

**Bollywood's representation of Shakespeare**

**A Postmodern Study:**

*Macbeth-Maqbool*

*Othello-Omkara*

*Hamlet- Haider*



**Rezwana Rahman**

**ID: 15163009**

**Department of English and Humanities**

**6<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

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**By**

**Rezwana Rahman**

**ID: 15163009**

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## Abstract

Shakespeare plays are illustration of the success and failures of human responses to order. These illustrations are very well captivated and displayed on silver screen. This paper is an attempt to study the Indian adaptation of Shakespeare in Popular Culture. It scrutinizes how Shakespeare has been utterly absorbed into the Indian imagination. The work mainly deals with recent three Shakespearean adaptations in Indian cinema: the Bollywood director Vishal Bhardwaj's movie *Maqbool* (released in 2004; based on Shakespeare's adaptation of *Macbeth*), *Omkara* (released in 2006; based on Shakespeare's adaptation of *Othello*), *Haider* (released adaptation of *Hamlet*). These movies achieved great success in India and domesticate Shakespeare like never before. The paper makes a foray into the strategies through which cinematic representation functions to ratify the existing social order. The paper analyses the ideology that governs the production of the film and the meanings that are transmitted through it. And finally all these are on the basis of postmodern

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The end of World War II marked the beginning of a new movement called postmodernism. In 1960 it spread its wings towards architecture, literature, art, as well as to visual culture such as television, Hollywood. Thus these areas have witnessed tremendous changes in the areas of genre, language, narrative style, portrayal of the characters and much more.

One of the most interesting aspects of postmodernism, one that I would argue sets it apart from every other “-ism”, is that you cannot bind it to a particular timeline. It is not an era or decade in the movements of art and literature. But rather, it is a notion that definitely had a beginning, in the sense that the term “postmodern” was coined by Arnold Toynbee in the early 20th century, but as a practice, it has always existed. I say this because postmodernism is not any specific set of ideas, or any particular way of thinking, but rather, it is the notion, that all existing notions be questioned, and deconstructed. And since every new “-ism” has arisen by questioning, deconstructing and eventually replacing its predecessor, it can be argued with a fair amount of conviction, that postmodernism, as a practice, has always existed. Or at least, the practice of questioning and rebelling against established ideas, has paved the way for what we now call the postmodern era.

Postmodern may mean different things to different people. To give an example, “there are some critics who might see this on the account of ‘anything goes’ culture that freely chooses from and mixes ideas and fashions around the world as the essence of postmodernism” (Malpas 2). Others argue that postmodernism is merely a fodder to the fire of capitalism, because this eclecticism can only be afforded by those with monetary capital. To a person living in the Southern Hemisphere, below the poverty line, struggling for basic necessities, postmodernism might as well not exist. “For these groups, consumer lifestyles of the rich are little more than fantasies or hopeless aspirations” (Malpas 3). The reason for these diverse meanings and connotations that the word “postmodern” carries, is that postmodernism is of uncertain origin, “perhaps appropriately so, since postmodernism denies the idea of knowable origins” (Woods 3).

Now what has William Shakespeare and his fleet of masterfully written plays has to do with this 21st century “anything goes” “eclectic” “globalized” postmodern world? Shakespeare and his

works are generally considered modern, a concept that is seen as being directly at odds with anything postmodern, where the modern believes in structure, and the postmodern revels in the lack thereof. Where the modern establishes a hierarchy, the postmodern thrives without it. Where modernism takes pride in form, the postmodern dabbles in pastiche. Shakespeare with his verses in iambic pentameter, his characters displaying universal traits, and love for hierarchy is clearly and undoubtedly modern. So how can we, living in a postmodern world, claim Shakespeare as ours? This paper argues that the connecting bridge between Shakespeare and Postmodernism is adaptation.

Adaptation in itself can be regarded as a very postmodern thing to do. We take a work from one genre and transform it into a work of a different genre. In doing so, we break down the form and structure that was originally (for lack of a better word) given to the work, and forge something new out of it altogether. In doing so, we often strip the work of certain elements, and keeping the essence, whatever that might mean to the person carrying out the adaptation, the same; we introduce a lot of new elements. We de-contextualize, and then re-contextualize.

To give an example, Shakespeare's plays are adapted in every culture and context imaginable. Beginning with Japanese dance drama, to manga, to films made in Bollywood, the Tinsel town of India, Shakespeare has not stuck to simply being modern. His plays have proved their fluidity across languages, cultures, forms and structures, and even beyond these, speaking from the twenty-first century South Asian perspective, even for those of us who are not familiar with the works of Shakespeare, are familiar with the works of Shakespeare. To clarify, even a person living in some remote corner of the Indian subcontinent (again, for lack of a better term), who has never heard of Shakespeare, cannot comprehend Shakespearean English, and is not familiar with the Elizabethan context of Shakespearean plays, may have watched the Bollywood film "Omkaara", which is an adaptation of Shakespeare's "Othello". Hence, they are familiar with the premise of the play, even if they are not even aware of its existence. And the fact that this has happened shows the nature of a postmodern world. The fact that this has happened also blurs the line between high culture and low culture: something postmodernism would approve of. Adapting the play, which is the epitome of high culture among us literary snobs, into a movie that is accessible to everyone, carries the work of Shakespeare across socioeconomic classes and renders literacy redundant, thus diminishing hierarchy.

To those of us who lament the departure of Shakespearean scholarship through these adaptations, it is worth noting that Shakespeare was not high culture in his own time at all. He was popular culture; perhaps even obscene entertainment upon occasions, as can be inferred from the fascinating proximity of the Globe Theatre to Stratford's circus and brothel. Another note that must be made is that Shakespeare was a very successful adapter himself. He did not invent the plots of any of his plays, but rather adapted them from stories he heard elsewhere. And very few of his plays were actually set in Elizabethan England. To name a few that make the maestro Hamlet is set in fifteenth century Elsinore, a city in Denmark and Othello is set against the backdrop of war between Venice and Turkey. Without further ado, this thesis is going to explore the themes that run through his plays, how they reflect in their respective Bollywood adaptations. The plays discussed are Macbeth, Othello and Hamlet and the adaptations analyzed are Maqbool, Omkara and Haider respectively.



## Chapter 2

### *Macbeth and Maqbool*

*Macbeth* is one of the plays where Shakespeare shows the dark side of humanity. It was written in 1606 and performed in the same year. The play was first performed in the Hampton Court. Since *Macbeth* was staged indoors there was a need to create artificial lighting in order to make the play intriguing. The Bard's *Macbeth* had crossed cultures and civilizations and eventually became a part of the Bombay film industry.

Vishal Bhardwaj, one of the contemporary film directors in Bombay, has successfully adapted the Shakespearean plays. One of the adapted films *Maqbool* has gained considerable popularity from the audiences. He has indigenized *Macbeth* at the level of setting, plot and language without weakening the complex issues raised in Shakespeare's play. By projecting the local cultural patterns including the landscapes, social interactions, Bhardwaj has created a new form of cinema. In comparison to Shakespearean language which is formal, the language used in Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* is slangs and colloquialisms which show that Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city filled with people of various ethnicities and religious backgrounds. Bhardwaj in *Maqbool* has used Bollywood conventions such as family scenes, catchy songs, dances and an item number which contribute to the element of visual culture on which postmodernism has started.

Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* rearranges the cultural setting to the Muslim dominated underworld where Abbaji and his Muslim mafia lieutenant Maqbool are the rulers of Mumbai's criminal world. In the movie the character of Lady Macbeth is recontextualized by Bhardwaj, in the form of Abbaji's mistress Nimmi rather than making her Maqbool's wife thus portraying the illicit love-affair that unfolds a series of massacres. *Maqbool's* main characters which incorporates with the characters of *Macbeth* are Maqbool (Macbeth), Nimmi (Lady Macbeth), Jahangir Khan (Abbaji), (King Duncan), Inspectors Pandit and Purohit (the three witches).

*Macbeth* is a violent play where Macbeth travels a road of blood and murder to fulfill the unchecked ambition that the three witches bestowed on him. In the beginning of the play Macbeth is portrayed as a courageous Scottish general and a man who has won King Duncan's favor. His greed for power became eminent after the witches first prophecy came true; Macbeth rewarded with the title Thane of Cawdor. When Macbeth learns of this he becomes hopeful that

maybe one day he will be crowned king. However Macbeth's fate was sealed the night he, under the influence of Lady Macbeth, murdered King Duncan in his sleep. This showed both husband and wife desired power and control. As the play progresses Macbeth's mental state starts to deteriorate as he stews in guilt and paranoia, which leads him to commit several murders in order to secure his position as the King of Scotland. Shakespeare through Macbeth gives warning of the outcome of over-ambition. Shakespeare issues this warning because he knows that humans can easily succumb to temptation and if anyone tries to fulfill their hidden desires they would suffer an unsavory downfall like Macbeth.

## 2.1 Feminism and gender

The characters in *Macbeth* often dwell on the subject of gender. Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband by questioning his manhood. She says that if she was born a man she would not hesitate to carry out the heinous task of murdering King Duncan. Macbeth, on the other hand, uses the same concept when he hires assassins to kill Banquo; he makes the assassins question their manhood. Such acts show that both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth link masculinity with naked aggression and whenever they converse about manhood, violence is bound to happen. Their understanding of manhood allows the political order that is depicted in the play to descend into chaos. Lady Macbeth is considered as Shakespeare's most daring female character. While it is shown in the play that men are violent and destructive, women can equally thirst for power and pursue their ambition. The three witches spark Macbeth's ambition to take over the throne, while Lady Macbeth acts as the brains and the will behind her husband's plotting. Many critics have considered Macbeth as a play which distrusts women; however the aggression of the women shown in the play dismantles that thought. Even though Lady Macbeth does not commit murder she relies on deception and manipulation rather than violence to achieve her ends.

Lady Macbeth breaks the conventional idea of the characteristics of a woman. Being the lady of a wealthy family she is expected to look after the household, her husband and her children. She should be soft spoken and have a kind, nurturing personality. However in the play Shakespeare has portrayed Lady Macbeth as ambitious, power hungry and strong. She plots the murder which ultimately leads to the downfall of her husband, which is contrary because society

will expect her to help the husband to make wise decisions and prevent such tragedies from taking place.

## 2.2 Postmodern view of *Maqbool*

The underground society is considered as low culture which makes the film postmodern. Postmodernism celebrates the ugliness of the society and the setting of *Maqbool* acts as a good example for this. The violence and bloodshed in the film serves as yet another one of postmodern characteristics. From the very first scene till the ending scene violence was a constant factor. Pastiche is also seen in the film. The term means a patchwork of various genres or ideas packed in a single piece of work. In this film in one side we see the mafia culture which is based on murders, killings and extortions, at the same time we see the mafia dons also performing their religious deeds. The film does not include any concrete relationship which falls under the postmodern feature of fragmentation. The characters in the film have illicit relationships with one another; henceforth the concept of 'till death do us part' is nullified. The boss's (Jahangir Khan) second wife, Nimmi has an illegitimate affair with Maqbool. This movie has another postmodern feature which is paranoia. Paranoia is a constant feature in every character, for example Maqbool feels fearful to get caught after murdering his boss, and paranoia has also found its way to Nimmi who like her original counterpart hallucinates all the gore and blood. Another postmodern feature which is, anarchy, is also present in *Maqbool*, for example throughout the movie the viewers will find only destruction; Nimmi's death, Maqbool's tragic ending, Jahangir Khan's murder.

The use of cellular devices, television, guns, and automated cars gives further insight of *Maqbool* being a postmodern film. Since Bhardwaj's target audiences are of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the dressing styles, the dialogues, the setting are contemporary. Since visualization is an ever changing culture, directors have met with the criteria in order to make the film intriguing.

### 2.3 Differences in characterizations

Macbeth is a Scottish general and the Thane of Glams who is led astray by the tempting predictions of the three witches, especially after their first prediction that he will be made Thane of Cawdor comes true. Macbeth is a brave soldier but he is not an honorable man. He is eventually pulled into a world of murder and power, and once he accomplishes his first crime and is crowned King of Scotland, he boards on additional murders. His response to every problem is violence and murder. On the other hand we see Maqbool a political goon who is just a puppet of Abbaji, having an illegitimate affair with Nimmi, all he knows is violence since young age and is short tempered with a very dark character which leads him to his tragic end.

Lady Macbeth is Macbeth's wife, an extremely ambitious woman who desires for supremacy and an established position. Initially in the play she seems to be the tougher and more brutal of the two, as she compels her husband to kill Duncan and snatch the crown. After the violence begins, Lady Macbeth fall victim to guiltiness and madness to an even greater degree than her husband. Her conscience disturbs her to such a degree for example hallucinating blood everywhere and like Maqbool that she ultimately commits suicide. Whereas Nimmi is the wife of the don and she is not happily married. She has an illegitimate affair with Maqbool for which she convinces Maqbool to kill Abbaji. In the case of Nimmi the murder of Abbaji was not because she craved for power and supremacy rather the crime was committed so that she could be with Maqbool; it was for love.

The Three Witches' predictions prompt Macbeth to murder Duncan which led Macbeth to his demise. On the other hand in the film there are these two police officers who manipulate Maqbool by saying that he will be the dominator but not directly tell him to kill Abbaji.

While staging a play it is the language that creates the atmosphere and the setting whereas in cinema visual metaphors aid the director in using cinematography to represent the horror in the actor which stimulates fear among the audience. Maqbool's hallucination of blood of a butchered ghost, Banquo's dead body leaves a ghastly expression on Maqbool as he starts to have delusions about Abbaji's death gaze. In a postmodern blend the supernatural is normalized in the form of the prophesying clairvoyant cops, Pandit and Purohit, who monitor the underworld

with their *kundali* charts using ketchups, food tit-bits, cigarette stubs to sketch the charts aiding to the comic relief.

## Chapter 3

### *Othello and Omkara*

William Shakespeare was a mastermind in creating tragic heroes and he portrays different forms of tragedies throughout all of his sorrowful creations. In this case *Othello* is just another example of how a once joyful man can be overpowered with the feeling jealousy and misunderstanding. A tale of tragic love, from 17th century classic *Othello* depicts the sorrowful story where the leading character Othello misunderstood his own innocent wife and killed her. The main focus of this paper is to look into the take of Shakespearean plays in Bollywood movies; in this case how the play of the tragic hero Othello is represented in the silver screen adaptation *Omkara*.

*Othello* is one of the greatest plays ever by the prodigious playwright. It illustrates the sad love story of the noble Moor Othello who secretly married the Nobleman's daughter the sweet innocent Desdemona. This angered the Lady's father as his daughter had married a man who did not belong to their race and he does not give them his blessings for their conjugal life. Other two names which play just as equal amount of importance in the play are Iago and Michael Cassio. It is due Iago's hatred for both Othello and Cassio which leads to sad end of both Desdemona and Othello's lives. Othello was a renowned general in the army of Venice and even after his marriage which was not accepted by the bride's father Brabantio, he served as the general due to his success as a military man. The problem of the story started when Othello chose young and learned Cassio as the new lieutenant of the army of Venice instead of Iago who was more eligible in terms of age and experience. Iago disliked both Othello and Cassio and wanted both to be dead. He kept his ears and eyed open to take any opportunity to destroy Othello and Cassio. No one could foresee that Iago would choose Desdemona, the innocent wife of the general he so despised. Iago decided to kill two birds with one stone. For this he chose to plot the deadly plan by targeting Cassio to get into trouble with Othello who was a very serious military soldier and a man of disciplines. Iago decided to trick Cassio into drinking alcohol whereas he was well-known for creating havoc in the surroundings when he was drunk on a night when he was on duty. After getting Cassio completely drunk where he ended up injuring an officer and Othello had to be called to the spot to settle the matter. Othello who was of a serious temper took away

Cassio's rank immediately and was asked not to be in Othello's sight forever. Iago all these times pretended to empathize with the situation of Cassio and begged Othello not to punish him as it was Iago's own fault because he asked the young lieutenant to drink when he did not want to.

Iago was not satisfied by causing Cassio to lose his position but he also wanted to be him to be removed permanently. So he plotted his next move creating a distance between the newly-wedded couple Othello and his virtuous wife Desdemona. Before his marriage to Desdemona, Othello sought the help of Cassio to show his love for her. Cassio was a good-looking Florentine who was quite popular among the young ladies of Venice due to his good looks and charms. Both Desdemona and Othello had a soft corner for him and he was always welcomed to their home as a family. As both Desdemona and Cassio belonged to the same age they had a certain bond between them. Iago decide to exploit this friendship between the innocent Lady and the young Lieutenant for his own benefit. Iago made use of the distrust a man places on his lady when she is being seen with another man or appreciates someone who is not her husband. The feelings of jealousy was all that used by Iago to ruin the relationship of those whom he so despised.

Cassio was determined to get back onto the good side of Othello, so he goes to Iago, who was already plotting against him and with an innocent heart asked for his advice. Iago told Cassio to ask Desdemona to help him to get on to the good side of Othello by recommending as the newlywed general only listens to his wife. Cassio who was already in the good books of the Lady Desdemona went to her eagerly. When Cassio was with Desdemona making his plea, Othello and Iago entered the room. Iago seeing that Cassio had stepped into another of his traps seizes this opportunity to point out that there might an illicit relationship between the lady and Cassio who was already well-known for being a Casanova. Iago uses the situation to his benefit to weave his destructive plot which is going to lead to a very tragic ending. He makes sure that Othello starts distrusting his wife, who was in fact a virtuous and honorable lady. The mistrust for his Lady goes to such a length that he decided to kill her because he was drowned with his emotion of jealousy. After he had committed the heinous crime of murdering such a sweet guiltless soul, he was filled with remorse and committed suicide himself. The play illustrates how a man can become destructive due to false ideas being used to poison the mind. Mistrusting

one's own loved ones can lead to people taking advantages of that. In Othello's case that can be seen when he starts distrusting Desdemona and ends up killing her and also losing his own life as well in the process. The situation can be seen in this way which is when people start distancing themselves from their loved ones; surely they are bound for a pathetic mishap. In this case Othello started to move away from Desdemona once he fell into the trap of Iago by losing faith in her which not only ended her life but as well as his too.

This play *Othello* has been brought to life in the modern genre of entertainment which is cinema. The Indian film industry has been known to produce adaptations from the works of William Shakespeare. *Othello* has been adapted in the movie *Omkara* under the direction of Vishal Bharadwaj who is reputed for making movies from the plays of Shakespeare.

A tale of tragic love, *Omkara* is adapted from 17th century classic, *Othello* and stars actors like Ajay Devgan, Naseeruddin Shah and Kareena Kapoor. While contextualizing it to the ground level politics of Uttar Pradesh, the lead Omkara played by Ajay Devgan plays the role of a right-hand man for a local politician. The narrative is rooted in the setting of Uttar Pradesh which not only accounts for the characters but also provides the messy setting of local corrupt politics. The film is based on the complexity of human relationships. While in the context of British Empire, the Bard symbolizes the Englishness, that could be used to justify British colonialism, Bharadwaj's project can be described as an attempt of post-colonial rewriting and therefore a possible revision of Shakespeare's position in a post colonial India. This he achieves by fitting Shakespeare's masterpieces and situating them to Indian cultural contexts.

Race is a central theme in *Othello*, similarly the caste system of India is also given priority in *Omkara*. Instead of making the dark complexioned Omi Shuklaa Dalit, he portrayed him as a half caste while the female lead Dolly Mishra (Desdemona) played by Kareena Kapoor is a Brahmin. But as the film moves ahead, the jealousy of love becomes the main focus rather than caste. Power and ambition is another factor that is given the central stage. The character of Iago played by Saif Ali Khan is called Ishwar. Being a second lieutenant, he is also the rightful heir to Omkara. But when it comes choosing an heir, Omkara chose a young urban educated boy Kesu (Cassio) played by Vicky Oberoi. He hoped Ishwar would understand the tactical move of



portraying an educated young guy as the successor. The scene which shows Ishwar crowning himself after the ceremony with his own blood as he looks at himself in the mirror, has a purpose of presenting a more sympathetic Iago. Billo (Bianca), a free spirited dancer is also given good screen time. It is through these characters that Bhardwaj Indianizes the Shakespearean play. The film then moves on to show how Ishwar manipulate Omkara based on his insecurities and jealous nature. Through his tactical planning he paves his own way for power and dispose of Kesu, his rival. He played on the supposed treachery of Dolly towards Omi by manipulating a certain series of event. Even Dolly's father told Omkara that a daughter who can cheat her father can never be loyal to anyone. All this was used by Ishwar thoroughly to serve his own purpose.

The end of the film shows the tragedy of Omkara and Dolly. Omkara kills Dolly and discover Dolly is innocent which make Omkara to be filled with grief and this grief leads him to commit suicide.

The movie *Omkara* elaborates the postmodernist portrayal of the classic play of *Othello*. The movie depicts the classic plot in a modern platform portraying the adaptation in a manner which will attract the attention of the audiences of the modern times in India. The silver screen adaptation is set in the midst of a political backdrop. This allows the movie to amalgamate with the plot of the play easily. It provides the chance of portraying the fateful events that are faced by those living their lives in the political area. The play illustrates the corruption of the human mind and how one might end up being destroyed by giving in to the dark side of it. The postmodernist portrayal in the movie would be that Dolly which is the character of Desdemona played by the versatile actress Kareena Kapoor in the movie, runs away and starts living with Omi (Omkara) whose play- character is Othello, the role played by the powerful actor Ajay Devgan. This can be said that by starting to live with Omi without being married first. This was not usually seen during those days when *Othello* was being staged as a play in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. During that time it was expected for a couple to be married even they had eloped. However since the movie adaptation is set in the modern times, it illustrates ways of life in the present time where couples have started to live together without being married to each other. Although William Shakespeare wrote his plays during a time when following social traditions and ensuring that strict social norms were upheld by the communities unlike the modern era where people are quite open-

mindful about letting go of the past culture and traditions so people get to do whatever strikes their fancy. The play of *Othello* portrays the inner darkness which engulfs the positive attributes of a human being in this case the protagonist gives in to his vindictive emotion of jealousy which leads him to murder his own beloved wife upon the words of a person who only desired Othello's downfall. In the cinema the main character Omi had also suffered from the same difficult insecurity. He despite his compassionate love for Dolly; he did not heed the last honest words of Dolly and suffocated her to death on the wedding night. Although the plot is set on situations where there is the scope to portray the inhuman nature of the characters in the case of the silver screen adaption. Moreover, the story is in a place where the political power play is at a high peak as it allows the people to channel their power of their evil to remove people from their path who stood as an obstacle to their way of success. Iago's character which was adopted in the character of Ishwar played by the versatile actor Saif Ali Khan evokes how there is an ulterior motive to every action a man might take to get ahead in the world in the modern era.

## Chapter 4

### *Hamlet and Haider*

From all the tragic creations of William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* is known to be the ‘Tragic Prince’ of all the plays written by the Bard of Avalon.

*Hamlet*, as anyone who is academically familiar with William Shakespeare’s works would know, is one of his most iconic plays that has endured for centuries, and made its way into popular culture and even catchphrases. The famous phrase “to be or not to be” is used by people who do not even remember the Bard’s first name. Even in Shakespeare’s ‘original’ version of the play, *Hamlet* can be read a deeply postmodern work of art. The plot in itself, defies the idea of absolute truths, something postmodernism would readily embrace. The play questions everything the audience of the Elizabethan era would take for granted.

To begin with, *Hamlet* is highly inter-textual. It borrows from different sources and enmeshes them together masterfully. According to Roland Barthes, all texts are “a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes 146), and *Hamlet* is a very good example of that. Louise Schleiner proposes “the possible mediated influence of Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*, and Euripedes’ *Orestes* on *Hamlet*, probably through such Latin translations” (29).

The play of *Hamlet* depicts the sad end of life of a promising youth who was led to madness due to his father’s untimely death for which his uncle was responsible and who later married his mother. However it was not just the death of his father that troubled the young prince was his mother’s marriage to his uncle Claudius who did not waste time to take up the power of the previous king. To *Hamlet*, it was painful for him to watch his mother being with someone else when he thought that his parents’ marriage was a happy one. It made him heart-broken and also suspicious of his mother Gertrude, the queen whether she had a hand in the death of his beloved father. The appearance of the ghost of his dead father made *Hamlet*’s suspicions to be correct in the sense that he got to know who his father’s murderer was and that the ghost of his father wanted revenge for all the crimes committed against him. This act of taking revenge made everyone in the play think that *Hamlet* is no longer in his senses anymore due to his mourning

for his father. This play of William Shakespeare depicts the desperation felt by human beings due to severe loss of their loved ones and also the exploitation of trust that is exercised by the close relatives. The imagination of his father's ghost caused Hamlet to suffer from thoughts of disillusionment which led to his tragic endings. The play which belongs to the classical time-frame however portrays thoughts and ideas which are most commonly seen in the modernist and post-modernist era. These can be seen in the situations where Hamlet imagines the ghost of the late king coming to him and asking him to avenge his death. Another event is when he believes that the whole country of Denmark is a prison by personifying the country. The post-modernist thoughts can be seen to be evoked throughout the writings of the playwright. The play portrays how the human mind works under severe depression in this case the main character shows to having delusional thoughts such as the ghost of his dead father. One might even say the plot was well ahead of its time given that it illustrates relationship of the widowed queen in a manner which depicts extra marital relationship from her part. However women in all societies are portrayed to be weak and dependent creation of nature. In this case Queen Gertrude might have married her late husband's brother Claudius to keep her position as a queen. Gertrude would lose all her power and position as the queen of Denmark however, by marrying someone would then rule the country as a king. The Prince's suspicions being true led to a series of unfortunate event of deaths such as the death of Polonius who was the father of Hamlet's beloved Ophelia and also the counselor of the court who was murdered by Hamlet unintentionally which made the innocent soft-spoken daughter Ophelia to commit suicide. The blood bath did not end with these two unwanted deaths but there are more such as the deaths of the brother of Ophelia, Laertes who wanted to kill Hamlet as a revenge for his father's death however fell in his own trap by being stabbed by his poisoned sword. The queen was poisoned because of the treacherous plan of the false king Claudius. The ending of the play is the main reason why Prince Hamlet is well-known as the prince of all tragedies. It is because none of the main characters of the play live to tell the tale on their except for Hamlet's beloved friend Horatio who was instructed by the dying protagonist to let people know the truth. The whole plot of Prince Hamlet illustrates the point that revenge only calls in for more revenge. Avenging the deaths of loved ones does not always bring to a person but can only lead to more undesirable deaths.

There is a reason why William Shakespeare is still known for all his works in the modern times as they can be connected to situations in the contemporary world. His works led many directors

and script-writers to pen their creations under his shadow. Vishal Bhardwaj seems like he could not get enough of Shakespeare already, prodigal director has directed three movies which are all adaptations of the Shakespeare writings. The movie *Haider* resonate all the emotions expressed by the play though the adaptation was based on the volatile situation in Kashmir, India. The movie is deeply intertextual. The most immediate and obvious influence is of course, *Hamlet*. But other than that, the film's director Vishal Bharadwaj can be seen taking advantage of the play's political premise to reflect the current political turmoil in Indian Kashmir. "Critics say Bhardwaj has succeeded in bringing out the raw emotions of Hamlet in the film, while keeping his focus firmly on Kashmir. The region witnessed its worst armed struggle throughout the 1990s as separatist groups violently clashed with security forces, demanding freedom from "Indian rule". (Pandey) Bharadwaj removes the Danish political turmoil, and replaces it with the present day situation in Kashmir, with it being subject to a tug of war between India and Pakistan, and its people suffering the consequences. The re-contextualization, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, is also a notion contained with the realm of postmodernism.

Secondly, an element very similar to Intertextuality of the work is the pastiche. Within the internal chaos of the Meer family, Bharadwaj juxtaposes the greater political conflict and human rights abuse in Kashmir. He even "incorporated 1990's Kashmir conflict, insurgency of Indian Army, turmoil of the city Kashmir along with autobiographical elements of journalist Basharat Peer and some real incidents of the situation" (Shishir). At one point of the movie, the internal and external chaos intermingle and affect each other, creating a beautiful element of pastiche. "This adaptation is more political than artistic" (Shishir).

Another very interesting thing that Hamlet does is the introduction of the ghost, as something that the audience cannot quite discern is if it is actually an otherworldly being speaking to the young prince, or is it his own suspicion manifesting itself in ways that would justify the upcoming actions by him. The Elizabethan audience was one that readily believed in spirits, and fairies and other otherworldly beings. However, Shakespeare once again makes them question. Is it really a ghost? And by extension, are ghosts even real? Or are they manifestations of our deepest fears and suspicions? *Haider*, on the other hand, takes creative freedom and skips this bit almost entirely. Although Haider thinks he's seen a ghost, that ghost, Roohdaar, merely turns out to be a prison inmate of his late father. However, judging by the bout of madness that the

character later reveals in, it is worth questioning, was Roohdaar really just a person with a strangely spirit like name?

Next comes the element that makes *Hamlet* so obsessed over: the madness. The madness in both *Hamlet* and *Haider* are exquisite! Both works take a brave dive into the confounding realm of the human psyche, only to come out with more madness, chaos and confusion. In the beginning, it is only an act. The protagonists decide it would aid them in their mission to find out the truth and avenge the death of their father if they pretended to be mad. However, as the plot progresses, that distinction between what is an act, and what is reality becomes more and more blurred, and at one point, we as audience are convinced that perhaps Hamlet and Haider really have lost their mind.

However, the bit that makes the madness postmodern, is the juxtaposition of reality and fiction within the fiction. I am inclined to think of this bit as metafiction. Within the reality of an audience sitting down and watching a play, or alternatively, an audience in a cinema theatre watching a movie, plays out an alternate reality where a son goes home to find his father dead, and his mother in a relationship with his uncle. However, within that constructed reality plays out the confusion of what is real and what is not. Was the ghost real? Was Roohdaar just Haider's way of coping with the loss of his father? And what do we make of his descent into the initially fake and progressively confusing madness? These are the things that make both Hamlet and Haider so exquisitely postmodern, and ensure their successes in this fragmented postmodern wasteland of ours.

The movie *Haider* had his own way of illustrating the story of the Tragic Prince of Denmark by the Bard. The way Dr. Hilaal Meer was taken away from his family arouses a thought in the minds of the audiences of the movie that there was a work of betrayal from his own family. In the time of post-modernism, the imagery of betrayal is common as there is a notion of distrust in the nature of human beings. In the adaptation the relationship of Haider's mother Ghazala Meer, a role played by the dynamic actress Tabu who has been a part of the previous Shakespearean play adaptation and Haider's Uncle Khurram Meer in hushed up manner. The scene where Haider first notices his mother's attention being diverted towards some other man, who was not his father, was shown through a veil. This evokes the thought that married woman being in love with other man who is not her husband is not taken in light manner in any society specially in

Sub-continental countries where the question of character arises from the outside world. If one notices closely some of the dialogues in the movie seemed to be taken straight out of the play such as the reference of Haider as the Prince which is in fact how the protagonist was known amongst his people. The original play was confined within the area of the courthouse and the palace, however the movie adaptation is set in Kashmir which has been nothing but a plain battle field in the past few decades of the modern times. In this way the director told the story of betrayal and tragic ending of a promising youth which apparently dovetails with the theory of post-modernism. In the original work of William Shakespeare there is the appearance of the dead king who only wished to speak to Hamlet alone. In that conversation the king talks about his own brother's treachery and how he was disappointed with the actions of the queen. Even after all these sinful crimes, the king did not wish to see his beloved queen to die in the hands of their son Hamlet, instead the ghost of the late asked his son to leave his mother to the judgment of the gods. Such similar scene was also included in the movie of Haider where the protagonist was confronted by a mysterious character named Roohdaar. The character 'Roohdaar' is a human representation of the ghost of the dead king of the play Hamlet. The post-modernism does not endorse the idea of any supernatural existence. Hence the creation of the character of Roohdaar was an ideal way to representation of the disbelief in spirits and supernatural activities the representation of the post-modernist thoughts and perceptions. In the play the character of Ophelia was portrayed as someone who was shy and meek as a person. However the character of Arshia Lone played by Shraddha Kapoor does not symbolize any person of a weak character. Arshia Lone was a person who would be a person who is capable of taking the reins in a relationship and this was portrayed by Shraddha Kapoor in the movie. For Haider which was played by Shahid Kapoor, Arshia was the one person with whom he could be at peace. It could be safe to say that Arshia played the role of Horatio who was the closest friend of Hamlet in the original piece of writing by the famous playwright. She was his confidant when it came to his desperate search of his father. It could be pointed out that the character of Arshia symbolizes modern woman who are capable of handling difficult situations in a single-handed manner. The conflicting characteristics of Haider which was illustrated by the actor Shahid Kapoor portrays the psychoanalytical characteristics when he shows mercy instead of killing his step-father after he lost his legs and literally begged for his own death in the hand of Haider.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

Although the works of William Shakespeare were written centuries ago, the impacts of these works are still seen in the modern era through the modern forms of entertainment such as movies, theatre and of the same likes. The influence of post-modernism which is the portrayal of ideas which defies the ideas, thoughts and concept made in the classic period of time. The post-modernist era does not only have one literary theory to follow but there are others as well such as feminist point of view which was illustrated in the comparison between the play of *Macbeth* and the movie *Maqbool*.

The comparison between the play *Othello* and the movie *Omkara* was about the vindictive nature of human beings and how that can be a reason for their own destruction. The plot of the adaption is set in the modern times which allows one to understand that the nature of human beings are not that simple however these are always complicated and mostly destructive which was illustrated in the adaptation when Omi who is playing the character of Othello shows how not being able to believe the words of the loved ones leads to a dangerous and tragic end.

Lastly the portrayal of the play *Hamlet* in the movie *Haider* shows how the Shakespearean writings still work to entertain the people of the modern times. Although Hamlet is known as the Prince of Tragedy however in the movie there were moments when there were pieces of comedy such as the inclusion of the characters of 'Salman'. Therefore it can be easily said that though William Shakespeare wrote his plays centuries ago however modern forms of literary works are still influenced by them.



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