

Translations from a Linguistic Medium to a Visual Medium: A study of Vishal Bhardwaj adaptation of Shakespeare

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Abstract

Shakespeare's tragedies are simple to understand yet at the same time. They are complex to portray. His grasp on how humans respond coupled with ghosts, murderous villains and many fancy soliloquies continue to find their place in different cultures all around the world. This has inspired various filmmakers to not only find inspiration from his work but also attempt to rejuvenate its artistic soul by touching it with their auteur. This research paper explores the works of Vishal Bhardwaj in his attempt to adapt Shakespeare into Indian cinema. Through studying and objectively analysing his trilogy of films (Maqbool, Omkara and Haider) with a close reference to Shakespeare corresponding plays (Macbeth, Othello and Hamlet) respectively, the paper aims to highlight the nexus between the culture and how human emotions remain consistent despite it. The plot, context and the characters of the film will be analysed and compared with the original text of the plays to bring attention to the similarities and the differences that exist between the two, which in turn will highlight how Indian culture has affected and evolved the original tragedies to suit its taste. The paper also aims to highlight the auteur of Vishal Bhardwaj as a scriptwriter, director and song composer and highlights the resonance in his three works despite the cinematic age gap between them.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Literature, Adaptation, Films, Auteur

Introduction

There has always existed a deep innate connection between literature and films. One rarely follows without another close behind, especially in the face of Indian cinema, where adaptations of great pieces of writing often elevated to a refined visual experience. Avid readers often crib about how cinema changes the artistic value of literature. Still, a virtuoso of art would undoubtedly beg to differ for a film is not obliged to copy the contents of a book alone but to redefine it with individual artistic liberty.

And this thought has been carried forward by many talented filmmakers in the Indian cinema, drawing inspiration and then adapting it to their auteur for the audience at large. When we strip the many formal tones of differences that exist between literature and cinema, aren't both at their very core a medium of mass storytelling?

And if there exists one literature icon who would justify the above statement accurately it is undoubtedly the Bard of Literature– the great William Shakespeare whose plays continue to provide a constant muse to filmmakers across ages all around the globe. Everyone fondly remembers the famous tale of two lovers in their balcony but hardly have they ever read the original play. Then how do we recognise it as the famous Romeo and Juliet?

From the numerous subtle and the not so subtle adaptations of it, Shakespeare inspires not only literature enthusiasts but also filmmakers around the world. This is because even though the plays written in the 16th century, they still hold a series of validating themes that the audience continues to respond to because of its relatability and honest portrayal of basic human emotions.

If one looks closely at certain movies, they will be amazed at how many are inspired by the plays of Shakespeare. One of the most adored children films '*The Lion King*' is simply a Hamlet recreation. Many rom-com films like '*She is the Man*' (based on the Twelfth Night), '*West side story*' (adapted from Romeo-Juliet), '*10 things I hate about you*' (inspired by Taming of the Shrew) are a few examples of hidden inspirations while others that stand directly on the name like Leonardo Di Caprio starring '*Romeo and Juliet*' and Christian Bale starring '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*' (1999)- the range of adaptations in cinema is endless.

However, the plays are not adapted only in the English Language.

For instance, Hamlet alone divided into multiple characters ranging from different authenticities to different makeup. We have a Chinese Hamlet who is a martial artist in Asian adaptation *The Banquet*(2006), a Kashmiri Hamlet in *Haider* (2014), a Finland based Hamlet

in Aki Kaurismäki's *Hamlet Liikemaailmassa (Hamlet Goes Business) (1987)* and even an animated lion cub interpretation of Hamlet in the 'The Lion King' and many more across the globe which only proves that Shakespeare holds a sturdy stand in expressing themes reciprocated through new generations and different cultures as a phenomenon shared by all humans.

From Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood (1957)* to Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool (2004)*, the complex characters mingled with drama and tragic endings move many to rework it with their personalised creative talent, and this has led to a wide range of work produced by many great filmmakers.

In Hindi cinema alone, there have been several adaptations of Shakespearean plays including *Romeo and Juliet (Qayamat se Qayamat Tak, 1989)*, *Comedy of Errors (Angeer, 1982)*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream (10 ml Love, 2010)*, *Macbeth (Maqbool, 2004)*, *Othello (Omkaara, 2006)*, *Hamlet (Haider, 2014)* and the most recent, *Goliyon ki Raasleela- Ram Leela* by Sanjay Leela Bansali.

Vishal Bhardwaj's trilogy of Shakespearean plays has earned massive world recognition. And this is not only because he translated the western-inspired Elizabethan Shakespeare for an eastern audience but also because of their credibility as beautiful pieces of art in the realm of revolutionary cinema. Though a music composer at heart, he quickly found his place in the film industry and made his mark with these iconic movies. Starting from *Maqbool (2004)* which continues to be one of the most beautiful adaptations of *Macbeth* in the world to moving quickly to *Othello* with a raunchy thriller *Omkaara* to finally tackling *Hamlet* with a Kashmir streaked *Haider*, his works continue to echo in the hall of fame.

Review of Literature

In the research paper by Shoma Chatterji 'The Image of Shakespeare in Indian Cinema' (2018), she discusses the impact of Shakespeare in the present-day cinema and how his plays which offer some of the best ingredients for a mainstream film in any language and that could belong to any culture, ethnic backdrop, time-space paradigms, relationships taken to produce blockbusters in Asian cinema. Examples like *Khooon ka Khooon*, *Ram Leela*, *Zalim*, and Bhardwaj's works *Maqbool*, *Omkaara*, and *Haider* used to illustrate the Shakespearean presence in our cinema.

Before dwelling into how the Indian cinema adapted to Shakespeare, it was essential to understand first how adaptations work and how Shakespeare has been perceived previously by other filmmakers. Margaret Jane Kidnie's 'Shakespeare and the problem of adaptation'

addressed the fundamental questions about the process of identification and exploration of Shakespeare in drama's twin media text and production. Her work focuses on understanding how adaptation emerges as a conceptual necessity while at the same time posts several culturally problematic issues that need to be addressed by anyone who wishes to follow the route.

In the paper published by Anal Zankar "Shakespeare, Cinema and Indian poetics" (2018), he has highlighted the use of Rasa's in the movie Maqbool by analysing various scenes and circling the rasa depicted in the particular stage.

The paper by Noopar Jha and Arunabh Banerjee "William Shakespeare's Macbeth to Vishal Bhardwaj's Maqbool: A case study on adaptations in contemporary Indian Cinema" (2016) helps establish a deeper understanding of Maqbool, Bhardwaj's adaptation of Macbeth. The paper touches on all the primary aspects of the film- the plot, characters, and context to draw out the similarities as well as differences between the two counterparts and at the same time emphasise and appreciate Bhardwaj's auteur. In 'Murder and Morality in Maqbool' (2014) by Rituparnasandilya, we find an in-depth analysis of the film. The author identifies and presents all the rising moments of Maqbool as an individual piece of art and as an adaptation of Macbeth and describes in exquisite detail what makes the film a theatrical masterpiece.

Ana Laura Magis Weinberg, in her extensive paper "A Loving Redemption of Lady Macbeth: Nimmi in Vishal Bhardwaj's Maqbool (2016)" goes into a journey of character exploration with Nimmi as her muse. The paper thoroughly slices open the makeup of Nimmi as an explosive recreation of Lady Macbeth and her pivotal role in the film.

Meraj Ahmed carefully studies Omkara in his work "Adaptation of Shakespearean Plays in Hindi Movies: A Case Study of Vishal Bhardwaj's Omkara(2016) " Through his paper, the author, not only highlights how Omkara sits comfortably in the plot of Othello but also how the director elevated the play with the unique cultural set-up he awarded it.

Another paper which throws light on the female characters of Omkara "Light your Cigarette with my Heart's Fire, My Love ": Raunchy Dances and a Golden-hearted Prostitute in Bhardwaj's Omkara (2006)" written by Madhavi Biswas puts forward an in-depth review of the rendition of characters, especially Billo and Dolly and their contrasting suit.

One of the most intensive papers to be ever written on Haider vs Hamlet has to be "Hamlet-Haider: From Rotten Denmark to Rotten Kashmir (2015)" compiled by Gohar Ayaz, Dr Zia Ahmed, and Ali Ammar. The paper highlights the importance of using Kashmir as a backdrop to its counter Denmark. Both are pitiful situations complimenting the adaptation. It

was perhaps a stroke of creative brilliance by Bhardwaj to use Kashmir's tragic condition in Indian Hamlet, and the paper explored the various aspects of how it succeeded in the risk.

Similarly, in Gauthum Ashok's "Haider: Shakespeare in Kashmir (2016)" the author brings the audience's attention to the masterwork that Haider is, claiming it to be one of the most progressive contemporaries to be directed for the Indian audience. The paper highlights the importance of Kashmir, how it works as Hamlet's adaptation while at the same time forces the viewer to wonder if they are watching a new movie altogether.

Objectives

The Objectives of the paper are:

1. To analyse how Shakespearean dramas adapted in the films.
2. To understand the differences and similarities between the play and its virtual representation.
3. To critique the director's auteur through reviewing his work as an individual entity and collective representation.

Methodology

The paper will use a qualitative methodology that is primarily analytical and thematic. Thematic research emphasises on identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning (or "themes") within the qualitative data. The researcher analyses the facts and information that were already available to make an excellent and critical evaluation.

Since the research paper aims to examine films, it will use the following parameters of enquiry:

- Study of scenes using thematic reference while studying the personality traits of the characters concerning the views.
- A review of the ongoing internal and external conflicts.
- A study of the relationship between characters and how they affect each other and the plot.
- An understanding of the motivation that lies for a particular action/scene.

Furthermore, to analyse the characters of the film concerning the corresponding literature, the following aspects will be studied:

- Sociology which will comprise the individual economical condition, the cultural differences as well as the study of the backdrop in which the character resides.

- The psychology behind the motivation of the characters about other characters and themselves and what drives their actions as individuals in the respective adaptations.
- Physiology concerning the physical makeup of the individual characters and represented as opposed to their play counterparts.

The paper will also examine the visual mise-en-scene and the auteur practised by the maker to understand various underlying semantics.

Analysis

Why the Indian Macbeth works: A detailed analysis of Maqbool

Many Indians may never know who Macbeth was, but they remember fondly the gangster Maqbool who was ruined by his ambition. Vishal Bhardwaj's Maqbool (2003) is the timeless adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth and has received worldwide acclaim.

The movie revolves around the lieutenant of a Mafia leader, Maqbool and his love interest in his boss's mistress, Nimmi.

Maqbool is a man whose ambition ultimately leads to his tragic demise, much like Macbeth. His goal driven by his love interest Nimmi as well as various other intriguing emotions that, in the end, compels him to kill his mafia boss and then face the repercussions of his actions. It shows how greed can ruin a man.

What is perhaps the most exciting thing about Maqbool is how it perfectly adapts Macbeth with the socio-cultural backdrop of a Muslim gangster in Mumbai and the diversification of characters it indulges in the set-up. While Maqbool draws many parallels to Macbeth, some scenes are a direct adaptation from the original, and others used as a creative muse; Bhardwaj's Maqbool stands on its creative ground while simultaneously staying as close to Macbeth as possible.

Backdrop: Maqbool set in the heart of Mumbai, the webs of the play spreading in a mafia set-up. We see the King adapted as the mafia lord Jahangir Khan a.k.a. Abbaji. Maqbool is his Muslim lieutenant whom he has raised himself. The other characters, like Banquo find a place among his other men. The ongoing war is entirely substituted for the everlasting inner politics of street gangs and sit comfortably between Urdu dialogues and Mumbai chawls. Maqbool may be the star of the film, but it is Lady Macbeth's adaptation that makes the film truly stand out. Instead of merely being the wife of Maqbool like Lady Macbeth, Nimmi is the live-in mistress of Abbaji as well as the secret love interest of Maqbool who she has an affair with and thus, acts as one of the strongest motivation for Maqbool to commit the crime.

This change of character of Nimmi affects the plot significantly as she represents not only ambition but also a choice for Maqbool between sexual and filial love. This adds massively to the plot of and answers the lasting question of what could persuade a man to murder?

These two twisted roles are a testimony to the cultural set up of the film. Affairs often act as powerful motivators of unjust actions and have been a constant source of entertainment for the Bollywood audience. The component of forbidden love that Nimmi uses as one of her primary techniques to urge Maqbool only justifies Lady Macbeth's role as a motivator to her husband.

The other exciting adaptation is of the witches who are altered as policemen with a peculiar hobby for astrology. This removes the buzz of clear superstition off the plot yet holds the magical allure of the prophecy of the witches.

The role of the Inspector pandit (Om puri) is another crucial turning point as the audience might have been wary of random prophecies the witches told. Still, a pandit involving kundalis giving it has certain credibility due to the cultural background. This change is a smart representation of the set-up of the movie while incorporating Shakespeare's witches to the plot. Similar to the witch-pandit interpretation, Maqbool draws many parallels to the original script but infused with a remarkable intelligence concerning its mafia setting.

The witches prophecy: The movie starts with the same witch scenes as Macbeth. The police officer who is also a pandit draws a Kundali on the window of his police van while his partner encounters a man from the rival gang and in the middle of it, blood spatters across the kundali. The pandit, wary of the gory, remarks "Poori Mumbai Khoon mein dhal gayi" wording the terrible omen to what is bound to happen ahead.

Just like the witches in the opening scene prophesied about Macbeth that plants the seed of ambition in his mind similarly, the pandit follows suit with Maqbool's prophecy. But only in Bhardwaj's adaptation, it all happens in a round of drunken buzz with the predictions disregarded as intoxicated nothingness. Only when the first prophecy of Maqbool becoming the head of the film industry comes true does he begin to take the entirety of these more seriously. It is also when Kaka (Banquo) gets suspicious of Maqbool after Abbaji's death because he too suddenly remembers what prophesied and fears Maqbool might be acting on it. The next round prophecy follows the same suit. Maqbool, just like Macbeth, begins to place all his trust in the enigmatic prophecies and thus question his faith. The pandit, just like the witches, answers in a riddle. The witches told Macbeth that he is unconquerable by

any man born of a woman' and this makes him cocky. Similarly, the pandit also claims Maqbool is undefeatable until 'the river comes walking to his house' which seems equally unlikely to him. The riddles of the prophecies fool both the men.

Blood Hallucinations: Maqbool like Macbeth never wished to murder the very man his loyalty rested. And just like him, he is subjected to the guilt-induced illusions and hallucinations that ultimately lead to his insanity.

As soon as the thought of homicide materialises in his mind, the hallucinations start. Like Macbeth sees a flying dagger, Maqbool is frightened by the blood he spots on the floor. The guilt of killing his best friend acts when he hallucinates him awake after his dead body brought in. And after the crime, Nimmi is subjected to the same fate as her counterpart; she starts hallucinating blood on the curtains as well as her face. These scenes, though written as mind-play act as integral components of what broke Macbeth. And in the adaptation, Bhardwaj takes it a step forward with the actor's brilliant performance and the semantics of the hallucinations, and the audience's rage for him turns to sympathy.

Despite many similarities, there also exist striking contrasts between the play and the adaptation, and this is what distinguishes the latter as a theatrical masterpiece.

The re-creation of Lady Macbeth and her role in Macbeth's betrayal: In the play, we see Lady Macbeth as a woman of pure ambition. Nimmi also inherits the same drive. But what distinguishes them is perhaps the fact that Lady Macbeth's ambition was motivated by the act of seeing her husband in power. At the same time, Nimmi was self-driven— she wanted to solidify her position as queen. Her words often materialise Nimmi's fears, and she drives Maqbool only for him to get her what she desires; the man she wants and power together, even if the means to acquire this is through the blood.

She first openly teases and talks in sexual puns to always make Maqbool aware of her love for him. Then she finds time to spend with him alone, only to manipulate him to complete submission.

The first time is on her walk to the dargah. She mocks his manhood, and when she sees he is unaffected by it and refuses to bow to her demands, she uses emotional manipulation by purposely hurting her foot and causing him to hold her. Next, we see when she lies to spend the day and night alone with him, which she completely capitalises on.

She first seduces him into admitting he loved her at gunpoint. Then spends the day wallowing in grief of her fate until Maqbool falls on his knees and agrees to give her whatever she wants.

This is when she places her final ultimatum: Either her or Abbaji.

Nimmi places all kinds of doubt in his mind. She tells him about how the line of succession will change with Guddu (Fleance as the witches predicted), uses her vulnerability of being replaced as the mistresses, uses her sexual power to entice him in the web of lust and love, and ultimately, forces him to kill.

What she shares with Lady Macbeth is her unequivocal love for Macbeth, in this case, Maqbool, and her refusal to stop short of gaining her objective. Just like Lady Macbeth, she devises the entire murder, to the point of killing the suspect herself, all in the name of ambition and greed. (Sengupta, I. 2018)

Emphasis on the Relationship between Abbaji and Maqbool: Construction of characters that Shakespeare deemed to leave behind as shadows are the contrasting artistic difference that adds a certain charm to Bhardwaj's work. Jahangir Khan, aka Abbaji is one prime example of this. Breathing in the role of King Macbeth was a loyal subject too, Maqbool explores a deeper and respectful connection between the two. (Rituparnasandaliya, 2014)

From the beginning, we see the deeply rooted love that rests between the two. Abbaji leaves no opportunity to express his love for his lieutenant, be it entrusting him as the leader of the 'film industry' and assuring him as his son when he seems visibly shaken to trusting him with his mistress oblivious of their secret affair; Abbaji looks at Maqbool like one looks proudly at his flesh and blood. He hugs Maqbool when rattled by the slap and calls him his 'Lakht-e-jaguar' when he sees him prepare for the wedding; thus, laying a concrete foundation of an adoring father-son relationship between them.

The love he has for Maqbool is what makes the betrayal more heinous. Macbeth's betrayal to King Duncan was a case of breaking loyalty, but with Maqbool, it equalled slaughtering work not only dedication but also a deeply rooted filial love.

Maqbool consists of everything one asks in a movie: a gripping storyline that audience can relate to, a protagonist who steals hearts, a background score that makes you hum and actors who are an absolute treat to watch and while doing so it also somehow manages to infuse the soul of Shakespeare with every one of its dialogues. The twerks that Bhardwaj made in his adaptation plays significantly to the plot and adds a special refined touch to work.

From Venice to Uttar Pradesh: A detailed analysis of Omkara: Omkara was a big commercial hit when it came out in 2006. Maybe it was the raw Uttar Pradesh appeal which mixed with the human drama of Shakespeare, resonated with the audience profoundly. The movie was a clear-cut adaptation of the romantic tragedy of Othello yet showcased the play in a completely new light.

Othello was primarily a story of how societal discriminations seeps into a man's psyche as well, and Omkara follows suit. Omkara, though a successful Bahubali beloved by all, falls into the trap of jealousy and self-doubt and is easily convinced that his lover is betraying him because of his caste. He shows the tragic faith of a man crippled by jealousy and self-doubt that ultimately leads to his ruin.

Backdrop: To adapt Omkara's Venice with a small village in Uttar Pradesh seems like a poor choice, yet it was this stroke of brilliance that earned Omkara a special place in the hearts of the audience. Unlike his previous film Maqbool which used the sweet-spice of Urdu language to deliver hard-hitting dialogues, the rough and often vulgar dialect of Uttar Pradesh suited Shakespeare's intense conversations quite perfectly.

Another reason why the backdrop was necessary was to highlight the prevalent caste system in India, especially in Uttar Pradesh that was an essential theme of Othello. Omkara portrayed by a half Dalit bahubali or a political fixture who works under another political-goan candidate. (M Ahmad, 2016)

It is the caste difference between Omkara and Dolly, who is a high-class Brahmin that irks many and especially plants the seed of misplaced inferiority in him that further works against him. The other characters of the play sit well with the mafia set-up as Cassio and Iago adapted into Omkara's two trusted lieutenants, Keshav and 'Langda' Tyagi (respectively). The set-up allows for the rivalry and jealousy to build between the characters and at the same time, allows the plot to imitate a hierarchy of power just like in Othello.

The redefined motivation behind Evil: What differentiates Othello's adaptation from the adaptation of Macbeth and Hamlet is the fact that Othello is a well round-up play by itself and thus leaves limited opportunity for Bhardwaj to explore. The game is fast-paced and follows Iago's step by step manipulation of basic human emotions, and similar is the case with Omkara's Tyagi.

The movie starts with establishing Tyaagi as a double-faced man and then follows his journey into the many manipulations he devices. He uses almost all the primary characters as pawns of his master plan.

Tyaagi is a man who understands his surroundings and then manipulates it to his benefit. When Raghu loses Dolly to Omkara, Tyaagi capitalises on his loss to motivate him to help him. He notices the friendship between Dolly and Keshav and Keshav's attachment with a prostitute and spins facts to make Omkara jealous. How he uses Raghu's feelings for Dolly by feeding Omi with false truths and old loyalty is how the movie moves forward. He is one of the sharpest villains created by Shakespeare.

What is changed is, however, his motivation for the entire wickedness that refined to make more sense now.

Iago in the play, we perceive as a shallow man who plots simply because he suspects Othello slept with his wife, Emilia. There is no other driving force to his evilness other than misplaced trust and perhaps a false sense of male ego. But Tyaagi has far more urgent motivations behind his schemes. We see him as a jealous man who is hungry for power. He saw deceiving Omkara even before he had any valid reasons except, of course, jealousy. What finally pushes him over the edge is the fact that Omkara chose Keshav, a younger and inexperienced man as compared to him as his successor. In a powerful cinematic scene, we see Tyaagi mimics the coronation of Keshav but this time on himself and with his blood that gives testimony to the blood he is ready to spill out of spite.

Another exciting element is that Tyagi has a close relationship with Keshav, unlike any connections between Iago and Cassio. This makes the entire scheme even more vengeful and crude.

The powerful women of Omkara: The women in Othello are weak, and that could be a primary factor of what causes their death ultimately. But in Omkara, this is revisited. Although Dolly is a mirror image of Desdemona, naive and shy, it is Indu (Konkona Sen Sharma) who steals the show. An adaptation of Desdemona's maid Emilia, Indu holds more gravity. She is Omkara's sister and Tyaagi's wife, and her strong opinions often find enough screen space. She saw chiding Omi when he does something wrong, trying to empower the weak Dolly in-between her sobs when she thinks she has been domestically abused and perhaps the most powerful of all, her role in the revised ending of the movie

Revamped ending of Omkara: Othello ends as a sad tragedy. Desdemona is dead, and so is Emilia. Othello only manages to wound Iago before losing his sanity and killing himself too. It is an ending where the evil trumps all. But Omkara didn't follow the same route. When the climax of the film plays and Omkara in the middle of breaking down realises what happened, Indu provides all the answers. With her wit, she joins the dots and angered by her husband's role in this tragedy. While Omkara, similar to Othello, in the grasp of his grief lets Tyaagi go, Indu is the one who reaches for justice as she passionately kills her husband without a second thought. The ending provides a fresh contrast from the fact that evil often gets away with the worst, and we finally see Tyaagi taste a little of his medicine.

The rest of the plot is synonymous to the happenings of the play, be it the curse of Desdemona's father to Othello that spices his suspicion much as it did with Omkara or the

racial prejudice Othello faced for being a Moor just like Omi, all of these follow the nature of their course and walks us through his self-destruction.

The pain of Kashmir inside Haider: A detailed analysis:

There is something about Hamlet in the middle of his monologue that has attracted intellectuals since ages and compelled them to fall in love with a complicated yet sensitive and blood-hungry man who may or may not be mad. Perhaps, this is what forced Bhardwaj to attempt to master the perfect trilogy of Shakespeare's work. The complex and emotionally distraught Hamlet in the rotten state of Denmark adapted as a similar yet different Haider in a more horrid state of Kashmir.

Haider (2014) produced and directed by Vishal Bhardwaj himself is one of the most striking Hamlet's adaptations in the cinemascope. Hamlet is a story of a son who goes mad in his thirst for revenge for his father's murder, and Haider's descent is the same. Struck by grief, his melancholy weaves his life into a tragic mess all for the sake of revenge from his uncle. The film is both a modern-day adaptation of William Shakespeare's tragedy Hamlet and an adaptation of Basharat Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night*, set amidst the insurgency-hit Kashmir conflicts of 1995 and civilian disappearances.

Backdrop: Kashmir has always been a land of tragic blood, its discourse a testimony to the cost of what human greed can ultimately demand. And with this acknowledgement also comes its everlasting controversial nature that has always challenged filmmakers. Vishal Bhardwaj is perhaps the first in Indian cinema to take on the task of bringing out the grey state of the heaven on earth Kashmir and has managed to use it as a metaphor to portray Haider's emotional turmoil. Both the man and the land are equally distracted and exhausted, both struggling amidst their rotten internal state of affairs.

Hamlet set in Denmark burdened with the worst of the worst, and similar is Haider's Kashmir of 1995 (Ayaz, G., Ammar, K, Ahmad,2015).

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- all these juxtapose the serenity of snow-capped trees and the peaceful lake, much like how Haider's warm past with his father contradicts his melancholic present without him.

Bhardwaj has used the 'show-but-dododododocan't-tell' technique to give us a veiled peek at the lives of ordinary Kashmiris who have borne the brunt of the Indo-Pakistan border

conflict. This is simply the great triumph of the film and why it continues to hold its intense impact. (Ashok, G. 2014).

The characters have adjusted well to the power play of the backdrop. King Claudius, now Khurram, is seen becoming a political leader that marks his role as the 'King' in power. Polonius now as Parvez is an inspector who often pairs with Khurram to help in his ill-tasks. Though the movie is an adaptation of Hamlet, it is not the play alone that garners the centre of attention.

The backdrop often steals the show used and its own set of tragedies. The movie doesn't pretend that Kashmir is just a vacation spot for a hero to romance in and it uses its harsh reality to move the play forward. Whether used in showing the already disturbed state of Haider as he returns from Aligarh and provokes the army official by saying he wishes to go to Islamabad highlighting the deadly hostility between the two countries or the use of protests led by families of disappeared people where Haider finds solace in, the history of the torn state used again and again to bring forward perhaps the more authentic state of how things have lapsed there.

There are shots of the beautiful landscapes of Kashmir just before a tragic scene, and Jhelum is used to harden the fact that whatever beauty lost among the dead ghosts. In one sense Kashmir could be a metaphorical representation of Hamlet himself if one looks closely.

The creation of characters: Just like in Maqbool, Haider also witnesses a stark recreation of the dead King, in this case, alive as Dr Hilal Meer. Unlike King Hamlet, who we barely knew as a kind king, Hilal in all his breathing moments, spells out a morality that Haider desperately adores in him. In the opening of the movie itself, Hilal experienced the treatment of a militant. Despite the urges of his wife, he refuses to give up on him simply because humanity demands him to. It is this very act that causes his arrest by the AFSPA.

Later in the glimpses of his time in the detainment camps, we see him still holding on to his morality which ultimately leads to his death. The sights of him and Haider from his childhood and his fondness of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's romantic yet revolutionary poems, we see a similar streak inside Hilal as well as Haider.

This focus on Hilal forces the audience to humanise Haider more than a man who went mad because we see what he misses, his memory materialising as an appropriate justification of his intent.

Then is the adaptation of the jesting characters of Rosencrantz and Gasendt as comical spies; Salmaans' who pretend to be Haider's friends. Their death scene is one of the most iconic scenes in the movie as unlike in the play. It portrayed with the most excellent attention to details as well as a certain level of gory that their betrayal warrants.

Another interesting personification is of Roohdar 'the soul of the doctor' in place of the ghost that haunts Hamlet. Bhardwaj realised that a spirit is too much of a superstitious belief and fails to provide any substantial justification. So he recreates a ghost man instead of who was with Hilal in the camps, and he is the one who brings the truth to Haider.

Recreation of the female characters: Ghazala drew from Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, and Arshia drew from Ophelia, Hamlet's love interest. While Shakespeare barely constructed them outside from the typical weak mould of women who were too meek to think on their own, Bhardwaj empowered them by giving them a strong soul rather than bundling them with a quiet, innocent, and naive feminine power that Gertrude and Ophelia draw.

Ghazala wrote with such depth that it makes her one of the most iconic roles written for women. With the range of emotions from her housewife bound by her husband's wishes to a widow lusted after a man who killed her husband to a mother-son relationship with incestuous tones; she commands a wide range of roles.

Arshia is a spunky journalist who unlike Ophelia, openly defends Hamlet in front of her father and brother. Ophelia, a meek female written who lets the male family members dominate her thoughts. Her feelings go neglected in the wake of what the males of her life demand from her. She is quiet when Hamlet yells at her and merely blushes from shame when he throws his sexual puns at her. She agreed to unlove him on the demands of her father. But Arshia shares no similar quality. She is bold, knows what she wants, and is desperately in love with the man despite his many flaws. She seen rescuing Haider in the very beginning from the army and later helping him calm down when he becomes too sentimental in his burnt house. She demands power on him and recognises it only to use it for his benefit. She openly supports Haider in-front of her brother and father refusing to let go of her feelings without a struggle, and this is what makes her a refreshing sort of difference.

Arshia is a mix of Horatio and Ophelia, and thus Haider's only well-wisher. He confides in her alone despite his latent insanity, and we see the ghost personification come to her just like it did to Horatio.

The makeup of Hamlet vs Haider:

The 'sane' Hamlet: While both the men drew with the same set of traits and flaws, they differ in various aspects. Hamlet, we know in the most pivotal moment of his life, after his encounter with the ghost as the plan of revenge seeps through his blood. The reader never knows who Hamlet was but perhaps but one single line of him being a sensitive student. But with Haider, the audience is awarded the opportunity. Haider saw as a man in solemn mourning, quiet

desperation leaks out of him as he cries in his old home. All we know is that he is simply a man who misses his father dearly. He uses all possible methods to find him, a hopeless optimist who just wants to believe that his father is alive. It is easy for the audience to love a man who simply resides in his grief.

Insanity: Hamlet, in the beginning, decided to pretend to act mad and would confuse the audience and himself with his mixed soliloquies. He often slips from his role of the sane and insane but with Haider. He never claims to pretend. There is grief-stricken Haider, and then after the ghost encounter, there is a Haider who is imbalanced slowly by the truth. There is no space for pretending, Haider shaves his head and displays his insanity with the utmost defiance, in front of a crowd with the most memorable lines of the play, 'To be or not to be: Hum Hain ki hum nahin'

The psychological build-up: Hamlet and Haider both share an innate talent of wits that come out in powerful soliloquies. But what is different between them is that Hamlet pretends to be mad and thus feels a sense of remorse in the victims of his plan but Haider, he performs one of the worst killings himself without an ounce of guilt. Whether it is killing the two Salman's or Parvez, he barely feels any remorse. He justifies their betrayal with his actions.

The love ballad: While Hamlet and Ophelia considered being Shakespeare's iconic couples, their relationship is cold like ice. There is no confession of love from either, and it looks like a scene of separation rather than one of hot romance. Hamlet never confesses his love until she dies, and even when they talk, he only insults her and denies his love. Ophelia barely harbours any wish to fight for her love when asked to forget him and is rather sullen for him. But in contrast, Haider and Arshia have a secure and undeniable connection.

While it is clear that Arshia loves him more and is not afraid to word it to him and the world, Haider is shy with his confession. But in her, he finds a confidante and comfort. Arshia openly hits him when he makes a mistake and defends him in public from time to time. Their romance even hosts a particular segment of pure love in a love ballad.

They affect each other so strongly that one look of mistrust from Haider devastates Arshia to the point of her death and the news of death ruins Haider. He saw clinging on to her dead body like snow on a roof, sobbing at the loss of his love.

Haider's intimacy with his mother: Hamlet harbours just a monochrome shade of emotion for his mother; one of feeling betrayed by her sexuality. But Haider and Ghazala share a kaleidoscope of emotions. They have a defining tone of intimacy between them that often borders on incestuous gory, their conversations often offering different perspectives of a

similar scene. We see Haider suspicious of his mother in the beginning and her blinding love for him.

She defends him even when everyone around convinces her not to, providing testimony to the fact that perhaps he was the only man she ever truly loved. Unlike Gertrude, who is unaware of the crime her new husband committed, Ghazala recognises Khurram's mistake, and her love for Haider only heightens. Unlike Gertrude, she is not blind to the ghost and is also a witness to its confession. This also plays a pivotal role in the ending as she kills herself, thus mooting Haider's thirst for revenge. Hamlet is barely affected by his mother's death, but that is not the case with Haider. On losing her, he loses his sense of purpose to the point of letting his revenge go.

Bhardwaj The Auteur:

Prime emphasis on the prequel: His adaptations often focussed on the prequel rather than the driving storyline. What Shakespeare briefly touched in the first act of the plays, Bhardwaj chooses to sit on it and let it build, thus dwelling on what caused the chaos rather than the chaos itself.

Shakespeare tells us why the characters must fall down the rabbit hole, but Bhardwaj probes the question of how?

He lets the movie breathe with the build-up of what caused the ultimate catastrophe rather than jumping right into the heart of the mess of what created. For example, in Macbeth, the play hardly explores Macbeth before greed took hold of him and focuses on what happens after he commits the crime. Similarly, in Hamlet, many intellectuals argue they never knew Hamlet before he decided to pretend to be mad, so it was hard for them to sympathise with him more than what we feel for crazy men. Even in Othello, the audience never introduced to why Desdemona chooses Othello and forced to believe that she is in love by telling rather than showing.

But in Bhardwaj's films, these complaints are met and given treatment.

This allows him as well as the audience to explore in-depth the motivation of the characters. These environmental stimuli pushed them to their extreme limits along with the internal conflict in the character's mind. In his adaptations, act one is painted very carefully, almost like a set of dominoes assembled with utmost care and patience, and then one trigger, and it sets the characters to their tragic fall. The rest of the play presented as consequences of what happened without any further explanation, and this usually happens after the interval.

In the case of Maqbool, the movie focussed on the various motivations Maqbool had that made him disarm his treasured loyalty. What tempted him to kill Abbaji is shown with

much detail unlike the play which opens with Macbeth with blood on his mind, Maqbool transformed from a loyal supporter to a man who bowed to his inner greed.

A similar style observed in the case of Haider. While the play starts with the ghost wrecking Hamlet's sanity with news of his father's untimely death turning out to be a murder, Haider encounters the 'ghost' man in the latter half of the movie only after the relation between Haider and the setting is ingrained.

We see Haider in a quest to find his father instead of focusing on revenge alone, his eyes suspicious towards his uncle and his mother but no thought of murder in the spectrum of his grief until the ghost clarifies it for him.

Even in Omkara, though the prequel stretched not as far as it was in the other two adoptions, we see a glimpse of Dolly and Omkara's love, coupled with romantic nuisances and their adoration of each other which is absent in Othello, where the audience based on one soliloquy forced to believe in their love throughout the play.

Birth of dead characters: Since Bhardwaj's adaptations tend to focus on the prequel of the play itself, this characteristic leads to the development and exploration of characters Shakespeare birthed but never let live. Characters like King Duncan in Macbeth and King Hamlet in Hamlet, both who were given a body and soul in the Indian Adaptations ended up playing a pivotal role in its success; revamped as Jahangir 'Abbaji' in Maqbool and Dr Halil in Haider.

Development of female leads: Although Shakespeare's works are said to be ahead of his times, what still holds testimony to the Elizabethan age in his work is perhaps, the framework of his female characters. All of his plays are filled with sexist remarks, shaming women on their sexuality, unnecessary obedience demanded as well as constant 'cuckold' remarks directed to the women alone. It is a rare phenomenon to see empowered women in his plays, and similar was the case in Macbeth, Hamlet, and Othello.

But surprisingly, in the Indian adaptation, there were some stark improvements on the role of women and how they aided in moving the plot forward aside from being the maiden whose honour defended.

In Othello, we come face to face with Desdemona; a weak-willed white woman who falls in love with a robust and courageous Moor after hearing the tales of his bravery. The only redeeming trait that she possesses is the fact that she doesn't care about the physical characteristics of her partner but focuses more on the internal quality of the man and decides who to marry by going against her father's wishes. But throughout the play, we see her as a submissive female and the very quality that leads her to her death. In Omkara, Dolly follows

the same suit. She is seen as a naive woman in love, crying bitterly when faced with an obstacle and ignorant of the world around her. But in Omkara, a divine redemption has been given to the character Emilia, who is Iago's wife and Desdemona's maid. In the movie, she is seen as a strong woman of personality, quickly voicing her opinions against Dolly's belief in superstition as well as reprimanding Omkara when needed. Although her Shakespearean counterpart killed in the end, in Omkara, we see her in a new light as she murders her husband in the wake of all the tragedies he caused.

In Maqbool, Lady Macbeth completely redefined. Not only by her position as to how she is connected with Macbeth but also by her wit. (Weinberg, A. 2016)

Bhardwaj has taken his intelligence to the next level as we see how she manages to convince Maqbool to betray his loyalty by using every weapon a female has possible. Greed, lust, and insecurities are targeted together by her as she seduces Maqbool to the point of him submitting to her ambitions, and the change in dynamics between her and Maqbool is what adds a refreshing twist.

But perhaps in Haider, it is that we see the most remarkable of recreation. Some critics even dared to propagate that the movie could have been named Gazala instead because of the powerful rendition of how she is transformed from a meek, submissive queen to a woman with a healthy conscience. (Davidson, K. 2015)

Same is the case with Ophelia who is now Arshia and far more passionate in terms of fighting for love than Ophelia ever could be.

The movement of the plot with powerful songs: It is no mystery that Bhardwaj's loyalty lies with his first love, and that is music. Maqbool filled with powerful love ballads. The first song 'Tu mere roobaroo' showing the seduction of Maqbool by Nimmi is a Gulzar written qawwali that mingles Nimmi's emotion with the lyrics. The second song is also a ballad of melancholy, another portrayal of Nimmi's emotion with 'Rone do' where her mourning convinces Maqbool of the crime he must commit. The two songs present a different set of emotions but with the same goal- to coax Maqbool to commit the murder. The first song has flirty tones and symbolises Nimmi's beauty and youth that captures Maqbool's attention. The second song focusses on the pain that wants Maqbool's sympathy for her.

Haider adopts a set of powerful songs that often steal the show from the characters. Whether it is a rendition of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's Gulon mein Rang bhare, a romance infused hymn of a revolution that Haider associates with his father or the narrative song Bismil he uses to guilt his uncle and narrate Hamlet's tale; the album of Haider is enigmatic yet magnificent. The profoundly intimate song 'Khul Kabhi' is a testimony to the love between Haider and Arshia

which reconstitutes the idea of Haider as a young man. At the same time, Jhelum is a cry that mourns the beauty lost from life in general and Kashmir in particular.

The cinematic lens: Many argue that the visual treat of a story is more effective than the linguistic medium and Bhardwaj's works compel a hardcore reader to change faiths. His camera work is so refined and certainly ahead of his time, it surely explains the numerous awards these three adaptations earned him.

In *Maqbool*, we see a striking display of poetic shooting. Whenever Nimmi would seduce them, the entire shot would be one of low angle to glorify their presence on the screen. The murder scene, coupled with the effect of thunder that uses light as a blinking torch coupled with the thrilling rising music added a new sense of allure to the entire grotesque scene. *Omkara* had its own set of smart camera movements despite the very rural location.

When one sees *Haider*, it looks like poetry written by a camera lens. The use of cinematographic semantics is at its peak and continues until the very end of the movie. At the beginning itself, we see Haider spying on his mother through a curtain, that stands for a symbol of one-sided perception. As the film moves forward, coupled with poetic shots of Kashmir and its usage to draw symbolic gestures between the plot and scenery is endless. Whether it is the spots of red blood on white snow to showcase the contamination of the pure by sin or the way Haider's eyes stay perpetually comprehensive after his insanity, these small details add majestically to the film.

Another smart camera usage is of the classic yellow-blue and grey filters. In all the three movies, the hilarious scenes have a warm yellow glow to represent that past in all of its warmth assurance.

Lack of Male gaze: What perhaps provides the most refreshing moment in Bhardwaj's work is the lack of glaring 'male gaze' despite its period and because it lived a high commercial life in a misogynistic Bollywood ecosystem.

While Shakespeare's view questioned for his glaring male gaze in his plays, Vishal Bhardwaj's work steers clear from it, which is truly remarkable. The female characters are a necessity in the movement of his plot and reinvented to act so, and his lens rarely lingers on the bosom and focuses more on the eyes where the emotions rest. This can be supported with frames of Bipasha Bapu in her item song or even in Arshia and Haider's love scene where the camera lies on her face often to show her devotion to Haider which otherwise could have exploited for increasing viewing, a common phenomenon in many Bollywood movies.

Conclusion

In a career spanning more than a decade and nine feature films, Bhardwaj has dabbled across various genres. But his work with Shakespeare has perhaps been an act of pure cinematic bliss. The three films stand testimony to his brilliance as a scriptwriter, director and song composer. The movies, though vastly different from each other with their background stories, characters and structure yet alike in terms of auteur and interpretation, testify to the fact that Shakespeare fits into the Indian culture quite comfortably.

What is remarkable about the three interpretations is how they are connected to resonate with the Indian audience. Important themes and paradigms used to help the audience identify with Shakespeare.

"Bhardwaj's films are not restricted within a few genres. So, the possibilities of portraying certain types and dimensions of characters increase in his films, which he has always explored well," says Anindya Sengupta, Assistant Professor, Department of Film Studies at Jadavpur University.

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