

Research Article

**The Common Dilemma Of 'To Be or Not to Be' Between Hemlet and Devdas  
Hamlet Vs. Devdas 'To Be or Not to Be': A Study of Dilemma in Shakespeare's Hamlet and  
Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's Devdas**

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Perhaps People and Government both love indecision. Because of this love for indecision Hamlet and Devdas both became immortal, unique and timeless. Devdas is a Bengali romance novel written by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee published in June 1917. Young generation may not be knowing Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay but they all are well aware of the name Devdas. It has become an epithet for Jilted lover. Every Indian is familiar with this iconic name. The story pivots a tragic triangle linking Devdas an Archetypal lover in separation; Paro, his forbidden childhood love; and Chandramukhi, a reformed courtesan. On the other hand, Hamlet is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare sometime between 1599 and 1601. 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.

The novel Devdas begins with the childhood of Devdas and Paro, showing Devdas as a naughty, arrogant boy, who takes Paro for granted. He hits her and yet expects her to follow him strongly, it is only Paro, who is initially harboring love pangs, whereas Deva, growing up in urban Calcutta had almost forgotten her. But the moment Paro becomes unattainable, Devdas pines for her love and starts drinking. Most of the readers love the younger Deva who looked carefree, somewhat naughty yet adorable. Had he remained as crazy and as frank as he was in childhood readers would have fallen in love with him as did Paro. But as he grew up he lost his appeal. He increasingly appeared as a weak-willed individual, who allowed one untoward incident to ruin his entire life. It reminds me of Macbeth where the protagonist suffers from weak will and vaulting ambition. In the case of Devdas 'vaulting ambition' is absent. This weak will of Devdas is clearly shown when Parvati's family proceeds to arrange her marriage elsewhere and Parvati, risking the appearance of impropriety, visits Devdas at his home in the dead of night. A shocked Devdas reprimands Parvati for the scandal she might create. Parvati declares that she is there to surrender herself to him. Devdas protests feebly about his family's honour and his duty to his parents but finally it is he himself who is unable to take Parvati that night and is eventually unsuccessful either in persuading his family or disregarding its wishes.

Unable to face Parvati Devdas escape to Calcutta. Later when he tries to apologize for his betrayal, hurt Parvati accuse him of being arrogant and narcissistic. She declares that her parents have made a wise decision in arranging her marriage with an older man, one who is not impetuous and fickle like Devdas.

In his review in firstpost.com of Daas Dev movie by Sudhir Mishra, Anna MM Vetticad comparing Devdas with Hamlet says.

"What common ground could there possibly be between the story of a weak-willed Bengali aristocrat drowning his unconsummated love in alcohol, and a Danish prince drowning in a desire for revenge against his scheming uncle and allegedly traitorous mother? what meeting point is there between a spineless fellow who wept at a fate he could have fashioned if he had the courage to defy his convention ridden classist parents, and another so single-minded in his quest for vendetta that he let everything else in his life slip away as a result? the answer is quite simple actually it lies in the self-destructiveness of both Hamlet and Devdas legendary fictional men Devdas is melancholy and fatalistic on the other hand Hamlet is mentally muddled. Hamlet has fascinated audiences and readers for centuries, and the first thing to point out about him is that he is enigmatic. There is always more to him than the other characters in the play can figure out; even the most careful and clever readers come away with the

sense that they don't know everything there is to know about this character. Hamlet actually tells other characters that there is more to him than meets the eye - notably, his mother, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern - but his fascination involves much more than this. When he speaks, he sounds as if there's something important he's not saying, may be something even he is not aware of. The ability to write soliloquies and dialogues that create this effect is one of Shakespeare's most impressive achievements. A university student whose studies are interrupted by his father's death, Hamlet is extremely philosophical and contemplative. He is particularly drawn to difficult questions or questions that cannot be answered with any certainty. Faced with evidence that his uncle murdered his father, evidence that any other character in a play would believe, Hamlet becomes obsessed with proving his uncle's guilt before trying to act. The standard of "beyond a reasonable doubt" is simply unacceptable to him. He is equally plagued with questions about the afterlife, about the wisdom of suicide. Hamlet the protagonist of the tragedy, Hamlet is a beloved prince and a thoughtful, melancholy young man. Distraught by his father's death, Hamlet is only made more depressed by his uncle Claudius' succession to the throne and his subsequent marriage to his mother. When the ghost of the king, Hamlet's father, tells him that he was murdered by his brother Claudius and that Hamlet must avenge him, Hamlet becomes almost suicidal and obsessed with revenge. He is slowly driven mad by his ability to act on this instruction. Very intelligent, Hamlet decides to fake madness in order to fool his uncle and those loyal to him while he uncovers whether Claudius is guilty for his father's death - although often his mental health is genuinely in question. Worried about his own guilt, Hamlet also becomes hateful, despising his uncle, voicing anger at his mother, frustrated with his traitorous friends, and alienating Ophelia (whom he once courted). His anger borders on ruthlessness, and he is responsible for numerous deaths throughout the play, but he never loses his reflective and melancholy traits.

While writing a book review of "The Indian Hamlet" by Mushtaq Sheikh, Lata Khubchandani on rediff movies says, "Devdas - The Indian Hamlet is an Odyssey of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's classic masterpiece Devdas through the spectrum of Indian Psyche. It is an introspective look at how the character of Devdas took its roots in the Indian mind. The book is based on exhaustive research and detailed discussions. The romanticism and decadence dwell on Sarat Chandra's conception of Devdas and the factors that attracted film makers to this literary masterpiece."

I feel when Sarat Chandra wrote Devdas in 1901 he must have had Hamlet in mind. Both the tragic heroes are similar in many ways. Both Hamlet and Devdas are the victims of indecision. Both are weak-willed individuals. The only difference between them is that there is a growth in the character of Hamlet what we do not find in Devdas. When Parvati's parents fix her marriage elsewhere she visits Devdas at his home in night to surrender herself to him. Afraid of his family honour Devdas could not take her nor he could persuade his family to accept Paro. More to add to this cowardice behaviour he escaped to Calcutta. We find Devdas fickle and lacking impetuosity. Thus, character of Devdas ceased to grow.

On the otherhand we see a growth in the character of Hamlet. There is a drastic change from the first soliloquy to the seventh soliloquy by Hamlet's character. Earlier in the play he seems feeble, brooding and hesitant. Later his growth is seen best through soliloquies. Soliloquies revealed Hamlet's transformation from a helpless man in despair into a determined confident man. The set piece 'to be or not to be' a speech which shows a desperate mood. In contrast to it is 'How all occasions do inform against me' Both the soliloquies mark the development in the character of Hamlet from a irresolute prince to a determined man.

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