



FILMS IN INDIA- SHAKESPEARE'S IMPACT

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ABSTRACT:

Shakespeare's well known tragedies 'Julius Caesar' and 'Macbeth' Hamlet, 'Antony and Cleopatra' 'Othello' and 'King Lear' have been the subject and themes of many movies across the world. India is also not far behind in adapting the themes from Shakespeare.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare's, subject and themes.



INTRODUCTION

The problems of human life that have been presented powerfully in Shakespearean tragedy did not try to solve it and present life in its true colour. Shakespeare has presented the expression of serene philosophy of life in his writings in a way that it seems he must have also taken refuge in it. His greatness lies in the fact that he had portrayed his characters by his experience and also by his careful experiment and labour, which is the result of his highest genius. Shakespeare's achievement lies in presenting all phases of life and the nuances of the character in his work.

He has comprehensively portrayed his characters whether it was men or women, ambitious, timid, brave, procrastinators, strong willed, every type. We see the beauty of romance, joy of life and the depth of tragedy in an

artistic way in works of this great legend, which is not considered of age but of all ages. His craftsmanship and mastery is seen in all his writings in the representation of men and women, in the most real sense of age and station, perfectly realized in all the subtle diversities and inconsistencies of protean human nature. We see strong male characters in his tragedies and strong women characters in his comedies.

Shakespeare uses his background characters basically for amusement and not only for entirely realistic event. Even he is always ready to sacrifice his chief characters to literal truth to dramatic effect that shows his mastery, craftsmanship & art and makes him a great dramatist. As Ben Jonson said, 'he was not for an

age but for all time,' was in every respect true to the core which any reader would decipher.

Since ancient times writers around the world try to depict tragedy in their works. So may be, this is one of the reason that writers all around the world try to depict tragedies in their works. Same is the case with the Indian film industry Bollywood which portrays tragic movies and songs mostly for its success.

Indian cinema, is also being inspired by Elizabethan drama especially Shakespearean drama. It is considered as second best in the world and the most popular film-industry in Asia. It has the record of featuring more than 200 films in a year. Although Indian Film Industry is not technically as good as the Hollywood, still the films and the stars are as popular as the Hollywood films and stars. Even

the West had started taking interest in the Indian Film Industry and the result is that we see many Indo-western projects together of which 'Slumdog Millionaire' is a fine example.

A very common trend in the history of Bollywood cinema to adapt stories of popular novel and dramas into films and so Shakespearean dramas are spare from this. There are three adaptations of Shakespearean tragedies into Bollywood films. They include:

1. *Maqbool* (2004), directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, is an adaptation of *Macbeth*.
2. *Omkara* (2006) directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, an adaptation of *Othello*.
3. *Haider* (2014) directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, an adaptation of *Hamlet*.

'*Maqbool*', a film directed by Vishal Bhardwaj is an adaptation of *Macbeth*. The actor Irfan Khan, who played the role of Macbeth, was named as Maqbool. Pankaj Kapoor named as Jahangir Khan or Abbaji is a powerful underworld don with Tabu, named as Nimmi as his mistress. Maqbool is his right hand man who is loved by his mistress. He also reciprocated her love but is grateful to Abba Ji and is very much devoted to him. Om Puri and Naseeruddin Shah are playing the part of corrupt police officers. These two are symbolic characters representing three witches in the play. The story of the movie moves with their prediction of growth of Maqbool as an Underworld of Mumbai taking over the reins of Abba Ji. In this way they brainwash Maqbool who is loyal to Abba Ji. At this stage, Maqbool is in dilemma whether to be loyal towards Abba Ji or to gain power by overthrowing him and his desire to be with Nimmi. She also motivates Maqbool's to fulfill his dream by killing Abba Ji. Being inspired by Nimmi he starts his mission for becoming don at the same time ensuring that nobody else is there to challenge him. Overpowering his ambition, at last he managed to kill him with the help of Nimmi in cold blood while he is in bed at night. So as per the plan he became do with Nimmi as his beloved but they both are haunted by the guilt of Abba Ji's murder. They even see Abba Ji's ghost many times. While on the other hand, there is suspicion within the gang about Maqbool's role in Abba Ji's murder. At last both the lovers are dead and in this way they meet their tragic ends.

These three tragic heroes are the main characters of the movie yet there are other characters that are significant. The supporting roles played by corrupt police officers like Om Puri and Naseeruddin Shah are among them who are responsible for the pace in the storyline of the movie. They also act as comic reliefs who are inspectors-cum-astrologers. They are responsible for bringing tragedy as they predict the rise of Maqbool and the fall of Abba Ji, who has held them on his payroll. Here the director has portrayed their characters in contrary to the Shakespearean play as they are not just passive soothsayers but are involve in plotting the events. They have acted as agents in providing information to Abba Ji's enforcers to eliminate out his rival gang, using elusive nuances in persuading Maqbool to deceive Abba Ji. They succeeded in patching clumsily an 'encounter' on Riyaz Boti which is playing the part of Macduff and subsequently setting up an alliance between two rival politicians. They were also responsible for fleeing Guddu, the character playing the role of Fleance and Riyaz Boti against Maqbool. There are other roles played by Masumeh Makhija and Piyush Mishra in the movie. Though it was not a commercial hit but was very much praised by the critics. The plot of the film is inspired by Shakespearean *Macbeth* in terms of events and the characterization. In the backdrop of the movie we see Mumbai underworld and events related to it though being inspired by the play. Bhardwaj has successfully co-related the events and happenings of the plays with the intrigues and conspiracy of the Mumbai underworld.

Shakespearean tragedy *Othello* is adopted and made into a movie '*Omkara*', released in 2006, is also directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, starring actors like, Ajay Devgan as Omkara Shukla or Omi playing the role of Othello, Kareena Kapoor as Dolly Mishra playing the role of Desdemona, Saif Ali Khan as Ishwar 'Langda' Tyagi, (Iago) & Vivek Oberoi as Keshav Upadhyay or 'Kesu Firangi' (Cassio). The film did very well commercially and praised by the audience for its music. Bhardwaj also composed the music for the movie including the super hit background score. Credit also goes to the lyricists Gulzar for writing lines preferable for the plot and today's situation. The movie is based in a small town of Western Uttar Pradesh, Meerut. The backdrop of the movies is the politics of Uttar Pradesh.

Though there are many movies based on politics and crime of Uttar Pradesh yet *Omkara* is very different in its portrayal of incidents and characterization. The movie being set up in Meerut reflects the criminalization of politics of Uttar Pradesh. The movie won many national and international awards like the prestigious National Awards, Filmfare Award, at Asian Film festival and at Cairo International film festival. It was also showcased at the Marche du Film section at the 2006 Cannes film festival along with a book on the making of *Omkara*. The leading character of the movie is Omkara, a bahubali, a sort of political enforcer & leader, related to gang committing crime for the local politician Tiwari Bhaisaab, role played by Naseeruddin Shah. Langda tyagi and Kesu Firangi are his biggest support. The movie has an abrupt opening with Langda tyagi gate crashing a baraat, challenging the bridegroom, Rajju (Deepak Dobriyal) to make attempt to stop Omkara from abducting his bride, Dolly Mishra. But Rajju is not successful and the wedding never takes place because Dolly is abducted by Omkara. Dolly's father Advocate Raghunath Mishra, the role played by Kamal Tiwari, referred as Vakeel Saab by people in the movie is agitated and confronts Omi. He pressurized Omi to return his daughter but Dolly herself hesitates to return back. She clarifies that she herself eloped with Omi and that she loves him.

Political upheavals came but then Bhaisaab is elected for parliament and Omkara is promoted from Bahubali to the candidate for the upcoming elections. Entering into politics, Omkara appoints Kesu over Langda as his successor which was a humiliation for him. Feeling jealous because Kesu was junior and inexperienced than him, he desired to take vengeance against both his offenders. For this purpose, he hatches a conspiracy against them by creating misunderstanding between Omkara and Kesu. For this purpose he hatched many plots, like on one hand he misguides Kesu against Dolly and Omi and on the other hand he starts poisoning Omi ears against Dolly. He convinces Omi that Dolly and Kesu are engaged in illicit love affair giving many false evidences. This results in the killing of Dolly by Omi on their wedding night and Kesu was shot by Langda on Omi approval. At this stage, Indu clarifies the misunderstanding of Omi against Dolly blaming Langda for the entire nuisance. At the end, Indu kills Langda and Omi commits suicide. There are some supporting cast in the movie; Bipasha Basu as Billo Chamanbahar (Bianca), Konkona Sen Sharma as Indu Tyagi (Emilia), Deepak Dobriyal as Rajan Tiwari (Roderigo), Naseeruddin Shah as Bhaisaab (Duke of Venice), Pankaj Tripathi as Kichlu, Manav Kaushik as Surendra Kaptaan and Kamal Tiwari as Advocate Raghunath Mishra.

'*Haider*' is an adaptation of Shakespearean Hamlet which is considered as "one of the most important movie of the year." Although his previous two films 'Maqbool' and 'Omkara' were successful but this movie, directed by Basharat Peer has gained wider media attention because of its controversial backdrop. It is based in the Indian-administered Kashmir in the 1990's, a time when militancy was at its peak. Shahid Kapoor, playing the role of Prince Hamlet is named as Haider Mir, who is a student of AMU and a poet, comes back to Sri Nagar after his father's death. Shraddha Kapoor is playing the part of Hamlet's beloved Ophelia named as Arshia in the film; Tabu playing the role of Hamlet's mother Gertrude called Ghazala and Kay Kay Menon as Hamlet's Uncle, Claudius.

The movie is set in the backdrop of Kashmir in the times of turbulence, movie has successfully adapted the play's well-known twists and turns into the lives of the characters in the movie. After his father disappearance, in order to search for him, Haider leaves his studies and comes back to Kashmir. It was the time when insurgency was at height, his father, who was a doctor by profession was found guilty of helping militants and was carried away by the armed forces. He is disappointed and dejected to find his mother in an illegal relationship with his uncle, whom he later discovered to be a traitor and responsible for his father's ill-fate. The film is all about Haider as the play is about Prince Hamlet and as he wanted to take revenge of his father's death in the same way Haider decides to take revenge against his Uncle and armed forces resulting in ruining his own personality. In his voyage to revenge he is being dragged up into the wrong hands and in the wrong way. If he believed his father was not guilty, he should have fought a legal battle which would have not ruined his life, his beloved and his family. 'Revenge is a wild justice', as Bacon says same is portrayed in the movie, Haider.

It is strongly believed by the critics that Bhardwaj has been able to portray out the raw emotions of Hamlet as Haider in the movie while focusing on Kashmir. The state which has witnessed its worst struggle throughout the 1990's as all the separatists groups started their violent clash with the

Indian army demanding for a separate state. This also includes the attacks of many other Indian cities, hijack of planes, kidnapping of many international tourists, forcing the Kashmiri Pundits to flee from the valley and killing of many innocents by the terrorists groups. Kashmir being the 'bone of contention' between India and Pakistan since 1947 has always been a flashpoint in South Asia resulting in two wars, nuclear armament of the two nations and number of ceasefire violation on the border. India has continuously warned Pakistan for supporting the militant groups and interfering in the internal matter of it. But in 'Haider' we don't see Indo-Pak rivalry and blame-game instead of it we see the human rights violation throughout the movie.

Many human rights activists have accused security forces of torturing and kidnapping local and innocent youths in illegal detention camps but the defence forces have always condemned this allegation as wrong. Jason Burke wrote an article in 'Guardian' that, "Haider includes graphic scenes of torture in Indian army camps and other human rights abuses by Indian officials." Although being a bold portrayal and receiving much criticism it has also received many praises from film critics and fans.

There are various films made on Kashmir issues in Bollywood since the rise of militancy in the valley like, 'Roza', 'Hero' 'Mission Kashmir', 'Dhoka', 'Fanaa', 'Lakshya', 'Lamhaa' and there are more regional and international films in the series including some documentaries also. Analysts and critics believe that all the commercial films made earlier were not successful in highlighting the real issue and 'Haider' is the first film which completes this demand.

Bhardwaj is being criticised by the various Indian groups and media about the portrayal of armed forces as they all describe it as an "unfair." But he spoke defending the movie that although he is an Indian and patriot and he loves the nation yet he would portray in his film what is anti-human. We all consider Kashmir as an integral part of India and we all want it but not account of human rights violation and so such things are happening it should be condemned and India being a Secular democratic republic does not believe in any kind of suppression.

We find a trend on twitter having contradictory views over the emotional outburst on movie as it has been reflected in two rival hashtags. It is either #Boycott Haider or #Haider True Cinema. Both are getting enough tweets since the movie has been released though the latter getting more. So people have contradiction on its depiction while some describe it as 'unfair portrayal' the other see it as a true expression of real cinema in India. Nonetheless, 'Haider' has paved the way for the opening a new platform for India where more sensitive issues will be raised through films and media as believed by many analysts. Dr Zakir Hussain, a senior analyst at the Indian Council of World Affairs states that:

As democratic traditions strengthens in the country,
more and more such movies will be made and people
will be educated. Haider is the first step in that direction. (2)

A democratic country that India is where one is free to express his/her views so if any citizen of the country has any issue regarding injustice meted to him/her then they should fight for their cause on humanitarian ground and not by picking up gun. Weapons are not a solution of any problem relating to ethnic, religious, political, and social or any other issue.

Vishal Bhardwaj seems to be greatly inspired by Shakespeare's genius as he is the director of three films based on his dramas and especially tragedies. May be in future we will see some more under his production. Human beings all possess reason, but they are generally ruled by passions and emotions (the 'lower' and 'irrational' parts of the human psyche). Literary texts disseminate ideas, but they do so by playing on our emotions and desires. (42) After reading the plays of Shakespeare and watching all these adaptations by Vishal Bhardwaj, we can believe it.

The greatness of Shakespearean drama lies in their being adopted even today in all parts of the world including Bollywood cinema.

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