The Bhagavad Gita is an integral part of the epic Mahabharata, forming chapters 23 to 40 of its ‘Bhishmaparva’ which contains Lord Krishna’s teachings to relieve Arjuna from his dilemma regarding the propriety of waging war against his teachers and revered relatives. The dilemma of the pandava prince originates from the clash between the incongruous principles of the domestic and political worlds because the character Arjuna has to perform diverse functions as a prince and as a family man. The immediate causes for the dilemma in Arjuna are the result of his innate sense of justice evolved from the experience of injustice done by the Kauravas. The filial devotion ensued from Arjuna’s intense attachment to the erring relatives and a simultaneous hatred caused by their misdeeds committed on Pandavas are coupled with his superficial knowledge in various metaphysical themes of human life. The presence of self pride and self consciousness that spring from his egoistic understanding of himself as the protector of his clan’s lost honour makes Arjuna fearful about the evil consequences of the battle on his life. In a nutshell Bhagavad
Gita discusses the question of the problem of human action – a subject dealt by the great dramatist, Shakespeare in his play *Hamlet*.

The focal point of the Bhagavad Gita is the philosophical advice offered by the divine teacher Sri Krishna to make the irresolute Arjuna agree to the proposal of participating in a righteous war against his family members. *Hamlet* presents a similar protagonist who is fully aware of his duty to atone for the death of his father but lacks proper resolution for its execution. The two heroes belong to the princely class whose *Swadharma* or prime responsibility is to safeguard truth and justice in their respective kingdoms. But both the characters are dominated by a similar emotional crisis caused by their intense attachments to their relatives and negative impulses which have to be curbed to be men of selfless action. The predicament of Hamlet is similar to that of Arjuna since both the heroes are intellects who are conscious of their actions and adhere to superior morality principles.

The present study attempts to take a comprehensive evaluation of the actions of the protagonists in order to identify the corresponding idiosyncrasies. According to the observation of Rudolf Allers in *The Psychology of Character*, one need to concentrate on what a person does in order to appreciate his character:

Hence one has always stressed the deeds of a man as an index of his disposition, his real thoughts – in fact what is ordinarily called his “character”. But the concept of an act or deed must not be unduly restricted; it must be made to include not only deeds in the special sense of the term, but also all movements, gestures, expressions, looks, postures and lineaments, his behavior in various situations. In
short, all the factors that go to make up the general term “conduct,”
form the basis of the estimation of character (9).

Allers confirms that a man’s conduct at any given moment, his very action, is
an expression of the whole man, and a single observation would enable one to
interpret the man because “[e]very “action” […] is thus a relation, the formation of a
nexus between the ego and the non-ego; as a relation it is determined by two parts –
terminus a quo and terminus ad quem” (The Psychology of Character 9). It is
interesting to make a comparative study of these two epic figures – Hamlet and
Arjuna with a focus on their tragic traits, patterns of thought and philosophical
undertones in their predicaments.

According to S.Radhakrishnan “The mood of despair in which Arjuna is
found in the first chapter of the Gita is what the mystics call the dark night of the soul,
an essential step in the upward path” (Indian Philosophy, 520). Swami Rama in
Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita states that the physical and psychological
symptoms that are experienced by Arjuna exemplify that his objection to fighting is
not caused by non-attachment and renunciation but due to his attachment (35).
There are several reasons for Arjuna’s despair. First of all, Arjuna is aware that he is
to get involved in a heinous war that could cause severe damage to both camps.
Secondly the fact that the war is fought between both camps of the same house
disturbs him. Thirdly, Arjuna is taking up arms against his teachers and elders.
Fourthly the hero is expected to fight a fierce battle to regain his and his brother’s
rights in the mundane world. Finally Arjuna is doubtful whether the prevailing order
of the society will be toppled by the battle.
The first, second, third and fourth acts of *Hamlet* present Hamlet as a young prince of exceptional caliber and charisma, who is fully aware of his duty and responsibility to one’s self, his family and kingdom. But the protagonist lacks proper resolution for its execution until the final act of the play. A bird’s eye view of the vicissitudes in Hamlet’s life and their impact on his attitude to life is necessary to understand the negative traits in him. In the first act of *Hamlet* the prince loses his right perspective of revenge of king Hamlet’s murder due to his intensive emotional attachment to his father. Shakespeare throughout the play portrays Hamlet as a truly devoted son who looks upon his father with high esteem and respect. Hamlet’s melancholy gains prominence in the play not only by his emotional exuberance but due to the absence of similar spontaneous expression of grief in other characters viz. Gertrude, Claudius. The following lines present Gertrude’s philosophical counsel tinged with her indifference and easy acceptance of the king’s death which has a reverse effect on Hamlet. In fact her words fans the flames of Hamlet’s rage against her due to his unique moral values and paternal devotion:

Do not for ever with thy vailed lids

Seek for thy noble father in the dust:

Thou know’st ’tis common; all that live must die,

Passing through nature to eternity (*I.ii 70-73*).

The deep emotional attachment between the father and son can be considered as the reason behind Hamlet’s intense sorrow for King Hamlet’s death. The ghostly revelation eventually turns his silent disapproval into a revengeful spirit which culminates in a sacrificial act of purgation. The hero’s hatred towards
Claudius, his anxiety and doubts regarding the consequences of his actions are caused by his inability to approach the act of retribution with a complete sense of detachment. Hamlet acknowledges that his emotional attachment towards his father is comprised of “[...] one part wisdom, / And ever three parts coward” (IV. iv. 42-43) and expresses it in his initial spurt of enthusiasm to face an ordeal for the dead father:

If it assume my noble father’s person,

I’ll speak to it, though hell itself should gape

And bid me hold my peace. (I. ii. 243-245).

These lines remind one about Arjuna’s initial stand in Gita: “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” (I. 23).

When Arjuna confronts his grandsire, relatives and gurus in the realistic plain of the battlefield he gets overtaken with grief and shows external signs of fear and depression leading to the complete abandonment of warfare. The philosophical advice of Sri Krishna serves as an eye opener to Arjuna regarding the perfect methodology and attitude to be followed in his action. The following lines spoken by Krishna pacifies the tumultuous mind of Arjuna as well as empowers him for a rightful action: “Thou grievest for those whom thou shouldst not grieve for, and yet thou speakest words about wisdom. Wise men do not grieve for the dead or for the living” (II.11).
In a similar way Hamlet understands the magnitude of his mission only after his tryst with the ghost of King Hamlet which made him think deeply on the moral and ethical consequences of his action. But unlike Arjuna, Hamlet lacks a confidant to advise him the right attitude to his duty and proper approach to solve his problems in life. Sheridan, Goethe and Coleridge criticized Hamlet for lacking proper heroism, and Eliot accused the hero for being unclear in his objective and weak in expressing his emotions. These intimidated behavioral and thought patterns of both Hamlet and Arjuna can be analyzed in the light of the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita by bringing out the philosophical undertones in their predicaments.

Arjuna’s uncertainty about whether he should fight or retire is clearly obvious in his intense argument in the battlefield. The dilemma in Arjuna springs from his ignorance about the metaphysical implications of his actions and his concern for his future: “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).

Radhakrishnan in his commentary The Bhagavadgita observes that Arjuna is obsessed by both the fear of being victorious and the fear of being defeated since he is tormented by an ardent wish for certainty (100). Even though the pandava prince is aware of his responsibility as a warrior the series of doubtful thoughts that arise in his mind questions the ethics and morality in the warfare with Kauravas. The Indian hero is unable to fix his mind entirely on his duty instead his concentration is focused on the righteousness of his action. The dilemma of Arjuna originates from the clash between the incongruous principles of the domestic, political and ethical worlds because he has to perform diverse functions as a prince, as an householder, and as a human being. The moral uncertainty in Arjuna is
caused by his ignorance about the permanent nature of the soul and wrong attribution of himself as the doer of all action. Radhakrishnan comments on Arjuna as a character who typifies the struggling individual who feels the burden and mystery of the of the world but has not yet empowered his inner spirit to understand the unreality of his own desires and passions and the true status of the world against him (Indian philosophy, 520).

The state of Hamlet as the only son and heir apparent to the Danish throne ordains him with equally unwieldy responsibilities which make him ponder over the results of his action. The Shakespearean hero also wallows in despair due to uncertainty. Hamlet would have reacted differently to his problem had the ghost never visited him, “Or that the Everlasting had not fix’d / His canon ’gainst self-slaughter!” (I. ii. 131-132). The moral and ethical principles become an onus which restrict the hero’s spontaneity and instinctual behavior. The character of Hamlet discloses a self-conscious attitude caused by doubts, fear and egoism as the only heir of the murdered king and executor of a divine mission of great magnitude. The following lines present Hamlet engulfed by the waves of anxieties and doubts caused by the magnitude of his mission: “The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right.” (I.v.189-190).

A reading of Hamlet will reveal the exuberance of three burning emotions — disillusionment, depression, and despair which block Hamlet from accepting his father’s death and his mother’s incestuous marriage. The hero is changed into a disillusioned idealist owing to the stark incongruity between appearance and reality in his domain. Hamlet’s attachment to his dead father instantly dichotomized his world into two halves: firstly the world that accommodates people who loved his dead
father and secondly the world encompasses the people who are against him. The hero realized that he is a lonely inhabitant in the former world since his kinsmen have deserted him for the latter. The dismal realization of reality is the cause for his lack of enthusiasm for life which gets culminated in the loss of faith in man. Juliet Mc Lauchlan in her essay “The Prince of Denmark and Claudius’s court” comments that Hamlet’s original intention to return to Wittenberg reflects his natural feeling of uneasiness and helplessness at the court of Claudius which prompted him to escape from his kingdom (Aspects of Hamlet 49). The initial escapist tendency of the hero is a proof for his lack of ambition for the throne of Denmark and his silent disapproval of the sudden turn of events that followed the death of king Hamlet.

Like Arjuna’s vacillation, Hamlet’s irresolution is caused by his innate desire to retain his conscience free from sinful action. The hero’s just desire to avenge his father’s death turns into an egoistic enterprise when it rises from his hatred, anger toward Claudius. Similarly Arjuna ponders over the rightness of killing the opposite force: “So it is not right that we slay our kinsmen, the sons of Dhrtarastra. Indeed, how can we be happy, O Madhava [Krsna], if we kill our own people?” (I.37).

The delay by Hamlet in the fulfillment of his revenge is caused by his anxiety on the after effects of his actions on him and his selfish motive to murder Claudius while engaged in a selfish act so that “[...] his heels may kick at heaven, / And that his soul may be as damn’d and black/ As hell, whereto it goes” (III.iii.93 – 95). The first four acts of Hamlet present the hero caught in a maze of moral and metaphysical doubts created by five negative character traits: ignorance, egoism, desire, fear and hatred. A detailed reading will disclose that these inappropriate behavioral features in Hamlet led to his tragic end. Hamlet’s ignorance about the
secrets of life after death turns him an egoist. The egoistic nature makes him consider himself as the doer of all his actions and the sufferer of their consequences. The tragic hero wants to ascertain the veracity of the ghost and doubts the righteousness of his action due to his self concern for salvation. Arjuna’s intense attachment to his gurus and relatives and his inherent hatred for the Kaurava clan prohibits him from performing a selfless and righteous duty for sustaining peace in the kingdom. Arjuna expresses his egoism caused by ignorance in the lines: “Nor do we know which for us is better, whether we conquer them or they conquer us. The sons of Dhrtarastra, whom if we slew we should not care to live, are standing before us in battle array” (II.6).

Swami Ramdas in *Gita Sandesh* comments on the ill effects of *Moha* and egoism in Arjuna:

It is *Moha* or attachment arising from the individual sense of ‘I’ in relation to the body and therefrom to the bodies of those near and dear to him by the ties of blood or friendship or material obligations. This *Moha*) causes the mind of man, as a result of its narrow vision, to move in a limited circle identifying itself with the interests of this circle (*Gita Sandesh* 1).

The preoccupation towards oneself makes Hamlet self retrospective by nature. The Danish prince feels fearful of sin, hatred towards the opponents and nurtures selfish desire for the attainment of personal salvation as well as eternal damnation of Claudius. In the opinion of Helen Gardner in the essay “Hamlet and the Tragedy of Revenge” “Hamlet is the quintessence of European man, who holds that man is ordained to govern the world according to equity and righteousness with an upright
heart, and not to renounce the world and leave it to corruption” (Shakespeare Modern Essays in Criticism 224-225). Hamlet holds an inflated self image of himself as the doer of meritorious action for his dead father and an angel of justice who wages war against the miscreants. The self consciousness makes him consider as the doer of all actions and be fearful about the aftereffects. The princely hero aims to avenge his father’s death but simultaneously gets entangled in the fearful thoughts about the results of his action. Hamlet’s concern for the veracity of the ghost and doubts regarding the righteousness of his action rise from his self concern for his salvation. The hero aims to avenge his father’s death but his mind is simultaneously disquieted by the fearful results of his action.

Bhave comments that “[e]goism is conquered by constancy in Sattva; attachment is conquered by giving up desire for results, and dedicating to the Lord even the fruits of Sattva-Guna” (Talks on The Gita 212). The initial four acts of the play present Hamlet’s personal feelings as a bereaved son of a dead king. The hero’s thoughts are self-centered and born out of his deep attachment to his father and stark hatred for his uncle and mother. Hamlet fails to respond to the plea of ghost not to tarnish his conscience in the course of action against injustice. Alan Gardiner in the essay “The State of Denmark” comments on the negative human traits in Hamlet that eclipse his positive qualities. Hamlet is portrayed as a paragon of qualities that Claudius and Polonius denigrate and reject—qualities such as openness, honesty and spontaneity. But simultaneously he is deeply oppressed by an overwhelming despair and disgust (Critical Essays on Hamlet 31). The revenge motive in Hamlet would have gained prominence as a solemn act if he had conducted it as a sacrificial act done for purging his country from evil. But it lost its grandeur when it turned out to be a calculated enterprise specially implemented for making Claudius deprive of
temporal and eternal happiness. Hamlet postpones his possible murder of Claudius in the prayer scene in order to deny Claudius the eternal bliss which was treacherously refused to king Hamlet by him. This ulterior motive of Hamlet which deflected his revenge motive originates from his inherent hatred for Claudius. He expresses his malicious desire to permit the ultimate punishment for Claudius:

HAMLET. Now might I do it pat, now a is a – praying,

And now I’ll do’t: and so a goes to heaven;

And so am I revenged. That would be scanned:

A villain kills my father; and for that,

I, his sole son, do this same villain send

To heaven. (III.iii.73-78)

The two heroes, Hamlet and Arjuna, present the predicament of a human being caught in the labyrinth of emotional distress which make them totally unfit for action. The motivating factor that drags these heroes to vengeance is the call of their duty as the custodians of their family’s honour. Arjuna and Hamlet are two royal princes who are entrusted with the responsibility of retrieving the lost honour of their families as well as their lost kingdoms from their vicious kinsmen. The heroes are ordained with a divine duty to wage a battle of justice to overcome injustice in their domains. During the initial stages of their actions the two heroes endure a similar phase of disillusionment, despair and depression which even force them to neglect their responsibilities. The Mahabharata war is the ultimate result of the ignominy
suffered by Draupathy at the hands of the Kauravas, and the incapability of the Pandavas in safeguarding their wife’s honour. If the untied locks of Draupathy had been a constant reminder for Arjuna to wage war against the Kauravas, the ghostly intervention of king Hamlet commits Hamlet with the responsibility of avenging his father’s murder as well as preserving the honour of his mother from further contamination.

Swami Chinmayananda in *The Art of Man Making* opines: “The strategy of invoking the Higher Being of Intelligence that lurks in each one of us and of defeating the dark forces of the ego and its dangerous henchmen is the ‘Discovery of Life’ chalked out in the Geeta” (17). The term ‘gunas’ is an important part in the Gita ethics that bears a positive expression in spite of its negative concept. According to Chinmayananda in *Sreemad Bhagavadgeeta: Chapter XIV & XV* the three gunas like chords bind the spirit to matter and create in the Infinite Spirit, the painful sense of limitations and sorrows (19). Gita introduces the term “gunas” to denote the presence and influence of certain negative qualities in the self which prompt the hero to indulge in vices that finally lead to his disintegration. Radhakrishnan discusses the doctrine of the gunas and their negative effect on human beings in *Indian Philosophy*:

The constituents of prakrti are the three qualities of sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (darkness). They are present throughout all things, though in different degrees. Beings are classified into gods, men and beasts according as the one or the other quality predominates. These three are the fetters of the soul (502).
The expression ‘gunas’ is an equivalent for ‘human frailty’ a Greek concept propounded by Aristotle to denote the presence of tragic traits in an individual which obstruct him from attaining fulfillment in life. Aristotle in Poetics states that a tragedy describes the predicament of a person “[…] neither eminently virtuous or just, nor yet involved in misfortune by deliberate vice or villainy, but by some error of human frailty; and this person should also be someone of high fame and flourishing prosperity” (238). H.D.F. Kitto in Form and Meaning in Drama enumerates on the Greek poets’ concept of tragic error by considering it as the breaking of a divine law whereas Shakespeare identified it as an evil quality which once broken loose will annihilate all until it reaches the natural end (337). A.C. Bradley in Shakespearean Tragedy views that the tragic trait, which is the greatness of a tragic hero proves fatal to Hamlet in the end. The hero fails to meet the circumstance with proper resolution, which a smaller man might have given and he errs by action or omission which get coupled with other causes lead to his end (14).

Radhakrishnan in Indian Philosophy observes the three gunas as capable of causing bondage or a feeling of limitedness to the self. The presence of gunas make Arjuna consider himself as the doer of all action:

The bondage to gunas causes the feeling of limitedness. The bonds belonging to mind are erroneously attributed to the self. Though action saturated with sattva is said to be the best kind of action, it is also urged that even sattva binds, since a nobler desire brings about a purer ego. For full freedom all egoism should cease. The ego, however pure it may be, is an obstructing veil and binds itself to knowledge and
bliss. Getting beyond all qualities and occupying an impersonal cosmic outlook form the ideal state (570).

Swami Rama sums up the three qualities of Prakrti called gunas – sattva, rajas and tamas. These three qualities exist together in the human being as well as in every being in nature, but the predominant quality in a being decides the quality of one’s action. Therefore a deed performed in a state of tranquility is a consequence of sattva guna, the deed in which rajas is predominant is performed with a desire to reap the fruits. Tamas leads one to sloth and inaction (Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita 148-149). Every human being is bound to do his duty since no body can remain idle without performing action and no one can attain perfection by mere renunciation. Everyone is compelled to act by the predominant guna in one’s nature.

Radhakrishnan in The Bhagavadgita explains that the three modes of nature are present in all human beings in different degrees. The theory of “humours” of the body dominated physiology, and categorizes men into sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholic and choleric based on the predominance of the humours; whereas the Hindu classification based on the psychic characteristics based on the gunas in human beings: The activities of a sattvika temperament are free, calm and selfless, the rajasa nature wishes to be always active and the activities are tainted by selfish desires. The tamasa nature is dull and inert, and its whole life is one continuous submission to environment (319). The negative effect of the three gunas and their universal nature is discussed by Sri Aurobindo in his commentary on Essays on Gita: “Arjuna is, in the language of the Gita, a man subject to the action of the three gunas or modes of Nature – Force and habituated to move unquestioningly in that field, like the generality of men” (19).
Lord Krishna teaches *brahmavidya* to his aspirant Arjuna in order to focus his attention on the presence of the three *gunas* and egoism in his nature which are the fundamental causes that deter him from salvation. According to the teachings of the Gita one can attain Self-realization through meditation, philosophical and analytical deductions and through the practice of *Karma Yoga*.

Ila Ahuja in *Bhagavad Gita: A New Perspective A Universal Message for the Modern Society* opines that the three types of *gunas* present in man bind and imprison the indestructible Self and block it from self realisation. The *gunas* are responsible for the variety, diversity, and heterogeneity in all human beings since they are ropes of attachment that fetter the Self and hamper self-realisation (106-107). The various influences of the three *gunas* on man is expressed in the words of Krishna:

> Of these, goodness (*sattva*) being pure, causes illumination and health. It binds, O blameless one, by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge. Passion (*rajas*), know thou, is of the nature of attraction, springing from craving and attachment. It binds fast, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna) the embodied one by attachment to action. But dullness (*tamas*), know thou, is born of ignorance and deludes all embodied beings. It binds, O Bharata (Arjuna), by (developing the qualities of) negligence, indolence and sleep (XIV.6-8).

The universal presence of the three *gunas* and their influences on human beings, and means to overpower them are discussed by Sri Aurobindo in his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, *The Gita* where he affirms that the first movement to be free from the clutches of the *gunas* is to get rid of desire which is the
root of the evil and suffering. Therefore one must put an end to the cause of suffering by controlling the reins of the senses (40-41). Ila Ahuja states that every man is under the influence of the three gunas which affect knowledge or jnana, karma or action and Karta or the doer. According to Samkhya philosophy the presence of sattva guna enables man to acquire true knowledge to perceive the One Indestructible Being in all existence, the effect of rajas causes one to see all beings as separate entities, the influence of tamas inspires one to believe that the part is whole and the body is the true Self. The sattva guna influences a man to perform his action or karma as a sacred duty without any attachment and desire for the fruits of the action. The action performed with a secret desire to satisfy one’s ego and pleasures is under the influence of rajas. A rash action performed without any concern about the consequences of one’s action on oneself and others is motivated by tamas. A karta is sattvika when he does an action without any attachment and desire for the fruits of the action. The doer is rajasika when he longs for the fruits of his actions. The performer is tamasika when he is rude, arrogant, deceitful and careless in his action.

The influence of the sattva guna on one’s intellect enables a person to make a distinction between the path of renunciation, work and worldly desires. A person fails to select between moral and immoral, right and wrong when he is inspired by rajas. The impact of tamas causes a person to stay in ignorance and perceive a distorted and perverted picture of the reality (Bhagavad Gita: A New Perspective A Universal Message for the Modern Society 176-183). Arjuna’s desire to be a sattwic forces him to possess an impeccable conscience in order to attain salvation. According to Rama the buddhi of rajasic quality is unable to discriminate between the real and the unreal and the tamasic knowledge leads one to sullenness, and inertia. The influence of rajoguna and tamoguna prompt man to act in a manner
opposite and contrary to the sattwic quality (Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad Gita 442). In The Bhagavadgita Krishna points out the crux of Arjuna’s problem:

“In this, O joy of the Kurus (Arjuna), the resolute (decided) understanding is single; but the thoughts of the irresolute (undecided) are many—branched and endless” (II., 41).

In the Gita Sri Krishna teaches about the influence of the three gunas on a person’s happiness. One’s happiness is sattvika when it is born from enlightenment or self—realization. Happiness is termed as rajasika when it arises from the contact between the senses and objects. The brutal pleasure is named as tamasika when it is resulted from excessive sleep, miscomprehension and lethargy (Ahuja, Bhagavad Gita 183). In the chapter XVIII of The Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna inculcates the influences of the three gunas on all beings on earth and in heaven and the necessity to eradicate them from one’s mind by the performance of actions based on one’s vasanas: “Better is one’s own law though imperfectly carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. One does not incur sin when one does the duty ordained by one’s own nature” (XVIII.47).

The destructive nature of the three gunas and their negative influence on the human soul is enumerated by Sri Aurobindo in Essays on the Gita. The three gunas born of Prakriti bind the imperishable dweller in the body by its attachment to the enjoinder of the three gunas. The infinite and imperishable spirit by its attachment to the enjoyment of the three gunas concentrates its consciousness on the lower and outward actions of life, mind and body in Nature and thereby get imprisoned in these new forms until it is liberated from the bondage of the gunas. Every natural action is done under the influence of gunas since the soul is incapable
of doing any actions by itself. Gita insists on the right action performed with complete detachment in order to be free from the shackles of the gunas ( Essays on the Gita 417 ).

Swami Chinmayananda in The Art of Man Making observes actions as the expressions of vasanas. The quality of vasanas determines the quality of the performances at the body level (120). Sri Krishna declares the difference in the actions performed by the wise and the unwise in the Gita. The understanding of the potency of the gunas and their varied impact on human beings can be applied on Hamlet in order to find solution for his crisis: “While all kinds of work are done by the modes of nature, he whose soul is bewildered by the self-sense thinks “I am the doer” (III. 27).

Chinmayananda states that “One who has the true insight into the modes of the mind and the actions precipitated by them, understanding that gunas as ‘sense – organs’ move along gunas as ‘objects’ – he no longer gets attached to them” (The Art of Man Making 120). In the following lines Sri Krishna teaches the great “secret of success”, which is termed by Chinmayananda as the very back-bone of the third chapter of Bhagavad Gita (The Art of Man Making 122): “Renouncing all actions in me, with the mind centered on thy self - without hope and ego, freed from fever –fight on ”(III. 30). Even though the path towards salvation appears to be simple, it offers several hurdles to the disciple since even the man of knowledge acts in accordance with his own nature or gunas. Therefore Krishna reveals to Arjuna the way to self – discovery in The Art of Man Making 130: “Likes and dislikes of the senses for their sense objects is natural. Let none allow himself to be swayed by them: they are his two enemies on his way to success (III. 34).
Radhakrishnan warns on the importance of acting according to buddhi or understanding or otherwise one will be an easy prey to our impulses or the play of prakrti. The failure of a man to interfere with the senses of attachments and aversions will determine his acts. Krishna stresses the necessity of doing one’s actions with a sublime sense of duty in order to save from the clutches of Prakrti (The Bhagavadgita 146).

Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna the impact of the gunas on human being since the root cause that impels a man to commit sin is caused by rajas. Chinmayananda considers lust and anger as the fruits of rajoguna – mental agitations (The Art of Man Making 135): “It is desire – lust : it is anger born of Rajas : it is insatiable and grossly wicked. Know this to be the enemy here in this world” (3. 37).

Chinmayananda considers lust – desire, otherwise expressed as anger as the greatest enemy of man in this life. Rajoguna is manifested through a person’s insatiable desire to possess, enjoy the objects of the world and when once he allows his bosom to be conquered by anger. Krishna enumerates on the destructive effect of the gunas on human beings: “As a flame is covered by smoke, a mirror by dust and the foetus by the womb, so is ‘knowledge’ covered by the desire – lust” (3. 38).

Chinmayananda states that the three examples indicate the three types of coverings or gunas that shroud ‘knowledge’, depending upon the types of desires; peaceful (sattwic), restless (rajasic) or low (tamasic). A sattwic desire to serve the members of the community and to perform selfless service to humanity can be corroded by the presence of a selfish desire which stems from attachment. The impurity is as superficial and as simple as the smoke that veils the flame which can be removed effortlessly. When the rajasic desire to acquire, possess and enjoy the
sense objects veils ‘knowledge’ like the mirror tarnished by dirt, a sincere effort is necessary to bring back the luster. The tamasic desire veils and walls the ‘knowledge’ like the foetus in the mother’s womb which requires intense effort for a length of time (The Art of Man Making 137-138).

The Gita concept of the gunas can be seen operating on the nature of Hamlet, who is dissuaded from his duty and responsibility as a prince and as a son by his earnest desire to do good in order to win heaven. The hero’s reliance on religion and morality persuade him to do the right action. The moral dilemma in Hamlet is caused by his ignorance on how to perform an action and yet be free from its possible evil consequences. Hamlet is haunted by his Sattwic desire to perform only the right action and thereby save his soul from the flames of hell which torments his father. The impact of sattwa guna in Hamlet prompts him to be meticulous about the purity of his actions.

In the Gita, the presence of sattwa guna prompts Arjuna to express a similar aspiration to fight a just feud against injustice which is apparent in his courageous verbal expression reported by Samjaya that reveals his initial readiness to fight against the Kauravas:

And, O Lord of earth, he spoke this word to Hrsikesa (Krsna):
Draw up my chariot, O Acyuta (Krsna), between the two armies.
So that I may observe these men standing, eager for battle, with whom I have to contend in this strife of war (The Bhagavadgita I. 21-22).
Earlier while standing upon the battlements with Horatio and Marcellus, Hamlet had the ability to overcome their requests to guard himself from the ghost of king Hamlet. The presence of pure inner strength derived from a divine sense of composure, total negation of the physical being self, belief in immortality of the soul and complete reliance on God empowered Hamlet to utter the following words:

HAMLET. Why, what should be the fear?

I do not set my life at a pin’s fee,

And for my soul, what can it do to that

Being a thing immortal as itself? (I.iv.64-67)

Later the Shakespearean hero loses his grip over his self and breeds erroneous thoughts and principles. In the end he regains his lost inner strength and becomes mentally fit for an open combat by shedding his egoistic desire to lead a sattvic life free from sin and wipes off his deeply rooted hatred towards Claudius.

In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna cautions Arjuna about the presence of the three gunas in varied degrees in all human beings and the importance of rising above the modes of nature to become trigunatita. Radhakrishnan asserts the malevolent nature of the gunas and their decisive role in human beings:

Evil is caused by the bondage to the gunas. It arises because the seed of life or the spirit cast into matter becomes fettered by the gunas. According to the preponderance of one or the other of the gunas the soul rises and falls (The Bhagavadgita 55-56).
The principles of the Bhagavad Gita encapsulated in these following verses by Radhakrishnan advocate the effects of the three gunas in man which are manifested in the manner one’s faith, knowledge, action, intellect, fortitude, happiness are expressed in life: “Good men worship the gods, the passionate worship the demigods and the demons and the others (who are) the dull, worship the spirits and ghosts” (The Bhagavadgita XVII. 4). Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna the three kinds of faith of the embodied which are born of the three gunas. According to Radhakrishnan the nature of faith of the devotee has importance since it determines the fruit of his worship (The Bhagavadgita 343). When analyzed in the light of the concept of the gunas, the basic cause for Hamlet’s vacillation rises from his doubt whether to take the ghost in confidence or to obey the canon of God. The conflict between tamoguna and sattwa guna in Hamlet causes a serious mental conflict in him on the propriety of taking revenge on Claudius. Finally the hero transcends the three Gunas and trusts his own conscience by thrusting the poisoned sword at Claudius. The villainous involvement of Claudius in the crime is revealed in Laertes’s testimony: “The king, the king’s to blame” (V.ii.312).

According to Sri Krishna the influence of the gunas in man creates three kinds of sacrifices:

That sacrifice which is offered, according to the scriptural law, by those who expect no reward and believe firmly that it is their duty to offer the sacrifice, is “good.” But that which is offered in expectation of reward or for the sake of display, know, O best of the Bharatas (Arjuna), that sacrifice to be “passionate”. The sacrifice which is not in conformity with the law, in which no food is distributed, no hymns
are chanted and no fees are paid, which is empty of faith, they declare to be “dull” (The Bhagavadgita XVII.11–13).

The predicament of Hamlet as a hero ordained with a mission has to perform a sacrificial act. In the first four acts of the play, Hamlet did the role of a passionate hero who was performing an action with his eye focused on the reward. Therefore he is affected by the uncertainty of the result of his action. In the final act, Hamlet succeeds by his readiness to foster *sattva guna* in himself by wiping off the retarding effects of the gunas in him.

Lord Krishna teaches on the influence of the three *gunas* on man’s knowledge and their effects on his ability of perceiving the truth in the universe in The Bhagavadgita:

The knowledge by which the one Imperishable Being is seen in all existences, undivided in the divided, know that that knowledge is of “goodness”. The knowledge which sees multiplicity of beings in the different creatures, by reason of their separateness, know that that knowledge is of the nature of “passion”. But that which clings to one single effect as if it were the whole, without concern for the cause, without grasping the real, and narrow is declared to be of the nature of “dullness” (XVIII.20-22).

A close study of the moral dilemmas of Arjuna and Hamlet will reveal that their disapproval of retaliation spring from their fear of murdering their kinsmen. The *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* in the heroes make them consider as the annihilators of their opponents’ souls. The grief of Arjuna reveals his ignorance of the immortality
and divine nature of soul: “These I would not consent to kill, though they kill me, O Madhusudana (Krsna), even for the kingdom of the three worlds; how much less for the sake of the earth?” (I. 35).

Hamlet partakes a similar expression of anxiety triggered by ignorance prompts him to shun the act of retribution:

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).

According to Radhakrishnan the three kinds of Karma in the Gita are created by the three gunas whose effects are distinctly visible in the two heroes:

An action which is obligatory, which is performed without attachment, without love or hate by one undesirous of fruit, that is said to be of “goodness”. But that action which is done in great strain by one who seeks to gratify his desires or is impelled by self-sense, is said to be of the nature of “passion”. The action which is undertaken through ignorance, without regard to consequences or to loss and injury and without regard to one’s human capacity, that is said to be of “dullness” (The Bhagavadgita XVIII. 23–25).

The predominance of rajoguna in Arjuna and Hamlet make them consider their responsibility as a gargantuan task which would cause immense loss in their
lives. Both the heroes were motivated by their personal desires and attachment. They could perform their destined mission only after considering their act as an obligatory and selfless service for their countrymen. The Bhagavadgita presents three kinds of doers moulded by the three gunas:

**KRISHNA:** The doer who is free from attachment, who has no speech of egotism, full of resolution and zeal and who is unmoved by success or failure – he is said to be of the nature of “goodness”. The doer who is swayed by passion, who eagerly seeks the fruit of his works, who is greedy, of harmful nature, impure, who is moved by joy and sorrow – he is said to be of “passionate” nature. The doer who is unbalanced, vulgar, obstinate, deceitful, malicious, indolent, despondent and procrastinating, he is said to be of the nature of “dullness” (XVIII.26-28).

Arjuna and Hamlet are swayed by the rajoguna since they desired the fruits of their actions. The heroes have not been men of equanimity and they were easily moved by the “pairs of opposites” which are detrimental for a trigunatita. In the final act of Hamlet and in the tenth chapter of The Bhagavadgita the two heroes reveal signs of sattva guna as they get free from the shackles of attachment, irresolution, egoism in them. The dawn of the spirit of discernment is vital to achieve enlightenment in a man. According to Sri Krishna a being’s understanding can be influenced by the gunas:

The understanding which shows action and non-action, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what binds and what frees the soul (that
understanding), O Partha (Arjuna), is of the nature of “goodness”.

That by which one knows in a mistaken way the right and the wrong, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done – that understanding, O Partha (Arjuna) is of the nature of “passion.”

That which enveloped in darkness as right what is wrong and sees all things in a perverted way (contrary to the truth), that understanding, O Partha (Arjuna), is of the nature of “dullness” (XVIII.30-32).

The two princes were under the influence of the rajoguna and tamoguna as their sense of perception were thoroughly jeopardized by them. The retarding influences of the gunas are apparent in the desperate state of Arjuna in the battlefield and in the state of inertia experienced by Hamlet until they attained the power of discretion.

In The Bhagavadgita effect of the three gunas cause emotional attachment that binds Arjuna with his relatives. Arjuna is unable to perform his duty since his mind is strangled by the pulls of desire, fear, hatred and egoism. Arjuna laments on his duty as a warrior and considers it as his misfortune to fight against his kinsfolk due to his egoistic thoughts which provoke him to consider himself as the doer and sufferer of all actions. The hero admits to Krishna about his inability to function as a warrior because of his doubts and indecision: “My very being is stricken with the weakness of (sentimental) pity. With my mind bewildered about my duty. I ask Thee. Tell me, who am seeking refuge in Thee” (II.7).

Arjuna’s intense attachment to his gurus and relatives and his inherent hatred for the Kaurava clan prohibit him from performing a selfless and righteous duty for sustaining peace in the Kingdom. Sri Krishna teaches the fundamental principle of
Bhagavad Gita that provides man inner peace and tranquility by doing selfless action without any vices and attachment with the results of the action. Aurobindo in *The Message of Gita* states that one must attain perfect equality in the soul, mind and heart and sustain oneness with all beings, their thoughts, expressions and experiences in order to attain a divine consciousness and to perform a divine action free from attachment. The term *Yoga* signifies the transformation of one’s mind and being to a phase of perfect poise and equilibrium which evolves the right principle of action that leads to a divine and spiritual result. *Yoga is* the result of a spiritual condition of universal equality and God-union and a perfect adaptation of the soul to the rhythm of the divine *prakriti* by attaining liberation from the shackles of egoism, senses and the gunas (*The Message* 48–49).

Sri Krishna advocates the necessity of performing the right action, selfless and free from the gunas, selfish desire and hatred in order to attain freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. Gita reminds Arjuna about the necessity of forgetting completely his egoistic nature in order to do selfless action. Ramdas stresses the importance of eliminating one’s artificial sense of actorship in order to dissolve the personal ego through complete surrender of all actions to God (*Gita Sandesh* 15-16).

In the view of Chinmayananda the subtle difference between the activities of the wise and the ignorant is demarcated by one’s ability to detach oneself from false action. “Detachment of the mind” refers to one’s ability to perform an action for the welfare of the world without attachment. Sri Krishna advises that nobler actions are actions without attachment since “[a]attachment becomes a clog or a painful chain […] when it is extremely ego-centric” (*The Bhagavadgeeta* 332).
In the third chapter termed *Karma Yoga*, Sri Krishna inculcates Arjuna the cardinal methods to perform one’s duty in the name of God Almighty without any regard for reward. According to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita every human act should be performed in a spirit of total disinterestedness by being free from all delusions caused by the three *gunas* and egoism. In the following lines Krishna stresses the importance of selfless action: “Resigning all thy works to Me, with thy consciousness fixed in the Self, being free from desire and egoism, fight delivered from thy fever. II. 30)

The presence of egoism in Arjuna makes him feel as the sole doer of all actions and talk in terms of enlightened selfishness. The shallow knowledge of Arjuna in the metaphysical themes of life and its severity is indicated in the following lines by Radhakrishnan:

The Gita requires […] not to renounce works but to do them, offering them to the supreme in which alone is immortality. When we renounce our attachment to the finite ego and its likes and dislikes and place our actions in the Eternal, We acquire the true renunciation which is consistent with free activity in the world” (The Bhagavadgita 178).

In the Gita, Arjuna’s doubts are solved instantly by Sri Krishna by his advice to nullify the principal vices: selfishness, egoism that cause man to cast his eye on the fruits of action.

Raman Selden in the essay “Hamlet’s Word - Play and the Oedipus complex” considers Hamlet as a melancholy man who is more given to ‘contemplation’ than for ‘action (Critical Essays on Hamlet 81-82). Hamlet’s
contemplation can be explained in the light of the Gita philosophy. In the beginning of the play, Hamlet expressed the qualities of *rajobguna* such as doubt, anger, attachment, vacillation in his activities and attitudes towards his opponents. Initially, various behavioral patterns of *tamoguna* such as melancholy, inertia were also evident. But in the final act, his self is liberated from the barriers of the three gunas. The predicament of Hamlet is caused by his obsession with morality and self-consciousness which constantly remind him about the righteousness of his actions in life. Hamlet’s desire to lead a *sattwic* life arises from the presence of *sattwa guna* in him.

Shakespeare pictures the complex workings of the human mind through the soliloquies of Hamlet. In the first soliloquy, we find Hamlet caught in the whirlpool of despair like Arjuna, the archetype of human soul. Hamlet keeps close allegiance with his conscience which supplements him spiritual enlightenment. The first soliloquy expresses four varied aspects of Hamlet’s states of mind. Firstly, it arises from his state of intense desperation and grief caused by King Hamlet’s death and it reveals his deep attachment and devotion for his dead father who is considered as superior to him:

O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason,

Would have mourned longer, – married with my uncle,

My father’s brother, but no more like my father

Than I to Hercules […] (I.ii.150-153).
Hamlet is moved by the indecent hastiness of Gertrude to marry Claudius. The line “A little month, or ere those shoes were old / With which she followed my poor father's body” (I.ii.147-148) reflects Hamlet’s disgust caused by Gertrude’s indecent hastiness. Thirdly, the unacceptability can be from his possessiveness of his mother on the absence of siblings to share his sorrows and anxieties. Fourthly, Hamlet’s innate sense of morality and ethics made the marriage unacceptable for him. It is important to notice that at this juncture Hamlet’s hatred is focused on his mother. Even though Hamlet could not appreciate the hasty marriage between his mother and Claudius, his decision to keep his displeasure in his heart as evident in the following line is a proof of his maturity and prudence: “It is not it cannot come to good; / But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue” (I.ii.158-159). It can be concluded that Hamlet’s uneasiness is caused by his attachment with his dead father and erring mother and hatred for his mother’s indecent action caused by his impeccable concept of morality.

Theodore Spencer in *Shakespeare and The Nature of Man* associates the vacillation and doubts of the hero to the thoughts and feelings of the people of his time. Shakespeare conceived Hamlet as a young man with a positive mind who believed in the traditional optimistic view of nature. Thus before his mother’s second marriage, Hamlet is portrayed as the ideal Renaissance noble man. According to Ophelia, the Prince had a ‘noble mind’, and he was the ‘the courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue, sword and th’ expectancy and rose of the fair state’ (III.i.145-146). In Spencer’s view, the discovery of Gertrude’s lust and the facts behind the death of his worthy father and the realization that the kingdom is in the hands of an unworthy man, shatters his belief, which in turn ruins his impression on the world, state and the individual (*Shakespeare and The Nature of Man* 94-95).
An identical picture of Arjuna is portrayed in The Bhagavadgita as an ardent worshipper of morality, obsessed to safeguard it in his thoughts, words and deeds. The dilemma stricken Hamlet who might have blessed with a close knit relationship with his parents reminds the similar perplex situation of Arjuna in the first chapter of The Bhagavadgita: “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 (II.7).

The second soliloquy in act I scene v reveals Hamlet’s feeling of disillusionment, loss of faith and pride in man as the glorious creation. The ghostly revelation reveals Hamlet about the couple’s involvement in the murder. Hamlet reminds himself about the importance of wiping off “all other trivial fond records” (1.5.99) for the quick execution of the revenge. The hero’s aversion toward his mother and Claudius is evident in the lines: “O most pernicious woman! / O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!” (1.5.105-106). At this juncture it is important to notice that Hamlet’s hatred towards Claudius and Gertrude rises to the tempo of revenge only after the ghostly revelation about the couple’s active and passive involvement in the murder of the king. Hamlet’s revengeful attitude towards Claudius can be considered as a genuine reaction which aroused out of his devotion for his dead father. But in the light of the philosophy of the Gita revengeful attitude and anger would bind him to the gunas which separate him from the ultimate truth.

The contemplative nature of the hero makes him decide not to budge an inch from the realm of truth and justice. Hamlet’s unflinching desire to retain an impeccable conscience in his dealings with Claudius and the ghost of King Hamlet is caused by his self-consciousness and egoism.
Chinmayananda in Sreemad Bhagavadgeeta : Chapter XIV& XV comments that goodness, though it gives freedom from all vulgarities, can also shackle within its own limitations just like a strong golden chain can bind one as equally as an iron chain (21). According to Acharya Vinoba Bhave in Talks on the Gita “To achieve victory over sattva means to remove our identification with it, our attachment to it. [...] We should make sattva free of ahamkara, of egoism”(209). In a similar manner the presence of egoism deters Hamlet from taking up the right action. In the third soliloquy in act II scene ii Hamlet accuses himself for the delay since he is “pigeon–livered, and lack gall” (II . ii .529). Hamlet’s anger towards Claudius which is still afresh fumes out in the lines: Bloody, bawdy villain! / Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!” (II .ii .531- 532). Here Hamlet is not under the grip of a frenzied emotion, the hero ponders over the issue to skim out a solution. The hero is strangled by the negative emotions which corrupt his goodness. He wonders:

Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them? (III . I . 57- 60).

The fourth soliloquy in act III scene i exposes Hamlet’s inability to overcome his irresolution. Hamlet is seen wallowed in existential thoughts and fears about the unknown future of man. He appears as a dull and desolate personality who is lost at the cross roads of life, a defeatist unable to decide his own actions since the future is unknown to him. Hamlet is at a loss to decide whether to take up arms.
against “a sea of troubles” or to bear it patiently. The doubtful attitude of Hamlet born out of his ignorance and egoism prohibits him from performing his duty with the right attitude just as in the case of Arjuna who quits warfare in the battlefield.

Hamlet does not know whether it is proper for him to suffer his adverse situations with patience or to fight against his adversaries and end them. The hero is worried about the results of his actions. The present action performed by Hamlet is influenced by the fearful thoughts about their results in the future which persuades him to lead a life of inaction. An identical situation of dilemma triggered by self-centered thoughts and ignorance in Arjuna is wiped off by Krishna:

But he who knows the true character of the two distinctions (of the soul) from the modes of nature and their works, O Mighty – armed (Arjuna), understanding that it is the modes which are acting on the modes, does not get attached (III.28).

The fifth soliloquy is preceded by the mouse–trap play in act III scene ii which discloses the involvement of Claudius in the murder. Hamlet now believes “[…] the ghost’s word for a thousand pound” (III. ii.260). The revelation has once again mounted hatred for Claudius and triggers murderous tendencies in Hamlet and he plans to meet the queen and […]speak daggers to her but use none (III. ii.357). The minds of Arjuna and Hamlet are tossed by a series of doubtful thoughts which are evolved from impure emotions. According to the teachings of the Gita the doubtful thoughts act as obstacles which hinder man from realizing his dreams through actions. Sri Krishna reminds Arjuna that a man can destroy his ignorance and doubts only by the attainment of wisdom. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna on the importance of desirelessness or non-attachment of action for the ultimate god.
realization. Krishna stresses the vital role of knowledge in equipping oneself in his battle against the three modes of prakrti, desire and hatred.

In the sixth soliloquy in act III scene iii Hamlet meets Claudius at prayer and he purposely doesn’t commit the murder at time of grace. Hamlet’s decision to postpone the prospective murder of Claudius to another occasion when he is engaged in “some act/That has no relish of salvation in’t” (III. iii. 92) arises from his ulterior desire to deny Claudius eternal salvation. Arjuna suffered a state of inactivity in the battle field caused by his seething anger and burning desire for personal vengeance against the Kauravas. Lord Krishna identifies that the crux of Arjuna’s problem is his inability to attain freedom from attachments and base emotions. Krishna’s advice is aimed at creating a positive change in the attitude of the warrior:

“When a man dwells in his mind on the objects of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire and from desire comes anger” (II. 62)

The seventh soliloquy in act IV scene iv is Hamlet’s analysis of his personal flaws. He chides himself for his procrastination and accuses himself for stooping to the level of beasts by forgetting his mission of life. Unlike Arjuna Hamlet has no confidant to correct his faults and guide him through the uncouth ways of life. The greatness of Hamlet is in his ability to unearth the inner wisdom of his self which lies buried in everyone. The selfconscious attempt made by the hero in order to scan his own conscience is explicit in the following lines:

Now whe’r it be

Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple

Of thinking too precisely on the event,
A thought, which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom,

And ever three parts coward—I do no

Why yet I live to say ‘This thing’s to do;’

Sith I have cause and will and strength, and means

To do’t (IV. iv .39-46).

Hamlet fails to get a plausible answer for his irresolution and brute—like forgetfulness and finally he attributes it to his cowardly feeling of reluctance caused by pondering too much over the consequences. Sri Krishna’s advice to Arjuna on the rightful attitude to do one’s duty is equally applicable to lift the yoke of mental anguish of Hamlet too: “To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction” (II.47).

If Arjuna and Hamlet are passing through a crisis—it is nothing but natural. Commenting on the philosophy of Gita, on this issue Radhakrishnan writes in his introductory essay in The Bhagavadgita:

The world is not fulfilling a prearranged plan in a mechanical way. The aim of creation is the production of selves who freely carry out God’s will. We are asked to control our impulses, shake off our wanderings and confusions, rise above the current of nature and regulate our conduct by reference to buddhi or understanding, as
otherwise we will become the victims of “lust which is the enemy of man on earth” (48).

Arjuna takes these advice from the mouth of the great teacher; Hamlet goes through the same line of thought processes, in his soliloquies. Radhakrishnan rightly justified these procrastinations of the human mind from the perspectives of Gita which lays stress on the individual’s freedom of choice and the way in which he exercises it: “Man’s struggles, his sense of frustration and self-accusation are not to be dismissed as errors of the mortal mind or mere phases of a dialectic process” (The Bhagavadgita 48).

James in the essay “Moral and Metaphysical uncertainty in Hamlet” considers Hamlet’s irresolution as a product of “[...] the difficulty of knowing what is right, and the uncertainty of our last destiny, together puzzle and arrest the will” (Hamlet 81-82). The mental state of Hamlet is similar to the state of Arjuna in the battlefield. Arjuna’s ignorance of the metaphysical life of man is the predominant reason for his dilemma in the battlefield: “Nor do we know which for us is better, whether we conquer them or they conquer us. The sons of Dhrtarastra, whom if we slew we should not care to live, are standing before us in battle array” (II.6).

The conscience demands the hero to do the rightful action but Hamlet is at a loss to discriminate right from wrong in his mission. According to James, Hamlet’s inability to make proper decision based on clear sense of discretion is the direct result of the moral and metaphysical uncertainty in Hamlet. Hamlet’s egoistic nature makes him consider both the doer of the action and the sufferer of its consequences. Egoism and selfish desires prompt him to worry over the after effects of his own actions on him. If we interpret Hamlet’s problem in the light of Gita the hero’s
ignorance of the ultimate reality of life is an effect of the *Gunas* which weakened his self from understanding the ultimate reality in life.

A similar ignorance and uncertainty about the fundamental aspects of life are the causes for the inner conflict in Arjuna. Arjuna fidgeted in the battlefield since he too feared that his action would be directly responsible for the death of his relatives and commotion in the society. The hero’s anxiety expressed in the following lines over the possible negative impact of his wrong action would be detrimental for his salvation: “And to hell does this confusion bring the family itself as well as those who have destroyed it. For the spirits of their ancestors fall, deprived of their offerings of rice and water” (I.42).

The Shakespearean hero is caught within a haze of ignorance in the third act when he inclines to lead a life of inaction for securing a life free from stress and misery as expressed in his soliloquy. Hamlet’s inability to find a proper way to lead his life on earth is the reason for his vacillation. Hamlet’s ignorance of the life after death motivates him to bear the burden offered in his life. The uncertainty of the future is a major reason that pulls him from self slaughter.

In *Hamlet* the hero fails to perform rightful action due to his failure in performing his action with complete detachment for the results and base emotions. The play within the play provides proof for the involvement of Claudius in the murder of king Hamlet. Hamlet gains an authentic awareness of his father’s murder but the new knowledge has on the contrary driven on him a deadly rage against Claudius. Hamlet in fact breaks the secret pact made with the ghost and “stains his mind” by nurturing revengeful and angry thoughts against Claudius. Hamlet’s suppressed hatred for Claudius is fully revealed in the following lines: “Now could I
drink hot blood, And do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on”  
(III. ii.383-385).

Hamlet is aware of his inability to do his duty in spite of all the necessary reasons for a rightful act. Hamlet’s egoistic thoughts, fears, hatred, and anxiety hindered him from performing the right action with the right attitude. The hero recognizes a sharp difference between his attachment to parents and Fortinbras’ detached attitudes to life and its responsibilities:

HAMLET How stand I then,

That have a father kill’d, a mother stain’d,

Excitements of my reason and my blood,

And let all sleep, while, to my shame, I see

The imminent death of twenty thousand men […] (IV. iv. 56-60)

The egoistic fervour in Hamlet makes him consider himself as the angel of justice. The murder of Polonius is another act of rashness for which Hamlet had to face the act of retribution. The objective of the second appearance of the ghost of king Hamlet in the queen’s chamber is to remind Hamlet about his moral transgression.

The initial four acts of the play Hamlet present Hamlet as a highly egoistic man who focuses his attention entirely on the possible consequences of his revengeful action on his life. The hero’s sole concern to kill his father’s murderer is triggered by his inner hatred and anger toward Claudius and the intense attachment to his
dead father. The prince fails to consider the murder of Claudius as a therapeutic treatment administered to save Denmark and his people. The hero could not accept himself as an instrument ordained by the king Hamlet to avenge his death for the wellbeing of Denmark. The motivating factor which leads Hamlet to take revenge upon Claudius ensues from his hatred toward Claudius and not from his concern for the people of Denmark. Ivor Morris in *Shakespeare’s God* views that “Macbeth, Othello and Lear carry out the tasks they have set themselves in obedience to their own interests or the presumed requirements of their souls; Hamlet’s distinction is that he fails to sustain the purpose imposed on him” (369). The revenge motive present in the first, second, third, and fourth acts of *Hamlet* does not occur as a sacrificial act for the purgation of his country from evil but it is a calculated enterprise specially implemented for making Claudius deprive of the temporal and eternal happiness. The ulterior motive of Hamlet is to deny Claudius of his boon of everlasting rest which was treacherously refused to King Hamlet by him. The hatred which culminated in his revenge motive is evident in his inner desire to permit the ultimate punishment for Claudius. Arjuna also experiences an identical spiritual tension which detaches him from social obligations and makes him preoccupied with an awareness about himself as an individual. Hamlet would have succeeded in his mission if he had undertaken a crusade; which is deeply rooted in selflessness against the unlawful heir to the Danish throne. Personal vendetta in *Hamlet* for Claudius tainted the clarity of his otherwise just cause which should have performed with a sense of detachment.

Earlier Hamlet viewed his life through the glass of egoism, hatred, and vengeance which gave him a distorted picture of life. The hero succeeds in his endeavour when he sheds his egoistic thoughts and faces his mission of life with at
most sense of detachment for the results of his action. Even though Hamlet has the perfect heroic strength and every reason to make a counter movement against Claudius he is deterred from action by the interference of various doubtful thoughts, selfish desires and revenge motive tinged with hatred against Claudius. In The Bhagavadgita Arjuna is also hindered from undertaking a rightful action by the influence of gunas and other flaws. When Arjuna inspected the opposing army, he caught sight of his teachers, cousins, elders and friends. Arjuna suddenly got struck by grief by his attachment to his relatives and forgot his purpose: “How shall I strike Bhishma and Drona who are worthy of worship, O Madhusudana (Krsna), with arrows in battle O Slayer of foes (Krsna)? (II. 4).

The valiant warrior forgot the ultimate goal of his life and became a victim of mundane and transitory relationships. The angst stricken Arjuna becomes an archetype of modern man who is typified by anxiety about the culpability of his actions and the future of his offspring.

Ila Ahuja in Bhagavad Gita: A New Perspective considers that a wise man can differentiate and separate the body and the self and can realize that the body is temporary and perishable, while the atman is permanent and immutable. Therefore he perceives that all empirical action is performed by the gunas of prakriti. The three gunas: sattva, rajas, and tamas which influence one’s decision and action use the body as their battlefield where a continuous clash takes place between good and evil. The presence of the ego in ordinary man makes him consider himself as the doer of his action and as a result he is concerned about the fruits of his own action. Sri Krishna resolves this dilemma by expounding the doctrine of Nishkama Karma (102).
A parallelism is found in the initial inability of the heroes to be passive in one’s action. Arjuna in the first chapter of the Gita decides to be passive in the battle field in order to safeguard him from committing a sinful act against his brothers: “Far better would it be for me if the sons of Dhrtarastra, with weapons in hand, should slay me in the battle, while I remain unresisting and unarmed” (I.46). Then Krishna reminds him: “But if thou doest not this lawful battle, then thou wilt fail thy duty and glory and will incur sin” (II.33). This is quite true of Hamlet’s problem too. Radhakrishnan in his interpretation on Gita states that “when the struggle between right and wrong is on, he who abstains from it out of false sentimentality, weakness or cowardice would be committing a sin” (The Bhagavadgita 113).

Radhakrishnan in The Bhagavadgita stresses that restraint and freedom from desire are essential qualities to win spiritual perfection. A man who wishes to rise to a knowledge of his true self should sever off the characteristics of the lower nature provided by the Gunas: attachments to objects and a sense of ego (369). In Radhakrishnan’s opinion:

Doing unpleasant things from a sense of duty, feeling the unpleasant things from a sense of duty, feeling the unpleasantness all the time is of the nature of “passion,” but doing it gladly in utter unself-consciousness[sic], with a smile on the lips, as Socrates drank hemlock, is of the nature of “goodness”. It is the difference between an act of love and an act of law, an act of grace and an act of obligation” (The Bhagavadgita 359).
The egoism in Arjuna is evident in his concern for the results of his action in the battlefield. Arjuna aims at his salvation and peace and does not wish to forfeit these eternal gifts offered to man. A similar anxiety is obvious in Hamlet when he ponders over the unknown consequences of his revengeful act upon Claudius: “As he is very potent with such spirits, / Abuses me to damn me” (II. ii.555-556).

Chinmayananda in his interpretation, *The Bhagavadgeeta* comments that the Kauravas and the Pandavas are represented by the will of the people who have marshalled to fight for the policy of *adharma* against the principles of *dharma*. Therefore “[…] Arjuna the hero does not have an individual right to accept any personal honour or dishonour or to insist on any respect or disrespect in meeting the individuals […] Arjuna made the mistake of arrogating to himself an individual egoism and observed the problems through the glasses of his ego” (120). In the view of Chinmayananda the Pandavas were convinced of their moral purity, spiritual worth and divine glory of their mission. But Arjuna failed to sink his egoism and closely identified with the army which fought for a noble cause (286).

Chinmayananda states that “One who has the true insight into the modes of the mind and the actions precipitated by them, understanding that *gunas* as ‘sense organs’ move along *Gunas* as ‘objects’ – he no longer gets attached to them” (The Art 120). In the following lines Sri Krishna teaches the great “secret of success”, which is termed by Chinmayananda as the very back-bone of the third chapter of *Bhagavad Gita* (The Art 122): “Resigning all thy works to Me, with thy consciousness fixed in the Self, being free from desire and egoism, fight, delivered from thy fever” (III.30).
Even though the path towards salvation appears to be simple, it offers several hurdles to the disciple since even the man of knowledge acts in accordance with his own nature or gunas. Therefore Krishna reveals to Arjuna the way to self-discovery by underlining a major flaw in Arjuna’s nature (The Art 130): “Likes and dislikes of the senses for their sense-objects is natural. Let none allow himself to be swayed by them: they are his two enemies on his way to success” (III. 34).

Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna to get liberated from the constraints of personal attachments that restrict Arjuna from performing a just action for the universal well-being. In the opinion of Radhakrishnan one should act according to buddhi or understanding in order to overcome the negative impulses created by the gunas. A man who supercedes these impulses and act from a sense of duty is not a victim of the play of prakrti (The Bhagavadgita 146). Arjuna is engulfed by a sea of perilous thoughts regarding the outcome of his present actions which make him listless and melancholic in spirit.

The two heroes, Arjuna and Hamlet belong to two entirely different cultural backgrounds and periods but the analogies that exist between their dilemma which arise out of their life situations appear to be similar. The heroes are confronted with a fundamental issue involving their personal life, family life and social life and both the heroes are inspired by an inner call to regain their lost honour. Arjuna’s dilemma involves the question of meeting the demands of a Kshetriya which involves the protection as well as the annihilation of his own relatives. The split in the personality of Arjuna is caused by the sudden surge of the sense of his ego and his egoistic-desires, which ripped his mind. Sri Krishna is able to point his finger at the crux of Arjuna’s mental disease. The Shakespearean hero, Hamlet is also urged by the call of honour to take revenge upon the death of his father. The reason for
Hamlet’s delay can be considered due to his failure to consider his mission as a sacred means for restoring peace in Denmark. The hero could have performed his action by avoiding several deaths, had he performed his duty with total indifference and complete detachment of its results. Hamlet focused his entire attention on providing the ultimate punishment for his father’s murderer. The ghost of king Hamlet assigned Hamlet the sacred duty to “Let not the royal bed of Denmark be / A couch for luxury and damned incest” (1.5. 82-83). Hamlet was expected to consider his duty as a divine mission and he should have performed with single-mindedness, by safeguarding his mind from all moral corruptions. The ghost’s objective to make Hamlet a divine instrument for cleansing the sacrilege from the kingdom of Denmark is based on the divine theory of kingship. The very fact that it does not instigate Hamlet to take up arms against his immoral widow, proves its benign nature. The deep awareness of their duty intensifies the inner grief of these heroes because both, Arjuna and Hamlet are equally contemplative and righteous by nature. A dilemma whether to accept their respective 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 their heroes. Hamlet and Arjuna are men of gunas which caused them to have intense bondage with their relatives. The severity of their attachment and egoism hinder these heroes from fulfilling their responsibility with single-mindedness and to undertake selfless action for the wellbeing of the humanity until they are awaked by the light of wisdom. The heroes through their testimonies prove that the egocentric misconception and consequent arrogance were part and parcel of their lives until they decide to break off their shells of gunas.