

# ***Haider*: Textualizing Tragic Flaw in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Indian Cinema**

**Ashok Sachdeva**

There is no denying the fact that Indian cinema has always followed print and the written works by the major authors of different ages of literature. Later, Cinema emerged as a potent medium of expression of literary works and also of cross-cultural parleys and a platform for evocative discussions pertaining to hegemonies and politics. The present paper studies astonishing similarities and comparison between the Indian film *Haider* directed by Vishal Bhardwaj and *Hamlet* written by Shakespeare. The movie is an intriguing film on revenge, love and about the Kashmir Valley. The paper also encapsulates and comments upon the ability of the cinema to render the human experiences in a unique way through its technocratic quotient and imagistic jugglery which enthralls the audience like literature.

A film presents simultaneity of striking reality and disconcerting unreality through the subtle and delicate balance of the stylistic components, the connotative richness of the images, the perennial appeal of the human saga which carries the text beyond the confines of space and time and achieves universality. (Mukherjee 45)

The major difference between Shakespeare's play and film *Haider* is that the play *Hamlet* starts with a ghost who walks the ramparts of Elsinore Castle in Denmark while the film lacks supernatural machinery employed in Shakespeare's plays. There are sections of the 'to be, or not to be' speech translated directly in Hindi. Due to constraints of time, the director perhaps had to omit the 'Apparel maketh a man' soliloquy. And also that the movie retained and translated the section where Hamlet meets Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and speaks about Denmark being in prison. New soliloquies have been created to convey Hamlet's madness and the veiled political satire in it. This was brought in when Haider with his head shaved, dressed in torn, shabby clothes rants on a traffic roundabout in Srinagar and apart from a few senseless jokes, reads out the bare act of the 'Armed Forces Special Powers Act'. An adaptation does not exactly follow the original. The part of Fortinbras is missing in *Haider*. The world of King Claudius and Polonius is portrayed as the counter-insurgency and government-run, counter-insurgent militias in *Haider* that rather thematically dominates the action.

The major characters of Hamlet transformed as the King Hamlet takes form of Hilaal Meer, Gertrude becomes Ghazala, Prince Hamlet becomes Haider and the heroine of the play Ophelia becomes Arshia, while Claudius becomes Khurram. The movie *Haider* starts with Hilaal Meer, a doctor who agrees to perform an appendicitis operation of a pro-separatist group at Kashmir during the Kashmir conflict of 1995. To avoid any unwanted circumstances and obstacles, he performs the operation at his home. His wife Ghazala raises questions to his allegiance to see the operation. Hilaal Meer becomes accused during military raid on the next day of the operation. A shootout ensues at Hilaal's home, during which the leader of the separatist group is killed and house is bombed subsequently in order to kill any other militant hiding there. Hilaal is taken away for questioning. After a long time, Haider, son of Hilaal returns from

university to seek facts and truth about his father's disappearance. He is shocked to see her mother singing and laughing along with her brother-in-law Khurram. With the help of her fiancée Arshia who is journalist, he starts to find his father at detention camps and in police stations. .

As Prince Hamlet in the play *Hamlet* was contemplative and thoughtful by nature, he delays, entering into a deep melancholy and even apparent or feigned madness. When Polonius suggests that Hamlet may be mad with love for Ophelia, Claudius agrees to spy on Hamlet in conversation with the girl. But though Hamlet certainly seems mad, he does not seem to love Ophelia. He orders her to enter a nunnery and says derogatorily to her "Get thee to a nunnery or you will be breeder of sinners" and declares that he wishes to ban marriages. This brought about the suicide of Ophelia. In the movie *Haider*, depressed by the growing closeness and proximity between Ghazala and Khurram, and unable to find any leads, Haider begins to lose hope. Arshia encounters Roohdar, who wanted to inform Haider that he will be able to provide information about Hilaal, his father. Haider contacts Roohdar, who turns out to be part of a separatist group. Roohdar then narrates the story of how he met Hilaal in one of the detention centers, where they both were tortured. Roohdaar tells Haider that he wanted to pass on his father's message to him that is to take revenge for Khurram's betrayal. The same is done by the King Hamlet but in the form of a Ghost to convey Prince Hamlet of the wrong done and invokes him to take the revenge for Claudius' betrayal, of his murdering the King and his debauched hasty incestuous marriage with his mother Gertrude. To avenge his father's death, Haider becomes mentally and emotionally scattered and starts to behave strangely. His uncle Khurram, after getting to know about the meeting of Haider and Roohdar, narrates to him that Roohdar has killed his father. He is in dual mind as to whose narration he should believe. This is much like Hamlet's strategy to confirm what the Ghost has proclaimed about the crime of Claudius where Hamlet plans 'play within a play' to 'catch the conscience of the King' as a mouse trap before he actually works upon the revenge. Hamlet is sensible in his insanity and in the the sense that he feigns madness to be secret. But Ironically, a sort of double tragic flaw, Haider discloses his state of indecision to Arshia and also states that Roohdar has given him a gun to kill his uncle. Arshia unintentionally discloses to her father who informs Khurram about the gun. Khurram immediately orders to send Haider to a mental cure institution.

In the play *Hamlet*, Claudius is a corrupt politician whose main weapon is his ability to manipulate others through his skillful use of language. Claudius's speech is compared to poison being poured in the ear and that is the method he used to murder Hamlet's father. Claudius's love for Gertrude may be sincere, but he married her as a strategic move, to help him win the throne away from Hamlet after the death of the King. In the movie, Khurram loves Ghazala but used her for the sake of power and tries to snatch the prestige in the society. He has the quality like Claudius to speak like sweet but poisonous. So both the characters of Claudius and Khurram in this way are similarly drawn and adapted.

Next morning Haider tries to kill his uncle but cannot accomplish his act of doing so due to his uncle is in prayers and then is captured by Arshia's father who orders to kill him but Haider manages to escape. He contacts Roohdaar, who suggests getting

trained in Pakistan to avenge for his father's death and Haider agrees. He calls his mother on other side of border and informs her about it to which she asks him to meet her once before going. During the meet, Ghazala discloses that she had disclosed about terrorists hiding in their house out of fear to Khurram not knowing that he was an informer of the Indian army. Arshia's father traces them and is about to shoot Haider when Haider shoots him in the head and escapes. This is similar to when Hamlet avoids killing Polonius and indulges in soliloquy that his soul thereby would straight go to heaven if killed during prayers and later Polonius is killed in the process who was hiding behind the arras.

Arshia is deeply hurt to listen to her father's death in the hands of Haider and later commits suicide. Haider goes to the graveyard where his father was buried. At the graveyard, Haider contemplates about the universal nature of mortality. Unaware of Arshia's death, on seeing her brother in the graveyard it hits his mind that the body is of Arshia. He runs towards her body where his brother sees him and informs Khurram. A fight ensues between Haider and Arshia's brother resulting in Arshia's brother's death. This is much similar of the Graveyard scene of the play *Hamlet* and his fight with Leartes, Khurram arrives with military and a gunfight ensues, meanwhile Roohdaar and Ghazala also arrive at the spot, where Roohdaar drops Ghazala. A fierce exchange of bullets and bombs leaves only Haider and few men on Khurram's side alive. Just when Khurram is about to kill Haider with a rocket launcher, Ghazala requests a chance to convince Haider to surrender. She confronts him but he says that he cannot die before avenging his father's death. Ghazala tells him that revenge only results in revenge and there is no ending to this vicious cycle, but he does not understand. In the fight somehow she pulls the pins of the hand grenade resulting in a big blast causing the death of the rest of the men and Khurram being gravely injured with his legs being amputated. Haider goes to Khurram in order to shoot him in the eyes, his father's wish, but is reminded of his mother's words "revenge only results in revenge" and thus decides to leave Khurram.

But in the play *Hamlet*, Claudius dies when the sword-fighting begins. In the film, there is no sword fighting but gun shooting used instead of it. Hamlet scores the first hit, but declines to drink from the king's proffered goblet. Instead, Gertrude takes a drink from it and is swiftly killed by the poison. Laertes, Ophelia's brother, succeeds in wounding Hamlet, though Hamlet does not die of the poison immediately. In the movie *Haider*, Leartes is Liyaqot Lone. Claudius is responsible for the queen's death, he dies from the blade's poison. Hamlet then stabs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine. Claudius dies, and Hamlet dies immediately after achieving his revenge.

So we can see that the movie *Haider* is a complete adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in all respects and even the names of the characters bear similarity. The present contemporary political setting has been provided and themes superadded to make it relevant to the current scenario. It is true that human nature is the same irrespective of ages gone by and human psychology and instinct remain the same throughout. The greatness of Shakespeare lies in universality and we can see that Shakespeare is still a modern writer, poet and dramatist who continues to dominate the world cinema, his all plays, whether tragedies or comedies, history or romances,

have widely influenced borrowings or adaptations into films and Cinema all over the world in all times and has been seen in post-modern framework in all its deconstructs and re-constructs. Tutun Mukherjee opines:

Films responded to the realities of life in terms of the predominating anxieties regarding new-found liberties and persisting constraints; rural predicaments and indifferent urban space; changes in the familial domain and interpersonal relationships; divisions and widening gaps among the people and such other preoccupations. There was scope for melodrama to romance with modernity and realism in many ways. All the elements of melodrama- the binaries of theme and characterization (the 'heroes' representing the madness for revenge; the 'heroines' innocent and long suffering; the 'villains' metamorphosing from the corrupt politician into the capitalist or powerful) and narrative resolutions- mirrored the changing perceptions of the people, the specificities of Indian culture and society, the disappointments and pitfalls of the nation state. Evidently therefore, it is possible to describe 'Indian' cinema as a mode for textualizing the 'nation' in many voices and pluralities which also convey the specificities of 'Indian-ness' (44)".

### Works Cited

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