

# Hamlet soliloquy

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Shakespeare's Hamlet is fraught with brilliant soliloquies. Shakespeare being a potential playwright of Elizabethan era managed to put his brilliance in the maximum into them. For him fitting gems of language into the befitting iambic pentameter lines was no question of added effort. But for us, especially the writers of the postmodern era surely it is a matter of assiduous attempt.

Let me try my hand on the famous soliloquy by Hamlet and write in my own way: *To do or not to do, that's a dilemma, Whether it is right to suffer alone Or to storm my Uncle with abuses And my mother with equal denigration Is a matter of conjecture, Assailing me each instant, Each fraction of a second! It would be better to die, to sleep in peace Than to see my mother an accomplice Of a heinous crime: Could I not stab my uncle and humiliate her, In front of all , their innocence to mar? Could I not plunge straight into revenge Rather than procrastinating for days on end? Or was I seeking refuge in the cold lap of Death? Or was I waiting to be kissed by Ophelia? Was I growing coward within While feigning to be brave without?!* It goes without saying that I have tried to rewrite the “ To be or not to be “ speech from Act III, Soliloquy of Hamlet. Shakespeare has rightly shown Hamlet, Prince of Denmark yet a scholar from head to feet , to procrastinate. But, Hamlet himself was not at all aware of this drawback . He went on weighing he pros and cons of wreaking a revenge on his uncle . But he was not at all sure of the right method for doing so.

And Shakespeare in a brilliant creative style has brought the hums and haws of Hamlet to the fore. His lines are imbued with the Elizabethan poeticism, imagery and flourish. Shakespeare's working technique is inimitable ,

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unparalleled . He weds emotion to imagery, thought to poetry. Hence, his soliloquies defy oblivion for ages on end.

He used to write plays for theatre companies and hence much professionalism was seen in his plays . But through the veneer of all such professionalism, Shakespeare preached the Universal Truth through his creations. Again, we all know , especially through the medieval Morality Plays that in mind itself the evil and the good play tug-of-war. That very technique is followed by this master playwright when he pens a soliloquy. After all, “ Mind in its own place can create the Hell of Heaven the Heaven of Hell.

“ While working on this famous soliloquy , I tried my best to keep the original context and style intact. I tried to write following the Elizabethan diction minutely. However, my lines are not all in iambic pentameter . There are variations of iambic metrical form. But, I have conformed to the technique of bringing in rhyming couplets occasionally (for example, the lines ending in her/mar; peace/accomplice so on).

Frankly speaking, my creative talent in comparison to Shakespeare is fractionally small. Naturally, when I took up the famous soliloquy of Hamlet for rewriting , I felt extremely nervous. How can I write it in my own way, keeping the style, diction , mood strictly Elizabethan? But, later on, employing my confidence I began to write and managed to do it somewhat satisfactorily. A bit complacent I may sound, but actually I felt so. In this soliloquy, Hamlet’s haplessness is coming to the fore.

But, I have plunged into the heart of the Prince of Denmark and taken out a few trepidations he was afraid to disclose even in the much-uttered

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soliloquies! His own procrastination has been admitted brazen-facedly! Has he ever done anywhere in the play so honestly? In this rewritten soliloquy he speaks out the truth without any pretension, any feigned facade as such! He even contemplates of washing his uncle's and his mother's linen in public too by tearing off their pretensions, fake innocence, to be precise! He speaks of wreaking a revenge on his uncle and stripping his mother of her pretended immaculateness in front of all ! If he had had done so, it would have been a valorous act!! But, Hamlet hummed and hawed , had recourse to “ play within the play” method and thus he could get to the centre of the truth !! What Shakespeare failed to make Hamlet utter in his play, I have made him admit in the last couple of lines where he self-analyzes and finds him to be ‘ coward’ within and a ‘ pretender’ outwardly. Therein lies the success of these rewritten lines. While rewriting these lines , I had an idea at the back of my mind : should I able to do justice to the protagonist of this play? Here, there is no madness in Hamlet, rather we see a method in that. Here, he is self-analytical and over-courageous, which he dreamt to be , but actually he was not! So, in one way, in this verse we find a vicarious fulfillment of Hamlet's suppressed wish! Hamlet says in the original soliloquy, “ To die, to sleep, ay , perchance to dream...” Here, he questions himself directly, “ Could I not plunge straight into revenge /Rather than procrastinating for days on end?” Even if he charges himself of lying on the lap of Death , he touts in his desire of getting passionately kissed by Ophelia too. Here Hamlet wears his heart upon his sleeves , speaks the truth from the bottom of his heart. Here Hamlet is shown o be the man of action rather than inaction.

Here he does not contemplate only but keeps on giving concrete shapes to his suppressed wishes. I have employed a direct narrative technique, a direct questioning technique and have deliberately avoided symbols and images. I could have made use of images but the attention of the reader could have been veered from the protagonist to the stylistics or poetical charm. Here, Hamlet is to-the-point and direct. I had a chance to think in a creative way while rewriting these lines. I have brought in occasional rhymed lines to retain the characteristic charm of the Elizabethan era.

Rhymed lines in Shakespeare have a charm of their own. Mine may not equal those in perfection but I am cock sure they are parallel to the original in connotation. Starting the verse with a similar intransitive verb is deliberate choice of mine. “ To be or not to be” has been replaced by “ To do or not to do.” In both the cases specificity comes much later and therein lies the beauty of the lines.

The other characteristic feature of my lines is that it is devoid of labyrinthine elaboration of images and a direct specification of the mental plight of the speaker. Shakespeare in this soliloquy deviates a bit , cogitating somewhat long upon Death and the imagined Country “ from whose bourn no traveler ever returns .” I have talked of Death too but in economic terms touched upon the issue and replaced the ghastly coldness of Death by warm kisses from Ophelia’s warm lips! No one can emulate Shakespeare in composing soliloquies. I never even dream to! But, it was a great and rewarding learning experience for me! Writing a parallel to Shakespeare ‘ s soliloquy is dream secretly cherished by all creative writers. I am no exception. This soliloquy

perfectly fits into its own given parameters, that is to say, it must be kept in its original place.

But if this soliloquy had been uttered by Hamlet in lieu of the original one, then Such Hamlet would need no garb of disguise or procrastination. He could catch the time and situation by their forelock and acted accordingly! The imagery of Death that I have used is of slight varied intent. My intention was to make Hamlet defy Death even , at such crucial juncture when he was planning a revenge on his father’s murderers. But, Shakespeare has used it in much philosophical way. I have tried to bring forth a contrast with Life by towing in Ophelia’s kisses.

The warmth of Life negating the utter coldness of Death! Here, an effect of chiaroscuro was my immediate aim. Could Hamlet speak so directly of direct actions? Or more specifically, could he charter his actions with such positive intent or again could he come to terms with himself so smoothly , if at all? Why have I employed the lines of varying meters other than iambic pentameter only? The reason is not far to seek. I have tried to be true to the Elizabethan style , and at the same time, I have intended to cater to the audience varying moods of the speaker through lines of varying length and meter. A monotonous style cannot properly reflect the mental graph credibly let alone successfully. Hence, I felt tempted to use such lines to portray the mood-graph of he speaker.

To sum up, it must be said that Shakespeare was no lesser dramatist whose soliloquies were in need of replacement or re-writing, but it is a creative passion that finds utter satisfaction in doing so. Delving deep into the

Elizabethan era is another chance which can hardly be resisted. Portraying the upheavals in the mental realm of a much-debated and much-acted protagonist is also a god-given chance of a lifetime. Rewriting the soliloquy appears to me somewhat voyeuristic. But this is pleasant peeking into a heart already portrayed by an unparalleled dramatist.

I learned a lot through this creative venture. And I enjoyed it to the hilt.