

The Hare And The Tortoise

ACT 1

Scene 1

{The stage is divided into two. Front stage is ¾ of the space. Backstage has three huge screens, which are puppet screens and have two windows between them.}

{Front stage right Hamlet occupies a square of light within which he moves and is contained. He contemplates all the sides of the square----getting increasingly frustrated by its limited options. Hamlet stops looks into the blankness in front of him.}

Hamlet: Are there answers outside knowledge?

Arjuna: *{From the shadows in a gap between the puppet screens at the back of the stage .}* That's the mystery, Hamlet!

{Then both tumble towards each other and meet on stage.}

Light fades and a long note on the saxophone is heard. Arjuna and Hamlet exit in the darkness. The music builds up and Ganapati as a shadow puppet is seen behind the screen. He sings.}

Ganapati:

The world's best pair is Ma and Pa;

Their machinations take it far.

While Ma moves busily in life,

Pa stays still and supports his wife.

But Ma made a stipulation:

" If you want marital station-

With brother Kartik you must race

Around the world, to win first place."

{The puppet fades off}

Scene 2:

{ Eklavya is playing badminton exquisitely with an unseen partner. She begins in slow motion and then the tempo changes and varies. She suddenly loses her racquet and the use of her arm. Hamlet appears in a window between the screens. He mimes his quietus – the musicians whisper “Oh that this too too solid flesh could melt etc” as Eklavya expresses pain at the loss of her thumb. Apotomenophelia? Light fades on Eklavya and then on Hamlet after he says – ‘ a dew’ or “ adieu”.

Eklavya ---becomes a thumb—turns to face the audience/ “ comes before god”/adieu, and resumes play without the arm. She uses her eyes in lieu of the arm. Her movements become a dance –the body moving like a bow and the eyes as arrows.}

Scene 3

{Roll of drums. One musician cartwheels across the stage to land in the position recently occupied by Eklavya. }

Cart-wheeling Musician: That was Eklavya. He lost his thumb.

Second Musician: *{Speed Walks Across the stage saying:}* Who? Who lost a thumb?

Cart-wheeling Musician: Ekalavya.

And you lost a race.*{Disappears behind the puppet screen only to reappear as the Tortoise shadow puppet.}*

Second Musician: *{ to the T puppet}* Who are you?

T: Come on stage and I'll tell you.

Second M: I am Onstage.

T: No silly. Onstage. *{ Throws Hare puppet to M2}*

Second M: Show time folks.*{To the audience and then dances crazily and disappears behind the screen and becomes a Hare. }*

H: Who are you---onstage?

T: Don't you remember me? I'm Tortoise! The one who won the Race!

H: **That race---** Was not a **real** race!

T: Why not?

H: If we race again - you will **not** win.

T: I'll win. I'll win every time.

H: You know why you won last time?

T: Why?

H: Because I went off course.

T: Off course?

H:Of course.

T: Of Course.

H: Off course.

T: Of course you went off course. And why was that? Why was that? Why was that? You went off on a magical mushroom trip!"

H: Don't laugh at me! *{ in tears }*

T: OK. Don't cry.

I'll tell you what--Let's have another race.

H: I love it!

Referee *Kaun*?

T: Referee? *{He calls out}* GANAPATI

{The race begins. Ganapati puppet is lit up.}

Ganapati: { *sings* } Then slowest and fastest were gone
On a race, which seemed all wrong.
For fast and faster can compete,
But who can slowest race to beat?

As for me, old Ganapati-
The race began simultaneously.
But I reached my goal instantly.

H: { *returning from the race* } You won AGAIN? { *tearful pause* }
And what was that song?

T: It's called *How Ganapati Won the Race*.

H: Ganapati won the race? Tortoise won the race? *Are Mera Kya hoga kalia?*

T: Hey !

H: Mr Tortoise who won the race, what about a Number Chase?

T: A Number Chase? GUMMON!

H: { *sniggers. Aside* } *Come ON!*

T: Go to the front of the class.

H: *Yeh lay, main aya. Pooch.*

T: What is 217 multiplied by 49?

H: That is too complicated. Give me some zeroes I love holes.

T: Alright Hare, here's your head start. What is 217 multiplied by 50?

H: 50. Cool. Zero straight side parking. 5 times tables. Cool cool!
Thi Ki Tha ka Tha ka Thi ki Tha / Tha ka Thi ki Tha / Tha ka Thi ki Tha / Tha ka Tom
Tom { *H starts counting. He does this in a vaithari/ or spoken rhythmic boles which
develop in number of voices and take much time, until he hits a crescendo with it* }
1085!

T: Absolutely Wrong! It's 10,850! What about that Zero you parked on the side?

H: *Ai guh! Visarrlo!* I forget the zero! Side parking *mein laude lage*.

Never mind. It's my turn to ask you. You go to the front of the class.

{ *The Tortoise puppeteer runs on to stage in front of the screens doing a jig.* }

H: *Kidhar gaya?*

T: I'm here!

H: Go to the front of the class!

T: I'm HERE!

H: O! Sorry!

What is — 900 he, he, he, *gochoo* no zeroes for you -----999 multiplied by 1001?

T: { *immediately* } 9,99,999. There Checkmate! Monkey, donkey, elephant, cow sitting in
the bathroom eating palav.

{ *The hare puppet falls and bumps his head from shock* }

H: Accident! That was pure accident!

T: Try me again.

H: { *Desperately and fast* } What is the cube root of 729?

T: 9

H: 9.... 9.... What is 987654321 minus 123456789

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T: 864197532

H: { *The Hare puppet dies of shock. Its Puppeteer emerges and tells the T puppeteer* }
Amazing. What speed. *Yeh to mar gaya.*

T: Dead?

H: Full dead.

{ *A funeral march. H puppeteer carries the H puppet on his shoulders for burial. The T puppeteer does a jig in front of the screen and then disappears behind the screen. Slowly the H puppet is seen emerging on to the screen. He turns to find the T breathing down him. He screams:*}

H: *Daraa mat. Line bhool gaya!*

T: { prompts } Amazing speed.

H: Amazing stool?

T: As you said before – Amazing speed!

H: Ya! Amazing speed! How do you do it?

T: Intuition.

H: Intuition? *EY! Ramanujan ke bache*, these are mathematics problems. They have to be solved using the principles of mathematics. Where are the intermediate steps, the sequential calculations, the logical conclusions? *Kha gaye?*

T: Those are only software subsystems. Besides, they take too long. I love immediacy.
{ *silence*}

H: Love?

T: Love!

H: *Abe laudoo.* What if you go wrong?

T: { *Starts laughing.* } Wrong? Me?

Someone is coming!

H: Is it a Hare?

T: Well, not a hare exactly, just a loser.

H: *Abhi mera tubelight chamka.* And what's a tortoise kind, a winner?

T: Well Ekalavya who lost a thumb is a tortoise kind.

H: Lost a thumb and is a winner?

T: Absolutely! Lost a thumb and is a winner.

H: And this *yevadiya* sitting here – who is he?

T: That's Arjuna - you remember Arjuna?

H: Shankar?

T: No no. This Arjuna Lost to Eklavya !

H: O that Arjuna!

T: That Arjuna!

Scene 4

{ *Arjuna is seen recalling the advise of his teacher. Drona is a shadow behind the puppet screen.*}

Drona: In the course of evolution the eye of the bird developed into a spectacular organ of vision.

So retina.

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{Arjuna stops recalling and thinks, then he mimes eating food in the dark, without sight. He goes back to recalling Drona's words.}

Drona: Time must stand still for your arrow ---then it will hit its' target at the instant it leaves your hand.

{Arjuna gets ready to shoot. Drona blesses him and disappears from the screen. Arjuna shoots and is disappointed with the result. He calls out to Eklavya.. }

A: Who taught you Eklavya?

Transition.

E: Taught? *{ teasingly}* What do you mean taught? Taught --us?

I taught myself Arjuna.

Transition.

A: Someone must have taught you the three processes, at least?

E: Three processes? What are those? Do you mean stringing the bow, focusing on the target and shooting the arrow?

A: Don't play with me Chulla. You know very well I mean the big three: Sravana, Manana, Nidhidyasana.

Transition.

E: *{ Laughingly}* What big, big words. What do they mean?

A: Liar! Chulla! You know very well, what they mean.

E: I swear I don't know! I don't know anything!

{The stage darkens and the puppet screen lights up to show the Tortoise and Hare having a fight. Then the light dims on the puppets screen and the actor is seen onstage playing on a string instrument –bow/guitar?. Arjuna twangs the bow and Eklavya makes a melody out of it. This continues for sometime---all the while Arjuna is disgruntled and unsuccessful and Eklavya is easily competent and teasing---showing off her easy command of the technique.}

E: *{ singing}* I become the bow, I become the arrow, I become the target in a single moment of time.

{ silence transition}

A: *{ twangs the bow suggesting the following line}* Is that the difference between us?

{Transition}

E: That is the difference between us. *{ S/he gifts her bow to Arjuna. }*

{ Hamlet appears in another window. He turns and looks at the spot at which Eklavya had stood. He then walks away.}

Scene 5

{The music from previous scene continues and Zeno walks on to stage playing his clarinet. He is interrupted}

Tortoise: Hey Zeno ! What's your take on this race?

P/M: Oh, I'll tell you in a minute.

{Musicians play a fugue on a clarinet, guitar, bass guitar and drum. At the end Zeno walks back to the musicians sitting on the disc of the stage}

Musician 2: Zeno! Come back!

Musician 1: How come The Tortoise always wins races?

He's not even a great runner.

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Musician 2: {Laughs} Great runners don't always win races. Look at that one for instance—do you see him?

Musician 1: Yes I do. Who is he?

Musician 2: Hamlet. His mind ran faster than any feet---but then he lost his nerve.

Musician 1: { muttering} Lost his nerve? ---the other lost a thumb? What is happening here?

Blackout

ACT-2

Scene 1:

{Hamlet enters and occupies a square of light. He turns and hears a whisper--}

G: Mark me. Pity me not.

Hamlet: What's there?

G: Lend thy serious hearing----

Hamlet: What's out there?

G: ---to what I shall unfold.

Hamlet: Are there answers outside knowledge?

G: I am forbid to tell the secrets , that would freeze the blood of man.

{Arjuna enters between the puppet screens. Lines run parallel with the G. }

Arjuna: { Laughter. } It's a mystery why Hares always ask this question!

Hamlet: Who's that?

G: Remember me. I am thy father's spirit.

Arjuna : Remember me?

Hamlet: Why are you here? You belong there.

G: Doomed for a certain time to walk the night, walk the night, walk the night, walk the night-----

Arjuna: -----Here –There and Everywhere!

Hamlet: What do you want?

G: Revenge, revenge, revenge---

Arjuna: To compare Notes.

Hamlet: About what?

G: His foul and most lamentable murder.

Arjuna: { under the above text } Illusion, Delusion, Confusion, Disillusion—

G: Remember me.

Hamlet: Hallucination?

Arjuna: Wake up! Wake up!

Lets Race!

Lets Play!

{ Pause--{ Hamlet connects to Arjuna. }

Hamlet: Play?

{pause}

Do I know you?

Arjuna: It doesn't matter. Let's play.

Hamlet: Yes. Let's play! Play is the thing!

{Hamlet starts dancing and singing:}

This could—

This could have a major impact on my mood, my self esteem and my relationships.

Arjuna: *{ interrupts pleadingly}* Come here.

Hamlet: Wait.

{ Dances towards one of the screens and becomes a shadow behind it and continues dancing and singing.}

It could affect the way I treat Ophelia and Polonius, in a way that could change their fate.

It could effect the way I think about killing my uncle and that could change the fate of Denmark. *{ At the end of the song he joins Arjuna behind the centre screen.}*

Arjuna: Congratulations. Very well done. *{ Laughing}*

Hamlet: *{pause}* Where is this going?*{ He goes off from behind the screen and onto stage. Arjuna joins him.}*

Arjuna: Alright. I'll take the head-start.

Here's my story for you.

Hamlet: Once upon a time---

The times were rotten--

Arjuna: ----My hand trembled---

Hamlet: --- I couldn't kill my enemy----

Arjuna: ----- I shrank from the burden of living.

Arjuna & Hamlet: This beautiful earth, this air, this golden sky was a mask.

Hamlet: Was a mask?

Arjuna: Was a mask.

I was disillusioned!

Hamlet: How did you recover?

Arjuna: With a Soliloquy.

{ Trips H .}

Hamlet: Those are mine!

Arjuna: Yes. But mine was a Meta Meta Meta Meta Soliloquy.

Hamlet: What's that?

Arjuna: Well---a Meta Soliloquy is a Soliloquy about a Soliloquy. You simply step out of your Soliloquy and soliloquize about it. I'm talking about a Meta Soliloquy—but you can take it to the power of infinity.

{pause}

Hamlet: What rubbish!

Arjuna: *{ shrugs her shoulders}* Want to try it with me?

Hamlet: Where do I start?

Arjuna: You could ask me questions. Or you could give me answers.

Hamlet: *{falling into the game}* Have you read me on my depression?

Arjuna: Oh! Yes. “ I have of late lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise”.

Hamlet: *{ Warming to the subject}* Yes---it's the most famous description on the condition.

Arjuna: Modern man in search of his soul.

Hamlet: You are laughing at me. I'm not going to play if---don't go---

{ What follows is a communication only with eyes, gesture and stance. Arjuna requests a musician to bring a chair on to the stage. On seeing the chair Hamlet moves away in fright. Arjuna asks Hamlet to sit on the chair. Reluctantly he does so. Arjuna paces behind the chair waiting for Hamlet to open up. }

Hamlet: Tell me --Is my depression due to a chemical imbalance? Or an emotional conflict?

Do I need medication or psychotherapy? Or both?

Arjuna: What are your symptoms?

Hamlet: Weight loss, early morning awakening, diurnal variation of mood, disgust with sex, drink, food and physicality in general.

Arjuna: What are the causes?

Hamlet: My struggle with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune—

Arjuna: Outrageous Fortune?

Hamlet: My dysfunctional family and society---

Arjuna: What else?

Hamlet: Doubts about the ethics of revenge, confusion about how to be in the world----

Arjuna: That one? That one I know intimately!

Hamlet: You do? Tell me!

Arjuna: I cant.

Try a Meta META Soliloquy!{ With that Arjuna disappears behind the darkened screen. }

Hamlet: *{ In the direction of the screen. }*What a fool you make of me.

{ Turns and studies the chair. }

I lack advancement.

{ He starts revolving the Chair then places it down, he tightrope walks towards it, falls on it, slithers over and around it. This is almost a dance to music. }

Arjuna: *{ appears in a window unseen by Hamlet }* You, **should** heal yourself.
{ Disappears }

Hamlet: Let me feel.

Let me think.

Why must I do?

My depression is a sign of health.

----- it gives me time : to reflect, heal--

Be self aware—*{pause}*

That's powerful action.

{ Musicians sing a vaitari as though calling Hamlet to action. Hamlet gets off his chair and starts an intricate pattern of movements with his feet ---he plots carefully with his feet. The musicians continue their percussive vaitari. Suddenly Hamlet stops his planning and makes an emotive gesture. He turns. He sees his own image reflected on the screen. . He admires himself, confronts himself. And then he sees the Angel of History within his

*image ---whose force pushes him forward/ in the direction of the chair in spite of himself.
Then he stops.}*

Hamlet: I don't want to run anymore.

Angel of History: I am ready for flight---

Hamlet: I would like to turn back---

A of H: Don't try to stop timeless time, you will have little luck.

{ *pause* }

Hamlet: { *Low and falling* } I want to stand still-----.

A of H: { *laughing* }---and walk backward like a crab. { *pause* }

No one can stand still.

Listen to this story.

{ *H unfreezes and goes to sit on the chair/throne* }

Hamlet: Whose story is this, Zeno?

Musician 3: A girl who ran with a red queen.

Hamlet: You mean Alice Who Ran Fast On The Same Spot?

Musician 3: The same girl

{Musicians enter and play Alice's Race with the Red Queen. A steady slow drum beat signifies the status quo, while the saxophone races progressively ahead to signify movement. As it plays H retards into a young infant with his father.}

{Hamlet interrupts the musicians :}

Hamlet: What's the point?

Zeno: The importance of being contemporary

Musician 2:---and being in the present.

Hamlet: The present---{ *starts laughing and then goes quiet* } The present is out of joint.

{ *pause* } Will I ever stand still?

Musician 2: Yes---when you loose your shadow.

Hamlet: How do I lose my shadow?

Musicians: { *laughter. Black out and lights on. Ganapati enters and Dances. At the end there is a black out—and only the Ganapati puppet is lit up during the following song.* }

Ganapati:

A lid was smashed, a veil was torn:

I was the World-I was new born.

The race began simultaneously.

But I reached my goal instantly.

{Light fades on and Hamlet is seen walking back slowly to his chair. He sits.}

Hamlet: Isn't this resolution outside knowledge?

Tortoise: Checkmate!

{Light changes on Hamlet and Music starts. Light on Arjuna who is dancing. Hamlet gets up and slowly lays his chair down on the ground. He finds a place to sit on it.}

Arjuna: It's a mystery Hamlet, how you made the transition from 'to be or not to be' to 'Let be'

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Hamlet: It must have happened off stage.
Arjuna: Off stage? Ah! on the boat to England.
Hamlet: Maybe—Perhaps--- Maybe.

{Music. The Hare sings.}

Hare: There was a Knowledge seeker--
Hedged in by human limits--
He sacrificed the main road
To take a zig zag by lane.
And though he lost much time,
He grew a wiser man.

{ Light falls only on Hamlet }

Hamlet: There is a Divinity that shapes our ends
Rough-hew them how we will.
If it be now, 'tis not to come,
If it be not to come, it will be now,
If it be not now, yet it will come.
The readiness is all.

{Blackout}

Puppets: Ready! Get set! Go! *{Musicians start up music of the race.}*

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