

Unit: 03: Cultural Imperialism and Global Shakespeare

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Despite the myriad facets of life found in his works, Shakespeare’s work has been problematized by the critics who use the frameworks of ethnicity, race, post-colonialism and cultural imperialism. Eurocentric and specifically Anglo-centric perspectives of his society, its priorities and prejudices seem to inform his writings in his spectrum of characterisation, plot development and language. Global Shakespeare is viewed as a mere repackaging of old colonial English cultural imperialism, which continues to influence and condition the lives and aesthetic sensibility of the English educated in the countries across the world.

In this unit, we will discuss Cultural Imperialism, Shakespeare as a vehicle for English Culture, Elizabethan Cultural Determinants, Colonial Devices in Shakespeare Plays and Responses from Other Cultures across the Globe.

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural Imperialism is the cultural domination of one country or power over another. The dominant culture asserts itself on the less powerful culture. A country which is superior in terms of military strength, economic strength, or technological strength reinforces its cultural hegemony over local/native cultures. Additionally, there occurs careful manipulation of various narratives that were part of the social fabric. According to Edward Said, “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism and constitutes one of the main connections between them” (13). The faith of the powerful becomes the accepted faith, the values of the powerful become the accepted values and the customs and attitudes of the power take over the life of the local community. Sometimes, local cultures are helpless, and hence adopt the values of the invading culture. This is called cultural appropriation.

Cultural Imperialism accomplishes a standardisation of culture. The standardisation may be the result of ‘forced’ acculturation with the yielding of the impuissant culture. The local culture may ‘voluntarily’ accept the imperial culture. In certain cases, the local culture may embrace the foreign culture as a better alternative.

Populations that are low on the social hierarchy become vulnerable to the hegemonic culture, as a result of which, diverse cultural values and their heritage slowly become extinct, giving way to the sway of monoculturalism as promoted by cultural imperialism. Monoculturalism is the exclusive sway of one culture in a particular territory, clan or country. Monoculturalism had been the norm in primitive communities when humans lived as clans or tribes. Woven around a totem, a sacred icon that demanded absolute loyalty, various norms, attitudes, beliefs, and everyday practices are accepted. Anything that is different or is a variant is viewed with animosity or fear and is treated as unacceptable, bad or sin, and thus, vehemently rejected or destroyed. The concepts like ‘enemy’ or ‘sin’ emerge from this animosity of the community towards other different voices or elements. A member of the community has to circumscribe him or her to this culture and offer unscrupulous allegiance. Apart from offering unquestioned loyalty, the duty of one member of the community demands the rejection or destruction of the elements that are different. In the present world order to monoculturalism exists in various communities and countries.

Multiculturalism accepts the plurality of culture. Various communities with disparate cultural moorings co-exist in a multicultural scene. While living in proximity to the other cultures, the members of each cultural group remain steadfast in their deep-rooted belief system. Where a successful multicultural scene persists, an intercultural communication, mutual respect, caring and sharing take place. Multiculturalism ensures the coexistence of various cultures where the society conducts itself without any significant threat to the diverse ways of life. The multicultural scene, where there is no mutual killing and destruction, must have taken a long period in the history of mankind to evolve as a principle of coexistence. Multicultural social pattern reduces animosity among various cultures, ethnic violence and destruction. In the present world, successful democracies persevere to retain the multicultural social fabric.

Existence of multiculturalism for a long period sometimes leads to transculturalism. Transculturalism involves a breaking down of barriers of different cultures, accomplishing a synthesis of the various elements of the cultures in contact. Each culture may open up and assimilate certain features of the other cultures, which do not threaten or endanger their respective cultures. During the process, the acute, intrinsic traits of the cultures may become softened, and even erased off. Explicating this phenomenon, Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* writes:

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. (336)

Integration of cultures ensures peace and prosperity in the region.

In the context of cultural imperialism, the powerful, invading, imperial culture, in a phased manner, permeates in the new territory or country. The cultural elements of the colonial masters will have the privilege. Mutual assimilation of the cultural values takes place while privileging the cultural postures of the invading, dominant culture. Cultural imperialism destroys multiculturalism or cultural pluralism by enforcing its attitudes, habits, values, and priorities, and thus sustaining its cultural hegemony as the norm or the desirable standard. Imperialism is intrinsically attached to social artefacts like culture and religion. Cultural imperialism is not a new phenomenon. It is ancient and must have existed when humans began to live in groups or clans. The less powerful or the defeated ones were forced to accept the culture of the victorious. The vanquished were either to perish or to accept the invading culture for survival.

Cultural imperialism is at the core in empire building. The military and economic prowess ensure dissemination of their culture. The culture of the empire permeates the conquered territories. Often, it is very difficult to differentiate between cultural invasion and cultural concurrence.

Shakespeare's plays, in due course of time, began to represent imperial Britain, adding favourable flavour in the colonies with a literary and theatrical flourish, though initially confined only to the strongholds of the white presence. Later, the natives who came in regular contact with the whites, and those who acquired English education also became carriers of the Shakespearean theatrical energy, fostering the alien legacy in the native culture. The plays supplied the aesthetic pillar in the process of the building of the empire in territories across the globe.

Shakespeare Sailing with the British Colonialism

Human history has been one of the struggles for power and domination. Classes, clans, communities, nations and even corporates compete with one another for power and try to dominate. Each struggle, battle, or treaty can be seen as an episode in the long story of human existence on earth. The more powerful ones assert the power on the less powerful. The more privileged exerts power on the less privileged. The superior military or economic power tries to dominate the communities/countries vulnerable or with an unstable economy. Imperialism extends from acquisition of land to domination of the economy, to take political advantage and the suppression of indigenous populations of a country. It is the continued domination of one country or one block of countries over another. The domination may operate at military, economic, religious, and cultural levels.

The Euro-centric, the Anglo-centric, the white-centric insularity of their culture travelled along with the English colonial missions, which started in the 16th century. The Caucasian ethnicity projected by the colonial masters distinctly asserted itself on the colonised communities. Whatever the colonial powers represented was named 'civilized' and by contrast, the other practices long held by the other/the colonised increasingly viewed as 'barbaric' or 'evil.'

As the colonial project stuck deeper roots in various places in different parts of the world, the fragile, ethnic, native cultures began to weaken. They had to adopt the culture of the white masters or get relegated to the ghettos of insignificance and perish in consequence. On the other hand, those communities that were quick to adopt, assimilate the alien culture, and convert themselves to the satisfaction of the colonial masters thrived in an unprecedented manner. The cultural crisis marked the spread and growth of colonialism. In the process, often the unique native cultural diversity diminished and perished.

Cultural imperialism of the English permeated the colonies, vehemently transforming the various communities into a realm where they were reduced to become useful task forces for furthering the interests of the masters. "The New World and its inhabitants generated a very different set of ideas about 'others' as either innocent or wild savages in a world of uncivilized plenty, ripe for European plucking" (Loomba 6).

The people were contrived through a process of homogenisation. Apart from the military interventions and the legal enactments that were enforced on the natives rudely and robustly, the influential, the upper class and the upper-middle class were given English education so that they were ideologically construed in diligently administering whatever was required from them to the satisfaction of the taste and temperament of the master. The rising English educated class of natives assisted the colonial masters in management of the 'white man's burden.' Many of the natives educated by the English were unmindful of the cultural assault and fragmentation caused to the native culture by the imperial culture. They accepted the imperial culture as the norm and the standard culture.

In addition to the military, legal and educational determinants, religion contributed to the sedimentation and consolidation of the imperial culture. The transformation of the habits, customs and festivities following the imperial culture was furthered by the conversion into the alien religion. Special privileges were accorded to the converted sects so that those not capable of jumping onto the bandwagon were left with the anguish of being left out and forsaken. However, the most potent weapons for accomplishing ideological control over the colonial subjects were the use of literature and other such art forms. Said's critical gaze was quick to notice this aspect and he explains how " . . . stories

are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history”(12). The greatest stories of the time were provided by William Shakespeare’s plays. So, it is only natural that Shakespeare’s plays were habitual companions of the English colonisers. During the early expeditions for establishing colonies, the plays were used as tools for creatively engaging the crew of the ships sailed across the seas. The rehearsal and performance, even if partial, or in rudimentary form, functioned as sustaining the vigour of the team, fostering in them the spirit of the English nationalism, and keeping them steadfast in their goal.

In colonial British gatherings, a Shakespearean enactment was the icing on the cake. A Shakespeare play, even in partial form, provided an ambience characteristically English, triggering nostalgia of their great, mighty homeland, and pride in the legacy of the culture and heritage of England. On occasions such as these, the natives who are educated by the English, belonging to the upper class also took part, thus getting instructed in a devious manner in the ideological subjugation, and acquiring the alien taste and temperament.

Reading of Shakespeare’s plays was promoted by the colonial masters. English education made natives regard the reading of Shakespeare as highly appreciable. Quoting the lines from the plays were done by the natives with a renewed vigour and passion, thus posing themselves as the champions of the Shakespearean legacy of the colonial masters. Performing of English plays in colonial territories were important events attended by the British colonial masters, educated natives and by the natives who did menial jobs in the colonial regime. The familiarity with the plays of Shakespeare became a sign of the ‘civilized.’ Shakespeare flourished globally as an indispensable part of the colonial empire.

Elizabethan Cultural Determinants

The Elizabethan culture forms the substratum which functions as the subtext of the plays of Shakespeare. The celebrated culture of the British imperialist bursts out of the matrix of the Elizabethan social and cultural ethos. The kernel aspects of the cultural spectrum can be categorised into different sections.

Heightened nationalistic fervour and Passion for adventure and expeditions

The legendary victory of Queen Elizabeth over Spain and the Spanish Armada that consisted of a fleet of warships with the connivance of some notorious pirates gave an unprecedented rise in English nationalism. The typical English man felt superiority in Europe and was proud of it, leading to the belief that the English man was the paragon of virtues.

Sailing the shores unknown and to find hidden treasures were dreams of the adventure-seeking people. A passion to sail beyond the horizons and annexe other worlds capsized the minds of the people who wanted to take further expeditions. The colonizing project acquired a new momentum, with unlimited opportunities for the adventurous and the enterprising.

The spurt of Scientific Temper, Learning and Growth of Utilitarianism:

Though the spirit of renaissance reached the English shore many decades after it started in Italy, the social environment was congenial for the fostering of a newfound passion for learning, and the rise of a questioning attitude. Scholars and learned people worked towards the accomplishment of a scientific temper.

Peace and subsequent prosperity, largely owing to the absence of big wars with any of the neighbours, triggered the growth of trade and commerce. Machiavelli's *The Prince* became very influential in the era. The English translation of the book was very popular, and the reading public, especially the enterprising youth found new vigour in their pursuit of a successful career. The social climbers and self-centred upstarts also were increasing and found their haven in places of the influential people.

Flair for literature, art and beauty:

Renaissance opened up the literature of the classical authors to the eager public. New genres and new modes of writing were available which inspired the aesthetic sensibility. Passion for art and an eye for beauty were characteristic of the widening arena of Elizabethan literature and art.

Prevalence of Superstition and Morbid Pastimes like Bear Baiting:

As in the case of any other social formation, Elizabethan society too had inherent contradictions. The most glaring is the prevalence of superstition and the belief in witchcraft, sorcery and black magic. The seamy side of the social fabric was abysmally sickening owing to the involvement in superstitious practices.

Among the sport and the pastime activities, the cruellest was the bear-baiting, wherein, a bear, tied to a pole would be allowed to fight for long hours against a pack of hounds unleashed for the attack. Ultimately the bear would die as it would be torn apart by the hounds.

Discrimination against other Religious Communities and Women:

The decadence of the Elizabethan culture was discernible in the narrow-mindedness seen in the treatment of people of other religions and ethnicity. This hostility is summarized as follows:

In Shakespeare's day, as Europeans searched for new markets and colonies abroad, they became culturally more open, and yet in many ways more insular. They began to bring in foreign slaves and to trade with outsiders, but also to expel those they considered 'foreign' from within their own nations. (Loomba 4)

The Muslims and the Jews were openly ill-treated. The megalomania of the English people was so strong that lampooning and torturing of ethnic people, especially the blacks, were usual occurrences. Instances can be seen in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *The Tempest*. The play, *The Merchant of Venice* is set in Venice where the Jews were dominated and ill-treated by the Christian majority with the support of the law. The Jews were not allowed to own property and run business. They were to live in places specifically allotted to them by the authorities, which would be under surveillance by the Christians. Whenever they went out, they were to wear a red cap to tell them from the rest of the crowd. They were ill-treated, spat upon, and even roughed up with legal impunity. The cultural confrontation surfaces in the words of Shylock. On Bassanio's invitation to dinner, Shylock speaks:

Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. (1.3. 31-35)

The Elizabethan social pattern was patriarchal, and hence women were marginalised, could not own property, and were not entitled to an education. They were subservient to men. Men could speak in a disrespectful and derogatory manner about women.

Colonial Devices in Shakespeare Plays

Artefacts are invariably cultural products that take shape from the historical context. Shakespeare's plays are informed by the Elizabethan ideological patterns that can be discerned in various aspects of the plays. The attitudes of megalomania, prejudice, arrogance, lampooning and intolerance marked the societal discourse. The celebrated, standard, cultural norms spread across the globe had its abysmal falls of decadence. Through Shakespeare's plays too, the tenets of the imperial culture permeated the colonized countries and communities. Loomba finds that Shakespeare has shaped the views of readers across many cultures and ages on questions of racial and colonial difference. To some readers, like Octavio Mannoni, Caliban's inferiority to Prospero in *The Tempest* confirmed that there is a natural inequality between human beings which justifies colonialism. To some others, such as Aime Cesaire, the play conveyed the miseries of colonial oppression. Both Mannoni and Cesaire not only claimed to have got their ideas from Shakespeare, but they also used Shakespeare to broadcast their views to others. Thus, Shakespeare's plays have been an extraordinarily powerful medium between generations and cultures, a conduit for transmitting and shaping ideas about colonialism and race (Loomba 5).

British Megalomania

The Tempest shows the colonial instinct of the Anglo centred, Euro centred cultures, and how these cultures view colonisation and enslavement 'natural' and 'justifiable' because their cultures are 'superior' and the other cultures are 'barbaric' and 'monstrous.'

The Orient was represented as Europe's 'other', and the difference between the two was crucial to sustaining Europe's image of itself. Such perspectives have revitalized the study of Shakespearian and other early modern representations of 'race' and 'outsiderness.' (Loomba 6)

The colonial project got great stimuli during Shakespeare's time. *The Tempest* is written soon after England colonised Virginia in North America in 1609. It is to be understood that every other English man is eager to colonise and make a profit. Gonzalo and Stephano also meditate upon a plan of colonising the island, which has already been colonised by Prospero. Antonio says that it gets an opportunity to colonise the island, he would establish a commonwealth. In the subplot, Stephano schemes to usurp the island from Prospero.

Racism

The ethnic and racial prejudices and intolerance are seen in the portrayal of the character of Prince of Morocco, who is a suitor to Portia. The Black Muslim is viewed as 'evil' and 'devilish'. Portia's words at the announcement of the entry of the Prince of Morocco are racist and decadent.

PORTIA: "...I should be glad of his approach. If he have (sic) the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me then wive me" (2.2. 120-123).

Othello is contemptuously and hatefully called 'the Moor,' not 'general,' or 'master.' A black character is not known by the name but by the colour of the skin and the 'racial evil' that the white insularity attributes to the character. The fury and intolerance of the whites burst out while they understand that the 'black' Othello has married the 'white' Desdemona.

Religious intolerance

Prejudice, bigotry, lampooning and intolerance were inseparable facets of the cultural legacy of the English colonialists.

SHYLOCK: Signor Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Realto you have rated me.
About my moneys and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For sufferance is the badge of our tribe:
You call me misbeliever, cut throat dog,
And spit on my Jewish gabardine. (1. 3. 95-101)

In these hate speeches of Shylock, the pathetic life of the Jews is drawn. Just because the Jews keep some other faith, they are called 'misbelievers' and are spat on.

Female subjugation

Shakespeare's plays were not free of the misogynistic tendencies that were deeply ingrained in the colonial culture. The subjugation of women is a characteristic feature of the Elizabethan social pattern. Women had only secondary status, even though the ruler of the nation was a woman. The jeopardised female existence punctuates the plays of Shakespeare. For instance, the female characters that Prospero speaks about get negative references. They are Prospero's mother, wife, and Sycorax, the mother of Caliban. While talking about his mother, Prospero is doubtful about the character of his mother because it is unusual that "good wombs bear bad sons" (1.2.143). When Miranda asks Prospero whether he is her father, Prospero answers that he is to trust his wife's words. Sycorax also is portrayed in a derogatory manner.

Slavery

The British invaders, like their European counterparts, considered themselves as the masters of the land and subsequently enslaved the natives of the territories they colonised. In *The Tempest*, the enslavement of Ariel and Caliban by Prospero is symptomatic of the superiority of the coloniser. The island belongs to the native Caliban. Prospero, the coloniser poses as superior and puts Caliban under his custody as a slave, making him do menial jobs. Caliban is severely punished, whenever he rebels. The airy spirit Ariel whom Prospero has saved from Sycorax's bondage also is kept as a slave by Prospero. Ariel also is afraid to disobey his powerful master.

The attitudes of prejudice, arrogance, and intolerance are in full sway in the Elizabethan audience who appreciated the happenings set in Venice. Attitudes of the imperial culture surface when the white, Caucasian, Euro centred, insular, imperial culture confront characters who are the non-Caucasian, non-European, ethnic and from other races. The tragedy in *Othello* is created by the interplay of the attitudes. The reiteration of the word 'the Moor' exposes the intolerance and sexual jealousy as seen in Iago's words about Othello.

Similar attitudes converge in the treatment of the character of Caliban, the native of the island portrayed in the play, *The Tempest*. Trinculo, the court jester's words about Caliban show the contempt the white people have towards the 'less civilized' other.

TRINCULO: What have we here? a man or a fish? dead or
alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient
and fish-like smell. (2.2. 23-25)

Phrases like “an abominable monster” (2.2. 152); “a most ridiculous monster” (2.2. 158); “a howling monster; a drunken monster” (2.2. 183) and “deboshed fish” (3.2. 30) used to describe Caliban are illustrative of this. Stephano, as a matter of fact, always calls Caliban “monster.”

Caliban as the colonised, however, is the underlying theme in *The Tempest*. Caliban, the son of Sycorax is the native from whom Prospero, the coloniser usurped the island.

CALIBAN: This island is mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou takest from me. (1.2. 332-333)

Prospero, in turn, ill-treats and keeps Caliban as a slave.

Responses from other Cultures across the Globe

Thomas Cartelli in his work *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* remarks:

“Shakespeare” is “refashioned” outside the national boundaries of British culture and society ‘in the image’ of cultures and societies seeking either to establish their independence from imperial influence or to identify, define, and assert their own national values or priorities. (3)

Shakespeare continues to influence generations in disparate cultures and has been adapted to various local art forms. The plays and the plots still do engage the aesthetic productions across the globe, and often transform according to the preferences of the local aesthetic sensibility and the codes of the local cultural ethos. The responses from the non-colonies place a transcultural aesthetic that acts upon the plots of Shakespeare liberally, catering to the taste of the educated sections who have known the plots of Shakespeare otherwise.

Akira Kurosawa’s adaptation of *Macbeth* is not writing back to the empire, because Japan has not been colonised by imperial Britain. Kurosawa’s film *Throne of Blood* is a negotiation between the Eastern and the Western. Kurosawa sets the story in the Samurai culture of medieval feudal Japan.

Akira Kurosawa’s Throne of Blood: Response from a non-colony

In the adaptation of *Macbeth*, Kurosawa follows the original with only minor differences, such as the introduction of the elements of the Noh theatre which are most prominently seen in the physical appearance and the movements of Washizu (Macbeth), Asaji (Lady Macbeth); and in the conception of the witches. The *mise-en-scene* at the beginning is evocative of the whole story of the plot. The mist, the darkness, the tombstone and the distant castle set the tone of the film and the story as usually seen in the ‘exposition’ of a Shakespearean play. Kurosawa uses a clever way of introducing the visual of the castle as the camera slowly discovers the castle through the mist. Here, the castle is juxtaposed with the vast nothingness and the tombstone.

The Temptation Scene takes place in the Cobweb Forest. While Washizu (Macbeth) and Mikki (Banquo) cross the forest on their way back from the battlefield, they get entangled in its labyrinthine ways. With the accompaniment of thunder and lightning, the evil spirit appears. Sitting inside a hut, spinning the wheel of fortune, it chants: “False fame falls; Death will reign supreme; Men are mortal, fame meaningless, and action only will remain.” According to its predictions, Washizu, who is the Lord of Fort One, will also become the Lord of the North Castle, and later, the supreme Lord of Cobweb Castle. Mikki, who is the Lord of Fort Two, will not thrive, but his son Yoshitaru also will become the Lord of the Cobweb Castle.

The white-clad, phantom-like, feminine and soft-spoken evil spirit creates startling effects, enhancing the horror. The subtle, soft chanting also lends a similar effect. The spinning wheel is foregrounded in the frames to reinforce the importance of fate. The heaps of skeletons and skulls, which appear in many frames in the scene enhances the theme of the futility of life.

The silent, soft-spoken and solemn figure of Asaji (Lady Macbeth), mostly clad in white, resembles the figure of the evil spirit. Asaji speaks out a philosophy of power, ambition, cruelty and success.

Kurosawa makes a big change in the ending. Washizu is attacked and killed by his soldiers who got a glimpse of the hellish nature of their master's mind. Made in 1957, Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* is an aesthetic response from a master filmmaker.

Responses to Imperial Culture from Former Colonies

The responses from the once culturally dominated put forward an aesthetics that has grown from within over centuries. Shakespearean plays have long disturbed and appealed to the imagination of the dominated communities. At a later stage, the artists from the native community reinvent and reaffirm its aesthetics, occasionally revealing the life principles and patterns continued to grow even after being grafted with the alien culture. Welcome Msomi's *uMabatha*, the Zulu Macbeth, is adapted into the Zulu culture in South Africa. Glocalization of Shakespeare, steeped in the local culture takes shape through the works of emerging artists/writers of the later generations.

Adaptations from the once dominated culture are negotiations between the two systems of values and ethos even though any aesthetic productions of humans share the common, enduring principles of life.

The responses from the erstwhile colonies sometimes carried a substitute philosophy to the ideology of power. It poses a principle of balance of power/energy which is operational/ingrained against the accumulation of power. Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* is a case in point.

Glocalization of Macbeth: Welcome Msomi's uMabatha, the Zulu Macbeth

Indigenous performance traditions that have long been repressed by a process of dehumanization of the native by branding them black backwardness come out of the shackles, and surface in South Africa towards the end of the twentieth century. The ethnic Other dominated for a long period by imperialism and devastated by apartheid, breathes a new life and resonates to the pulsating rhythm of the Zulu aesthetics led to flourishing once again under the leadership of Welcome Msomi. The attempt to perform back a glocalized *Macbeth* to an imperialist audience in 1970 can be seen as a counter-discourse crafted in the vocabulary of Zulu culture that has been severely marginalised through the repressive state policies of the Apartheid.

Msomi's *uMabatha* opens up questions of cultural difference. The imperial audience that once looked down upon the native culture of Africa as negative now experienced a vibrant display of a theatrical mode which was hitherto unknown. Michael Chapman says that "black would be redefined, would reject the negative association of being the other with a European sign system" (quoted in McMurtry 323). *uMabatha*, thus, is a decolonizing work. The Shakespearean canonical play has been resituated in the South African indigenous culture.

In *uMabatha*, the central character is the Zulu Chief Shaka who lived in the early nineteenth century. There is a one to one substitute for each character. However, some minor characters have been avoided. For example, the messenger who informs Lady Macbeth about the arrival of Duncan to Inverness, the attendant to Macbeth during Duncan's visit, and the Porter are rolled into one – msimbithi (messenger).

One significant addition is the Imbongi (a praise singer) who sings and dances in praise of the King when Duncan first appears on the stage. Scenes and situations of the play *Macbeth* are closely followed by Msomi although he curtails long scenes considerably and is reduced to nineteen scenes. However, as a glocalization strategy, indigenous theatrical and performative elements have been intricately woven into the experience. Hence, a cast of sixty-five including “drummers, singers, dancers and actors has been used” (Daniel and Fortier 164).

Glocalization of Shakespeare's Macbeth: Vishal Bhardwaj's film Maqbool

Drawn from the Christian tenets, Avarice (over-ambition in the play), Temptation, Sinning and Death function as the four pillars of the story of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Set in the underworld havens of the Mumbai city in the last decades of the twentieth century, *Maqbool* foregrounds the Eastern motif of regaining of the balance of power/energy in the lopsided world. The film conceptualises life essentially as an interplay of the flow of power/energy (*Shakthi*), which is neither created nor destroyed; but always undergoes changes and shifts across pivotal points. One plays one's part and leaves, but invariably paving the path to the 'balancing of power [that] is essential in life.' The utterance repeatedly and ironically comes from one of the two police officers who constitute the forces of temptation in the film. The witches in *Macbeth* represent evil and talk about the interplay of the binaries 'fair' and 'foul.' But in the conception of the life in *Maqbool*, 'fair' and 'foul' or 'good' and 'bad' are relative; and what remains is a spectrum of multiple qualities.

The two police officers, who are presented in the film as the agents of prediction and temptation, talk about the fake encounter killings of the underworld mercenaries in the city of Mumbai. In the first scene with Maqbool (the henchman of the don, Abbaji), since Maqbool's astrological chart shows Venus (*Shukra*) in the tenth position, they predict that Maqbool will be king of kings within six months. When the other henchman Kakka asks about his future, they said that they were surprised to see him still alive. However, Kakka's son Guddu's astrological chart shows a royal position shortly.

Nimmi, the young wife of Abbaji, has a great desire for Maqbool and tempts him. She exhorts him to show courage and kill Abbaji so that he would get the underworld empire of Abbaji as well as Abbaji's wife. Here, apart from the desire for a position of power, sexual desire becomes a marker.

There are also other key changes from Shakespeare. There is no one to one replica of the elements of *Macbeth* in the film. But the key elements are reworked and presented. The character of Nimmi is an agent of temptation, and also a prize to be accomplished if the murder committed. It is a significant reworking of Shakespeare. The indecision of Maqbool whether to kill or not is also reworked. Nimmi counters Maqbool's loyalty to the father figure by saying that “[apart from henchmen like you] dogs also are reared here,” indicating that there is no filial gratitude involved.

There are also significant omissions. For example, *Maqbool* has no dagger scene, banquet scene, or the sleepwalking scene. Before the murder takes place, Maqbool gets disturbed by the hallucination of blood spilt on the floor when the lamb was religiously slaughtered for the feast. When Kakka's dead body has been brought, Maqbool has the hallucination of Kakka opening the eyes and staring at him. Nimmi cannot sleep because the baby in her belly is crying incessantly day and night, since “its father has been killed.” In a brilliant reworking of the hand-washing scene, Nimmi hallucinates that the blood that had splashed on to her face during Abbaji's murder, is still on her face and the wall and she tries to rub it off. Some changes are that Maqbool strangles Nimmi to death as she became deranged and an

invalid, and the child born to Nimmi before the death of Nimmi and Maqbool, promises regeneration and continuance.

Conclusion

Shakespeare's plays function as a powerful tool of the empire brought to colonies evoking European cultural superiority. However, there is no denying the fact that Shakespeare, even now, continues to influence generations in disparate cultures, and has been adapted to various local art forms. The plays and the plots still do engage the aesthetic productions and often transform according to the preferences of the local aesthetic sensibility and the codes of the local cultural ethos.