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# Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider*: A comparative analysis

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**Abstract:** The element of tragedy in William Shakespeare's Hamlet inspired Vishal Bhardwaj to come up with Haider. With this film, Bhardwaj completes his trilogy of Shakespearean tragic adaptations. Haider is a commendable fusion of a revenge play, Elizabethan drama and a Bollywood movie. The horrors of Kashmir are reflective of the tragic elements in the original source text. The eternal themes in Hamlet, such as betrayal, corruption, death, love and filial obedience, are beautifully woven with the plot of Haider. However, Bhardwaj has taken certain liberties to mould the story in his own creative style to cater to cinematic and commercial requirements. The present research paper aims to analyze Hamlet and its adaptation in the light of comparative analysis. It opens with a brief introduction on the conception of the idea that brought Haider into existence and moves on to discuss the art of characterization, the political aspects of Kashmir in the adaptation, and the different dramatic devices that are being employed. Finally, the paper presents a detailed comparative analysis between the source text (Hamlet) and the adaptation (Haider) to explore the various points of contact and departure between the two.

**Subjects: Theatre & Performance Studies; Media & Film Studies; Literature**

**Keywords: adaptation; appropriation; comparative literature; Hamlet; Haider; Kashmir; India**



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Fatimah Javed has done her BA and MA in English literature from Aligarh Muslim University in 2010 and 2012, respectively, with first division, securing first position in both the courses. She has four gold medals to her credit that were awarded to her for being the university topper in both graduation and masters. During her BA, she was also adjudged as the Best Girl of Women's College in the session 2009-10, for which she was also conferred upon with the prestigious Papa Mian Padma Bhushan Award. She has been awarded her PhD degree in the year 2017. The topic of her research is "From Shakespearean text to cinema: A study of select dramaturgic adaptations". Dr. Fatimah has published more than 05 National and International papers in reputed journals. Her area of interest includes Shakespearean Drama, film studies and comparative literature .

## PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study provides a comparative analysis of Shakespeare's Hamlet and Vishal Bhardwaj's Haider with a focus on different points of contact and departure. The reading of the paper will arouse the interest of movie lovers and scholars working in the area of film adaptation. The main highlight of the paper is the Kashmir conflict, which Bhardwaj has equated the tragedy of prince Hamlet. Kashmir is one of the important characters in the movie, in fact it is the central character around which all the other characters and the entire plot of the adaptation revolves.

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## 1. Introduction

Director Vishal Bhardwaj has won acclaim for adapting Shakespeare's tragedies into cinema. With *Haider* (2008) which is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he completes his trilogy, the other two being *Maqbool* and *Omkara* adapted from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Othello,* respectively. Bhardwaj's genius lies in "appropriating the films in a completely different cultural milieu" (Bhagira, 2015, p. 2). Like *Maqbool* and *Omkara,* where the setting has been completely changed from the original source-text, in *Haider* also the setting has been changed from the Denmark of 16$^{th}$ century to the Kashmir in the mid-1990s. "It finds its setting in violence wracked state of Kashmir much in the same way as *Hamlet* is set in the rotten state of Denmark" (Ayaz et al., 2015, p. 117). It is interesting to note that before *Haider*, Bollywood witnessed several films circling around the religious and political rifts in Kashmir, such as Mission Kashmir, Lakshya, and Tango Charlie, but none of these films could portray such an intricate picture of Kashmir as shown in Bhardwaj's adaptation (Dey, 2014, p. 276).

Initially, Bhardwaj intended to give the background of an espionage thriller to *Hamlet* as suggested by his friend Stephen Alter:

> When Vishal was beginning this project, I urged him to make *Hamlet* into an espionage thriller, with intelligence operatives flying around the globe—a cool, taut action flick in which secret agents and underworld arms merchants chased each other through the transit lounges of international airports. We brainstormed about making something that looked and felt like the Bourne Identity or Mission Impossible. However, in the end, Vishal chose Kashmir … (Alter, 2014, p. xv)

After discussing all this with Alter, Bhardwaj was determined to adapt *Hamlet* as an espionage thriller, but once the script got ready he visited Gulzar for his approval and the entire plan got changed:

> I always go to Gulzar saab for the final approval and he was the one who pointed out that it was no doubt a good thriller but where was the tragedy in it? I suddenly realized that the genre had changed from a tragedy to a thriller …

Post this meeting with Gulzar, Bhardwaj dropped the idea of a thriller and started thinking along the new lines, searching for the perfect background to adapt Shakespeare's greatest revenge play. And finally his search ended:

> One night I woke up to find my wife Rekha crying while reading a book titled *Curfewed Nights* by Basharat Peer. She explained that it was a memoir of the writer's growing-up years in the nineties—the peak period of militancy in the Kashmir valley. A bulb switched on in my head. I strongly feel that Kashmir has been the biggest tragedy in modern Indian history and no film has been made to capture the real tragedy of what has been going on there for the last twenty-five years. I began to read Basharat's book with *Hamlet* in mind and by the time I finished it I had decided to collaborate with him to work out my version of *Hamlet* … I wanted to explore the culture of Kashmir and translate that into celluloid … I did not want to write or direct through imagination, so I held Basharat's hand and walked back in time with him to feel the pain, terror and tragedy of that time in Kashmir (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. vi).

This is how Bhardwaj chose the setting of the Kashmir conflict to complete his trilogy. And it goes without saying that Bhardwaj has done full justice to the idea. Kashmir has never been portrayed in such intricate detail in Bollywood before. The film holds a mirror up to the traumatic realities of Kashmir as summed up aptly by Basharat Peer:

> *Haider* is different as it is a more realistic film that takes on a politically charged subject. I have always written about Kashmir but it was really brave of Vishal Bhardwaj to go along with a story like this. It is the longest bravest journey any Indian filmmaker has made on Kashmir (Hassan, 2014).

The amalgamation of Kashmir's conflict with the tragedy of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a superb idea for which Bhardwaj received critical acclaim worldwide. In this regard Stephen Alter opines:

> The brutal ironies of Kashmir and the shadow puppetry of violence offer a perfect counterpoint to the family intrigue and feudal politics of *Hamlet's* tragedy … the violence and deceit that Shakespeare weaves into his tragedy merge seamlessly with the fabric of contemporary Kashmir … By setting *Hamlet* in Kashmir, Vishal intends to depict the horrific realities of a state under siege and the tortured ethics of nationalism and separatism … (Alter, 2014, pp. xiv-xv).

Most of the Shakespearean tragedies follow certain set patterns and elements, such as vengeful ghosts, mad scenes, play within a play, gory scenes and, above all, a protagonist who has a grievance against a dangerous opponent. Vishal Bhardwaj with the help of his innovative ideas has tailored a Shakespearean tragedy that has all these traditional elements (Ayaz et al., 2015, p. 117). It depicts Kashmir's conflict during the mid-1990s and true to its source-text it revolves around the themes of treachery and oppression.

## 2. The art of characterization

The various Shakespearean characters in *Haider* have been very well depicted and Bhardwaj's creative genius lies in amalgamating the 16$^{th}$ century characters with the current scenario of Kashmir (Dey, 2014, p. 277). Here it is important to mention that in Haider, Kashmir is also an important character; infact, it is the central character around which the lives of all the other characters revolve. The film opens with the good-hearted doctor **Hilaal Meer** (Narendra Jha) treating an ailing militant. He is an advocate of life, for him identity of his patients is not important, and, unfortunately, he pays a heavy price for this. The next morning, during a crackdown, he is accused of treating a terrorist and is taken away by the Indian Army. His sudden disappearance sets the stage for the return of his son **Haider**, a young man who is pursuing research on the Modern Revolutionary Poets in Aligarh Muslim University. Unlike Shakespeare's Hamlet, who was from Denmark, Bhardwaj's Haider is a Kashmiri, who returns home after his father suddenly disappears:

> The state of affairs unfolding empower the protagonist Haider to take the affairs into his own hands and hunt for vengeance secretly much in the same line as Hamlet does when he finds King Hamlet dead on his returning from Denmark after fair dealing has failed both of them in the state of Denmark community and power corridors of Kashmir … (Ayaz et al., 2015, pp. 117-118).

Actor Shahid Kapoor, who plays the role of Haider, expressed his views about the role he played, in an interview with Nasreen Munni Kabir:

> … the character is a young guy. It starts off with him being a student coming back to understand the dynamics that exists in his life at that time … a very complex role to play … possibly the most difficult of my career yet. But equally exciting and challenging (Gahlot, 2014).

Haider is missing during the initial scenes of the film, as he is away at the university to complete his education, but the reason why he was sent away from home becomes clear as the film proceeds. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, prince Hamlet was sent away for the sake of education but in Bhardwaj's version Haider was sent to Aligarh so that he could live a peaceful life away from the pain and suffering, which a person living in Kashmir has to endure. While at school he had begun to keep company with the militants and, one day, he even brought a pistol home. As a consequence, his mother sends him away for his betterment. This particular instance in the film highlights the predicament of Kashmiri parents who send their children away from them so that they could breathe in fresh air away from the lurking terror of death and destruction. When Haider reaches Kashmir and asks Arshia about his home, she replies:

> There isn't a much of a home left in what remains (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 36) "Tumhare ghar mei ghar jaisa kuch bacha nhi hai Haider"

Not only his father but even his home has disappeared. "The home he knew, the Kashmir he knew, does not exist anymore" (Ayaz et al., 2015, p. 121). His plight does not end here; he is shocked to see his mother flirting with his uncle. He could not believe his eyes on seeing her singing and dancing when her husband has disappeared and there is no news from him. Shocked at his mother's infidelity he begins the search for his father in various police stations and detention camps with the help of Arshia, a journalist by profession and his love interest. When he was about to lose hope, he receives message from a stranger named Roohdaar, who promises some information about his father Dr Hilaal Meer. When Haider meets him, Roohdaar narrates to him the entire story of their imprisonment together and informs Haider that his father is no more and it was his father's last wish that Haider should take revenge from on his uncle Khurram and leave his mother Ghazala to God's justice (Bhagira, 2015, p. 2).

**Ghazala** (Tabu) is a pretty woman in her forties. Like Queen Gertrude, who was unmoved after her husband died, Ghazala too, is least bothered about her husband's disappearance. After her husband is taken away by the Indian Army she soon started living with her brother-in-law Khurram and, in no time, she married him after knowing that her husband is dead. From being a "half widow" of Dr Hilaal Meer, she is now a happily married woman, enjoying all the festivities of her marriage ceremony. In this regard, Sayan Dey observes:

Bhardwaj has revitalized and revived the Shakespearean female characters, especially Gertrude. In *Hamlet,* Gertrude exists in a subalternity whose voice remains embalmed under the black tar of masculinity. Neither any magical divine intervention nor any sudden Promethean power blazes the soul of Ghazala. But she uses the very weapons of patriarchy, like deception, deputation and diplomacy, to unlock the heavy fetters of masculinity that have been binding her for a long time. With the passage of time she soon realizes that she has been used as a political bait and a sexual object by Khurram (Dey, 2014, p. 278).

The role of Claudius, **Khurram** in the play is played by Kay Kay Menon, who "with his caracal hat and white sherwani, tapered beard and venomous eyes", looks every inch the ruthless leader of the counter-insurgency (Alter, 2014, p. xvii). With a fake smile on his face he misguides innocent poor people who visit him for help.

Khurram played foul with his elder brother also. He was the one who informed the army about the militants hiding in Hilaal's home. Once his brother was detained by the army he was free to fulfill his much awaited wish of marrying Ghazala.

Shraddha Kapoor as **Arshia** is a combination of Ophelia and Horatio (Chaudhuri, 2014, p. 3). As a lover and as a friend she helps Haider in every possible manner. Like Ophelia, she too was bound with "filial duty" but despite all the restrictions she never betrayed Haider. She fought with him till her last breath.

The character of **Roohdaar** is the most important of all. His sudden emergence becomes the ultimate turning point of the story. The character of Roohdaar, which is brilliantly played by Irrfan Khan, has been introduced in place of the ghost in the original source text *Hamlet*. The name Roohdaar has metaphorical connotations because "Rooh" means soul and Roohdaar is the soul of Hilaal Meer, as he introduces himself to Arshia in scene 103 of the film:

Arshia- "Are you a doctor?"

Roohdaar laughs

Roohdaar- "A doctor's soul" (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 103).

Roohdaar is the soulful form of Meer. There is a scene in the film where the bodies of Roohdaar and Meer are thrown into the river Jhelum, it is here that the concept of soul and body comes to light. Just like the ghost of Hamlet's father who brings a message for Prince Hamlet, in the film Roohdaar delivers to Haider the message of his Abbuji. The conversation between Roohdaar and Haider in scene 109 of the film clearly illustrates the message:

Haider- "You said you had a message from him … what it is?"
Roohdaar- "Revenge. Vengeance"
Haider- "Vengeance. Vengeance from whom? And why?"
Roohdaar- "To take revenge for a foul and unnatural murder … by a serpent of a murderer"
Haider- "you seem to have confused matters … my father was arrested by the army and one of these days … we will find out where they hold him"
Roohdaar- "It was Khurram who betrayed your father. The army crackdown in your village was not a matter of chance. And Ghazala had informed Khurram … Ghazala deceived your father and Khurram betrayed him. They live like a married couple is a proof of that"

Roohdaar further announces that it was Meer's last wish that Haider should take his revenge.

Hilaal- "Tell him to avenge my betrayal by my serpent of a brother … Tell him to aim his bullets at those cunning, deceiving eyes … that entrapped his mother … that made him an orphan"
Roohdaar- "And his mother"
Hilaal- "God will be her judge" (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 112–127).

The message of Meer echoes the message of the ghost in Hamlet.

Other than these major characters, the film also has Pervez Lone as (Polonius), Liyaqat as (Leartes), portraying their respective roles. As far as the roles of Salman and Salman as (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) are concerned, Visual Bhardwaj has made them caricatures rather than characters.

### 3. The political aspects of Kashmir in Haider

This adaptation by Vishal Bhardwaj is the first commercial Bollywood film to uphold a mirror to the grim realities of Kashmir's conflict. Because of its serious socio-political content, the film was widely criticized and created a lot of controversy. For people who are aware of Kashmir's traumatic history, *Haider* is far more than a mere adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Their primary concern lies in the political aspect of the film, its artistic and cinematic aspects are of secondary interest to them. It clearly appears that Bhardwaj's intention was to highlight the "geopolitical discourse" rather than in adapting Shakespeare's plot. There is no doubt that the political content of the film is very strong. By setting *Haider* in Kashmir during 1995, Bhardwaj deconstructs the issues of armed insurgency, the position of the Indian army and its power and brutality on the local people. There are many scenes in the film where several army concentration camps have been shown where innocent people are being detained and inhumanly tortured on the suspicion of being a militant (Bhagira, 2015, p. 3).

Scene 112 of the film depicts the brutal realities of the interrogation center and torture room, where different methods are being applied on the captured militants to get out the information. A man's hands are tied behind him and a soldier holds him by his hair to make him look directly into a high voltage bulb. An officer speaks calmly as the prisoner screams:

Officer- "Twenty innocent children died in your blasts … where are your colleagues hiding?"
Prisoner- "Sir, I swear I'm a student … I'm not a militant" (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 118).

Because of this unending terror, the people of the valley live a dreadful life always tensed and surrounded with the fear of death. Scene 103 of the film depicts yet another instance of this aimless life where people have become so used to the check-posts and body searches that they cannot enter their houses until they are searched. They are suffering from a psychological disorder called "New Disease." The scene depicts the plight of an old woman whose young son refuses to enter the house despite her constant pleadings:

Arshia- "What's with him?"
Old Mother- "I don't know … These days he just stands outside the door for hours. He doesn't come in … "
Roohdaar- "Search him. Where are you coming from? … What's in your pockets? ID?"

The boy immediately takes out his ID from his pocket. Roohdaar frisks the boy from head to toe.

Roohdaar- "Go, now"

The boy quietly goes inside.

Roohdaar- "People have become so used to check-posts and body searches at every entrance that unless they are frisked … they fear crossing a door even to enter their own homes. It's a psychological disorder called 'New Disease' … " (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 102–103).

It is interesting to note here that Basharat Peer did a cameo in the film. He played the role of the man with a New Disease. In an interview with Poonam Saxena, Peer explains that "New Disease" is one of the stories by a well-known Kashmiri short story writer Akhtar Mohiuddin, which he translated:

> … Akhtar Mohiuddin. He's a very well-known Kashmiri short story writer. I had translated one of his stories, New Disease. A man is taken to the doctor by his family. The problem is that every time the man comes to a door, any door, he stops. Until he is asked for his ID and searched, he can't enter. This was the 'New Disease' in Kashmir (Saxena, 2014).

Similarly, the crackdown scene early in the film also resonates the memories of fear and humiliation, where all the people had to step out of their houses and parade before a masked informer whose job is to identify the militants.

Similarly, Haider's struggle to search his missing father in different jails and detention camps brings to light the dark truth of the disappeared Kashmiri people. "Every month a group of people under the banner of Association of parents of Disappeared people (APDP) stage a peaceful sit-in at Lal Chowk to highlight their struggle to locate their loved ones." However, the most talked about scenes of the film dealt with the depiction of detention centers and torture techniques, Papa 2 the most dreaded detention centers in Kashmir are one of them (Hassan, 2014).

In scene 112 of the film Roohdaar describes the brutalities of Papa-2 in the following lines:

> Papa-2 was the other name for hell. Men returned as shadows of their selves from Papa-2 (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 116)

It is really heartbreaking to encounter such grim realities of Kashmir's traumatic past in Bhardwaj's adaptation. From enforced disappearances to unmarked graves and from custodial killings to Ikhwani terror, *Haider* portrays a true picture of Kashmir in the mid-nineties. In this regard, Ishfaqul Hasan, DNA's special correspondent in Jammu and Kashmir opines:

The Shakespearean roots aside, *Haider* is an authentic narrative of Kashmir. The horrors of crackdown, the abuse of being treated as an alien in one's own land, the obsession with identity cards, the torture chambers, custodial killings … half widows and the unending struggle of parents of disappeared people … It is like reliving the Kashmir of the nineties, which everyone wants to forget.

## 4. The dramatic devices

### *4.1. Irony*

Irony is brilliantly woven with the plot of *Haider*. From the beginning till the end there are many instances of irony in the film. Scene 02 of the film presents one such example where Khurram, who is a lawyer by profession is seen playing with the sentiments of an old man by making him false promises:

Old Man- "Khurram saheb, my son is innocent … He's been detained at the Shiraz Cinema camp … "
Khurram- "How can I help you?"
Old Man- "Please get him out … "

Khurram laughs

Khurram- "Uncle … I have no authority to free your boy … I can't get him out but I can possibly save his life … We have to move him out of the camp and get him sentenced to a prison … We'll need to file a formal report … We need to get him charged with a crime … "

He takes a deep breath.

Khurram- "It'll be a false charge. That would get him a hearing in a court. Once he is presented in court, he can't disappear (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 4–5).

On the pretext of helping him, Khurram is actually using the old man for his own evil plans. Instead, to performing his duty and getting the innocent boy out of the detention camp, he wants him to get charged with a crime so that he can create an Ikhwani group.

In another powerful example of irony, scene 59 of the film, Ghazala is seen singing and dancing with her brother-in-law Khurram, soon after her husband went missing. Like Queen Gertrude, she is also not bothered about her husband's disappearance. Looking at her "Haider freezes in his tracks. He notices a certain look in his mother's eyes, a look, he has never seen before".

Scene 68 depicts yet another instance of irony in the film. Khurram, who is the real culprit behind Hilaal's detention and disappearance, is promising Haider to search every prison to get him home. He is trying to convince Haider that there is nothing going on between him and Ghazala and that he is just trying to keep her sister-in-law happy.

At the beginning of the scene 130, Bhardwaj describes the bedroom of Khurram, where Ghazala is living with him like his lawfully wedded wife:

> Ghazala wakes up with a start. Morning sunlight is coming through the curtains of the windows. She looks at Khurram sleeping next to her on the bed (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 131).

The hypocrisy and wickedness does not end here, after getting the news that Hilaal is no more, Khurram recites fateha at his grave and prays for his soul to rest in peace. He also arranges for

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a condolence meeting at his house to mourn the death of his brother, but soon after the prayers are over, he asks the priest to marry Ghazala:

> Khurram- "Thank you for being with us in the time of grief. Somehow, I have managed to embrace this loss … but … the prospect of seeing my beloved sister-in-law live a widow's life … and my dearest Haider as an orphan … How will I find the courage to bear with that? … And thus facing these facts, I seek your permission. The elders and friends here … to marry my sister-in-law Ghazala Meer … " (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 152–153).

While everyone congratulates him, Ghazala has a smile on her face. She smiles as if their long-lived dream is going to get fulfilled. This is in fact the biggest instance of irony, where a wife whose husband has just died is happily planning to get married to his brother-in-law, without wasting any time. It draws a complete parallel with the hasty marriage of Queen Gertrude with her brother-in-law Claudius, in Shakespeare's Hamlet.

### *4.2. Imagery*

The images that Bhardwaj employs in *Haider* strongly support the plot and theme of the film. There are potent images of blood and destruction justifying the miserable and traumatic conditions of Kashmir. In scene 15 of the film Bhardwaj draws powerful images of blood as Hilaal operates on an ailing militant:

> Ghazala waits in the balcony under the attic. A noise in the drainage pipe. Blood-colored water flushes out. The young man comes down the steps with a large bowl full of bloody napkins and instruments. There is quite lot of blood in the bowl. He hands it over to Ghazala … she is left alone with the blood filled bowl … (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 17).

The repetition of the word "blood" again and again by Bhardwaj signals a tragedy of bloodshed and destruction. The images of blood remain fresh throughout the action of the film, with death waiting at every end. The latter half of the film witnesses several deaths. The grave diggers scene further adds to the imagery of death and destruction.

Scene 50 of the film depicts yet another picture of destruction. On returning home after years, Haider is surrounded by heaps of broken images, the images of burnt, torn-down structure, which used to be his home once. The film ends with "a gory painting of blood bath," where blood-soaked Khurram is dragging himself along the ground, both his legs blown off, blood oozes out of his legs, he screams in pain as Haider leaves him to die in a pool of blood (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 212–213).

### *4.3. Soliloquies*

The play *Hamlet* has seven instances of soliloquies by Prince Hamlet, but Bhardwaj's adaptation focuses on only one. The most famous soliloquy by Prince Hamlet "To be or not to be" gets transformed to "Hum hain ki hum nahin" in *Haider*. In an interview with Nasreen Munni Kabir, Bhardwaj explains:

> I had many options. In *Haider* we have two or three places where he says different things. But basically for me: 'Main rahun ke main nahin' or 'hum hain ki hum nahin'? (Gahlot, 2014).

In scene 105 of the film, Haider is seen protesting for his missing father outside the gates of the UN office, where the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons holds a demonstration. They display large banners and photos of disappeared people "where is my father?," "Did they vanish into thin air?" Haider is amongst the crowd, holding a banner in his hand it reads:

> Hum hain ki hum nahin
> Shall we be or not be? (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 106).

A similar protest finds its way in scene 137 of the film, where Haider delivers a powerful speech at the historic Lal Chowk in Kashmir. Pretending to be mad, he is seen with a clean-shaven head and beard, wearing the American flag as a bandana around his forehead on an old suit, and he has a stethoscope around his neck like a tie. He begins to orate loudly as if giving a speech:

> Hello … Hello … mic testing one, two, three … can you hear me? Hello … According to the UN council resolution number 47 or 1948 … Article 2 of the Geneva Convention and article 370 of the Indian constitution … There is but one question! Do we exist or do we not? If we do … then who are we? If we don't … then where are we? If we exist, then why do stand here? If we don't exist where did we loose ourselves? Did we exist at all? Or not? … (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 142-143).

Haider's monologue clearly reflects his pain and misery. His existence is challenged, he is in a confused state, unable to decide, like Prince Hamlet, how to move ahead. It is interesting to note here that "the choice of Lal Chowk is intentional on Bhardwaj's part, because the political leaders of Kashmir deliver their speeches here. Haider's rebellious soliloquy plants a new twist in the idea of being and not being of Hamlet as both of them are in somewhat the same situation" (Ayaz et al., 2015, p. 119).

Other than highlighting the dilemma of Haider, his monologue also probes into the miserable and unfortunate conditions of the people of Kashmir. Like Haider, their existence is also challenged. They have no identity and future. Their lives are circling around the torturous crackdowns, interrogations, ID cards and ultimately death.

### *4.4. The technique of flashback and voice over*

There are many instances in the film, where Bhardwaj has relied upon the flashback technique. The entire scene 51 is a montage of flashbacks where flashes of Haider's happy childhood appear before him as he walks through his ruined house on his return to Kashmir.

Another instance of the flashback technique appears in scene 85 of the film. Ghazala is in Haider's room cleaning up. She gathers some textbooks to put inside Haider's bag pack and feels a metal thing inside the bag. She pulls it out. It is a pistol. She is shocked. The entire flashback, which runs into around 10 pages of the screenplay, depicts Haider, at the age of sixteen, being scolded by Ghazala for keeping a pistol, and how she convinces Hilaal to send Haider away from home to study.

Yet another instance of the flashback technique appears in scene 110 of the film, where Bhardwaj narrates the torture and brutalities of the detention center—Papa-2—where Hilaal and Roohdaar were tortured by the security forces. The condition of prisoners in jails is highlighted through Roohdaar's voice-over, as he narrates his ordeal to Haider. Roohdaar also informs Haider of the illicit relationship between his mother and uncle and also gives him the message of his father to take revenge for the same.

With the help of the flashback technique, Bhardwaj saves a lot of time. Had all this been filmed it would have become difficult on his part to adjust it in the time span of two and a half hours. Through these small visual clips, he successfully achieves his purpose without compromising on time.

### *4.5. Play within a play*

Like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Bhardwaj's adaptation also has a play within a play, excellently woven with the plot. As Stephen Alter suggests, it is "a moment of light entertainment amidst a tale of deceit, intrigue and murder" (Alter, 2014, p. xi). Bhardwaj has given a Bollywood flavor to the play, where the lead narrator is masked Haider, narrating the tragic story of intrigue and betrayal through a song "Bismil." The lyrics tell the story of the newly crowned King after he betrayed

and murdered his own brother, the older king, to ensure that the kingdom and the queen would be his forever (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 164).

In the words of Sayan Dey:

> The dance drama enacted by actor Shahid Kapoor was embellished with every theatrical technicality. The open-air platform of the Martand Sun Temple, hundred feet tall puppets, infusion of Dumbhal folk dance which originally belongs to the Wittal tribes of Kashmir enriches the viewers with a cine-theatrical wonder. All these techniques not only uphold the priceless Kashmiri traditions but also fulfill its original purpose of evoking guilt conscience in the newly married couple. Thus Vishal Bhardwaj wonderfully transcends the play within a play into an extravagant cine-theatrical version (Dey, 2014, p. 278).

### *4.6. Music*

Vishal has put in a lot of efforts to craft the music for *Haider*. The lyrics are carefully penned down keeping in mind the conflict of Haider and the tragedy of Kashmir. It is important to note here that the screenplay has no mention of any song; however, the film has many songs.

Let us begin with the romantic track "Khul Kabhi To," featuring Haider and his beloved Arshia. The picturization of the song is beautiful with snow laden trees and floating rivers. Throughout the song Haider praises the beauty of Arshia and compares her beauty with Kashmir, which is heaven on earth. The romantic voice of Arijit Singh adds to the melody of the song.

Another in line is a powerful song "Bismil" in the voice of Sukhwinder Singh. According to Peer, "This song is a very dark political statement about extra-judicial killings, in the words of Gulzar" (Saxena, 2014). In the film, it serves the purpose of "Play within a play" where Haider narrates the story of a king who killed his own elder brother to marry the Queen and to observe the guilt on the faces of Khurram and Ghazala, much similar to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* where Prince Hamlet staged a play to trap his uncle Claudius and mother Gertrude.

In the voice of Rekha Bhardwaj, "Jhelum" is a beautiful song telling the tragic tale of Kashmir's traumatic life. With "Aao Na," the film reaches its climax. The song is filmed in a graveyard, with the grave diggers lamenting on the mortality of the human life.

### *4.7. Ending*

While Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had a clear end where everyone, including Hamlet, dies, Bhardwaj leaves *Haider* open ended. Unlike Queen Gertrude, who consumes the cup of poison unknowingly, Ghazala commits suicide. Khurram is left bleeding in a pool of blood, while Haider slowly walks away into the smoke. Here, Bhardwaj suggests two options:

> After a few steps he falls on the ground or Roohdaar emerges from smoke and Haider falls into his embrace (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. 212).

Thus, unlike Prince Hamlet's fate, Haider's death is not made clear. Here, Bhardwaj has compromised with a major characteristic of a tragedy, that is, the death of the protagonist at the end, to suggest a ray of hope or in other words to illustrate the freedom of Kashmir from the shackles of death, destruction and misery in future. But still the basic idea of a tragedy is never lost because except Haider, all the characters die in the end.

### *4.8. Setting*

Instead of sixteenth-century Denmark, Vishal Bhardwaj relocates *Haider* in Kashmir during mid nineties. As it has already been pointed out, Basharat peer's memoir *Curfewed Night* inspired Bhardwaj to set his adaptation in Kashmir:

> . . . I began to read Basharat's book with *Hamlet* in mind and by the time I finished it I had decided to collaborate with him to work out my version of *Hamlet* . . . (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, p. vi).

By setting *Haider* in Kashmir, Bhardwaj draws an excellent parallel between Hamlet's dilemma and Kashmir tragedy.

### *4.9. Diction*

In *Haider*, Bhardwaj has "experimented with the Kashmiri dialect and regional tone" (Bhagira, 2015, p. 5). Unlike Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the characters here do not speak Elizabethan English. Even the pronunciation has intercultural variations.

## 5. Points of contact and departure between text and film

In making *Haider*, Vishal Bhardwaj has appropriated the source text (*Hamlet*). Though he draws parallels with the important scenes of the original play, the deviation is more powerful. It is worth mentioning here that through *Haider*, Bhardwaj has crafted his own unique version, which remains loyal to the Shakespearean spirit.

## 6. Points of contact

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* have many things in common. There are close parallels at the level of theme and plot. Like *Hamlet*, Bhardwaj's adaptation also centers around the uses of revenge, deceit, betrayal and murder. Similarly, all the main characters of *Hamlet* have successfully planted their way in *Haider* also. Bhardwaj's genius lies in creatively naming his characters so that they reflect the Shakespearean mark evidently. Therefore, Hamlet becomes Haider, Gertrude-Ghazala, Claudius-Khurram, Polonius-Pervez, Leartes-Liyaqat, Ophelia-Arshia and so on. Javed (2020), has presented a similar kind of comparative analysis between Shakespeare's Macbeth and Vishal Bhardwaj's Maqbool.

The famous scenes in *Hamlet* like the Prayer scene, Nunnery scene, Closet scene, the Mouse trap scene and the Grave Diggers scene have successfully found their way in Bhardwaj's version also, though he has painted them with his own colors. For example, the exchange of dialogues between Haider and Ghazala in scene 168 of the adaptation clearly hints at the famous closet scene of Hamlet, where Prince Hamlet accuses his mother Gertrude of adultery:

Haider- "Such innocence in one face; such deceit in the other … This face reads the prayers at my father's funeral … That one glows with repeating marital vows to Khurram."
Ghazala- "I am not to be blamed for your father's death"

Haider laughs aloud

Haider- "Oh! How sad to see a mother lie … The flowers on father's grave were still fresh … you rushed into Khurram's marital bed" (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 183–184)

This dialogue by Haider echoes the famous "Frailty Thy name is woman" by Prince Hamlet (Act I, scene 2).

A similar parallel is drawn between the famous prayer scene of *Hamlet* and the scene 156 of *Haider* where Khurram is kneeling down in prayer, as Haider looks from behind:

Khurram- "My lord, my crime, my sin stinks the skies, the earth … I fail even to bow in prayer despite my punishing guilt … My brother's blood covers my cursed hand … "

Haider creeps in towards Khurram, pistol in hand

Khurram- "Dear God! You alone can forgive my horrible murder … "

Haider can't pull the trigger

Haider- "I didn't kill you because you were in prayer … Even a ghastly sinner would enter heaven if killed in prayer … " (Bhardwaj and Peer 2014, pp. 171–174).

Haider's inability to pull the trigger echoes Hamlet's similar decision not to kill Claudius while he is praying.

"Now might I do it pat, now he is praying
And now I'll do, and so he goes to Heaven
And so am I revenged: that would be scanned,
A villain kills my father, and for that
I his sole son, do this same villain send to Heaven … " (Act III Scene 3).

Other than these, there are other parallels, which are inspired by the source-text, such as Haider pretends to be mad like Prince Hamlet, Salman and Salman are set to spy and kill Haider by Khurram like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Arshia goes mad like Ophelia, when Pervez gets killed by Haider in a fit of anger.

## 7. Points of departure

The setting of the film has been changed from sixteenth-century Denmark to the Kashmir in mid nineties. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare focused solely on the revenge motive but in *Haider*, Bhardwaj also intended to depict the realities of Kashmir along with the revenge tragedy. Therefore, sometimes it appears as if "Kashmir" is the protagonist in *Haider*. In *Hamlet*, ghost appears in the very opening of the play but in *Haider*, Roohdaar enters the scene only during the second half of the film. Similarly, in *Hamlet*, Horatio has an important role to play. He was Hamlet's friend and adviser but in the adaptation Haider has no such friend, instead Arshia acts as friend and beloved of Haider.

While *Hamlet* has a clear end, where Claudius, Gertrude and Hamlet are dead, Bhardwaj leaves *Haider* open ended. Unlike Queen Gertrude, who unknowingly consumes the cup of poison, Ghazala commits suicide, Khurram is left in a pool of blood begging for death and Haider disappears in smoke.

It is important to mention here that though *Haider* is Shakespearean in spirit, Bhardwaj has crafted a unique version of his own with Kashmir as the central character around which all the other characters revolve.

## 8. Conclusion

After analyzing the source-text (*Hamlet*) and its adaptation (*Haider*) it becomes clear that the film has make use of appropriation, rather than being a strict example of adaptation. Though Bhardwaj has done a tremendous job in drawing several parallels with the original play but the deviations are more strong. However, it is worth appreciation that despite changing the setting, language, location and ending, the film does not de-construct the notion of Shakespeare's tragedy. It is an honest and bold attempt on Bhardwaj's part to depict the torments of Kashmiri life through Shakespeare's play. The amalgamation of revenge tragedy with the tragedy of Kashmir is a brilliant idea for which Vishal Bhardwaj received much acclaim worldwide.

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