

Chapter Two

HAMLET

2.0 Alienation in Different Contexts

According to Horowitz in “On Alienation and the Social Order,” “At its source, the word ‘alienation’ implies an intense separation first from objects in a world, second from other people, third from ideas about the world held by other people. It might be said that the synonym of alienation is separation, while the precise antonym of the word is integration” (Horowitz 231). On one level, alienation can simply be defined as a state of being estranged from something or someone but it acquires different meanings in different areas. For example, in law, alienation is used in the transference of property. In psychology, someone who has withdrawn himself/herself from society is said to be the case of alienation. In critical theory, alienation of a person is defined in terms of isolation from his or her self. And Karl Marx says that a person is alienated when they have no control over the products he made. Peter C. Ludz says:

Man alienated from the product of his own work and activity is no longer able to experience himself as a human being. In Marx’s own words: Alienated labour ‘alienates from man his own body’ as well as ‘external nature, his mental life and his human life’. It produces man as a ‘mentally and physically dehumanised being’. Alienation is thus for Marx a total phenomenon comprising the entire human condition. (Ludz 10)

In literature, Shakespeare’s Hamlet is one of the iconic manifestations of the concept of alienation. First, he sees his murderer uncle rising to power on the dead body of his father and second, his only hope (mother) marries this monster immediately after the crime. These two events start a series of actions that clearly show that Hamlet is now alienated first from himself and then from the rest of the world. He becomes bitter every passing day and swears to take revenge. At this point, he says:

“The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 52).

These lines lay before us the whole procedure to be carried out by Hamlet. This burden is so much heavy for him that he loses his own self in this process. Hamlet is alienated and therefore pushed into the world of conflict. He imposes on himself the conditions of isolation. Harold Bloom remarks that:

Alienation” originally meant *estrangement*, in the sense Celia applies it in *As You Like It* when she takes on the name of Aliena, “the stranger,” for her sojourn in Arden with Rosalind, whose assumed name is Ganymede. But alienation in the Age of Kafka took on the meaning of existential dread. Camus, influenced by Kierkegaard and Sartre, as well as by Kafka, shifted alienation to a category reflecting a dishonored post-war France still suffering under the stigma of the Nazi occupation. (Bloom *Alienation* xv)

2.1 Introduction to Hamlet

Hamlet is one of the most important plays in English and other literatures. A lot has been written on this play. In coming pages, I will try to focus only on the issue of alienation in it. Hamlet is famously a complex text with beauty and depth. To the Hamlet’s question, “to be or not to be” a lot of different answers are given by scholars. One is answer is that he is asking whether he should live or he should die. He is longing for death. The first option is to go on living and show endurance in the tough time and the second option is to end everything by taking life. But scholars say that whether he kills himself or stays alive, Denmark will still be in problem. Bradley says:

Shakespeare turned to tragedy not merely for change, or because he felt it to be the greatest form of drama and felt himself equal to it, but also because the world had come to look dark and terrible to him. (65)

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564. The details of his life are scarcely available. William went to school but records say that he did not attend the college. He married Anne Hathaway who was eight years older than him. She bore him three children – Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith. He worked as an actor in some of the plays but ended up as a successful playwright. Another playwright, Robert Greene called him “an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers.” In addition to sonnets and other poems, he wrote 37 plays. Most of which are considered to be masterpieces of whole literature. He died in April 1616.

Hamlet according to many researchers was written during 1600 and 1601 which happens to be the time that is called the time of maturity in tragedies. It is well known that first half of Shakespeare's writing was devoted to comedies and histories but in this period he also wrote *Titus Adronicus* (1594) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1595). It was during the writing of these histories that Shakespeare realized a great deal about the tragedies. So we can learn a lot about hamlet if we see him as a Renaissance man. The greatness of this play is in the full portrayal of its age. Like renaissance, the play is contains in itself varieties of conflicts and contradictions. The question with which all the critics are busy with is that why after knowing everything why does hamlet keep on delaying his task of killing Claudius. The fact is that his delay leads to the death of many people- his mother, Ophelia, Polonius, Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet himself wants to know the cause of this delay and asks:

Why yet I live to say "This thing's to do,"
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me.
Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed
Makes mouths at the invisible event. (159)

Shakespeare shows that this delay is not caused only by external forces but also by the conflict, estrangement and alienation inside the Hamlet. Hamlet never refers to the external thing as a cause of this but we come to realise that it is all internal chaos within him. Thus the problem with hamlet can be defined and understood under the field of psychology. In this regard Sigmund Freud famously said:

Shakespeare's Hamlet, has its roots in the same soil as Oedipus Rex. But the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind. In the Oedipus the child's wishful phantasy that underlies it is brought into the open and realized as it would be in a dream. In Hamlet it remains repressed; and—just as in the case of a neurosis—we only learn of its existence from its inhibiting

consequences. . . The play is built up on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result. According to the view which was originated by Goethe and is still the prevailing one today, Hamlet represents the type of man whose power of direct action is paralysed by an excessive development of his intellect. (Freud 282)

But scholars say that problem with this view tends to create further problems in the area of literature especially in the field of tragedy. A tragic hero then loses its character. They further say that the criticism that was done before Freud was at least good in the way that it defined the delay of hamlet in better manner. They say that hamlet was poetic, sensitive and moral person who got crushed by the task of murdering a human. Schlegel and Coleridge also say that *Hamlet* is a tragedy that involves a lot of thinking. Hamlet's deep thinking on an issue from all sides stops him from acting and hence becomes alienated in this process. "With the purposelessness of all human action...the protagonist of Shakespeare's most famous play becomes as complex as we imagine ourselves to be. In the end, he learns that even his own massive intellect cannot allow him to control his destiny or reverse the 'diseases' of passing time" (Toropov 124). He loses his own self and also loses society. A. C. Bradley created one of the widely read criticisms on *Hamlet*. Bradley says that the actions of Hamlet take place due to the sadness that is born of his father's unfortunate death and his mother's speedy wedding to his uncle. Her disloyalty to his father's marriage makes Hamlet to lose faith in his mother. And then Hamlet generalizes and loses faith in whole womankind as Bradley says:

He can never see Ophelia in the same light again: she is a woman, and his mother is a woman: if she mentions the word 'brief' to him, the answer drops from his lips like venom, 'as woman's love. (96)

So when Hamlet needs courage and will to take revenge, he is collapsed by despair and alienation towards all the things and persons. He thinks on this thing that ghost has put him in such a situation that no matter what he does, he is enforced to violate one principle or the other. Hamlet's chief characteristic in the play is his indecisiveness to act, which may bring him to the level of unheroic in a sense. Laertes

and Fortinbras on the other hand in the same play also highlight the oddness of Hamlet being a hero. But then if Hamlet is difficult as a hero, it is because the concept of heroism has itself become problematic in his surroundings. This is the time when Hamlet finds himself most distressed and has the feeling of annihilation. What was dearest and sacred to him began to rot. Hamlet's problems do not remain personal, but they tell us about the society as well in which the play is set. Mousley writes:

Rather than acting as sources of identification, human nature and human existence become the site, for Hamlet, of uncertainties and questions. He is exposed to a variety of beliefs and behaviours, each with its own assumptions about what it is to be human, but as a disengaged, disenchanted sceptic he remains at a critical distance from them. (33)

Hamlet's story is obviously interesting but it gains emphasis and more importance by the fact that its conflict is based in an entire era.

A continuous theme in Hamlet is about the interior disease in Hamlet himself and in the state of Denmark. Hamlet thinks of philosophical matters and knows that there are other problems than his mother's hasty marriage with Claudius. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are friends of Hamlet but now they are loyal to Claudius now. They are killed performing their duty of taking Hamlet to England and they are totally ignorant about the real plot of King who wants Hamlet dead as soon as he reaches England. Similarly Ophelia is more innocent than her father and brother but is caught between the affairs of the men whom she is devoted to. Claudius uses her as a spy for Hamlet. Hamlet is pretty much disturbed that almost everyone is conspiring against him to find out what he is really up to.

Harold Bloom in his introduction to Hamlet says that "The fundamental fact about Hamlet is not that he thinks too much, but that he thinks much too well. His is simply the most intelligent role ever written for the Western stage; indeed, he may be the most intelligent figure in all of world literature, West or East" (Bloom *Bloom's* 7). After the months of death of ruler of Denmark, Horatio sees the apparition of the late King wearing the armour he wore in the battle against King of Norway. He thinks over this supernatural occurrence of the king and is troubled to understand it. Hamlet is still mourning over what has happened. In the meantime, Horatio, Bernardo and Marcellus inform Hamlet about the appearance of the ghost and Hamlet tells them

that he will join them in the night. Ophelia is the love of Hamlet but her brother Laertes tell her to guard herself from hamlet because he thinks that hamlet is only toying with her and will not marry her. In the midnight, hamlet joins Horatio and others to look for the ghost. The ghost returns and hamlet is terrified at the sight and asks about the cause of his appearance. The ghost tells him about the whole happening. The ghost also tells him how his queen Gertrude betrayed him as well and helped Claudius in making the conspiracy. The ghost eventually asks hamlet to avenge him. Hamlet swears to do so and tells Horatio to keep this thing a secret. After that hamlet begins to find about the truth of this revelation.

Several weeks later Ophelia tells his father Polonius about hamlet's bizarre behavior and he diagnoses him with the sickness of love. Polonius also produces his love letters to prove his diagnosis. Claudius and Gertrude call Hamlet's childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and order them to inquire about the strange behavior of hamlet. Hamlet understands that his murderer king has appointed them to spy on him and therefore confuses them with his speeches. They also inform him about the arrival of his favourite actors. Hamlet welcomes them warmly and requests their manager to perform *The Murder of Gonzago*. Hamlet actually wants to be sure about the accusations of the ghost so he will observe the reactions of Claudius and Gertrude while the players act. Hamlet even thinks of suicide that will end his dilemma. He questions everything. He feels completely alienated. He questions Ophelia's love and her devotion towards him. After Claudius sees the play which Hamlet calls "The Mousetrap", he rushes out from the venue and hamlet is assured of Claudius's crime.

Claudius tries to lessen his guilt by praying. Hamlet gets the chance to kill him but he thinks that if he kills him now he will die without sins as he is praying. While his father was killed with his sins. He decides to wait until Claudius is surrounded by horrible sins of adultery, drunkenness etc. After this Hamlet confronts his mother and reminds her of crime. She gets agitated and voice of Polonius comes behind the drape. Hamlet thinks it is Claudius and pokes his sword to it but Polonius is killed. On hearing this news Ophelia has a mental breakdown. Her brother Laertes comes on the scene and wants to kill the person in revenge He poisons his sword and wants a duel with Hamlet. Claudius also mixes the poison in the drink which hamlet will have during the break. Laertes stabs hamlet with the poisoned sword and after the exchange

of swords takes place hamlet is also successful in stabbing him with the poisoned sword. Meanwhile, Gertrude drinks the poisoned drink and falls during the fight. Hamlet then stabs Claudius by same sword and asks him to drink the poison wine. Both Laertes and Hamlet die afterwards.

2.2 Alienation in Hamlet

Alienation in Hamlet is a kind of psychic state, which grew in him due to reaction towards the massive changes that took place around the death of his father. About this state of mind, Claudius says about Hamlet:

Sith nor th' exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from th' understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 60)

Hamlet has changed. He is not what he was before. He became more complex in his attitude. Many scholars have said that Hamlet is an enigma even after all these years of scholarship. His confrontation with his mother reveals a lot about his plan as well as about the real feelings of Hamlet that are hurt.

“O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.”

He answers:

“O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.” (Bradley 114).

Similarly, his confrontation with Ophelia is one of the interesting thing to consider. He talks to her with obsession, madness and biased view of women. He handles the matter very badly and loses the lovely lady and that shows us the cruel trait of hamlet. A. C. Bradley writes beautifully about this fact:

Hamlet's love for Ophelia never changed. On the revelation made by the Ghost, however, he felt he must put aside all thoughts of it; and it also seemed to him necessary to convince Ophelia, as well as others, that he was insane, and so to destroy her hopes of any happy issue to their love...in the Nunnery-scene (III. i.) and again at the play-scene, he not only feigned madness, but, to

convince her I bitter and insulting language. In all this, he was acting a part intensely painful to himself; the very violence of his language in the Nunnery-scene arose from this pain. (126)

A young man like Hamlet is thoughtful, continuously tries to make sense of everything in the world, and tries to solve all the mysteries around him, he is right to do so in pursuit of the meaning for its own sake. He is perfectly confident about his capabilities, he is not afraid of the opposition on any part. Ironically, after all this he gets alienated in a strange manner. *Hamlet* is a play that reveals the workings of a distressed mind and soul. There are a lot of evidences for this thing: Hamlet threatens about committing suicide. He ruthlessly abuses Ophelia who is not at all guilty of what Hamlet suffers from. It seems important to quote Wilson Knight here, who says:

Hamlet . . . is cruel to Ophelia: so too he is cruel to his mother later. He tortures both of them, because he once loved them. They agonize him with the remembrance of what they once were to him, of what he himself is now. There are often moments when reincarnations of what must have been his former courteous and kindly nature—of which we hear, but which we only see by fits and starts—break through the bitterness of Hamlet as he appears in the play, but they do not last: cynicism and consequent cruelty, born of the burden of pain within him, blight the spontaneous gentleness that occasionally shows itself, strangle it. (Knight 28)

In the very first soliloquy, when Hamlet had not even interaction with the ghost of his father who asks him to take revenge of his murder, Hamlet turns out to be suicidal. He desires to destroy himself as it is seen in *Hamlet*:

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God,
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed: things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. (21)

Hamlet lives in a Christian world and has faith that his soul is going to live forever. Although this seems obvious but if we consider this it has a lot of implication for understanding this play. Hamlet's belief in afterlife has many effects on the overall meaning of the play as well on his thinking. In Shakespeare's Roman characters the ethics of a man directed him towards suicide when his honour was in danger but it is opposite in characters like Hamlet. In the lines above Hamlet reveals about the prohibition of the act of committing suicide. So unlike the classical heroes, he thinks whether his actions will lead him to eternal damnation or eternal peace. This is the reason many scholars say that prevents hamlet from taking action immediately. But this deep thinking lead to other dark places. The most crucial question about the afterlife is that Hamlet cannot know what it will be like. He suffers from a general alienation and is estranged from all the things around him:

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed: things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. (Shakespeare *Hamlet* 21)

This motif of suicide comes again in his well-known contemplation in *Hamlet*:

To be, or not to be: that is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die, to sleep
No more, and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep –
To sleep, perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause. (97)

The main issue in this speech is that he would have no problem in committing suicide if he were a pagan but he finds himself in difficulty when he is reminded of the next life. This speech clearly tells us the problem and agony of a man suffering from existential crisis. He seems to tell that there is no difference to exist or not to exist. It is all meaningless. Ash Tekinay in article "From Shakespeare to Kierkegaard: An Existential Reading of Hamlet" says:

The existential hero is an outsider and so is Hamlet. After the appearance of the ghost, Hamlet puts an antic disposition on and alienates his authentic self from the "mass", not permitting anyone to cross the bridge between the "I" and "they". The only exception, of course, is Horatio, who can be regarded as Hamlet's alter-ego. Hamlet's alienation or spiritual exile, which later combines with the physical, is illustrated by the pretended madness which is the result of the cosmic estrangement of the self from an non-understandable world. (Tekinay 120)

He thinks about this reality and how it redirects his actions in *Hamlet*:

But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have. (98)

He also says *Hamlet*:

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. (98)

While Christianity stops him from taking revenge but it also offers the pattern instead that is more horrible. The Bible says:

Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

On the contrary,
"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him a drink.

For in so doing,

you will heap burning coals on his head.” (Romans 12:19)

These verses here clearly say that Lord will take care of the person who has committed a sin and died with that sin. He will be damned for eternity. This knowledge makes cautious in taking any action. It might also mean that he wants the soul of Claudius to suffer for eternity. Hamlet gets an opportunity to kill Claudius with ease. The king was defenceless, without any guards and is alone. Hamlet is also fully convinced that ghost of his father has spoken the truth about the murder. But Hamlet does not act because he finds the king in a state where he seems to be repenting:

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;

And now I'll do't. (draws his sword) And so 'a goes to
heaven;

And so am I revenged. That would be scanned.

A villain kills my father; and for that,

I, his sole son, do this same villain send

To heaven.

O, this is hire and salary, not revenge. (Shakespeare *Hamlet* 132)

Hamlet is so much disturbed and is full of hatred he does not want a simple death for Claudius but wants never ending suffering for him. So he says:

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,

Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed;

At gaming, a-swearing, or about some act

That has no relish of salvation in't;

Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,

And that his soul may be as damned and black

As hell, whereto it goes. (Shakespeare *Hamlet* 133)

Hamlet sees himself as a person of failure and loss. However he plays fool strategically for his own purpose but at some moments he shows his real emotions which are brought by frustrations. Hamlet is disturbed by a lot of things that take

place after the death of his father. Hamlet's doubting nature and deep thinking take him to the boundaries of alienation from his own self, others and the whole society in general. In Shakespeare's time there was just a beginning in the understanding of mental problems. They would say that it was related to melancholy. Melancholy is one of the four humours based on the ancient diagnosis of physical and mental health by Greek physicians. The theory said that blood, phlegm, choler and black bile are related to earth, air, fire and water. They said that humours affected the personality of a person. The entry in Wikipedia on Four Temperaments says:

Four temperaments is a proto-psychological theory that suggests that there are four fundamental personality types, sanguine (optimistic, active and social), choleric (short-tempered, fast or irritable), melancholic (analytical, wise and quiet), and phlegmatic (relaxed and peaceful). Most formulations include the possibility of mixtures of the types. Relation of various four temperament theories:

Classical	Element	Adler
Melancholic	Earth	Avoiding
Phlegmatic	Water	Getting
Sanguine	Air	Socially useful
Choleric	Fire	Ruling (Wikipedia).

This theory said that until these humours were in balance the person was healthy and fine but when one humour was more than others, the person would get ill. Even if we take hamlet's problem to be melancholy, Alfred Adler (the famous medical doctor and psychotherapist) says that melancholic persons avoid others, society and even their own selves. To his mother Hamlet says:

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,
 Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
 Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
 Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
 That can denote me truly. (Shakespeare *Hamlet* 18)

Hamlet's sense of alienation from other persons (including who are close to him) and from the rest of the world is such that he no longer feels himself a part in its practices, understand its customs and feelings. This condition of Hamlet is very well defined in Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*:

There are cases in which parts of a person's own body, even portions of his own mental life - his perceptions, thoughts, and feelings – appear alien to him and as not belonging to his ego; there are other cases in which he ascribes to the external world things that clearly originate in his own ego and that ought to be acknowledged by it. (qtd. in Hattaway 95).

Many scholars agree that hamlet gets divided against himself first “whether this sense of alienation derives from a defect in his sensibility or, as Marxists would argue, from the dislocations in his world. It is reasonable to surmise that the division between his parents affected him grievously, although some might argue that his typically riddling account of this is the product of a neurosis.” (qtd. in Hattaway 95). Hamlet is assigned to do a particular task and that does not only depend upon his motives but on the actions of others too. The hero thus becomes a complex figure because of strange experiences and situations.

If Hamlet kills Claudius, in his own eyes, perhaps, he restores justice, but this action of revenge can equally be construed as murder. By explaining Hamlet in terms of ‘the heart of his mystery’ alone, romantic critics explain him away. ‘Accounts of his unresolved Oedipus complex, his paranoia - both clinical and vulgar- his melancholic nobility of soul in a world made petty by politics have all served the purposes of bourgeois criticism's self-recognition ... have ... discovered ... that alienated modern individual dejected in the market-place of inauthentic values.’ (qtd. in Hattaway 40)

The act of taking revenge ordered upon hamlet by the ghost of his father lands Hamlet in lot of crucial problems. His desire to carry out the act of vengeance accompanied by his apparent inability to do it quickly in spite of getting a lot of chances to do so raises various questions. It is interesting to know that the greatness of this play of Shakespeare revolves around this strange tension within its hero, hamlet. Bradley writes:

The shame of his delay would further weaken him and enslave him to his melancholy still more. Thus, the speculative habit would be one direct cause of the morbid state, which hindered action; and it would also reappear in a degenerate form as one of the *symptoms* of this morbid state. (94)

However, it is important to remember that this melancholy is not like insanity as Bradley again writes:

No doubt, it might develop into insanity. The longing for death might become an irresistible impulse to self-destruction; the disorder of feeling and will might extend to sense and intellect; delusions might arise, and the man might become, as we say, incapable and irresponsible. But Hamlet's melancholy is some way from this condition. It is totally different thing from the madness which he feigns. (97)

Revenge was one of the central issues in plays of Renaissance, and its impact was tremendous particularly in England. In writing *Hamlet*, Shakespeare took care of this tradition of revenge.

Shakespeare used the great technique in making the characters so brilliant that they compliment the overall conflict. Every character in the play gets tested during many events. What makes Hamlet so tragic is that he thinks very deeply about the contradictions of his age. Shakespeare being the master playwright has shown us that both the Hamlet and his society were fragmented and estranged. However among all characters Hamlet seems to be the one who is truly aware of this alienation. Bradley writes:

Hamlet is unintelligible. What is meant is that Shakespeare intended him to be so, because he himself was feeling strongly, and wished his audience to feel strongly, what a mystery life is, and how impossible it is for us to understand it. (75)

Also what makes Hamlet so much interesting character is his awareness and knowledge about the complex contradiction of his age. His soul becomes the place where pagan and Christian, old and new values struggle, thus he finds himself unable to remain true to one. He tries to embrace different values of life. Though he was a prince but he was proud of himself for having the practical knowledge of the theatre

and that he could talk to them in their own language with ease. He can do almost anything. Like at the grave of Ophelia, he tell Laertes that he can outdo him in anything from love, mourning, and being a hermit on mountains as it comes in *Hamlet*:

Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself ?
Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface1 me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us. (203)

Hamlet does not have a simple one mind that he would take revenge as soon as the ghost tells him to do so. A man with a simple mind would have done it quickly or rejected it at first. The complex mind of Hamlet takes enough time to ponder over various issues. Peter Mercer in *Hamlet and the Acting of Revenge* says:

Hamlet's appearance of persistent grief, however sincere it may be in itself, is also, inevitably, a kind of performance, an act which keeps the hated King at a decent distance, which openly declares his alienation from the general consent. His suit of black may have ample social validation in his 'mourning duties' but it has already become a costume that signifies more than that; it is the colour of his spirit, the sign of his role as melancholic bitter jester. (Mercer 142)

By a close reading we come to know that main characters of the play are estranged and alienated and that follows a particular pattern. Claudius and Polonius send out their spies to make sure that the new king rules in a smooth manner. While he has murdered the elder brother to get himself to the throne he is aware that he has to be extra careful when young Hamlet comes to know about this. Claudius appoints Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to investigate as to why Hamlet is acting in a weird way. On the other side, Polonius sends out his daughter to spy on Hamlet. Polonius also does not trust his own son Laertes and deploys Reynoldo as a spy on him in France. Thus Shakespeare shows us the alienation in characters resulting from

deception and cheat in the kingdom. Hamlet knows that there is no one sincere on his side and says in *Hamlet*:

I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could
accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had
not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with
more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them
in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. (100)

The melancholy in Hamlet leads to the inaction and alienation. He feels life as disgusting and almost everything that is in it, and includes his own self also. This disgust is of various intensities, which at times leads him to desire for death, gets caught deep into estrangement, his body is motionless and his mind is indifferent to everything on earth. There are endless question that come to his mind as Bradley writes:

Was I deceived by the ghost? How am I to do the deed? When? Where? What will be the consequence of attempting it – success, my death, utter misunderstanding, mere mischief to the State? Can it be right to do it, or noble to kill a defenceless man? What is the good of doing it in such a world as this? – All this, and whatever else passed in a sickening round through Hamlet's mind, was not the healthy and right deliberation of a man with such a task. (99)

Hamlet is so much absorbed in his deep thinking that he is only with his self all the time. This thing takes him to alienation where he believes that he is all alone. He even meditates on suicide as Bradley writes:

And he finds that what stands in the way of it, and counterbalances is infinite attraction, is not any thought of a sacred unaccomplished duty, but the doubt, quite irrelevant to that issue, whether it is ignoble in the mind to end its misery, and, still more, whether death *would* end it. (109)

The alienation in Hamlet raises existential questions of great importance. Hamlet's character goes through 'intellectual struggle' as Richard Levine says, in the age that was trying to answer the mysteries of life. If we look closely we can find the existential thought of Kierkegaard is visible in the play Hamlet, who famously wrote:

I stick my finger into the world—it has no smell. Where am I? What does it mean to say: the world? What is the meaning of that word? Who tricked me into this whole thing and leaves me standing here? Who am I? How did I get into the world? Why was I not asked about it, why was I not informed of the rules and regulations but just thrust into the ranks as if I had been bought from a peddling shanghaier of human beings? How did I get involved in this big enterprise called actuality? Why should I be involved? Isn't it a matter of choice? And if I am compelled to be involved, where is the manager—I have something to say about this. Is there no manager? To whom shall I make my complaint? (200)

Hamlet asks big questions about the existence. The play *Hamlet* carries three main existentialist philosophies which are alienation, the seeking out meaning in otherwise meaningless world, and finally the inevitability of death. The all-over personality of Hamlet has changed since he came to know about various things. About this change Philippa Berry says “An alienation from the hypocrisy of a courtly style or decorum in language afflicts Hamlet from his first appearance in the play...We meet a Hamlet whose abrupt retreat from social intercourse is not only signalled by his mourning dress, but is also articulated through an intensely satiric relationship to language...scathing view of the world is articulated in all of Hamlet's language, in his soliloquies and monologues as well as in his dialogues with others; it finds its most effective form of expression, however, in his use of wordplay.” (Berry 57). Hamlet's mourning language and mourning dress is in total contrast with all others present in the play. He ponders over various questions but instead of getting answers he gets caught in the web of other questions that distances him more than earlier. The first scene of Hamlet is a crucial from existential point of view. “Barnardo. Who's there? / Francisco. Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3).

They are questioning each other about their 'being' and 'existence.' “This question 'later will become the core of Hamlet's dilemma. 'Who am I?', Hamlet will ask himself; 'Who are you?' to his mother and to Ophelia. And these questions will lead up to the final, unanswerable question: 'Who or what is man?' - The existentialist's main concern. Man is not what he seems to be and the world is not how it seems like” (Tekinay 117). Later in the Act 4, Hamlet questions:

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 159)

As discussed earlier, it is as if hamlet cannot believe what his own mother has done. He loses faith in humanity and wants to distance himself from all. He says:

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god – the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me – nor woman neither. (75)

Another existentialist principle that comes again and again in Hamlet is the fact that death cannot be beaten, it is inevitable. There are many instances in the play where Hamlet talks about the death a lot. His soliloquies are proof of it. About the inevitability of death he says:

We fat all creatures else to fat
us, and we fat ourselves for maggots.
Your fat king and your
lean beggar is but variable service – two dishes, but to one
table. That's the end. (154)

He truly understands that death spares no one, even if he is king or only a beggar. Every human being has to drink from the fountain of death. So he in graveyard scene says:

Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth
into dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam, and
why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not
stop a beer-barrel?
Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 199)

Calderwood writes about this: “Hamlet has readied himself for the death by a process that began with his mention of self-slaughter in his first soliloquy, and that continued with his action-losing analysis of what it means ‘to be or not to be’, with his shipboard perusal of his own death warrant, and with his graveyard meditations on pocky corpses and skulls and the unroyal progresses of Alexander and Caesar through instead of over the earth” (Calderwood 271). Like Gloucester in King Lear says “ripeness is all” about death, Hamlet says:

If it be now, 'tis not
to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now,
yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man, of aught
he leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave betimes? Let be. (217)

2.3 Existential Analysis of Hamlet

Existentialist theorists say that alienation is one of the natural characteristic of humans. So it is fine if a person like Hamlet tries to seek the genuineness of things, people and ideas that surround him, and in doing so he completely gets estranged from all by understanding the concept of nothingness. Northop Frye says that hamlet “sees consciousness as a kind of vacuum, a nothingness, at the centre of being. Sooner or later, we have to commit ourselves to nothingness” (Frye 99).

Shakespeare's work, most importantly his tragedies deals with all essential issues of life: how humans live their life, how people communicate their ideas and feelings to each other. He writes his characters in such way that show the alienation and estrangement between self and society. A well-known critic of Shakespeare, Walter Kaufman writes that Shakespeare:

Knew the view that man is thrown into the world, abandoned to a life that ends in death; but he also knew self-sufficiency. He had the strength to face reality without excuses and illusions and did not even seek comfort in the faith in immortality. (3)

Christine Gomez in her article “Hamlet- an early existential outsider” says that Hamlet can be seen as anticipation of the existential hero. He experiences alienation from existence . . . The circumstances that have taken place precipitate him into a condition in which he is overwhelmed by a profound disgust for life, an awareness of

the irrationality of the universe and a realization of the futility of the individual as well as collective endeavour. He is painfully aware of his alienation and speaks about it continually. His awareness that revenge cannot help him to overcome the burden of existence and his detached ironic attitude to death further qualify him as a forerunner of the existential Outsider. His self-loathing and the tension within him between the inner self and the role of avenger imposed on him reveal him as a self-estranged figure. The powerfully evocative imagery of disease and corruption that runs through the play expresses Hamlet's obsessive sense of disgust and world-weariness. (Gomez 27)

It may be said that Hamlet is the character who thinks a lot about self and others than other characters in Shakespeare's plays. The character is so interesting that he not only questions others but he also questions his own self too. He distances himself from his own self after he had argument with Laertes in the graveyard as in *Hamlet*:

Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it, then? His madness. If 't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged:
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy. (218)

The scholars say that hamlet had to do this in order to fully understand the concept of self. Hamlet shows us many realities of life which were not touched by any other literary character before him.

To a great extent, Hamlet resembles the postmodern man who is caught in chaos, confusion and illusions. Victor Hugo said that "Hamlet expresses a permanent condition of man. He represents the discomfort of the soul in a life unsuited to it." (Hugo 233). It is very interesting to find that even today *Hamlet* is very relevant in many spheres of life. It still has its readers and audience. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche famously wrote that

Dionysiac man is similar to Hamlet: both have gazed into the true essence of things, they have acquired knowledge and they find action repulsive, for their

actions can do nothing to change the eternal essence of things; they regard it as laughable or shameful that they should be expected to set to rights a world so out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires one to be shrouded in a veil of illusion - this is the lesson of Hamlet... (Nietzsche 40).

Hamlet truly shows the anxiety of modern man and his contribution in understanding the modern man is great. Hamlet finds it difficult in fitting in the cruel and evil environment. It clearly tells us about the noble nature of Hamlet. He finds himself in a big trouble in the corrupt world. Popavac says:

Hamlet the soldier inherits the warrior's honour of old King Hamlet as his father's son, prince and heir apparent to the throne. Hamlet the faithful son must avenge his father's murder and release his father's tormented ghost from limbo, but thereby contravenes the divine monopoly of vengeance. Hamlet the scholar, student in Wittenberg, home of Martin Luther's edicts against the Catholic Church, pursues the strict protestant practices of self-interrogation...He is paralysed by fear of making the wrong moral or political decision. Hamlet's predicament anticipates the modern condition where we do not just follow given moral precepts, but have to determine moral values for ourselves. Here Hamlet has to decide between two strong all-encompassing moral frameworks in conflict with each other, and an emerging secular framework of realpolitik, alongside yet another moral code of sincerity requiring individual integrity and inward truthfulness. (Popavac 3-4)

Hamlet's noble quality does not let him agree with the evil world. He finds it a good option to alienate himself from this world in order to survive and protection. When he is more in stress he then wants to know and understand the human actions with their causes and effects. This thinking of Hamlet can be said is one element that made Hamlet cruel for others including his beloved Ophelia. He thinks her as the part of corruption and wants her to be removed also. In the same way his childhood friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern should get punishment for being in the part of corruption. Hamlet's alienation from the world around him is clearly a sign of his emotional dilemma. Thus, in planning to kill one (that is his uncle) he becomes responsible for seven lives. He is obsessed with this idea that he will not find the reason now to live peacefully in this world. He is suffering because of his intellectual

crisis. He is trying to wrestle with whole world but he is not winning the battle. He does not see any ray of hope which will get him out of this problem. And when he tries to understand the deep meanings of life he finds no answer or conclusion. All these traits make hamlet a very interesting character in whole literature. We can say that all the characters in this play fail to get on with the life. By reading Shakespeare's plays especially the tragedies we come know that he did not only want to depict human beings but also how they live their life and connect with each other. For example, in Hamlet's deep thinking there is strange tussle between how he thinks and how he feels. This experience is terrible for him. A lot of critics say that existential importance of *Hamlet* is produced by the strange nature of its protagonist. *Hamlet* greatly deals with concept of thought, self and consciousness. This reality can be seen in this following dialogue by hamlet, which he addresses to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet*:

I have of late – but wherefore I know not – lost my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise, and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition That this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestically roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god – the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? (75)

In this speech, hamlet tries to show the existential thinking of humans. Hamlet knowingly alienates himself from his own self I order to understand the working of human consciousness in great detail. He is shocked to see the results of self-alienation. However, it can be said that his strange behaviour is not a fake entirely; it is between authentic and inauthentic. We may say that hamlet necessarily needed to do this if he wanted to fully understand what the concept of self and society is. In the first four acts of the ply hamlet takes a lot of measures to understand the duality of self and society and in the final act he comes up with the realization that there is always a kind of fight within the self. It is useless to try to calm down this fight. It is

why that it becomes hard for Hamlet and for the readers to interpret the problems. Hugh Grady observes:

In short, what makes Hamlet suitable for our own decentred age is its insight into the constituting fissures and fictions of the tossing life raft of subjectivity to which Hamlet clings, for Hamlet is a humanist of the Montaignean sort – one who sees into the shifting, uncertain, contradictory, and unstable qualities of the self, not a humanist of the Rousseauistic school which makes of the self a fixed, essential source of unproblematic values and perceptions. (Grady 261)

The humanism of Hamlet shows that it is not the man himself who is the source of value but is a continuing process in the realization of true self. We may look at the often quoted passage of Sartre:

The word humanism has two very different meanings. One may understand by humanism a theory that upholds man as the end in-itself and as the supreme value. . . . That kind of humanism is absurd. . . . But there is another sense of the word, of which the fundamental meaning is this: Man is all the time outside of himself: it is in projecting and losing himself beyond himself that he makes man exist. . . . Since man is thus self-surpassing, and can grasp objects only in relation to his self-surpassing, he is the heart and centre of his transcendence. There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity. . . . [T]his is what we call existential humanism. This is humanism, because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realisation, that man can realise himself as truly human. (56)

Hamlet truly shows these traits which Sartre defines. Writing the interesting character of hamlet, Shakespeare demonstrates the issues of self, truth and integrity to ones's own self and to the society as well. Hamlet knows this fact that people around are wearing masks and are inauthentic in their concern for him. He also reflects on the issue that how everyone including himself can get busy in this world of illusion. He is worried how people can become corrupt in their different pursuits. He says in *Hamlet*:

So oft it chances in particular men
That, for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth wherein they are not guilty,
(Since nature cannot choose his origin),
By their o'ergrowth of some complexion
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens
The form of plausible manners – that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect
(Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star),
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault. (38)

There are lot of interesting things to be seen in this speech. He implies that it is often the case that people's behaviour changes according to situation that suits them and hence they are all artificial. He also comes to realize that humans are totally complicated creatures and have faults as well as virtues. He becomes alienated and doubtful when he comes across the opinions of society. Peter Holbrook in his book, *Shakespeare's Individualism* tells us this that:

We don't think Hamlet is inferior to Fortinbras, the energetic future leader of Denmark. We know there are types of worldly success that constitute existential failure. Hamlet refuses to become like Kierkegaard's 'the others' or Heidegger's 'the they'. He holds himself back from the world, or 'fails' in it, if you like - but from a certain perspective this failure looks like high success, like freedom. (50)

However, Hamlet believes that making distinction between genuine and not genuine is very difficult. He is completely puzzled to see his inability to act according to the task assigned by the ghost of his father. This fact clearly reveals that he having an existential confusion. The questions about self and genuineness come from this very fact of 'how to act'. It also raises the issue that whether Hamlet has the freedom to act at all or not. This play also challenges the thinking of readers as well and alarms

them about the existential crisis about them. This is what William Hazlitt comments on this thing that Hamlets dialogues:

As real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is we who are Hamlet. This play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history. (84)

The famous critic Harold Blooms also has to say this:

I have struggled, to the limit of my abilities, to talk about Shakespeare and not about myself, but I am certain that the plays have flooded my consciousness, and the plays read me better than I read them ... We need to assert ourselves and read Shakespeare as strenuously as we can, while knowing that his plays will read us more energetically still. They read us definitively. (Bloom, *Invention* xx)

Different scholars have given different interpretations for Hamlet's delay and other important problems in the play. We can say that no one can have a definite solution and answer to all problems. It is seems perfect to understand that all the conflicts have different causes and interpretations. We may combine them all on some level for better meaning. One critic, Paul Gottschalk says:

After all, the play takes place largely on the conscious level, and its philosophical, religious, and political content is considerable ... we cannot fully appreciate the play, even from the psychoanalytic point of view, without understanding how Hamlet's inner problem . . . finds expression in these . . . ideas that body forth the deeper workings of the mind. To my knowledge, such an interpretation has not been done. (Gottschalk 101)

A thorough study of the Play makes it clear that hamlet is suffering from psychological crisis in way or the other. He finds himself disgusted with the people and the life he is living. He is completely devastated with the life experience. To comprehend hamlet completely, we have to understand the intensity of all the experience he had after he had directions from the ghost. We have to dig deep into his character to reveal the hidden meanings of great importance. About Hamlet's deep observing power, Honigmann says:

Hamlet, the prince of observers, has more success perhaps because he has trained himself to look for 'that within', whether he observes himself, or

another person, or natural phenomena. As the play's imagery confirms, his mind moves from the visible to the invisible, from the outer to the inner. . . Hamlet is a penetrating observer who, I have said, wins the audience's assent *more or less*. Before we continue let us consider two very different attitudes to his point of view, neither of which seems to me acceptable. *'Hamlet* is the only tragedy in which the audience watches the whole action through the eyes of the hero. (Honigmann 58-60)

Before his father's passing away, Hamlet is thought of having good nature and personality who worked hard to become good. He also believed that humans are ultimately best creatures because of their nobility and compassion. He believed that good is rewarded in this world and in the next world. He did not go after ambitions and had no greed. He did not believe in taking revenge because the God was there to take care of that. He was proud of his father's majesty and his mother's beauty. He disliked lechers, drunkards and lazy. He was preparing himself for the throne so that he would be remembered for his justice and valiance. He respected women and their chastity. He was afraid of lust in himself and felt disgusted towards one who had it. He venerated friendship and considered it to be necessary for peaceful life. The death of his father changed almost all these features in him. He was totally alienated from the people and world which were so familiar to him. He did not get the throne either. He became the subject of the ruler who killed his father and married his mother. The most shocking and deadly blow to Hamlet was his mother's hasty marriage to an untrustworthy and unworthy uncle. Her 'frailty' made him question the love of all women. It made him feel that women are unpredictable when they have to make choices. "Hamlet denies the existence of romantic values. Love, in his mind, has become synonymous with sex and sex with uncleanness. Therefore, beauty is dangerous and unclean. Sick of the world, of man, of love, Hamlet denies the reality of his past romance" (Knight 27). Earlier he was not disturbed by her devotion to his father because they were in the pious bond of love and marriage. He even desired to have the same love in his marriage. Now he could not believe his eyes that she entered in such an unholy union with his wicked uncle. His mother's sin shattered his thoughts about all women including his beloved Ophelia. It also implies that it is impossible for him to find a faithful woman whom he can marry and lead a happy life. Wilson Knight in his famous book, *The Wheel of Fire* says, "Hamlet's soul is sick to

death—and yet there was one thing left that might have saved him. In the deserts of his mind, void with the utter vacuity of the knowledge of death—death of his father, death of his mother’s faith—was yet one flower, his love of Ophelia” (Knight 21). One of the main reasons that makes Hamlet so hostile is that he cannot understand how his mother could make conspiracy against his noble father. He strongly identifies himself with his father and gets angry on behalf of his father. His suspicion and distrust of woman strengthens his alienation and makes him like a permanent outsider in the society. In a very important passage, Shakespeare in *Hamlet* says:

That it should come to this –
But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two –
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on – and yet, within a month –
Let me not think on’t: frailty, thy name is woman!
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father’s body
Like Niobe, all tears – why she, even she –
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer – married with my uncle,
My father’s brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her gallèd eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good. (21-22)

The complaints expressed by Hamlet towards his mother are again repeated by the apparition as it comes in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*:

O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love
was of that dignity
That it went hand
in hand even with the vow
made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as
it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage. (44)

All the speeches by apparition and hamlet emphasize the noble character of King Hamlet, the inferiority/unworthiness of king's brother Claudius, and the infidelity of Gertrude. The likeness in these speeches tells us the degree to which hamlet is responding to the behavior of Gertrude. Hamlet identifies himself with his father more because he has worked hard to make himself like him. he shares with his father many similar characteristics. Both possess nobility, religious interest and faithfulness but both have not been paid back with same goodness. Instead, Claudius is depicted as a person who committed the worst of sins yet he is shown as the one who prospers. Wilson Knight in the same essay on *Hamlet* again says that the soul of Hamlet is sick to a great extent. He says:

Hamlet's soul is sick. The symptoms are, horror at the fact of death and an equal detestation of life, a sense of uncleanness and evil in the things of nature; a disgust at the physical body of man; bitterness, cynicism, hate. It tends towards insanity. All these elements are insistent in Hamlet. He can describe the glories of heaven and earth—but for him those glories are gone. And he knows not why. The disease is deeper than his loss of Ophelia, deeper than his mother's sexual impurity and his father's death. These are, like his mourning dress, the 'trappings and the suits of woe'. They are the outward

symbols of it, the 'causes' of it: but the thing itself is ultimate, beyond causality. (Knight 25)

2.4 Summing Up

Hamlet displacement and alienation of self in this kind of society are results of the shock he receives. He becomes aware of the world which is full of injustice, disbelief and unfaithfulness. His simple self attains the dangerous qualities of anger, revenge, angst and anxiety. He thinks about the fate of his father and believes that same is going to happen to him. He is assured that this world full of deceit and cunningness is not going to play fair with him. Regarding this quality of Hamlet, E. A. J. Honigmann says in his book, *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies Revisited*:

Hamlet observes and understands more efficiently than the other tragic heroes, being usually on the right scent (though at times he may feel confused, even lost). Accordingly the audience has a different task in observing the observer, judging the judge: it can rarely be sure that Hamlet is mad (as it knows Lear to be mad), or that he is deluded (as Brutus and Othello are deluded), or even that he is guilty of an error of judgement (as when Antony agrees to marry Octavia). Hamlet's point of view wins the audience's assent, more or less, and this makes the task of judging the judge peculiarly difficult. (Honigmann 57)

Disappointed in such way, he thus wants to push himself into the complete nothingness. Though Hamlet is enraged but cannot say anything and then takes recourse to madness, sarcasm and mutterings. And all these strategies of hamlet work and it makes his uncle and mother very uncomfortable. They get reminded of the crime they had committed. Similarly, hamlet's suicidal thinking provides enough evidence of his troubled heart and mind. As said earlier, Hamlet wanted to be an ultimate prince, son, friend and lover and believed that being good shall bring him good from others. But the murder of his father destroys all his dreams. It becomes clear to him that the people out there are like Claudius and Gertrude.

The main source of inner conflict in Hamlet is produced by the need to set things right. He had a task at hand to avenge his father's murder but he has not done anything in its execution. It makes him feel coward, disloyal and unworthy of carrying out the tasks assigned to him and then he begins to hate himself. Every time

he takes steps to execute the plan he creates other complications and ends up doing nothing. With each passing day Hamlet hates himself more but he also knows that when he takes his revenge it will bring wrath of divine and he will suffer more and more. In short he is terribly trapped in this dilemma. But as we know towards the end of the play nothing is going to satisfy him. Only death brings him final peace from this life of misery and torture. And the dilemma of putting a soul to death can also be seen in the final act of the play. Shakespeare in *Hamlet* or basically Hamlet says:

Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me now upon
He that hath kill'd my king and whored my mother,
Popp'd in between the election and
my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such
cozenage-is 't not perfect conscience,
To quit him with this arm? and is 't not to be damn'd,
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil? (209)

Hamlet wants to justify his murder of Claudius so that he will not be damned for eternity in life of hereafter. It can also be seen in Act 3 that Hamlet is worried for what he has done to Polonius. These are his words at that time as mentioned in *Hamlet*:

“For this same lord,
I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.” (144)

About this conflict with death, Alexander Leggatt in his book, *Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity*, says:

The steadiness Hamlet seeks through the male code of action is late in coming. His killing of Polonius is up to a point like Romeo's killing of Tybalt: it is his initiation into violence, his loss of virginity. Tybalt's death shocks Juliet; Polonius' death shatters Ophelia. But Hamlet's act has nothing like the clarity and purpose of Romeo's. He runs his rapier through the arras, and then wonders who he has killed, even what he has done. (Leggatt 76)

At times, Hamlet wonders what has happened to him. The displacement and alienation of his self from others gnaws at him time and again. He becomes melancholic, he becomes mad, he gets suicidal, he becomes obsessed with death, and he becomes extremely sarcastic and cruel in his dealing with his loved ones. Hamlet at once expresses:

I have of late – but wherefore I know
not – lost my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise, and
indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that
this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile
promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look
you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof
fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to
me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What
a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in
faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable,
in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god –
the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And
yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights
not me – nor woman neither. (75)

Wilson Knight interestingly comments that the people couldn't understand and appreciate the intelligence and deep thinking of Hamlet. He is also of the opinion that it is the corruption of the people that makes Hamlet take horrible steps and indulge in inflicting pain to his mother, Ophelia and others. Knight remarks:

Hamlet thus takes a devilish joy in cruelty towards the end of the play: he is like Iago. It is difficult to see the conventional courtly Prince of Denmark in these incidents. We have done ill to sentimentalize his personality. We have

paid for it—by failing to understand him; and, failing to understand, we have been unable to sympathize with the demon of cynicism, and its logical result of callous cruelty, that has Hamlet's soul in its remorseless grip. (Knight 29)

For the most part, Hamlet may have flaws that lead to death of many characters including himself. But his intelligence will always be remembered as epitome in whole of the English and other literatures. Most of the critics are of the opinion that Shakespeare has succeeded in portraying hamlet's character with tiniest details which help the readers in understanding how exactly Hamlet perceived the world around him in his difficult times. His character reveals how a person of sound mind can end up as displaced and alienated from the rest of the world.

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