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Un/Sexing Women in *Maqbool*: The female agency in the cinematic adaptation of *Macbeth*

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Abstract:

The brutality of Lady Macbeth is immemorally remembered and debated. Lady Macbeth, in the Elizabethan England, shocked the audience with her violent aspirations and unimaginable crimes, not common to women. In the twenty first century India, Vishal Bhardwaj, relocates and repurposes Lady Macbeth for the Indian audience in his cinematic adaptation of *Macbeth* namely *Maqbool*. The leading character is placed within the world of the underworld and while, resonating with the violence of Lady Macbeth, she also foregrounds the social, political, cultural and economic trappings of her context. The present paper studies the cinematic adaptation of the powerful female characters - Lady Macbeth and the three witches vis-à-vis the chosen film in the Indian context and focusses on the different degrees of struggle and assertion the three women- Nimmi, Mohini and Sameera- put across in their own capacity and within the given circumstances.

Key Words:

Cinema-adaptation, Macbeth, Maqbool, Vishal Bhardwaj, women-subjectivity, Elizabethan England, underworld, Mumbai.

Lady Macbeth is hailed as one of the classic Shakespearean tragic heroines, upsetting the conventional definition of womanhood and escalating the tragic suffering essential to a tragedy. The recreation of Lady Macbeth and the three witches by Vishal Bhardwaj in his film *Maqbool*, opens avenues to engage with the question of female agency, sexuality and marriage within the larger Indian social code, economic conditions, political orientation and cultural milieu of the twenty-first century India. The three female characters in the film *Maqbool*- Nimmi, Mohini and Sameera – symbolise different degrees of struggle and assertion in their own capacity and within the given circumstances. While Lady Macbeth and the three witches catalyse the tragedy and play an instrumental role in disturbing the Patriarchal power hierarchy, Nimmi, Mohini and Sameera act out of their contextualized positions in dealing with the convoluted patriarchal power structures.

The present paper proposes to study how Vishal Bhardwaj, while adapting Shakespeare for Indian cinema, interprets the bard and relocates his plays in the Indian context. With the specific focus on the theme of gender, the present paper examines the film *Maqbool*, a cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by Director Vishal Bhardwaj- and the portrayal of the powerful female characters akin to Lady Macbeth and the three witches, in an Indian context, vis-à-vis the chosen film.

The process of Adaptation has a history of being scrutinized from various perspectives. The initial discourse on adaptation had its preoccupation with the issue of fidelity. Considered the most appropriate criteria for evaluating adaptation, the fidelity discourse conceived the success of adaptation based on its ability to recreate textual details. Critics like George Bluestone, Andre Bazin, Robert Stam, Brian Mcfarlane, Thomas Leitch, Linda Hutcheon, Julie Sanders, etc. have extensively theorized on adaptation.

Deriving my understanding of adaptation as an active process of interpretation from Linda Hutcheon's theory, the present paper perceives adaptation as an amalgamation of the source within the innovative and imaginative mind of the adapter. It is a fusion of the essence of the original text

with the subjectivity of the author, blending with cultural, social and political baggage of the adapter's identity that trespasses the spatial and temporal boundaries.

The Female Energy: The Three Wired Sisters, Nimmi and Lady Macbeth

In *Macbeth*, the three witches - or the weird sisters- represented the potential female energy that was considered as a corrupting force at the time of the reign of James I, and posed a threat to the quintessential patriarchal structure of that time. As a result they were labelled as social outcast and were believed to reside in forests and other isolated regions. They had dark personalities and whatever was evil to others qualified as good to them. They were difficult to be gendered and resonated masculinity. Critic A.C. Bradley in his work titled *Shakespearean Tragedy* states that "The Witches, that is to say, are not goddesses, or fates, or, in any way whatever, supernatural beings. They are old women, poor and ragged, skinny and hideous, full of vulgar spite, occupied in killing their neighbours' swine or revenging themselves on sailors' wives who have refused them chestnuts" (293). Though they appeared to be women, they had beard. They added the supernatural element in the play through their prophecy. Their roles show similarities with the roles performed by Nimmi and Lady Macbeth. All of them try to subvert the patriarchal structures. The witches disassembled Scotland's power hierarchy by tempting Macbeth with the possibility of the throne. This led to the creation of political chaos and unrest especially pertaining to the fact that the witches represented the marginalized and the socially condemned position. Similarly Nimmi acts out of her belittled position in order to bulldoze the dominance of the authority figure both at the domestic and the political front. After this act of hers, she is also reduced to the status of an outcast. Lady Macbeth manifests the discontent arising out of her limitations as a woman and demolishes the structure around her. Critic Ram Bilas Sharma in his work titled *Essays on Shakespearean Tragedy*, locates the tragedy of Macbeth within the temperament of its period. He describes the conflict of many renaissance intellectuals and states, "they were ambitious, they wanted all the good things of the world, from magic to the throne of Duncan but they were not unscrupulous enough to realize their ambition without an inner struggle" (197). He further points out towards the concept of unnatural deeds associated with Lady Macbeth, highlighting the unconventional choices she made in the Elizabethan age. The violence by Lady Macbeth is seen by the critic as an important motif in "raising the tragedy to new heights" (186). Just as the witches who appropriate masculine qualities, so Lady Macbeth asks the spirits to unsex her. All three of them employ the nearest man in order to destroy the patriarchal authority- the witches use Macbeth, Nimmi uses Maqbool and Lady Macbeth employs her husband Macbeth. All of them tempt the men by using different discourses, either of vulnerability or of the sense of lack, insecurity, jealousy, threat or greed. They all are perceived as deviant forces corrupting the intentions of the men. All three come across as very strong personalities in themselves voicing out the consequences of inequality that ultimately leads to destruction and chaos, yet unfortunately results in succession of another patriarch. Both Lady Macbeth and Nimmi become insane by the end and are unable to decipher the reality around them, thus meeting with grave consequences. For the conventional patriarchal audience, their deaths becomes important since they have been rendered "impure" and only death can chastise them. It is symbolic of Nimmi's martyrdom for the audience: she is penalized and disciplined for her infidelity towards her husband and for taking his life. Therefore, her death is rationalised as a self-punishment in the eyes of the society in which she loses her status. In Shoma Chatterji's words "they must pay for this defiance and 'freedom to love who they choose' with their lives" (207). Nimmi becomes an outsider since the social, cultural and moral milieu does not accommodate her. Therefore, life becomes meaningless for her as the parallel world that she had created for herself comes across as unreal.

However the struggles of Lady Macbeth and Nimmi opens portals to address the marginalized position of women that puts them on the path of unfair means in order to secure justice and equality for themselves when the society fails to do so.

Women oscillate between the categories of the pure and the profane. These binaries have stringent consequences for women. Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the Apollonian and Dionysian temperaments in his work *The Birth of Tragedy From the Spirit of Music*, is pertinent in understanding the 'identity creation' of women in the film *Maqbool*. The character of Sameera represents Apollonian temperament since her actions are confined within the matrix of social codes and manifest the constitution of Abbaji's domestic sphere. Before going ahead with her union with Gudu, both had to go through the wrath and trial of Abbaji and both showed conformation with the system. Adherence to the norm for fulfilment and legitimization of their relation becomes their mode of conduct. Sameera possesses the Apollonian qualities of moderation, control, analysis, clarity, order and reason as dictated by the social conventions of her context. The scene where Gudu is brutally beaten by his father becomes emblematic of Sameera's indoctrination since she does not protest nor tries to save him instead submits herself to the mercy and the final verdict of Abbaji. The marriage and its ceremonies are respectively performed and executed to legitimize their relation in an orderly manner. However, Sameera's real test in terms of adherence to order is never materialised since the system conforms to her interests when Abbaji agrees to their relation. Sameera could have been a Dionysian in process and could have transgressed if the given order would not have accepted her relation with Gudu. Another inference pertaining to Sameera could be that she perceives the figure of Abbaji as absolute in itself and overlaps it with righteousness and thereby never questions him regarding his conduct with Nimmi. Even after the death of Abbaji she continues to follow his principles and refuses to be influenced by Nimmi or Maqbool. She does not lose her patience and shows her resentment only in the scene where Maqbool comes to sympathise with her and she screams at him. She becomes the social voice when she condemns Nimmi as an adulterous wife.

Nimmi on the other hand incorporates Dionysian traits, characterizing passion, excess, transgression, frenzy, intuition and spontaneity. She designs the entire plan to dismantle the hierarchy and functions by either getting absorbed into the system or by stepping out of it. While Sameera is seen orbiting around the family, Nimmi tries to secure space which divorces her from Abbaji's influence and his members. This becomes evident from the same scene where she goes bare foot to the 'Dargah' to secure time with Maqbool. Similarly, at the time of the engagement ceremony, she lies to Abbaji regarding the lack of preparations and manages to be with Maqbool, which becomes the temptation scenes of the movie. She is projected as wildly sensual and also harbouring the desire for motherhood. Her actions come across as unrestrained and in her endeavours to realize her passions, she strives to be a free spirit. Howsoever, as a typical Dionysian she suffers severe pain as an outcome of her acts, which are characterised as her self-destructive behaviour. Her sexuality is perceived as immoral and interestingly she is pronounced as a 'Chudail' - a witch by Sameera.

The contradiction in the temperament of Sameera and Nimmi shows the loopholes and drawbacks of the 'modern Indian society', which tries to suppress the Dionysian order and is unsuccessful in its attempts. And, Nimmi becomes the site of this contradiction when insanity and hallucinations haunt her and she questions herself on moral grounds. She keeps oscillating between the two forces and her existence becomes a contradiction. According to Nietzsche, our human mind is sometimes Apollian and sometimes Dionysian. However, Nimmi's position opens portals to interrogate the fundamental question pertaining to the lack of avenues for women to realize their inner instincts and passions which renders the Dionysian in them on the self-destructive path. The compulsion of their situations suffocates them and compels them to adhere to the path of immorality as a possible path to freedom. Nimmi suffers from the same dilemma and she is never able to resolve her moral crisis.

Quoting the critic Mr Gandhi in her work, '*Subject: Cinema, Object: Women*', Shoma A. Chatterji reverberates his statement on adulterous women who are defined as 'belonging to the hysterical personality type which is typified by traits such as emotional instability and dependence. They are mainly attention seeking, dramatic and immature' (110). It is difficult to compartmentalize Nimmi into moral categories since the conflict of her situation is reflective of the conflict in the society where women are expected to be more chaste, pure and loyal to their husbands and have to prove their dedication to the absolute and derive sense of fulfilment from the same. Further, Chatterji asserts that 'Traditional law ignored the moral lapses on the part of the husband, but even a single lapse of virtue on the part of wife was taken seriously' (114). This unequal frequency in the relation is reflective in the movie where Abbaji's extra marital affair with Mohini, the Bollywood actress, is never questioned and his mistress enters and exits the domestic space without any protest or resistance by any member. In contrast Nimmi's extra marital liaison represents betrayal not just towards Abbaji but also towards the whole gang and all the institutions that were associated with him. Shoma A. Chatterji alludes to critic Arthur in her work who states that 'Adultery, for example, when practised by women, came to be seen as a crime against society and not merely as a personal transgression' (115).

While Nimmi's intercourse with Abbaji is motivated out of the need for a child and successor, which Abbaji failed to provide, Mohini on the other hand sought intercourse in order to keep intact her place in Bollywood. Nimmi's need to restore her self-esteem and sense of security and fidelity that Abbaji failed to provide gets channelized towards Maqbool. While describing a figure of an adulterous woman, Chatterji states that "adultery is neither wilful, nor designed nor immoral. It is purely an extension of the friendship with the man she is slowly falling in love with" (117). The film opens areas to explore the subjectivity of women and confronts sensitive yet marginalized issues. It incorporates scenes of autonomy for Nimmi, where her sexual relation with Maqbool becomes a dimension to strengthen her emotional and ideological position and to secure a place for herself, marked by her subjectivity and individuality. Subsequently, however, as the movie proceeds, the grave consequences of Nimmi's relation with Maqbool make her question the purity of her relation. The social condemnation of her relation with Maqbool gets filtered into her consciousness and becomes a prism from where she starts judging herself. In Chatterji's words Nimmi "is punished for her anti-social behaviour" (121) and has to psychologically struggle with her guilt-ridden consciousness. Her hallucinations mark the extension of this very trauma. It could also point out towards the conformist resolution of the film maker wherein the relationship ends up with devastating consequences. Shoma A. Chatterjee states that in the modern times, the figure of an adulteress woman has procured a strong presence in the India cinema.

Nimmi: A Rebel or A Victim?

Nimmi and Lady Macbeth both tempt their men into committing murders and to deceive their leaders, however, Nimmi differs from Lady Macbeth owing to their different circumstances. Lady Macbeth is driven purely out of her bloodthirsty ambition and desire to become the Queen. Her discontentment is related to the lack of opportunities or avenues to possess power as a woman which drives her to shed off her feminine side and reject her motherhood. This become evident in the scene where she calls upon the spirits and asks them to "tend on mortal thoughts/ unsex me here/ And fill me from the crown to the toe topful/of direst cruelty" (Shakespeare 1.5. 30-32). While Lady Macbeth perceives feminine as weak and resolves to a masculine temperament so as to indulge in the treacherous gamble of securing the throne, Nimmi embraces female charms and employs them to draw Maqbool towards herself. By juxtaposing Abbaji's assertion within her personal space with Maqbool's lack of agency, she induces jealousy in him. Throughout the movie, Nimmi is shown yearning for a child and for the experience of motherhood. However Lady Macbeth departs from

this idea and in order to procure strength to execute her plans she is ready to “Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums, / and the brains out, had I so sworn as you/ Have done to this” (Shakespeare 1.7.58-60).

The character of Nimmi, in the film *Maqbool*, shows the interplay between power and personal relationships. She plays a crucial role in planting the seeds of jealousy, insecurity and sense of self-effacing identity in *Maqbool*. Nimmi is introduced in the movie in the domestic space of Abbaji's home, serving food to all the core members of the gang. Her initial act of refusing to give water to *Maqbool* for Abbaji who is choked, becomes symbolic of the events that would follow later. It is in this scene that her extra marital liaison with *Maqbool* becomes evident. However Nimmi's compulsion of the situation fetches certain amount of sympathy. Married to Abbaji, a man dominating and leading the underworld and much elder to her in age produces a sense of disgust in her. This revulsion is further strengthened by Abbaji's physical appearance that is characterized by short height, pot belly and an ageing face and deteriorating body. This is constantly juxtaposed with his voracious and beastly sexual appetite which she communicates to *Maqbool*.

Nimmi, though married to Abbaji, is always referred to as his “mistress” and her position keeps oscillating from a sense of possession to dispossession. Her identity as a mother is never realized with Abbaji and all her prayers and wishes go futile, rather she has to role-play being a mother to her step daughter Sameera, who is close to her age. This leads her ‘identity fulfilment’ as a mother onto the road of frustration. Also, her vocation to enter Bollywood remains unrealized. When Pandit proposes to get Nimmi featured in one of the movies, Abbaji's dissent and disapproval gets reflected by his facial expression and it is followed by a long silence. The arrival of Mohini- an attractive young woman- into the domestic space of Nimmi again leaves her feeling disinherited and uprooted wherein Abbaji showers all attention to the former and makes her an important figure at the time of the marriage ceremonies of Guddu and Sameera. She becomes the new Biba (wife) of Abbaji and Nimmi fully realizes the implication of Mohini's arrival in terms of the threat it poses to Nimmi's position.

Mohini being more charming, employs her sexuality and seductions to flatter and to appeal to Abbaji, is close to the age of Sameera, Abbaji's daughter. She is at the peak of her youth and participates in household ceremonies of Abbaji and possesses the potential to easily replace Nimmi's importance. These three motifs – Nimmi's unrealized motherhood, her unfulfilled Bollywood dreams and her easily replaceable position compel her to seek refuge and sense of assurance outside the domain of Abbaji.

Acknowledging the fact that Abbaji and his influence is beyond the law of the state and its institutions, Nimmi cannot free herself from this confinement. Owing to the power that Abbaji holds in the society, Nimmi is left with no choice but to resort to deception in order to move out of this confinement. Subversion of Abbaji's rule creates a space for her where she can have agency. Otherwise the state of affairs at the larger political level affects her decision and her life at the domestic and personal level wherein she does not find any legitimate way to free herself from the confines of Abbaji's home. Abbaji's concepts of fidelity are established in the beginning of the movie itself wherein he shows no mercy on the traitor. Fully aware of these principles, Nimmi is unable to articulate her disconnectedness and lack of compatibility with Abbaji and his household. She becomes a mere platform for Abbaji to displays his sexual vitality and prowess in the face of his declining age and retiring political power. Abbaji throughout the movie keeps reasserting his carnal instinct which also becomes another dimension for him to display his performance of power and his strong hold over the domestic in the face of his retirement. His liaison with Mohini further builds this identity for him, since he intermingles with her in the public place, makes her dance in front of all the men and hires her for a few days in his service.

The journey to the Dargah becomes a space that opens avenues for Nimmi to interact with Maqbool and to communicate her intentions. She demands to go bare foot to the Dargah, an act in which Abbaji cannot give her company, therefore leaving her with ample opportunity to exercise her agency. Though it is a journey carried out to pray for wish fulfilment, Nimmi employs it to plant insecurity and doubt in Maqbool regarding his own changing position in Abbaji's gang. She uses the motif of the predictions by the Inspector who foretold the succession of Maqbool after Abbaji. Debunking these claims she challenges his potential and capability to replace Guddu and claim the position of Abbaji. This resonates the way in which Lady Macbeth challenges Macbeth's strength in retaining his firmness to displace Duncan. Also, Lady Macbeth emasculates Macbeth in her speech and tells him that if he wants to be the King, he needs to be more than that. In her soliloquy, she articulates the little faith she has in the courage of Macbeth when she states "Yet do I fear thy nature, / It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way" (Shakespeare 1.5.16-18). She perceives Macbeth as too gentle and needs to be nurtured and guided. She associates Milk with Macbeth, meaning that he is innocent, pure and kind but for her it is a weakness that characterizes him as unmanly and weak. In her own way, Lady Macbeth critiques the gender relations, which render women on an unequal platform for power struggle and they have to realize their ambitions in the fulfilments and vocation of either their husbands or sons.

Nimmi on the other hand is also not projected as virtuous, innocent, moral or upright, instead she is shown to engineer the conspiracy to dismantle the authority of Abbaji and secure her freedom. For this very purpose she employs cunning at two levels, firstly, by employing her sexuality and instigating jealousy in Maqbool at the domestic and the physical level of ownership. She uses the institution of religion as a space where she can exercise a free play and design a configuration to employ Maqbool at her service by drawing his loyalties from Abbaji to herself and, secondly, by projecting coalition with herself as a more promising, steady, secure and unwavering position that would ensure Maqbool's leadership in the gang and a union of both. The journey to the Dargah also becomes a path for Nimmi to entice Maqbool. She implants political insecurity in him, by showing the changing dynamics of the gang, wherein the marriage alliance between Guddu and Sameera can put Maqbool in service of Guddu, who as Abbaji's son-in-law would take the seat of Abbaji. Nimmi crafts her freedom by first disassembling Abbaji's authority over her at the domestic front and then extends it to the political realm of Maqbool's position in the gang. Nimmi uses the weapons of the domestic space as a wife and mother and imbibes these spaces for political purpose. However, after power gets displaced, Nimmi retires to her domestic space and lets Maqbool head and direct the gang, unlike Lady Macbeth for whom political power supersedes domestic. The micro model of the Mauritius house, which will be the new home of Abbaji, unsettles Maqbool as he associates it with the private moments between Nimmi and Abbaji and visualizes an appalling intercourse between them in which he figures Abbaji as grotesque and crooked.

The engagement ceremony becomes an occasion where the murder of Abbaji is formulated. The occasion also becomes a space that builds up the binaries of the profane and the pure. Nimmi and Maqbool's relation is contrasted with Sameera and Guddu's relation. The preparation for marriage not just marks the ripening moment for Sameera and Guddu's wedding but it also marks the intimate liaison between Nimmi and Maqbool. While for Abbaji it stands for his extra marital involvement with Mohini. This becomes evident when Mohini performs an enticing dance for Abbaji, while simultaneously Sameera sings and celebrates her engagement with Guddu, and Nimmi and Maqbool conclude their union in their anticipated plan of Abbaji's murder.

The character of Sameera is in stark contrast to Nimmi's. Her relation is projected as a pure and a legitimate one that is sanctioned by marriage and blessed by Abbaji, therefore socially accepted. Unlike Nimmi, Sameera has no compulsions and the moral order comes across as compatible with

her freedom of choice and assertion. Both Sameera and Guddu are assimilated into the power structures by being declared as the successor of Abbaji. Her safe and secure position renders her incapable to understand Nimmi's position and her vulnerabilities. Sameera does not voice out any dissent when her father gets his new 'biba'-Mohini- showing her adherence with the patriarchal Abbaji.

The engagement ceremony gives birth to three different intersecting relations, wherein one relation is considered to be acceptable and pure, while the other two fall into the category of infidelity and deception. The ceremony concludes with Abbaji blessing the couple, Mohini, the Bollywood actress, drawing Jahangir to a dance and Nimmi and Maqbool both realizing their displaced position and identity- Nimmi in the domestic sphere and Maqbool in the gang.

The scene where Nimmi asks Maqbool to sacrifice her along with the other goats becomes symbolic of her position in Abbaji's house wherein she has been sacrificing her identity playing the role of Abbaji's wife, Sameera's mother, and playing the role of a typical housewife by entertaining the guests and Abbaji's gang. Abbaji's relation with Mohini, finally marks Nimmi's departure from this role wherein she concretizes her plan to kill Abbaji before her position could be entirely displaced by Mohini. Nimmi communicates her fears attached with this dislocation to Maqbool when she tells him about her reluctance to return home where people would receive her differently since Abbaji has taken a new mistress.

Mohini comes across as a smart woman who exchanges sexual favours for the money she is unable to give to Abbaji. She offers her services, her charm and entertainment to Abbaji to ensure her survival in Bollywood. She enters the domestic domain and participates in all the ceremonies. This again reinforces the compulsive roles that women have to indulge in within the domain of patriarchy and the spaces and institutions that are regulated by men. She is bound to compromise since power structures do not give her much choice.

Nimmi's madness becomes symbolic of her guilt and her socially condemned position. After the death of Abbaji, Nimmi is alluded in a demeaning manner by everyone. The politicians blame her for Maqbool's carelessness, Guddu and Sameera call her a shameless witch, Inspector Purohit and Inspector Pandit see her as a mistress, and even Maqbool questions the legitimacy of the child she is pregnant with. The social disgrace accelerates the guilt in her and she starts hallucinating Abbaji's presence. She keeps wiping her face trying to wipe the blood that splattered on her face at the time of the murder and she keeps imagining the blood-stained walls and tries wiping them. Her madness becomes symbolic of the uncertainty of moral values in a society that denies a framework to women like Nimmi to assert their own choices thereby leaving them with no option except to transgress the system that confines them.

In contrast, Lady Macbeth's madness is projected in the sleep walking scene which becomes emblematic of the loss of sanity. She keeps washing her hands to wash off the guilt. She loses sight of reality and is preoccupied with thoughts of suicide. She subverts the stereotypes that framed sixteenth century Elizabethan women into meek, innocent, passive and fearful beings while men were always associated with acts of violence and bravery. Lady Macbeth identifies herself with the male strength and feeds the vocation to rule against the conventions of her times. While she manages to subvert the discourse of patriarchy of her times and seeks an outlet in the treacherous crime, in the end, she lands up in the discourse of morality and rectitude. As a response to her insanity, the doctor concludes "Unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds/ To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets: / More needs she the divine than the physician. / God, God, forgive us all" (Shakespeare 5.1.50) Suicide comes across as her final escape. She keeps oscillating between her frustration pertaining to her limitations as a woman and the moral conventions which keep haunting her. Her transgression as a woman in those times and her moral degeneration as a consequence render her lonely, abandoned and labelled as evil. Parallel theme echoes in *Maqbool*, where Nimmi

too has no outlet to realize her dreams of becoming an actress. Shoma A. Chatterji describes such tendencies in women emerging out of the paradox of their status in society and quotes Simon de Beauvoir words in *The Second Sex* which speak of women having “double and deceptive visage” as a result of the contradictory expectations by men, “there is no figurative image of women which does not call up at once its opposite: she is Life and Death, Nature and Artifice, Daylight and Night. Under whatever aspect we consider her, we always find the same shifting back and forth” (127).

The murder of Abbaji meant freedom for Nimmi and a possibility to realize her selfhood, however there was no moral path through which she could free herself, since Abbaji was above the law and state institutions. Her insanity becomes an extension of moral madness. The expression of her sexuality and wish for motherhood is regarded as disruptive by the community. Her freedom from Abbaji was perceived as a transgression against the absolute patriarch. In contrast, Abbaji’s involvement with Mohini is never critically looked at by anyone; he is always worshipped and feared.

Being married to an undesirable yet powerful man, Nimmi had very less scope of freedom via any other means compelling her to resort to mediums outside the moral and legal framework. She is the ‘trapped’ wife, who is expected to adhere to the conventions of Abbaji’s house, ultimately building up her frustration and anxiety. The murder voices Nimmi’s rage against the physical, psychological and social oppression and marks her departure from the state of servitude and submission.

CONCLUSION

The legacy of Shakespeare has endured over the ages as the greatest dramatist and bard of all times. His acute understanding of human emotions, motivations, ambitions, failures, joys and sorrows has become a hallmark not only in England, his place of birth, but all over the world. Shakespeare has been a source of inspiration for filmmakers to tell his complex plots through the medium of cinema. The paper draws attention towards the interpretative aspect of adaptation by Vishal Bhardwaj in relation to a Shakespeare’s play.

The film *Maqbool* explores the varied female spaces contextualized within the realities of the Mumbai underworld and Bollywood. The cinematic adaptation captures this grim and dark reality and alerts us to the threats what the concept of the modern city holds for females. The movie puts across the manifold subjectivity and experiences of women through the character of Nimmi, Mohini and Sameera and resists a homogenous representation of women. The film opens areas to explore the subjectivity of women and confront the sensitive yet marginalized issues. The conclusive paradox of ‘that’ city, especially for women, gets reflected in the women characters for whom there are no state institutions to free them from patriarchy and capitalism.

The character of Nimmi in *Maqbool* reflects the plight of women unable to free themselves from an overbearing husband, the dysfunctional state and the masculine spaces of the underworld. The state has nothing to offer to her and the compulsions of her situations pertaining to the social and economic handicaps purges bits of sympathy in the audience.

While the women in the play *Macbeth*, howsoever powerful, were given conventional endings of death, facelessness and helplessness owing to the demands of the Elizabethan-Jacobean social conventions, in Bhardwaj’s film the socio-cultural aspects of a woman’s oppression is highlighted and the plot is also modified in a way that leaves significant threads hanging but not leading to an erasure of the woman’s identity. During the course of the film, the women characters boldly challenge the patriarchal nation state and even from their limited positions, don’t let the audience

forget their moral strengths, endurance and risk taking moments. They exhibit minor strands of rebellion in order to subvert patriarchy. For instance the character of Nimmi (*Maqbool*) embraces womanhood and within that domain engineers her path to freedom by using the tools of domesticity and female charm. The spaces occupied and available for women in the modern city come under critical evaluation. The state of Mumbai blossoms with its accelerating trade and economics, politics hail its democratic elections, technology and skills are employed to reflect an urban landscape and overall discourse of nation building is calculatedly pronounced in the society. However, the conclusive paradox of that city, especially for women, gets reflected in the character of Nimmi, for whom there is no state institution to free her from the clutches of the underworld. The paradox is reflected in the figure of Mohini who, although free to have career choices and to play many roles in front of the camera, has to compromise and please Abbaji, dance on occasions and entertain his guests to secure her position. Another paradox is in the character of Sameera, who is assimilated into patriarchy and is never able to question it. And these paradoxes make us question as to what the modern Indian state has to offer to women.

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