



Macbeth In The Underworld Of Mumbai: A Study Of Bhardwaj's Adaptation Of Shakespeare's Macbeth

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Abstract:

As a writer, Shakespeare is, maybe, the best in class. His plays cast a spell, and triumph and win are indivisibly associated with his special craftsmanship. His skillfully drawn circumstances, life-like characters, and captivating verse catch all hearts, old and youth. His plays have stood the flavor of the time. Multiple hundred years have passed since his demise, but his widely popular dramatizations and sonnets have stayed the closest companions to men. As the superb manifestations of extraordinary workmanship, they have held their enticement for all ages and all groups of people. His plays have been adapted worldwide in different languages and medium. Recently, one of the filmmaker of Bollywood Vishal Bhardwaj has adapted Shakespeare's three tragic plays *Macbeth* as *Maqbool* (2004), *Othello* as *Omkaara*(2006) and *Hamlet* as *Haider* (2014). Here the main aim is to study how Bhardwaj has adapted *Macbeth* in contemporary India and set it in the Muslim dominated underworld of Mumbai. For this study mainly descriptive analysis method is applied. Here the researcher analysis the different situations of the movie.

Key words: Bollywood, Shakespeare, Maqbool, Adaptation, Bhardwaj, Underworld, Mumbai, Macbeth.

Introduction:

Shakespeare as a dramatist can't be compared with another. His universality lies in his art of characterization. His dramas are the portrayal of the dark corridors of human mind through which the human instinct like jealousy, envy, trust, betrayal, love get its expression to the fullest. His characters are the real men and women. They have their own individuality and peculiarity but at the same time universal. So the writings of Shakespeare know no limits. His writings are not for an age or a particular nation but of all ages and nations. According to Dutta, "The appeal of his plays has the same moving effect on all minds, ancient or modern" (Dutta, 1999, p. 67). And for this universality of Shakespeare filmmakers and dramatists of the world find their raw material to adapt Shakespearean dramas. Shakespeare in India is found in two different folds. According to Hussain and Das,

The existence of Shakespeare in India is of two different categories: The Shakespeare of the age of Elizabeth and the Shakespeare of India. We find the Elizabethan Shakespeare in the syllabus of different institutions. The Indian Shakespeare appears in the shape of receptions, adaptations, transliterations, presentations, alterations, and appeared as self-restraint in Indian land. From the introductory juncture of British rule, the Shakespearean craft is found in the different states of India. Among them, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Maharashtra, and Assam are some of the prominent places where Shakespearean plays were performed to entertain the traders during the tenure of British rule (Hussain & Das, 2023, p. 876).

Karim and Mondal (2020) remarked, "The Assamese dramatic production has been indubitably influenced by Shakespearean plays. Most of the modern Assamese plays have evolved as a result of their writers' interaction with the West, especially with the dramas of Shakespeare" (p. 8). Later on the Shakespearean plays moved into the silver screen from texts and stage performances.

Adaptation of Shakespeare in Indian cinema has started from the time of its inception. Especially, it is the Parsi theatre that localized the Shakespearean plays according to the taste of the Indian audiences. And this led several filmmakers in India to adapt Shakespeare in national as well as regional languages. It is Sohrab Modi who first adapted Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into *Khoon ka Khoon* in 1935. This film was made in both Hindi and Urdu language and can be regarded as the first Hindi and Urdu adaptation of Shakespeare in India. However, the craze of adapting Shakespeare was set behind as soon as India was freed from British rule. According to Suddhaseel

Sen “After Indian independence in 1947, this tradition took a back seat, but the late 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in Shakespeare adaptations, no doubt partly because of the success of English-language adaptations by Kenneth Branagh, Baz Luhrmann, and others” (Sen, 2009, pp.1-2).

Bhardwaj’s adaptation of Shakespearean trilogy has started a new genre in Bollywood. Though there are many adaptations of Shakespeare in Bollywood, people and educationist was not concern about it. It is Bhardwaj who made Shakespeare popular in Bollywood and among the masses of India. Even Bhardwaj never knew that his adaptations would become a study material of university students and research. Nowadays, in most of the universities of India film adaptation of Shakespeare is introduced as one of the important topic and Vishal Bhardwaj’s trilogy is one of them.

Maqbool is the first installment of his trilogy that got release in 2003 and Bhardwaj received international acclaims for this movie as it was screened in Cannes Film Festival. In fact, the filmmaker has the enthusiasm to touch the audiences out of the border of India. He acclaims, he "wanted to touch a chord with international audiences, so there were many commercial considerations in adapting Shakespeare" (cited in Sen, 2009, p.2).

In the history of adaptation of Shakespeare’s drama, *Macbeth* plays an important role. Among them, the most remarkable ones are Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood* (1957), Roman Polanski’s *Macbeth* (1971), Orson Welles *Macbeth* (1948), etc (Sultana, 2014). Among all these *Maqbool* is one of the adaptations of *Macbeth*. Bhardwaj has successfully transported the story of *Macbeth* into a Muslim dominated underworld of Mumbai. The movie depicts the struggles for power and ambition like the source text. Here, Irfan Khan plays the role of Maqbool (Macbeth) while Tabu plays the role of Nimmi (Lady Macbeth) and Pankaj Kapoor plays the role of Abbaji (Duncan I Scotland). The most interesting character of the movie is the portrayal of Om Puri (Pandit) and Naseeruddin Shah (Purohit) who plays the role of the three witches. Watching the socio-political situation as depicted in the movie, it can be considered as desi *Macbeth*.

Methodology:

For this study mainly descriptive analysis method is applied. Here, the researchers describe as well as analysis the different circumstances of the film. Moreover, the impact of Shakespeare in Hindi cinema and other research work on Shakespeare's adaptation in cinema becomes the source material of this study.

Bhardwaj's Maqbool:

Bhardwaj has transported the movie from Scotland to Mumbai underworld to give a local touch. Here, the characters are not related to royal family nor they are soldiers of Scotland. Even Maqbool (Macbeth) doesn't serve the state like Macbeth who instead work for the mafia king Abbaji (Duncan) who has a beautiful mistress known as Nimmi (Lady Macbeth). Abbaji considers Maqbool like his own son but he never knew one day Maqbool will bite him like a serpent. Indeed, it is Nimmi who sparks Maqbool's heart with love after her immense try, and an illegitimate relationship starts between them. It is illegitimate because they are not bound by marital vows like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Nimmi always instigates Maqbool to kill Abbaji even she questions his manhood. Moreover, Pandit and Purohit who work like three witches of source text also pour into the mind of Maqbool that one day he will become the main boss of the underworld gang. Abbaji has a daughter named Sameera who loves Guddu (Fleance) and Guddu is the son Kaka (Banquo). After the marriage between Sameera and Guddu, Nimmi becomes mad like to see Maqbool in the position of Abbaji as she thinks Maqbool can never take the position of Abbaji and filled his mind with negativity that one day Guddu will become the heir of Abbaji as Abbaji don't have any son. So, with the hope to get the position of Abbaji and out of sexual jealousy Maqbool kills Abbaji at last.

Maqbool comes out after murdering Abbaji and assumes the position of don of the gang and both Nimmi and Maqbool were supposed to spend a peaceful life but they are plagued with remorse after witnessing Abbaji's spirit and being powerless to remove the bloodshed from their hands. Moreover, Maqbool is suspected as the murderer of Abbaji by the gang and the couple finally suffers a horrible demise.

The movie is closely related to the source text. As per Lanier, “Closely parallels Macbeth in plot, motifs, and character” (Lanier, 2007). For instance, the banquet episode when the spectre of Banquo makes its appearance is transformed by a gathering of the gang of Maqbool where Guddu and Kaka (Fleance and Banquo) are absent. Maqbool is the only person who believes Kaka is breathing and staring towards him when his murdered corpse is returned, and as a result, he reacts like a frightened person. According to Singh, “Maqbool’s fear of Kaka’s gaze is tied to Abbaji’s murder scene in which Abbaji dies looking at Maqbool. His blood splashes over Nimmi who like her Shakespearean counterpart becomes increasingly obsessed with imaginary bloodstains” (Singh, 2014, p. 763). The filmmaker has recreated the incident involving the movement of Birnam wood in the shape of Maqbool's effort to dispose of illegal goods and the ensuing investigation of his house.

The conclusion of Maqbool in Bhardwaj’s hands does not aim for either ultimate harmony or extreme disorder. He pursues a medium path, nevertheless, in contrast. Since the film takes place in Mumbai's underbelly, it would be slightly unfair to imply a change from chaos to peace, yet on an individual basis, peace is attainable. This is demonstrated by Guddu and Sameera caring for the newly born child of Nimmi in a gesture of humanism that surpasses their differences with one another and their gang. Yet this hint is brief since the film's tone consistently conveys the idea that the deadliest deeds do not even originate through predictable sources, but rather the unanticipated ones. Since the audiences learn that Abbaji slaughtered his employer to gain power and Maqbool murders the guy who raised him like a son, this statement becomes pretty perceptive.

Macbeth in the Underworld of Mumbai:

Vishal Bhardwaj’s movie Maqbool is based on the socio-political situation of Mumbai under a Muslim-dominated area where Macbeth is renamed as Maqbool. Once, Bhardwaj once admitted in an interview that he was looking for a story to set in the backdrop of the underworld and fortunately, he read the short story of Macbeth on a train journey and found it suitable to set in the background of underworld. The 2003 film Macbeth/Maqbool by Vishal Bhardwaj provides a shocking summary of the underworld topic that has been persistently emerging in Bombay (Mumbai) cinema for the past 15 years. It demonstrates how the underworld

genre's energy of street survival, the logic of harsh justice, the exuberance of existence on the verge, and the illusive but profound comfort of fraternity harbour the potential of a tragic form in the traditional sense.

In this way, the urban crime film has acted as the "Chronicle" background to Bharadwaj's *Macbeth*, growing from *Ankush* (1986) and *Nayakan* (1987) through *Parinda* 1989, *Angaar* 1992, and *Gardish* 1993, and reaching its full blossom in *Satya* 1998 (Biswas, 2006). According to a critic on *Macbeth* from the early 20th century, the author of the Elizabethan play took inspiration for the tone and environment of the play from the Chronicles, which "told him of men driven by an irresistible impulse into deeds of treachery and bloodshed but haunted when the deed was done by the spectres of conscience and superstition" (Grierson, 1914, p. 22). The Chronicles detailed the royal ancestry; Holinshed's *Chronicle*, one of these, served as inspiration for *Macbeth*. The kingpins in the urban crime movie are named "Bhais," despite the fact that there are no monarchs or lineages to record in it. This raises the question of whether the tragedy's traditional plot device—kinship—is present here. Indeed, there are two types of kinship: the literal kinship of blood relatives and the virtual kinship of criminal brothers. Law, which is another source of tragic strife, is evidently a ghost in this situation. This possibility doesn't materialize as long as the Bombay movie has its cop and robber subject, but when the genre turns to the underworld, the conflict moves to a lawless realm and forces the audience to consider the roots of law.

Could we assert that the ability to cast a number of modern popular ruminations in the pattern of Shakespearean tragedy is attributable to the enduring character of those "irresistible urges and haunting sorrow," the universal need to go back to the beginnings of law? The question of the current itself would remain unsolved in light of the fact that this cinema only began to experience fresh correlations with realities outside of the cinema in the 1990s. Let's not forget how seamlessly *Macbeth* transitions from a scene depicting the desecration of nature (*Macbeth's* act of treason and the brutality that followed are depicted as an offence against nature) to a sorrow over a place.

Macduff addresses Malcolm in Act IV, Scene III

.. Each new morn,
New widows howl, new orphans cry; new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face,
that it resounds As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out
Like syllable of dolour.

The major moral change for *Maqbool* is that one is no longer grieving the deterioration of a legal system, but of an order inside the underbelly. The Bombay Macbeth breaks the rule of the criminal regime itself; there is no ethical base over ground, and the outside simply sends retribution and revenge in the shape of the police. The country, the way of life grieved in *Maqbool*, is one that has fallen from this fallen condition. This, one must concede, has its own tragedy. Other languages of mourning have been lost; who would now be interested in lamenting the loss of a normative order? The extremely moralistic rhetoric of Indian popular film has been obliged to make significant concessions in this new genre. “Moralism excludes tragic perception of the universe, which Hegel would argue requires a struggle between two moralities or laws rather than one between a rule and its lack” (Biswas, 2006, p.3). The solidity of evocation is what most stands out about the universe in *Satya*, *Company* (2002), or *Maqbool*. The legitimate order could not be thematically replaced without this. The Mumbai underworld is fascinating because of how closely it resembles reality and how shockingly similar it is to our awake life during the day. The speech, the appearance, the humour, the environment—in other words, the entire cinematic body—has been designed for insertion into a variety of texts. The underworld shown in *Maqbool* (Macbeth) is an apparently never-ending study of facial expressions, hand gestures, spoken language, and movement, constructed on the stereotypes of ordinary urban street life and subaltern existence popularized mostly by television. Consider how music videos, commercials, news articles, and comedic interludes have made the whole tapori repertory or the slum idiom apparent. Before film could give it a form, the mimetic capital, to use a term from the New Historicists, had already flowed across a large-scale cinematic field. For the events in a movie like *Satya* to make complete sense, one needs to undergo an introduction into this language.

In the realm of cinematic crime, the criminal fraternity itself is a source of curiosity. *Satya* by Ramgopal Varma painted a vivid image of this connection, showing how it was both deeply ingrained and delicate, frequently ethically strong because to its very detachment from the moral code. This emotive zone, the fragile community of the murderer, develops into a fertile core of performance, exchanging codes and sharing moments of impending annihilation while reflecting common sense through a vibrant interchange language. It's fascinating to watch how, in *Satya*, a community is purely imagined, as opposed to the genuine sibling or parent-child bonds that existed in previous instances of the genre, like *Parinda* or *Gardish*. So like *Maqbool* the bonding between Abbaji (Duncan)

and Maqbool (Macbeth) cannot be ignorant. It is just for the instigation of their loved one and the prophecy of Pundit and Purohit (the three witches) that allured Maqbool to kill Abbaji like Macbeth killed King Duncan. After the death of Nimmi and Maqbool, it is Sameera and Guddu who adopts their child and it is only for family bonding that we see in other underworld movies. *Maqbool* creates a magnificent structure by fusing together all possible bonding representations and the cumulative effects of the general practice.

The stability of the life-flow that exists just below the surface of genuine social reality is inextricably linked to violence. The customary divide between economic and cultural creation is being gradually erased in mediatic activity, which is where the dense, tight documentation of an idiom of life is derived from. *Maqbool* gives a mirror of observation on the new commercial creation of pictures by summarizing the obsessions of a genre. It is able to achieve this because it aimed to divert media effects into a cinematic form in the traditional sense, one that allowed the vividly detailed contemporary—the other side of the current city—to be infused with a feeling of history.

Conclusion:

Bhardwaj's depiction of the underworld is reminiscent of films like *Agneepath*, *Company*, *Satya*, and *Once Upon a Time in Bombay*, among others. The film's depiction of violence, bloodshed and gang warfare is comparable to the films mentioned. Abbaji's refusal to participate in the drug trade reminds us of a similar scenario in the film *Once Upon a Time in Bombay* when Ajay Devgan as an underworld Don refuses to perform such business, and both the dons are eventually slain by their most devoted henchmen. As a result, the adaption of Macbeth as *Maqbool* might be referred to as Macbeth in the underworld of Mumbai.

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