



Macbeth to Maqbool: Analyzing Variations and Parallelisms

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Macbeth to Maqbool: Analyzing Variations and Parallelisms Abstract This research paper focuses upon the understanding of the world of creative writing and picturization. William Shakespeare, a universally acclaimed author used his versatility to portray the traits of the characters in the light of the beliefs that were popular in those times, making his plays widely accepted across the world.

ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses upon the understanding of the world of creative writing and picturization. William Shakespeare, a universally acclaimed author used his versatility to portray the traits of the characters in the light of the beliefs that were popular in those times, making his plays widely accepted across the world. The eternal style of creative writing that Shakespeare is known for has attracted the present world so much that filmmakers adapt his works on the celluloid. Vishal Bhardwaj directorial, "Maqbool", was made on the theme of the play Macbeth. This research is to bring forth the differences between the characteristics of the characters as per the time, situation, environment and beliefs. At the same time, it seeks to analyze how these variations do not alter the central theme of the original masterpiece and instead presents a new take on with the cinematic liberties. Irrespective of the minute changes that have been made to decorate the environment, the essence of the plot capturing the themes of ambition, guilt, and other imageries has been made perfectly effective leaving the similar impact upon the viewer as it was made through writing the play.

KEYWORDS

Comparative Analysis, Adaptation, Comparing Literature, Contrasting Characters, Macbeth and Maqbool.

The basic traits and emotions of human beings remain unaffected by time. Examples of this are the numerous relevant modern adaptations of works that were written centuries ago, including Shakespeare's works. This paper will seek to analyze and compare Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) with its cinematic adaptation of Vishal

Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003).

The two works have been woven in extremely different contexts and since their settings, timelines, and the cultures vary, there are a number of conspicuously visible variations. The play by Shakespeare is set in Scotland with the royalty and nobility as the pivotal point of the plot whereas the movie is set in Mumbai, India, keeping the world of organized crime at the center of all the characters. It has been ruminated that the characters curated by Shakespeare are timeless. "His (Shakespeare's) characters do not belong to any particular place or time; they are universal in nature and this universality of his characters allows filmmakers even today to adapt his plays and characters for their cinematic purpose." (Javed) Giving precedence to this notion, Bhardwaj very skillfully creates his characters. But since the societies differ, Bhardwaj, in order to atone the characters culturally has slightly altered the roles in his directorial piece. While Macbeth held the position of a thane in the play, Maqbool worked under the underworld don, Abbaji, having a strong command over the business. The parallel drawn here is that both the characters were painted as trusted allies in the beginning of the respective plots. Where Macbeth is praised by King Duncan for his commendable job in the war, Maqbool considers Abbaji, the leader of the mafia organization, as his father and is appreciated for his work.

The opening scenes of the play and the movie set up similar tones. Both scenes present a dark and gloomy atmosphere that has been depicted with the aid of lightning and rain. The two visuals are suggestive of an eerie and blood-filled climax, which holds true. The play opens with the three witches conversing and eventually prophesizing about Macbeth becoming the next King whereas in the movie, the characters of these witches have been mirrored into the role of two police officers. Since the supernatural element might seem unrealistic in today's time and era, Bhardwaj uses the police officers to predict Maqbool's future through the art of astrology. The usage of cloudy and thunderous weather has been effectively employed by Shakespeare which in turn has been adopted by Bhardwaj to set the tone for the forthcoming events in the plot.

The most prominent difference comes in the character parallel of Lady Macbeth. In the play, she is the wife of Macbeth but in the cinematic adaptation, Nimmi is Abbaji's mistress who is romantically involved with Maqbool. Nimmi loves Maqbool and despises Abbaji which gives her motive to remove the old, disgusting man from the scene. This is where the film and the play diverge a little. It leads to a change in the dynamics of the movie's plot as well as the motive to commit crime. In the play, the driving force to murder King Duncan was ambition and the thirst for power. Lady Macbeth wanted to see Macbeth become the King and therefore uses her authority to encourage her husband to kill Duncan. Knowing Macbeth's penchant for power, she, in plain words, persuades him to do the deed. Contrastingly, Nimmi subtly plagues Maqbool's mind and hints at killing Abbaji because she wants to be with Maqbool. Here the major factor wasn't ambition but it was the mighty of all, love. "The dynamics of the character of Nimmi is an instrumental factor in the plot of the movie. It is because of her that the otherwise heroic tragedy Macbeth turns into a story of failed love and ambition." (Jha and Bannerjee 309)

Macbeth's character seems ambitious from the moment he hears about the prophecy but lacks of courage to go ahead. It is upon the persuasion of Lady Macbeth that he murders Duncan. On the other hand, Maqbool remains extremely reluctant to take any step in the direction of the predictions made by the counterpart of the witches. Even after receiving subtle hints from Nimmi, he does not intend to commit the evil task. It is only when Nimmi gives him a choice of either killing her or Abbaji, that he decides to murder the latter.

"**Nimmi:** Kisi ek ko maarna hoga tumhe. Hum ya Jahangir." (Maqbool), Yet another colossal variation is where Nimmi conceives a child whose father remains unknown. In the original text, Lady Macbeth was never pregnant. This variation seems apt as it adds to Nimmi's guilt and Maqbool's

degraded state of mind. Moreover, in the play it is indicated that Lady Macbeth dies by suicide whereas Nimmi dies naturally in the arms of her lover, Maqbool.

Despite these differences, Maqbool can be accepted as an apt adaptation of Macbeth as the themes largely remain the same. Both narratives highlight the themes of ambition, fate ruling supreme, guilt, etc. The murder of the superior on persuasion of the protagonist's love interest and usurping his position is same in both works. Some other parallels that have been drawn are the imageries of blood, hallucinatory visions, so on and so forth.

In the play, Macbeth, sees a dagger hanging in the air before killing Duncan and in the movie, this has been countered with Maqbool seeing blood on the terrace when there wasn't any. Another parallel drawn is that of the famous scene from the play, Banquo's ghost. Macbeth, after having ordered his men to murder Banquo sees his ghost at a party and starts being paranoid. Similarly, Maqbool, on knowing that Kaka has been murdered successfully, hallucinates that the dead body that lay in front of him, had opened its eyes. The two similarities underline the same message, the protagonist's fear and guilt. On the same lines, Lady Macbeth and Nimmi become hysterical. They see blood on their hands and face which cannot be washed away. Yet again, it is their guilt that makes them see things that aren't present in real life. It is this very culpability that has been kept similar in both the pieces of art. Lady Macbeth and her counterpart, Nimmi, both succumb to their paranoia. Even the prophecies made, bear semblance. The last prophecy where the witches talk about the woods moving and coming towards Macbeth's fort has been artistically paralleled in the movie.

"He called Macbeth by name, and comforted him, saying that he should never be beaten until the wood of Birnam should come against him to Dunsinane Hill" (Macbeth 78)

The counterpart of this prophecy in the cinematic adaptation is where Pandit and Purohit tell Maqbool that unless the ocean moves into his home, he is fine. "if the sea comes into your house, obviously you'll sink ..." (Bhardwaj and Tyrewala 118) This metaphorically happens when his consignment that was supposed to be smuggled via sea is foiled and the police comes after him following which a misfortunate stream of events rock Maqbool's world making him hit rock bottom.

The usage of fine imagery is another aspect that Bhardwaj keeps in mind while creating his masterpiece. The dark images of rain, thunder, blood, lightening and more blood run throughout the play. There is hardly any scene which remains bereft of an eerie atmosphere or one which does not suggest anything sinister. In Macbeth, "the violent and gigantic images of blood, fire, thunder and storm conspire with the appearances of the witches and ghostly apparitions to create an atmosphere of horror, mystery and of supernatural dread." (Bradley 290) Likewise, Maqbool begins and ends with blood and has splashes of rain and thunder in between. The opening scene and the night before Abbaji's murder are both laced with terrible weather and thick red blood that makes way for more eerie and evil events to follow.

CONCLUSION

The endings of both the works are equally tragic as Macbeth and Maqbool are killed. The emotions reflected are same throughout the two. Bhardwaj has beautifully brought out the essence of the play that delves into the emotions of ambition and guilt into his artistic masterpiece. According to Outlook, "... Vishal Bhardwaj, has effectively transported the essence of the story to the milieu of the Bombay underworld of our times: it's all about crime and self-punishment." (Jain). Herein, while contrasting and comparing the original writing with the cinematic piece of the same, it has been made clear that it takes a lot of creative acumen to mold the characters, scenes as well as expressions in order to create the same effect and leave a similar impression upon the audiences of the both the works. The movie, with few intriguing and necessary variations, does not fail to impress us in the same capacity as

that of the play. To conclude, it can be positively said that though having certain cultural differences, *Maqbool* was a fair adaptation of the masterpiece, *Macbeth*.

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