend and fail to come to a mutually agreed and definite position. The mystery primarily consists in that there are two clearly opposed impressions gained from the play i.e. from the reading of the play. When one, however, actually witnesses the play, the confusion as to the real age of the hero evaporates, as the age of the particular actor in the make up of the hero will clearly indicate the hero's age, for that particular play. But, in reading, a lot is left to the imagination of the reader. Both the opposed impressions are based on strong evidences. On the one hand, there are strong evidences, external to Hamlet, pointing to the conclusion that Hamlet is young, 'not much past 21'. He is 'young Hamlet', especially so mentioned in certain places, though used partly for the sake of distinguishing him from his father. Again, Laertes clearly refers to Hamlet, before Ophelia, as a young
man. Hamlet's companions and competitors, Horatio, Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Fortinbras also are all young men, probably somewhere between 20 and 25, nearer the latter. Moreover, Hamlet and Horatio are still university-going students and so probably cannot be men of thirty. Lastly, the past of Hamlet's mother suggests that she is not an elderly woman, nor would Hamlet at 30 have been so amazed at her changeableness. But on the other hand, the character of his speeches shows him not to be a young man, rather a man of mature years. Their quality of reflection, insight, experience are beyond the scope of youth. They reveal the 'formed man'. That Hamlet is an extraordinary person with an extraordinary intellect and imagination may perhaps explain this fact to a certain extent; but the impression of his maturity remains. Besides this internal evidence, there are external evidences. The Grave-digger says (and people of his status are very precise in such matters) that Hamlet is 30. This evidence is plain and beyond dispute. It is confirmed by the following passage about Yorick - the jester has been dead 'three-and-twenty years', but Hamlet was old enough to remember him well. Again, in the Play-scene, 'thirty' is the burden of the first speed of the King. In this evident inconsistency, critics think that Shakespeare originally conceived Hamlet, following his sources and models, to be young, but as the drama grew in character and complexity, so Hamlet also grew in age to be able to bear the great intellectual burden - the burden of the life-wisdom, profound experience and keen and virile wit of the poet's own.
Besides, the actual time of a play does not necessarily coincide with the dramatic time-illusion and stress of events often seems to age a character (cf. Macbeth) with a rapidity of effect not credible literally. We think, however, that Hamlet is probably 25 or very near it, that being the most crucial age of a man, viewed emotionally and otherwise, as modern psychology will testify; and of all reasons for Hamlet's failure none is probably stronger or more immediate than the emotional shock of seeing his mother's dishonour which he takes to be his mother's shame. So, we would describe Hamlet as a 'young man'—rather as an extraordinary though universal youngman -- in whom both youth and manhood combine, and from this point of view, as from the evidences in the play, 25 would be the ideal age. But as for the contrary evidences of his being 30, we must grant some more than proportionate growth in his age toward the end, in the poet's conception, due to reasons stated earlier and upheld by celebrated critics. Thus this problem of Hamlet's age, among others, has been not a little problem —in the play 'Hamlet', rather in this the profoundly mysterious character of Hamlet.

Now, let us consider the other characters of 'Hamlet'—the minor characters, so to say, for in 'Hamlet', all characters except the Prince of Denmark himself may be called minor characters - with special reference to the parts they play in throwing light on the really one character in the play i.e., the character of Hamlet. In 'Hamlet', the character of Ophelia
naturally comes to our mind next to the character of Hamlet. She is fair, delicate and tender and is the beloved to the hero. But she is not the heroine as one might perhaps expect and would be happy to see her play that role. She is very weak by nature and is so much dwarfed by the personality and character of Hamlet and her lordly father that we hardly find in her a trace of independent personality and self-assurance. In fact, she is probably the tenderest and weakest of Shakespeare's women — and alas also the most frail, frail not in the sense of Hamlet's mother being frail. Desdemona resembles her — but it is only Desdemona in her last moments that resembles her. Desdemona who defied her father and ran away with Othello is a far, far stronger woman than the ever-meek Ophelia. There is not a single moment in the play when she has been shown to possess some amount of personality and strength or capacity for judgment which might be of any help to herself and her lover. She is really not only a 'green girl', as her worldly father observes about her, though she has not certainly mistaken the genuineness of Hamlet's love, but a most meek, docile, obedient and passive type of woman. She is devoid of the least passion except the passion of passive love. It may be said, in truth, that she has no 'character' at all. In this respect, she is Lady Macbeth's extreme opposite, the vital difference between them, however, being that while she is a weak angel, Lady Macbeth is a self-possessed monster (at least upto the point of her ambition being fulfilled after which she fades away). Ophelia is also a victim of circumstances
in the way she has been cruelly and abruptly denied love by Hamlet and ultimately, through her travail of madness, comes to her most pathetic but beautiful end. As some critics have observed, she is too delicate to be able to withstand our verbal descriptions of herself, and her ultimate destiny is too deep for our tears as it is for her brother’s. The character of the child-like Ophelia is an extremely delicate piece of portrayal by Shakespeare. So, when she cannot save her own life, how can she be expected to save the life of Hamlet? And when she herself claims our sympathy how can she show sympathy to Hamlet and even give him support and strength? Many critics have been, however, unjust to Ophelia in their sympathy for Hamlet. But the simple fact is that she cannot understand Hamlet and his complex problems. And how many of us exactly do? Hamlet and Ophelia are alike in at least one respect - they are both lonely souls - each without any communion with the other, as with the rest. Both are encaged souls - one having strength but being divided within itself is powerless and the other having no strength at all has merely drifted, like the other, along the oppressive current to its fatal and most piteous end. Both are mere victims of circumstances, so to say, and in a sense both have no 'character'. Tolstoy and Shaw, the two great literary giants, observed that hardly a single character of Shakespeare - including Hamlet - has any real character at all. However, it is literally a watery grave where now she lies in her 'muddy death', glorious like an angel, in her 'fantastic garlands of
wild flowers. Critics variously argue whether Hamlet does really forsake her love, as it appears to be the case from the only scene where they are alone, or he continues to love her secretly to the bitter end. We would prefer the latter view and think that Hamlet's excessively violent and even vulgar outburst against Ophelia in that scene is but an indirect indication of her profound love for her which has now been embittered in his soul beyond measure by seeing the all too ugly example of his mother. Or, if it is feigning madness, when he guesses with his quick sense that she is but a decoy while he is being spied upon, let it be so. In any case, it is not - it cannot be - hatred for Ophelia whom he really loves with all his pining heart and Hamlet's boast to Laertes, in the grave-yard scene, that 'forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love, make up my sum' rings utterly true. So, all in all, Hamlet's tragedy is a double-edged one in that not only the potentialities in Hamlet himself and in his situation inevitably leads him to his tragic end, but the only woman who could possibly save him through his power of love is powerless herself. Besides, before Hamlet himself falls, the shock of seeing her beloved 'mad' and her father, who is her only shelter and guide, killed drives Ophelia to real madness and leads her to her watery grave. This, in its turn, makes the tragedy of Hamlet all the more poignant. He is not only deprived of life, honour, throne, justice and peace, he is also dispossessed of his love which could be the crown of all his
Next, Polonius, Ophelia's father and the king's chamberlain, is clearly the antithesis of Hamlet. He is old, experienced and worldly-wise, but not wise, Hamlet calls him 'tedious old fool' and 'a foolish prating knave'. This may be an exaggeration, but it contains a substantial truth. He has plenty of prudence and cunning, no doubt, or else he would not be the king's minister of state. He has an abundance of worldly wisdom - material wisdom - that counts in life. His famous advice to his son Laertes is a masterpiece of what may be called sermon on the art of practical life, and this may be compared to the great piece of advice by the venerable minister Śukanāsa to the young prince Candrāpīḍa in Bāna's Kādaṃbarī in Sanskrit literature. Of course, the advice of Polonius is very neat and shorn of all poetical flourishes and though it is quite in character also appears to be Shakespeare's own. But there is hardly any spiritual content in it except one glowing instance viz., 'This above all: to thine own self be true...' Polonius is, of course, true to himself i.e. to his essential nature. He is out and out a materialist, like many successful men of the world, and is, therefore, unscrupulous as to the means of attaining success. He once faithfully served Hamlet's father, and he is now licking the feet of the usurper king. People like Polonius always whole-heartedly accept the status quo and cheerily adjust themselves with it for worldly success and material gain. They have nothing but scorn
for spiritual value, or for any real values. They are the antetype of the idealist, the dreamer, the visionary and the revolutionary and it is they who are at the head of the overwhelming majority of people in the world. They are blissfully free from any spiritual conflict and spiritual agony. Thus while Hamlet hesitates, Polonius is but cock sure of his judgments and opinions. He sticks, ironically enough, to his wrong diagnosis of Hamlet's 'transformation' till the last and being busibodied, while eaves-dropping upon Hamlet and his mother, is rightly put to his inglorious end. Polonius is the perfect antithesis of Hamlet and so it is but natural that Hamlet should have a righteous contempt for him and his type. Besides, Polonius serves the murderer usurper and also comes between Hamlet and his love$. Therefore, Hamlet's contempt for this ignoble 'rat' is all the more boundless and severe. In truth, the knowledge of Polonius is but limited and dogmatic and does not belong to the kind of all-seeing wisdom which is a blessing in a man's life. As Hamlet's perfect negative he has served a most useful purpose. Though Polonius, Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Osric all excite Hamlet's scorn to a more or less extent, none has whetted the contempt of Hamlet so much as Polonius. While Hamlet has nothing but love for Horatio and praise for Laertes and Fortinbras, he has but fear of and contempt for Claudius and a pitiful scorn for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Osric, he has nothing but unalloyed contempt for Polonius.
To Hamlet, he is probably the most contemptuous, almost like his life itself. Hamlet's tragedy has been made keener and intenser in the context of this gravely funny and vainglorious character of the worldly-wise Polonius.

Laertes is an able son to an able father. He is also a man of courts and worldly-wise like his father and no less cunning. He has many accomplishments, no doubt, but they are somewhat superficial. His father, knowing the nature of his son, rightly suspects him and sets a spy against him in Paris, the city of pleasures. His wild youth and 'wild will' may bring danger for him. He is too full of the passion of youthful exuberance. And Ophelia, too, cautions him, like their father. Laertes shows what Polonius once was and it is clear, given the chance, Laertes would have possibly grown into another Polonius. It is as if a whole continuous life has been shown apart in these two lives. In spite of his accomplishments, his low cunning is horrible and it is not less than that of Claudius himself. Of course, there are ample reasons for his fury against Hamlet. Both his dear ones, his father and his sister, are mysteriously dead and he is made to believe that the man responsible for both is Hamlet. Obviously, he has not the spiritual qualities of Hamlet; but he has got precisely the one quality for the lack of which Hamlet meets his doom - a proper will and the capacity for action. In this he shines fairly and even feverishly. His case is an almost exact parallel and contrast
to that of Hamlet. But he has not the advantages of the prince. And yet he at once flies at the king whom he first suspects. When the king cunningly sets his rage upon Hamlet, his vengeance swells and being mixed with vile cunning becomes irresistibly fatal for Hamlet and, ironically, for himself too. Shakespeare, in his cunning art, sets the example of Laertes over against Hamlet and his predicaments, and the action of Laertes clearly points to the possibilities of action on the part of Hamlet himself. But, alas! Hamlet has now reached a dead end, and though he feels he ought to act like Laertes and condemns himself inwardly for not being able to do so, he is all but paralysed and cannot do the deed. Thus Laertes, the closest foil to Hamlet, Fortinbras coming next, lends poignancy and an ironical zest to the bleeding tragedy of Hamlet. Laertes is just, though a little vile, a virile possibility to Hamlet - a might-have-been, while the reality of being Hamlet is too painful and pressing. Yet Laertes departs not without a little of our heart's sympathy, having exchanged hearty 'forgiven' with 'noble' Hamlet in his moment of death, which he has so richly earned for himself by his folly and crime.

We, then, take up Claudius, uncle to Hamlet and the present king of Denmark. He is the prime force against Hamlet, and is the perfect anti-hero (prātimāyaka of Sanskrit literature). It is he who has started the whole evil which Hamlet has now to combat. It is his greed for the throne and all the power
itwëldis and it is possibly also his lust for the queen, that have originated the whole series of events of the drama. If 'Hamlet' is a study- rather, a tragedy of evil, Claudius is the embodiment of that evil. Goaded by his greed and lust, he, serpent-like, takes to vile cunning and brutal murder, and thus having taken away the life of the brave and worthy king, his elder brother, he usurps the throne and also wins the hands of the queen, his brother's wife, who is but weak at heart. His cunning and cruel villainy seem to be triumphant for the moment. And, as it is to be expected, Claudius is not devoid of certain kingly qualities which command admiration. He has steady nerve, and a strong desert. He is not easily out of his wits and tries his desperate best to cling to the fruits of his ill-gotten prize. But sin hangs too heavy upon a guilty heart, and he has also his pricks of conscience which never let him go. He would have heaven's mercy for which he now preys. He repents his crime, but would not give up the fruits of his crime. He feels hopeless and dejected, but still fondly hopes, 'all may be well'. By his actions, he has wronged Hamlet in a three-fold way. He has foully killed his father, has dishonoured his mother, and has deprived him of his rightful throne. His crimes are so much 'unnatural' that they have provoked the spirit of Hamlet's father to rise 'in arms' before Hamlet and urge him to take revenge. When he suspects Hamlet has got secret of his crimes, he conspires to put an end to his life. He tries to add crime to crime,
and in this way he tries to save himself. But evil cannot ultimately triumph. It must sink under its own 'burden'. In the Play scene, where his crimes are exposed, he easily succumbs and finally when he is struck by Hamlet with the accursed sword he has himself contrived for Hamlet, he says pathetically, 'I am but hurt'. Thus this 'incestuous, murderous, damned Dane' is, at long last, paid, in full, his dear debt in blood. Some critics including Wilson Knight, however, think that, in proportion with the evil in Hamlet, Claudius has some good in him, and they go to the extent of saying that barring the original sin of Claudius, it is Claudius who may be taken as the good king and it is Hamlet who may be taken as the villain. Notwithstanding the later modification of this theory by Knight, this must be declared as a monstrous distortion of the all-too-potent fact of the play. It is painful and amazing how a bias for theorisation can generate, even in distinguished critics, such total distortion of all too-plain-facts. The whole tragedy of Hamlet has started with the crimes of Claudius, and Hamlet's avengement of these crimes has ended with the end of that foul life.

Gertrude, twice queen and the unfortunate mother of Hamlet, inspite of her beauty and still lingering youth, is most weak at heart. She has no strength of character - rather, she has no character at all; far less a moral character. She loves life and its low physical pleasures, like any ordinary woman of her type. Though the queen of Denmark and once wife to a brave
and worthy king, she has no queenly qualities in herself. Her fidelity to her former husband and her love for him vanish with his death and she does not hesitate to marry his younger brother who has now ascended the throne. It is true she is most probably not a partner in crime in so far as she has not abetted her husband's murder and has even no knowledge of it. But the woeful lack of a spiritual content in her character is regretted all the more as she happens to be Hamlet's mother. We cannot, therefore, expect her to give any succour to his son Hamlet in his greatest hour of need. Her husband's spirit has pity for her, and so has Hamlet. Thus Hamlet, though he speaks daggers to her, uses none. For a moment, she seems to be sorely repentent and understand her 'frailty' and she possibly also wishes to rectify herself. But, alas! she lacks the strength, the will like her son -- to move forward and turn a new leaf. It is most probably her 'frailty' - this fall from virtue on her part - which shocked Hamlet most and was the grave immediate cause of his paralysis of will and consequent fatal failure. She is also the indirect cause of the unhappy ending of the love between Hamlet and Ophelia, as her all too bad example has provoked Hamlet into suspecting the love of Ophelia. She pays, to some extent, the debt of her sins when she dies by drinking the poison meant for her son.

The Ghost in 'Hamlet' - the stirred spirit of Hamlet's father - is not an unimportant character. Though he appears only thrice and then vanishes from our sight, it is this spirit that
sets the whole drama in motion and opens the flood-gate of hell, so to speak. It is this spirit that has first revealed to Hamlet his uncle’s suspected guilt and goaded him to revenge. And, through all the trials and tribulations of Hamlet’s life, this spirit has never ceased to haunt him and his proceedings—rather his lack of proceedings. The Ghost—this supernatural agent—appears to be the presiding deity of the whole tragedy of Hamlet and its multi-faceted catastrophe, like the messenger of the avenging God Himself. Hamlet’s father, while in life, was a brave, worthy and unique monarch for whom Hamlet has all his veneration, and, while a spirit in arms, he has a grave message to impart to his dearson urging him to a dreadful deed. Though ultimately the Ghost might rest in peace, He must rest with a pining heart as well because Hamlet could fulfill his mission only at too great a cost to himself and to others. The Ghost is as much a character as any other by His own right, and those who think it is but a hallucination are surely mistaken. And, as we have seen earlier in chapter III, the Ghost in Hamlet, like the witches in Macbeth, is very much a real character, based on an universal superstition of those times, which Shakespeare used and moulded for his dramatic purpose.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the two courtiers and the former friends of Hamlet, are now the two detested spies and hirelings of the king. Though purely subordinate characters, they are interesting in relation to Hamlet, like other subordinate
characters. As we have earlier remarked, Schiller has shown that there are subtle individual distinctions between the two, and in the delineation of such minor characters, Shakespeare's power of characterization may be profitably judged. Besides, instead of having one such character, Shakespeare's having divined two unmistakably shows his intention and power to strike effect. Now, the question is - is Hamlet justified in sending them two to their death? Some think he is not, and they moreover think that Hamlet himself is a little uneasy about this. But Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are nearly the two self-confessed spies upon Hamlet and they have been thoroughly exposed. Circumstantial evidence adds to this the fact that they are going to be the instruments of death to Hamlet, being employed by the villainous king. So, what Hamlet did in letting them 'go to't' - in terms of the ethics of his time - rightly did, and rightly they are not near his conscience. Hamlet's wrath is all the more vehement because their former friendship has, for purely personal gain, now turned itself into treacherous, mortal enmity.

Fortinbras is a good foil to Hamlet, next only to Laertes. He is also nephew to an uncle who, he feels, has wronged him. But this young gallant is not, like Hamlet, a slave to his paralysed will, nor he has anything to do with excessive thought or melancholy. His 'course' is clear and straight. He forthwith organises an army of 'lawless resolutes' and rises in revolt. When his uncle comes to terms with him, he is pacified, but he does not rest there.
He at once marches with a huge army against Poland for the right of a border land which is but a barren waste and yields no revenue. Great as he is, he finds quarrel 'in a straw', 'when his honour's at the stake'. And Hamlet clearly sees this and appreciates this. But Hamlet cannot emulate his example, though he has graver causes to move him, because of his unique predicament. Fortinbras, this gallant youth of energy and will and of honourable spirit, is a shining example before Hamlet. He, therefore, rightly succeeds him to the throne of Denmark and Hamlet, in his dying moments, justly speaks of him as his successor. And rightly does the drama end with the speech of Fortinbras who proposes appropriate honour to this 'soldier' and to one who would 'have proved most royally'.

Horatio is the one unique character in 'Hamlet', next to Hamlet. Speaking truly, he is the only friend of Hamlet who sustains his friendship to the very end. But, alas, Horatio is of no vital aid to Hamlet in his predicament. He cannot be of any real use to Hamlet in solving Hamlet's problems. He seems to be rather quiet and subdued in his relation to Hamlet. As if, overawed by the personality of Hamlet, though self-possessed and with a loving heart for Hamlet, he is mostly ineffective and does not play a fruitful role concerning Hamlet. This has rightly caused surprise in many critics. But, to be sure, all is well in Shakespeare's scheme of things, if not in God's. Horatio is a soldier, scholar and a modest, evenly balanced person. He is brave, honest and wise. It may be said, he is an embodiment of temperance, the
highest Greek virtue. He is a friend and fellow-student of Hamlet, and Horatio is the only man to whom Hamlet is still the Hamlet of his happier days. It is he who has first confronted the Ghost and has addressed Him though He might 'blast' him. He has done his modest best to help Hamlet and to save him from all dangers and difficulties. He has tried to keep Hamlet away from the Ghost; he has closely guarded the secrets of Hamlet, he has helped him in the play scene and has done as he has been asked to do. He has also tried to persuade Hamlet to desist from the final trial of strength, but he has to yield before Hamlet's insistence. The fact is that Horatio cannot possibly influence Hamlet, he has himself been influenced by him. Hamlet's now grave and mysterious personality is too deep for him. Besides, he is not taken into confidence by Hamlet regarding his problem which he feels to be intensely personal. All this is part of the deliberate dramatic scheme of Shakespeare. Horatio, like Laertes and Fortinbras, is also a foil to Hamlet. He is a contrast to Hamlet, not in what he does but what he is. Hamlet himself appreciates and admires Horatio's virtues - he is 'not passion's slave', like Hamlet. He is a smooth, balanced and even person. Could Hamlet but emulate Horatio, he would be free from all his troubles and tribulations. But that is not to be. While Hamlet must cry, Horatio remains calm. Horatio, with his easy virtues, is the envy of Hamlet with his fatal flaw. It appears, however, in effect, Horatio mostly plays the role of a dispassionate onlooker, like the dramatist himself. But we have
seen the fire of this 'antic Roman', who would not live after Hamlet but gladly die with him. His insistence, however, ultimately yields to his love of Hamlet who wants him to live and tell his story. When Hamlet, finally, rests in silence, it is gentle Horatio's hearty and prayerful words that are our very own — 'Now cracks a noble heart: good night, sweet prince;/And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!'

There are other very interesting and distinctly individual characters which we pass by in silence. Of these, the two grave-diggers are the most vivid, like-like, gravely amusing and dramatically poignant. The speeches and manners of these two rustic clowns bespeak a kind of stern, grim humour which dilates through delight and chills through cheer. When the impending catastrophe hangs like a sword of Democles by a single thread of chance and when Hamlet, in a desperate trance of resigned despair, philosophises on the skulls, the grave-diggers, with their unlearned wit but down-to-earth, first-hand experience of the life and death of mortal mankind, delight and instruct us with their quick tongues. But all this feast of grave fun, now being celebrated in the grave yard, unmistakably points to the one inevitable catastrophe that is fast heading towards Hamlet and a host of others. Here, as in the great storm scene of 'King Lear', Shakespeare, of all dramatists in the world, has clearly shown his extraordinary power of inter-weaving laughter and tears winto a single unit of dramatic poetry and that of an unique kind.
We have at last disposed of the characters in some
details, and from this we believe we can have a more or less
clear idea about the supreme character of Hamlet himself. We
now propose to take up for consideration what we have earlier
described as the ultimate 'emotional effect' or 'granthadhvani'or 'mahā-
'mahādhvani' of the Sanskrit critical literature, or which has been
called by Bradley and others as the 'impression' got from the
reading or witnessing of the play. In this context, we may refer
to what we have stated earlier in chapter IV in connection with
our general consideration of the tragedies of Shakespeare and his
tragic masterpieces, in particular, following the great tradition
of the celebrated Shakespearian critics. We have observed there
the vast waste and terrible pain and finally death and ruin being
hurled upon the unfortunate protagonist with the 'tragic flaw'
as well as others as a result of the tragedy and the culminating
catastrophe which is too deep for fears and also is a matter of
fright. But this is not all. This is only one aspect of the
tragedy. There is another which, to be sure, is not less impor-
tant than the first. That the struggling protagonist has not
easily succumbed or yielded to failure, but has fought with all
his might, with all the power of his soul which he could possibly
command is a very clear impression received from all these tra-
gedies, and therein our own souls seem to be satisfied. If the
heroes of these plays were mere victims of circumstances, mere
tools in the hand of a blind and cruel fate, as in the Greek
tragedies of old, then they would not be the heroes of a Shakesp-
pearian tragedy. That they have fought against an adverse Fate - in fact, they have fought against an evil power, whether that evil is in others or it is in themselves or both, they deservingly win our hearty sympathy and ardent approbation. If we are sorry for their failure, we are also proud of their spirited resistance and magnificent defeat. If it is pathos for their ruin and death, it is also exhilaration for the nobility of their soul's endeavour. Aristotle, as we have seen earlier, mentioned the two emotions of pity and fear as the principal resultant effects of a tragedy, which are no other than 'karuṇa' and 'bhayaṅaka' in terms of the Sanskrit critical literature. We pity the doom of a tragic hero and we also fear it, possibly because such doom might also befall ourselves. But Aristotle based his theory on tragedy entirely on Greek models before him. Shakespeare's tragedy has, however, moved a long way from these Greek models and has opened up a new and vast direction in dramatic literature, which the world has come to claim as its own. So, if it were, mainly, pity and fear or 'karuṇa' and 'bhayaṅaka' in the Greek tragedies, in the tragedies of Shakespeare, it is, mainly, not only pity and fear or 'karuṇa' and 'bhayaṅaka' but also admiration and exhilaration or 'vīra' and 'ādbhuta' in terms of Sanskrit critical literature. Of these 'karuṇa' and 'bhayaṅaka', 'karuṇa' seems to be more predominant than 'bhayaṅaka', and of 'vīra' and 'ādbhuta', again, 'vīra' seems to be more predominant than 'ādbhuta'. Thus, of the four principal emotions or sentiments - of a Shakespearian tragedy, 'karuṇa' and 'bhayaṅaka',
'vīra' and 'ādbhuta,' 'karuṇa' and 'vīra' seem to be more predominant than 'bhayaṅaka' and 'ādbhuta.' What, then, is the most predominant emotion or sentiment or 'āṅgī rasa;' in terms of Sanskrit critical literature, in a Shakespearian tragedy? 'Karūṇa'—we should immediately answer, otherwise a Shakespearian tragedy would not be a tragedy at all. Next should come, we think, 'vīra;' next, possibly, 'bhayaṅaka' and 'advuta,' in that order. Or one might say, next to 'karuṇa' comes 'bhayaṅaka,' and next 'vīra' and 'ādbhuta,' in that order. So in so far as our impression testifies, the principal emotions or sentiments in a Shakespearian tragedy, taken generally, are, in order of importance, 'karuṇa,' 'vīra,' 'bhayaṅaka' and 'ādbhuta,' or perhaps, 'karuṇa,' 'bhayaṅaka,' 'vīra' and 'ādbhuta,' judged in terms of the principles of Sanskrit critical literature. Whatever their relative importance, all these are the principal emotions or sentiments in a Shakespearian tragedy. While, in Greek tragedies, those were 'karuṇa' and 'bhayaṅaka,' according to Aristotle, and also 'ādbhuta;' we should add because of the sense of mystery in them and 'vīra' to a certain limited extent only, Shakespeare has further developed this 'vīra' immensely and intensely in his tragedies so much so that his tragedies have assumed a totally different character from the Greek, in particular, early Greek tragedies. This developed 'vīra' has in its turn, enhanced the 'ādbhuta' as well. To revert to the terms of English criticism, a Shakespearian tragedy not only evokes the emotions of pity and fear, it also
causes our admiration for the hero's noble fight against an adverse Fate or evil power as well as our feeling of exhilaration on seeing an inscrutable mystery where even a noble soul or a noble fight fails before an ignoble Fate or an ignoble power. Bathos, horror, admiration and awe are, then, the essence of a Shakespearean tragedy, and we shall see how it is so in 'Hamlet', which is one of his greatest tragic masterpieces, if not the greatest of them all.

So, pity and fear continue to stay dominant in a tragedy including Shakespeare's, as in a Greek tragedy. But it appears pity and fear have come to loose some of their sting in a Shakespearean tragedy, relative to Greek tragedy. On the other hand, admiration and awe have gained ground and have been more intensified. This is due to a really soulful endeavour on the part of the hero despite most critical circumstances. But as the hero has ultimately to meet his doom, inspite of his best endeavour, the feeling of awe is all the more intensified. This is so in so far as a Shakespearean tragedy, in general, is concerned vis-a-vis a Greek tragedy. But it should be observed that the emphasis varies from tragedy to tragedy. For example, pity or 'karuṇa' seems to be relatively more dominant in 'King Lear' and 'Othello' than in 'Macbeth' or 'Hamlet', and among them all it seems to be most dominant in 'King Lear' than even in 'Othello'. Fear or 'bhayānaka' seems to be relatively more dominant in 'Macbeth'
and 'Othello' than the other two, and among them all it seems to be most dominant in 'Macbeth' than even in 'Othello'. Similarly, admiration (for a heroic soul) seems to be relatively more dominant in 'Macbeth' and 'Hamlet' than the other two and to be most dominant in 'Macbeth' than in the rest. And if we take wonder or awe, it seems to be relatively more dominant in 'Hamlet' and 'Antony and Cleopatra' than in other dramas, in 'Hamlet' because of Hamlet's inexplicable failure and in 'Antony and Cleopatra' because of Cleopatra's inexhaustible splendour, to speak only of the most important reasons, and of them all, most in 'Hamlet' than in others. However, this tendency of modern tragedies to put more emphasis on the feelings of admiration and awe - if it is, indeed, a tendency, as it seems to be - is most prominent in the tragedies of Shakespeare, relative to Greek tragedies where pity and fear clearly dominate. But why it is so? We think the phenomenon may be explained by the fact that in modern times man has possibly come to believe more in his own endeavour than in the workings of a blind Fate. This, in its turn, is due to the advancement of knowledge, particularly of science, in place of early and medieval beliefs and superstitions. In particular, man has now become relatively master over the blind forces of nature and has become conscious of his own power. But it must be said, in truth, that this is true of the times of Shakespeare or of his dramas in a relatively less degree than in more recent times. But then, are admiration and awe more prominent in modern
tragedies than in Shakespeare's. Not necessarily. Too much civilization and in particular, mechanisation of the means of production and the ways of life, and the tyranny of political power have given rise, ironically enough, to a new kind of fatalism. However, to cut short our present digression and to come to our point i.e., the tragedies of Shakespeare, it is possible Shakespeare, in his genius for characterization, while probing the very depths of our souls, touched the great source of power that lies there. Thus he has, in effect, urged upon us to fight more valiantly against our evil circumstances and cruel fortunes and to be really men worth that great name. This is how admiration (for a heroic soul) and awe have come to occupy a position nearly as dominant as pity and fear in the tragedies of Shakespeare including, of course, his 'Hamlet'.

Apparently, the emotional effects, as stated above in terms of the principles of literary criticism of both the East and the West, with regard to the tragedies of Shakespeare in general, are also applicable in the case of 'Hamlet'. That pathos or 'karunā' is the predominant emotion or sentiment or 'āṅgī rasa' in 'Hamlet' seems to be hardly challengable, for in a tragedy, whether according to Aristotle or any modern conception, tears must dominate, next being fright or 'bhayānaka'; and Hamlet is certainly foremost in evoking that impression or feeling. Next to pathos, comes fright. If pity for poor Hamlet is the dominant
feeling; fear of his frightful doom is also a pronounced feeling, next only to pity, that continues to haunt us as long as our consciousness of the play lasts. Next comes admiration for the heroic struggle or 'vīra' that is put up by Hamlet's soul, though that struggle ends in a ruinous failure, and however much may Hamlet appear to be but weak and lacking in 'character', in the depth of his soul, there goes on to the last a constantly raging battle of opposing wills and tendencies which give him no rest. If this is not a heroic struggle, we do not know what, indeed, it is. The external manifestation of that struggle may not always be clear, but the struggle is always on in the seat of his very soul. And one cannot but have admiration along with pity and fear with regard to Hamlet. Last, but not least, comes wonder and awe or 'adbhuta' as a result produced by the tragedy as a whole as well as in its various parts. That such a great soul should fail and that such a great struggle should fail, and fail in that dismal manner, is not a little wonder. It is all the more painfully amazing that all this should so fail against forces that are but evil and lowly. We find no apparent explanation of this peculiar fact of life and of nature; and we do not know what to think of this. We are here face to face with a mystery, a riddle, so to say, and we are overawed. Thus all these four, viz., pity, fear, admiration and awe (karuna, 'bhayaṅaka', 'vīra' and 'adbhuta') are the most essential feelings or emotions of 'Hamlet', though there are others in its various parts,
But is this all? What is the ultimate feeling or emotional effect of 'Hamlet'? Undoubtedly it is a mixed feeling - a composite feeling of which the principal constituents are pity, fear, admiration and awe, pity being the most dominant among them all. But there is yet another which cannot be omitted from this composite final feeling. It is, as the Shakespearian critics have pointed out, 'conciliation' or 'resignation' which is equivalent to 'śānta' of the Sanskrit critical literature. We somehow or other seem to accept the final outcome, we mentally adjust ourselves with it. We seem to think what is is for the best and what has become of the hero has, after all, been right and the tragedy has, after all, fulfilled the ends of justice. Some such feeling is also there along with others. It is not the predominant or sole feeling. But it is one of them, and is probably the last. We finally seem to accept the cruel end of Hamlet as just and proper in the order of things, and thus our feelings of pity, fear, admiration and awe seem to be at last reconciled. And this is so in the other tragedies, along with 'Hamlet'.

After having looked into the emotional effects, or 'rasaś', in terms of Sanskrit critical literature, of 'Hamlet', now let us consider the reasons for its universal popularity and appeal and
thereby touch upon the ultimate significance of this dramatic masterpiece. We have seen earlier, in connection with the theme of 'Hamlet', that it was once a popular revenge story. But to us moderns it cannot be said that the tale, in itself, is a popular one. Monarchy has been all but abolished and kings and princes are not to be frequently met with in modern republics. Assassinations and pursuits of revenge are, relatively, rare indeed. And for an ordinary man, there is hardly any likelihood that he should ever be confronted with the particular problem of Hamlet. It is rather a very 'abnormal' story of a very 'abnormal' person taken from far off legends, although dramatised by Shakespeare successfully and in superb poetry. So, what may it be that causes any soul that reads or sees the play to be profoundly stirred and never too really forget it in his whole life? There we come to the phenomenon of art called universalization or सुधारेष्टर्थिति of Sanskrit critical literature. When this strange tale is heard or seen, its various particulars are not emphasised, but as a result of universalization, the real substance or core of the tragedy still persists in the minds of all mortal men, who have necessarily to combat some or other form of evil in life and who, however he may try, can never really or wholly succeed in that combat. Alas! this evil is overwhelming and it is for ever an unequal combat, and we need not go to the thinker, philosopher, social reformer or revolutionary to confirm this. The everyday life of everyone of us except the idiot or most dull all too painfully testifies to this universal experience. The evil is
there, whatever its form -- and there are almost infinite forms of evil. This evil is, again, most imposed upon us by our circumstances beyond our control. The more pity, this evil, in the form of some flaw or other, is also in us ourselves. And when we try our best to combat this evil, both in us and outside of ourselves, and bring forth good, we can never really or completely succeed, because most often than not, in this combat, our very will seems to be paralysed, and we falter in our duty and become 'svādhikārapramattā' in terms of Kālidāsa. This is the tragedy of life, in general, and this is the tragedy of Hamlet, in particular. It is thus, that Hamlet has become a symbol of any man - particularly modern thinking and striving man - and the tragedy of Hamlet has become one with the tragedy of man and his life. This identification with Hamlet and his tragedy through universalization is the cause of 'Hamlet's universal popularity and appeal, and is the measure of its great significance. And this has been made possible by Shakespeare's most potent art, in particular, by his very keen and superb poetry and his extraordinary power of characterization in depicting the supremely universal character of Hamlet - the symbol of any man. Shakespeare, from his profoundly agonizing experience of life and by his most penetrating vision of its mysteries, has come to create this infallible tragedy of 'Hamlet' - the fallen and fallible man. Therein 'Hamlet' holds all mankind in its firm grip, for all time to come, and never really lets him go.
Besides this universal significance of the character of Hamlet there are other reasons for the play's great popularity and appeal. 'Hamlet' is the 'most contemplative' of Shakespeare's plays. As Hamlet himself is contemplative, his creator is also contemplative. This, of all his plays, may be said to be too full of the 'wisdom of life' and of the revelation of its great mysteries. In particular, this revelation seems most deliberate and most conscious - possibly also even personal; and the questions with which 'Hamlet' confronts us are those which 'knock for answer at ever heart'. At the top of these questions comes the great 'To be, or not to be...' which has no parallel in world literature. In this one single line, has been very finely compressed the full weight of possibly the profoundest, the most vital and the most critical question of the universal man. Coupled with this is the problem of 'something after death' and also the thought of 'a divinity that shapes our ends.' Then there is the eternal enigma of life's inequalities and injustices - 'the whipes and scorns of time, the oppossed's wrong, the proud men's contumely, the pangs of despised love, the law's delay, the insolence of office and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.' At the root of this all, there is the inherited responsibility which crushes man for no fault of his own - '0 cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right!' Yet there is the inspiring sense of the
world's beauty and wonder and of man's glorious attributes
- 'this goodly frame, the earth...', 'this most excellent
canopy, the air...', 'this Brave overhanging firmament, this
majestical roof fretted with golden fire...!

And what a
piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in
faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable!
in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!
the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!'
And yet,
alas! 'this quintessence of dust' delights us not for the
dominance of evil which we cannot wholly or truly combat.
All these and others coupled with the significant character of
Hamlet himself are a great source of wonder and awe and
perennial fascination for all men.

Then there is the particularly important matter
connected with Shakespeare's personal and professional life
on the stage. It is Hamlet's discourse to the players (III.1)
on the art of acting and on the general function of the stage
besides showing his feelings towards the actor's profession
and his dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the contempo-
rary theatre. In this discourse, one can unmistakably detect
the voice of the poet-actor himself in the guise of Hamlet.
No critic seems to have ever doubted this. That Shakespeare
sometimes bitterly felt about his own profession is also common-
ly deduced from the 'sonnets'. But ultimately he mastered his
conditions and rode from triumphant success to triumphat success.
It is only natural to expect that Shakespeare shrewdly noticed
the common failings of actors in their elocution and he not merely stopped at their denouncement but clearly pointed out the road to improvement. His positive approach has been possible by his direct connection with the stage. He was a practical playwright and his firsthand experience of the stage is a major cause of the success of his plays. But he was far more concerned as a poet than as an actor on the stage, and his views on the general function of the drama is the most famous of all, in this context, which we have briefly discussed in Chapter-II. His great observation on the 'end' of 'playing' 'as to hold, as'twere, the mirror up to nature' is still unsurpassed. In this, he has brilliantly summarised, once and for all, the chief function and end of drama, in particular, of his own dramas, which are, indeed, 'mirror up to nature' and what is more, 'one with nature.' This self-conscious touch of the poet, in the drama, upon drama itself is no less a cause of its never-failing fascination and appeal.

We have discussed, in our preceding chapter on the 'Sakuntala', some of the great sayings of the poet in that masterpiece - those which are not mere 'subhāşitas' or good sayings but great utterances judged from the point of view of 'artha-gaurava' or profundity of meaning. We propose to do the same in 'Hamlet'. Here also the number of what may be called good sayings or 'subhāşitas' is not inconsiderable; but, in fact, may be more than those in
the 'Sakuntala' and, judged by their conditions, they are naturally more acute and penetrating. But we leave them aside, as in the case of the 'Sakuntala' and wish to concentrate upon what we would call really great utterances of universal significance. The first and foremost, as we have often indicated, must be the great 'To be, or not to be; that is the question'. This seems to be the most profound, most poignant; most pointed and most penetrating of all, not only in 'Hamlet' but in entire Shakespeare, or perhaps in entire literature. Closely following this in import, there is 'O Cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!' This is akin to the great Biblical saying 'Nor verily my mother conceived me in her sin' which has seemed to many critics as the greatest single utterance in the English literature. If the Biblical lamentation of Job has a primitive air, Hamlet's inevitable outcry is quite modern and agonising. Then there is that 'what a piece of work of man!' and its close and painful antithesis 'what is this quintessence of dust? ' already quoted above. These two make one enigmatic whole and make the drama of man acutely poignant. Then are those 'words, words, words' which, piled up, represent our total activity - mere activity without fruition, mere words, vain words all. Then there is that commonplace, but one whose edge is never blunted, 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends...' And then 'The readiness is all,' like Lear's 'Ripeness is all,'
is the only possible conclusion of a tempest-tossed soul who knows not his end. And last, but not least, comes that profoundly eloquent 'The rest is silence,' after which it seems almost blasphemous to speak. This silence is too deep for words and is the consummation of all words and all mortal strivings. The soul rests in such silence, and this silence is the silence of the seas. We have quoted eight great utterances. Of these eight, four stand out more universal than the rest, and they are, in their order - 'To be, or not to be; that is the question,' 'What a piece of work is man!', 'The readiness is all', and 'The rest is silence.' They all revolve round the verb 'to be' and merge in the supreme 'To be, or not to be: that is the question.'

Lastly, critics have also spoken of 'the moral of 'Hamlet'. This may, at first, appear to be rather 'moralistic' than 'artistic'. In particular, the votaries of 'art for art's sake' will immediately object to such moralistic interpretation rather than an artistic appreciation of art, especially of such an author as Shakespeare. But discerning critics have good reasons for doing this. They assert that Shakespeare did not certainly write 'Hamlet' or any other play, consciously and deliberately to 'moralise,' but his artistic product 'Hamlet', like any other play, does inevitably possess a moral of its own,
which inescapable. This reminds us of the famous 'Kāntāsāṃmi-
tatayopadesasya' of the Sanskrit critic Mamata, which means
in its purport, that poetry (or art) dilates (or dictates ?)
through delight. But what is the moral of 'Hamlet'. This is
all too clear. Hamlet's failure has been due to his lack of
a proper will - a strong, active and sustained will, which
alone can do a deed. No mere thought or feeling or imagination,
however intense or vivid, but will and action should be the
watch words of a practical man in life. Not a mere dreamer
or thinker or poet or philosopher, or, we may add, philibusterer,
but a soldier or statesman or social reformer or revolutionary
- by all means, a practical man of action - is the natural
lord of mankind. Not Hamlet, but Lear's, Fortinbras and
Henry are the 'ideal' men - but, as we have seen earlier, these
are Shakespeare's 'finite ideals', models of 'practical wisdom.'
If we fathom spirituality and soul life, Hamlet is our 'ideal'-
ours and Shakespeare's 'infinite ideal' and is at the head of
this rare tribe. And because of this mystery of conflicting
ideals, among others, the great drama 'Hamlet' is all the more
'one with nature' as well as one with the infinite.