Chapter – 3

ARJUNA AND HAMLET – MEN OF INNER ACTION

Sri Aurobindo in his interpretation entitled *The Bhagavad Gita* comments that the teaching of the Gita must not be regarded in the light of a general spiritual philosophy or ethical doctrine, but as bearing upon a practical crisis in the application of ethics and spirituality in human life (1). The theme of the entire Gita, in the opinion of Chinmayananda in *The Art of Man Making* is the treatment of a natural, mortal illness of the inner mind (38). The break-up in Arjuna’s personality in the face of a crisis which demanded his complete mental attention and alertness is the result of the eruption of his repressions and suppressions in his mind due to conflicts. Arjuna is aware of his responsibilities as a Kshatriya and wishes to retrieve his lost glory but he inwardly fears the negative results of the warfare, on him. The Shakespearean hero is concerned about the misfortune that has fallen on his country and family by the misrule of Claudius, but he also broods over the consequences of his act of vengeance. The heroic strength and superior manly qualities do not support these great men at their times of crisis. They are invariably caught within the tangible webs of inner dilemmas that spring up from fear and ignorance which make them deprive of their heroism until it is regained by the strength of the philosophic elixir that rejuvenates their inactive minds.
The two protagonists, Arjuna and Hamlet, belong to two entirely different cultural backgrounds and periods but the analogies that exist between their dilemmas which arise out of their life situations are similar. The heroes are confronted with a fundamental issue involving their personal life, family life, and social life, and both are invigorated by inner call to regain the lost honour. Arjuna’s dilemma involves the question of meeting the demands of a kshatriya which involves the protection as well as the killing and shedding of his own relatives’ blood. The Shakespearean hero, Hamlet, is also urged by the call of honour to take revenge upon the death of his father. The clear awareness of their duty intensifies the inner grief of these heroes because both, Hamlet and Arjuna, are equally contemplative by nature and well versed in their respective sacred scripture. A dilemma whether to accept the call of their temporal duties and inherit God’s wrath or to ignore the urge for revenge not to forfeit their promised heaven is tormenting the heroes.

In the first act of the play, Hamlet is presented as a student of the University of Wittenberg who denies to take his ‘nighted colour off’ at the request of his mother (I.ii.68). The sincere grief of Hamlet is reflected in his curt reply tinged with disbelief at the callousness of Gertrude “Seems madam! Nay, it is; I know not ‘seems’” (I, ii. 76). Hamlet’s aversion for her hasty marriage with Claudius stems from his dislike for her infidelity and lack of modesty: “O! most wicked speed, to post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets” (I. ii 156 – 157). Hamlet’s soliloquy is a deep contemplation on the ethical, existential, and metaphysical issues that are related to man. Hamlet broods over the issue of mortality of man and is at a loss to decide whether it is nobler to suffer the slings of fortune or to take up arms against the sea of troubles and end them. The results of these two fundamental questions are inseparable one, for Hamlet knows that the first option demands him patient
endurance of his kinsmen’s evil, that would lead to his death. He knows for certain that death and loss of immortality would be the final outcome if he decides to have an open conflict with the evil. These issues of his existence are seen against the fearful background of an unknown world to come in where punishment may be inflicted by a righteous God. The question of Hamlet gains an ethical, metaphysical and religious colouring by the fact that Hamlet does not have a solution due to his limited wisdom about the life after death.

In Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna VisadaYoga presents a dismal picture of the valiant warrior Arjuna who laments on the futility in gaining victory after killing the kinsfolk. In his logical discourse to Lord Krishna, Arjuna indicates his inclination for renunciation. Arjuna is being led by social conventions and customary morality and therefore he shudders at the thought that the war would result in the ruin of the family and the ancient laws, which will create utter lawlessness and corruption of women resulting in the confusion of varnas and in the laws of castes. Arjuna is apprehending the eternal punishment that would fall on the Pandavas for annihilating the Kauravas. The despondency of Arjuna who is bereft of his innate heroism is drawn in the following lines of Gita: “Having spoken thus on the (field of) battle, Arjuna sank down on the seat of his chariot, casting away his bow and arrow, his spirit overwhelmed by sorrow” (I. 47).

‘Arjuna – Visadayoga’ describes the moral degeneration felt by Arjuna at the wake of his great dilemma. The chapter presents the inglorious fall suffered by the pandava hero from a man of relentless energy and undaunted inner strength to a desperate and disoriented sceptic. Earlier Arjuna was confident since he knew that he was fighting a just war and he was aware of the presence of the greatest of all
yogies as teacher near him. Swami Rama points out that the sudden change that leads Arjuna to despondency is a natural feeling in men. In spite of one’s fund of optimism a human being can slip down to the valley of sorrow as a result of a single thought that makes him a victim of attachment. Because of his involvement and attachment Arjuna becomes confused and loses his objectivity (Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita 28).

The first chapter of the Gita captivates one’s attention by the presence of dramatic and life-like situations. The chapter presents a realistic situation in the battlefield which can be equated with a commonplace life situation faced by a human being in today’s world. Earlier Arjuna enters the Kurukshetra battlefield with complete awareness of his action and firm determination to fulfill his mission in life. The following lines give a glorious picture of Arjuna as a man endowed with an inner zest and power of discretion to make a proper assessment of the enemies: “I wish to look at those who are assembled here, ready to fight and eager to achieve in battle what is dear to the evil-minded son of Dhrtarastra” (1.23).

But when Arjuna faces the opponents in the battlefield he suddenly becomes despondent and loses his mastery over his mind and body. The valiant warrior eventually loses his inner strength and begins to hibernate beneath the dark clouds of ignorance. Arjuna’s mind is so turbulent that he forgets his self and his responsibilities as a Kshetriya and casts his bow and arrows in the battle field. Later Arjuna is presented as a melancholic and confused hero who is shocked by the stark realities of life. A series of justifications are fabricated by Arjuna as the causes for his inaction in the battlefield. “The Arjuna Vishada Yoga” explicates the inner turmoil of Arjuna and the externalization of his mental confusion. Yati in The Gita A Managerial
Science comments that “What is given in the Gita is a symbol of conflict and the need for resolving of conflict. This can happen at any level of life […]” (48).

According to Yati even a healthy man known for his mental courage and physical strength can easily change into a helpless man with a diseased mind if he fails to make the right resolve.

In Hamlet the prime reaction of Hamlet exhibits his princely traits and heroism as he heeds to the plea of King Hamlet: “Haste me to know’t that I, with wings as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love, / May sweep to my revenge” (I.v. 29 – 31). Later Hamlet’s decision that […] “thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain” (I.v. 102-103) becomes a reality since hereafter the hero gets into a mood of contemplation.

In The Gita Yati observes that the first and second chapters of the Gita deal with the problem of regaining normalcy and an orientation of the situation in order to orchestrate the entire field to bring the monitored action to a successful harmony (8).

Yati identifies the external symptoms of inner conflict in Arjuna:

All symptoms of an unresolved mind which become subjected to psychological disorder are given in the first chapter of the Gita, such as a person trembling in the limbs, the body experiencing heat as if burning in fire, the eyes smarting, the mouth becoming parched, the lips growing dry, the hands becoming shaky and powerless and the head reeling in giddiness (The Gita 8).

The seeds of degeneration are sowed in Arjuna as a result of a shrewd message sent by Dhritarashtra to Arjuna on the eve of the great war, on the futility of
a war between members of the same clan. The arguments raised by Dhritarashtra altered the thought process of the mighty warrior and later the very same questions are repeated by him in the first chapter of the Gita titled *Arjuna Vishada Yoga*. Arjuna’s dilemma is caused by his ignorance on how to synchronize the duties ordained upon him as a warrior without committing fratricide in the battlefield.

Chinmayananda in *The Art of Man Making* identifies the pitiable condition of the disillusioned Arjuna with the ‘confused man of the world’:

> The inner shattering of the personality in man is projected out so vividly in the characterisation of Arjuna that in the Bhagawad Geeta, the pandava prince represents the ‘confused man of the world – the disillusioned youth’ of all time. The case history of Arjuna is recorded with scientific precision in the opening chapter of the Bhagawad Geeta (6).

The problem in Arjuna’s and Hamlet’s life arises at the rise of fundamental issues of conflicting natures which expect their unbiased rejection of the wrong behavior and the selection of the right attitude. The intensity of the inner conflict in these men depends upon the morality, sensibility and sensitivity of these heroes and the nature of duty expected from them. The Shakespearean hero Hamlet considers revenge on Claudius as a filial duty since he is the only responsible member viable for the retrieval of his family’s honour. Even though Arjuna and Hamlet are called to partake in their personal endeavours for the successful completion of two just causes; the two heroes are tormented by a series of conflicting thoughts which question the veracity of their actions. They are caught in between the contrasting
pulls to answer the call to honour and to accede to the call of their inner conscience. The two heroes are constrained by the demands that urge them for immediate action.

The first, second, third and fourth Acts of *Hamlet* present a bleak and distorted picture of Hamlet caught in the whirlpool of dispersed thoughts. According to Juliet McLauchlan in the essay “The Prince of Denmark and Claudius’s court” inevitable tragic conflict begins when Hamlet is aware of the bestial qualities of Claudius, his mother’s faithlessness in her marriage and the revelation that his father was murdered by his own brother. The culmination of the inner conflict results in the disintegration of Hamlet’s own personality in Elsinore (*Aspects of Hamlet* 58). The transformation of Hamlet from a man of integrity to total disintegration is reflected in the lines spoken by Ophelia:

**OPHELIA**. O! what a noble mind is here o’erthrown:

The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue, sword;

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion and the mould of form,

The observ’d of all observers, quite, quite down! (III.i.153-157).

Radhakrishnan delves into the problem of Arjuna and analyses the cause for his tension and methods to overcome it:

The chapter ends in dejection and sorrow and this is also yoga as this darkness of the soul is an essential step in the progress to spiritual life. Most of us go through life without facing the ultimate questions.
It is in rare case when our ambitions lie in ruins at our feet, when we realize in remorse and agony the sad mess we have made of our lives [...] Arjuna passes through a great spiritual tension. When he detaches himself from his social obligations and asks why he should carry out the duty expected of him by the society, he gets behind his socialized self and has full awareness of himself as an individual, alone and isolated. He faces the world as a stranger thrown in to threatening chaos. The new freedom creates a deep feeling of anxiety, aloneness, doubt, and insecurity. If he is to function successfully, these feelings must be overcome (The Bhagavadgita 97).

Arjuna and Hamlet become men of inner conflict by the effect of their inner awareness of their problems, superior moral sense, and consciousness of the consequences of their action. Both the heroes endure severe mental conflict over converging issues in their life: problems in the mental, physical, spiritual, and metaphysical arenas of human life are triggered by domestic unrest, political chaos, morality issues, ignorance, attachment, fear, hatred, egoism. According to the philosophy of Gita, Arjuna and Hamlet pass through a brief period of spiritual darkness as men of inaction since they postponed their rightful action or swadharma as men of warrior class. It can be stated that Arjuna and Hamlet commence their righteous battle for the restoration of peace and welfare in their kingdoms only after dissolving all conflicting thoughts in their mindscapes which are the products of the gunas.

The crisis of Hamlet is similar to that of Arjuna since both the heroes are men of intellects who adhere to superior morality principles. According to Paul A.
Hamlet does not manifest the conventional heroic traits present in Laertes and Fortinbras, instead his [...] “chief characteristic throughout the play is his hesitation to act, which makes him appear unheroic” (Hamlet 23). Cantor asserts that [...] “Hamlet’s personal story is rooted in a substantive ethical conflict characteristic of an entire age. Unlike other apparitions in Renaissance drama, who demand a simple and straightforward revenge, the ghost in Hamlet hedges in his charge with careful instructions” (23). The demand put forth by the ghost “Taint not thy mind” (1.5.85) shows the metaphysical concern prevalent during the age of Renaissance which causes the conflict in Hamlet. Hamlet and Arjuna are equally concerned with the question of making a just reconciliation between the treatment of honour in their lives in terra firma and terra in cognito. The opinion of J. M. Gregson that “[Hamlet] is the contest between the individual mind of wide – ranging imagination and the public man who subjugates private thought to the demands of political action” (Public and Private Man in Shakespeare 130) holds good with these heroes.

Hamlet undergoes a period of irresolution and spiritual unrest due to the effect of the gunas. According to Helen Gardner in the essay “Hamlet and the Tragedy of Revenge” Hamlet towers through his heroism, nobility, superior power of insight, ability to reflect upon his situations and his capacity to suffer the moral anguish which moral responsibility requires from him (Shakespeare Modern Essays in Criticism 224). The troubled state of the kingdom is increasing the onus of prince Hamlet who is already committed to two important responsibilities assigned by the ghost. A bleak and contrasting picture of Denmark sans the old order that prevailed when Hamlet’s father was on the throne emblazes the inner composure of a dutiful son. In “The Embassy of Death: An Essay on Hamlet” Knight points out a series of miserable incidents in the life of Hamlet: The misery of his father’s
untimely death, his mother’s quick forgetfulness leading to an incestuous marriage with Claudius, the revelation of the ghost of the terrible secrets of his death and the knowledge that his father’s murderer now wears the crown disturbed the mindscape of Hamlet (The Wheel of Fire 26-27). Knight’s comment which presents Hamlet as a sick soul commanded to heal, cleanse and to create harmony who becomes in the end an agent of death who poisons the life around him (27) has some grains of truth in it because Hamlet’s tumultuous nature has a major impact on the course of the play.

According to Chinmayananda in The Bhagavadgeeta, the state of Arjuna’s anxious preoccupations of his mind upon the ultimate end of the war and his egoistic self–valuation as the greatest hero, brought about a similar split between the subjective and the objective aspects of his mind. Swami Chinmayananda discovers various symptoms of a neurotic condition in Arjuna and considers the labour in Chapter 1 of the Gita as a complete case history of this patient suffering from the typical Arjuna-disease (The Bhagavadgeeta 73). The basic characteristic common in Hamlet and Arjuna is their turbulent minds caught within the coils of conflicting thoughts. The first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita initiates the moral despondency of Arjuna in the battlefield. Arjuna expresses to Krishna about his unfitness caused by his inordinate anxiety over the outcome of his actions in the battlefield: “What pleasure can be ours, O Krsna, after we have slain the sons of Dhrtarashtra? Only sin will accrue to us if we kill these malignants (I.36).

The heroes brood over existential issues triggered by antithetical entities such as body and soul, mortality and immortality, finiteness of man and infiniteness of God, hell and heaven. They are subjectively tossed by their sense of indecisiveness in choosing the appropriate approaches: action or inaction, selfless
duty or motiveless malignity, knowledge or ignorance, sin or righteousness, order or disorder, intellect or instinct in man for tackling the various abstract and ethical issues of daily life.

Hamlet’s faith in God, desire for gaining immortality and eternal salvation in heaven make him doubtful whether he should put his immortality at stake by heeding the request of his dead father. The delay in action is due to the uncertainty about his future caused by the metaphysical doubts in him:

But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscover’d country, from whose bourn

No traveler returns, puzzles the will,

And makes us rather bear those ills we have

Than fly to others that we know not of? (III.i.79–82).

The apprehension whether to take revenge or not disturbs Hamlet even after receiving the safest modus operandi for his crusade against Claudius from the ghost. Hamlet even doubts the veracity of the ghost and suspects a foolery played by the devil or an evil spirit against him. The ghost’s request to Hamlet to avenge his unjust murder, unleashes a series of unresolved thoughts in Hamlet. The double-edged responsibility ordained on him by the ghost whose demands appeared contradictory by nature cause confusion in the mind of the hero:
Hamlet undergoes severe mental trauma due to his personal feeling of suspicion of the apparition. A conspicuous allegation raised against Hamlet is regarding the authenticity of the Ghost of king Hamlet, that it was a mere coinage of his brain. The supernatural intervention occurs for the first time upon a gun platform on the battlements of Elsinore Castle and Marcellus, Barnardo, and Horatio were the first witnesses. The presence of Horatio as an eye witness brings authenticity to the appearance of the Ghost, since apart from Marcellus and bernardo, Horatio was a scholar and a sceptic who first downgraded it as an object of their fantasy. The second appearance of the Ghost to the sentinels convinced him and he agrees with others that the Ghost is the exact image of the dead king. The testimony of Horatio is an ample proof that the Ghost is real and not a conjecture. The fact that the secret revealed by the Ghost of king Hamlet is turning out to be true is yet another validation of the apparition which is certified by Claudius in the Prayer scene:

But oh, what form of prayer

Can serve my turn? ‘Forgive me my foul murder’?

That cannot be since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,

My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen. (III. iii . 51-55).

The nature of conflicts in Arjuna appear identical to Hamlet’s apprehensions which arise from his personal aspiration for eternal rest in heaven. Hamlet’s innate obsession to maintain a clear conscience that would win him immortality is the reason for his delay in action. Arjuna’s firm conviction in the eternal punishment due for a sinner keeps him off from retaliation. When Sri Krishna stopped the chariot in midst of the armies assembled in the battle field, Arjuna recognized in the enemy lines all his family members, brothers, cousins, teachers and grandsires. The sight brought to his mind the complete realization of the atrocity caused by fraternal war. The valiant Pandava detest the thought of being the murderer of his kinsmen. The following lines prove that the Pandava prince does not want to bear the moral responsibility and curse for being the cause for the destruction of the family culture:

“...And we have heard it said, O Janardana, that the men of the families whose laws are destroyed needs must live in hell (I.44).

Krishna wipes off the fears of Arjuna by inculcating the perishable nature of the body and the imperishable nature of the soul:

He is never born, nor does he die at any time, nor having (once) come to be will he again cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain (II.20).

In *The Bhagavadgeeta* Swami Chinmayananda states that the grief and the mental conflict of Arjuna are manifestations of the infinite amount of dynamic
energies evolved from a long life of mental repression. The Gita portrays an exhaustive enumeration of the symptoms a person could recognize in his physical body as a result of mental confusions. Chinmayananda stresses undoubtedly that “[a]ll these symptoms are typically described in the textbooks of modern Psychology as symptoms of the mental disease named ‘anxiety – state – neurosis’” (The Bhagavadeeta 75).

G.Wilson Knight in “The Embassy of Death: An Essay on Hamlet” views Hamlet’s outstanding peculiarity in the action of the play as a symptom of the sickness in his soul. Hamlet’s inefficiency in avenging his father’s death is because his ‘wit’s diseased’ (3.2.341), his mind wavers between the principle of good, which is love, and that of evil, which is cruelty (The Wheel of Fire 29). John Lawlor in the essay “Agent or Patient” in The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare comments on the inner conflict in Hamlet and considers that the situation of pure tragedy in Hamlet is brought in by the unique situation of Hamlet who is commanded to do what he has no assurance is right (66).

Hamlet and Arjuna present the predicament of a human being caught in the labyrinth of emotional distress which make them totally ignorant of the right philosophy of action. The distress is caused by their lack of insight into the performance of action through inaction. The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita glorifies selfless action performed in a detached spirit as a means to preserve one’s inner composure: “He who in action sees inaction and action in inaction, he is wise among men, he is a yogin and he has accomplished all his work (IV.18).

The fourth chapter of the Bhagavadgita entitled jnanakarmayoga is regarding the main principle of truly perfect living in action and knowledge without attachment.
The lord tells Arjuna that the true action is one which the doer does in the name of God without any attachment or desire for its fruits. Bhave equates the word “karma” with “swadharma”. According to Bhave, desireless action is achieved only when the outwards action (karma) is combined with the purity of the mind within (vikarma). The three key terms are “karma”, “vikarma” and “akarma” which signify practice of Swadharma sans kama and krodha (Talks on The Gita 41).

The stalwarts failed at the initial stages of their actions due to the predominance of wrong attitude. Therefore their inner conflict can be read as a manifestation of the tug of war between right action and wrong attitude caused by personal desire and lack of reason. The conflict of Hamlet is caused by his desire to find out a safe method to perform his duty without receiving eternal damnation.

The second chapter of the Gita narrates the doubts of Arjuna on the morality of initiating a warfare against his relatives. Chinmayananda observes that the moral compunction felt by Arjuna in the battle field was not due to any religious scruple or spiritual conviction; it was because the prince was mentally tattered by the sight of the great army of the Kauravas. Arjuna was demoralized and has reached into an ‘anxiety – state – neurosis’ by his anxiety for the fruit of his action (The Bhagavadgeeta 98). The following lines portray the anguish of Arjuna: “How shall I strike Bhisma and Drona who are worthy of worship, O Madhusudhana (Krsna), with arrows in battle, O Slayer of foes (Krsna)? (II.4). The summit of the conflict in Arjuna is reached when he realized that he lacked the ability to rationalize the difference between dharma and adharma in his action as a warrior and confides in Lord Krishna:
ARJUNA: My very being is stricken with the weakness of (sentimental) pity. With my mind bewildered about my duty, I ask Thee. Tell me, for certain, which is better. I am Thy pupil; teach me, who am seeking refuge in Thee (2, 7).

The futility of entering into a feud with one’s relatives dissuades Arjuna from warfare. Arjuna is in a severe mental turmoil since he is at a loss to find out the better way to conduct himself in the battle field. Arjuna fails to find out a safe way to fulfill his temporal as well as spiritual responsibilities in order to win eternal peace.

The dominance of ignorance over knowledge is another reason for the inner conflict in the heroes. The ‘Vishada Yoga’ or the Yoga of dejection or sorrow, portrays Arjuna held constrained by the bonds of attachment and despair until he receives Brahma Vidhya or the knowledge of absolute truth from Sri Krishna. Yati in The Gita A Managerial Science considers the Bhagavad Gita as a treatise which discusses the typical problems of an average man, ahouseholder with wife and children, who was caught between conflicting ideals. The book begins with the predicament of Arjuna who has lost the direction of his life and suffers a genuine problem caused by his ignorance. In the zero hour of his initiation Arjuna is enlightened (2).

The eighteen chapters of Gita present a serious discourse between Arjuna and Lord Krishna on the fundamental issues of life in order to free Arjuna from his irresolution caused by ignorance. A glance through the eighteen chapters of Gita will show the serious moral issues and the gradual progression attained by Arjuna in realm of self knowledge. It is important to notice that the initial ten chapters of the
Bhagavadgita disclose the moral trajectory of Arjuna towards the attainment of self realization. According to Bhave in *Talks on the Gita* “The Gita’s main task is to remove this illusion, this sense of “mine,” this attachment” from the mind of Arjuna (9). The first chapter of the Gita, entitled *Arjuna VisadaYoga* comprises of 47 stanzas which present the conflict faced by Arjuna, its nature and causes. Arjuna presents his stressful state of mind and voices his personal fears coloured by personal thoughts, superstitious belief, omen, doubts arising from customs, religious and social norms to Sri Krishna who patiently listened to the exasperated flow of Arjuna’s grievances: “And I see evil omens, O Kesava (Krshna), nor do I foresee any good by slaying my own people in the fight” (I. 31).

Radhakrishnan affirms that when the peace of God descends on an individual, the divine knowledge floods his entire being with a light which illumines and transforms the darkness and obscurity caused by ignorance (*The Bhagavadgita* 179). The effect of the splendid change in a being is expressed by Krishna: “But for those in whom ignorance is destroyed by wisdom, for them wisdom lights up the Supreme Self like the sun” (V.16).

The absence of a confidante or mentor to discuss the doubts on existential and metaphysical issues makes the Shakespearean hero rely on his conscience. The decision of Hamlet to feign madness until the knowledge is revealed is an ingenious plan to know the truth shrouded in ignorance. Hamlet stays back in the arena of doubt and ignorance until he trusts the identity of the ghost and the involvement of Claudius in the crime through the device viz a play – within – the play. Later Hamlet learns about the ultimate end of human life and gains wisdom on God – man
relationship during his dangerous voyage to England and attains self realization while overhearing the light hearted conversation of the grave diggers.

A major similarity in Hamlet and Arjuna is their natural inclination for righteousness and order in their lives which make them repel from sin and disorder in their respective domains. The presence of disharmony, promiscuity and social unrest in their society bring forth an identical reaction in them. The unsteady and agitated Arjuna has lost his mental morale and the loss is reflected in his ability as a valiant warrior. In the state of mental confusion the hero decides to quit warfare since he desires to gain neither victory nor even pleasure through a massacre. In the first Chapter of the Gita Arjuna focuses his arguments against the inadvisability of a civil war between two branches of a family since it leads to fraternal bloodshed. Arjuna is obsessed with the sense of righteousness in warfare and thus he considers it as the duty of the Pandavas to retire from the battlefield and to suffer the ignominy of a defeat instead of being aggressive against the relatives. Arjuna fears that the Kurukshetra battle will shake the sanctity and solidarity of individual families which will lead to the disruption of the religious tradition of the society. Once the morality of the society which is a reflection of the moral integrity preserved in the family is shaken it would cause cultural erosion and caste-admixture. The following lines prove that the Pandava prince does not want to bear the moral responsibility and curse for being the cause for the destruction of the family culture: “And we have heard it said, O Janardana, that the men of the families whose laws are destroyed needs must live in hell” (1.44).

Arjuna implies that the agent behind the destruction of an empire and its culture will have to atone for his sin in hell. Arjuna, a brilliant thinker and warrior
plunges into grief when he foresees that the heroes killed in war will leave innumerable widows. He is aware of the possible destruction of the prevailing society and its noble tradition as a result of the battle. These thoughts create a serious dilemma in Arjuna’s mind and leaves him so confused that he loses the power of discrimination to judge between the lawful and the unlawful. The picture of a desperate warrior who has become a victim of a situation instead of being the master is presented. The hero’s intellectual exhaustion and moral weariness are expressed in the following verse: “Alas, what a great sin have we resolved to commit in striving to slay our own people through our greed for the pleasures of the kingdom” (I.45).

The initial reaction of Hamlet’s uneasiness at Gertrude’s hasty marriage is caused by the sudden disorder in his domestic life caused by an immodest act of his mother. Hamlet’s sense of disgust is aroused by her frailty in safeguarding her integrity which made him feel Denmark as a “weeded garden” (I.i.135). The contrast in the natures of Gertrude’s husbands and the impact caused by the difference on the kingdom worries him. The state of revelry and social unrest in Denmark make Hamlet consider Claudius as “this canker of our nature” who contaminates the fair state (V.ii.69). The prince desperately ruminates over the miserable plight of his country in the hands of satyr: “The king doth wake to—night and takes his rouse,/ Keeps wassail and the swaggering up—spring reels; […] (I.iv.8-9).

The conflict caused by the impulsive collisions between buddhi or intellect and instinct or manas is another reason for inner conflicts in the heroes. The perplexity and confusion in the objective mind of Arjuna have influenced the intellectual composure of Arjuna. In The Bhagavad Gita, Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda considers the character of Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita as a warrior who
fights a spiritual warfare between the two opposing forces: discriminative intelligence (buddhi) and the sense-conscious mind (manas). Buddhi, the pure discriminating intellect is allegorically represented as Pandu, the husband of Kunti, the mother of Arjuna and other pandava princes who uphold the righteous principles of nivritti, or renunciation of worldliness. Manas is allegorically represented by the blind king Dritarashtra, father of one hundred Kurus who bent toward pravritti or worldly enjoyment (5-6). The intimate dialogue between the divine teacher and Arjuna extended in the eighteen chapters of the Gita brings back peace and composure in Arjuna.

Swami Chinmayananda in The Bhagavadeeta comments that the sight of the Kaurava army commanded by Arjuna’s relatives and friends severely challenged the mental stamina of Arjuna. The objective—mind or Manas could not get a suitable explanation from the subjective aspect or Buddhi because the intervening layers of Arjuna’s ego-centric assumptions and desire—prompted anxieties blocked the free flow of intelligence and made Arjuna despondent and bewildered (34). In the opinion of Swami Chinmayananda the problem created by the array of the enemy lines in Arjuna, needed the guidance of the rational aptitude of his subjective mind. The inner conflict in the hero is the result of the creation of an unbridgeable gulf formed by the intervention of the egoistic self-evaluation and the ego—created anxieties for the fruits of the war between his mind and intellect (The Bhagavadeeta 124).

Chinmayananda in The Bhagavadeeta draws an analogy between the dilemma of Arjuna in the physical battlefield of Kurukshetra and the eternal conflict in the mind of a seeker of truth. Chinmayananda considers Dharmakshetra as the
spiritual field of self – development where incessant battle is fought between the lower instincts and the higher ideals in the mind of man. Arjuna is likened to a true seeker who inspects between the enemy lines under the guidance of his divine discriminative intellect. At the moment of his introspective meditation the egoistic entity within him feels a deep desperation and doubt regarding the possibility of his success in the spiritual battle (38): “Why should we not have the wisdom to turn away from this sin, O Janardana (Krṣṇa), we who see the wrong in the destruction of the family?” (I.39).

The philosophy of Gita teaches Arjuna to bring the wavering of the unsteady mind by bringing the mind and the intellect under control: “Abandoning without exception all desires born of (selfish) will, restraining with the mind all the senses on every side” (VI.24).

In the initial four acts of Hamlet, Hamlet’s mind becomes a battlefield of conflicting emotions and thoughts which lead the hero into a state of derelict. The critical reading in What Happens in Hamlet by Wilson presents Hamlet as a tragedy of a genius caught fast in the toils of circumstance and unable to fling free (52). The critical comment suits the early predicament of the hero in the first act of Hamlet when the hero receives an emotional jolt caused by the murder of his father and subsequent incidents which got constrained him within the reins of emotional, mental and moral conflicts.

Arjuna expresses the intensity of the mental sorrow that blasts his sense organs which cannot be pacified even an empire over the whole world is brought under his rule. The attempt made by Arjuna to bring consolation to himself through his own intellectual discrimination is reflected in these lines: “I do not see what will
drive away this sorrow which dries up my senses even if I should attain rich and unrivalled kingdom on earth or even the sovereignty of the gods (II.8).

James in the essay “Moral and Metaphysical uncertainty in Hamlet” observes in Hamlet, a similar plight of a hero bound by the questions of morality, ethics and existential issues that have puzzled him and arrested his will. Hamlet finds it difficult to decide his duty and is uncertain whether he should perform it because of his lack of understanding about the destiny of man. James considers Hamlet as a foil to Horatio (Hamlet 82).

Boorman in Human Conflict in Shakespeare observes that Shakespeare’s chief interest in Hamlet is to show “[...] the ‘interior action’ of the play, what is going on in the minds of the characters, above all in the mind of Hamlet; the slow and feeling exploration of the Prince’s nature is the mode and motive – force of the play (150-151). A detailed representation of the innermost nuances of the hero’s mind is presented in Hamlet’s soliloquies which portray the hero’s attempts to get relieved from various entanglements made by his egoistic desires, fears, hatred for the attainment of moral regeneration. The soliloquies of Hamlet and the open conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna provide an opportunity to gauge the inner turmoil of Hamlet and Arjuna who are otherwise forbidden to reveal their thoughts and fears to the outside world. If Bhagavad Gita presents the conflicting thoughts in Arjuna through the conversations between Arjuna and Krishna, Shakespeare presents the intricate working of the human mind and its conflicts through Hamlet’s soliloquies that are delivered to the audience. D.G. James states in the essay “The New Doubt” that the soliloquies in Hamlet carry a heavy burden,
the secret, passionate and intellectual Hamlet and one need not be surprised if they
could not make all clear about the hero (The Dream of Learning 68).

The soliloquies are expressions of Hamlet’s intimate conversation with his
conscience and his source of spiritual empowerment. Theodore Spencer argues that
Hamlet’s soliloquies show a progress in Hamlet’s power to convert the personal into
the general, and that in the end he is above rather than in the tumult (Shakespeare
and the Nature of Man 108). The soliloquies reveal the source of the crisis in the
hero’s life, various moral and ethical doubts in his mind, and the reason for his
delay in action. Therefore there exists a definite co-relation between the conflicts in
the mind of Hamlet and the soliloquies spoken by him. The sporadic placement of
eight soliloquies in the first, second, third, and fourth Acts of the play exemplify
the mind of Hamlet tossed in the sea of inner turmoil. The absence of soliloquy in the
fifth act of Hamlet denotes the end of the mental conflict existed in Hamlet and
proves his decision to materialize the inner aspirations.

Earlier Krishna kept silence as it was useless to contradict Arjuna who was
inspired to argue eloquently in favour of his own wrong estimate of ideas. The tears in
Arjuna’s eyes proved that his inward confusion had reached a climax. Lord Krishna
proclaimed Arjuna to cast off the weakness of heart and not to yield to impotence.
Arjuna on the other hand considers that Bhishma and revered Dronacharya are fit to
be worshipped with flowers and asks if he can stand against these great men. He
finds it nobler to live upon the bread of beggary than ascend the throne after
annihilating their elders and teachers. The ignorance in Arjuna prompts him to quit
warfare: “Having thus addressed Hrisikesa (Krsna), the mighty Gudakesa
(Arjuna) said to Govinda (Krsna) ‘I will not fight’ and became silent” (II.9).
In Radhakrishnan’s view Arjuna’s fear indicates his mental weakness and instability (The Bhagavadgita 90). Arjuna’s despondency is caused by his attachment to his own people which has overshadowed his sense of duty. The first soliloquy of Hamlet in Act I scene ii expresses Hamlet’s inner discomfort caused by Gertrude’s incestuous marriage with Claudius. The soliloquy reflects the son’s attachment and devotion towards his parents which makes his life appear sterile. Hamlet is unable to perform the right action because of his inner conflict which arises from moral and ethical doubts. The death of king Hamlet upsets the domestic peace as well as the political climate in Denmark which in turn causes an emotional trauma in Hamlet.

HAMLET. O! that this too too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;

Or that the Everlasting had not fix’d

His canon ’gainst self – slaughter! O!God! O! God!.

( I. ii. 129-132)

Arjuna reaches an identical situation of mental turmoil when he realized that he lacked the ability to rationalize the difference between dharma and adharma in his action as a warrior and confides in Lord Krishna.

The second chapter of the Gita titled Samkhya yoga deals with the imperturbable stand of the wisdom teacher, Krishna in contrast to the notions of a sceptic in conflict. Chinmayananda considers that the first ten stanzas explain the circumstances under which Arjuna totally surrenders to the “Krishna – influence.” The rest of the second chapter, is viewed as an epitome of the entire Gita where
Sri Krishna vehemently argues against Arjuna’s decision not to fight but to renounce the glory of success and retire to the solitude of the jungles (The Bhagavadgeeta 112-113). The “Samkhya Yoga” condenses the whole philosophy of the Gita since it teaches Arjuna to know the Absolute and one’s own imperishable self: “He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desire amid pleasure, he from whom passion, fear, and rage have passed away, he is called a sage of settled intelligence” (II.56).

The second chapter titled Samkhya yoga dwells on the true knowledge (Samkhya) regarding the perishability of the body and the imperishability of the soul, is aimed at removing the despair, doubts and illusions that overruled Arjuna in the battlefield. Bhave comments that in the second chapter three great truths are declared: First, the immortal and indivisible nature of the spirit. Secondly, the transient nature of body and thirdly the truth that Swadharma cannot be ignored (Talks on The Gita 13). An exposition of the philosophy of duty is enunciated by Lord Krishna in 72 stanzas with a view of convincing Arjuna of the necessity of waging war against the Kauravas. Arjuna’s metaphysical doubts are a major reason for his dilemma. Sri Krishna’s advice helps him to untie the strings of attachment: “Fixed in yoga, do thy work, O Winner of wealth (Arjuna), abandoning attachment, with an even mind in success and failure, for evenness of mind is called yoga” (II.48).

In the light of Gita the cause of Hamlet’s problem is his inability to maintain inner serenity by abandoning attachment and negative emotions. The second soliloquy in Act I scene v of Hamlet deserves special mention because it encases the earliest reaction caused by the seeds of realization sown by the ghost of king Hamlet.
in him. The feeling of aversion embroils in Hamlet’s mind against Gertrude and Claudius is a direct result of the ghostly revelation. The first Act of *Hamlet* provides Hamlet a complete awareness of his mission but he fails to execute the right action.

According to the philosophy of Gita the inner conflict is caused by ignorance in a human being which makes one an easy prey to the three gunas which deter from gaining the right attitude to life. The play *Hamlet* presents three characters with a similar mission in life but contrasting attitudes: Hamlet, Fortinbras and Laertes have commendable attributes in their personal life situation which make them appear similar but their attitude to life and the manner of reaction at a crisis make each of them unique. Lily B. Campbell in *Shakespeare’s Tragic Heroes* comments on the temperaments of these three young men in *Hamlet*: who are entrusted with similar missions:

[…] the play of *Hamlet* is concerned with the story of three young men – Hamlet, Fortinbras, and Laertes – each called upon to mourn the death of a father, each feeling himself summoned to revenge wrongs suffered by his father. Grief in each for the loss of his father is succeeded by the desire for revenge. But each must act according to the dictates of his own temperament and his own humour (109).

The three heroes are entrusted with a divine call of duty to avenge the deaths of their fathers who were killed in diverse situations of their lives. The three heroes differ in their degrees of moral regeneration attained in their personal life since their approach to their personal goal in life is unique. Young Fortinbras leads twenty thousand men in order to safeguard his honour by securing […] a little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name” (IV. iv.18-19). Fortinbras is not a
man of inner conflict since he is free from egoistic thoughts, desires, hatred and ignorance. According to Campbell, the fundamental problem that Shakespeare deals in *Hamlet* is the problem faced by men when their lives are tossed by the unexpected turns of incidents. The presence of a sound reason free from grief is the ingredient which enabled young Fortinbras to have an edge over Hamlet and Laertes (*Shakespeare’s Tragic Heroes* 110). The profound wisdom of his self enables him to fulfill his responsibility with the right attitude and with a complete sense of detachment. Young Fortinbras’ action is not motivated by desire to win glory nor he is led astray by the anxious thoughts about the negative consequences of his action. Campbell stresses that “Fortinbras is guided by reason; he is not the victim of his grief. Hamlet is inconsolable, and his grief is of the sort that renders him dull, that effaces memory, that makes him guilty of the sin of sloth. Laertes is neither to be consoled nor to be appeased. His grief converts to anger. He enrages his heart” (114-115). The flaws in the attitudes of Hamlet and Laertes to their respective duties are similar to the initial egoistic approach of Arjuna to his mission. Krishna advocates the proper attitude of a doer of action: “Having no desires, with his heart and self under control, giving up all possessions, performing action by the body alone, he commits no wrong (IV.21).

The Gita philosophy of action reveals the glaring defects in the Shakespearean characters. Laertes is a man of fiery temperament with least understanding of conscience, morality and ethics in life. Laertes’ ignorance of his self enables him to resort to underhand methods in his open combat against Hamlet. A similar attitude of hatred and aversion causes Hamlet to take instant revenge upon Claudius and Gertrude.
The third soliloquy popularly known as the Hecuba soliloquy in Act II scene ii of the play presents a grim picture of Hamlet who condemns himself for his apparent sluggishness in action. Hamlet chides his inability to take up a just action against the miscreant who committed regicide. The hero is clearly aware of his duty as the son of a murdered king but he decides to “[…] catch the conscience of the King” (II. ii. 601). Hamlet suspects the authenticity of the supernatural revelation and considers it safer to understand the involvement of Claudius in the murder. The indecisive nature of the hero is caused by his concern for personal salvation which might be obstructed by a wrong conduct. The following lines express the preoccupation of Hamlet:

HAMLET. As he is very potent with such spirits –

Abuses me to damn me. I’ll have grounds

More relative than this: the play’s the thing

Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king (II. ii. 598-601).

The presence of certain cowardly traits in Hamlet are projected by him as he compares his mental frigidity with the grievous state of the actor who deeply mourn the grief of Hecuba, the widow of Priam. Hamlet’s concern for his own immortality, morality and knowledge of the religious doctrines advocates his mind not to get morally defiled by his action as warned by the ghost. Therefore he wants to be doubly sure of the degree of truth contained in the cause he is involved in. Bertram Joseph in Conscience and the King claims that Hamlet vacillates in the first half of the play because of his lack of credibility in the words of the ghost because a belief existed among the Catholics and protestants of the Elizabethan period that the
devil or an evil spirit can appear in the guise of a person recently dead (32). The mouse trap play underlines the involvement of Claudius in the murder of King Hamlet and brings credibility to the words of the ghost.

Hamlet presents a hero who is cut off all reins that will provide him peace and happiness in life. The play presents the abortive thoughts of the young hero who is ushered to take revenge upon his father’s murder at a young age when his mind was under the grip of a series of conflicting thoughts on the efficacy of his action and the need for the achievement of his life’s mission. The third Chapter entitled “Karma Yoga” opens with Arjuna’s confession of his inner delusion caused by Sri Krishna’s advice on action and renunciation: “With an apparently confused utterance thou seemest to bewilder my intelligence. Tell (me) then decisively the one thing by which I can attain to the highest good” (III.2).

The fear in Arjuna arises from his self consciousness as the doer of an action and the agent behind the destruction of an empire and its culture. Karma yoga is a discourse in 43 stanzas about right action through renunciation in order to save from the binding effect of action to the cycle of birth and death:

KRISHNA. As the unlearned act from attachment to their work, so should the learned also act, O Bharata (Arjuna), but without any attachment, with the desire to maintain the world-order (III.25).

The fourth soliloquy spoken in Act III scene i of Hamlet portrays a similar stream of thought in Hamlet. These doubts act as the epicentre of his intellectual reverberations that result in Hamlet’s dilemma. The hero is concerned about the consequences of an improper action against Claudius on his eternal life. Therefore
Hamlet is unable to decide if he should patiently bear the unfortunate occurrences in his life with fortitude or violently react against the evil and overpower it. The problem which torments Hamlet is his ignorance of the life after death. These conjectural fears of the consequences of his action deprive him of all moral courage. The resolution of Hamlet which gets constrained by the reins of his ponderings on metaphysical ideas is expressed in the line: “To be, or not to be, that is the question” (III. I.56). Hamlet muses on the difference between existence and non-existence of man after his death. According to James in the essay “The New Doubt” “[t]he thought of the soliloquy is not, at the outset, of suicide at all, but of personal immortality: [...]” (The Dream of Learning 38). The hero does not wish to debase his conscience and as a result cause death and eternal damnation of his soul. Hamlet’s doubt is whether he should suffer evil patiently and thereby protect his soul from defilement or he should take arms against evil and forfeit his gift of immortality.

When Hamlet is read in the light of the Gita, Hamlet’s fear to practice his Swadharma by attaining freedom from desire and hatred is a reason for his state of illusion. The fifth chapter of the Bhagavadgita known as Karmasamnyasayoga enlightens Arjuna on the essential identity of the two apparently opposite systems of renunciation and action. The title signifies that both samnyasa or renunciation and action should go hand in hand in a person in order to be united with the universal spirit. According to Bhave an even synthesis of action performed with an attitude of detachment is meant by “akarma” or normal action (sahaja karma) (Talks on The Gita 51). Hamlet’s failure is caused by his incompetence in performing a selfless act with the right attitude. The fifth soliloquy in the Act III scene iii of the play reveals Hamlet’s understanding of Claudius’s involvement in the crime. The soliloquy exposes the masquerading nature of Hamlet who decides that “I will speak daggers to
her, but use none” ( III. ii.889 ). The hero at the apex of anger fails to be a proper practitioner of his karma or Swadharma leading to vikarma (inward action) through purifying the mind for the attainment of selfless action or akarma. Hamlet’s indecisive nature is observed as a symptom of the sickness in his soul by Knight in The Wheel of Fire. Knight considers his mind wavers between the principle of good, which is love, and that of evil, which is cruelty (29).

The sixth soliloquy in the Act III scene iii of the play in the prayer scene attains significance, when one applies namely the Atmasamyamayoga or God Realization through Self-Restraint. A reading of the soliloquy from this perspective will reveal the negative traits in Hamlet. Sri Krishna explains to Arjuna that the true servant of God is one who does his allotted work by controlling one’s selfish desires and without aspiring results. A practitioner of dhyana yoga need to be one-pointed of mind, disciplined, balanced and friendly in his attitude:

He who does the work which he ought to do without seeking its fruit he is the samnyasin, he is the yogin, not he who does not light the sacred fire, and perform no rites. What they call renunciation, that know to be disciplined activity, O Pandava (Arjuna) for no one becomes a yogin who has not renounced his (selfish) purpose (VI. 1-2).

Hamlet purposely postpones a chance of retaliation since he does not want Claudius to die in an immaculate state of mind which will give him an easy access to heaven. Hamlet’s preoccupation with immortality is obvious in his decision to withdraw from action against Claudius. The hidden motive which guided him to delay the murder to another occasion “That has no relish of salvation in’t” (III. iii
.92) is to deny him eternal peace in heaven. The revengeful attitude displays Hamlet’s selfish motive behind his action which emits out of his anger and hatred.

The seventh soliloquy in Act IV scene iv of Hamlet has relevance in the light of the seventh chapter entitled Jnana-Vijnana-yoga or the yoga about the relation between wisdom and knowledge. According to Bhave there are many vikarmas for attaining god realization. But bhakti is essential to all kinds of efforts to reach God (Talks on The Gita 85). The soliloquy discloses Hamlet’s total reliance on himself and the lack of resolution in pursuing his vengeance. Hamlet is able to spot the presence of “divine ambition” (V.iv .49) in the martial endeavour of Fortinbras who risks his life for his goal in life. But Hamlet does not betray a speck of his allegiance to God, instead he proclaims his decision to be more harsh than ever to his opponents in the lines: “O! from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!” (IV.iv. 65-66).

Hamlet’s egoistic nature that dissuades him from taking refuge in the omnipotent terminates his chance to succeed in his endeavour. Krishna states the superiority of the yogin over the tapasvin or ascetic in knowledge. Even a yogin has to worship Krishna for attaining wisdom and to be attuned to the Lord. The advice given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna is about the importance in taking refuge in Krishna in order to transcend the divine maya consisting of the three gunas: sattva, rajas and thamas to be one with the God who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

Hamlet is at a loss to decide whether his procrastinate nature is caused by mere beast – like forgetfulness or some cowardly feeling of reluctance force him to meditate too minutely over the consequences of his action. The hero confesses that he is provided the right motive, the desire, the ability and the opportunity for action.
but his mind is preoccupied with the result of his action. Hamlet admires young Fortinbras who pursues a mission of his life with equanimity. Fortinbras brims with determination to conquer the lost terrain in order to safeguard his honour. The twenty thousand Norwegian soldiers derive their willpower and moral strength from young prince Fortinbras who inspires them to perform their action without any concern for the result. The prince Hamlet evaluates the similarity in his cause against the mission of young Fortinbras and considers young Fortinbras as a foil to him.

In Hamlet Shakespeare presents a unique hero who operates in his own ideology. Bradley in Shakespearean Tragedy considers that among Shakespeare’s characters Hamlet and Cleopatra have genius because of their unique intensification of the life they share with others in their respective realms (13). Cantor in Hamlet considers the play as a quintessential Renaissance play, since it gives access to the heart of the Renaissance, the heart of its conflicts and contradictions, the heart of its drama. The hero of Hamlet is open to the whole gamut of Renaissance heroic possibilities and is asked to choose between the passive and active form of heroism and he is viewed as a typical Renaissance prince with the Christian tradition and belief who reflects the nature of a true Christian. The conflict in Hamlet, is therefore considered as a result of Hamlet’s difficulty to fuse Christianity and Classicism due to the contrasting nature of heroism followed in these two traditions. According to Cantor the former considers the act of suffering misery, a deeper form of heroism than inflicting misery whereas the hero of the latter tradition is proud, aggressive, vengeful and implacable in his enmity (Hamlet 4 – 12).

The Shakespearean hero presents an equally promising image of a young prince in his unique way of comprehending the issues of his life. Unlike Arjuna who
engages in a collective effort with his brothers against the opponents, Hamlet relies mainly on the voice of his conscience which offers him guidance: Hamlet’s startled reply on the revelation made by ghost of king Hamlet “O my prophetic soul! / My uncle?” (I.v.40) is an evidence for the inner feud which had already begun in his mind and his allegiance to his inner conscience. Like Arjuna, the mind of Hamlet too is an arena where tremendous fight progressed between his will and reason until he finds resolution in the final act. John Lawlor in the essay “Agent or Patient” in The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare comments on the presence of inner conflict in Hamlet and considers that the situation of pure tragedy in Hamlet is probable since the hero is commanded to do what he has no assurance is right (66). Hamlet’s confession to Horatio: “Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting / That would not let me sleep” (V.ii.4-5) speaks for the intensity of the inner conflict in him. The four acts of Hamlet portray the hero engaged in endless communion with his conscience regarding the rightful action. Like Arjuna who overcomes his inner conflict in the battlefield, Hamlet too undergoes a cathartic process which teaches him about man’s limitation and dominance of God’s providence in the graveyard which leads to his ultimate liberation:

HAMLET: Imperious Caesar, dead and turn’d to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:

O! that that earth, which kept the world in awe,

Should patch a wall to expel the winter’s flaw (V. I.206 – 209).
The fact that Arjuna and Hamlet alone are caught in the whirlpool of a similar moral dilemma in their respective clans clearly points out their sensitivity and consciousness of the inner conscience. The two heroes are men of exceptional intelligence who have a deeper knowledge of life and its worth, which make them feel concerned over the metaphysical issues of life. In the conversation with Horatio, Hamlet acknowledges his limitations as a puny human being in the universe in his outright acceptance of the supernatural appearance of King Hamlet:

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (I. v. 166-167). The two heroes tread through similar winding paths of doubts and ignorance until they are enlightened by the right attitude to be followed in life. Arjuna and Hamlet are undoubtedly the archetypes of human soul, aught in the web of mundane activities. Shakespeare pictures the complex working of the human mind through the character of Hamlet. In the essay “Poetic Experiment” James comments that Hamlet explores a mind arrested in dubiety before the awful problem of life (The Dream of Learning 77). The seven soliloquies encapsulate the problem confronted by Hamlet and the inner struggle experienced by the hero. Hamlet is aware of his purpose and the impediment that separates him from his goal. The hero asks a series of ethical, metaphysical, and religious questions that hinder him from action, but he does not have a succour to give proper guidance and support in his peril.

The moral dilemmas tormenting the two principal characters, Arjuna and Hamlet are stemming from their inability to reconcile between the urge of temporal duty and belief in the concept of justice in the absolute. The heroes are shriveled by the pull of motivation for war and revenge on one side and the counter pull caused by the knowledge of man’s finite nature. Hamlet and Arjuna, as princes are ordained
with divine responsibility for protecting the honour of their clans but both the heroes are affected by a similar heroic sensibility which makes them highly sensitive to moral and ethical issues that cause moral defilement. The universal nature of the moral dilemma makes Ernest Jones’s in “Hamlet and Oedipus” present Hamlet as a universal symbol of man. Jones observes Hamlet as a reflection of every man because much of human kind lives in an intermediate and unhappy state charged with a sense of frustration, futility and human inadequacy which is the burden of whole symphony” of which Hamlet is the supreme example in literature” (Hamlet 51).