

# The Journey from Aesthetic Intuition to Vision of Reality in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: An Analysis in the Light of *Panckriyā* Theory

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**Abstract**— *Man begins his journey of creation with phenomenal activity, attains the purpose of his being and ultimately becomes a part of the eternal process. The same process is followed in artistic activity. In this process, the poet performs, realizes and attains the state of pure knowledge with perfect awareness of his energy as the identity of his being. The act of the poet has a universal effect which imparts rasa (aesthetic pleasure), in which the sahrdaya (reader) transcends the world and enter the supra-human state where he is neither subjective nor object and nor even neutral. The Panckriyā theory Kashmir Shaivism demonstrates this process of literary composition through the five sequential steps of creation that takes place in the mind of the artist when he conceives the idea of literary composition. The present paper aims at analyzing Shakespeare's Hamlet in the light of this theory which explains how the artist evolves from the first stage i.e. aesthetic intuition to the final stage of Grace.*

**Keywords**— *Panckriyā, sr̥ṣṭi (creation), st̥ithi (preservation), saṁhāra (transformation), tirobhāvā (diffusion), anugraha (grace).*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Kashmir Shaivism, also known as pure Trika System, is a monistic group which believes that Lord Shiva is the creator of the universe. Trika System accepts the most important triad- Śiva, Śakti and the identity of both. The *Panckriyā* theory is derived from the same triad principle which delineates five eternal activities attributed to Lord Shiva, who performs the cycle of Grace as *Ardhanarishwara* with perfect balance. This theory, as its name evidently unfolds, is impregnated with five activities: *sr̥ṣṭi* (creation) which evolves a longing or an aesthetic intuition to create, *st̥ithi* (preservation) which means to follow and sustain the course of thought, *saṁhāra* (transformation) which involves mixing of thoughts and thereby resulting in a new filtered form, *tirobhāvā* (diffusion of illusion) which means the identification with the approach and vision of reality, *anugraha* (attaining Grace) which leads to sublimity and imparts aesthetic pleasure or *rasa*. As has already been said, this attempt is an application of this theory to

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to demonstrate how the playwright evolves from the first stage i.e. aesthetic intuition to the final stage of Grace.

## II. APPLICATION

William Shakespeare is an artist who has exhibited all the dimensions of human life in his plays. In his tragedies, he has shown how life sometimes takes U-turns, and as a result the whole becomes tragic. In his tragedies, he underlines the lack of moral as the root cause of human tragedy. He does not let go any evil act unnoticed. He holds that the cause must be looked for in order to wipe out the evil lest it should flourish and harm the general goodness. This can be seen Shakespeare's *Hamlet* also, which is under review. In this play, Shakespeare makes use of Hamlet as his mouthpiece to identify the evil and eliminate the unnatural elements through his intellectual activity where reason serves as his guide. The *Panckriyā* theory helps in understanding Shakespeare's creative process through the act of Hamlet. The opening

scene of the play, is the very first level of *Panckriyā* theory i.e. *Sṛṣṭi* (Creation). Here Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, is in a sorrowful and gloomy mood as he is shocked from the abrupt death of his father, who was formerly the king of Denmark and from the hasty remarriage of his mother with his uncle, Claudius, the present king of Denmark. Being a person of enormous intellect and reason, Hamlet somewhat assumes that the death of his father is not natural but deliberate and well-planned. Thus he tries to assess his problem from every angle and from every point of view. The process of the discovery of the truth of the culprit who is responsible for his father's death is *Sṛṣṭi* (Creation). In this stage, an aesthetic will or intuition comes into the mind of the creator or the poet from his surrounding experiences and concurrently activates him as he becomes conscious of his idea.

This idea develops from the appearance of the Ghost of the king seen Horatio, the closest friend of Hamlet and Marcellus, an officer when they share this mysterious truth with Hamlet. In the dreadful silence of the night, Hamlet encounters his father's Ghost which discloses the secrets of his homicide. Hamlet's father's Ghost revealed that he did not die of Snake-bite in the garden but was slain by his own brother, Claudius who had poured a poisonous juice into his ears while the king was asleep in his orchard so that he might occupy his throne. The Ghost also revealed to Hamlet that being a passionate and lustful animal, Claudius seduced his mother, Gertrude with his rare wit. The spirit of the King, thus, exhorts Hamlet to take revenge for his father's death and have no harsh action against his mother. Hamlet is shocked and distracted beyond measure after learning this terrible secret but at once he recovers his mental balance and agrees to act as desired by his father's spirit. He now makes a firm resolution to avenge the death of his father as early as possible. For this, he first determines to put on an 'antic disposition' to prepare himself for the revenge so that no one may suspect his intention. He feigns madness as a means of self-defence for he finds his own life to be in danger after the revelation of the spirit of his father and also this madness can serve as a screen under which he can keep an eye on the king's activities and await for the right opportunity to take revenge. The beginning of Hamlet's eccentricity and strange behaviour can be noticed when Ophelia, the beloved of Hamlet informs her father, Polonius about Hamlet's unusual behaviour in her room. This makes Polonius have a hasty conclusion that the Prince has gone mad in love with his daughter. Therefore, he announces about Hamlet's lunacy to

the king and the queen that his frustration in love is the cause of his madness.

Later, in the famous nunnery scene, Hamlet pretends to be mad when he finds that Ophelia is being used as a decoy to know his actual reality and when he suspects that someone is doing eavesdropping on their conversation. So, he speaks very rudely to Ophelia and tells her to forget him forever and join a nunnery to preserve her chastity. Ophelia, a meek and docile, bemoans her fortune and considers his bizarre conduct as a symptom of his madness, which she thinks to have been caused because of her father's order to remain aloof from Hamlet. She laments for him in the following manner:

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword;

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion and the mould of form,

The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched, Thus  
suck'd the honey of his music vows, Now see that  
noble and most sovereign reason,

Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune, and harsh:

That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth

Blasted with ecstasy. O, Woe is me,

To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

(101-102)

The conversation of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with Hamlet also somewhat hints them of his insanity: "I am but mad north-north-west: When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw" (79). In this way, Hamlet wears the grab of madness to conceal the terrible secrets haunting his mind as he fears that he may disclose the secret in a moment of enragement or excitement, and if he appears to be mad, his words will be ignored by his foes. The second major step taken by Hamlet to achieve his target is based on the organization of the 'play-scene'. He adopts a deliberate plan of staging a short scene named 'The Mousetrap' from the play "The Murder of Gonzago" (88) in order to verify the story of his father's murder as narrated by the Ghost and to catch the conscience of the king. Thus, Hamlet's deep brood on the identification of the evil in the form of feigned madness and arrangement of 'Play within the Play' fulfills the objectives of the second level i.e. *Stithi* (Preservation) of the *Panckriyā* theory. Here, *Stithi* (Preservation) involves the

sustenance of an idea and thoughts of the creator. The thoughts and analysis for the remedy of the problem have been maintained by Hamlet to identify the culprit as early as possible.

*Samhara* (transformation) is the third and the important level of the *Panchkriyā* theory as in this process, the artist churns between his pure and impure thoughts and gradually evolves a new shape of thoughts. The artist dismisses all that is improper with the natural order and purifies his thoughts eventually. This stage is the stage of complexity, destruction and evolution of new thoughts. This takes place in the play when Hamlet wavers and oscillates on account of his habit of thinking too much. He tries to bring the exact balance between conflicting considerations but his actions are undermined due to his half-conscious effect of objections and scruples. After the well designing of the plan of 'The Mousetrap', an inner conflict arises in the mind of Hamlet that the spirit he had seen might be the devil and not really the ghost of his father.

Hamlet: The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil: and the devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me (91-92)

Hamlet ponders that it may be possible that the spirit having assumed a pleasing appearance, might have taken advantage of his weakness and dejected mood as a ghost generally does with such kind of people and compel him to do the crime. However, he curses himself of inaction in revenging his father's murder and then expresses a readiness again to catch the real culprit through the performance of a play- scene by the travelling actors and sweep to revenge with wings as swift as meditation or the thought of love.

Another internal conflict that flows into the mind of Hamlet is related to the problems of life and death. He bewilders between these two courses of action which are equally painful. Actually, Hamlet baffles for taking revenge as his own uncle had killed his father and at the same time, his mother had married Claudius. So, Hamlet enquires to himself in a desperate situation whether to live or to die. He was unable to decide whether to suffer the misfortunes and miseries inflicted by the cruel fate or to omit all the sorrows and pains by putting an end to his life itself. He believes that to die means to reach the state where one is unaware of what

happens and since life after death is uncertain, it is better to take a pause from putting an end to life and bear the life however painful it may be on this earth.

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 wish'd. 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: there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life. (96-97)

He further adds that it is the conscience of the human mind that makes him afraid of committing suicide as the conscience helps the person to estimate the consequences before and after death. In other words, the conscience means deep meditation from cause to effect and further effect and in this process, a lot of energy is wasted due to which no power remains to do any action. In this way, Hamlet is in a state of divided mind which forbids him to move for the actions. The thoughts act like a cloud that hangs over and obscures the brightness of his will or resolution to act. However, he wipes out the idea of committing suicide as the morality and religiousness inscribed in him suggest that suicide is the worst thing and God never pardons those who apt for suicide which is a sinful activity and therefore he gets ready to justify the truth through the short play- scene.

In order to identify the real offender, Hamlet himself has devised the whole scene by naming it 'The Mousetrap' based on the play "*The Murder of Gonzago*" and for this, he invites in a hall of the castle to all his suspects like Claudius, Polonius, Gertrude, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Ophelia etc. to confirm the veracity of the Ghost's revelation. He guides the players of the travelling troupe to focus on the various aspects of acting like delivery of the speech, the harmony of word and the action, keeping the artistic effect of an impassioned scene, holding on to natural instincts, steer

clear of overacting or underacting in roles and also ordered the clowns not to speak more than that is set down for them. Besides this, Hamlet takes his closest friend Horatio, into his designed plan by revealing his normal temper and firm resolution to take revenge against the king and then desires from Horatio to observe the reaction of the king carefully during the stage performance. The play begins with a dumb show. The whole scene is imitated as revealed by the spirit where the player, King Gonzago sleeps in the orchard and then Lucianus, his nephew comes and drops the poisonous liquid into King Gonzago's ears. While watching this terrible scene, King Claudius becomes agitated and at once he leaves the hall by shrieking 'Stop the performance'. This astonished sight of Claudius assures Hamlet and he therefore becomes extremely happy over the success of his plan and feels convinced about the killing of his father by pouring the poison into his ear and guilt of the King in seducing his mother, Gertrude. Thus, Hamlet accomplishes his task of identifying the real culprit i.e. King Claudius and now he is ready to take revenge on him. However, being emotional, Hamlet is still undecided to carry out the avenger himself from his father's killer.

Later, Hamlet's task of achieving revenge becomes more strong and dynamic when he meets a Norwegian captain who was sailing to Poland under the command of Fortinbras. Hamlet learns that he and his force are going to fight for a small patch of Polish land that is not wide enough to cover even the dead bodies of the Norwegian soldiers on march.

Captain: Truly to speak, and with no addition,  
We go to gain a little patch of ground  
That hath in it no profit but the name.  
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it,  
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole  
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee. (158)

Hearing their energetic mission for capturing a small piece of land, Hamlet gets highly influenced by them and he again thinks of his own indolence and cowardice and thereby promises to himself that he should cherish only the bloody thoughts for revenge against the king and nothing else. In one of his soliloquies, Hamlet announces: "O, from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth" (160). In this way, Hamlet who was on the way of losing his life in the court of London, has a chance to escape and reaches back to Denmark and dares now to carry out his plan with full zeal

and intense furiousness. This turn of Hamlet to take revenge is the fourth stage of *Panckriyā* theory i.e. *Tirobhavā* (Diffusion), the stage of lucidity and transparency of vision. In this stage, the clouds of perplexity and uncertainty exterminate and the vision of the artist becomes precise and fixed for attaining his objective.

Hamlet is now on the verge of fulfilling his promise made by him to the Ghost of his father when he joins the friendly fencing match with Laertes in the presence of King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Orsino, a courtier, and other attendants in the hall. Actually, King Claudius arranges the duel match between them in order to remove Hamlet from his way through Laertes. Laertes is treacherously misguided by King Claudius that Hamlet has put an end to the life of his father, Polonius. So, they prepare a plan to kill Hamlet with his poisoned rapier so that Laertes may take revenge easily of his father. In this duel, Laertes makes a deadly thrust at Hamlet with his poisoned rapier. Hamlet gets wounded and then the scuffle occurs between them resulting in the change of rapiers. Hamlet acquires that poisonous weapon and fatally wounds him in rage although he is completely unaware of that poison rapier. Correspondingly, the queen drinks the poisoned cup of wine prepared by the king for Hamlet. Hamlet comes to know that there has been treachery. Hamlet instantly becomes a practical man of action and stabs the king with the same poisoned sword. Hamlet dies as a nobleman leaving the *karuna rasa* in the readers. Thus, Shakespeare through his mouthpiece, Hamlet attains *anugraha* (Grace), the fifth stage of the *Panckriyā* theory, the stage of elegance and sublimation where the artist achieves gratification and divine grace by fulfilling his objective. It is because of this *anugraha* in the text, Hamlet gives up his temporal colours and represents the whole humanity. At this juncture, the *sahṛdaya* (reader) elevates himself to the level of the playwright and experience *rasa* experience.

### III. CONCLUSION

To sum up, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is the perfect representation of the artistic creation which is impregnated with the five stages of *sr̥ṣṭi* (creation), *st̥ithi* (preservation), *sam̥hāra* (transformation), *tirobhavā* (diffusion), *anugraha* (Grace) of *Panckriyā* theory. The intellectual journey of Hamlet from the process of discovery of truth to the ultimate elimination of evil has been systematically studied with the help of *Panckriyā* theory. *Sr̥ṣṭi* (creation) is the very first stage of *Panckriyā* theory, which refers to the

stage of an aesthetic intuition or inspiration that Shakespeare develops from his surroundings experience. Hamlet's doubt that his father does not get a natural death arises a will or inspiration in his mind to find out the actual truth. His deep thinking on the identification of evil serves the second level of *stithi* (preservation) which simply means to uphold the thoughts or ideas for further action. Hamlet somehow gets confused and perplexed while working on his thoughts as he broods that the spirit of the father may be a devilish creature who can make use of his weakness of sorrowful mood and forces him to do the crime and the problems of life and death arises an internal struggle of mind in him. However, he disintegrates the idea of committing suicide and pulls himself again to justify the truth. This signifies the third level i.e. *samhara* (transformation) which includes the complexity and consequently, the purification of thoughts. The enactment of the short scene namely 'The Mousetrap' based on the play *The Murder of Gonzago* which is designed by Hamlet alone and the recognition of the real culprit i.e. King Claudius who slays him by pouring a poisonous juice into his ear fulfills the objectives of the fourth stage i.e. *tirobhavā* (diffusion of illusion) wherein Shakespeare gets the approach and the vision of reality. He finally achieves sublimation and grace when Hamlet sacrifices his life after taking revenge from King Claudius. Shakespeare thus arouses aesthetic sympathy and pleasure in the heart of the *sahṛdaya* (reader).

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