CHAPTER - TEN

SUMMING UP
Man's encounter with death emphasizes the true meaning of life. Shakespeare has searched for the sanctity of life as also the sanctity of death. The metaphysics of death prepares the ground for a new world of perception.

The analogy of sleep suggests an agnostic attitude to death. 'Ripeness' (Pagan Edgar) and 'Readiness' (Christian Hamlet) are phrases charged with meaning in their reflection on death. Death is viewed, at times, as peaceful oblivion; whereas in most cases, death is the final test of character.

Through premonitions and prophecies of death, Shakespeare dramatizes the intuitive apprehension within the subconscious mind. Different characters face death differently. Death becomes acceptable at the moment of perfect happiness. It is sought in time of defeat and dishonour. On the beastly level, death is approached with indifference. It comes both as rejection of life as also its acceptance. Death has a transforming effect on the survivors. There are two major attitudes to death (1) as balmy rest (2) as decay and oblivion.

Death often emerges as an actor. His many faces, many masks, many modes, eventually enhance our understanding of life in all its complexity. It is in the aesthetic and metaphysical context of death that we understand better the creative attitude to life and art. In spite of all its anguish and annihilation, death in Shakespeare ultimately emerges in its multiple images as an integral part of reality; Life and death being only two sides of the same coin. Love and death are harmonized in a spiritual reality.
Murder as a deed has moral consequences. The killer is alienated from the Universe. Sacrificial death restores the rhythm of life. Shakespeare's major Tragedies are a deep probe into the human predicament and the meaning of existence in Time. Although essentially revealing the Renaissance view of life in the scheme of things, the vision of the theme of death transcends the bounds of space and time. Hence it has consequences in literature of a different clime and culture.
Chapter 10
SUMMING UP

Death in the Plays

The ultimate dualisms of good and evil, life and death are harmonized in Shakespeare's tragic intuition. Over the centuries, great artists like Shakespeare have registered the plight of man caught between agonising actuality and transcendent possibility. Shakespeare's major tragedies probe deep into the nature of man. Most tragedies fall into either of the two categories - the Tragedy of Greatness or the Tragedy of Innocence. The former shows a mighty spirit battling against difficulties, the latter shows a helpless innocent being crushed by the cruelty of life. But in both the types, death is the final end.

It is the glory of the Shakespearean drama that death assuages but does not intensify the tragic pain. Death as an act of humanism adds to the stature of the hero and to the dignity of life. In his major tragedies, physical action shades off into the symbolic; and the dramatic action into the spiritual, which transcends it. Death comes to all, to the high and the low; in that sense,
it is a leveller, but in another sense, it is a defining characteristic; it distinguishes the worthy from the worthless. Though it is a leveller, it reveals the eminent. Each dies in his own characteristic way.

A fearless encounter of death is represented by two groups of characters (1) Those who seek honour, (2) those who seek true love. Heroic death is the true measure of love for the native land. Heroism can defy death as does Harry Hotspur. True love also can defy death as of Juliet or Romeo or Cleopatra. Shakespeare believes in the holiness of the heart's affections. Romeo and Juliet died affirming the value of love. Cleopatra died sublimating her life and love and death. Such people turn death into a triumph of man over circumstance. They make death into a celebration. Here, as in the Sonnets, Shakespeare has immortalised the moment of death. Sweet roses do not die, for "Of their sweet deaths, are sweetest odours made." (Sonnet LIV:12). Their deaths are, as in great tragedy, creative. Even the common humanity encounters death with wisdom. The wisdom of a common man is voiced by Feeble "We owe God a death." 2 Henry IV, (III, ii, 254). Even little Master Macduff is a courageous reply to the threat of death. It
is about such people that we may say "Death, be not proud."

Even the dark agents of hate are fearless in their encounter with death. Rather they are the agents of death. The agents of hate - Iago, Edmund, Regan, Goneril, Timon are the dark agents of death. The tragedies of the hate theme are closely connected with the death-theme. Timon of Athens strongly emphasizes the hate-theme and death-theme. All major tragedies are related with the mystery of death, but in the tragedies like Macbeth and Timon of Athens the protagonists endure an awareness of nothing. Such awareness of nothingness produces acts of nihilism. G. Wilson Knight sees in Macbeth "a death consciousness, a positive and active symbolism of his experience in his acts of destruction."

Tragedy is quintessentially a religious experience; hence it is suited to deal with the metaphysical problems of life and death, good and evil. Tragic art, in its Golden Ages, in the times of both Sophocles and Shakespeare acknowledged the mystery of death. Though Shakespeare's insights arise from the awareness of his times, they fuse the traditions of the past, the reflections on the present and prophecy about the future.
The more ironic the tragedy, the fewer are the central characters who die. In Troilus and Cressida, though the setting is a battlefield where men die like flies everyday, none of the central characters dies except the greatest of all, Hector; in Timon of Athens, nobody dies except the only noble character Timon.

From Agamemnon to Hamlet, the revenger’s predicament is a paradox. The villain deserves death, but killing him is a sin. Here death comes as a retribution. Death is a law of life, not punishment. Only sometimes it comes as a punishment, at times it comes as a gift; whereas to many, it has been a favour a release from the mortal coils. Death levels all men. One may live as a conqueror but he must die a man. It is oft hinted that it is philosophic to be prepared for death, though it is cowardly to desire death. Shakespeare has also shown that death brings every being to his pure individuality. In Macbeth’s death, Shakespeare has shown death to be the ender of meaningless life. In Lear’s death, Shakespeare has depicted death to be the ender of suffering. At the end of the great tragedies comes an act of poetic creation that surpasses all earlier tragedies: a vision and revelation of death, immediate and final, as in the final acts of Antony & Cleopatra.
In great Shakespearean Tragedies like Hamlet we pass from death to immortality; in Othello the passage is from falsehood to truth; in King Lear, we pass from the darkness of the world of Regan and Goneril to the light that is Cordelia's love; in Macbeth from evil and chaos to the Grace of Grace and the restoration of order; in Coriolanus from the assertion of ego to the transcendence of self in death, and in Antony and Cleopatra from sensual love to fulfilment of love in death. G. Wilson Knight points out that "death eventually contradicts itself." Carlisle's words are apt:

"And fight and die is death destroying death,
Where fearing dying pays death servile breath."

Richard II (III, ii, 123)

Even his Romantic Comedies reflect on happiness beyond or within death. The History Plays contain a series of tragedies of fate but these tragedies convey a sense of pathetic irony absent from the tragedies, since the deaths of the protagonists are deprived of the significance of finality by the larger continuing movement of history in the context of which these deaths occur. With Julius Caesar, he had turned to tragedy where the main clash is between the man of action and the idealist.
Antony comes from it victorious, though it is the tragedy of the soul of the idealist. Thereafter Shakespeare deals with the theme of the soul torturing of Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear. All are concerned with the world within themselves. With Antony and Cleopatra he returns to the world of great affairs but even here, as in the four major tragedies, we are in erected not in the external forces as with the inner struggle of the protagonists leading to death. Shakespeare is not a preacher, he is an artist with a vision that encompasses the entire universe and has probed the heights and depths of the mysteries of life and death. G. Wilson Knight has toned "Macbeth, King Lear and Antony & Cleopatra as experiences of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise."

Timon of Athens is a summation of all Shakespeare's tragedies. It alone gives a philosophic reading of death. Timon's thoughts are on death. Disillusioned and embittered, Timon aspires to the nothing of death. Nothingness is an abyss far deeper than death. He craves silence of eternity. He recognizes the paradox of mortal existence. Suicide is the only expedient. To Timon, death is nothing. As Timon concludes: 'And nothing brings me all things' and
he willingly embraces death. Here 'nothing' implies the significance of the 'Nirvana' of oriental mysticism. "In his dying Timon attains selfhood, that 'to be' for which Hamlet craved." In Richard II also there is an emphasis on 'being nothing'.

"Nor I nor any man that but man is With nothing shall be pleas'd till he be eas'd, With being nothing."

King Richard II (V, v, 39-41)

Shakespeare was haunted by the mysteries of life and death but nowhere does he express it more powerfully than in Hamlet, and that too most beautifully in the character of the hero. There is 'death' in Hamlet from the first scene. There is a death-wish in Hamlet from his first internal dialogue. Hamlet is Shakespeare's supreme interrogation, the culmination of his capacity to ask questions of life. The search in Hamlet is of the mystery of man himself, whether Hamlet's revenge is accomplished by his own act or by his instrumentality at the hands of fate, remains a mystery. Hamlet is essentially a play of doubt concerning what happens after death. Like Claudio in Measure for Measure, Hamlet is terrified at the orthodox belief of
possible survival in pain after death. They share the poignant desire that death may be the utter annihilation of consciousness.

Though in other tragedies, many people die, no one thinks so much of death. Hamlet keeps thinking about it all the time, whether in terms of the soul's destiny or of the body. Implicit in his tortured thinking is a sense of overwhelming consciousness of death and a recoil from life. Other tragic heroes think of dying, Hamlet thinks of being dead. Too much thinking incapacitates him to act and there lies his tragedy. As Drinkwater said,

"Macbeth is the tragedy of unchecked will destroying itself, whereas Hamlet is the tragedy of unready will wasting itself."

In Hamlet the old concept of revenge 'blood will have blood' assumes the new concept of tragedy. "O cursed Spite, that ever was I born to set it right"(I,v,188-189). The ghost incites him to take revenge; he meditates on the pros and cons of the issue and delays. When he returns to Denmark, he is determined upon justice but he no longer desires to take revenge. He realizes that it is a social
necessity that Claudius, who is the source of corruption, should be killed — not out of personal revenge, but prompted by social justice. As in Orestes, so in Hamlet, we are concerned not with crimes but with the problem of avenging or punishing crime. Orestes kills and Hamlet shrinks from killing. In both, the tragic hero is humanity itself, suffering not a specific evil but evil itself.

The sharp contrast between Hamlet's ideals and the rottenness of life brings him to a tragic awareness of existence. Death, to Hamlet, is a felicity compared with what life meant in Denmark, but he sees no way out from this prison of life. He sees the world as an 'unweeded garden', bereft of vision. He is tortured by too much thinking, obsessed with death's hideousness. As L.P. Smith observes: "Hamlet metaphysicalizes the things he does not do Macbeth the things he does."

Hamlet meditates on the mystery of existence and mortality. He voices the dilemma of 'not to be'.

"History puts double-edged questions 'to be' or 'not to be'. The answer is found: 'To be! Man is to be!' But 'to be' means to know life deeply and to struggle passionately for its great ideals. Then even defeat, even the
death of the struggling hero is transformed into a hymn of triumph. In the name of what? In the name of Man. The struggle is for Man, for humanitarianism, for humanity."

Hamlet is Shakespeare's ripest expression about his philosophy of life and death. As Swinburne said:

"In King Lear is the darkness of revelation; in Hamlet is the light of Revelation. ..... In this world of terrible light in which even the dead cannot rest in the peace of the grave, Time does not exist."

Hamlet is Shakespeare's tragic reading of life, analysing the mental and moral nature of man, whereas in his cosmic tragedies Macbeth and King Lear, the tragic issue is sought in the forces beyond and above man. He ponders on life, death and life after death. The central paradox of this tragedy is that it reveals death as the gateway to life.

Though Shakespeare's approach is secular, Hamlet's last phase suggests the patience of the Christian martyr, awaiting the blow — for him 'Readiness is all' Hamlet(V.ii.237). He is a sceptic, with a Christian inheritance of faith in Providence.
Hamlet is Shakespeare's most modern tragedy in which we come close to the life and spirit of his time and he comes close to the life and spirit of our time. Hamlet is an allegory of our time

"in which twice within three decades the older generation has called on the younger generation to settle a quarrel with the making of which it had nothing to do."

It is this contemporaneity of Shakespeare that lends universality not merely to his art but also to his thought.

Though Othello is the least metaphysical tragedy, it is most touching. Here our hearts are swept with the mystery of life and the bitter release of death. Shakespeare has shown that earthly souls like Emilia are raised and redeemed by the nobility of Deademona.

"Belief in her, the symbolic equivalent in the play of belief in Christ, is a means of salvation for Cassio as well as for Emilia."

Of the four major tragedies, King Lear creates a universal impression by a union of human intimacy and elemental vastness.
Shakespeare neither a psychologist nor a philosopher dramatized .... Sartrean psychology in various plays by using the device of disguise,

— but more so in King Lear.

Macbeth is guided by the witches, Othello is misguided by Iago, Hamlet is instigated by the Ghost whereas Lear's own wilfulness leads him to his tragedy. But his credentials lie in his sufferings. He has purchased knowledge about man and universe through the tortures of his flesh and the breaking of his mind. He rises to Titanic heights in the storm scenes. His dialogue with the elements of nature—of wind and water, is a communication between equals. Through the night of the soul, a terrible wisdom comes to the mad king and his blind Prototype. Death comes to Lear as release from suffering. We are at peace with it as we are never at peace with any other protagonist's death. As Shelley notes on the death of Keats in Adonais "From the contagion of the world's slow stain/ He is secure". So is Lear from the misery of life. To him death comes as a relief. Even to Gloucester, death comes as a liberator.

Lear is the only tragic hero in Shakespeare who
repents; it is a repentance not before God, but before a human being — Cordelia. According to Paul Siegel, through Cordelia, Lear is provided Christian Salvation.

"The redemption of Lear for Heaven, a redemption analogous to the redemption of mankind, for which the Son of God had come down to earth." 12

In this play there are repeated references to Divine Justice. When Albany hears that Cornwall is killed immediately after he has plucked out Gloucester’s eyes, his comment is:

"This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our nature crimes
So speedily can vengel"

(IV, ii, 77-79)

Though King Lear is a Pagan play, there is the Christian concept of Retributive Justice as is evident in the deaths of Goneril and Regan. But the Gods seem indifferent, rather cruel in the fate of Cordelia. The hanging of Cordelia seems outrageous to our moral sense.

The most positive statement in the play is Edgar’s ‘Ripeness is all’ (V, ii, 11). This aphorism can be traced
back to Homer's image of men and women as leaves on the tree of life and to Montaigne's dictum: 'To philosophize is to learn how to die'. They think alike. Shakespeare has expressed the same idea in King Richard II.

"The ripest fruit first falls, and so doth he
this time is spent."

(II, i, 154–155)

Lear through suffering rises to greater heights. He reaches a loftier humanity through humility. Lear's spiritual journey is upward whereas Macbeth's spiritual journey is downward.

The power quest and tyrannic ambition explored in Richard III are in Macbeth presented more metaphysically and more imaginatively. It proves that the moral universe can be neither cheated nor outwitted. Macbeth's tragedy shows the inviolability of the social order. It is also a reminder of the inevitability of the moral law. It proves that the wages of ambition must be death. With Banquo's fall, Macbeth's own fall is determined.

"As Bradley and others have argued
this combination of apparent freedom
and actual determinism contributes significantly to the tragic quality of Macbeth.\textsuperscript{13}

Macbeth's life is an illustration of the saying from St. Paul's Epistle — "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do". The same sentiment is expressed by Duryodhan in Mahabharat.

In Macbeth the elements which compose the Elizabethan world are more closely fused than in any other tragedy. The confusion in the political world is reflected in the world of nature and of the individual. Macbeth kills the King and steps a rank higher in society. But by this deed of evil, he has committed a sin against order, against degree, against Nature. On the night of the murder, the physical elements are in disorder. The disorder in nature corresponds to the disorder on the plane of human society.

"A subject has killed a king in order to take over his position (inversion), correspondingly, it is dark when it ought to be light (also inversion)\textsuperscript{14}

This merely shows that 'Order' in Shakespeare's view, should be preserved at all costs.
'Nature' in Macbeth is organically related to the moral and religious theme. 'Night' and 'evil' are associated. This association is derived from Seneca. Here unnaturally cruel deeds are committed only in the darkness of night.

"To the Christian imagination night suggests the deeper terror of abandonment by God, isolation and intense spiritual dread as the evening herons ... testify." 15

An important aspect of mortality is the total isolation of the individual before death. The most vivid illustration of such isolation is the predicament of Macbeth after the death of Lady Macbeth.

Macbeth's murder of Duncan is a kind of suicide. The tragedy lies as much in the violation of the hero's true self, as in the violation of an innocent life, and for that horrible sin, he is condemned in this world as well as in the life to come.

Macbeth's is the unpardonable crime. As Wilber Sanders has put:
"Macbeth has performed the murder of Renown and Grace for his world as well as for himself."  

As in King Lear, the outer disorder disrupts the mind of the protagonist, the disorder in Macbeth's mind disrupts the state. With Duncan's fall, starts the downfall of Macbeth. He cannot prevent his downward journey. Had he undertaken the initial murder without any mental conflict, nothing would have prevented him to establish himself on the throne. G. Wilson Knight observes:

"Conscience which had urged him not to murder Duncan, now forces him to murder many others. With Brutus, his conscience which urged him not to assassinate Caesar, tells him not to risk further unnecessary bloodshed — all in the nature of a peace offering to his own uneasy conscience. The result in both cases determines the downfall of the hero."  

Both Claudius and Macbeth realize that they have committed mortal sin and have alienated their souls from God, so they cannot ask for God's mercy. Claudius cannot pray; Macbeth cannot say 'Amen'. After the murder,
Macbeth knows that death does not change anything; that it cannot change anything; it is just as absurd as life. "He has realized that every choice is absurd, or rather there is no choice." 13

In Macbeth the evil is supernatural and there is no remedy except an equivalent supernatural Power of Grace embodied in the Good King of England and his miraculous work of healing. Richard III is the 'bloody wretch' whose death heals England's wound; so also Macbeth is a butcher who is killed so that his country can live again. Death is an instrument here for the vindication of the normal rhythm of life disturbed and even quite a bit destroyed by a tyrant.

In Macbeth and Hamlet the supernatural figures that have prompted the bloodshed are seen by more than the hero; later on the supernatural figures are seen only by the hero; at the end, the supernatural figures fade away. The question arises whether the supernatural figures have to do with the outer universe or else are they dramatic symbols of inner discord? Are the heroes used as their tools? Should Macbeth be condemned as a criminal
or is he just a part of a vaster cosmic pattern?

In Macbeth and Oedipus there is a prophecy about the future which comes true. But the Greek waits for fate, Macbeth does not. He takes it as a promise with which he has to co-operate. At no point Oedipus was faced with a choice; Macbeth's acts are his own. The terrorist Chen in Malraux's "La Condition Humaine" utters in mid 20th century: "A man who has never killed is a virgin." It means that the act of killing changes the person who has performed it; from then on he is a different man living in a different world. As Macbeth says after the first murder: 'There's nothing serious in mortality' (II, iii, 100).

"'Murder is man's work. What can a man do'? This Nietzschean question has been put for the first time in Macbeth"

In Antony and Cleopatra all the threads of questionings, fears, passions and aspirations of the earlier great plays are caught up into those supreme moments where love and death are harmonized.

"In Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida death and love problems .... leave us distressed;
in Othello .... since Desdemona dies untrusted, leaves us still pained, whereas in Antony and Cleopatra by the synchronizing of faith with death, we are left with a vision of a timeless instantaneous ascension in death to love, which is life."^21

The Old Scandinavian heroes reach the valahalla after death. The Christian heroes rise from inferno to Paradiso. Shakespeare makes only casual mention of Heaven and that too he makes only specific poetic assertions about the poet's meaning of Heaven.

Death for Antony and Cleopatra is not the doom that it is for Macbeth, or the release that it is for Lear or the self-imposed retribution that it is for Othello. It is the purification of love and is the condition of love's perpetuity. It is the passport to eternal life. The motif of the transcendental reunion of the lovers, which is hinted at in Othello, becomes the main theme at the end of Antony and Cleopatra.

As in Sophocles, so in Shakespeare, it is in death that the final assessment of life is offered. Death offers true evaluation in retrospect. Being beautiful, she dies
beautifully. Being regal, she dies royally and yet she becomes conscious of her common humanity. Just as Lear had to lose his title and recognize that he was only a very foolish fond old man before he could regain his Kingdom as Spiritual King, so Cleopatra had to realize that she was 'no more but e'en a woman' (IV, x, 73) before she could become a spiritual queen worthy to meet her Emperor. Through humility, both Lear and Cleopatra discover their humanity. Lear shows that it is greater to be a man than to be a King. So also Antony refuses to sacrifice to the Roman Empire his heritage as a man. Antony shows that it is greater to be an Emperor in Romeo's sense than to be Emperor of the earth. Cleopatra, like Othello, has killed the one she loves, not with her own hand, as he did, but not less actually. On the contrary, Othello did it under a delusion but in good faith. She did it for a wantonly selfish purpose and by a lie. Likewise is traceable a parallel between Antony and Desdemona. Desdemona dies with no reproach for the wrong he has done her. Similarly not one word, not one thought has passed Antony's mind against Cleopatra after knowing the part she played in his death. He dies a true devoted lover.
Cleopatra demonstrates the paradox familiar in modern psycho-analytic literature that "to live fully one must accept the actuality of death." In her readiness "to play till doomsday" (V, ii, 231). She asserts the supremacy of being over becoming. She illuminates the meaning of one, of the key Shakespearean terms 'ripeness'. The positive element in Antony's death is developed in Cleopatra's words, where death is a casting off of base elements.

In the Last Plays, Grace becomes an active participant in human affairs.

"Shakespeare's Last Plays close the metaphysic of the tragedies and the ethic of the comedies in an increasing integration of eternity and time" The Last Plays do not aim at revealing a temporal survival of death. Rather they hint at the thought that death is a delusion. What was thought dead, turns out to be alive. Pericles and The Winter's Tale show us immortality in terms of victorious love welling up in the beautiful plot of loss and reunion. Death here is musical, an embedding in earth and its earthy sweets. Death is functioning as harmony.

"Such is death throughout Cymbeline, so rich in sweetly sombre impressions of death, of death softened with a pervading
atmosphere of deep but ineffectual tragedy."

Death is here merciful. The tortured mind of the tragedies is healed and it reaches a tranquillity of vision. In these Last Plays "there is beyond the Dark Night of the Soul, the radiance of Dawn." 25

It is only in the Last Plays that Shakespeare looks forward to natural death after a life fulfilled. It is such death which is in harmony with life in nature. Prospero in The Tempest is the reassuring symbol that life can be lived well and death can be awaited as a friendly end. It is with Prospero that the Shakespeare of Hamlet and King Lear is restored to the natural rhythm and the supernatural wisdom in the life of man.

"The Progress from spiritual pain through stoic acceptance to a serene joy is a universal rhythm of the spirit of man." 26

The Last Plays anticipate the philosophy of Wordsworth.

"He laboured slowly for reintegration with nature, and finally he too saw man's true state in terms of creation and miracle. The response in both — Wordsworth and Shakespeare, is a reverential wonder at knowledge of life where Death was throned." 27
In his Sonnets and Plays, Shakespeare has made the point clear that those who die for goodness, may die for goodness, may die physically; but they who are damned for lack of goodness, die eternally.

Shakespeare has rendered universal observations on death in immortal expression. Death strikes unaccountably. Virtue offers no protection against it; it is young age an exemption.

All Shakespearean Protagonists are obsessed with death — most of all Hamlet. He keeps meditating on death all the time. Macbeth has commerce with Hell continually; for Lear, death is deliverance, for Brutus and Othello, suicide is escape; for Romeo and Antony, death is reunion with the loved one; for the audience, death is the end, almost the frame of the tragic picture. As Dover Wilson has put it:

"From the time of Socrates, who drank his poison and is dead, the champions of the Spirit have paid the price." 23

Shakespeare has also hinted that death itself is not so terrible, as the loss of the will to live, which
we see in each of the great tragic heroes, more so in Hamlet.

Some deaths are just bubbles on the stream of life and are merged in oblivion. The manner of the hero's death is a true gauge of his inner growth. To know the man, Death is a true test of character. It is an index of personality. Ophelia in her last hours, distributed flowers. Even at her death, her love retains its original sweetness and purity. It is spiritual and intuitive in mode. Heroic warriors like the Talbots and Macbeth die fighting. Patriots die with patriotic utterances as Gaunt did. Cowards die a daily death and the lovers die for the sake of love.

In the dying moments Shakespearean protagonists are held in perfection. The tragic characters are victims of devouring time. They disappear in the darkness of death but Shakespeare's creative art makes war against the tyrant Time.

A noticeable feature of Shakespearean tragic character is a turning inwards before death. Hamlet with his restored faith, Timon with the philosophy of total negation of life and Macbeth with the bitter disenchantment are unforgettable examples of inner self-realization. Such
realization results in contrition and leads to redemption of the soul.

Shakespeare's heroes attain self-realization in the penultimate moment of their life and welcome death with open arms. They are liberated from the fear of death and are therefore released.

Shakespeare is justly famous for the words he sets upon the lips of the dying persons. Over and over he has hinted that holy men at their death have good aspirations. Time and again he has illustrated it in the death scenes, whether in bed or on the battlefield in his plays.

"The tongues of dying men Enforce attention like deep harmony Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain."

Richard II (II, 1, 5-9)

Those who are well-integrated, die in peace. Death may be physical, it may be psychic also — that is partial death during life. Such psychic death may result in melancholia. The murderer suffers spiritual death. The murderer not
only kills his victim, he kills the best in himself. In that sense, murder is also a moral suicide. The plays stress the undeniable fact that however cunningly murders may be manipulated, their consequences can never be stopped. Murder will rebound on the murderer.

In Shakespearean Tragedy death does not exist as a simple negation.

"Death is a needed completion, to cover the wholeness of human existence, corresponding with Christ's words on the cross. Consummatum est"

In Shakespearean Tragedy death is an acid test of character. The characters die as they have lived. Romeo and Juliet die in violent splendour of first love. Their courage and loyalty turn even death into a pliant lover. Their love illumines Capulet monument and is victorious over death. The suicides of Antony and Brutus reveal their true selves. Antony, like Brutus, falls on his sword to escape the shame of defeat. Both contemplate the meaning of their life before they die. Brutus endures like a stoic. The death of Portia shapes his own death to pacify the ghost of Caesar. Antony who had spread an empire at the feet of Cleopatra, dies with one
'poor last kiss'. Death incalculates in Brutus some sense of ultimate reality veiled now only by death. The deaths of Antony and Cleopatra are the touchstone of their characters.

Their love was sensuous to the last, but by self-slaughter, their love overflows the banks of strict morality. It is indeed death that is dead; and Antony and Cleopatra find a place among the immortal lovers of world history. Even Shakespeare is so dazzled, that nowhere, even by implication has he questioned the legitimacy of their suicide. In self-slaughter of the lovers we see love transcending all the terror of death; it is the triumph of love in the face of death; and thus eventually an accent of life in such a death.

In the end, the dying hero thinks of his society, and to an extent is reconciled to it. Hamlet's last act is to cast his dying voice for Fortinbras as the next King of Denmark. Even Othello's last act is an affirmation of loyalty to Venice and the execution of judgment upon himself. King Lear is the only tragedy in which the tragic hero dies unreconciled and indifferent to society. Their concern for the quality of the footprints they would leave behind on the sands of time shows how profoundly they live their life in the moment of death. For a while, life submerges death into some living reality.
Shakespeare has not been unaware of the humbler characters who have quietly killed themselves out of loyalty to these lovers and thus followed them to life's end. Eros, Enobarbus, Iras and Charmian are convincing proof of the loyalty of the human heart which dares death. It is this affection of the human heart which lends sanctity even to suicide.

The women loved in the tragedies have the white Goddess characteristics of some one whom it is death to love. Cleopatra is the tantalizing mistress, Cressida the treacherous Siren and Juliet is the bride in the midst of enemies. The maternal phase of the White Goddess Cycle is represented by the ferocious mother of Coriolanus, Volumnia, whose supreme happiness as a mother consists not so much in giving her son life as in exposing him to death. The three Queens of King Henry VI Trilogy — Margaret, Elizabeth and Anne are symbols of nemesis. They are the Furies that chase King Richard III to his death. Of all the women characters Cleopatra is the eternal mystery. Her Sphinx-like mystery ends in a blazing glory. Her love is a complete revelation of all the fascinating aspects of her character. Death awaits her queenly pleasure. She is all at once — a beautiful bride, a doting mother, an imperious
queen, an astute politician, a jealous rival and above all
a devoted woman, eager to follow her husband. Her longings
are immortal and her end spreads her authority over both
Cæsar and death. She swoons when Antony dies. She
awakes from the swoon only to organize her own death.
Cleopatra's death has the Eastern charm. It is the most
aesthetic of all deaths.

The suicide of Portia is a metaphoric anticipation
of the ensuing death of Brutus. Portia's suicide is in
dramatic contrast to the drowning of the unconscious
Ophelia - one is tragic, the other is pathetic.

Shakespeare, by his poetic touch has immortalized
the deaths of his heroines - of gentle. Ophelia and Desdemona,
of pretty Juliet or ever charming Cleopatra - whether it
is by accident or murder or suicide - whether in a flush of
a moment or the well-organized well-executed self sought
end. Equally touching is his description of the deaths of
children.

Death of a child is heart rending as it is the death
of potentiality of some great promise. It is great loss to
life itself. Life nipped in the bud is a promise denied.
When innocent childhood faces the rough onslaught of death,
it shocks us to the core. Mamillus in 'The Winter's Tale'
is a tender child, so sensitive and so loving that when the parents fall apart, he pines and dies. He is the symbol of sacrifice. With his death begins the self search of Leontes. Arthur, the son of Richard, prefers self slaughter to murder. So also Master Macduff refuses to run away from danger and stands rock-like. He dies, defending his father's name. Death as a killer of the young is manifest through the murders of the Princes in Richard III. These murders rebound on Richard on the eve of his final battle, when his mind is tortured by the ghosts of his victims. In the dying children Shakespeare lets us see the smothering of pretty flowers by some cruel hands, as it were, we see innocence bruised and broken. What a pity!

**Death and The Survivors**

If only the eyes are closed and pious ceremonies performed in silence, the audience is shown that death affects other people besides the protagonist. His Death affects those who survive.

Mercutio's death affects Romeo. It transforms Romeo into a desperate killer. Momentarily the love is overshadowed by revenge, as it is a question of honour for
him. Juliet, on the other hand, is shocked by the death of Tybalt but remains true to love. Mercutio's death brings out the hero in him. Tybalt's death is an ordeal for Juliet, but she still remains loyal to love. The Capulets express venemous hatred for Romeo who has killed Tybalt. The Prince who maintains the balance, turns into the judge and banishes Romeo. Bloodshed makes him decisive. As the Capulets virulently hate Romeo, Juliet is isolated, and she is awakened from the dream of love into the hard realities of life. Death of the lovers transform the society by transforming hatred into pity and feud into peaceful existence. The statues of gold are symbolic of the alchemy of love which turns the baser metal of hatred into the gold of amity.

The death of King Hamlet exposes the killer to the perils against which he wears the mask of hypocrisy. It debases the character of Gertrude. Its greatest impact is on the young Prince Hamlet who loses his very faith in life. He becomes a hypochondriac. Contact with his dead father makes him an agent of death. He is freed from this tortured transformation at the final moment of revenge. The death of Polonius reveals a callous Hamlet. The hardened cynic in him comes out with this death. It turns Laertes
into a fearless daredevil clamouring for revenge. It pushes gentle Ophelia into madness and into a watery grave. It galvanizes the political Claudius into active scheming. Gertrude, the woman of selfish lust is transformed into sentimentality by the death of Ophelia. She comes to deserve the role of a reporter of the death of hapless Ophelia. The mother in her now has ascendancy over the complacent Queen. The graveyard along with Ophelia’s funeral and the assured deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have changed the restless spirit of Hamlet into a man of faith in Providence. Horatio, the scholar is so moved at the death of Hamlet that he turns into a resolute man seeking his own death, though he reluctantly agrees to absent himself from the felicity of death for a while.

The death of Desdemona brings home to the dazed Othello the truth of a cosmic loss of a universe eclipsed in darkness. He has put out the light. Othello had pretended to be a judge in punishing Desdemona. It is Emilia who becomes an eloquent advocate for Desdemona and braves the judge in Othello. After realizing the situation, the jealous Othello is no more. Desdemona alive lost his faith in her, Desdemona dead regains his faith in her. It is
Emilia, however, who registers the greatest transformation in him. Her womanhood asserts its loyalty for a woman unjustly killed. She braves even her husband Iago and knowingly meets her death. Emilia after Desdemona's murder is the voice of true humanity, defending the loyalty and truth of innocent womanhood. The only person unaffected by the deaths of Desdemona and Emilia is the villain Iago, whom death touches not nor sanctity of any value of life.

Murder of Cordelia galvanizes old Lear into final fury. He kills the hangman. With the dead body of Cordelia he challenges the Heavens to account for the irrational and unjust visitation of death which snatches away the most precious life while the worthless continue to live. Cordelia's death turns Lear into the mouthpiece of the anguish of humanity about the vagaries of mortality. The death of the wicked sisters Regan and Goneril creates some softening of the evil Edmund. "Some good I mean to do."(V,iii,245). But his belated intent to do good is of no avail. The effect of the deaths of the evil daughters of Lear on Albany is discerned in his belief of the Justice of Gods.
"This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity."

(V, iii, 233-234)

The effect of the death of Lear on the faithful Kent is to strengthen his death wish:

"I have a journey, sir, shortly to go
My master calls me, I must not say no."

(V, iii, 323-324)

The murder of Duncan turns Macbeth into a haunted character; he is ensnared by his own deed. His suppressed conscience compels him to realize the monstrosity of his deed. He has blood on his hands, besides blood in his thoughts. For the time being the very practical Lady Macbeth seems unaffected but the truth about the gnawing remorse and the deep rooted sorrow become manifest in the sleep walking scene. She lives in a hell of nightmares. She who clamoured for the death of Duncan ultimately contrives her own death. It is the death of this great partner which transforms Macbeth into a furious warrior ending his life in a fury of action on the battlefield. He takes a retrospective view of life, of the futility of his achievements and of life itself. The death of Lady Macduff and her children strengthens
the determination of the avengers. Macbeth is transformed into a tyrant. With the deaths of Macduffs and it breaks the back of Lady Macbeth's stern self control. Banquo's death makes Macbeth a prisoner of his misdeeds 'cribbed cabined, confined'. The death of Macbeth transforms the bereaved Macduff into exultation of revenge and Malcolm into a thankful believer in the Grace of Grace. In Julius Caesar, we have the most spectacular transformation that death brings about in the masses. Antony turns Caesar's death into a terrible instrument of converting the masses against the admired conspirators. Those who gloated over his assassination, now set out to avenge it. It is a sentimental reaction to death.

The transformation of Cleopatra with the death of Antony is akin to the transformation of proud Lear under the hammer blows of the storm, a symbol of destruction. Cleopatra and Lear learn humility through the shock. Lear identifies himself with "unaccommodated man."(III, iv, 11). Cleopatra recovers from her "humble woman "even as the maid that milks" (IV, xiii, 74) but unlike Lear, who dies in despair of the loss of Cordelia, Cleopatra emerges integrated. The death of Antony has killed the
fear of death in Cleopatra. The intricate knot of mortality no longer binds her. She has immortal longings. Her mercurial temperament has learnt a new loyalty. The asp of Nile, an agent of death has no terror for her. She plays with death, which for her opens a door to immortal love. Her love began with a pleasure trip on the waters of Cydnus. In her death she relieves another Cydnus because she is another Cleopatra — sublimated by the sacrifice of Antony. Antony's death momentarily compels Caesar to be generous. He admits that the death of Antony is such a great loss that it should make a bigger crack. The same Caesar comes very near poetry when he looks at the dead Cleopatra:

"She looks like sleep,  
As she would catch another Antony  
In her strong toil of grace."

(V, ii, 347-349)

Intuitive Realizations and the Supernatural:

Shakespeare has significantly treated premonition of death. Clarence in Richard III before his murder dreams of his death, and on waking, he is murdered. Calphurnia sees a nightmare on the night before Caesar is murdered. In Romeo and Juliet, love and anticipation of death come
together. Juliet's 'first love is born of her first hate'. There are mysterious inklings of death. In the Balcony scene, Romeo at the bottom appears like a corpse in a tomb. To Romeo, Juliet is like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear. The darkness enfolding the bright Juliet is a vivid anticipation of Juliet in the Capulet monument, illuminating the dark vault with her beauty. The dark night is the symbol of death and the bright jewel is the innocent beauty of Juliet which death is to love. Shakespeare has used the poetic devices of anticipating the deaths of Juliet and Romeo even at their first meeting. As Romeo has a dream before his death, Cleopatra has a dream of her Emperor Antony. The dream presages her own death. Desdemona's 'Willow Song' presages her death. That premonition 'non-discursive beyond the reason's scope, recalls Ophelia's mad yet effortless reaching after truth.'

In the plays of Shakespeare, the secret house of death has many gates. In some of his tragedies, Shakespeare opens the door of death to suggest an avenue beyond death. Such are the ghosts of King Hamlet and Julius Caesar. Contentwise they are the result of a superstition
turned into a dramatic device but they also indicate the internal predicament of the bereaved Prince Hamlet and Brutus who is out of tune with himself. The weird sisters are dramatic symbols of the cantankerous evil that has tempted Macbeth. They are to Macbeth what Iago is to Othello. Shakespeare has combined dramatic realism with poetic imagination in shaping Iago as a cosmic agent of death.

Death and Beyond

An apt summary of Shakespeare's dramatization of death is found in the words of Robert Stevenson:

"In his Histories and Tragedies set in Christian times and countries, thirty one persons die on stage. None dies with so much as the name of Christ on his lips. Only one mentions the name of God at the hour of death - King Henry VI".

As is observed by Hambage "Life after death is treated as a mere hypothesis". Shakespeare's Christian characters have used doubtful phrases to describe death: "never changing night" (Richard III (II, ii, 46), "lasting night" King John (III, iv, 27), "blind cave of
eternal night" Richard III; (V, iii, 62) 'being nothing' Richard II; (V, v, 41) 'dateless bargain' Romeo & Juliet (V, iii, 115).

There is no emphasis on a compensatory future life. Heavenly joys are referred to, only occasionally; and that too with what different emotions! Both Othello and Antony imagine that they will meet the women they have loved, in the next world, but Othello imagines their reunion with horror:

"when we shall meet at
compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven
And fiends will snatch at it."

OTHELLO (V, ii, 272-274)

-whereas Antony's vision is of another kind. He and Cleopatra are to be together in the next world, not separated by the gulf between Heaven and Hell. Cleopatra assumes a Heavenly encounter with Antony and fears that Iras will reach him first. Shakespeare's heroes taking leave of life, do not speak of bliss beyond the grave. For them, only one thing has significance, and that is life on earth. All experience is concentrated in this earthly life, for
whatever may happen to the soul of man after death, action is only possible here on earth. This life on earth is the acme of beauty. What may or may not happen beyond death is something that Shakespeare mostly leaves out of consideration.

In Shakespearean tragedy, there is no suggestion that man can find his compensation in an afterlife. Death terminates each Shakespearean tragedy but in none of these Shakespearean tragedies is death the beginning of new life, for 'The Rest is Silence' *Hamlet* (V, ii, ). Shakespeare does not concern himself with the fortunes in the next world nor does he insist that 'the meek shall inherit the earth'.

Though Shakespeare gives dramatic acknowledgment to the Eternal Judgment, he is rather concerned with judgment passed in this life.

"The references to expectation of the Christian Heaven are few. ..... Had Shakespeare wished us to extrapolate our interest in his characters beyond the final lines ..... of the plays, he would surely have done more to direct our attention to the afterlife."
Only on rare occasions, Shakespeare refers to the Christian conception of Heaven and only then the references are confined within one or two lines; and yet his plays are moral in the best sense of the term. Many of his plays have pious thoughts, but piety is not exclusively Christian. T.S. Eliot in his introduction to G.W. Knight's *Wheel of Fire* states:

"The Catholic philosophy of Dante with its stern judgment of morals, leads us to the same point beyond good and evil as the pattern of Shakespeare." 34

Shakespeare's references to death are most often made against the background of universal human experience.

"Major 16th Century theologians contended that the ethics relevant to the concerns of the secular order were not exclusively Christian, but universally human." 35

Those who seek Christian virtues in the dying heroes are disappointed. But there is a wide gulf between the conventional Christian values and the Pagan humanist values of the Renaissance; and Shakespeare's approach has, by far and large, remained secular. His delineation of suicide has been sympathetic. As Paul Siegel observes:
"Shakespeare relies upon his audience to free itself from conventional religious attitudes and regard the suicides of his heroes and heroines sympathetically as the noblest action that those guided by the attitudes and emotions of romantic love and by the philosophy of stoicism could take." 36

Shakespeare's plays cannot be theologically categorized as Pre-Christian or anti-Christian.

"He was primarily concerned with the life of man within the Secular Order where Christian and non-Christian ideas frequently overlap and coincide." 37

Dramatic Devices and Symbols

Shakespeare has used various devices to reveal the process of death within the character. He has dramatized the death wish with penetrating psychological insight. Macbeth suggests "a rooted sorrow" (V, iii, 41) as the cause of Lady Macbeth's death wish. Her memory is all obsessed with the happenings of the night of murder. No art can pluck this rooted sorrow and she is led to self slaughter. Duncan was murdered at her instance and her nemesis is that she kills herself. The killer has thus invited punishment even before
her death. She, who had no conscience before the murder, is all sorrow after the murder. The sleep walking scene of Lady Macbeth gives us not only a glimpse of the inferno in which she lives, but it also is a dramatic prologue to her dreadful act of suicide. Her agony is so unbearable that death is welcome.

The willow song in Othello is the most convincing artifice for presaging the death of Desdemona as also for realising the anguish of Desdemona at the cruel transformation of her lord. The Willow Song is a natural twist of memory. Desdemona remembers her hapless maid Barbara and the song she crooned, now transforms Desdemona into another Barbara, unhappy in love. The Willow Song links up unhappy deaths of three victims of cruel lovers — Barbara, Desdemona and Emilia. For all the three, tied with the same Swan Song, death is more desirable than life. The song becomes a revelation of death.

Symbols

Throughout the works of Shakespeare, tempests are recurrent symbols. Tempests suggest the tragedy of destiny in a wider sense. Job in the Hebrew story sees his misfortunes as a tempest rocking his mortality. Tragedy is ever tempestuous. Tempests vary from play to play. Physical
tempests are primarily cruel in Shakespeare. Their presence indicates tempestuous reality which is as cruel, perhaps more, in terms of spiritual experience. In Othello, the tempest suggests the irony of fortune.

There is tempest-death association in King Lear. In King Lear the tempest in the physical world is cruel yet it is less cruel in comparison with mental torture that man inflicts on man. Here the tempest is viewed as a visual projection of the soul's unrest. Jomfotion in the physical world is indicative of some wider moral and spiritual upheaval.

The tempest is used as a symbol of adverse fortune in the comedies. A subtle imagistic use of tempests is made in the Histories. It is in the tragedies, however, that disruption and disorder are symbolised by upheavals in nature. Shakespearean tempest is

"Shakespeare's intuition of discord and conflict — Shakespeare's intuition of tempestuousness at the heart of existence." 38

Death is also communicated, sometimes, through music.
Death by water is made sadly sweet by the willow Song in Othello and the Swan Song of dying Ophelia.

Besides the dramatic use of symbols, Shakespeare has recourse to pseudo-ritualistic presentation of the mystic working of tragedy. The use of triads in Macbeth is an instance in point. There are three witches and three apparitions in the play. The witches thrice acclaim Macbeth as Glamis, Cawdor and King. The bell rings as a signal for murder. The candle in the sleep-walking scene has ritualistic overtones.

The murder of Desdemona is preambled by the Willow Song. Othello enters the chamber like a priest. He has a lighted candle in his hand. He repeats the words "It is the cause" (V, ii, 1) like a chant. The light is put out to put out life.

In Romeo and Juliet 'night' is a symbol of death. The first meeting of the young lovers is like a ceremonious encounter of pilgrims of death.

Analogies of Death

Shakespeare has made dramatic use of sleep to suggest death as in the characters of the grooms guarding Duncan's
chamber and the boy-servant Lucius asleep in the tent of Brutus on the eve of the last battle.

George Seibel notes "Shakespeare's repeated references to death as sleep have been interpreted as agnostic." 39

But as R.M. Frye rightly points out:

"The image of death as sleep is Biblical and was interpreted in the 16th century as implying a rest which looks forward to the raising of the dead." 40

Sleep was a favourite image with Martin Luther who repeatedly dwelt on the fact that for the righteous,

"death is a sweet slumber which though deeper than that of this life, gives the body rest while the soul communes with God." 41

In his Commentaries, John Calvin notes that "Paul speaks of death as a sleep, a term by which the bitterness of death is mitigated, for there is a great difference between sleep and destruction." 42

This image of death as sleep, as is stated by the theologians Luther and Calvin, is voiced by Shakespeare in Macbeth "After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well" (III,ii,23).
It is not mere Ruphusm. It is 16th century Christian truth. Calvin writes

"Our sleep itself is a plain witness
of immortality for it doth not only
minister unto us thoughts of those things
that never were done but also foreknowings
of things for time to come."

as Hamlet says "to sleep, perchance to dream" (III,i,65). So the image of sleep does not indicate an agnostic view of death, though it is not exclusively Christian.

Death is also interpreted in terms of silence. Horatio talks of flights of angels singing Hamlet to his rest; and for Hamlet, 'The Rest is Silence' (V,ii,372). It is in that silence that the aesthetic experience of the Shakespearean vision reaches its culminating. Silence and sleep are the conjoints of death. Macbeth kills sleeping Duncan, therefore Macbeth kills sleep, with the result that Duncan sleeps well but 'Macbeth shall sleep no more' (II, ii,44). Sleep is the death of everyday. It is therefore the death of time.

For Shakespeare, death is not just an end of life. It is a process that keeps pace with life. Shakespeare
presents death through the metaphor of journey. As life is existence in Time, and as Time is a one directional flow from past to the present and to the future, all the achievements of life are swept away by the tide of time. Oblivion is the most obvious result of life in Time. Death therefore is oblivion; but there is an intense yearning for immortality which is denied by death. This aspect is expressed in the speech of Ulysses as "Time, my lord, hath a wallet at his back to put alms for Oblivion." Troilus & Cressida (III, iii, 145-146)

Attitudes Towards Death

Shakespeare has effectively made use of Christian attitude towards death as also other attitudes towards it. Shakespeare's most poetic passages on death involve two attitudes — one in which death is accepted as something restful, a balm soothing the anguish and worries of life; and another in which he suggests the imagination deeply stirred by fear of the decay of the body and the uncertainty as to the fate of the soul. This second attitude is peculiar to the Gothic imagination.

The terror of death has a fearful hold upon the imagination of the characters as illustrated in the
horrified speeches are never put into the mouths of those actually dying. His characters like Claudio are seized in the grip of deep-seated fears, before which honour and nobility become, though momentarily meaningless abstractions. Claudio expresses his apprehensions about death:

"Ay, but to die, and go we know not
where,
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and in certain thoughts
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible;
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

Measure for Measure (III, i, 116-130)

Hamlet, too feels the same apprehensions

"But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of."

Hamlet (II, i, 78-82)
Troilus discovers that his fears are well grounded.

"Death, I fear me
Sounding destruction, or some joy too fine
Too subtle potent, tun'd too sharp in sweetness
For the capacity of my ruder powers:
I fear it much."

_Tro. & Cre_ (III, ii, 21-25)

On the one hand we have characters like Claudio caught in the grip of fear, but on the other, we have the characters of even children who meet death with courage and dignity. In _Macbeth_, Master Macduff dies the death of a true man's son.

In the case of Troilus, we have a tragedy worse than death—the tragedy of continued existence after every cherished value has been destroyed. Troilus, like Hamlet, tried to escape from the life of this world and discovered that he could not escape the human consequences of the fact that he was living in it.

An important aspect of the role of death in Shakespeare is that death serves as a nemesis. An invisible power seems to be at work contriving the punishment of the guilty at the hand of the persons they have harmed.
Such is the case of Macduff killing Macbeth. Hamlet's killing of Claudius and Othello's self-punishment are instances of retributive death.

Shakespeare has dramatized the universal truth that dusty death cuts even glorious heroes to their size. All achievements end in death. Even the longest life winds its way to the ocean of oblivion. Through the misanthropic eyes of Timon and the blood-shot eyes of Macbeth, death reveals the nothingness behind the illusory pomp and pageantry of life. The same truth emerges in Hamlet's meditations in the Churchyard. Yorick and Ophelia both mingle in the same dust. The realization of nothingness affects each character differently. Timon turns into a misanthrop and Macbeth plunges into cynicism, whereas Hamlet re-emerges as a noble prince who has regained faith in Providence; and dies 'all passion spent.' Death in this case enlarges and ennobles the Prince of Denmark.

The vision of death is a form of inspired seeing. Lear dies in self-deception; Othello dies recollecting the memories of the past. To Lear, death comes as a saviour; to Othello, it comes as a bitter release.
Death is welcome as an end to suffering and anguish. It is also welcome as a release from the depth of shame; as it is evident in Angelo in Measure for Measure and in Enobarbus in Antony and Cleopatra.

Angelo: "No longer session hold upon my shame
But let my trial be mine own confession
Immediate sentence then and sequent death
Is all the grace I beg."

*Measure for Measure* (V,i,372-375)

Enobarbus on receiving the bounty from Antony cries in shame and despair before committing suicide:

"O Antony!
Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
My better service, when my terpitude
Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart:"

*Antony & Cleopatra* (IV,v,31-34)

"......... I will go seek
Some ditch, wherein to die; thou foul's best fits
My latter part of life."

*Ant. & Cleo.* (IV,v,37-39)
Death is also welcome on the height of joy, as in Othello's cry of ecstasy at the time of Cyprus reunion:

"If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate."

Othello (II,i,192-196)

Shakespeare has dramatized various non-Christian attitudes to death. For Macbeth, death is the rejection of life, which, in his despairing cry, is described as 'a tale told by an idiot' (V, v, 27). Antony willingly welcomes death

"I will be .......
A bridgroom in my death."

(IV, xii,99-100)

whereas a wretch like Barnardine is indifferent to death. Provost describes him as a man that apprehends death

"no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep, careless, reckless, fearless, of what is past, present or to come, insensible of mortality and desperately mortal."

Measure for Measure (IV,ii,142-145)
The essence of Shakespeare's attitude to death is distilled in the remarks 'Ripeness is all', King Lear (V, iii, 11) Readiness is all", Hamlet (V, ii, 236). With reference to death, Edgar in King Lear declares that 'Ripeness is all'; and Hamlet has made a similar statement 'Readiness is all'. These two phrases are virtually identical and are uttered in their own appropriate contexts - one made by the heathen Edgar and the other made by Christian Prince, educated at the Wittenberg University. 'Ripeness is all' is an appropriate remark made by a virtuous heathen in a Pre-Christian world illumined by hopeful fatalism; as 'Readiness is all' is the characteristic remark made by a Christian Prince educated at Protestant University, based on the grounds of Christian hope.

Masks and Modes of Death

For most people, death is an invisible but universal fear. Pluto silently strikes at his victim any time anywhere. Many are the ways of death in the plays of Shakespeare. Death grins and grimaces through many masks.
Natural death is illustrated in the characters of old Gaunt and Falstaff. But the richness of Shakespeare's imagination has visualized even these two natural deaths as similar but distinct. Old Gaunt dies in a blaze of patriotic pride for England. Incidentally he reveals a Christian attitude towards revenge which he leaves in the hands of God. Like Gloucester in King Lear he dies resigned to his fate. Falstaff too is old but his death in old age results from a shock. Henry, Prince of Wales, transformed into a King, rejected Falstaff who once had been his father figure. So the natural death of old Falstaff is a kind of patricide on the part of King Henry V. Falstaff had cheated death itself on the battlefield by pretending death. His rejection by his favourite Prince is explained as a sacrifice to cleanse the land for another glorious age. The death of Falstaff is not communicated through a dying speech. His death comes to us in a serio-comic report by Madam Quickley, the hostess of Boar's Head. She calls him 'a Chriishom Child'. He died as if co-related with the ebb in the river. He died with the name of God on his lips and babbled of green fields. The reference to green fields is a proof of his joy in the English countryside.
The blinded Gloucester in *King Lear* finds new sight ere he dies. His vision of life as a cruel sport of Gods, is transformed after a fraudulent attempt at suicide. His faith in the universe is restored by his lost son Edgar; and his heart bursts smilingly. Edgar is the saviour of Gloucester as Cordelia is the saviour of King Lear.

The death of old Lear is a much debated mystery. The titanic old man who had contested against forces of nature and had braved a storm in nature and in his inner being till his mind collapsed into lunacy, was reclaimed to sanity by a reunion with his daughter Cordelia, and for a brief while Heaven was around the old King and his daughter, but the play ends with the dead body of Cordelia in his hands. It parallels with the pietas of the blessed Virgin with Christ in her hands. Lear dies, as he had lived, calling Gods to answer for Cordelia's death. He dies a rebel, knocking at the gate of the mystery of death. He knows and yet does not recognize the death of Cordelia. He too dies a natural death, with his daughter and the Fool retaining hold over his fading memory.

At the other end is the untimely death of Mamillius the child of sorrow in *The Winter's Tale*. Those
whom God's love, die young. He dies of denial of life. His sensitive spirit pines away; it just cannot outlast the injustice done to his mother by a jealous father. It is death which is tamed. The attachment of Mamillus for his mother is paralleled in Antony and Cleopatra by the clinging loyalty of Iras for her Queen Cleopatra. Her death is more oriental than of the West. Like some Yogi of the East, she dies by wishing death. There is nothing jarring or hideous in these youthful deaths.

Shakespeare has included deaths by chance and accident, for example in Hamlet, Polonius is killed under mistaken identity; but where the plots of Claudius go wrong and Hamlet unknowingly steps into a trap, the end is an achievement of Providence rather than of man.

On the borderline of natural and contrived deaths is the death of Ophelia. She, like Lady of Shalott, dies of love. Hers is a death of the heart even before she dies physically. Death transforms her for a while into a nymph. She sings her own requiem. So far as her mind is unhinged, she has not willed her death. Shakespeare
hare exercises poetic freedom and rises above the unsympathetic condemnation of suicide by the Christian Church.

Many are the ways of dying—poison, sword and dagger, hanging, smothering and drowning—these are the modes of death but the motives and the implications are profound. There is a world of difference between the death of Regan by poison and Juliet seeking death with the last drop of poison. Regan’s death is punishment whereas Juliet’s death is sacrificial and redeems the society in Verona. So also there is a tremendous difference between the self-slaughter by Othello and the one by Goneril. Brutus murders Caesar with a dagger but the words ‘Et tu’ of dying Caesar go deeper than a dagger and they claim the life of Brutus.

Tragedy in Shakespeare means a story of violent death. His plays deal with victims of death and agents of death. The History Plays display deaths in a ‘Tandav’ same cosmic dance of universal carnage. Massacres are accepted as a normal practice of warfare. Similarly in Macbeth there are images of death, when he enacts another
Golgotha. Henry V unleashes the war hounds in France. Soldiers and citizens alike face the ferocious hounds of death. The heroes like Hotspur willingly lay down their lives to pluck bright honour on the battlefield. For them death resembles the pale faced moon. Death on the battlefield wins encomium even from the enemy, as is shown when Prince Hal covers the corpse of Harry Hotspur with his feathered hat. Here death holds the key of the Hall of Fame. Shakespeare has been true to the sense of honour in all heroic ages. Young Siward dies 'God's Soldier' (V, vii, 76). He had faced Macbeth bravely. Talbot and his son receive the tribute of tears from a thousand spectators as they rival each other for honourable death on the battlefield. For them death comes as an ally. At the same time Shakespeare reveals the heroism latent in common men like Feeble, the ladies' tailor and others who join the army.

The most death scenes in Shakespeare take the form of ceremonial murder. Macbeth arranges the murder to the ringing of bells. The ringing of the bell is the signal for the killing of Duncan in Macbeth. During the murder, someone prays and another says Amen, and Duncan is murdered.
Primitive myths are based on the oldest and the deepest common experience of mankind. One such myth is that of sacrificial death. In Oedepus Athens is saved by the sacrifice of Oedepus, so is Denmark saved by the sacrifice of Hamlet. As Oedepus dies on Athenian soil so that Athens may be preserved from its enemies, so also Coriolanus dies so that Rome may be saved. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet have cleansed the poison of hatred from the society of Verona. They have performed a priest-like task of purification. On their sacrifices, the age-old family feuds end.

The cleansing of the contaminated land by sacrificing the King is one of the oldest myths. Macbeth is killed so that the land is redeemed. With his death, order is restored, and fertility regained. The assassination of Julius Caesar is also centred around this sacrificial myth. Caesar is not butchered but sacrificed. Brutus adopts the tone of a high priest and really believed that the murder of Caesar is indeed a ceremony to restore health to Rome. His motive is nobler than that of Macbeth, but the end is the same. Duncan is murdered and avenged; Caesar is murdered and avenged. Blood was considered to
have mystic power so the conspirators washed their hands and their weapons in the blood of Caesar. But at the end of the ceremonial murder the shrewd Antony exhibits the same blood of Caesar to incite the mobs, and the miracle is worked by Antony rather than by Brutus.

The most unforgettable murder in Shakespeare is perhaps the murder of innocent Desdemona by the purblind Othello. He is to be the high priest saving the world from impurity by shedding the blood of 'sinful' Desdemona. He comes with a light which he puts out to do a dark deed. He refers to the metaphoric meaning of light which is life, and cannot be restored. This ritual which he takes seriously is unbearably devilish to the readers. Othello is cleansed with the realization of his monstrous act and executes judgment upon his life.

Both Othello and Macbeth murder and both suffer its consequences but whereas death in Othello regenerates, death in Macbeth degenerates.

**Aesthetic Presentation of Death**

A hushed drum, a bowed head a moment without sound or motion is enough to establish death as a fact
for others' comprehension, that would have sufficed for
the dramatic presentation of death but Shakespeare is not
interested in describing the physical pain of death,
he has described the mental anguish of the persons in
vicinity of death and of those around them. What we
seek in his tragedies is not merely the dramatic pre-
sentation of death but his metaphysical probing into the
depths of death. Death is envisaged as an antagonist of
love, as it is envisaged as a separator and at times even
as a bliss that leads to the reunion of lovers.

The immortality implied in the plays of Shakespeare
is the resurrection of the dramatic characters in the minds
of the spectators. It is there that Cleopatra is alive
after her death and Antony is a cosmic Emperor. As
Christ ascended from the grave to Heaven, these characters
ascend from the stage to the Heaven of unfortgotten fable.

Shakespeare by his technical excellence makes the
death scene of Cleopatra a thing of beauty. As he describes
Cleopatra's death, he gives his verse dignity. The pulse of
it throbs with a steady intensity and goes processionally
forward. The poetic description alleviates the pain of
death.
"The description of Cleopatra's death demonstrates how easily Shakespeare could intertwine heroic and purely romantic elements into the dramatic and poetic texture of the play."

Death for Cleopatra is a celebration, a re-enactment of the glorious first meeting on Cydnus. If the description of the dying Ophelia is a lyrical masterpiece, the death of Cleopatra is a magnificent drama.

For Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, there is no more dying after their willed end. Since eternity is made of a sequence of single moments, a moment of eternal love is immortality. They attain a double immortality - the immortality of the awareness of the supreme value of love. The ending of the plays is the commencement of a spiritual in memoriam, which reclaims the plays from oblivion. Like Shakespeare's soul, the Spectator's soul is fed within. Shakespeare's aesthetic vision awakens in the Spectator the continuity of his characters even beyond death. This awareness survives the play and gives it a death-and-resurrection pattern which is expressed by Keats in his Sonnet on reading *King Lear*.
"Let me not wander in a barren dream
But when I am consumed in the fire
Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire."

Miracles are the work of some immortal power, but
immortality which is relevant to Shakespeare is the
immortality in the Heaven of living words, in the Realms
of Gold, where truth dwells. Centuries have attested the
longevity of the moments of perfection attained by the
imaginative creation of Shakespeare. Here it is all
ripeness and nothing raw in the silence in which dwell
the dreams of Shakespeare.

Across Space and Time

There is a profound significance in the welding
of metaphysical thought as a functional element in the
structure of an aesthetic presentation. The classical Age
and the Middle Ages had covered a great distance in ethical
thought and metaphysical speculations. The ethics of
the Church and philosophic speculations of the thinkers are
ways of comprehending death, but the poet's is the third
approach of aesthetic experience. Shakespeare adopts this
aesthetic approach. His creative vision contemplates the
plentitude of life with its myriad types of men and its mesh of events and offers a universal world view, which is a synthesis of ethics and metaphysics. This aesthetic world view harmonises with the Western vision of life and yet extends beyond it into a world vision. Shakespeare has worked with the material of historical experience and his creativity has yielded the crowning achievement of his major tragedies.

The Western critics of Shakespeare have tried to interpret Shakespeare's presentation of mortality as either influenced by the Christianity of his Age or by referring to the influence of Renaissance humanism. Sometimes they have traced both the influences. This logical approach seems to miss the truly Shakespearean achievement of dramatizing the universal aspects of human behaviour. His quest was for such tragedy of man as would appeal to any society. This is borne out by the fact that his plays retain relevance when examined in terms of Indian aesthetics. To say that Shakespeare was an Elizabethan, a Christian or a Renaissance humanist is not as relevant as to say that he was a dramatist of human behaviour and human predicament. Shakespeare is meaningful
in terms of his time or of the Western heritage but he transcends the frame to a universality which makes meaning in any culture.

The Indian tradition of philosophy develops through the inquiring disciple and the inspiring preceptor. Such a disciple was Arthabhāg who inquired of his master Yagnavalkya: 'Does a man vanish into nothingness when he dies?' (Bruhad Aranyaka Upanishad). Shakespeare's Timon is an aspirant of Nothingness.

Krishna explained that death is not something to be grieved over; there is no such thing as death of the eternal self. The self (Ātmā) does not kill and is not killed. Hamlet re-enacts this text in his death. His concern about 'a wounded name' is like an endorsement of Krishna's claim that for a truly noble person ill name is worse than death.

Hamlet's message 'The Rest Is Silence' is the message of the Kathopanishad of ancient India. The destiny which Hamlet finds reflected in the fall of a sparrow is not peculiarly Christian. We find an Indian parallel in a passage of Goshal.
"There is no human action, no strength, no human power of endurance which can affect one's destiny in this life. Whatever happens was predestined." 45

The Hamlet predicament is paralleled in the predicament of Arjun at Kurukshetra. He experiences a profound crisis of Spirit. He recoils at the idea of victory through bloodshed by taking arms against kinsmen. It is on the battlefield in case of Arjun and in the Churchyard in the case of Hamlet that an integrated vision is reached. To fight or not to fight was the dilemma of Arjun on the battlefield and of Hamlet in his solitude. This crisis of action was an existential crisis. It could be resolved by profound moral decisions. Arjun was fighting not for personal gain but for resisting evil, irrespective of consequences. Hamlet had to act not for personal revenge, but for cleansing the rotten state of Denmark. Both Arjun and Hamlet contemplate in a psycho-philosophic mood - but with a difference. Hamlet is his own Arjun and he has to be his own Krishna. As in the Divine Speech of Krishna so in the 'To be' soliloquy of Hamlet, universal human experience finds memorable
expression. At the hour of death, there is transformation as we find in Hamlet. In the hour of death, the Shakespearean Protagonist is transformed into self-realization. Antony at the moment of death feels that he is losing all sense of his physical reality - 'as water is in water' _Antony & Cleopatra_ (IV, xii, 8).

The human ego, as known to Indian literature, is not far away from the Shakespearean dramatization of personality. By personality is meant a psychological complex of character, attitudes, preferences and prejudices which sum up an individual. Life is a journey towards self-realization. As in Sanskrit Literature so in Shakespeare, we are made aware of the ethical law of the universe. The philosophy of appearance versus reality that we find in Shakespeare finds it parallel in appearance. Some critics have interpreted Shakespeare's plays as a conflict between appearance and reality. This is paralleled in the Indian doctrine of Maya - a doctrine of transfiguration. The individual who realizes the illusory aspect of life is a liberated person for instance, Hamlet resigning himself to destiny is no longer deluded by appearance. He now lives in the world without being involved in its eddies. He now has to work for others. His fatalism is not a passive withdrawal; it is a doctrine
of activism — an obligation to work, as long as life lasts. His motive now is not the satisfaction of his ego but the welfare of his world. Antony at the moment of death feels that he is losing all sense of his physical reality — 'as water is in water'. Othello realizes the truth of love at the moment of death after passing through the deceit of illusion. Deceived by the equivocation of the Witches Macbeth realizes the illusory nature of life at the penultimate moment.

There is an Indian parallel to such transformation in the play 'Urubhang' of Bhas. It reveals a deep tragedy. At the moment of death Duryodhan's outlook is transformed into a new vision of life.

The Indian Epic Poet Vyas and Shakespeare are at one in offering a synthesis of the various life views. They manage to do so because they keep in mind the full rounded image of experience. The Ramayana of Valmiki and the great Tragedies of Shakespeare sound sympathetic chords. In such art, higher pleasure emerges from an acceptance of pain.
Tagore has interpreted Kalidas's 'Meghdoot' and suggested that there is a curse on human love. Shakespeare in Othello has shown such unfathomable gulf between two souls. Each lover lives on the inaccessible bank of his or her own 'Man Sarovar'. Between all Othellos and all Desdemonas, there is the vast sea of incommunicability. Only in death can they unite.

Gloucester's pessimistic philosophy expressed in "As flies to wanton boys, are we to Gods" (IV, i, 36) is anticipated in Sankhya philosophy.

"This world (the world of appearance)
of chaos and anarchy and suffering
cannot be the creation of a benevolent God." 46

The Shakespearean world view is not exclusively Elizabethan. His poetic insight has reached the universal centre of life view. The linking of the ethical conduct of man with the orderly organization of the cosmos is more human than Elizabethan, Christian or Pagan. The purpose behind the creation of the world itself is reflected in the moral conduct of man. Tragedy reaches this pure
metaphysical thought in the correspondence between nature and the nature of man. The doctrine of correspondence is better known to Indian intelligence. Storm in Lear's mind corresponds with the storm outside. As in Universe, so in self — is an observation familiar in Indian philosophy "Yatha Brahmande, Tatha Pinde". Man is thus interwoven with nature. Shakespearean linking of man's life with the Universal Order is interpreted by Western critics as derived from the theology of the Middle Ages. In India it makes sense in the context of Vedic poetry. The metaphysical implications of Shakespeare come home to the heart of the Indian reader because the Indian mind too has known the exultation of mystic experience.

Valmiki, like Shakespeare, is determined to confront squarely the problem of the tragic in human destiny. It is an existential approach. "Like waters that have ebbed away, times will also never return." In Valmiki tragedy is accepted but courage is insisted upon.

"Man cannot do as he pleases, he is not wholly his master. Fate drags him hither and thither. All acquisition ends in loss, all union in separation, all life in death."
Man forgets death in the exultation of living. But death is man's shadow. Every sunrise and every fresh season take away a part of life. Wise men ought not to grieve. According to Valmiki, life is a closed fatality or a casual drift. These responses to mortal life in time are equally familiar to the genius of Shakespeare.

In Shakespeare, there is no bald philosophizing, and the metaphysical is embedded in a rich poetic tissue. Ravana of the Epic has something which corresponds with Macbeth of Scotland. Just before his death, he grows in stature. It is significant that it is tragedy which shocks them into growth - Ravana when his son dies; and Macbeth at the passing of Lady Macbeth.

Shakespeare's works exceeded the limitations of the Age in which he lived. The large issues which he probed - his attitudes to life and death are as meaningful to our own time, as they were to his.

Shakespeare has recorded sharp sensitivity about the evanescent beauty of human life as also the invincibility of the human spirit. The Indian philosophic concept
of Time (Mahākāl), a symbol of cosmic death into whose cavernous jaws are devoured the Past, the Present and the Future. (Kalosmi) (Canto 11: Verse 32). This terrible vision of the inevitable transitoriness of life is counterbalanced by the metaphysical assurance of the indestructibility of the human soul (Na hanyate) (Canto 2: Verse 20). The Epic Poet of the Mahābhārata declares in no uncertain terms that there is nothing greater than Man in the universe. Shakespeare, too, never loses faith in man. For Shakespeare, man, however, deluded, is still the finest work of creation. His humanism is implicit in his plays. His feet were firmly planted in his Age but he, like his dying heroes, transcended the limitations of his Age and so became ever living.

The hero of the Pagan World was a doomed soul. The story of his tragic life had a special social function. Aristotle had called it 'Catharsis', a cleansing, a restoration of healthy society. Shakespearean Tragedy emphasises this aspect of sacrificial death. Medieval Christianity held death to be the wages of sin. Death
was a settling of accounts, though an intermission stretched between death and doomsday. In Shakespearean Tragedies there is no time lag between death and the Day of Judgment. The conscience of a Hamlet or a Macbeth is instinct with medieval ethos.

The isolation of the Shakespearean protagonist which forces on him the responsibility of decision is akin to the Indian theory of 'Karma' which squarely puts on the shoulders of man the burden of the consequences of his choice. A dramatic working out of the consequence of choice in the life and death of the hero makes Shakespeare our neighbour.

Likewise his linking of the drama with the inner life of the characters as revealed in the soliloquies of Hamlet or Macbeth or the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth is fully comprehended in a Freudian world. Hamlet is unbelievably relevant to a civilization which has sent young 'draftees' to global wars, and Timon's quest for the perfect 'nothingness' of death presents his maker as our illustrious contemporary.
The multiplicity of life views offered in the works of Shakespeare through many doors of death, the subtle poetic glimpses and insights into human responses to the splendour and terror of real and illusory death capture for us the human per se, as only inspired art can — that is the secret of the immortality of Shakespeare and the universality of his Mortalia.
Chapter - 10

Summing Up

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