

## Shakespeare in Kashmir : Delineation of Hamlet's Dilemma in *Haider*

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**Abstract :** Haider delineated by Vishal Bharadwaj, who rummages in political as well as psychological depths of the play - Hamlet, where he could recreate Bard's pathos, wit and intrigue appealingly in the backdrop of Kashmir. Haider as the titular protagonist, student and poet though returns Kashmir to seek his father's 'Kalashnikov' but tugged into the politics of the state. In the end of the movie Haider finds himself in dilemma what is the fair and what is foul?

**Keywords :** Adaptation, Bard, Dilemma, Kalashnikov, Titular

*'April is the cruelest month, because April is Shakespeare's month.'*

As per known facts, William Shakespeare was born and died on Saint George's Day, April, 23. It is a sheer coincidence that one of Shakespeare's memorable character; Cassius in Julius Caesar also dies on his birthday saying as-

*'This day I breathed first; Time is come round,*

*And where I did begin, there shall I end.'*

*- Julius Caesar, Act -Fifth, Scene - Third.*

An immortal persona, a pole star of literary arena William Shakespeare has not only attracts the literariats but also Cinema where directors have created unforgettable movies consistently copying or imitating the Bard.

*'It is a profound truth that Nature does not know best; that genetical evolution... is a story of waste, makeshift, compromise and blunder'.*

*- Peter Medawar, The Future of Man*

Adaptation is, first of all, a process, it is not just a matter of visible traits; it takes place in the life- cycle which is often quite complex. It is a fact of life that has been accepted by many of the great thinkers who have tackled the world of life. It is their explanations of how adaptation arises that separate these thinkers. Empedocles did not believe that adaptation required a final cause (purpose), but 'came about naturally, since such things survived.' Aristotle, however, did believe in final causes. Before Charles Darwin, adaptation was seen as a fixed relationship between an organism and its habitat. It was not appreciated that as the climate changed, so did the habitat; and as the habitat adapted inmates adapt themselves.

Shakespeare is a famous face of literary world, which is widely and consistently being adapted. Though sometimes the problem with many of the contemporary Shakespearean adaptations was the loss of essence and depth, they are just 'Pedestal'

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productions that over-inflate the Bard's plays to a lofty 'high art', entirely disregarding a good portion of his intended art but possess the elegance and luster of literature that truly makes Shakespeare's works universal and timeless.

In the high tumultuous and palm covered state of Kashmir, the Bard and Hindi cinema screen did meet, and created a fine piece of art named - Haider. Vishal Bhardwaj, adapting Shakespeare's play 'Hamlet' into Hindi, the national lingua of India. Haider is a modern-day adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet and Curfewed Night of Basharat Peer, set amidst the insurgency-hit Kashmir conflicts of 1995 which ended with civilian's disappearances. In Haider, the director tries and somewhere becomes successful to recreate Bard's pathos and wit including intrigues in an accepting and understanding way. In 2014, through Haider, the Bard travelled to the valley of Kashmir which was entirely resonant and boom with the volleys of terror and terrorism.

As where in Hamlet his father is killed by the hand of his brother so as in Haider Dr. Hilaal Meer disappeared and is murdered by his brother, Khurram. In Hamlet when he comes to his home he sees that his mother, Gertrude, has got married to his Uncle, Claudius, who had killed his father, here also Haider when he returns from Aligarh Muslim University to seek answers about his father's disappearance he sees that his mother Ghazala is now his uncle's wife and is very happy with her life. As where Hamlet meets his father's Ghost and drops some clues of his murder here also Haider meets Roohdar who tells the story of Haider's father's murder by Khurram. As when after hearing his father's murder Hamlet becomes tormented and depressed and tries to get the truth, in the movie also Haider is mentally and emotionally shattered. As in the play Hamlet tries to trap and expose but in the movie Haider tries to kill his uncle but could not because he was praying that time and Haider's moral ethics do not permit him for the crime. The role of Ophelia is presented in the film as Arshi who is Haider's beloved to whom Haider, discloses his dilemma, adding that Roohdar gave him a gun to kill his uncle now confused as to whom to believe despite knowing the truth himself. Arshi confides this to her father who informs Khurram about the gun and Khurram immediately orders his men to send Haider to a mental asylum. This is done in Hamlet when Claudius orders to send Hamlet to England. Moreover he puts Polonius (Ophelia's father) to kill him. Here in the film Khurram sets order to Arshi's father to murder Haider. Haider is captured by Arshi's father, who orders him to be executed, but Haider manages to escape, but Arshi's father is killed by him as Polonius is killed by Hamlet. Tormented by her father's death at the hands of Haider, Arshi is emotionally traumatized and commits suicide which is the same fate of Ophelia in the play. In Hamlet Claudius arranges a wrestling between Hamlet and Laertes where the latter is killed and Gertrude unknowingly drinks the poisoned wine which is put for Hamlet by Claudius and at last Hamlet kills Claudius before he dies because of the mortal wound given by Laertes. In the movie Ghazala confronts her son who says that he cannot die

before avenging his father's death. Ghazala tells him that revenge only results in revenge and there is no end to this cycle, but Haider, who is bent on revenge, does not understand. Ghazala kisses Haider goodbye and steps outside, only to reveal that she is wearing a suicide bomb given to her by Roohdar. Khurram and Haider rush towards her but she pulls the pins of the hand grenade resulting in a big explosion, killing herself along with the rest of Khurram's men and gravely injuring Khurram himself, while Haider is only slightly thrown back from the force of the explosion. Haider goes to his mother's remains, weeps by her side and goes to kill Khurram, whose legs have been severed from his body. He is reminded of his mother's words that "revenge only results in revenge" and thus decides to let Khurram live. Khurram begs Haider to kill him to free him from the burden of guilt and to avenge his father's death, but Haider doesn't oblige to Khurram, ignores him and leaves. This is clear now that in the end Haider differs Hamlet where in his dilemma -

*"Dil ki agar Sunoon to hai, Dimagh ki to hainahin  
Jaan loon kijaadoon, main Rahoongi main nahin"*

Haider deviating from the original ending of Hamlet, it also makes a necessary point about the cyclical nature of revenge and violence. Haider a nice adaptation that never fumbles, never stumbles, and is so sure of itself that it cannot go towards wrong. Haider is a 'Guztaq' movie that audaciously breaks away every rules of 'Hamlet'. Haider is Chutzpah and in keeping with the same vein.

Hindi cinema hasn't gazed into Kashmir, preferring to look superficially at it instead. In Kashmir, this saga of disappearance which resulted in the maddening drama of media reaches to the peak of uncertainty and unrest, cannot be the tale of one Prince or just one expelled family or a race; in Kashmir, where mothers know the name 'Kalashnikov', which is a traditional culture of weapon ownership in the area of LOC and across the Border, very well there are too many Hamlets not just one.

Phiran and Hijab are not just normal robes but a standard symbol of Kashmiri, and in Haider these colours of costumes tries to recreate an environment of recce in the valley of Kashmir, where the Almighty creates everything in snow white. In movie, when somewhere along the way Ghazala's husband disappears after that she as a half-widow marries her brother-in-law who is wealthier than her husband and this change in her marital status is depicted through the richer colors and fabrics of Ghazala but she is torn between her idealistic husband, opportunistic brother-in-law and her innocent and passionate son. Somewhere she feels that she has the responsibility to keep everything under control but obviously she can't. She loves her son to the extent of craziness and always tries to protect him from being mislead and misguided as the epitome of universal motherhood.

Here the director tries and succeed to explore and delineate the psyche of the character 'Haider' through colors, textures and cuts. The signs of madness in his character are depicted through the pom-poms in his cap during the track 'Bismil' that is a

manifestation of the traditional folk dance named- Dumhal of the Kashmir valley performed by Wattal tribes. The costumes seen in the climax are also symbolical and relevant to the theme and psyche of the movie. Against the white snow backdrop, characters stacked to black and red; to bring out the passivity of the human mind through the cold color of snow and the death of psyche in blood red hues.

Haider is a beast that just won't be tamed by regular and common cinematic definitions and artistic eyes. There is flamboyance and subtleness, both at once in the treatment. Elegance and earthiness rub shoulders in the execution of what is regarded as one of the Shakespeare's most complex tragedies. Bhardwaj's this Shakespearean sojourn in Kashmir is quite apt and acceptable adaptation. Haider is like a painting viewed from the distant roadway inside an art gallery. Though, the vision is distant, layered; yet vivid life-like and exquisitely poetic.

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