



A CRITICAL REVIEW OF SELECT SOLILOQUIES IN *HAMLET* AND *MACBETH*: A LOGOTHERAPY APPROACH

1. Shiny George 2. Dr.Nabamita Das

1. Research Scholar, Department of English Assam Don Bosco University, Tapesia Campus Guwahati
2. Supervisor, Dr. Nabamita Das Assistant Professor, Department of English Assam Don Bosco University, Azara Guwahati

Abstract : An integration of the brighter and darker side of life would bring about holistic development and growth. This paper is an attempt to characterize the abstract notion of the brighter and darker side of human beings through the soliloquies of Hamlet and Macbeth. All of us have thoughts and feelings that are noble and that are hurtful yet, how do they shape our personality and attitude of life? A parallel analysis of one each soliloquy from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* would be sufficient to trace the two-sided personality of an individual. The researcher makes an attempt to interpret the soliloquies through the concept of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy based on "super-meaning" and "tragic optimism". According to Frankl "super-meaning" refers to a higher level of meaning that transcends individual circumstances and experiences. "Tragic optimism" in logotherapy means being optimistic in the face of any tragic situation in life. The research paper aims to explore the dissimilarities between Hamlet's Soliloquies and Macbeth's soliloquies and its impact on shaping one's attitude and personality

IndexTerms - Viktor E. Frankl, Logotherapy, Soliloquy, Super-meaning, Tragic optimism.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Not disclosing our thoughts and feelings can be unhealthy. Divulging them can be healthy" (Pennebaker 2). The main objective of this study is to explore the dissimilarities in soliloquies and its positive and negative impact. The article titled, A Critical Review of Select Soliloquies in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*: A Logotherapy Approach will discuss and project this concept. Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* defines "super-meaning" as "The ultimate meaning necessarily exceeds and surpasses the finite intellectual capacities of man" (122). "Tragic optimism" in logotherapy means being optimistic in the face of any tragic situation in life. Human existence consists of three significant aspects according to 'tragic triad'. They are pain, guilt and death. Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* defines 'tragic optimism' as: "Life is potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable. Hamlet and Macbeth are the innovative characters designed and portrayed by William Shakespeare each representing universal human characters. These imaginary characters vividly reveal the real human beings in their varied personality traits. The aim of this study is to identify the dissimilarities that would mould and shape the positive and negative qualities of the mind, attitude and character.

11. VIKTOR E. FRANKL: A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Viktor Emil Frankl was born on (March 26, 1905, Vienna, Austria—died September 2, 1997, Vienna). Frankl was born as the fourth child to Gabriel Frankl, a civil servant in the Ministry of Social Service and his mother Elsa. He belongs to a Jewish family in Vienna, then the Austro – Hungarian Empire. Gabriel Frankl was self-disciplined, hot tempered, possessed positive attitude and he was a perfectionist. On the other hand Elsa his mother was kind hearted and a pious woman. Gabriel Frankl prayed every morning and his father's prayer life left a deep impression on his son. Frankl had an older brother named Walter and his younger sister Stella (Redsand 2006). Viktor Frankl was fascinated by psychology even as a young student and as a teenager he began corresponding with Sigmund Freud. Viktor Frankl had been trained as a physician and he got specialization in psychiatry and neurology before being taken into concentration camps. He was a professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Vienna Medical School. He was a philosopher, author, and Holocaust survivor. For twenty – five years he was head of the Vienna Neurological Policlinic. He developed a psychological approach well known as "Logotherapy". It is popularly known as the "third school" of Viennese Psychotherapy after the "first school" of Sigmund Freud and the "second school" of Alfred Adler. Viktor Emil Frankl's book *Man's Search for meaning* the writer

gives a gigantic view of “everyday life in a concentration camp” (Frankl, 2004). “The basis of Frankl’s theory was that the primary motivation of an individual is the search for meaning in life and that the primary purpose of psychotherapy should be to help the individual find that meaning” (Britannica, 2023). His terrible experience and suffering in various concentration camps taught him the ultimate meaning of life and that each individual is earnestly thirsting for meaning in life and not a quest for power or pleasure. Each bitter experience in the camps did not break his spirit but elevated his spirit with hope and courage to live each day. During World War II Frankl spent three years at Auschwitz, Dachau and other concentration camps. Experiences in the concentration camps and bodily torture did not imprison his thoughts or as he calls “barbed wire sickness” could not affect his mind. Frankl got accustomed to terrible and immense horror of seeing each day ‘watch towers, search lights and long columns of ragged human figures.’ Sweet memories of the past, thoughts about his wife and life out of the concentration camps kept alive his hope. He held professorships at Harvard, Stanford, Dallas, and Pittsburgh, and was Distinguished Professor of Logotherapy at the U.S. International University of Vienna. Frankl’s thirty-nine books appeared in forty languages. His book *Man’s Search for Meaning* has sold millions of copies and has been listed among “the ten most influential books in America” according to a survey conducted by the Book of the Month Club and the Library of Congress. Honorary doctoral degrees were conferred upon him by twenty-nine universities and he was a guest lecturer at universities throughout the world (Frankl,2004).

111. LOGOTHERAPY: A THERAPY THROUGH MEANING

During one of Frankl’s public lectures in Germany, he used the word ‘*logotherapy*’ for the first time. It was the unique term used to describe the approach to a humanistic form of psychotherapy. The following is the true statement of Frankl himself:

Logos is a Greek word which denotes “meaning.” Logotherapy, or, as it has been called by some authors, The Third Viennese School of psychotherapy, focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man’s search for such a meaning. According to Logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a *will to meaning* in contrast to the pleasure principle (or, as we could also term it, the *will to pleasure*) on which the Freudian psychoanalysis is centered, as well as in contrast to the *will to power* on which Adlerian psychology, using the term striving for superiority, is focused (Frankl, 2008, p.104)

According to Dickson (1975) Logotherapy, “Is the process of emotional growth through the discovery of meaning.”

Logotherapy is “therapy through meaning,” guiding people towards understanding themselves as they are and could be and their place in the totality of living. Logotherapy is an existential therapy based on actual experiences. It help us have a fresh look at ourselves, our limitations and potentials, failures and visions our total experiences, with people to encounter, disappointments to overcome, hopes to realize and tasks to fulfill (Fabry, 1980,P. xiii-xiv)

According to Joseph Fabry the definition of logotherapy is: “Logotherapy is a method to help persons whose life has become empty and meaningless to lead a fuller existence. Lack of meaning may be experienced as frustration, doubt, confusion, unhappiness, a sense of failure, of being trapped, of having been betrayed by life, of not living up to one’s potential” (Fabry et.al.1978 p.12).

IV. SELECT SHAKESPEAREAN SOLILOQUY

Childs and Fowler defines soliloquy as follows:-

The typical soliloquy is either a passionate speech giving vent to the immediate pressure of feeling at a point of crisis, or a deliberative speech in which a particular dilemma or choice of action is debated and resolved or, since one may lead naturally to the other, a combination of both. Thus, the most effective soliloquies are introduced at moments of urgency for the character concerned, particularly, when there is a reason for privacy and secrecy rather than public display of passion or reasoning. Sometimes, however, the soliloquy may be spoken directly to the audience by characters who wish to take them into their confidence (Childs& Fowler, p.221)

The actual term "soliloquy" was coined by St. Augustine in the fourth century. In Latin the word was ‘soliloquim’ and was constructed from ‘solus’ and ‘logue’ meaning to talk to oneself. It is not clear whether St. Augustine’s term was even indirectly connected to the theatre. St. Augustine more than likely used the term in reference to speeches by religious characters (Wilton,1976, p.7).

Shakespeare’s soliloquies can be viewed in the light of three important purposes such as, self- revelation of the villains, heightened pathos and conflict of the mind (Egan, Gabriel, et al.).

The word soliloquy is derived from the Latin words “solus” means alone and “loqui” means to speak (Merriam, 1828). It is speaking alone, a mental talk to self. Soliloquies and self-talk is an open book of the mind. It reveals one’s complex thoughts, feelings, guilt, attitudes, motives, joy, doubts, fears, anger, state of mind and heart. The positive and negative attitude of the mind is brought out.

V “SUPER MEANING” AND TRAGIC OPTIMISM”

According to Frankl “super-meaning” refers to a higher level of meaning that transcends individual circumstances and experiences. Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* defines “super-meaning” as “The ultimate meaning necessarily exceeds and surpasses the finite intellectual capacities of man” (122). Frankl declares that, true meaning of life has to be discovered in the world and not just looking into oneself as a closed system. Frankl calls it as, “the self-transcendence of human existence” (Frankl, 2008, p.115). It means that a human being is always directed to something or someone else in life. It may be to love, serve or encounter the other in order to fulfill meaning. Elisabeth Lukas in his *Living Logotherapy Principles and Methods* points out that, in most of the humanistic psychology self-actualisation is the highest goal. But in logotherapy self-transcendence of human beings is its highest goal (Lukas 12).

“Tragic optimism” in logotherapy means being optimistic in the face of any tragic situation in life. Human existence consists of three significant aspects according to ‘tragic triad’. They are pain, guilt and death. Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* defines ‘tragic optimism’ as: “Life is potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable. And this turn presupposes the human capacity to creatively turn life’s negative aspects into something positive or constructive” (Frankl 2008, p.139). According to Frankl a person with optimistic outlook will allow three most important things to happen: - (1) turning suffering into human achievement and accomplishment; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; and (3) deriving from life’s transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action (Frankl 140).

The dagger scene in *Macbeth* symbolizes Macbeth’s inner turmoil and there is a conflict between his ambition and his conscience.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle towards my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou... A dagger of the mind, a false creation
(*Macbeth* 2.1.31-37)

Macbeth sees the vision or so-called hallucination of the mind in which appears a floating and moving dagger. “The handle towards my hand? Come, let me clutch thee”. He knew it is a “fatal vision” and it came from a “heat-oppressed brain”. Yet, Macbeth’s inner world is set to take immediate action. He observes that, even the very nature around him –the darkness around and it is the time when “witchcraft celebrates pale Hecate’s offerings”. Therefore, it is the right time to murder King Duncan in his sleep. Macbeth knew well that he is betraying his conscience and taking up the dagger to fulfil his thirst for power through evil means. Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* states, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms- to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way” (Frankl,2008). Further, Frankl stress in his book *The Doctor and the Soul: from Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* that, “Attitude is – in contrast to the basically destined ‘position given’- a matter of free choice. Proof of this is the fact that man can change position” (88). Here, the choice of Macbeth’s attitude is to do evil, even when he knew what he does is wrong. It pins points the negative aspects of every human being those who do not make a choice between the good and bad attitude in life.

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
(*Hamlet* 3.1.64 - 69).

In the mind of Macbeth there is only “To be” and “not to be” is absent because he is determined to take resolute and cruel action to achieve his goal. Whereas Hamlet is contemplating, “To be or not to be” from the beginning till the end. He carefully analyses the consequences of his action. The mental torture, conflict and agony of his mind is more than one could understand. Eli Schonfeld in his article on *The Tragedy of Tragedy: Levinas Reads Hamlet* has the following observation on Hamlet’s soliloquy “To be or not to be is not the question where transcendence is concerned. The statement of being’s *other*, of the otherwise than being, claims to state a difference over and beyond those which separates being from nothingness—the very difference of the beyond, the difference of transcendence” (5). He thinks, “‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer” an attitude entirely different from Macbeth in his thinking.

But the dread of something after death, -
The undiscover’d country, - puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
(*Hamlet* 3.1.86 - 90).

Hamlet’s “*Will to meaning*” is frustrated by the so-called fate. But he does not give up his spirit to be crushed under the weight of his conscience. He says, “And makes us rather bear those ills we have”. Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* states that, “Life’s meaning is an unconditional one, for it even includes the potential meaning of unavoidable suffering” (118). Hamlet is able

to find this “potential meaning in unavoidable suffering” is because of his faith or belief in a “super power”. The concept of “tragic triad” which consists of suffering, guilt and death seemingly negative aspects of human existence is also made positive by the “change of attitude” in Hamlet. In Macbeth it all ends up in a negative and terrible tragedy. “Voltaire repeatedly asserted that “if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.” (qtd.in Wong 14).

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
 ... their currents turn awry
 And lose the name of action - Soft you now!
 The fair Ophelia!- Nymph, in thy orisons
 Be all my sins remember'd
 (*Hamlet* 3.1.85 - 98).

Hamlet had been entertaining a self-talk regarding committing suicide and the life after death. He was undergoing a great conflict in his mind regarding death – because he thought death will put an end to all his suffering and pain in life. But suddenly the thought of life after death or what might happen after death makes him to take a ‘U ‘turn and change his plans. All that he planned in his mind, “And lose the name of action”. He poses to think about his Lady love “fair Ophelia” and the prayers that she would offer him before God for the forgiveness of his sins. Here, it is the thought of the ‘super power’ that influences Hamlet through Ophelia makes him to change his attitude from committing suicide to a life of reconciliation with God and one another. Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* observes that, “Even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself, and by so doing change himself” (147). Hamlet in his hopeless situation is able to “rise above himself”, “grow beyond himself” and “change himself”. Whereas in the case of Macbeth even when he knows hundred percent sure what he does and going to do is against righteousness he is ready to act immediately in order to gain position and power is clear from the following soliloquy.

Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
 Given to the common enemy of man,
 To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings.
 Rather than so, come fate into the list,
 And champion me to th’ utterance (*Macbeth* 3.1. 68.72).

Macbeth is inviting the fate to come upon him because he cannot think of Banquo’s children becoming kings. The Witches hailed Banquo as, “father to a line of kings”. Macbeth has placed his faith in the supernatural beings that leads him to his own destruction and “rancours in the vessel of my peace”. On the other hand Hamlet places his faith in the “super- meaning” through which he is enabled to withdraw from the thought of committing suicide and waits to “catch the conscience of the king” by staging a play within the play. Robin Sharma in his book *Who Will Cry When You Die?*, states that, you are not your feelings, any more than you are your thoughts. You are in charge of the emotions you feel. Feelings that you can alter in an instant. You may find calm in a stressful situation if you decide to do so. Happiness amid a period of sorrow and vitality during a period of grief (Robin Sharma 158). The researcher found that, Macbeth is a person who acts with the spur of the moment to fulfill his power hunger; whereas Hamlet acts responsibly after much meditation and reflection on the consequences.

VI.CONCLUSION

Wong in his article *The Best Possible Life in a Troubled World: The Seven Principles of Self-Transcendence* he presents the view on transcendence as, “The most promising path is to inspire humanity to move beyond self-interest and self-care to the self-transcendental values of loving God and loving others as oneself” (Wong 7). Hamlet moves from “self-interest” and “self-care” to the “super- meaning” further on in the soliloquy he takes responsible action after long pondering over the pros and cons. Whereas, Macbeth is motivated with “self-interest” and “self-care” to fulfill one’s ambition. The present study has found dissimilarities between Hamlet’s soliloquies and Macbeth’s soliloquies based on Viktor Frankl’s concepts of “super- meaning” and “tragic optimism”. The above discussed soliloquies from *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* vividly present the darker and brighter side of life respectively through their words and actions in the play. Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* states, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms- to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way” (Frankl,2008). Further, it is obvious from the study that, Macbeth misuses his freedom of choice and does not take responsible action in spite of knowing that it will lead to his doom. On the other hand, Hamlet utilizes his freedom of choice responsibly and rises to attain “super- meaning” and “tragic optimism” in the course of the play. Hence, the study has found that the soliloquies in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* depict dissimilarities that mirror the darker and brighter side of human personality. Thus, the aim of this study to identify the dissimilarities that mould and shape the positive and negative qualities of the mind, attitude and character is justified. Frankl in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* defines ‘tragic optimism’ as: “Life is potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable. And this turn presupposes the human capacity to creatively turn life’s negative aspects into something positive or constructive” (Frankl 2008, p.139). The soliloquies in both reveal vividly the characters that mould and shape these dissimilarities to a greater extent in the light of ‘super- meaning’ and ‘tragic optimism’. The personality and character of Macbeth and Hamlet is therefore, exhibit dissimilar personality on account of their view of life and personal motif. Thus, the study has found Macbeth to be a heartless murderer and Hamlet a man of responsible deeds.

References

- Augustine, Saint. *The Soliloquies of St. Augustine*. Williams and Norgate, 1910.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Viktor Frankl". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 Oct.2024, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Viktor-Frankl>. Accessed 24 November 2024
- Childs, Peter, and Roger Fowler. *The Routledge dictionary of literary terms*. Routledge,2006.
- Dickson, Charles. "Logotherapy as a pastoral tool." *Journal of religion and health* (1975): 207-213.
- Egan, Gabriel, et al. "VII Shakespeare." *The Year's Work in English Studies* 95.1 (2016): 391-520.
- Fabry, Reuven & William . Logotherapy in Action. J. Aronson.New York.1979. <https://archive.org/> Accessed 5 September
- Frankl, Viktor,E. *Man's Search For Meaning: The Classic Tribute to Hope from the Holocaust*. Translated by Ilse Lasch and Harold S. Kushner,Great Britain Rider,an imprint of Ebury Publishing,2008.
- Frankl, Viktor E. *The doctor and the soul: From psychotherapy to logotherapy*. Vintage, 1986.
- Lukas, Elisabeth. *Logotherapy: Principles and methods*. Vol. 2. Elisabeth-Lukas-Archiv GmbH, 2020
- Nagpal,Payal,editor.William Shakespeare Macbeth. World View Publications, Delhi,2016. Pennebaker, James W. *Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions*. Guilford Press, 2012.
- Redsand, Anna. *Viktor Frankl: A life worth living*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006. 2014.
- Schonfeld, Eli. "The Tragedy of Tragedy: Levinas Reads Hamlet." *Levinas Studies* 16.1 (2022): 39-57.
- Shakespeare,William. *Hamlet*. Fingerprint Classics Prakash Books India Private Limited,2018
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Westland Publications Private Limited,2019.
- Sharma, Robin. *Who will cry when you die?: Life lessons from the Monk who sold his Ferrari*. Jaico Publishing House, 2003.
- Wilton, Ronald N. "Knowledge of spatial relations: The specification of the information used in making inferences." *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 31.1 (1979): 133-146.
- Wong, Paul TP. "The best possible life in a troubled world: The seven principles of self-transcendence." *Positive Psychology in Counseling and Education* (2022).

