

## CULTURAL GLOCALIZATION: FROM OTHELLO TO OMKARA

**Dr Janki N Bhatt**

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Commerce

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

Vadodara

### **Abstract**

Film adaptation is believed to be an essential instrumental force to enhance the process of globalization; it creates an array of distinct cultural texts that becomes conducive in understanding a cultural mosaic in the context of multiculturalism. In the digital era where readership is increasingly being replaced by a viewership, as a general mass prefers a visual film over printed text, film adaptation plays a pivotal role in introducing global perspectives to local regional groups. Certain adaptations amalgamate global with local in an attempt to appropriate the universal ideas to the local mind sets. This process of amalgamating global with local is proclaimed to be the *glocalization* by certain intelligentsia. The present paper examines the process of *glocalization* through a comparative study of a European literary text Othello by William Shakespeare and an Indian film Omkara by Vishal Bhardwaj, an adapted version of the same literary text.

**Key Words:** Adaptation, Glocalization, Transliteration, Transcreation

### **Cultural Glocalization: From Othello to Omkara**

Globalization is a process of sharing, spreading the objects, ideas, experiences to the people around the world. The very idea of ‘sharing’ comes with the concept of connecting through minds and hearts of people. The whole Globe is made up of various continents and oceans geographically which consist of multi cultural people. With the existence of various cultures come the varieties of objects and experiences. ‘Globality’ is the condition, where as, ‘Globalization’ is the process of transaction of social relations worldwide. The concept furthers with the idea of ‘Glocalization’ which is the combination of the terms, ‘Globalization+ Localization’. According to Management Dictionary, Glocalization is an amalgamation of the words “Global” and “Localization”. It is a term used for describing a product or service whose development and distribution is done globally, but after it reaches different local markets it is tailored to accommodate the user of that particular local market. It is basically the adaptation of globally standard products done in the local markets according to the laws, consumer preference, customs etc.

The concept describes a product or service that is developed and distributed globally, however, is also adjusted to accommodate the user or consumer in a local market. The research

intends to evaluate *Omkara* directed by Vishal Bharadwaj which is the Film Adaptation of the play *Othello* by William Shakespeare with Global perspective.

Literature, history, and movies are distinct forms of communication which seem to have received a sudden spur in the information age we live in. The first key is the nature and tradition of adaptation itself. Although screen adaptations of literature have been around since the beginning of cinema and have provoked the most intense debates among the public at large. Film adaptation is a derivative work of transferring literary text into a feature film. From earliest days of cinema, adaptation has been as common as the development of the original play. In society as well, if analyze, audience accept films more than text because the common class does not possess the ability to enjoy the text.

Film-adaptation is an attempt to serve the same dish in a new plate. Though, the art form changes and is bound with too many allegations of losing charm of original text or bringing away the form from the originality, brings forth a new version of what is already been said. It is intending to cover the mass that is not able to read and interpret the literary text.

The Shakespearian drama *Othello* has two adaptations in which the first is the BBC version and second is the Bollywood adaptation, *Omkara*. The first does not have many changes but the later is affected massively with the Indian culture and the element of dirty politics is added along with.

The Indian version of *Othello* covers within the Indian culture and by that deals the plot of original work, a bit differently. The movie consists of peculiarities of Indian politics, UP culture and symbolism. There are some changes in terms of plot when we see Billo's character used for political purpose. In the end Indu kills his own husband Langda Tyagi where as in original work Emilia is killed by Iago. In several circuits, the dialect, the dark and disturbing theme and also the expletives curtail its prospects to an extent.

Vishal Bharadwaj has been given the rough name of 'Indian Shakespeare'; as he carries the plot of his movies from Shakespearean drama. In his films, the audience get to see the Indian version of the dramas of Shakespeare. To take up the European plot and interweave the Indian culture is his speciality. The treatment of the movie comes to the audience as never expected in Shakespearean drama. Shakespearean dramas represented European culture and its nuances; whereas Vishal Bharadwaj gives it a complete Indian touch.

In the beginning of the film, introduction of the villain of the film is being done through his unstable walk which introduces him as 'Langda Tyagi'. The complete Uttar Pradesh culture is depicted in a very thorough manner. Let that be through their dressing, hot blood, language, characteristics of a person, representation of society. The proposal of Dolly to Omkara is done through letter is an example of woman belonging to Uttar Pradesh Culture. The designation changing of Omkara and Keshu is also done in a temple opting ceremony and Havan. In Omkara and Dolly's marriage many superstitions are been discussed which also acted as symbolism such as Omkara leaving the Haldi ceremony half way, an eagle flying with a dead snake in its mouth and it falls down in the bowl of Haldi for Dolly.

Langda Tyagi gets an idea to link up Dolly and Keshu in a birthday party of his own son. In just one song, couple of sequences are exhibited together; Keshu's interest and protection towards Billo, Langada encouraging Rajju to evoke Keshu and the physical relation between Omkara and Dolly.

In the original text *Othello*, Shakespeare has used historical backdrop: Military conflict between Vietnam and Turkey. In the adaptation, Bharadwaj has used Uttar Pradesh political scenario. Omakara is made *Bahubali* by Naseeruddin Shah which is the legacy followed from

ages in political section. In both text and movie, political as well as social affairs are finely interwoven and are also somewhere responsible for disaster to come in personal lives of the characters. For instance, Kesu tries to teach Dolly English song to please Omkara and he convinces Dolly to plead Omkara for his forgiveness. This very instance brings the thought of Dolly's affair with Kesu in Omkara's mind.

In the film many events are presented in the song sequence only. The music of this film became very popular among audience as it carried a very high lyrical meaning and visually every song told some story. This is a unique technique adapted by Vishal Bharadwaj. The first song *Naina Thag Laenge* says the story of Dolly falling in love with Omkara; second song *Omkara...* Title track depicts the personality of Omkara – an introduction to the character of Omkara; third song *O Sathi re* presents the love and comfort between Omkara and Dolly in which towards the end of the song Kamarbandh is stolen by Imli and an jealous eye on their relation is exhibited. The fourth song, *Bidi Jalai le* presents the triple movement mentioned above and fifth song *Namak Ishq ka* plays a role of political mishaps and stolen Kamarbandh is noticed on Billo's waist. In *Othello* there are songs which narrate the deep thoughts of the minds of the character. Bharadwaj has used the technique of moving the plot through songs whereas Shakespeare has used them to depict the inner most feelings of the characters or situation. The original drama *Othello* has a significant character of the 'handkerchief'. Though it is a materialistic tool or seems to be mere gift from a husband, however, it plays an important part in both the texts. In *Othello*, the handkerchief is very close to Othello because he gave it to Desdemona as a first gift, the handkerchief functions as a token of his love, which Desdemona cherishes.

## EMILIA

*I am glad I have found this napkin.*

*This was her first remembrance from the Moor.*

*My wayward husband hath a hundred times*

*Woed me to steal it. But she so loves the token*

*(For he conjured her she should ever keep it)*

*That she reserves it evermore about her*

*To kiss and talk to. I'll have the work ta'en out*

*And give 't Iago. What he will do with it*

*Heaven knows, not I.*

*I nothing but to please his fantasy. (3.3.334-343)*

This is why Iago convinces his wife to steal it from Desdemona, he knows that it has a lot of sentimental value and that Othello will be angry when he finds out his wife no longer has it.

Iago also knows that, for Othello, the handkerchief symbolizes Desdemona's fidelity. When it shows up in Cassio's possession, Othello is convinced that Desdemona is unfaithful. The white napkin, as we know, is spotted with red strawberries, and Othello tells Desdemona that the strawberries were hand stitched with thread that has been dyed with blood from "maidens' hearts" or, virgins' blood (3.4.87).

In this way, the handkerchief resembles a white wedding sheet that's also been stained with a virgin's blood. So, in Othello's mind, as long as Desdemona has the handkerchief in her possession, she's chaste. But the moment she "loses it," she loses her chastity.

The handkerchief also seems to function as a symbol of Othello's mysterious past and his

“exoticness.” He tells Desdemona that an Egyptian “charmer” gave it to his mother and that it would keep his father under her spell (3.4.67). That such a small object has such enormous weight in the play testifies to the sensitivity of jealous minds, and the way that small incidents can be magnified psychologically into “proofs” of love or betrayal. In *Omkara*, handkerchief is replaced with ‘Kamarbandh’ which Omkara says is *Pushtaini*(ancestral) to be possessed by daughter in laws of the family. ‘Handkerchief’ and ‘Kamarbandh’ are not merely gifts or objects used in the drama but it plays a distinct character to bring twist and turns in the texts. They are closely associated with the fidelity of Desdemona and Dolly.

The characters in both *Othello* and *Omkara* are basically the same in nature. However, due to change in social transformation from European to Indian, makes the difference. Desdemona in *Othello* is naive but brave woman to take decision to be with love of her life. Race is given the central theme in the movie; however, caste is given the same weigh. It parallel deals with race and caste system in India. In *Othello*, Othello is a moor, whereas in *Omkara*, instead of portraying Omi Shukla a Dalit, he portrayed him as a half caste. Desdemona is a young fair lady belonging to the upper strata of the society; whereas, Dolly Mishra is a Brahmin. In *Othello* black Othello chooses white Desdemona and ego clashes; her father warns him for assumed betrayal from Desdemona’s side. In *Omkara*, half caste Omkara marries Brahmin Dolly and follows the same context in Indian approach.

In one of the scenes, Kesu is seen teaching an English song to Dolly in which she is unable to pronounce the word ‘bottom’ according to the accent of the song. This very incident carries various meanings, for instance, however tough try any Indian person gives to British accent, they lack somewhere, another derivation can be the hidden urge of an Indian not to accept British accent.

Toward the end, all the political, social and personal affairs reach to the height and do not resolve as such at the end. In one of the conversation of Imli and Omkara a touch of feminism is reflected. She talks about the woman in Indian society who leaves her own family and loved ones to go and live with a boy but she is not honoured or trusted.

### Conclusion:

Shakespearean *Othello* (1603) presented European culture and was adapted by Vishal Bharadwaj into *Omkara* which reflected Indian culture. *Othello* has two adaptations, first is by BBC which is the pictorial version of the text and thus can be considered as the transliteration. The next *Omkara* is the Indian version of *Othello* which is the transformation of the original text as it has difference in cultural impact but has stuck to the original plot.

Film adaptation, just as translation process, can be classified at three various levels: transliteration, transformation and transcreation; denoting the same concepts as that of associated with literary translations. Film in comparison to literary written text and adaptation are, like translated texts, considered sub-text, less than the main one. Transcreated film adaptations of famous literary texts are, arguably, evident of creative transformation of main text that enriches the literary experience of the viewers; hence, such film adaptations ought to be judged as separate valuable text.

*Omkara* is the Transcreated version of the play *Othello* which perfectly puts forth the example of Glocalization. William Shakespeare, nevertheless, is considered the master playwright for his quality of writing plays with universal appeal. Thus, his plays have been adapted into films time and again such as *Hamlet* to *Haider*, *Macbeth* to *Maqbool* directed by Vishal Bharadvaj and *Romeo Juliet* to *Raam Leela* directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

In the nutshell, due to Shakespearean theme of writing play with universality, Glocalisation becomes possible. The vision of Shakespeare while writing dramas yet does not seem out dated. The play written in Europe became possible to be adapted in Indian Cinema due to Glocalization.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources**

#### **(A) Literary Texts**

Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. New Delhi: Peacock Books, 2005. Print

#### **(B) Film Adaptations**

Bhardwaj, Vishal, dir. *Omkara*. Prod. Shemaroo Entertainment, 2006. CD.

Miller, Jonathan, dir. *Othello*. Prod. BBC, 1981. DVD.

### **Secondary Sources**

#### **(A) Printed Texts**

Fairclough, Norman. "Media Discourse". London: Edward Arnold, 1995. Print.

Feuer, Jane. "Genre study and television". Channels of Discourse Robert C Allen., Reassembled: Television and Contemporary, 1992. Print.

Hulbert, E. M. "Equivalence and the adaptationist program". *Ecol. Model.* 64, 1992. 305-329. Print.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The symmetry of adaptation in predominantly asymmetrical contexts". *Ecol. Model.* 85, 1996. 173-185. Print.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The four principles of adaptation." *Ecol. Model.* 156, 2002. 61-84. Print.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Non-interference and reciprocal adaptation." *Ecol. Model.* 2001, 1-13. Print.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Theory of adaptation: application of symbolic logic". *Ecol. Model.* 107, 1998. 35-50. Print.

Ray, Robert B. "The Field of 'Literature and Films'". *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000, 44. Print.

Stern, J. T. "The meaning of 'adaptation' and its relation to the phenomenon of natural selection." *Evol. Bio.* 4, 1970. 39-66. Print.

#### **(B) Web Sources**

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinematic\\_techniques](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinematic_techniques)>

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omkara\\_\(2006\\_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omkara_(2006_film))>

<<http://latinoweeklyreview.com/?p=1766>>

<<http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Academy-Awards-Films/Adaptation.html>>