
Shakespeare's Influence on Hindi Films Omkara and Maqbool: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

Millions of people in India watch films every day as both enjoyment and education. Indians like taking part in our nation's film culture. Filmmakers all around the world are continuously inspired by Shakespeare's tragedies. Shakespearean plays have been shown in a variety of other artistic forms, including songs, films, plays, performances, and documentaries. Shakespeare's plays have been adapted in a variety of artistic mediums, both for commercial and artistic purposes, although it seems that film is the most widely used. Nearly all of his plays have been made into films in a variety of languages and throughout the world. When it comes to Shakespeare's plays, Bollywood has also produced some noteworthy successful adaptations. An incredible turning point occurred with William Shakespeare in India. Shakespeare's body of work is vibrant and a never-ending source of inspiration for innumerable individuals all over the world. The spectator is taken to a cinematic paradise when Shakespeare's works are adapted for the screen. Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies have been adapted in India and are understood as a synthesis of the East and the West, an exchange of Eastern and Western cultures, and a combination of 'videsi' and 'desi'. This study makes an effort to comprehend how Shakespearean literature has influenced Hindi film and certain theoretical ideas on cinematic adaptation.

Key Words: Shakespeare's tragedies, Hindi film, Western cultures, theoretical ideas

Introduction:

India serves as the base and primary operating location for the Hindi film industry in India, generally referred to as Hindi cinema. There is a significant connection between literature and movies. The popularisation of the writers is greatly aided by films. Shakespearean film adaptations helped to mould the global viewers' contemporary sensibilities. Bollywood has often looked at William Shakespeare as a valuable source of knowledge. Filmmakers have drawn much inspiration

from his works, which include 2 epic poems, 154 sonnets, and 38 plays. Shakespeare has a lengthy history in Hindi cinema, which makes it an influential instrument. It is the director's work that uses Shakespeare to examine an Indian way of thinking in global society. Some of Shakespeare's works—aside from his poetry works—have been adapted for the big screen. Shakespeare's most famous tragedies and historical plays are available in several translations in addition to being adapted for the big screen. Numerous television miniseries are produced alongside the movie versions. His plays are relevant due to their timeless themes. He dramatized subjects such as love, marriage, family connections, gender roles, comedy, sickness, deceit, betrayal, retaliation, murder, and death, among others. He crafted unforgettable characters, from regal kings to debased crooks, who have evolved into prototypes for contemporary dramas and cinema. He has a very broad personality. Each character is distinct from the others and is liked by everyone. His speech is based on real conversations between people. We can sum up by saying that his plays reflect life. Shakespeare's legacy is maintained in India by Hindi cinema, which gives his work numerous interpretations.

This study focuses on the reading and viewing the gloomy tragedies by Shakespeare such as Othello and Macbeth and their cinematic adaptations Omkara and Maqbool directed by Vishal Bharadwaj.

The initial disclosure of any creative endeavour plays an incredibly important role, whether it's the opening lecture of a teacher, the opening of a movie, the first composition of a musician, the first draft of a scriptwriter, the first painting created by an artist, or the opening of any literary genre, like the opening line of a poem, the opening paragraph of a short story, the opening chapter of a novel, or the opening scene of a play. Since first impressions are always lasting, poets, novelists, and playwrights emphasize the value of "openings" and devote a lot of time to crafting them for their literary creations.

Shakespeare has performed a difficult balancing act, setting the divine right of kings against the bourgeois ethic. The triumph of traditional values at the end means that, in a sense, the middle-class audience has been witnessing its own more modest failures. But ruthlessness is something which is all too easily responded to in itself, whether the perpetrator be Macbeth or Malcolm. The braver sort of spectator might find satisfaction in Macbeth's aggressive thrusting after the unattainable, come what might. Herein lay the impetus behind the great discoveries of the Renaissance. There is a pride and arrogance, but also an appealing vulnerability, about this pressing forward regardless of consequences. More timid souls might enjoy identifying with Macbeth and so vicariously savouring possibilities.¹

The play's introduction is crucial because it establishes the play's tone and atmosphere, informs the audience or readers of what will happen next, and draws them in from the start. It is a crucial theatrical tool that assists in revealing the play's storyline, topic, location, and surroundings as well as in emphasizing its key problems and concerns. Shakespeare employs certain strategies to improve the effectiveness of the opening scenes of his plays. For instance, the beginning of *Macbeth* begins with lightning and thunder and the entrance of the three witches. The fight that has already occurred is conveyed to the audience through the witches' discourse, and it is also made clear that they plan to see Macbeth soon through their chat. Similar to how the drama starts with thunder and lightning, it conveys danger and violence. Both *Macbeth* and *Maqbool* begin with intense darkness, gloom, torrential rain, thunder, and lightning. Bhardwaj captures this "special atmosphere of a Shakespearean tragedy" in *Maqbool* from the very beginning in a masterful manner. But in shaping the movie to suit his cinematic requirements, he has made certain liberties as a filmmaker, or more accurately as an adaptor of the play. As a result, the Mumbai underworld takes the place of the Scottish court, and Purohit and Pandit, two corrupt police officers, assume the roles of the three strange sisters. Witches were a good way to increase the play's tension and mystery while Shakespeare was writing *Macbeth* in 1606. In Elizabethan times, the notion of including supernatural aspects in the play was well received by the audience, but when Bhardwaj chose to create *Maqbool* in 2003, no audience would have been open to the idea of witches forging prophecies for the protagonist. It would have turned into a ridiculous and unoriginal concept to hold onto. Therefore, the director's revisions gave the movie a more authentic viewpoint. Shakespeare intended for the inclusion of witches to evoke a sense of dread, which was what Bhardwaj in *Maqbool* tasked the two cops with doing. *Maqbool* has had several interactions, either with Pandit, Purohit, or *Maqbool*'s group. Inspector Purohit kills local mobster Sadiq in the head at point blank range during a police confrontation that is shown in the movie. Blood sprays everywhere as he instantly passes away. The tense mood throughout the movie is a result of these meetings. The witches in the play serve as soothsayers in addition to instilling a sense of dread. In Act 1, SC. 3, witches encounter Macbeth and Banquo as they are leaving the battlefield and make prophecies first for Macbeth and then also for Banquo. They address Macbeth as the king before addressing him as the Thane of Glamis and the Thane of Cawdor. Inspector Pandit, who, like the witches of *Macbeth*, can make forecasts by reading a horoscope, serves as an intriguing example of a link drawn by Bhardwaj in *Maqbool*. *Maqbool* and *Macbeth* both employ nighttime darkness as a cover for their horrible actions. In the gloom of the night, people seek solace and indulge their darkest cravings. However, it is crucial to point out that while Duncan's murder in the play also happened at night,

there were distinct reasons for Abbaji's murder. The sole reason given for Macbeth's murder of Duncan, who served as a father figure to him, in the play was his "ambition" to become king. Nevertheless, in contrast to the drama, Maqbool kills Abba ji because he is sexually envious. Obtaining Abbaji's status becomes secondary to his main goal of winning Nimmi's affection. It is vital to note that Duncan's murder is not the play's main focus before tracing Maqbool's path from Abbaji's right-hand man to his killer. In contrast to Maqbool, when Abba ji is killed halfway through the movie, the murder in Macbeth occurs right at the start of the second act. This is the point that the movie reaches its peak. This alteration reveals Bhardwaj's shift in viewpoint; he sought to centre his crime thriller on the subject of sexual jealousy, with Nimmi serving as Maqbool's throne and Abbaji's murder serving as his means of achieving it. Consequently, the killing of Abba ji takes up more than half of the movie. In the play, witches tempt Macbeth to commit that heinous act, whereas Nimmi repeatedly encourages Maqbool to kill Abba ji in the movie. Despite being Abba Ji's mistress, she despises being near "his repulsively fat body." However, she secretly longs to spend every moment with Maqbool. She starts encouraging Maqbool to perform that terrible murder since she knows she won't be able to satisfy her wants until Abba ji is still alive. When they are out on their own, she strikes Maqbool first. The plot of Macbeth is heavily reliant on irony. It also fosters a hazy feeling of terror and mystery while aiding in the development and maintenance of suspense. Abba ji's speech is obviously ironic in nature. He is the don of Mumbai's underworld, and he got there by ruthlessly killing many people, including Lal Ji Bhai, his own guru. Macbeth's protracted monologue reveals to the audience his divergent opinions. His "vaulting ambition" pushes him toward the crime even if he isn't yet confident, he will kill Duncan. A crucial part of the play is the dagger scene. The blade becomes a representation of Macbeth's conscience in his soliloquy, which amply portrays his mental state. However, there aren't any examples of asides or soliloquies in Maqbool. The only way the viewer may learn about a character's inner thoughts is through dialogue. In Macbeth, there is absolutely no pleasant music; the only sound that can be described as disagreeable is the sound of thunder, lightning, rain, and storms. Maqbool's music, however, is quite well-done in the film. Bhardwaj composed lovely music for the movie, which features numerous songs and dance scenes while adhering to the rules of a normal Bollywood movie. Scotland's regal court has been replaced with Mumbai's criminal underworld as the scene. The bleak cityscapes of Mumbai replace foggy moors, damp castles, and mildewed havelis. Mercedes-Benz cars and pistols take the place of horses and swords. But Vishal's ability to recreate a Scottish melodrama amid the perilous and bizarre realm of Mumbai's criminal underworld is what gives the movie its true brilliance. The order that is thrown off in the beginning

in both Macbeth and Maqbool is eventually brought back. In the play, Malcolm is installed as king after Macduff kills Macbeth and brings his head onstage. Because Duncan's rightful successor is proclaimed king, order is reinstated. However, in the movie, when Guddu and Sameera warmly adopt the Nimmi kid, the world is once again in order. Because of this, it can be said that the film is an appropriation of the text rather than a strict adaptation of the source material, even though there are numerous instances where a strong parallel can be drawn between the two, the differences are more cogent.

Shakespeare has written on a variety of subjects, and his works always bring his characters to life. Othello, one of Shakespeare's most well-known tragedies, warns us about the dangers of jealousy in all its manifestations. The weak are envious of the strong, and inferiors are envious of superiors, but when the seed of jealousy enters a love connection, it not only destroys that relationship but may also have much more severe implications than one might think. Shakespeare wrote the play in 1603 and it dealt with a variety of subjects, including as racism, resentment, love, betrayal, and atonement. Othello was a sorrowful drama with a gloomy undertone, yet the characters were handled well, with each one clearly distinguishable from the others. In Othello, issues of betrayal, discrimination, and appearance are all explored. The play's central character is Othello, a moor. He suffers from a lot of discrimination and malicious plans since he is a moor. In favor of Michael Cassio, who is junior to Iago, Othello overlooks Iago. Iago feels humiliated and seeks to get his retribution. It's possible that Othello slept with Emilia, Iago's wife. By having his messenger, Roderigo, inform Senator Brabantio that Othello has wooed Desdemona, Othello starts Iago's plan against him. Othello is able to persuade the Senate that he and Desdemona are really in love, despite Iago's attempts to frame him. Following his success in persuading the Senate, he and his new wife are transferred to Cyprus for a military command. Iago, who is unhappy with the decision, continues tormenting Othello by putting Desdemona's handkerchief on Cassio, Othello's devoted caption, and accusing Cassio and Desdemona of having an affair. Roderigo is exploited by Iago because he is wealthy, in love with Desdemona, and works with Iago because he is promised that he would have Desdemona if they are successful in beating Othello. Roderigo is driven by his infatuation with Desdemona and his faith that Iago will help him gain her. Iago persuades Roderigo to try to murder Cassio. However, Roderigo fails miserably and only succeeds in wounding Cassio, which infuriates Iago, who then murders him covertly.

Despite Desdemona's pleas, Othello suffocates her to death out of jealousy while being completely oblivious of the plan to have him killed. Othello commits suicide after hearing of Emilia's discovery

of the scheme and her admission of the truth to him. Othello injures Iago before committing himself; Iago is detained. Iago murders Emilia. Being a classic villain, Iago has a significant part to perform in the play. He contributes the most dialogue to the drama. Throughout the play, his frustration and evilness are evident. He was aware of Othello's flaws and easy pickings, and he took advantage of them. Iago skilfully played with Othello's ego since he was an egotistical man. Without even hinting, he cleverly turned Othello's ego against himself.

In the film *Omkara*, Vishal Bhardwaj, like *Maqbool*, tries to mimic the topic, characters, events, and moments from the grim drama of Shakespeare's *Othello*. *Omkara* has been built and framed by the screenplay writer using *Othello*'s plot as a model. Even though Vishal Bhardwaj attempted to adapt Shakespeare's *Othello* by mimicking the plot structure, character models, and theme, he also attempted to contextualize *Omkara* by bringing up the practical concern of the criminalization of politics in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. The movie has taken on a new tint by fusing politics and crime, with politics becoming criminalized in the process. Nothing but the ironic feminine jealousy and murder that *Othello* features serves as the movie *Omkara*'s central topic. In the film *Omkara*, we can observe how the characters are an exact replica of *Othello* while still having an Indian aspect and cultural uniqueness. *Omkara* consequently reiterates *Othello*'s topic. A number of the film's events that are based on a string of occurrences in *Othello* serve as a reminder that the plot of the movie was imitated. *Omkara*, which Bhardwaj produced, was a huge success at the box office. It was highly praised by critics and received awards, largely due to the story's rural feel and the language's heavy usage of the Khariboli dialect, which appealed to the locals. Everyone enjoyed the language, and other directors were inspired to explore with it in a number of other films. The names of the film's characters were one particularly intriguing adaptation made by Bhardwaj. The protagonist's name was *Omkara*, whereas *Desdemona*'s was *Dolly*, *Iago*'s was *Ishwar "Langda"*, *Emilia*'s was *Indu Tyagi*, *Cassio*'s was *Keshav "Kesu Firangi"*, *Rodrigo*'s was *Rajan "Rajju"*, and *Bianca*'s was *Billo*. Each character's name begins with the same sound as its counterpart in the play, which is a remarkable aspect of their naming. To successfully fit into the adaption, Bhardwaj must have selected the names ingeniously. An significant part in the film was portrayed by the well-known actor *Ajay Devgan*, whose powerful performance was ideal for the part. *Saif Ali Khan*'s portrayal of *Ishwar "Langda" Tyagi*, who was modelled by the playwright *Iago*, was the other admirable character in the movie. Numerous compliments from both the public and the critics were given to his wicked and clever persona. *Langda Tyagi* feels humiliated over up-ranking to *Kesu Firangi* and his vengeance-seeking spirit; his conspiracy against *Omkara* is a repetition of *Iago*'s being

humiliated and vengeance turning into a conspiracy against Othello. This is reinforced by the promotion of Kesu Firangi to rank instead of Langda Tyagi, who is senior and experienced. The miscommunication between Omi and Kesu, the paradoxical circumstance that arises between Omi and Dolly Mishra, the assumption that Omi pursued an affair with Dolly and Kesu, Omi's murder of Dolly in response to this suspicion, and Omi's subsequent suicide all contribute to this. All of these events are echoed in the play Othello, from Iago's devious trap to Desdemona's murder, Cassio's killing to Othello's suicide, and Roderigo's pursuit of Desdemona's love to Emilia's revelation of Iago's plot against Othello.

Even though the play was adapted for the screen and the language was altered, one of the play's most crucial passages was faithfully translated into Hindi.

In its simplest terms, then, the tragedy of Othello represents the destruction of a sublime love between two noble spirits through the intrigues of a villain devilish in his cunning-and unscrupulousness. And the chief excitement of the play is provided by those scenes in which we see this destruction taking place.²

In Othello, Desdemona's father had said this to the moor, but in the movie, Dolly's father—who plays Desdemona—spoke the same words. Due to the fact that Othello had retained this information, which Iago would later utilize, it was a discourse of the highest significance in the play. The phrase not only hurt Omkara in the movie, but it subsequently tormented him. By cultivating the seed of envy in Omkara, Langda Tyagi utilized the discussion to enrage him even more. The movie's rural scenery helped to create an Indian atmosphere for the audience, while Gulzar's melodic songs improved the film's overall quality. The movie's lighting wasn't particularly brilliant right away. To replicate the gorgeous scene of the countryside, a dismal hue of brown was consistently splattered over the screen. The movie follows the play's development of situations exactly. Situations and story development are comparable, and the movie's characters grew as the story did. Bhardwaj has always been interested in the film's depth. He has remarkable vision when making movies. He was able to insinuate the key themes of the play into the movie by reading between the lines of the text. He focuses mostly on one scene at a time, handling the emotions and how they are presented with extreme gentleness. It's not difficult for audiences to relate to the movie's handling of challenging emotions like covetousness, guilt, and jealousy because it does it in a genuine way. The film's lyrical imagery, lethal power of jealousy, and conviction in its deeds demonstrated the director's ability to comprehend the more sinister side of love and relationships. The moving emotions that Othello portrays have made it famous.

The popularity of Omkara has been attributed to its cinematic quality, the particularity of language, its music, and all the fare of Hindi masala film it can offer its audience. For example, Raja Sen calls it a “superlative-exhausting work of passion and tribute, skill and style” and then goes on to identify five reasons for this “Spellbinding stuff”: “language,” “loyalty,” “players” (actors), “sights and sounds,” and “creativity” (Sen). One can argue that Bhardwaj’s refusal to place race at the heart of his adaptation of Othello and to replace the witches of Macbeth with corrupt and complicit cops who spend their free time making predictions through horoscopes brings attention to other kinds of urgencies that mark the contemporary postcolonial milieu in India: crimes related to caste warfare and the violence against women that remains at the centre of these crimes, along with lawlessness, clan rivalry, and political deceit.³

It is commendable that Bhardwaj piqued the audience's interest with an adaption that displayed strong emotions but did it in an Indian setting and with a rustic tone. Shakespeare's plays are renowned for their sobering realism and sad conclusions that eloquently capture the essence of the characters and their personalities. Bhardwaj in no way served as the inspiration for the renowned playwright while creating sketches of his characters and putting the intense drama on screen. He treated Dolly's innocence and Ishwar's cunning equally with justice. Nowhere could we claim that the movie's portrayal of the characters from the original text was lacking.

Conclusion:

Through the creation of his films, Vishal Bhardwaj demonstrated his unmatched brilliance. Even though it was a difficult effort to adapt the historical time and social context of the original play for Hindi film, Bhardwaj eloquently captured the essence of the play on the screen, leaving no Shakespearean fan unsatisfied. Another area of filmmaking where many directors fall short is literary adaptation. Although the two media have certain similarities, hiding their distinctions takes expertise that not everyone possesses. When comparing the parallels between literature and film, it is clear that both mediums create the illusion of reality. To help their audiences connect, authors and filmmakers can use a variety of strategies to make their works as realistic as possible. While the most crucial approach in a book is writing, where one may describe various scenarios and beautiful vistas using words and phrases, there are other strategies that can assist a spectator feel connected to a movie. Lighting, camera angles, and, of course, conversation are a few of these tactics. The

audience's perspective is reproduced in films rather than just being a representation of reality. The audience is constantly aware that everything they are viewing on the screen is a work of fiction, yet thanks to cinematography, the events presented strongly force their actuality. The parallels and contrasts between the two mediums may be found in how they convey meaning. While a book's meaning can only be communicated through words, a movie can also be understood through action, scenic views, lighting, non-verbal cues, and music, among other techniques. These techniques can all aid the audience in better understanding the film's meaning. It is simple to comprehend that an audio-visual encounter affects a person more strongly and permanently than printed words do. Bhardwaj has demonstrated his mastery of the craft of filmmaking with his films like *Maqbool* and *Omkara*.

Although the portrayal of his characters is really Indian, they appear to have been lifted directly from Shakespearean plays, which makes it easier for the audience to identify with them. With the support of the excellent filmmakers it already has, like as Bhardwaj, who could be clearly recognized as the forerunner of Indian films based on well-known adaptations receiving international recognition, Hindi cinema will surpass borders in perfection if this relationship between literature and cinema continues.

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