Chapter -4

ARJUNA AND HAMLET – MEN OF ACTION

The foregoing chapters dealt with the first four acts of Hamlet and the Gita which expose the mental, spiritual and ethical potency of the two heroes and their attempt to manage the crisis in their life with the aid of their natural prowess and basic instincts. Both the heroes failed to engage in their respective missions until they recognized their glaring drawbacks which restrained them from doing their assigned duties.

Arjuna appears as low-spirited and disheveled in the first chapter of Gita until he attains complete freedom from the web of delusions and regains perfect fitness for action in the eighteenth chapter of the Gita. The attainment of self-knowledge in Arjuna occurs gradually as a result of the inculcation of the moral, ethical and metaphysical precepts by Sri Krishna. In Hamlet the moral rejuvenation happens instantly amidst his casual interaction with ordinary grave diggers. Even though Hamlet begins to experience the divine rays of inner realization during his sea voyage to England, he externalizes the impact of his God experience in the fifth act and its concluding scenes. A regeneration is observed in the selfless action performed by Hamlet that restored peace in Denmark. In the fifth act, Hamlet is
able to sever off the negative influences of the three *gunas*, egoism and other negative traits in him and finally achieves salvation through his death. The newly gained wisdom about the omnipotent provides a similar enlightenment in Arjuna and Hamlet, which lead to the understanding of the superiority of soul to body, God to man, action to inaction and immortality to mortality. The spiritual revelation transforms Arjuna and Hamlet to the pristine status of *yogi* from their erstwhile state of lethargy and delusion. This chapter attempts to highlight the philosophy acting behind their spiritual rejuvenation.

An evaluation of Arjuna and Hamlet aims to bring out the converging elements in their characters. The seventeen chapters of the Gita and the final act of *Hamlet* present the transformation of mind caused by the philosophical knowledge attained by these heroes through their interactions with men of wisdom. Even though the heroes had spiritual awareness, they are transformed by a spiritual enlightenment at a point of crisis in their lives. The Gita provides grains of wisdom to foster God realization in Arjuna to revitalize him to be a transformed man of action. Both Gita and *Hamlet* contain similar revelations of the supreme reality in varying degrees and forms capable of awakening the protagonists to divine consciousness. Sri Krishna introduces to Arjuna the various ways to salvation and inculcates the ideal yoga, *karma* yoga that suits the *kshatriya* hero. Krishna approaches Arjuna like a teacher, like a friend and as an equal who simultaneously admonishes and inspires his disciple. The teachings of Krishna sheds myriad rays of wisdom on the fundamental and metaphysical truths concerning man: the knowledge on the omnipotent nature of God which makes God superior to man, the knowledge on the supremacy of God’s providence over man’s will, positive methods to sustain God – man relationship and knowledge on the divine law of sin and retribution. A re-
reading of Hamlet in the light of Gita reveals resemblances in the nature of problems suffered by the protagonists and in the underlining philosophical tone in the solutions leading to their moral transformation.

Sri Aurobindo in his Introduction to The Bhagavad Gita identifies The Gita as a Gospel of works which are motivated by devotion and a conscious surrender of one’s whole self into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme to culminate in knowledge, spiritual realization and quietude (XVIII). Krishna stresses Arjuna the inability of a living being to be inactive in life: “For no one can remain even for a moment without doing work; every one is made to act helplessly by the impulses born of nature” (III.5). Arjuna is taught the right method of action performed by the yogins: “The yogins (men of action) perform works merely with the body, mind, understanding or merely with the senses, abandoning attachment, for the purification of their souls (V.11). Radhakrishnan considers that Naiskamya is the state of mind when one is unaffected by work. The unique mind set enables the doer to surmount the three gunas and ignore the results of the actions. Thereby Arjuna perceives the truth that “What is demanded is not renunciation of works, but renunciation of selfish desire (The Bhagavadgita 133).

The attainment of a similar inner realization in Hamlet is fully manifested in the fifth act of Hamlet which includes the Graveyard scene where the hero is confronted with two gravediggers, who by their punning and playing with language prompt Hamlet to reflect on mortality and the triviality of man and the necessity of expressing his allegiance to God’s will. Hamlet recognizes the might of divine providence which ultimately transforms him from a passive thinker into a valiant soldier who in the end succumbs to death for the common good. The illiterate
gravediggers are the beacons who provide enlightenment to Hamlet that eventually leads to the realization of his mission of life. Hamlet’s theoretical knowledge and command of the metaphysical concepts receive a sudden jolt at his encounter with the raw realities of human life expressed by the uncouth gravediggers. The following lines reveal the hero shuddered by the limitation of man: “This might be / be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o’er – reaches, / one that would circumvent God, might it not? (V.I.76-78).

The recognition of man’s finiteness and the importance in relying on the omnipotent is creating a spiritual ignition in the mind of the vacillating hero that accelerates his moral regeneration. G.Wilson Knight in the essay “Rose of May: An Essay on Life – themes in Hamlet” observes that Hamlet in the graveyard surveys the whole of life: the predicament of the politician, the courtier, the lawyer, a great buyer of land. These images widen his vision of human life and Yorick’s skull becomes an emblem and symbol of human destiny (The Imperial Theme 120).

In the eighteenth chapter of the Gita, Sri Krishna inculcates the vitality of God’s grace in a person which acts as a guiding force in one’s life and reminds Arjuna that nothing is possible for man without the heavenly grace. The inner transformation of Arjuna is completed and moral regeneration in the hero is accomplished through the assurance he felt through the following lines: “Surrendering in thought all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme and resorting to steadfastness in understanding, do thou fix thy thought constantly on Me” (XVIII.57).

According to Radhakrishnan the goal of the Karmamarga is to unite wisdom, devotion and work together. Therefore one must do the duty with the knowledge that nature or prakrti is the power of the Divine and the individual is only an instrument of
God (The Bhagavadgita 372). The self-realization attained by Arjuna teaches him the importance of performing his duty with devotion and selflessness and the necessity to fix his heart on the Eternal and do the work through His divine grace. The phenomenal change in the attitude of Arjuna as a warrior and as a human being is expressed by Krishna: “Doing continually all actions whatsoever, taking refuge in Me, he reaches by My grace the eternal, undying abode. (XVIII. 56). Krishna inculcates the fundamental philosophy of the Gita that when a man succumbs his ego to the will of the Supreme, he becomes the most efficient instrument for the expression of the Divine Will (The Bhagavadgeeta 341-342)

In the final act of Hamlet we find Hamlet also turning over a new leaf by submitting himself to the will of God, especially in the Act V scene ii where he expresses his readiness to take part in the contest against Laertes despite his adequate training and understanding of the hidden risk behind it. Louis Auchincloss in Motiveless Malignity observes a noticeable change in the mood of Hamlet, who has become “calmer, more resigned, more accepting” from the moment of his return to England (41). In the fifth act, Hamlet appears confident, calm and mature by the attainment of self realization through the knowledge of the divine providence. The stoic mood and tempered attitude expresses Hamlet’s reliance on the divine which makes him dissuade Horatio’s suggestion, to postpone the duel to ensure his safety:

HAMLET: Not a whit, we defy augury; there’s a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, ’tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not
now, yet it will come: the readiness is all (V.ii. 211–214).

In the subsequent conversation with Horatio, Hamlet expresses his belief in the presence of a divinity that perpetually superintends all human actions. Earlier Hamlet considered man as a self-sufficient unit and supreme creation endowed with immense power to transform his inner aspirations into reality. The enlightenment he attained regarding the presence of an omnipotent God who decides the destiny of the human beings and the necessity of performing one’s action with willingness to his holy will inspires him to ignore the request of Horatio to put off the duel with Laertes. Hamlet acknowledges the superior hold of God over man and he finally understood the unavoidable influence of God in shaping the destiny of man. Earlier Hamlet relied entirely on himself and his human faculties which made him too much concerned over the results of the actions. The narrow escape from the fatal sea voyage provided him tangible experience of God. The new knowledge is enabling Hamlet to do the duty assigned to him without thinking about the results of the actions. Maynard Mack focuses on Hamlet’s whole deportment, which appears to be ‘illuminated’ in the tragic scene. “Till his return from the voyage” says Mack in the essay “The world of Hamlet”, “Hamlet had been encroaching on the role of providence, and he had been too quick to discharge the burden of the whole world and its condition upon his limited and finite self” (Hamlet 104). Mack observes Hamlet’s new frame of mind in the Graveyard Scene where he confronts, recognizes and accepts the condition of being a man. After the Graveyard Scene Hamlet is mentally ready for the final contest of the mighty opposites (106).

In Irving Ribner’s view the principal mark of his regeneration is manifested on his sea voyage, when Hamlet finally derives the knowledge of death’s
inevitability and faith in the providence of God which prepare him to face the inevitable undauntedly. Earlier Hamlet’s egoistic nature made him consider himself as the sole agent of his actions. Ribner observes that the miraculous escape from an imminent death which awaited him in England was averted by the combined effort of his ingenuity and a series of semi–miraculous accidents which enlightened Hamlet on the all encompassing presence of the Divine providence in the life of man (Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy 79). The realization brings in Hamlet a mood of acceptance of God’s will and complete deliverance from self pity which had earlier caused him to compare his low state with that of young Fortinbras who is absolutely determined in his mission in life:

[...] is ‘t not perfect conscience

To quit him with this arm? and is’t not perfect conscience

To quit him with this arm? and is’t not to be damn’d

To let this canker of our nature come

In further evil? (V. ii . 67–70).

Swami Chinmayananda attributes the wheel of action to the creator, since the principle of right action has come out of the Creator. The power of the omnipresent is ever centered in all undertakings pursued in an honest spirit of Self-dedication for the good of mankind (The Bhagavadgeeta 316–317). Krishna reminds Arjuna about his princely duty and the correct way to perform his duty without incurring sin in the following verses: “Janaka and others attained perfection verily
by action only; even with a view to the protection of the masses you shouldst perform action” (III. 20).

In *Samkhya Yoga* of the *Gita* Sri Krishna expects moral regeneration in Arjuna when he teaches the doctrine of *Nishkama karma* in order to ward off the dark clouds of misplaced pity which is expressed by the boundless streams of tears flowing out from his eyes. The hero confides on Sri Krishna as a last resort since he failed to resolve his inner conflict by the powers of his intellect. Sri Krishna advises Arjuna not to waste his present moments in fruitless dreams and fears in the lines which speaks about the importance of selfless action: “The wise who have united their intelligence (with the Divine) renouncing the fruits which their action yields and freed from the bonds of birth reach the sorrowless state” (II.51).

Radhakrishnan in *The Bhagavadgita* comments on the effect of the newly dawning wisdom on the omnipotent: “Arjuna turns to his appointed action, not with an egoistic mind but with self-knowledge. His illusions are destroyed, his doubts are dispelled. The chosen instrument of God takes up the duty set to it by the Lord of the world. He will now do God’s bidding. He realizes that He made us for His ends, not our own” (381). Arjuna is enlightened to engage in disinterested performance of his duty which imparted him self-knowledge. The newly acquired knowledge teaches him the necessity of surrendering man’s individual will to the superior will of God, like Hamlet in the final act.

According to Ribner in the fifth act, Hamlet has changed from an ineffective schemer and became a passive instrument in the hands of divine providence. Therefore Ribner comments that “Hamlet, like Romeo and Juliet is a play not about defeat, but about victory and salvation” (Patterns in Shakespearean
Ribner endorses the view that once Hamlet submits to the divine providence, he no longer ponders over the consequences of his actions. When he enters on a duel with Laertes, the ‘antic disposition’ which had been the mark of his confused indirection has disappeared. The guilt of Claudius is exposed to the court and once again God’s harmonious order prevails over evil. Horatio’s words “Good night, Sweet prince; / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest” (V.ii. 370–371) shows that Hamlet in his death has attained salvation (79). Hamlet succeeds in patching up his strained relation with Laertes: “Give me your pardon, sir; I’ve done you wrong; / But pardon ’t, as you are a gentleman (V.ii. 218–219). Hamlet’s open confession is another sign of his moral progression to the level of a yogi as portrayed in the Gita: “He who has no ill will to any being, who is friendly and compassionate, free from egoism, and self-sense, even-minded in pain and pleasure and patient (XII.13).

A similar attitude to action is seen in Arjuna who performs his duty with complete detachment and love for all. Arjuna is motivated to fight not for attaining personal glory but for the re-establishment of righteousness for the common good. The gradual change seen in the thought patterns of the two heroes is reflected in their actions which is a testimony for their liberation from the web of three gunas. The moral progression attained by Arjuna and Hamlet enables them to gain the moral integrity of a yogi. According to the Gita a yogi is man of perfect mental balance and a paragon of virtues:

He who neither rejoices nor hates, neither grieves nor desires, and who has renounced good and evil, he who is thus devoted is dear to Me. He who (behaves) alike to foe and friend, also to good and
evil repute and who is alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain and who is free from attachment (XII.17-18).

The opinion of Tillyard that Hamlet of the fifth act represents no “regeneration”, and John Vyvyan’s comment in The Shakespearean Ethic that the play is ‘a study in degeneration from first to last’ ‘a death play’ (55) appear groundless in the light of the Gita.

Irving Ribner in Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy comments on the initial conflict in Hamlet: “Hamlet’s delay is not the symptom of any peculiar psychological quirk: it is a symbolic statement of the futility of all man’s attempt to destroy evil without first learning to know himself and without intellectual faith and certainty” (68). Hamlet sheds his inaction and egoistic nature when he attains the realization of the divine providence which guides the affairs of man according to God’s own just and merciful designs. He realizes the strange intervention of providence and senses the mysterious design of God’s will behind his miraculous escape from the villainous trap laid for him by Claudius. “Why even in that was heaven ordinant” (V.ii.48). The wisdom gained on the might of divine providence and the triviality of human life creates an understanding and humility in Hamlet to consider himself as a puny instrument of divine providence. In the final Act Hamlet forgets his personal loss and focuses on the misrule of Claudius and the plight of the Danish subjects. The hero is mentally and philosophically moulded to take charge of his assigned duty with a sense of detachment. Hamlet’s freedom from egoism is evident in the lines where he identifies with the problem of his subjects: “[…]is’t not perfect conscience / To let this canker of our nature come / In further evil?” (V.ii.68–70).
In the light of the Gita, Hamlet is truly a regenerated hero since he engages in his allotted duty in an attitude of detachment. Hamlet wards off the requests made by Gertrude and Horatio to put off the duel in order to be a partaker of God’s will. He succeeds in severing off the effects of the three gunas and fear over the result of the duel. The duel between Laertes and Hamlet appears to be an archetype of the Kurukshetra battle fought between the righteous Pandavas and the guile natured Kauravas. The words spoken by Hamlet are tinged with irony since he is truly ignorant of the opponent’s treachery: “I’ll be your foil, Laertes; in my ignorance / Your skill shall, like a star I’ the darkest night, / Stick fiery off indeed (V.i.ii. 246-248).

Hamlet’s attainment of self-realization coincides with God realization which emancipates him from the bondage in life. In Gita, Chapter IX entitled ‘Rajavidya - Rajaguhyayoga’ is a discourse on Raja yoga, the king of all sciences and all disciplines that leads one to salvation. Krishna exposits Raja yoga as the means to acquire total devotion and complete surrender to the Lord which will enable a devotee to attain salvation. Radhakrishnan explains the right method of performing one’s duty, as per Gita through perfect allegiance to God:

Self – giving results in the consecration of all acts to God. The tide of the common tasks of daily life must flow through the worship of God. Love of God is not an escape from the harshness of life but a dedication for service. Karmamarga or the way of works which starts with the duty of performance of prescribed rites concludes with the position that all tasks are sanctified when done with disinterestedness and dedication (The Bhagavadgita 249).
Diana Devlin in the essay “Has Hamlet changed at all after his return from England” confers a complementing opinion on Hamlet as she finds a new openness in Hamlet’s behavior in the final act of *Hamlet*. According to Devlin a minute observation of the final act presents three important features: Towards the end, Hamlet fully acknowledges his own identity ‘This is I, Hamlet the Dane’ as if he is owning himself for the first time. Secondly, he reveals his true feelings for Ophelia which he kept hidden until then. Thirdly, Hamlet observes Laertes, pining over Ophelia’s death with scorn, since he sees in him a reflection of his own previous tendency towards self-pity. These reasons account for the sea-change that came upon Hamlet after his departure from Denmark to England where he is never alone and therefore he never indulges in soliloquies (*Critical Essays on Hamlet* 104).

According to Devlin Hamlet is contemplating mortality over Yorick’s skull. When Osiric comes to offer the wager, Hamlet accepts it for all its obvious danger and rejects Horatio’s suggestions of postponing the duel. He goes forward with a clean purpose to use this ‘interim’ to the best advantage possible with a clear premonition of his death. Devlin observes the exquisite balance of the prose uttered by Hamlet: “It will be short: The interim is mine; / And a man’s life’s no more than to say ‘one’” (V.ii.73–74). The words of Hamlet foretell the fulfillment of his purpose and his imminent death while achieving it. The serene tone of his words is a strong hint that the hero speaks it out of his conviction (*Critical Essays on Hamlet* 107). The regeneration of Hamlet as a man of action spurs from his understanding of the divine will and the importance of man’s obedience to it for salvation. A similar feeling of fulfillment is promised in the closing note of the celestial song which demands Arjuna to dedicate his actions, thoughts and will to the divine will:
“abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils” (XVIII.66).

Lord Krishna teaches the way to attain the ultimate truth by inculcating in Arjuna the accepted theory of perception in *Vedanta* which categorically advocates that the objects of the world are perceived not by the sense-organs but through them. A wise man therefore must understand that these sense objects are not only finite, but also impermanent, because the same object that gives pleasure at one moment fails to impart eternal happiness. In *Hamlet* The graveyard scene provides the hero a rendezvous with the ultimate reality of human life which teaches him the limitations and possibilities of man. The hero’s realization of the transient nature of human life and the insignificance of human body is made obvious in the lines: “Here’s fine revolution, an we had the trick to see’t. / Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at / loggats with ’em? mine ache to think on ’t” (V.i.87–89).

According to Radhakrishnan in *Indian Philosophy* the *Gita* begins in an atmosphere of tension and agitation, but very soon the dramatic element gives way to a very solemn interview between God and Man which eventually leads to enlightenment and action. The chariot of war becomes the lonely cell of meditation which transforms the disoriented Arjuna into a resolute man of action (521). In a similar manner, Hamlet learns the lessons of ultimate reality and the strengths and weaknesses of man in the graveyard by being a witness to the nonchalant attitude and light-hearted conversation of the rustic gravediggers who teach him the ultimate reality of human life. Hamlet realizes the great truth that the paths of all glory end in the grave where the dead are beyond all discriminations. The hero’s tryst with the ultimate human destiny culminates with a realization received from the destiny of
Caesar that irrespective of social positions and life situations, a human being is inferior to God and destined to pay obeisance to the will of the God in his life:

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 magnificence of God is unveiled in Chapter XI entitled ‘Visvarupadarsanayoga’ where Lord Krishna manifests His cosmic form to Arjuna to make him comprehend the driving force behind the myriad activities performed in the world. Radhakrishnan states on the divine influence of providence in human actions in The Bhagavadgita:

The God of destiny decides and ordains all things and Arjuna is to be the instrument, the flute under the fingers of the Omnipotent, One who fulfils His own purpose and is working out a mighty evolution. Arjuna is self-deceived if he believes that he should act according to his own imperfect judgment. No individual soul can encroach on the prerogative of God (280).

The necessity of man’s total submission to God and his omnipotence is the idea reflected in the following lines: “Fixing thy thought on me, thou shalt, by My grace, crossover all difficulties; but if, from self-conceit, thou wilt not listen (to Me), thou shalt perish” (XVIII.58).
The philosophy of Gita which advocates that the ultimate aim of human life is to attain self realization by being one with the divine reality and by bringing one’s actions into accord with that reality sounds identical to the moral rejuvenation attained by Hamlet. The spiritual revelation transforms Arjuna and Hamlet from their state of lethargy and delusion to the pristine state of action. The ultimate truth makes the heroes develop a realistic and deeper inner vision on the limitations of man and the infinite nature of God, the upper hand of God over man is acknowledged by their acceptance of the omnipotent nature of God and in the belief in the divine providence.

Arjuna is revitalized by the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita which considers that the God – dedicated Selfless action performed in a spirit of devotion and self – surrender exhaust the existing vasanas and sustains God – man relationship. Selfless action done in an attitude of total surrender is the mark of jivamukta. The typical inner attitude required for being a jivamukta is stated in the following lines: “He who seated like one unconcerned, unperturbed by the modes, who stands apart, without wavering, knowing that it is only the modes that act (XIV.23). Krishna in His Divine declaration asserts that any action can be a glorious sacrifice if it is undertaken with purity of motive, spirit of surrender and emotion of love. The conflict in Hamlet is resolved by a similar attitude of self – surrender expressed by Hamlet in the final act of the play.

Sri Krishna advocates Arjuna the importance of action over inaction and the importance of performing one’s action as a self – sacrifice by which one can win freedom from vasana bondage in the following verses: “But he who controls the
senses by the mind, O Arjuna, and without attachment engages the organs of action in the path of work, he is superior” (III.7).

According to Swami Chinmayananda one’s unintelligent activities which are based on egoistic desires veils the Divine Spark of Life in man. Therefore a man should engage in his action with a spirit of dedication, sacrifice and complete detachment in order to attain freedom from the bondages (The Bhagavadgītā 303). The removal of egoism enables Arjuna and Hamlet in mending God–Man relationship by rising beyond the limitations of human consciousness and vagaries of the mind.

The central philosophy of Bhagavad Gita teaches Arjuna the importance in cultivating a willingness to perform one’s predestined duty with perfect skill and lack of selfish desires. The Gita advocates the necessity of maintaining complete detachment from the fruits of one’s action. The selfless action is compared to a sacred sacrifice offered to God that would lead to the eternal salvation. The accusation made by Bradley against Hamlet in Shakespearean Tragedy as a tragic hero lacking determination can be refuted in the light of the Gita. Bradley comments that “[…] the Hamlet of the fifth act shows a kind of sad and indifferent self abandonment, as if he secretly despaired of forcing himself to action, and were ready to leave his duty to some other power than his own” (116).

Hamlet’s recognition of the inexorable nature of his duty and man’s inability to shirk off the foreordained yolk is expressed in the lines: “Let Hercules himself do what he may, / The cat will mew and dog will have his day” (V. ii. 284-285). The spark that lit the enlightenment in Hamlet about the purpose of his action and the right attitude to perform it reminds one about the philosophic truth present in
Gita that a mind clouded by ego – sense and egoistic desires will disrupt the sense of equanimity in a person which in turn will affect the mental purification or the vasana – catharsis. Sri Krishna’s advices on the importance of action and the way to free oneself from bondage in the lines cure Arjuna’s illusion:

KRISHNA: He who is satisfied with whatever comes by chance, who has passed beyond the dualities (of pleasure and pain), who is free from jealousy, who remains the same in success and failure, even when he acts, he is not bound (IV.22).

*Hamlet* presents the relevance of the rightful action done with an equally rightful attitude for attaining the desired results. The play portrays the progressive attitude achieved by the hero to his life and its problems as a result of his recurrent battle with his inner conscience.

Hamlet and Arjuna’s desire for performing the rightful action is reflected in their self-retrospective nature, Arjuna’s firm reliance on Krishna’s philosophical advices and Hamlet’s dependence on one’s conscience. In the first three acts of the play Hamlet is concerned about the unknown results of his action on himself. In act IV scene iv of *Hamlet*, Hamlet recognizes his fear over the result of his action as the chief element that deters him from being an active hero. Hamlet still fails to find out the right approach to one’s life and the proper way to solve its problems. In spite of being stirred to action he is not totally purged of imperfection since his action continues to be self-centered than an altruistic one since it is ensued from his deep rooted aversion for Claudius who is seen as a villain who murdered his revered father and whored his mother. The following line manifests Hamlet’s improper resolution evolved out of his hatred for the wrong doers and feelings of emotional attachment for
his parents: “O, from this time forth/ My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth” (IV. iv. 65-66).

On the contrary Buddhi yoga teaches Arjuna to perform his action with a mental attitude of non-attachment to the fruits of one’s action. Arjuna is taught about the importance of maintaining a tranquil mind in order to perform one’s action skillfully and without attachment. In Gita Sri Krishna plays the part of the discriminative intellect in an individual who solves the spiritual, the intellectual, the ethical problems. In Hamlet, the hero has been contemplating on revengeful action but he lacked the right attitude which was inevitable for his right action. The relatively strenuous duty of providing a ray of inner vision of life is effortlessly tackled by the uncouth gravedigger. In the scene two of the final act of Hamlet the hero prepares for a tremendous action between life and death. The readiness of Hamlet to undertake his destined task is revealed in the lines: “Since no man / has aught of what he leaves, what is ’t to leave betimes?/ Let be” (V. ii. 214–216).

According to Swami Chinmayananda the function of ‘action’ is to be valued not merely by the externally manifested qualities but also by the unmanifested and inner motives behind the actions. Therefore no action in itself can be considered either as good or bad since the motive behind one’s action determines the quality of the action. (The Bhagavadgeeta 404). Therefore Hamlet becomes a man of action when he got purged of his spiritual dryness caused by egoism. The necessity to free one’s mind from endless desires and to work with one resolute determination with a single-pointed mind are advocated by Krishna. Karma Yoga guarantees the devotee the highest achievement of self-realization when he works with out vacillation. In the opinion of Swami Chinmayananda Karma Yoga signifies the art
of working with perfect mental equilibrium in all the contrasting circumstances in one’s life (The Bhagavadgeeta 231). The teachings of Sri Krishna engendered noticeable changes of regeneration in the angst stricken Arjuna that enabled him to ask Krishna to impart a detailed description of a man of tranquility. According to Sri Krishna the man of steady wisdom or Stitha Prajna means one who has attained the self-realization by shedding the unwanted layers of ignorance, anger, fear, egoistic desires and anxieties in his mind. Lord Krishna draws a clear pictorial description of the qualities of a man of tranquility below: “He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after pleasures, who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady wisdom” (II.56).

Hamlet reveals signs of equanimity and he is viewed as a sthitaprajna in the act V scene ii of the play. The prince continues with the duel until Gertrude fainted. A spurt of heroic valour is seen in Hamlet when Gertrude reveals that the drink was poisoned “Oh Villainy!–ho! let the door be locked! / Treachery! Seek it out!” (IV.ii.290-292). The very moment Laertes confesses the truth that both he and Hamlet are poisoned by the sword, that Gertrude is poisoned too the villainy of the king is finally disclosed. Hamlet reacts like an angel of justice against treachery at the propitious moment. In the end of the last scene the characters are collapsing like nine pins followed by the murder of Claudius as a result of Hamlet’s careful judgment. As Devlin points out, “The three adjectives that he speaks as he does it, ‘incestuous, murderous, damned’ bring together all the reasons he has for killing Claudius, and complete his act of just revenge” (Critical Essays on Hamlet 102).

The character of Hamlet picturizes the moral trajectory of an individual towards complete moral regeneration through self realization. The inner conflict in
Hamlet leads to the realization of his Self which teaches him the importance of performing one’s action as a sacrifice and with a complete sense of detachment for its result. The chapter VI designated as ‘Atmasamyamayoga ’ is a treatise on the perfect way to perform one’s duty with total abstinence from its results as a means to reach God: “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.2).

According to Swami Chinmayananda actions performed without desires are not actions capable of producing any painful results. Therefore renunciation of action means the readiness of an individual to give up his wrong motives behind his actions. Actions performed by such an individual are not ordinary actions but they become the expressions of the Supreme will through that individual: “He who works, having given up attachment, resigning his actions to God, is not touched by sin, even as a lotus leaf (is untouched) by water” (V.10). When a man succumbs his ego to the will of the Supreme, he becomes the most efficient instrument for the expression of the Divine Will (The Bhagavadgeeta 341-342).

An important theme of Hamlet closely linked with the repercussions of right action done with wrong attitude is the idea of the sin and retribution. The ideal state is transgressed at first by Claudius by the murder of his brother and by his incestuous relation with Gertrude. Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern become passive accomplices in the crime by helping Claudius in protecting his undeserving kingship. The villainous nature of Claudius makes him plot against Hamlet with the help of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Laertes.
An important aspect of the play that demands some plausible explanation is the motive and attitude of the murderer that led to the murder of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The murders are committed in cold blood and the murderer does not lurch for a moment before the fulfillment of these crimes. Hamlet does not feel an iota of guilt for these murders since he feels that their end came as a retribution to their sin which they rightfully deserved. Hamlet considers himself as an agent for ordaining divine law upon them which is done in an attitude of detachment:

“Why man they did make love to this employment./They are not near my conscience./Their defeat / Does by their own insinuation grow” (V. ii. 8). The same sense of neutrality is absent in the rash act of Hamlet that results in the murder of Polonius: “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell./I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune./Thou find’st to be too busy is some danger” (III. iv. 31-33).

In Hamlet the hero suffers the consequences of the murder of Polonius because of his erroneous act done under the spell of base emotions and wrong attitude. The principle of selfless action done with a sense of devotion propounded by the Gita, provides justification for the retribution suffered by Hamlet in the end. A rightful action is evolved from an act executed in a state of complete detachment which will motivate the doer in discharging his duty with perfect composure. Therefore Hamlet feels remorseful and considers a victim of its retribution for the act triggered by hatred and anger:

HAMLET: For this same lord,

I do repent: but heaven hath pleas’d it so,

To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister. (III. iv. 172 – 175).

In the Gita Arjuna is given the essential spiritual advice at his required hour by Lord Krishna whose timely intervention saves Arjuna from committing an unpardonable mistake. Hamlet on the other hand does not have a live mentor to rely on for his spiritual development; instead the ghost of king Hamlet acts as Hamlet’s alter ego whose admonition is to perform an action based on two principles: “Taint not thy mind nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught” (I.v.85-86). The heroes differ in their sense of credibility and attitude toward their spiritual advisors in life. Arjuna succeeded in achieving firm belief in the moral guidance and precepts offered by Krishna, whereas Hamlet considered the ghost with a tinge of apprehension and mistrust. Hamlet’s hatred for Claudius and his inner derision towards his mother have resulted in his earlier phase of inactivity and later got culminated in a rash act of murder. According to the philosophy of the Gita Hamlet has to repay by his own death since the murder of Polonius is a rash act of motiveless malignity performed without an overview of its consequences on Hamlet and on others. Secondly the act ensues purely as a result of Hamlet’s self–conceit and inner hatred for Claudius.

The wrong action done by Hamlet causes him to bear the consequences of the murder of Polonius by being an easy prey to the wrath of Laertes. The saving grace of Hamlet when read in the light of the Gita is the selfless endeavor undertaken to save his kingdom and his readiness to put an end to the misrule of Claudius even at the expense of his possible kingship and eternal salvation. Hamlet can be observed as a martyr who forfeited his life, in the temporal as well as in the religious point of view for the well being of his kingdom. The willingness to lay down
his life for a noble cause can be perceived as a noble act which lead to beneficial results. The opinion of Louchlan that Hamlet expressed a tendency to escape from the helplessness of Elsinore in his longing to return to Wittenberg comply with the hero’s earlier attitude to his problem. But the critical comment that Hamlet’s initial spurt of energy and eagerness to action is slowly cooled, leading to the disintegration of his own wholeness as a man and in the destruction of others can be debated in the light of the Gita. In fact, the opinion of Louchlan that the problem of Hamlet is of a person who lived in the idealistic light of life which suffers from a shattering blow leading to the destruction of self as well as others through his irrational responses sounds true in the view of the temporal philosophy. But Hamlet’s endeavour can be assessed as a single and selfless action and the principles of the Gita support his stand.

The progression in the attitude of Hamlet is reflected in his new vision on man’s destiny. Hamlet understood the significance of action in inaction. The purport of the teaching of Sri Krishna on the significance of non-performance of action attains relevance in Hamlet:

KRISHNA: Not by abstention from work does a man attain freedom from action; nor by mere renunciation does he attain to his perfection (III.4). Save work done as and for a sacrifice this world is in bondage to work. Therefore, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), do thy work as a sacrifice, becoming free from attachment (III.9).

The doctrine of selfless action is the guiding force which enables Hamlet to retaliate against the treachery of his companions during the sea voyage. Hamlet does not budge an inch in his decision to annihilate them. Hamlet’s freedom from the
chains of fear and doubt is due to his liberation from the reins of attachment, hatred and fruits of action. The sincere condolence expressed by Hamlet towards Laertes at the death of Polonius is in contrast to his cold response ensues from his callous attitude towards the deserving end of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet does not feel an iota of remorse at their death since their death is the result of his act of self-protection and not a product of his personal vengeance or egoism. The lack of any signs of prick of conscience in the hero is reflected in the following lines: “They are not near my conscience; their defeat / Does by their own insinuation grow” (V.ii.58-59).

Hamlet and Arjuna gain wisdom regarding the right method of performing one’s action in their unique ways. According to Ribner Hamlet has a proper understanding of the probable consequences of his action and its effect on his destiny. Hamlet’s ruthless murder of Polonius complicated his task by causing his moral disintegration caused by the recognition of having forfeited the role of God’s minister and has become a scourge destined to damnation (Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy 67). Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna that one’s action becomes a proper one only when it is undertaken with a sense of devotion and dedication. A rightful action alone will lead man to a status of complete detachment which will enable him to be active in the execution of his duty but passive and uninterested about the result of his actions.

The character of young Fortinbras acts as a foil to Hamlet on account of his performance of selfless action: “Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats / Will not debate the question of this straw!” (IV. iv. 25-26). The willingness of Young Fortinbras to lead and to motivate his soldiers for a military invasion without
any expectation for its results shows the true spirit of selflessness advocated in the Gita. The simultaneous occurrence of action and inaction leading to the fulfillment is expressed in the following lines: “Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of works, ever content, without any kind of dependence, he does nothing though he is ever engaged in work” (IV.20).

Sri Krishna focuses on the ability of an intelligent and philosophical mind to function actively in the outer world and concomitantly detach from the fruits of its results. According to Swami Chinmayananda an individual who can stand constantly apart from himself and observe “the activity in inactivity”, and “complete inactivity even in the highest activity” can be termed as a man of realisation or one who is very near to the Self (The Bhagavadgītā 411-412).

The tranquility attained by Hamlet in the last scene of the play is the result of his total surrender to the will of God. Shakespeare underlines the importance of a calm mind free from egoistic thoughts and negative emotions in order to foster an intimate God–man relationship. Earlier Hamlet maintained a fearful image of God who acted as a taskmaster in reckoning the sins of man. The fear originated from his dissociated relation with God. In the final act Hamlet acknowledged the omnipotent nature of God who holds command over the entire universe. The recognition of God’s magnificence and benevolence reveals to Hamlet his limitation and the importance of man’s obeisance to God.

Hamlet’s early ignorance on the providential nature of human life and its ultimate secrets is reflected in his heated conversation with the grave digger, who on the contrary is aware of man’s uncertainty. The argument of Raman Selden in the essay “Hamlet’s Word - Play and the Oedipus complex” that Hamlet passed through
the Oedipal phase of his boyhood by suppressing his Oedipal desires, until a period of crisis in his life once again brought out these repressed desires to the forefront (Critical Essays on Hamlet 81-82) loses its credibility when it is read in comparison with Arjuna’s consciousness of morality and ethics in the Gita. The following lines can be read as an expression of Hamlet’s mixed feelings towards Gertrude which springs from his paternal devotion and attachment for his mother as the only son and, his anger due to her hasty marriage:

HAMLET: [...] within a month,

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears

Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,

She married. (I.i.153-156):

Selden’s critical opinion that Hamlet as a hero gets genuinely deranged in Gravedigger’s scene in his confrontation with Laertes and in his interview with Ophelia Hamlet (Critical Essays on Hamlet 84–85) loses its cogency when read in the light of Gita. Graveyard scene is a major scene in Hamlet where Hamlet manifests his newly attained deliverance from the constraints of the gunas. The open expression of Hamlet’s affection towards Ophelia in the graveyard suggests his newly acquired wisdom and bravery: “I lov’d Ophelia: forty thousand brothers / Could not, with all their quantity of love, Make up my sum”(V.i.262-263). The declarations of Hamlet have an echo of confession in them since it is in contrast to his harsh treatment towards Ophelia in the Nunnery scene.
In the graveyard scene Hamlet reveals an unprecedented state of composure evolved from his attitude of perfect detachment for the results. Grene in Shakespeare’s Tragic Imagination criticizes Hamlet of act V as a man who has given himself over to death, rather than equipping himself ready as an instrument of providence (58). But when Hamlet is read in the light of Gita one will not fail to notice his transformation attained as a result of self realization which makes him recognize himself as an instrument who acts the will of God. Hamlet attains his inner growth and moral regeneration by wiping off his self consciousness caused by egoism from his mind, thought and actions. The self recognition dawned in Hamlet causes him to accept his fate as God’s will with perfect equanimity: “I cannot live to hear the news from England, / But I do prophesy the election lights / On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice; [...]” (V. ii. 346-348).

The moral regeneration in Hamlet makes him consider Laertes as his brother, a fellow man who shares the same universal problem along with Fortinbras. Hamlet’s readiness to seek forgiveness from Laertes for murdering Polonius exposes the inner calmness attained by Hamlet. The Shakespearean hero has understood the reason for his malady and he succeeds in finding out the solution through self retrospection. The following lines of Hamlet discloses his newly dawned wisdom:

His madness is poor Hamlet’s enemy.

Sir, in this audience,

Let my disclaiming from a purpos’d evil

Free my so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow O’er the house ,
And hurt my brother       ( V.ii. 231 – 236 ).

Ribner considers Hamlet as a hero who has to fight against a world of ancient evil not of his creation . The hero falls prey to a foolish act for which he had to suffer expiation . But Hamlet succeeds in lifting the human shortcomings in him which make him an archetype of man who is invariably caught within the vigorous pull of good and evil . In the end of the play he learns to accept the order of the universe and to become a passive instrument in the hands of the benevolent God . According to Ribner Hamlet achieves victory over evil by encountering with it and thereby wins the true knowledge and enlightenment for his salvation . ( Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy 67)

The philosophy of Gita also states that man becomes superior when he succeeds in conquering his senses by the mind and engages in action free from detachment . Radhakrishnan in The Bhagavadgita opines that consciousness must be raised step by step in order to attain self realization : “ The senses , they say , are great , greater than the senses is the mind , greater than the mind is the intelligence but greater than the intelligence is he   ( III .42 ) .

The verse describes a hierarchy of levels of consciousness . If one acts under the sway of the senses , he is under bondage . One attains more freedom when one adopt the dictates of manas; still more freedom is achieved when manas is united with buddhi , and the highest freedom when one’s acts are determined by buddhi suffused by the light from beyond , the self   ( The Bhagavadgita 150 ) . The
importance of expressing total submission to the will of God and the willingness to be the servant of God to win ultimate peace and freedom is the purport of the lines.

The regeneration attained by Hamlet as a tragic hero is evident in the observation made by Michael Mangan in *A Preface to Shakespeare’s Tragedies* on Shakespearean tragic heroes. According to Mangan Othello, Macbeth and Lear are presented as public figures before their private tragedies occur and they undergo a gradual disintegration from the heights of glory (149). They fall in to the abyss of despair by their wrong actions which could not bring forth a single positive result, whereas Hamlet’s action cleansed the nation of all wrongdoers and resulted in a purgative effect on the kingdom of Denmark. The definite moral progression attained by Hamlet which culminates in his death can be judged on the basis of the definition of Sri Aurobindo in *Essays on the Gita* on the peculiarities of *sthita-prajña* or a man who has attained equanimity:

He is steadfast in a wise imperturbable and immutable inner calm and quietude. He initiates no action, but leaves all works to be done by the *gunas* of Nature. *Sattwa, Rajas or Tamas* may rise or cease in his outer mentality and his physical movements […] but he does not rejoice when this comes or that ceases, nor on the other hand does he abhor or shrink from the operation or the cessation of these things (418-419).

The final act of *Hamlet* presents the hero who has finally decided to suspend all conflicting thoughts from his mind in his willingness to surrender to the divine providence. The hero has attained genuine awareness of Claudius’s villainy and therefore his actions are ensuing out of his true conviction. Hamlet begins to believe
in the idea of predestination and in the sublime thought, that every action in the world takes place by the divine will. Hamlet does not insist for a change in the appointed schedule for the duel nor he is ready to accept Horatio’s request to heed to his presentiments. The hero’s lack of any selfish motive in his decision to engage in the duel with Laertes is evident from his decision to enter into an open combat with him. Laertes openly confesses the secret of the cold blooded treachery played on Gertrude and Hamlet by Claudius. Hamlet’s decision to kill Claudius for his treachery can be counted as a selfless service done for the wellbeing of his kingdom and country men. The hero who is mortally wounded is ready to kill Claudius with a clear understanding that he would not get any personal gain from the murder. The murder of Claudius facilitates Young Fortinbras to gain the throne of Denmark without further bloodshed. Hamlet’s decision to nominate young Fortinbras as the new ruler of Denmark shows his genuine interest for the well being of his country.

The central theme of the Gita is the doctrine of *Karma Yoga* which speaks about the association of an individual’s “duty” or “swadharma” with the righteous action. The path of renunciation and the path of action are the two contrasting paths that lead a man of action and a man of renunciation to a common ground of self-realization. The philosophy of the Gita helps Arjuna to resolve his moral dilemma and rejuvenates him to perform his duty in the battlefield with a new insight and identity.

Michael Gearin – Tosh in the essay “The significance of Hamlet’s second soliloquy” states the deep religious mind of the hero gives him the habit of thinking in religious terms (Critical Essays on Hamlet 37). Unlike Arjuna who has to be convinced about the immortal nature of the soul and the necessity of doing action
through inaction in order to win heaven, Hamlet need only be convinced about right method of his allotted duty because he doubted the veracity of the apparition.

Hamlet’s moral and metaphysical doubts are caused by his profound religious sense, contemplative nature which can be considered as a reflection of Shakespeare’s age. Bertram Joseph in *Conscience and the king* asserts that “[…] nowhere in the play does Shakespeare say explicitly that Hamlet’s delay is due to his melancholy, […] they have another obvious reasons for not killing Claudius. The ghost might be false, in which case to kill Claudius would be to ensure one’s own damnation” (32). According to Joseph, Shakespeare’s contemporaries would not have sensed much enigma as felt by a modern critic, since the suspicious attitude and doubtful thoughts of the hero regarding the authenticity of the ghost were considered and appreciated as an act of prudence (32). Arjuna, unlike Hamlet, is greatly blessed in having a divine counselor as his charioteer who saves him from his overwhelming dilemma. Sri Krishna in his symbolic role as a charioteer is assuming a two fold role of a physical as well as spiritual guide in the battle field. When the sorrow stricken Arjuna reclined on his chariot Krishna becomes sympathetic towards his disciple. The teaching of Krishna is aimed at revitalizing Arjuna so that he would perform his duty by taking refuge in the omnipotent for the attainment of salvation.

The elements of Christian philosophy is a dominant factor that guides Hamlet. Sister Miriam Joseph in her essay “Hamlet, a Christian Tragedy” considers the play to be a specifically Christian tragedy with a Christian atmosphere and Christian characters. A Christian tragedy in Joseph’s opinion must arouse pity and fear in the audience leading to purgation of emotions through incidents that have Christian significance and a Christian tragic hero must bring upon himself misfortune and
suffering through a flaw in his nature. The ghost reveals the moral situation in Denmark and prescribes the remedy to rectify the sin by avenging the murder and there by to cleanse the state. According to Joseph conscience is regarded as the primary cause of Hamlet’s delay in fulfilling the ghost’s command. Hamlet had conscientious doubts regarding the veracity of the ghost, which was removed by the play–test that proved that the ghost is a good spirit, his revelation true and his command just. Joseph assessed the morality of the ghost’s command from three points of view: the moral situation as grounded on custom and reason, the legal aspect, and the special command. The authority that St. Paul says in (Rom.XIII.3-4) which is invested on king as God’s minister, cannot reside in Claudius, who committed regicide. Hamlet is the rightful ruler, the one in whom according to custom and reason the authority from God resides and Claudius is the arch–criminal whom the true ruler should cut away for the health of the body politic. Secondly Hamlet is in truth the legal ruler in whom the authority from God resides and through whom as God’s minister the divine prerogative may be verified: “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom.XII.19). The third reason for Hamlet to regard himself as having the divine authority comes from his faith in the ghost who is regarded as a good spirit and a divine messenger of God. According to Joseph Hamlet has good reason to believe that, through the ghost’s message, he has been granted divine authority to kill Claudius. Hamlet’s tragic flaw is his hatred for Claudius which overcomes his Christian nature and ultimately leads to his doom. Hamlet expresses his hatred for Claudius in the Prayer scene and thereby radically disregards the ghost’s warning “Taint not thy mind” (Shakespearean Criticism 231-234). Hamlet is observed as a play with a Christian atmosphere and Christian characters who are confronted with moral problems by sister Miriam Joseph.
Roland Mushat Frye in *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* comments on Hamlet as being characterized in the final act as relying upon an unmistakably Christian providence. Frye observes that the character of Hamlet is depicted as attaining complete maturity through his suffering and steady assurance of God’s providence. According to Frye [… ] “it is Hamlet who seems most aware of the full range of the Christian doctrine” which had earlier made him preoccupied with the consequences of his action (234).

M.M. Reese in *Shakespeare His World and His Work* assumes that Shakespeare seems to have made a slight twist to the cardinal Christian doctrine which tells about the power of love in causing redemption. Reese finds that “Shakespeare seems to have felt that redemption is brought about by man’s individual action rather than by the efficiency of spiritual graces” (313).

A similar regeneration is noticed in the thought process of Hamlet in the fifth act of the play by Irving Ribner in *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy*. According to Ribner Hamlet learns the answer to his problems in the fifth act of *Hamlet* where his mission is accomplished in spite of his human inadequacies (Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy 68). Earlier the mind of the hero was tossed to and fro by the doubts regarding the righteousness of his action and fear about its far reaching consequences. The act five of *Hamlet* takes place in the graveyard, where Horatio and Hamlet overhear the conversation between two grave diggers while preparing the grave for Ophelia’s funeral. Hamlet is annoyed by the disrespect shown towards the decayed remains of the dead by the gravediggers. The incident in the graveyard reminds him the universal truth that the glory and might of men must end in the grave. The prince is deeply moved on seeing the mutilated skull of Yorick, the court
jester with whom Hamlet associates his childhood memories. The awe inspiring remnants of his early companion Yorick reminds Hamlet of the might of mortality and its invincible hold over human beings. In “The Imagery of Hamlet” W.H. Clemen points out that Hamlet is deeply moved by the reality and significance of the earthly remains of Yorick because he sees more in it than the others who consider it merely a lifeless object (Shakespeare Modern Essays in Criticism 231).

Ribner observes that in the fifth act of the play, Hamlet has submitted to the will of God. The very act of submission sweeps off the dark clouds of confusion in his mind and lead him to victory. Hamlet no longer considers the death of Claudius as a sinful act of private vengeance which can cause his damnation, but as a lawful act of public duty (Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy 79). Ribner endorses that despite the initial conflicts, Hamlet learned the answer to his problems in the fifth act of the play and thereby accomplished his mission in spite of his own human inadequacies. “He dies, but he is victorious. He attains salvation, and there is a new birth of order in Denmark with the agents of evil dead upon the stage and Fortinbras ascending the throne” (68). Young Fortinbras by his ascension to the throne of Denmark has reached the summit of success whereas Hamlet’s untimely death secures a luminous self image as the martyr who sacrificed his own life for the destruction of evil that loomed over his empire. The character of Fortinbras if analyzed according to the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita fits well to its precepts which advocate selfless action, the necessity of attaining freedom from the three gunas, egoism, feelings of self – conceit and hatred for one’s opponents as means to perform the right action. Fortinbras secures victory in his endeavour in life as a young prince, as a son and as a human being since his actions are strongly based on a spirit of detachment and selflessness. When the actions and the thought process of
Hamlet are assessed on the basis of the philosophy propounded by the Gita the death of Hamlet can be considered as a direct result of his rash action done towards Polonius caused by his egoistic nature and action rooted on a spirit of vengeance and solely for the satisfaction of his desires. Finally Hamlet accepts the presence of evil in man and the positive shift attained by him in the fifth act prompts him for gracious action against the evil ruler Claudius for the benefit of his subjects.

Shakespeare presents Hamlet as a devoted son of king Hamlet who nurtured revengeful thoughts against Claudius as a result of his deep attachment to his father. In the end of the play the hero is purged of all egoistic desires for the fruits of his action. Hamlet ends as a renunciate who does the action for his people. He is calm and unperturbed towards Laertes who inflicted the death blow on him. The selfless nature of Hamlet makes him decide to be an instrument of justice in wiping off all malignant elements from the court of Denmark. The greatness of his service offered to the motherland is evident in young Fortinbras’ decision to offer a state funeral befitting a soldier for him. The unrelenting royalty of prince Hamlet even during his last moments might have made Shakespeare give Hamlet the unique distinction of two valedictions and a formal farewell delivered by Fortinbras, the future king of Denmark. The following lines spoken by Fortinbras speak about the glory Hamlet has attained by his death: “Let four captains/ Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;/To have prov’d most royally: and, for his passage, / Speak loudly for him (V.ii. 388 – 392).

The philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita teaches Arjuna to take up action against the evil doers since the duty as a Ksatriya expects him to wage war for restoring peace in his kingdom. The divine teachings on the immortality of the soul and its
reincarnation in all ages until the attainment of salvation are relieving Arjuna from his pangs of inner conscience. The only factor insisted by the Gita on the doer is to gain freedom from all selfish desires and to observe total detachment from the results of the action. The valuable maxim of Sri Krishna is tearing the dark clouds of doubts and ignorance from the mind of the great pandava prince.

The reading of Hamlet in the light of the philosophy of Bhagavad Gita will present Hamlet as a character similar to Arjuna, who performed a selfless action for the benefit of others. Hamlet presents the moral trajectory of Hamlet as a son who is obliged to avenge the murder of his father to a statesman who commits regicide for the well being of his countrymen. The character traits of Hamlet as a man of endless thoughts, inspired by continual and never satisfied meditation on human destiny and the gloomy perplexity caused by the events of the world are visible in the character of Arjuna.

The attempt is to find stark resemblances in the protagonists who tried to give dramatic form to the problems of man’s life on earth, its meaning and its direction in the face of the reality perceived in the ever-present evil and an inevitable death. The initial failure and the hard earned victory over their self underline the relevance of absolute reliance on the omnipotent, philosophical strength, spirit of resilience and heroism manifested in their right action in accordance to the inner conscience.