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The Consequences of Revenge in Shakespeare's Hamlet

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In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

{Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting. And We will surely give those who were patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do.} (Al- Nahal, 96)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا
أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ) (النحل، ٩٦)

Dedication

We dedicated this work to the Almighty God , thank you for the guidance , strength , power of mind , protection and skills and for giving us a healthy life . All of these , we offer to you.

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to our beloved parents who have been our source of inspiration and gave us strength when we thought of giving up , who continually provide their moral, spiritual , emotional , and financial support.

To our brothers , sisters , relatives , mentor , and classmates who shared their words of advice and encouragement to finish this study

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Abstract

Shakespeare was a phenomenal writer during the Elizabethan era. Among his many greatest writing pieces, Hamlet was one of his most famous work. If we proceed to elucidate the play Hamlet, then we will see there were three significant plots which have been presented with great importance. The main plot is revenge and two other sub plots including the romance between Hamlet and Ophelia and the looming war with Norway. With these three significant plots Hamlet has dealt with procrastination, because the revenge was not done until the final scenes. However, Shakespeare did depict the direct reference to the tradition with the play within play. For doing such, he did present an Italian Picarro play called “The Murder of Gonzago”.

In order to establish the true justice of Hamlet's father's murder, Hamlet attempted to decorate that Italian play with grim tenacity, he was very adamant to catch the real culprit of his father's death. To accomplish this hard task, Hamlet became slow and pondered over many things.

The first chapter deals with the playwright's life and works. In addition to the summary and analysis of the play.

The Second chapter deals with the elements of revenge as well as the consequences of revenge, how Hamlet took revenge and how are the victims as well as why they tragically ended.

The Aim of the Research

This research aims at highlighting the theme of revenge and showing its consequences throughout the play. This study is going to show that revenge has negative consequences on the part of the pursuer and on the people around.

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Chapter One

1.1 William Shakespeare's Early Life and Works:

William Shakespeare (26 April 1564 – 23 April 1616) was an English playwright, poet and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "the Bard"). His extant works, including collaborations, consist of some 39 plays, 154 sonnets, three long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. They continue to be studied and reinterpreted (Craig, 2003: 3)

Shakespeare produced most of his known works between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were primarily comedies and histories and are regarded as some of the best work produced in these genres. He then wrote mainly tragedies until 1608, among them *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, all considered to be among the finest works in the English language. In the last phase of his life, he wrote tragicomedies (also known as romances) and collaborated with other playwrights (Shapiro, 2005: xvii–xviii).

Many of Shakespeare's plays were published in editions of varying quality and accuracy in his lifetime. However, in 1623, two fellow actors and friends of Shakespeare's, John Heminges and Henry Condell, published a more definitive text known as the First Folio, a posthumous collected edition of Shakespeare's dramatic works that included all but two of his plays. Its Preface was a prescient poem by Ben Jonson that hailed

Shakespeare with the now famous epithet: "not of an age, but for all time". (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2012: 1163) .

Shakespeare's first plays were written in the conventional style of the day. He wrote them in a stylized language that does not always spring naturally from the needs of the characters or the drama. The poetry depends on extended, sometimes elaborate metaphors and conceits, and the language is often rhetorical—written for actors to declaim rather than speak. The grand speeches in *Titus Andronicus*, in the view of some critics, often hold up the action, for example; and the verse in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has been described as stilted (Clemen, 2005: 150) .

Shakespeare's standard poetic form was blank verse, composed in iambic pentameter. In practice, this meant that his verse was usually unrhymed and consisted of ten syllables to a line, spoken with a stress on every second syllable. The blank verse of his early plays is quite different from that of his later ones. It is often beautiful, but its sentences tend to start, pause, and finish at the end of lines, with the risk of monotony. Once Shakespeare mastered traditional blank verse, he began to interrupt and vary its flow. This technique releases the new power and flexibility of the poetry in plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*. Shakespeare uses it, for example, to convey the turmoil in Hamlet's mind: (Bradley, 1991: 9)

"Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly—
And prais'd be rashness for it—let us know
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well "...

(Hamlet, Act 5, Scene 2, 4–8).

Shakespeare's works include the 36 plays printed in the First Folio of 1623, listed according to their folio classification as comedies, histories, and tragedies. Two plays not included in the First Folio, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, are now accepted as part of the canon, with today's scholars agreeing that Shakespeare made major contributions to the writing of both. No Shakespearean poems were included in the First Folio (Boyce,1996: 91) .

In the late 19th century, Edward Dowden classified four of the late comedies as romances, and though many scholars prefer to call them tragicomedies, Dowden's term is often used(Edwards, 1958: 1–10). In 1896, Frederick S. Boas coined the term "problem plays" to describe four plays: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Hamlet*. "Dramas as singular in theme and temper cannot be strictly called comedies or tragedies", he wrote. "We may, therefore, borrow a convenient phrase from the theatre of today and class them together as Shakespeare's problem plays." The term, much debated and sometimes applied to other plays, remains in use, though *Hamlet* is definitively classed as a tragedy(Berry, 2005: 37) .

1.2 A Plot Overview of the Play:

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, often shortened to Hamlet, is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare sometime between 1599 and 1601. It is Shakespeare's longest play, with 29,551 words. Set in Denmark, the play depicts Prince Hamlet and his revenge against his uncle, Claudius, who has murdered Hamlet's father in order to seize his throne and marry Hamlet's mother. Hamlet is considered among the most powerful and influential works of world literature, with a story capable of "seemingly endless retelling and adaptation by others". It was one of Shakespeare's most popular works during his lifetime and still ranks among his most performed (Thompson & Taylor, 2006: 74).

Shakespeare's Hamlet represented its story as complex and a concertation of many themes. Revenge was one of the first and Foremost theme in Hamlet. To some extent it has been adopted the dramatic conventions of revenge tragedy, Where revenge was proved to be the most popular theme for Elizabethan play. The Elizabethan spectator's Demands were centered with the depiction of vengeance inside of the play where there will be wild justice, the Duty of vengeance should be considered as a pious duty upon the next kin.

Moreover, all the victims should go Directly to hell for burning and it should be for eternity. And after fulfilling all those criteria, a revenge play Should be called as a great revenge play towards the Elizabethan people. Moreover, Hamlet considered as a Revenge play which has fascinated by the frameworks of Senecan revenge tragedy. But Shakespeare did focus on many other notable themes of human condition,

social teaching, the appearance of ghost as a moral Injunction, and the ethics of revenge. These all significant themes were taken as the well acclaimed themes of Elizabethan revenge play where as a play Hamlet did cover all the areas which was necessary for presenting a revenge play of Shakespeare. From the Elizabethan era to 21st century, the audience of Hamlet actually has been Mesmerized by the magnificent and conjuring ability of revenge play. (Thompson & Taylor, 2006: 75).

Chapter Two

2.1 Elements and Causes of Revenge:

There were many causes and circumstances that compounded the concept of revenge, if these elements did not exist, the protagonist in the play might refrain from revenge. The theme of revenge was developed by and Shakespeare through dialog or internal conflict, and the use of eye language throughout the play. In Shakespeare's play Hamlet, the appearance of the ghost was the most important catalyst for the idea of revenge, and at the same time symbolizing fate. Thus, when the ghost spoke to Hamlet revealing his true identity "I am thy father's spirit, doomed for a certain term to walk the night and for the day confined to fast in fires till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away" (Shakespeare, 1987, p. 185), asking him to take revenge on his brother Claudius, who poisoned King Hamlet, that ignited the first spark of revenge in Hamlet's mind. (Taylor, 2002: 17)

1.1 The Need for Someone to Provide Reassurance and Confidence:

Under the general situation of the literary work, of betrayal, treachery, and revenge, the urgent need for someone to rely on by protagonist to justify the idea of revenge he has and to help him to achieve that revenge. In the play of Hamlet, loyalty is an extremely rare trait in this play, the characters in this play have spent their time betraying each other, and the only person who was faithful to Hamlet is Horatio. Their relationship represents the only true friendship and loyalty in this play, Horatio was the only person Hamlet relied on. He seems to be the one to whom Hamlet entrusted the substance of his conversation with the Ghost,

and who knows that Claudius assassinated Hamlet's father in order to seize the throne. (Taylor, 2002: 17)

This loyalty can be observed, through Hamlet's converse of Horatio, Shakespeare (1987):

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice, and could of men distinguish her election, sh'hath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been as one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing, a man that fortune's buffets and rewards has ta'en with equal thanks.... (P. 251)

Hamlet idolizes Horatio because of the characteristics, Hamlet does not possess himself, throughout the rest of the play, Horatio acts as a true friend to Hamlet and proves his complete loyalty when he tries to commit suicide to at the very end to join Hamlet in death, referring to himself as "I am more an antique Roman than a Dane" (Shakespeare, 1987, p.351), that he cannot live without his beloved friend. (Taylor, 2002: 17-18)

1.2 Infidelity as a Cause of Revenge:

The first and last main driver for revenge is betrayal, the play centered on treachery, and one of its results is vengeance. Ophelia has deceived him in Hamlet's view by sharing his private letters of love with his uncle Polonius. He treats her cruelly saying that "get thee to a nunnery" (Shakespeare, 1987, p. 243), and then he caused her madness, Hamlet's mother Gertrude, betrays Hamlet and the late King Hamlet by marrying to Claudius, Hamlet, being still depressed about his father's death was further upset and felt betrayed by his mother when she quickly married Claudius. Also, by marrying her former husband's brother, she also betrayed the late King Hamlet. (Haque, 2016: 55) .

1.3The Appearance of the Ghostto Inform Hamlet about his Father's Murder:

It is to be said that, in revenge play the appearance of ghost is a significant part to inform about the wicked persons to the hero of the story. The ghost was the advisor of taking revenge and therefore in Hamlet the ghost like figure has given the unknown information about king Hamlet's murder, the ghost told that the murderer was no one but his own brother Claudius and told his son to take revenge against him. The ghost of king Hamlet, the late king of Denmark, has been manifested like a shadowy appearance, seemed like to wear his royal dress and embellished with armor. (Bradley, 1905: 78).

The ghost told to Hamlet that it was his own brother Claudius who did kill him actually. From that time Hamlet was determined and decided to take revenge on his uncle Claudius. Hamlet did concentration and started to ponder on his goal of taking revenge. He was having the strong tenacity to kill Claudius as he usurped the throne of his father unlawfully whereas the general people of the kingdom had no clue about this cruel truth .(Edwards ,1985: 33)

1.4Bloodshed, Adultery, corruption and Death:

Shakespeare's Hamlet was known as a world famous revenge tragedy of all time. The enthralling plots of Claudius "cruel intention to murder the king Hamlet and to get married with his wife made the greatest play Hamlet as a play of fierce motif of revenge. The seeds of bloodshed, adultery, corruption and death has been planted soon after the ghost did convey the actual information about the king Hamlet's murder. Here we can say the appearance of ghost has created the sensation inside of the

story of Hamlet. The murder of king Hamlet was more than a mysterious event which has shown the corrupted mind of Claudius, as he usurped the king Hamlet's throne illegally and by force.

The traces of adultery came soon after Gertrude did marry with Claudius. This was her second marriage with her late husband's brother. There actually lied more than enough proof of Gertrude's tainted mind. She was a kind of disgusting woman who only used to think about her own happiness and didn't even think of her son while she did marry with Claudius. This kind of selfish attitudes of Gertrude has been taken the play Hamlet towards the unlawful relationship.

Hamlet was furiously angry with his mother as she did marry with Claudius, Hamlet's father's own brother. He remarked that what his mother has done was a very shameful for a woman to do and therefore people will have no trust or respect for her (Haque, 2016: 56) .

2.2 The Consequences of Revenge in Hamlet

1.1 Killing Innocent People in Pursuit of Revenge:

The element of anxiety and psychological disorder, which resulted from betrayal, was the first cause in of killing many innocent people. There were many victims because of the madness of revenge; Hamlet kills Polonius, mistaking him for Claudius, hidden behind a curtain. He felt no regret, he could see nothing but the vengeance for his father's murder, after the murder of Polonius, Hamlet illustrate that "Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell I took thee for they better" (Shakespeare, 1987, p. 278).

Then, at the end of the play, Hamlet killed Laertes with a poisoned sword. Hamlet also caused the death of his childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, when their ship is attacked by pirates, he returns to Denmark, make them facing death on their own. He has also involved indirectly in his love Ophelia's deaths when she drowned, as Gertrude described “clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke, when down her weedy trophies and herself fell in the weeping brook” (Shakespeare, 1987, p. 319). Also, Hamlet was the cause of Gertrude's indirectly death when she poisoned by Claudius by mistake. (AbdulRazzaq, 2020: 94)

1.2 Psychological Conflicts Evolves in the Mind of Hamlet:

The psychological conflicts were the most striking things in Hamlet's mind. And those conflicts have been started by delaying to take revenge against Claudius. Hamlet was actually having the problems of indecision. He did think everything very critically; there he has chose to kill Claudius in an indirect way rather than direct way. In order to prove that Claudius was the actual culprit, Hamlet has launched an Italian drama „Gonzago “with the same story line of his father's murder case in order to see the reaction of his uncle Claudius. He was been so alert and sensitive to accomplish the task of killing Claudius, which was his first conflict with his own inner self. Hamlet's moral conflict got appeared by his plot of attempting suicide. As he was perplexed that his own uncle did murder his father and at the same time his mother has married with that murderer Claudius. But after all he has to take revenge which made him fall into despair and in extreme moral dilemma as his inner heart didn't want to deal with all these incredibly hard and risky steps.

“ 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 trouble and by opposing end them”. (Act III, Scene I).

These significant lines were attached with Hamlet’s deep contemplation about life and after life’s situation. These remarkable lines have been delivered by Hamlet to convey the readers about his inner conflict due to the fear of the after life(Edwards, 1985: 34)

1.3 Failure Regarding the Love Affair with Ophelia:

Ophelia was basically the loyal character in Hamlet. Her dependence was fully on her father and brother. She always tried to obey her father and brother whatever they asked her to do. Ophelia loved Hamlet but suddenly stopped to keep any contact with him because her father and brother have told her to do so. But ,Hamlet was a promising and thriving young man, and he could choose a certainly happy and safe life ahead with Ophelia.

As he loved Ophelia; and could have a very happy married life with her. But, he was inquest into such a complicated situation from where he had to choose except to take revenge of his father’s murder. In the time of their love affair Polonius wanted Ophelia to return all the letters that Hamlet gave her; and she instantly agreed to do that. By knowing that Ophelia has been rejected him, then he became disappointed about female’s nature .(Haque, 2016: 57) .

1.4 Fortinbras's Entrance into Denmark and the Moment of Capturing the Kingdom:

The Norwegian prince, Fortinbras purposely entered in Denmark with his ambassadors from England. At first he saw Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as dead. After that he got shocked to see the devastating sight of the entire royal family who were laid sprawled on the floor with bloodshed. Fortinbras actually came to take revenge of his father's murder but after knowing the tragic story of the entire royal family he got dumbstruck. Later Horatio told him the whole tragic story and at the end of the play Fortinbras gave order to show respect to Hamlet in proper way. Therefore Hamlet was carried away in a manner of befitting a fallensolider. Finally Fortinbrashas captured the kingdom of Denmark and then the cruel history of it came to an end . (Edwards, 1985: 36)

Conclusion

William Shakespeare's Hamlet was an example of perfect and witty revenge play. The first part of this play was made with the revenge motif and it has been carried out till the end as well. Hamlet was actually convinced by his father's ghost and he got the tenacity to take revenge upon Claudius, Hamlet's father murderer.

He finally understood that there will be no fair justice, and as a result he has to take the law in his hands. For accomplishing this hard and risky task of revenge, Hamlet got frazzled from his mind and as well as he was suffering from the symptom of indecision. In the same time Hamlet did use to keep connection with the audience by his famous and greatest soliloquies including the famous “To be or not to be...” (Act III, Scene i)

Hamlet got infuriated by seeing his mother with the culprit Claudius which was the most striking moment in the play. In this play there also came the controversial mad condition of Hamlet and also the mad scene of Ophelia

When she came to know about her father's death and Hamlet who was also sent to England. These two events made Ophelia totally shocked and frustrated therefore she did suicide by drowning in the river. At the end of the play the audience has seen the entire royal family deceased and the whole kingdom got entered into the edge of demolishing its past glory. Therefore the play was considered as a total and absolute revenge play.

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