

Shakespeare on Screen: The Blend of Literature and Cinema in Indian Adaptations

Dr Kambhampati Rajesh

Associate Professor

Department of Sciences & Humanities

St. Peter's Engineering College, Autonomous

Maisammaguda, Dhulapally, Hyderabad, India

Email ID: cclrajesh@gmail.com

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Abstract

The literature and cinema relationship have always been interconnected, particularly in the Indian cinema where the transformation of literary work has been a custom. Film adaptation is not a textual translation but rather a creative re-enactment, which provides audiences with new opportunities to interact with a story. Although there are readers who regret what they consider to be the loss of literary depth in films, the article states that the film does not have to imitate the written word, but rather reinterpret it and give it a visual representation. Indian filmmakers, basing their idea on the classics of literature, have extended this thought to a wider audience. The works of Shakespeare, especially, are still being adapted thousands of times, and this just goes to show that literature is able to cross the divide between mediums. Literature and cinema are two fruitful cross-disciplinary interchange processes, and both directions enlighten and result in the creation of a particular subgenre of postmodern film studies. These adaptations not only make literary canons popular but also teach audiences as they increase their knowledge of the historical, cultural, and literary backgrounds of the original work. Film adaptations, therefore, contribute a lot to the increased availability of classic literature, and expand the cultural knowledge base of the cinephiles.

This article talks about the works of William Shakespeare especially on how his plays are translated into Indian movies. It also brings out the impact of the Shakespearean literature on the Indian filmmakers who find the Shakespeare plays inspirational to produce the film versions. The article also discusses on literature and cinema relationship in Indian cinema in general and how literature works are re-enacted and adapted into cinema.

Keywords: Indian films, adaptation, plays, film versions, cultural exchange, film genre, classic literature, visual representation etc.

Comparative literature denotes cross cultural, interdisciplinary and transnational literary critique. It is commonly credited to the German philosopher Goethe who was the first to coin the term *weltliteratur*. Goethe had a feeling that the literary texts have no national or language boundaries and there should be a freedom and a general communication among the contemporaries as art should be popularized both nationally and globally (Goethe 92). He also understood the need to examine the historical context of literature, and this is reiterated by other scholars after him such as Rabindranath Tagore who believed in the importance of *Vishwa Sahitya* (World Literature). According to Tagore (2015),

we must make our own way forward, in our own means and abilities...To capture this totality in all the righteous things we do and to discern its relation with all the efforts of man in his self-expression that is the goal we must play ourselves to (38).

According to Henry Remak (1970), comparative literature is used to refer to the study of literature other than that of a given nation and study of the association between literature on one hand with literature of other spheres of knowledge and conviction...art, philosophy, history, social sciences, the sciences, religion (101). Steven Totosy de Zepetnek (2003) adds to this by saying that comparative literature deals with the familiarity with several other national languages and literatures as well as uses other disciplines to analyze literature. Another ideology of the other that comparative literature possesses is the inclusion ideology (58).

Literature has always had a strong inherent relationship with cinema. When it comes to Indian cinema, but one cannot be held without the other, since the traditional Indian cinema culture, which is all about adapting great literature, is often elevated to the level of a refined visual treatise. Diligent readers tend to lament about the way the aesthetic worth of reading is distorted by the film. However, an artistic genius would be outraged, because a film does not need to replicate the information in a book but rather it is free to re-enact it. And various Indian film makers have taken this concept to the next level as they have drawn inspiration out of it and molded it to their form, so that the masses can consume. It is none other than the Bard of Literature, the great William Shakespeare, the works of which go on to inspire.

The fusion of different artistic and cultural forms, such as literature and cinema, is not a new and unique occurrence. Being two distinct types of narratives, the two-way communication process of approaches to narration between the film and the literature results in the creation of the genre of film adaptations as a specific subgenre in the postmodern film studies. These modifications make literary canons more popular. Moreover, they make films

educational by enriching the historical, cultural, and literary background of the source material in the mind of cinephiles. Corrigan examines such dynamics in his work *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader* (1998).

"According to one estimate, 30 percent of today's films are based on novels, and 80 percent of the best-selling books have been adapted for the screen. If the relationship between the two practises has maintained so tenaciously throughout the years, it seems especially urgent now... as an indicator of why film is vital, why literature is still significant, and what both have to give a cultural era in which boundaries are always shifting. (2)

The difference between adaptation and appropriation, which was highlighted by Julie Sanders (2006), resolves one of the most significant issues of the adaptation of literary works to the screen. As she explains:

"An adaptation indicates a relationship with an informative source text; nevertheless, appropriation typically involves a more definite departure from the informing source into an entirely new cultural product and domain." (39)

This difference outlines the degrees of faithfulness and metamorphosis in the process of adapting, in which "adaptation" has a bond with the original source, whereas, "appropriation" has a larger extent of devotion, and it generates a novel cultural product and sphere. In most circumstances, adaptation can be viewed as the implementation of the major ideas of the parent text to the target one. The film world is based on the literary world creatively and there are numerous films that come up as a response. Literary genres, drama, novels, poetry and epic are the most common sources of films. It is possible to consider the terms of transfer and the adequate adaptation in the frames of the theoretical concept of Julie Sanders.

Brian McFarlane (1996) has coined the notions of transfer and adaptation to examine the book adaptations. According to McFarlane, the process of transfer is specified as the fact that the elements of the novel are transferred to the film in a virtually straight-line manner. But there is also the so-called adaptation proper, that of reinterpretation in which the thematic content of the original text is expressed in a new framework than one. (24) Here, the definitions of adaptation and appropriation by Sanders are not different than the transfer and adaptation designations of McFarlane, which focus on the varying levels of fidelity to source material. Adapted films are currently increasing in popularity and this is reinforcing the continuation of

the conversation between film and literature. Shakespeare can be considered one of the most adapted writers in movies, he has a rich filmography that may be considered his own.

Vishal Bhardwaj brings to an end his Shakespearean trilogy *Haider*, a tragic melting pot of revenge tragedy, Elizabethan theatre, and Bollywood film. The movie revisits Shakespeare *Hamlet*, portraying the main character, who, similar to the original play, struggles with a lot of turmoil and despair, with revenge being one of the focus points. The character is constantly developing, and his way is characterized by the confusion at every period of his life. The blacker aspects of the original Shakespeare work are very strongly appealing to the Kashmir people, where the film was shot. The classic themes of *Hamlet* like betrayal, loss, death, love and duty fulfilment are flawlessly interwoven in the story of *Haider*. Nonetheless, Bhardwaj is free of creativity to customize the narrative to his own style achieving both artistic and commercial goals. The movie starts with a general introduction of how the concept of *Haider* came about, the discussion of the art of characterization, the political background of Kashmir in the filming, and the emotional codices used by the director.

Maqbool: Timeless Version of Macbeth

The film *Maqbool* (2003 directed by Vishal Bhardwaj gives a perennial adaptation of Shakespearean Macbeth and received international appraisals on the way it was done. The movie focuses on a right-hand man of a mafia boss, Maqbool, and his mistress, Nimmi. Similar to the case of *Macbeth*, *Maqbool* is a man who let his uncontrollable ambition cause his downfall. It is his lust of Nimmi as well as his other impulses that make him kill his mafia boss, which initiates a set of events which eventually result in his eventual death. The devastating nature of greed has been depicted by Maqbool in the most vivid depiction. The fact that it successfully incorporates Macbeth into the Indian realities of a Muslim gangster in Mumbai and gives it an extensive and intricate cast is one of the strongest points of the film. Although *Maqbool* is too close to *Macbeth* as far as some points are concerned, Bhardwaj creatively reinvents the original. There are certain scenes that are directly inspired by the play of Shakespeare and others are based on the themes. *Maqbool* is one of the films that are unlike any other film, but it still adheres to the essence of *Macbeth* and makes it applicable in the setting of the Mumbai underworld.

Maqbool is set within the core of Mumbai and it is in the form of a mafia movie. This character of King also gets a reenactment in the form of Jahangir Khan (Abbaji), the head of a strong gang. His lieutenant, a Muslim, Maqbool is a person whom he brought up just like his

son. Banquo and other characters of the original have their counterparts in the men of Abbaji. The war that Macbeth is involved in is substituted by the ever-changing politics of street gangs, which all perfectly align with the Urdu dialogues and the local life of the Mumbai chawls. And despite the fact that the main character is Maqbool, the performance of Nimmi, following the example of Lady Macbeth, becomes the actual added value of the movie.

Nimmi is not merely the wife of Maqbool as Lady Macbeth is; she is also the live-in mistress of Abbaji with whom Maqbool has some form of secret affair. This is a complicated relationship which makes it a major driving force behind the crime of Maqbool. The contrast between ambition and emotional conflict in changing the character of Nimmi helps to influence the plot significantly. She is the stake in the decision of Maqbool to murder, as the representation of the decision of his sexual love or the commitment to his family. This is a critical dynamic that provides the solution to the question of what makes a man kill. These two distinct roles bring out the cultural setting of the film. An illicit relationship is always a major trigger of evil behavior and has always served to offer both drama and comedy to the Bollywood audience. Nimmi, in Maqbool, exercising forbidden love as one of the main instruments to manipulate Maqbool, resembles Lady Macbeth, as a person who spurs the action in the original play. This adaptation brings out the emphasis of how personal relationships can motivate people to do morally questionable things.

The other significant change is that the witches are now turned into more astrologically-minded policemen, this eliminates the superstition overture in Macbeth but still maintains the essence of the witches' prophecy. This adaptation is essential in making the story more relatable to the audience, and maintain the magic in it like in the original. In this regard, the role of Inspector Pandit (portrayed by Om Puri) takes on a crucial factor. Although there may have been more doubt about the witches and their seemingly unpredictable words to Macbeth, Pandit is credible in his role, as he was brought up in the culture. The use of a pandit, or an astrologer, talking about 'kundalis' (astrological charts) is an additional element of authenticity and cultural interest in the film, keeping the supernatural theme of the witches alive and the prophecy presented on a more realistic level to the audience.

Just like in the original version by Shakespeare, Maqbool begins to believe the prophecies when the first one that his ascension to the mafia leadership is fulfilled. These prophecies are initially ignored as drunkard rambling but as they are fulfilled they become heavier in the mind of Maqbool. When Abbaji is killed, Kaka (the equivalent of Banquo)

develops suspicion against Maqbool and starts to remember the prophecies, and starts to be cautious of what Maqbool could do. Then the movie follows *Macbeth* even more closely with the following prophecies. Maqbool, just like Macbeth, believes in the mysterious oracles and thus he grows paranoid and unclear about what awaits him. The pandit just like the witches presents the prediction in the form of a riddle. Similarly to how the witches assure Macbeth that no man born of a woman can be hurt and, therefore, feels invincible, the pandit tells him that Maqbool will never be defeated until the river arrives at his home and concludes that this is equally impossible. Both, Maqbool and Macbeth fall prey to the uncertainty of these prophecies, which finally drives them to their unfortunate fates.

Similar to Macbeth, Maqbool did not plan to kill his loyal person. On the same note, he has hallucinations that are the result of his excessive guilt that causes him to be insane. The moment he thinks of killing someone, he starts hearing things that are not existent. This is initiated by the disturbing vision of blood on the floor just as Macbeth is given a vision of a dagger floating towards him. The haunt of the hallucination of his dead best friend later on torments Maqbool as a result of his guilt regarding the murder. Nimmi also begins to see blood after the crime, and just like it happened to Macbeth wife, the blood appears on the curtains and on her face. The psychological torment that is written is important in the collapse of the characters and these shocking scenes of the characters. The emotional effect of such hallucinations is enhanced in a version by Bhardwaj where the actor is fantastic in his role, making the audience respond to the demise of Maqbool, not with anger but with sympathy.

Although the play and the adaptation have numerous similarities, one should note that there are also significant differences, which help to distinguish the movie as an effective reinterpretation of the Shakespearean work. Lady Macbeth as a person in the betrayal of Macbeth is replicated in the Maqbool with some important variations of the motivation. In the original play, Lady Macbeth is motivated by the power thirst, as she wants to witness the rise of her husband to the throne. Nimmi also is ambitious, but her intentions are more pragmatic, she wants to retain her position and earn her own right to be the queen in the world of Maqbool.

The fears and desires of Nimmi are brought out clearly by the way she acts and speaks and she manipulates Maqbool to have what she wants, both him and power, at any cost. The manipulation is initiated in a subtle way as she teases him sexually to demonstrate that she is interested in him. She then devises methods of getting intimate with him and takes advantage

of these situations to put him to the ground. The former takes place when she mocks him about his masculinity on their way to the dargah when this does not have the desired effect, she intentionally breaks her foot to make him look after her. The planned manipulations are carried on by Nimmi who, spending the day with Maqbool crying and playing with his sympathies to make him consent to her demands. His final destination is evident, she leaves him with a simple choice between herself and Abbaji, he has to choose where his loyalties are. The description of the manipulative and ambitious character of Nimmi two-fold the adaptation, as she employs her charms and her fears to take Maqbool to a self-destructive track.

Nimmi infiltrates the mind of Maqbool with doubt and uncertainty playing with his thoughts various tricks. She informs him that the succession will shift with Guddu (symbolizing Fleance as in the witch prediction), and works to her own benefit with the threat of her own possible replacement as a mistress. Her sexual appeal makes him entangled in a web of love and lust, through which she ends up influencing him into committing murder. Similar to Lady Macbeth, Nimmi is a devoted woman to Maqbool and unstoppable in her ambitions. She masterminds the whole scheme and goes to the extent of murdering the suspect herself, a similar plot of the Lady Macbeth in the original play. Her causes lie in her desires and greed which make her influence Maqbool in doing what he would not have done.

The central theme of the story is the relationship between Abbaji and Maqbool and it also gives the play an interesting twist on the original Shakespearean story. What is endearing about Bhardwaj is the way he has given a personality to characters who were nothing more than shadows in Macbeth. One of the best examples is Jahangir Khan or Abbaji. In *Maqbool*, the characterization of Abbaji further invests him into the character thus showing how their relationship is not a straight forward one.

Maqbool, like Macbeth, does not just regard Abbaji as a father but as a man who despite his status in power is a faithful subject. This respectful level of relationship between these two characters adds more depth to the story (Rituparnasandaliya, 2014).

At the earliest stage, one can see how much Abbaji adores and respects Maqbool. Abbaji uses any chance to show his affection, it can be giving the film industry to Maqbool or calling him his son when Maqbool looks scared. Abbaji immensely prides himself on Maqbool, to an extent of letting him sleep with his mistress without knowing they are having an illicit relationship. Abbaji considers Maqbool in the same way a father considers his son and this fatherly love is brought into focus in some of the best scenes. After Maqbool is slapped in the

face, Abbaji consoles him, addressing him 'Lakht-e-jaguar'. The same phrase is reiterated when Maqbool is about to marry his partner solidifying the strong family bond between the two. What is saddening about Maqbool is that he not only betrays a king but also a father figure who he was very close to. Macbeth betrays King Duncan not just because he betrays him by not keeping his word but also by betraying a person who loves him as a son and not just by not keeping his word.

Thus, *Maqbool* is a complete film with all the elements of a good movie: a compelling story that makes the viewer empathize with it, a protagonist that makes the heart, a background music that lingers and performances that are a pleasure to watch. The quality that makes it worth noting though is that Bhardwaj puts the feel of Shakespeare in every word of speech. The alterations that Bhardwaj makes to the narrative are part of the plot, and they bring some special and refined touch to the adaptation.

Omkara: Venice to Uttar Pradesh

Omkara (2006) is box office hit that resonated with the viewers with its combination of human tragedy and the rough, real-life setting of Uttar Pradesh. Although the movie is a definite adaptation of *Othello*, it is viewed in a totally different context. Similar to *Othello*, *Omkara* investigates the power of discrimination and inner insecurities of a man that can destroy his mind. Omkara, who is a well-established member of his community and has earned the love of his people, is eventually brought down by jealousy and self-doubt to the point that he feels he is being betrayed by his lover, Dolly, because of his caste. The movie shows the sad destiny of a man who became crippled by such feelings and who is ruined as a result of them.

It may be hard to imagine that the version of Venice created by *Omkara* could be placed in a village of Uttar Pradesh but this decision turned out to be a lightning strike and it enabled the viewers to easily relate with the plot. The sweet-spicy twinge of the Urdu language was used by Bhardwaj in his earlier film, *Maqbool*, to pass hard hitting dialogue but the coarse and at times the vulgar language of Uttar Pradesh was the perfect fit when it came to Shakespearean dialogue that is emotionally charged.

The setting too plays a critical role; it underlines the continuation of caste system in India and especially in Uttar Pradesh, which is a key concept in *Othello*. *Omkara* is a half-Dalit Bahubali, a politician who is an employee of a political goon, who is his competitor. This history also makes his self-esteem difficult. His friendship with Dolly, who is a high-class Brahmin, poses a problem because of the caste gap as Omkara feels inferior to her and this

insecurity leads to his insecurities. This movement is a reflection of the themes of prejudice in society and internalized self-doubt of Othello. M. Ahmad (2016) says:

“Omkara portrayed by a half Dalit bahubali or a political fixture who works under another political-goon candidate... It is the caste difference between Omkara and Dolly, who is a high-class Brahmin ... plants the seed of misplaced inferiority in him that further works against him...”. (9)

Another characteristic of the film is the mafia environment in which relationships of the characters are perfectly integrated within this world. Cassio and Iago are changed into ‘Keshav’ and ‘Langda’ Tyagi two close allies of Omkara. The conflict between these characters makes it possible to develop a sense of rivalry and jealousy which resembles the superiority explained in the military hierarchy of Othello. It is a setup that makes the plot develop, as a reflection of such a hierarchical power struggle, as in the original play.

Othello is more of a self-contained drama that is more structured as compared to the adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* which offer greater creative flexibility. In *Omkara*, there is less room where Bhardwaj can explore and elaborate, which is why the film progresses very fast and centers around the manipulation of simple human emotions by Iago, step-by-step. The use of Omkara by Tyagi is a similar case to the behavior of Iago in the play by Shakespeare, in which the characters move forward the tragedy as they exploit the emotion of jealousy and insecurity.

The movie begins with Tyaagi being a two-faced character with his scheming and manipulation of the people, to get a more difficult plan into motion. He manipulatively uses the protagonists as chess pieces. Tyaagi is a genius at taking advantage of the circumstance around him. He leverages on the fact of Raghu losing Dolly to Omkara and observes that Dolly is friends with Keshav and Keshav has an association with a prostitute. To complicate the situation further, Tyaagi is falsifying the details in order to render Omkara jealous. His scheme proceeds when he uses the emotions of Raghu towards Dolly, and lies to Omkara that he is too loyal to the old man. The wit of Tyaagi is the reason why he is able to be called as one of the intelligent villains of Shakespeare.

The adaptation by Bhardwaj however provides Tyaagi with more motivation to his actions. Iago in the original play is mostly depicted as petty in his wickedness; his plans are based on the assumptions that Othello has had an affair with his wife, Emilia. In addition to the blinded faith and possibly a battered ego, there is little motivation to his wickedness.

Conversely, the motives behind the actions of Tyaagi are envy and power thirst. He plans to kill Omkara before knowing of a real reason, other than jealousy. His turning point is when Omkara decides to replace him by selecting Keshav who is a younger and less experienced person to be his successor. In a very intense scene, Tyaagi performs the coronation of Keshav, however, rather than Keshav, he crowns himself with his very own blood thus showing how far he is going in his vengeance. The other notable change in the adaptation is the one between Tyaagi and Keshav. In contrast to the coldness with which Iago keeps Cassio at a distance, Tyaagi is closely attached to Keshav and so it is even more inhuman of him to betray him with most of personal vengeance. This makes the story that more tragic.

Females in *Othello* are perceived as weak and this is one of the reasons behind their tragic end. This is the same theme echoed in *Omkara*, with one significant twist. As Desdemona is shy and naive, Dolly is the one who is rather shy and naive, yet the one who comes out shining in the film is Indu (Konkona Sen Sharma). Indu is a more complicated incarnation of Emilia, the servant of Desdemona. She is the sister of Omkara and the wife of Tyaagi and her presence in the screen is greatly experienced in the film. Woman of conviction is Indu who corrects Omkara when he errs, aiding Dolly when she feels that she is being abused, and a key figure in the new ending of the film.

The tragic conclusion in *Othello* is that Desdemona and Emilia are killed and Othello, overwhelmed by grief, kills himself after momentarily hurting Iago. The evil wins over the good at the end of the play. *Omkara*'s solution is however different. When the climax sets in and Omkara with his grieved mind comes to the realization of the extent of the tragedy, Indu tells him the truth. Omkara, being frozen by grief and letting Tyaagi go, is guided by the urge of revenge on the other hand, whereas Indu is due to the need of justice. She does not hesitate to kill Tyaagi making sure that he is finally going to feel the brunt of his actions. This is a pleasant surprise when compared to most tragedies where the bad guys usually escape justice. The remainder of the plot is a close reflection of the original *Othello* story. Similar to the fate of Desdemona where his father curses Othello and leaves him suspicious, Omkara is also a victim of his insecurities. Similar to Othello, Omkara is abused due to his origin which culminates into his destruction. Such thematic similarities reveal that the two men end up destroying themselves because of jealousy and deceit.

Haider

It is something about the soliloquy of *Hamlet* that has fascinated thinkers, who were attracted by this complicated and emotionally tormented personality, a blood-thirsty and perhaps crazed man. And this duality may have been the reason why Vishal Bhardwaj has chosen to make Shakespearean perfect trilogy. *Hamlet*, a person trapped in emotional turmoil in a gloomy setting, is changed into Haider who is in a much worse setting.

One of the most vivid *Hamlet* adaptations is *Haider* (2014), which was produced and directed by Bhardwaj. It is similar to the original story, a son avenging the loss of his father that leads him to insanity. Similar to *Hamlet*, the revenge mission of Haider against his uncle makes his life a tragic downfall. The movie is a contemporary adaptation of *Hamlet* by Shakespeare and a present-day reflection of a memoir called *Curfewed Night* by Basharat Peer. It is located in 1995 in Kashmir, the period of the insurgency and how it has affected the lives of the civilians, whose names have disappeared amidst the war.

The Kashmir, the land of bloodshed, is not only a land of political conflict but it is also a strong metaphor of the inner conflict of Haider. The movie is a strong point in culture, to bring out the juxtaposition between the beauty of landscapes in Kashmir, and the hard reality of violence, human rights violations and the trauma of the citizens living there. This contrast is meant to illustrate emotional and physical destruction of both Haider and the land itself. The personal sorrow and disorientation of Haider just take its toll on him, just in the same way that the film shows Kashmir as a place that is infested with internal conflicts.

“*Hamlet* set in Denmark burdened with the worst of the worst, and similar is Haider’s Kashmir of 1995. The beauty of pine trees contrasts the beastly affairs of the state, from disappearing persons to the constant army threat and from ignorance about human rights to hours of wondering if the person you have lost will ever come back...” (Ayaz, G., Ammar, K., Ahmad, 116-23).

The pleasing beauty of the pine trees in Kashmir is a complete contrast to the terrors of the state, the disappearances, the perpetual military presence, and the risk that one will never see a loved one again. This comparison can be drawn with the past that Haider experienced when he was a child and feels happy and satisfied with his father and the present where he feels

lost and heartbroken. Bhardwaj utilizes a cinematic device, which contributes to the emotional appeal of the film and is one of the key elements of its long-term effect.

“The genius of this film is how its director Vishal Bharadwaj has managed to adapt Hamlet to a whole new setting, and yet as an audience one wonders if they are watching an entirely new story.” (Ashok 1)

The authority tussle in the backdrop of Haider never changes the way the characters act. Khurram (King Claudius) is a political leader, who is still in power as the King. And so, the current Polonius, renamed Parvez, is an inspector and is often involved in collaborating with Khurram to perpetrate corrupt activities. Although the movie is adapted on *Hamlet*, it is not the play that attracts the most attention. Rather it is the setting that frequently takes the center stage and makes its tragedies known to us. The film does not make Kashmir a scenery in which a hero is going to be travelling, and it does not idealize the location. Rather, it leverages the terrible facts of the area to drive the narrative. The words of Haider, who had just come back to Aligarh and explained that he wanted to come to Islamabad, provoke the rage of one of the representatives of the army, which demonstrates the level of enmity between India and Pakistan. The documentary still relies on the history of the state, especially on the painful truth about the people who have been missing during the insurgency to depict the reality about the real struggles of Kashmir. The haunting beauty of Kashmir landscapes is in contrast with the realities of the region, which are bleak, and the Jhelum River is a symbolic summons to the fact that beauty is covered with the ghost of the past. Kashmir in this context can as well be considered as a metaphor to Haider- both of them are in the state of mourning, loss and unresolved conflict.

Similarly to *Maqbool*, in which Maqbool is a witness of the reappearance of the deceased King, he is a witness of Dr. Hilal Meer, a character that resembles the appearance of King Hamlet. In contrast to the enigmatic King Hamlet, whose personality has been largely determined by his demise, Dr. Hilal Meer is a moral believer. At the beginning of the film, we see that Hilal is a militant leader who is determined in his ideologies despite the request of his wife to surrender. His uncompromising stand to his principles, even when he is in his detention camps, brings forth his tragic death. The life of Hilal and his decisions are very close to Haider who was presented as having a common background with him as depicted in childhood photographs and how Hilal was fond of revolutionary poetry written by Faiz Ahmed Faiz. It is this focus on the character of Hilal that compels the viewer to interpret Haider as a man that

has been pushed to the verge of madness, but as a man that has been deeply impacted through loss and memory. His behavior is also explained by his relationship to Hilal and principles he used to be. These two characters are united by the subject of righteousness, and the story of *Haider* can be interpreted as an indication of his struggle to compensate what Hilal had previously struggled to achieve.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are replayed as humorous spies, Salmans, who are disguised as friends of Haider. This re-invention is a clear contrast to their role in the play and the scene when they are brought to their final is one of the most famous and cruel scenes in the film. Their betrayal is dealt with in great gore and this increases the seriousness of their betrayal. The other interesting adaptation is the soul of the doctor, which is represented by Roohdar who substitutes the ghost of the father of Hamlet. In understanding that the belief of a spirit would be considered superstitious and irrationally anchored, Bhardwaj turns the ghost into a living and real person who had been in the camps with Hilal. It is Roohdar, this ghostly yet real character, who is the one to show the truth to Haider and that serves as the trigger to his quest to knowledge and solution.

The character of Ghazala, in *Haider*, is based on the mother of Hamlet, Gertrude, however, in the adaption, Bhardwaj provides her with a much more detailed and potent character. In the original *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, Gertrude is usually depicted as a weak character that does not defend her own will. But in *Haider*, Ghazala is a deep, strong, and morally ambiguous woman. Bhardwaj makes her one of the female characters of the contemporary cinema, providing her with a spectrum of emotional manifestations. Between being a housewife trapped by the desire of her husband and being a widow who desires to be with the man who killed her husband, the character of Ghazala has a disturbing tinge of depravity in her relationship with her son as well, thus making her motives even more complex and interesting than Gertrude.

Arshia however finds her inspiration in Ophelia and Horatio. In contrast to Ophelia who is portrayed in *Hamlet* as a timid, submissive woman who lets the men in her surround to dominate her, Arshia is a assertive, self-sufficient and very protective woman towards Haider. Whereas Ophelia continues to be a passive character when Hamlet raises his voice at her and giving cruel jabs, Arshia is not afraid to confront the men in her life such as her father and brother. It is also Arshia who intervenes and helps Haider when he is in an emotional meltdown, demonstrating the proactive nurturing power, which Ophelia never possessed. She is not afraid

to side with Haider at the expense of disobeying her father and her brother. Arshia is also aware of her mind as opposed to Ophelia, who only does what the men in her life desire without question and does not have issues defending Haider even when the situation is not favourable.

The character of Arshia is a combination of the emotional nature of Ophelia and the loyalty of Horatio, which provides a more recent and stronger version of a woman trapped in a tragic story. She is the one, who truly wants Haider to be happy, and despite his imperfection and psychological issues, she does not change any of her opinions about him. She is trusted with the darkest secrets of Haider, like Horatio is in Hamlet, and turns out to be a key confidant. Even the ghost comes to haunt, just as it did in Horatio in the Shakespearean play, which once again enforces her position as the emotional stabilizing figure of Haider. With an added layer of strength, defiance, and emotional intelligence that Bhardwaj adds to both Ghazala and Arshia through the attribution of agency and complexity to each of them, the characters of the two Shakespearean ladies, as reimagined in the film, become richer and more compelling than the characters of the two original Shakespearean protagonists.

The issue is, can any Shakespeare play ever be filmed in a version that is thought to be a transformation, transcreation, interpretation, translation, contemporizing, or re-localization of the language, culture, geography, etc.? Considering the large number of Indian adaptations in other languages including Hindi and Bengali and other regional languages, these movies are a combination of all these processes and beyond. Every adaptation brings its expression to the works of Shakespeare. The fact that Indian films are sometimes perceived to be crude and unworthy of serious attention, even though India, is the largest movie producer in the world, could be one of the reasons why Shakespeare has been adapted into Indian films so many times. The filmmakers could have tried to overcome this impression to refer this misperception in a subtle way thereby proving their own power to make the works of Shakespeare fit into the language of film that would appeal to the Indians.

As *Maqbool* (2004) a version of *Macbeth*, *Omkara* (2006) a version of *Othello*, and *Haider* (2014) a version of *Hamlet*, Vishal Bhardwaj attempts are serious variants of studying and learning how Shakespeare can fit into the Indian spirit. The movies by Bhardwaj discuss the possibilities of the application of the themes produced by Shakespeare to the socio-political setting of Northern India, its social classes, and stratifications, without corrupting the original plays. *Omkara* is a film established in the rural rural areas of Northern India and *Maqbool* is a film established in the dark side of the world of the criminal underworld in Mumbai. In

Maqbool, the spirit of the character Macbeth is transformed into something that is close to the current cinema. As being among the most tortured and tragic characters of Shakespeare, *Macbeth* is re-designed in *Maqbool* as one of the most human characters, who is caught up in his situation. The action of *Maqbool* remains very faithful to the original but modifications made in the dramatic structure to adapt to the contemporary environment.

Haider, however, takes a totally different direction. According to The New York Times, *Haider* by Bhardwaj was among the most appreciated and debatable Bollywood movies of the year. Although successful, winning five awards at the 62nd National Film Awards, including Best Actor (Shahid Kapoor) Bhardwaj has not won the awards on the Best Direction, Best Music Direction and Best Screenplay. This movie is a reflection of the issues in the process of adaptation of a text: how does a medium of cinema alter the nature of a story? Adaptation usually leads to the division between the original work and its film adaptation whereby what the writer intended to convey may be overshadowed by the collective effort in film production and the viewers to mean making is limited. The themes of Shakespeare have remained a source of inspiration among Indian filmmakers although Bhardwaj prefers to dwell on some of the dark themes of the poet as well. The characters of Shakespeare and their existential dilemmas are not limited in any way to their time of creation, and the stories go above their Western roots. The popularity of Shakespeare in East might also be due to the interest of Western philosophers in Eastern culture and Shakespeare has served as a prism through which they can perceive the Western notions about power, politics, and human nature. Nevertheless, this process of accommodation cannot be boiled down to an ‘orientalizing’ project. Shakespeare works are translated and transformed into too many languages and cultures that it is not possible to think about their themes belonging to the West only.

The adaption of Shakespeare works to other cultures and cinematography shows how his themes are applicable across geographical and time limits. With these developments, filmmakers can touch upon the intricacies of human nature, power relationship, and social struggles in such a manner that are familiar with the communities that they target without sacrificing the universal truths inherent in the original sources. The adaptation, either the cultural re-interpretation or the modern re-contextualization, permits a certain dialogue between the past and the present, with its new insights and the deepening of the source material. These movies are not only mirrors of social-political reality, which existed in the time and place, but also encourage people to watch these ancient stories through a more diverse and mutually encompassing perspective. In such a dynamic intertextual relationship between

literature and cinema, the works keep evolving and now one can admit that great art is timeless and limitless in its ability to reach people of all cultures, generations.

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