The subject of the proposed thesis is the modes of redemption in major tragedies of Shakespeare. Relying on various books, the proposed study maintains that redemption lies in the state of being saved from the power of evil. Accordingly, this study identifies several modes through which man can save himself from the power of evil. These modes are: Through God's grace, through Christ's atonement and, through the knowledge of self which man can attain by comparing and contrasting his self with the divine order of the created universe. In order to present a critical opinion on the main assumption and to trace the underlying pattern of redemption in major tragedies, the thesis is neatly divided in six chapters and a conclusion.

The introductory chapter is divided in two parts: section (a) is concerned with the religious and philosophical background of the age. The aim is to identify the underlying pattern of redemption; section (b) is concerned with a brief survey of the study of major tragedies with a bearing on the present subject.

Section (a) is devoted to a detailed study of the religious and philosophical background of the age. This includes the study of the Elizabethan notions of cosmic order, chain of being, place and aim of man in the universe, sin and chaos. Consequently a world picture emerges before us, which was theocentric and in which the notion of cosmic order was of paramount interest and didactic in impulse. This world-picture reminded the Elizabethans of a larger force at the helm of human affairs and it was also the basis of their survival. Hence, violation of order was a sin against divinity itself and it would inevitably result in chaos. According to this world picture it was believed that of all the created beings man alone was subjected to passions e.g. jealousy, pride, lust, ambition etc. and he alone was capable of violating the order due to
inherent evil. This study informs that, irrespective of the basic conflict between the optimistic and pessimistic approaches regarding human wretchedness and dignity and inspite of the theories of Montaigne and Machiavelli, the majority of the Elizabethans believed that man was capable of ascending the spiritual ladder in spite of corrupt wit and will and inherent evil. According to the Elizabethan religious beliefs, man was bound to live with evil but there were ways to remain untouched and unaffected. In spite of evil’s destructive power, it was up to man to degenerate or regenerate his self. The Elizabethans knew and believed that in spite of fall God did not abandon man for He had made him for a purpose- to praise and glorify Him and to love Him supremely.

Moreover, several premises, drawn on the basis of this study of religious and philosophical beliefs, answer to many questions raised by ‘modern atheistic existentialism’ and help us to understand all kinds of violence and wide ranging chaos in major tragedies. These premises are: The Elizabethan world picture granted the goodness of creation, divine order in the created universe and man’s responsibility to maintain that order. Laws were given in their universe and their consequences were fixed, man was free to obey or defy these laws. The universe was benignant and behind every suffering there was human wickedness and behind cosmic chaos there was a violation of order. Man’s wretched condition did not decrease his immense importance to the universe. By acquiring the knowledge of true-self man could ascend the spiritual ladder.

Section (b) is devoted to a brief survey of various critical approaches with a bearing on the present subject. Consequently, various schools of thought e.g. ‘agnostic’, ‘christian’, and ‘existential’, which have interpreted major tragedies in terms of man–tragic cosmos
relationship are identified. Critical opinion, as it is, appears to be divided on the nature of the tragic universe as well as on the pattern of redemption. This section elaborates a few critical studies in order to understand critical views regarding the pattern and mode of redemption.

Next four chapters are respectively devoted to the study of major tragedies in terms of the Elizabethan religious beliefs. The approach to the tragedies is mainly orthodox based on 'Christian humanistic' synthesis. The pattern of redemption is analyzed in terms of man's confrontation with evil and his response to it.

Chapter II is devoted to a detailed study of *Hamlet*. Accordingly, this chapter analyzes the pattern of confrontation and Hamlet's reaction to evil. In *Hamlet* the protagonist is subjected, without any fault of his own, to the external evil of the world incarnated in Claudius and several other minor characters. Undoubtedly he is subjected to internal passions as well and he loses self-control many a times but he never commits any mortal sin under its sway. He is a man of sound wit and his knowledge of evil within, of human dual nature and his place in the chain of being is much better than rest of the protagonists. Hence, he repeatedly refuses to yield to the evil within. Nevertheless he fails to remain unaffected by the external evil. A noble prince is reduced to a melancholic figure; he contemplates suicide ("This too too sullied flesh", "To be or not to be"). Moreover he is a kind of independent man having little faith in the ways and workings of divinity. He curses his destiny and questions the code of revenge. Instead of saving his country and his self from Claudius, he lets the "canker of nature" grow. He contributes to the "unweeded garden". As long as Hamlet fails to cope up with the pain and sufferings of sub-lunary region and has intellectual barriers, he is beyond redemption.
Nevertheless, on his voyage to England, young Hamlet grows to maturity. At a time when he considers himself bound to punishment due to his crime against Polonius, he is miraculously saved. This miraculous escape generates faith to divinity in Hamlet. This faith fills him with a feeling i.e. “readiness is all”. Hamlet no more interrogates the ways and purposes of divinity or the code of revenge. This sudden development removes all the barriers of mind. Towards the end of his life he is aware and unaffected by internal as well as external evil. In spite of his destruction, Hamlet acquires that state where he is saved from the power of evil. He retains self-control and eradicates the “canker of nature”. This chapter is concluded in favour of Hamlet’s redemption. Through God’s grace Hamlet learns all that of which he was ignorant in his early phase of life.

Chapter III takes up Othello for a detailed study. When analyzed in terms of the Elizabethan world-picture, Othello turns out to be a study in one of the major Elizabethan beliefs concerning man i.e. man could redeem his fallen self in spite of corrupt wit and will. This chapter analyzes the graph of confrontation, fall, destruction and redemption in terms of the beliefs of the age. In this tragedy, the protagonist is largely defeated by deceptive evil as well as evil within. His insufficient use of given reason and ignorance of external as well as internal evil seal’s his doom. Initially, Othello confronts external evil incarnated in Iago. Consequently he is deceived to believe in his wife’s infidelity, and his own jealousy inspires him to make a sinful moral choice. He fails to judge the deception and this seals the tragic doom of “Valiant Othello”. Deceived by Iago and provoked by his own passions, which he fails to control, Othello strangulates “divine Desdemona”. If Iago disturbs the social and moral peace of Cyprus, Othello untunes the domestic
harmony as well as the harmony of the cosmic order. In Othello, order is violated at domestic level; Othello’s crime is against his wife instead of a king or state. Consequently the chaos that follows is short, though it is felt at all the corresponding planes. Till this point Othello is beyond redemption. Instead of saving himself from the power of evil; he yields to external as well as internal evil.

Undoubtedly Othello yields to evil, turns the domestic order upside down, nevertheless, this study proves that Othello is not past redemption. After Emilia’s revelation, Othello learns the deceptive nature of external evil and of evil within and he renounces both of them. He breaks his bond with Iago and calls himself a foolish fellow. As far as his suicide is concerned, it has something heroic in it. By this time he is aware of external as well as internal evil and if by committing suicide, which critics interpret as an act of passion, he gives himself again to the power of evil it is not to gain anything like Faustus and Macbeth rather to punish himself. Othello is saved from the power of evil in two ways: first through Desdemona’s Christ like atonement for his sin and secondly he is armed with the knowledge of his bestial self. Implicit in this knowledge is the contemplation of the divine order of the created universe, which is redemptive.

In chapter IV, *king Lear* is analyzed in terms of man-tragic cosmos relationship. This chapter too focuses on the pattern of violation of order and redemption. The main focus is on Lear’s confrontation with evil, his inevitable destruction and his redemption in spite of fall and destruction. In Elizabethan terms Lear’s sin is his pride. In rest of the tragedies men of comparatively lower rank reverse the normative pattern of Nature, but in *King Lear* a king, who in the Elizabethan age was supposed to be God’s representative on earth, reverses order. Lear’s
impetuous and irrational urges to shed his divine right, to divide his kingdom, to disinherit Cordelia and his distrust in divine justice disturb the harmonious pattern of his body politic. He alone is responsible for unleashing the external forces of evil incarnated in Goneril and Regan. Since Lear’s sin is no ordinary sin rather a sin against divinity itself, the chaos that follows is cosmic and prolonged one. His decisions disturb all the three orders: cosmic, social and vegetative. This violation of order begins a tragic journey, which is full of pain and sufferings. Lear is victimized by his own daughters i.e. Goneril and Regan, he is disobeyed, chided and is thrown to complete madness.

Nevertheless, Lear’s redemption and regeneration lies in this tragic journey during which he learns self-control, love of humanity and sheds the pride of his eyes. Lear is not past redemption. If Claudius deliberately embraces evil, Lear renounces it the moment he learns his mistake. If Lear is tortured by the mental agony and the storm, these purge him of his sins as well. Once purged off his pride Lear can see better. By the end of the tragedy he is aware of the external evil as well as evil within. Consequently his redemption lies in this knowledge. He knows that he is no better than a “very foolish old man”. Ultimately Lear and Gloucester are saved from the power of evil. If Gloucester acquires redemption through God’s grace: Lear acquires redemption through Cordelia’s Christ like atonement as well as through self-effort i.e. he is aware of evil within and implicit in this knowledge is the contemplation of the divine order of the universe.

Chapter V analyzes the tragedy of Macbeth: a “worthy gentleman” and a “valiant cousin”. The focus of this chapter is on the battle between passion and reason. As far Macbeth’s confrontation with evil is concerned, he confronts external as well as internal evil. He is
aware of external evil incarnated in the preternatural powers and in Lady Macbeth and he is aware of his ambition as well. But he is ignorant of the internal evil, which is the cause of his ambition. Macbeth knows that the deed he contemplates is evil, a sin against God itself. Consequently he undertakes a battle between passion and reason and he ultimately yields to passion and reverses the normative pattern of Nature. Interestingly he never condemns his ambition in spite of his awareness of what it will result into. He does not know that by yielding to passions he will degenerate his self to the sensitive level. He is not witty enough to see his degeneration to the level of a beast. Moreover he is not willing enough to listen to his reason which keeps on reminding him of what he is doing. According to one of the major beliefs of the age, man’s will could never be victorious in the eternal battle between passion and reason until unless it was thoroughly enlightened by wit. This study brings forth that first of all Macbeth is not witty enough to see his degeneration to the bestial level and second of all he is not willing enough to check his “Vaulting ambition”. Further this chapter analyzes how Macbeth yields to passions and instead of renouncing his deeds, moves ahead and turns into a hardened criminal. Due to his continuous involvement in sinful activities from the very beginning till the end and that too in spite of his awareness, critics unanimously deny redemption to Macbeth.

Nevertheless this chapter is concluded in favour of Macbeth’s redemption. According to this proposed study Macbeth is not past redemption. Undoubtedly he is largely defeated by his corrupt wit and will. Nevertheless he ultimately renounces the external evil and recognizes the evil within as well as his reduction to the bestial level of which he was ignorant earlier. Just before his death he consciously and
willingly renounces the preternatural powers and learns his true self and of his degenerated self. He knows that instead of ascending the spiritual ladder, he has descended it and has deviated from his aim. Macbeth acquires redemption through the realization of his true self. Implicit in this realization is the contemplation of the divine order of the created universe.

Chapter VI exclusively deals with distinctive underlying patterns in major tragedies through which the confrontation between man and evil is explored. Consequently this chapter identifies four distinctive patterns which can be summed up in the following words: pattern of growth in *Hamlet*, pattern of fall in *Othello*, pattern of regeneration in *King Lear*, pattern of worldly rise and spiritual fall in *Macbeth*. The aim is to identify possible relationships i.e. points of divergence, convergence and parallel. These relationships suggest a unity among major tragedies in spite of diverse patterns.

A conclusion at the end offers a brief outline of the findings of this study. The thesis is rounded off with the findings that the proposed study of major tragedies identifies a pattern, which exhibits a saving perspective through which man can redeem himself. All the tragedies bear a relationship with the Elizabethan worldview as well as with the conflicting views of the age. Nevertheless the tragedies assert a benignant universe made for man.