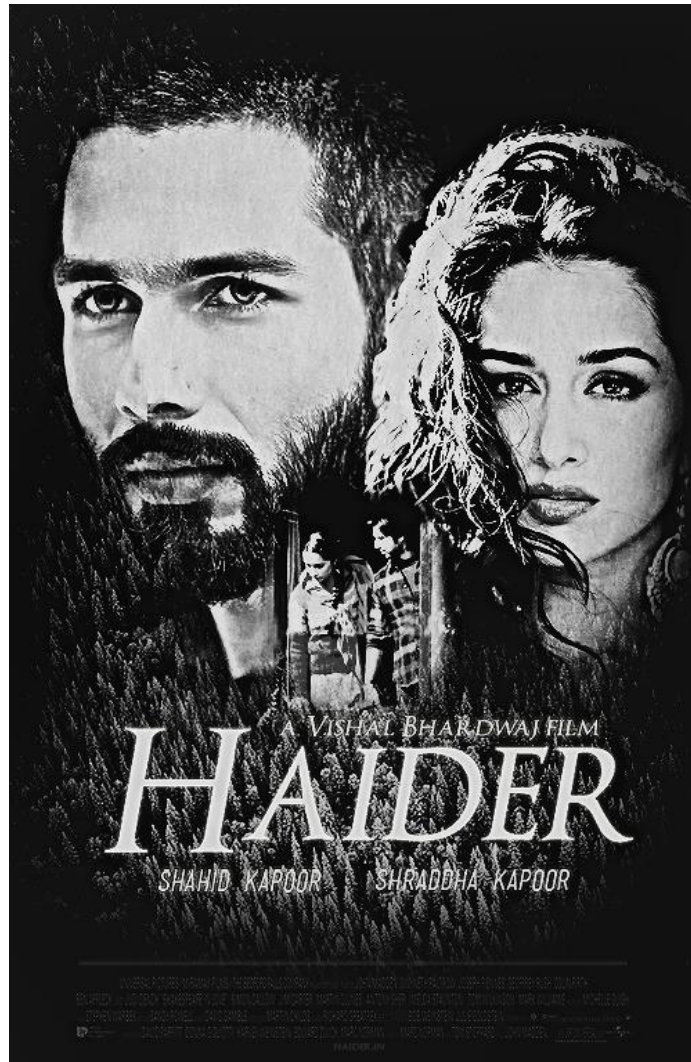


**Hamlet's "To be or not to be" and
Haider's "Main rahoon ki main nahi"
An Analysis**

Dr. Seema Rana, Ph.D.



Abstract

Vishal Bhardwaj, along with a Kashmiri journalist Basharat Peer has presented an adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet. The film is a modern-day reproduction of the tragedy of Hamlet set amidst the insurgency-hit Kashmir of 1995 and civilian disappearances while

Bhardwaj gives it an Indian twist. Though the political backdrop often overwhelms the family drama, he provides the occasional sharp reminder of how cinematically he can reconstruct Shakespearean moments. About “Haider” one can say that it succeeds better as a tale of Kashmiri unrest and official brutality —than it does as a telling of “Hamlet. By comparison Haider is a simple fellow. In an un-Hamletlike way, he knows what he wants. He knows his purpose- to avenge his father and goes after it.

This paper tries to compare Hamlet’s soliloquy “To be or not to be, that is the question” – with Haider’s monologue “Main rahoon ki main nahi.” ‘To be or not to be’ in Act 3 Scene 1 of Hamlet is one of the most famous soliloquies in the works of Shakespeare.

Key words: To be or Not to be, Hamlet, Haider’s “Main rahoon ki main nahi.”

To be, or not to be

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis Nobler in the mind to suffer
The Slings and Arrows of outrageous Fortune,
Or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them: to die, to sleep...

The first six words establish a balance. There is a direct opposition – to be, or not to be. Hamlet is thinking about a state of being alive or being dead. The question for him was whether to continue to exist or not. He asks which of the two alternatives is nobler whether to suffer silently the cruelties of fate or to put up a fight against the misfortunes of life that afflict one. It would be better perhaps to commit suicide if death were to mean a kind of total sleep and total unconsciousness. The argument that makes Hamlet pause is the question of what might happen after death. So his resolution is weakened and he is unable to execute great enterprise. This soliloquy reveals the speculative temperament of Hamlet, his irresolute and wavering mind, and his incapacity for any action. This soliloquy has a universal appeal because Hamlet seems to be speaking for all human beings. The dramatic purpose of this soliloquy is to explain Hamlet’s

procrastination in carrying out his purpose and to show at the same time the mental torture that Hamlet has been undergoing because of his failure to have carried out his purpose.

The Movie *Haider*

Out of many thought provoking dialogues from the movie *Haider*, “Main rahoon ke main nahi” seems to touch our hearts the most. It is the desi version of “To be or not to be”, and can be termed as one of the best stealers from *Haider*. Haider express his emotions of pain and sorrow, with a stoic exterior, leaves one in awe – he is just so natural and perfect.

Shaq pe hai yaqeen to , yaqeen pe hai shaq mujhe.

Kiska jhoot jhoot hai, kiske sach mein sach nahi.

Hai ki hai nahi, bas yahi ek sawaal hai.

Aur sawaal ka jawaab bhi sawaal hai.

Dil ki gar sunu to hai, dimaag ki to hai nahi.

Jaan loon ki jaan doon, main rahoon ki main nahi

These lines sum up Haider’s reflection on life, his dilemma as he is faced with betrayal and the pain of losing a loved one. Is it better to kill someone and live a life full of pain and troubles or is it easier to just die and relieve oneself of all the miseries. If I listen to my heart, it's there. If I listen to my mind, though, it's not. Should I take a life, or give mine, Should I remain, or should I not. That's the simple, literal translation of the poetry of Gulzar *Haider* and we can relate it to “To be, or not to be, that is the question” of Hamlet.

The Scene in the Movie

Comparing it with Hamlet, we can easily relive the scene in the movie, where Haider has a gun in his hand and is asking 'jaan doon ki jaan loon', though in the movie it is not a soliloquy but a monologue because Haider here expresses his dilemma before his beloved Arshia. But he surely has the confusion Hamlet of Shakespeare was in, in his soliloquy 'to be or not to be', while contemplating or feigning suicide. The doubt whether it was actual contemplation of suicide or just feigning isn't cleared by Vishal in here as well. Here Haider is not generalizing or speaking for all human beings like the soliloquy but seems to be speaking only for himself.

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Hamlet's Soliloquy

In the soliloquy Hamlet's mind and body seem to be in conflict while in Haider's monologue his mind and heart are troubling him. Hamlet's soliloquy has hidden and implied meaning while Haider explicitly manifests himself.

Full Paper

After numerous adaptations, re-visitings and re-tellings of Shakespeare's works by film makers and writers all over the world, Vishal Bhardwaj's 'Haider,' is the latest. Movies have the power to leave an indelible impact on the minds of the viewers. They not only make us think, but also play an influential role in changing the way we think. And Bhardwaj does exactly the same with his projects. His films not only open up a new world of possibilities, but also hit us on an intellectual level. His films put forth a different outlook to life, social beliefs and political ideologies. If the dark setup and pulsing background score of 'Haider' echoes the despair of Kashmir, its hard-hitting dialogues elucidate the pain the natives have been experiencing for years.

Adaptation of Shakespeare's Play

Vishal Bhardwaj, along with a Kashmiri journalist Basharat Peer has presented an adaptation of Shakespeare's most ambitious play, Hamlet. The film is a modern-day reproduction of the tragedy of Hamlet set amidst the insurgency-hit Kashmir of 1995 and civilian disappearances while Vishal Bhardwaj gives it an Indian twist. The movie on Shakespearean tragedy gives a view of contemporary India. Though the political backdrop often overwhelms the family drama, Mr. Bhardwaj provides the occasional sharp reminder of how cinematically he can construct Shakespearean moments. Though, this remains the fact that no adaptation or translation can take the place of its original as something gets lost in the process of transfusion or translation.

Hamlet's Story and the Story of Haider

William Shakespeare's tragic play, 'Hamlet,' tells the story of the Prince of Denmark who is driven into deep sadness after the news of his father's murder at the hands of his uncle. The

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news is imparted to Hamlet by his father's ghost who seeks vengeance. While Hamlet is determined to avenge his father's death, his disillusionment causes him to withdraw into self-destructive introspection, and madness ensues.

In Bhardwaj's movie, 'Haider,' Shahid Kapoor is Haider (Hamlet), Shraddha Kapoor is Arshia (Ophelia), Tabu plays Ghazala (Gertrude) and Kay Kay Menon is Khurram (Claudius). Haider - a young man returns home to Kashmir on receiving news of his father Hilaal Meer's disappearance. Not only does he learn that security forces have detained his father for harboring militants, but that his mother Ghazala is in a relationship with his very own uncle Khurram. Soon Haider learns that his uncle is responsible for the gruesome murder of his father, what follows is his journey to avenge his father's death. Irfaan Khan (Roohdaar) tells Haider that he simply wanted to pass on his father's message to him: revenge for Khurram's betrayal and also gives him a gun to kill his uncle. Thereafter, angry and swearing to avenge his father's death, Haider becomes mentally and emotionally scattered and starts to behave and act strangely. In the end a fierce exchange of bullets and bombs leaves only Haider and few men on Khurram's side alive. Ghazala has been wearing a suicide vest. Khurram and Haider rush towards her but 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 seriously injured with his legs being amputated. Haider goes to his mother's remains, cries a lot and goes to Khurram in order to shoot him in the eyes as per his father's wish but is reminded of his mother's words "revenge only results in revenge" and thus decides to leave Khurram. Khurram begs Haider to kill him to free him from burden of guilt and to avenge his father's death but Haider doesn't kill and leaves.

A Tale of Unrest in Kashmir

One can say that 'Haider' succeeds better as a tale of Kashmiri unrest and official brutality — people disappear, are tortured, shot for sport — than it does as a telling of 'Hamlet.' By comparison Haider is a simple fellow. In an un-Hamletlike way, he knows what he wants. He knows his purpose- to avenge his father.

'To be or not to be' in Act 3 Scene 1 of 'Hamlet' is the most famous soliloquy in the works of Shakespeare – probably, even, the most famous soliloquy anywhere. That is partly

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because the opening words are so interesting, memorable and intriguing but also because Shakespeare ranges around several cultures and practices to borrow the language for his images, and because he's dealing here with profound concepts, putting complex philosophical ideas into the mouth of a character on a stage, communicating with a wide range of audience.

A Comparison of the Soliloquies

This paper has tried to compare Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be, that is the question" –with Haider's monologue "Main rahoon ki main nahi."

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis Nobler in the mind to suffer
The Slings and Arrows of outrageous Fortune,
Or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them: to die, to sleep

The first six words establish a balance. There is a direct opposition – to be, or not to be. Hamlet is thinking about the state of being alive or being dead. The question for him was whether to continue to exist or not. He asks which of the two alternatives is nobler whether to suffer silently the cruelties of fate or to put up a fight against the misfortunes of life that afflict one. He pondered the prospect to sleep – as simple as that. And with that sleep we end the heartaches and the thousand natural miseries that human beings have to endure. It would be better perhaps to commit suicide if death were to mean a kind of total sleep and total unconsciousness. The argument that makes Hamlet pause is the question of what might happen after death. There is a religious dimension to it when Hamlet says that that it is a sin to take one's life and that conscience does make cowards of us all. So with that added dimension the fear of the unknown after death is intensified. It is the fear of what may happen after death that makes one endure the pains and injustices of life. Though his resolution is weakened and he is unable to execute great enterprise. This soliloquy reveals the speculative temperament of Hamlet, his irresolute and wavering mind, and his incapacity for any action of a momentous nature. This soliloquy has a universal appeal because Hamlet seems to be speaking for all human beings. The dramatic purpose of this soliloquy is to explain Hamlet's procrastination in carrying out his

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purpose and to show at the same time the mental torture that Hamlet has been undergoing because of his failure to have carried out his purpose. It is not just about killing himself but also about the mission he is on – to avenge his father’s death by killing his father’s murderer. Throughout the action of the play he makes excuses for not killing him and turns away when he has the chance. ‘Conscience does make cowards of us all.’ Convention demands that he kill Claudius but murder is a sin and that conflict is the core of the play. At the end of the soliloquy he pulls himself out of this reflective mode by deciding that too much thinking about it is the thing that will prevent the action he has to rise to.

Out of many thought provoking dialogues from the movie ‘Haider,’ “Main rahoon ke main nahi” seems to touch our hearts the most. It is the desi version of “To be or not to be”, and can be termed as one of the best stealers from ‘Haider.’ Haider express his emotions of pain and sorrow, with a stoic exterior, leaves one in awe – he is just so natural and perfect.

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Aur sawaal ka jawaab bhi sawaal hai.

Dil ki gar sunu to hai, dimaag ki to hai nahi.

Jaan loon ki jaan doon, main rahoon ki main nahi

If I am certain about my suspicion, I am also suspicious about the certainty

Whose lies are absolute lies, whose truth has no truth

Does it exist or does it not, that is the only question

And the answer to that is just another question

My heart says it exists, my mind says it does not

Should I take a life or should I take my life,

Should I continue to live or should I just die

These lines sum up Haider’s reflection on life, his dilemma as he is faced with betrayal and the pain of losing a loved one. Is it better to kill someone and live a life full of pain and

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Hamlet's soliloquy has hidden and implied meaning while Haider explicitly manifests himself.

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