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Souraj Dutta

Presidency University, Kolkata, souraj.dutta@gmail.com

Adaptation of Shakespearean plays for theatrical and film media in India was initiated in the mid-nineteenth century, largely as part of concerted efforts to introduce English education into the colony. It is popularly believed the primary reason Shakespeare's plays have stayed on the mass cultural consciousness, is because his plays are universal, not bound by time and space. But what does it mean to be universal, or timeless? Or to put it in other words, if a Shakespearean play is transposed to a radically different time and space does it still remain Shakespearean? Can an adaptation of a certain Shakespearean text still remain Shakespearean in essence in spite of the replacement of the theatrical performativity retained in the original text with the dynamics of cinematic performativity inherent in the execution of the medium? In this paper I would like to explore those Indian adaptations of Shakespeare that are without the aid of the "Shakespearean language". I would like to take up Vishal Bhardwaj's adaptation of *Macbeth* into *Maqbool* (2004) and *Othello* into *Omkara* (2006) in order to investigate and understand how Shakespeare can be and has been appropriated into the national ethos and also fitted into a very typically Indian socio-political setting of Northern India with all its class distinctions and existing social strata, and furthermore, how they can still function as independent works of art. My attempt will be to assess how Bhardwaj adapts and appropriates the Shakespearean plays to fit them into the particularized sociological and geopolitical issues of India without compromising the central strains of the plays.

Introduction

Adaptations can be said to be ‘an acknowledged transposition’¹ that offers an extended engagement with a work and which can be identified as something creatively distinct from the original subject or the source-text. Nevertheless, adaptation also implies a process of alteration and adjustments that exists in the original. India’s extensive history of colonial domination inevitably extends to cultural domination. The colonial education system in India was filled with Western texts, including Shakespeare. A proliferation of Western literature, mainly Shakespeare, within the colonial education system was important for a political reason too; for example, Shakespeare was included into the colonial curricula not only as the exemplary figure of literary and artistic greatness, but also because his works demonstrated the core values of Western tradition.

An argument for the presence of such an intention can be found in the fact that Shakespearean performances were evident in India by English troupes on a regular basis dating from 1770. Colonial and imperial strategies of domination inevitably extended to culture with the imposition of Western thought, art, and technology on traditional Indian cultural formations; and it is that longstanding history of cultural collusion between the West

and the East which accounts for “a Shakespearean presence in India ... older and more complex than any other country outside the West” (Chaudhuri 2013). In the 19th and 20th century Indian society went through a massive interaction with Western thought, art and technology which was termed the “Indian Renaissance”. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that many facets of Western culture were absorbed into the cultural mainstream of India over time, and Shakespeare was integrated as a colonial cultural icon in India as it was elsewhere. By the twentieth century, Shakespeare had been translated, adapted, and assimilated into many Indian languages, and writers and performances in the general Indian cultural landscape were contributing to sustaining his presence.

Margaret Jane Kidnie in her book ‘Shakespeare and the problem of adaptation’ (2008) argues that ‘play’ and ‘adaptation’ are actually provisional categories – mutually dependent processes that evolve over time in accordance with the needs of users. Adaptation thus emerges as the conceptually necessary, but culturally problematic category that results from partial or occasional failures to recognize a shifting work in its textual-theatrical instance. The difficulty, however, is that while addressing adaptation as something like an independent art form opens up areas of investigation not available to more traditional compare-and-contrast methods, these studies

¹ Cited in an online summary of *Pockets of Change* edited by Stadler, Mitchell, Atkinson and Hopton (2011)

tend to assume the existence of a relatively stable distinction between work and adaptation.

By and large, Bollywood has become synonymous with Indian popular culture over the years, and it simultaneously represents and shapes the mass consciousness of the country. Bollywood can be said to be bluntly Shakespearean-esque in its temperament, featuring song and dance, love triangles, comedy, melodrama, star-crossed lovers, angry parents, conniving villains, convenient coincidences, and mistaken identities. Yet, even in a massive culture industry such as this, the Bard is often left unacknowledged in the practice of adaptation. However, recent Bollywood productions, such as the productions of *Macbeth* and *Othello* by director Vishal Bhardwaj, have departed from the “blatant plagiarism” of their predecessors and listed Shakespeare as the source-text or inspiration.

Section I: Shakespeare in Bollywood: Issues of adaptation and appropriation

The two key concepts that are central to the current article are adaptation and appropriation. For the establishment of specific notions and ideas pertaining to said key concepts, I use the framework provided by Julie Sanders (2006) in *Adaptation and Appropriation*. Adaptation, she points out: “...signals a relationship with an informing source-text or original... a specific version, albeit achieved in alternative temporal

and generic modes, of that seminal cultural text.” (Sanders, 2006: 26)

The most formal works of adaptation can be expected to carry the same title as their source text: Kenneth Branagh’s *Hamlet* (1996), or Stuart Burge’s *Othello* (1965) are examples of such adaptations. The desire to make the relationship with the source explicit links to the manner “in which the responses to adaptations depend upon a complex invocation of ideas of similarity and difference.” (Sanders 2006, 22)

It can be said that adaptations, be it of plays or novels, attempts to catch its audience on the basis of remembrance or nostalgia for a certain text, almost prolonging the initial pleasure of the encounter with the text, extending it into the realm of another medium of expression. In the case of classic literature, however, the operation is even a bit more simplified, as the adaptation can readily draw upon the collective consciousness or a circulated memory.

On the matter of appropriation, Sanders observes that an appropriation of a certain text, in comparison with adaptation, frequently travels a greater distance away from its source. An adapted text is generally much closer to the original source-text. Therefore, the appropriated text or texts differ in the aspect that they are not always as clearly signalled or acknowledged as in the adaptive process and often occur in a far less straightforward context than is evident in making a film version of a canonical text. In appropriations the

intertextual relationship may be less explicit, more embedded. Nevertheless, a political or ethical commitment that shapes a writer's, director's, or performer's decision to re-interpret a source text is often inescapable. For example, two of Deepa Mehta's films, *Bollywood/Hollywood* (2002) and *Water* (2006), make use of Shakespearean plot structures, allusions or citations though they address very different issues.

Deepa Mehta's 2002 film, *Bollywood/Hollywood* deals with the generation and cultural gap between young immigrants and their conservative families. Throughout the film, Rahul's grandmother, Grandma Ji marks the plot with Shakespearean anecdotes and references. These quotes revolve primarily along the central crisis that plagues the family, which is the struggle to find their own place in the West. Thus, faced with the prospect of her grandson marrying a Canadian, she says, "Et tu, Brutus", or "there's the smell of blood, still all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand," as she has to deal with her family's hypocrisy regarding the marriage. This loose form of adaptation, achieved through constant allusion to various source texts, is meant to be both a parody of the Bollywood's generic dependency on a typically Shakespearean temperament of high melodrama and a comment on Indian immigrants. In the process, the film also makes a significant comment on the fluid nature of Shakespeare's work, which

can be continually adapted for varying audiences, and can also act as an intercultural signifier.

Water is set in the colonial India of 1938. Mehta's films have often courted much controversy and have also been banned in the more conservative regions of India. The last film of her "elements trilogy", *Water*, attracted violent protests and death threats while filming, and later had to be reproduced in Sri Lanka with a different cast. The film is informed by an internal 'class struggle' within the Indian society; a struggle between the wealthy, westernized class, who had fashioned their lives around the British model, and the more conservative and staunch populace whose lives are tailored by the doctrines of an ancient religious text, the Bhagvad Gita. Situated in a historical moment when colonialism was being challenged by a young generation with a more academic bent of mind influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, the film deals with controversial subjects, such as oppression of widows, prostitution, and its socio-economic vis-à-vis cultural aspects. *Water* loosely follows the *Romeo and Juliet* plot, as the western-educated scholar protagonist of the film helplessly falls in love with a marginalized widow, a character with whom the society forbids any relationship.

Both adaptation and appropriation are in their very essence works of revision, or to be more precise, a transpositional practice. A

work of adaptation casts or transposes a work of a specific genre into another generic mode. On the most basic level, as is evident from so many works of adaptations of ‘classic’ texts for television and cinema, a work of adaptation makes texts relevant or comprehensible to present audience via “the processes of proximation and updating” (Sanders 2006, 18). In such a trend, adapting works of William Shakespeare is definitely the most popular practice as his works have enjoyed a particular unstinted acceptance from the very beginnings of the trend itself.

Adaptations and appropriations can therefore vary in how explicitly they state their intertextual purposes. This may involve a director’s personal vision and it “may or may not involve cultural relocation or updating of some form; sometimes this reinterpreted act will also involve the movement into a new generic mode or context” (Sanders 2006, 2). The inherent intertextuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning and an ever-expanding network of textual relations.

A Bollywood film, by the very expectations of its name, requires “set themes, character types, and the almost mandatory song-dance sequences” (Hogan 2010, 49). So how does a film maintain its claim to be a Shakespeare adaptation while also keeping to the codes that are necessitated in the course of its production, but which are poles apart from the central

sensibility of the text? Following Shakespeare’s own example of extensive use of older materials, Bhardwaj too makes abundant use of older texts to invent something new, original and his own. A text that:

addresses a range of concerns and anxiety patterns of his own time. Thus, Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* (and adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*) takes up the issue of drug trafficking and other crime in India, focusing on the Mumbai underworld that, none the less, presents a very wholesome glimpse of Muslim-India, the culture and traditions, with specific reference to Sufi practices. (Hogan 2010, 50)

One need to investigate how such a film, derived from Western literary canon, yet deeply rooted in a particular film genre, notorious for its surface crudity, finds its place in the broader scope of adaptations of the bard’s work. The next section of this paper tries to find an explanation for this question.

Section II: Bhardwaj’s free adaptations of Shakespeare

Vishal Bhardwaj made his first film in 2002, a children’s film called *Makdee*, or *The Web of the Witch*, which was highly acclaimed and earned him proper critical and commercial attention. His second film was in 2004, the much praised adaptation of the Shakespearean *Macbeth* into *Maqbool*. In 2006 he followed

suit with another Shakespeare adaptation, this time of *Othello*, named *Omkara*. *Omkara* was a commercial and musical hit in domestic and international markets, cementing Bhardwaj's position both as a movie director and a music composer. Till date, these two Shakespeare adaptations remain the best praised works to emerge out of Bhardwaj's oeuvre.

In an interview with Saeed Naqvi, when asked about his adaptations of the two Shakespearean plays, especially *Omkara*, and the inspiration behind such a venture, Bhardwaj said that his endeavor was not really to capture the poetic magnificence of the play (which incidentally, he says, was brilliantly done by Harivansh Rai Bachchan in a poetic translation of *Othello*), but to take the essence of *Othello* and make it into an "original" film—his own version of *Othello*. In the case of *Maqbool*, the source text of which is considered to be one of the best dramatic works of Shakespeare, a tragedy of ambition, that he made two years before *Omkara*, he cheekily states that while taking up *Macbeth* for adaptation, he was still ignorant about Shakespeare, unaware of the Bard's artistic magnitude. Once he made *Maqbool*, and it was appreciated by the intellectuals, and he went to foreign film festivals and screenings abroad, he understood what the "whole deal" was. He also comments that this "foolishness" or "ignorance" was a blessing in disguise because as he was innocent about the canonical

magnanimity of William Shakespeare, he could approach the text with "innocent eyes" and could create an original work which only bore the core essence of a particular Shakespearean tragedy.

However, the same cannot be said about *Omkara*, which garnered much more popular attention and was a huge commercial success. Conscious of the weightage that a Shakespeare adaptation carries, Bhardwaj casted popular actors like Saif Ali Khan, Ajay Devgan, Kareena Kapoor and Kankona Sensharma to play the principal characters and Bipasha Basu in a short, but important role in his film, hoping to make the movie much more commercially viable to the Indian masses. Poet-columnist Chandril Bhattacharya is of the opinion that in comparison to *Maqbool*, *Omkara* is an utter disappointment (Bhattacharya 2009, 152). He further states that whereas *Maqbool* was refreshing in its daring to step out of the typical "Bollywoodyness", i.e. all the typicality and eccentricity that defines and isolates conventional Hindi cinema from the rest of the world, within which most mainstream Hindi films are inescapably trapped, *Omkara* takes no such chances and follows every step in the Bollywood cookbook. The most pitiable aspect of the film, according to Bhattacharya, is that it takes a very trepid approach towards the text of *Othello*, the approach one takes towards anything sacrosanct and does not really dare to operate upon it in an attempt to make the work

his own; whereas in *Maqbool*, Bhardwaj took a surprisingly liberal attitude towards the text in appropriating it according to his own unique sensibilities, remaking it completely. *Omkara* only appropriates or adapts, or rather deviates, according to Bhattacharya from the Shakespearean text in the two principal instances, that the setting is altered into Uttar Pradesh and that Langda Tyaagi, the Indianized Iago, dies in the hands of his wife.

Maqbool draws upon the mainstream popularity of movies based on the Mumbai underworld, a genre established firmly in the 90s by films like Mahesh Bhatt's *Sadak* (1991), Ram Gopal Varma's *Satya* (1998) and *Company* (2002), Mahesh Manjrekar's *Vaastav* (1999) etc. However, the film steps aside from the exaggerated and high-crying drama, dialogue and action that would be expected from such a film and reaches for a more muted and resultantly poignant mood. It is also highly successful in fusing together the key elements of the Shakespeare play with the theme and setting of the underworld, a genre marked by its boundaries within urbanity. This aspect of the film is noted by Moinak Biswas (2006) in his essay "Mourning and Blood-Ties: Macbeth in Mumbai". He observes:

Over the last decade or so popular film in India has become imbricated with the contemporary in a way that it has never been before. It has entered the age of images that blur the familiar line between

cultural and economic processes. We have witnessed a remarkable proliferation of new cinematic elements, a representational accumulation- though not often emergence of new forms- through this transition.

However, one probably didn't suspect that in search of form a generic practice within Bombay cinema, thriving on capturing the new mode of urban existence on the screen, would fall back upon William Shakespeare. Vishal Bharadwaj's *Macbeth*, *Maqbool* (2003), offers a rather startling summing up of the underworld theme developing in Bombay cinema with some persistence over the last decade and a half. It reveals how all that dynamism of survival on the street, the logic of violent justice, the exuberance of life on the brink, the elusive but profound comfort of fraternity that the underworld genre offers, harbor the possibility of a tragic form in the old sense. (Biswas 2006, 78)

This is also where the geographical settings of these two films largely differ; whereas *Maqbool* is set in the urban metropolitan setting of Mumbai with all its emblems of an expanding global commercial capitalistic entity, the tale of *Omkara* unfolds in a strictly rural setting, where the only character who has a touch of modernity, which is in a way synonymous to an English education and urbanity, is Keshav Upadhyay, aptly nicknamed Kesu Firangi owing to his

“English” education. Macbeth’s three witches, which Kurosawa merged into one with a spinning wheel in his film *Throne of Blood* (1957), are effectively altered into two corrupt horoscope-touting cops here: Pandit and Purohit, the scholar and the priest. In the initial few minutes, they reveal what is to be the course of the film through their prophesying, deliberating over the city’s astronomical charts which they bloody while killing a hapless criminal; they prophesy the ascendancy over the city of Miya Maqbool. Thus the film follows the rise and fall of Maqbool, the right-hand man and second-in-command to Jahangir Khan, or Abbaji, who is the adoptive father of the clan. As is the trend with the generic conventions of the underworld films, the legitimate law and order of the land is essentially subverted; Mumbai seems to be more in the able clutches of gang lords than in the hands of the legitimate authorities.

The love affair between Maqbool and Nimmi acts as the pivot to the plot, as it is one of the principal motives that instigate the assassination of Abbaji. The figure of the fallen woman as the love interest is quite common in underworld movies, but Nimmi is no common prostitute. She is “a mistress performing the wife’s role” (Biswas 2006, 83). Nevertheless, such a bifurcated position is threatened when Abbaji seems to acquire a new mistress, a Bollywood starlet, and his daughter Sameera is betrothed to Guddu, son of Kaka (Banquo).

The acceptance of Guddu as the heir of the family, not only threatens the future of Nimmi and Maqbool, but also announces the impending termination of the Muslim “family” and the beginning of the Hindu one, further heightening the tensions. In a curious shift from the original play, Maqbool’s affair with his lord’s concubine is played out as the typical case of oedipal complex, where Maqbool must supplant the father-figure to fulfill his desire for the “mother”.

As in Shakespeare, in the film history is cyclical. In the night prior to Abbaji’s murder, Maqbool finds out from Purohit that Abbaji too most likely had executed the former gang-lord to ascend into power. In such manipulations of the source-text, Bhardwaj effectively shifts the weight of the moral flaw of Macbeth, as Abbaji is no benevolent Duncan; none is better than the other. However, such a justification does not suffice for the principal characters. The corruption of Abbaji makes his murder no less a parricide, and after the killing both Maqbool and Nimmi plunge into deep throes of guilt and start to lose their grip on reality. At the end of the film, when Maqbool sees Guddu and Sameera taking his newborn son in the hospital, he decides to put an end to this life of violence and walks out of the hospital in a dazed state. The same inevitable unfortunate act of bloodshed is repeated, when Guddu has Maqbool killed to ensure his position as the gang-lord and reinstates a sense of equilibrium.

However, unlike the play, the killing of Maqbool in the film does not symbolize the triumph of the natural order over evil; Maqbool's dying expression is conveyed and emphasized by a gradually reddening screen and noises of commotion gradually fading into a silent nothingness, which prophesizes, like in the beginning of the film, an endless repetition and perpetuation of the same series of events.

Section III: Bhardwaj's Predecessors

As mentioned earlier, Indian cinema, as well as Bollywood has had a long tradition of adapting Shakespeare to cater to the Indian audience, often through a complex intermingling of direct reference, plagiarism, citation or allusion. I shall take up two Bollywood films to cite them as examples of the said tradition.

The whole practice of adapting Shakespeare started with the Parsi theater, which later exercised much influence on the performative codes and methods of film adaptations of Shakespearean texts, as well as Hindi filmmaking in general. However, the films merit to be judged as independent sites of intercultural experiment and performances, set quite apart from its theatrical predecessors. A good example of how the "Shakespeare factor" operates in a commingled cultural milieu is James Ivory's *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965). Owing to the complex structuring of the film,

the intermingling of fact and fiction, the corpus of the film itself becomes an embodiment of attitudinal ambivalence toward post-colonialism and the role of Shakespeare in India. As Dan Venning says, *Shakespeare Wallah* is:

[a] film that itself depicts theatrical performance in intercultural encounter while giving the theatre history background that informs the making of the film itself." (2011, 152)

Shakespeare Wallah, a film set after independence, is in many ways premonitory of the future Shakespeare adaptations in India and the postcolonial attitudes towards the adaptation of Western literature. The film resides in the slippery space between fondness and rejection, nostalgia and anxiety, and thus is highly ambivalent in its attitude; it looks both back to the days of the Raj, and forward to an uncertain postcolonial future. Many elements of *Shakespeare Wallah* suggest that it is in fact a genuine intercultural work, blending the Colonial/British form and language with the Colonized/Indian culture and history.

The story, written by the Booker prize-winning novelist Ruth Praver Jhabvala, is that of a travelling theatre troupe of English actors who perform Shakespeare's plays in towns across India, amidst a dwindling demand for their art and the rise of Bollywood. This film, produced by the Merchant Ivory productions, deserves a special mention as it brilliantly

captures the position and influence of Western literary masters in a post-colonial situation, or can be said to be an embodiment of how, through the effective metaphor of the journey, the production and consumption of Shakespeare's plays moved from direct performances, free borrowings of plot to "critical appropriations which countered colonial hegemony"(Trivedi 2005, 47). The plot, which has an intriguing double plot, "half backstage drama and half romance" (Venning, 2011: 153), is loosely based on the real-life actor-manager Geoffrey Kendal, his family, and his Shakespeareana Company (The Buckingham Players in the film) of travelling theatre, which earned him the accolade Shakespearewallah. The name, itself a pidgin, is also almost symbolic; an amalgamation of Western literary genius and the Eastern entertainment trade. The film contains scenes from Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, Twelfth Night, Othello and Romeo and Juliet in plays inside the film as actors enact them, but they are shown to be fighting a losing battle against the emerging phenomena of Bollywood, which gains more and more popularity, whereas the theater troupes such as the Buckinghams have to fend for themselves in a demand that is continuously debilitating. In a central scene of the film, Tony, the principal character, laments to his wife:

"I just can't get it out of my mind: we've been here year after year. Five, six, seven

performances, they couldn't see enough of us....Now, such a rejection. A rejection of me. Everything I am. Everything I've done. Nowadays why should they care? It's not appreciation I'm talking about. Why are we here, instead of in Sheffield, or in Bristol, or in at least somewhere like that?" (Ivory 1965)

Such a rejection almost symbolically becomes the larger Indian rejection of British high culture, dismantling them from their hegemonically superior status, and thus becomes the central existential crisis of the main characters of the film.

While some elements in the film may seem imperialistic, or even colonial, it can also be read as challenging such a simplistic colonialist view. Any work of art that aims at interculturality must not exist "at a single point on the spectrum, but sits in a range of possible positions" (Venning 2011, 163). Nonetheless, in the course of watching the film, what becomes more interesting is to watch these readings collapse together. So, at the end, a quite different question arises; instead of measuring how much "each culture gives and takes, the questions can be in what varied and unexpected ways cultures listen, contribute, and benefit from the final intercultural artistic product." (Ibid, 163)

The film can also be read as a critique of Buckingham's imperialist mentality. Buckingham's blatant nostalgia for the

colonized India, partly leading to his inability to understand why he and his art are being rejected in favor of native Indian traditions, is a major character flaw responsible for the growing failure of his troupe. He is unable to deal with Indians as equals, to present truly intercultural theatre that speaks to an independent Indian audience. The film creates an intercultural coalescing, depicting India and Indians slowly, but surely engulfing a fumbling and confused British theatre troupe.

Perhaps one of the most powerful scenes in the movie is Manjula's disruption of Othello. Manjula's disruption of Othello represents, according to Valerie Wayne, "the movie's most sustained presentation of hybridity" (Wayne 1997, 100). Manjula, although an Indian woman in a scenario dominated by White presence, who has also lost her lover, is the most powerful character. Her power primarily lies in the simple fact that she is a film star and can draw far more audience than the theater artisans. This scene becomes a prophecy of what is to happen to the age old colonial influences, the Western 'high culture' in the post-independence Indian movie scenario. However, this does not sound the dying knell for Shakespeare in India. Shakespeare, as said earlier, enjoys the power of a universal validity, and therefore of universal value. They cannot be simply categorized as a colonial force imposed by the British colonizers, they are also great works of art that are enjoyed and

revered by an Indian audience. This unwillingness of India to completely reject Shakespeare, even after it had rejected the British rule, is similar to the paradox of Shakespeare Wallah: the film neither fully condemns, nor condones the colonialism of its central characters. Almost all the characters are caught in the slippery place between the two opposing worlds amongst which they must choose one. Lizzie's almost forced departure reveals some of the trauma that can accompany the beginnings of postcolonialism. Also, the Buckingham's are not really English anymore, they are robbed of any authentic singular identity in their long stay in the country they had once colonized, and therefore, became part of the diasporic community that must ultimately accept India as the new home away from home. Their identity as Shakespeare performers becomes their only seeming link with the nostalgic remembrance of their homeland and their past which they must negotiate with.

A good example of post-independence Indian adaptation of Shakespeare is Gulzar's 1982 film *Angoor*, based on *The Comedy of Errors*. As opposed to a 1935 Shakespeare adaptation, *Khoon Ka Khoon* (*Hamlet*) which made extensive use of Victorian costumes and backdrops, invoking a sense of past, *Angoor* perhaps is the first Indian adaptation of Shakespeare which imports the bard's plot into a modern day drama. In a noncommercial film

such as this one, the director could move out of the broader generic aspects of the Hindi film, and afford to drop the “essential” song and dance sequences, or otherwise incorporate them into the story world of the film. Thus we see, in the film, Luciana’s Indian counterpart is a singer, “and one of the Dromios is in the habit of parodying classical Hindi songs and ragas whenever he is in a tight spot” (Hogan 2010, 49). Therefore, the movie appropriates both the play and Bollywood conventions to achieve its own ends, making for a denser inter-textual filmic text where the characters and the plot allude to the source-text, the Shakespearean play, while the songs sung in the concerts and the parodies of the old songs allude to other films. As one of the earlier instances of a Hindi Shakespeare adaptation, we can see how *Angoor* could have served as a potent influence on Bhardwaj, more so in making *Omkara*, where he actively employs song-and-dance sequences through the character of Biloo Chaman Bahar (Bianca), who is a career courtesan.

Despite such a history of Shakespearean adaptation in the history of Indian cinema, Vishal Bhardwaj’s two films merit for special attention and in some cases preferential treatment owing to its place in the time period. Made in the crucial time in the first decade of the new millennium when Hindi cinema rapidly gained a global audience, these two films have made their way into being the only

two Indian mainstream Shakespeare adaptations to gain recognition and credence in the international stage. Also, Vishal Bhardwaj is a filmmaker of acute sensibilities who has in his work deftly merged filmic micro-genres, thus making his work of adaptation an intertextual body in itself, alluding “to the history of Indian and non-Indian film and much like the way Shakespeare’s drama does with an array of other texts.” (Hogan 2010, 49)

Maqbool, as well as *Omkara*, links Shakespeare with the subcontinent as it has never been done before, joining a tragedy of ambition to a tale of Bombay bloodbath in one and tragic love and violence in a saga of gang-war and treachery in another, importing seminal cultural icon of the Western into the narrow lanes and the dusty fields of the world’s largest democracy.

Conclusion

Bhardwaj said in an interview, post the year 2000 has started what we can doubtlessly call the golden age of Indian cinema. This is an obvious result of the rapid development in filmmaking techniques along with other peripheral advances- the huge leap in the development of the communication system in the internet age etc. in short, the phenomena we call globalization. Such rapid growth, along with the aid of certain other socio-cultural and economic factors, has almost completely changed the viewing practice of the urban

audience. Now, there is a gamut of audience for every kind of cinema. Owing to such reassuring conditions, producers are also more willing to experiment with both content and form of cinema and break free from the boundaries of the traditional storytelling modes and preferences. Also, Bollywood today readily finds at its disposal a widespread global audience, enjoys simultaneous international releases and higher ticket prices. The overseas market today generates 65% of a film's total income. Keeping this figures in mind, one may say that in the recent tumultuous years of global economic crisis, Bollywood perhaps enjoys a larger viewership than any other film industry in the world.

In such times, artists with a sensibility steeped in literary and cultural tradition can afford to revisit old practices, and not merely grind their talent in mindless money churners. When “all the world's a stage” to the bard, Indian cinema has proven to be no exception. In the sub continental, as well as in a global context, Bhardwaj's films can be seen as works that string together disparate aspects of a global trans-cultural history of art, across mediums of expression, adapting the English master in a foreign tongue and still managing to keep both cultural elements intact with all their nuances and flavour. 🍛

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