

**Unit: 11: Shakespeare on Screen**

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The history of Shakespeare film is as old as cinema itself. Cinema was born when Lumière brothers made their first public screening of ten short films in Paris on 28 December 1895. Cinema was the upstart rival of the stage in the early days.

Ever since Herbert Beerbohm Tree staged Shakespeare's *King John* in cinema in 1899, Shakespeare has been a native of cinema. What survives of this attempt of four scenes is a one-minute long portrayal of the death of *King John* in Act 5 Scene 7 of the play. Since then there have been many Shakespeare screen adaptations of different lengths in different languages in different parts of the world. Shakespeare and cinema enjoy a special bonding. He is the single-most filmed author ever, anywhere. The number of Shakespeare films has increased exponentially over the last two decades.

The early films were silent, black and white, and were made on one-minute reels. Some of these were manually coloured later. As Shakespeare was readily available to be filmed, the early one-minute movie reels could capture some iconic scenes from Shakespeare plays, which were held in very high esteem in those days, partly to enhance the reputation of the film industry. The directors who took liberties with Shakespeare were under severe criticism until about 1940s when the works of directors like Laurence Olivier and Orson Welles received widespread critical acclaim.

*Shakespeare on Film Newsletter* (1976) was the first periodical on Shakespeare in cinema. *Shakespeare Bulletin* publishes theatre, film and book reviews, providing a record of performance and scholarship in a variety of media across the world. In 1987, *Shakespeare Survey* came out with a volume on Shakespeare in film and television. The important books on the subject are Robert Hamilton Ball's *Shakespeare on Silent Film* (1968), Jack Jorgen's *Shakespeare on Film* (1977). The articles in *Literature/ Film Quarterly* and *Shakespeare on Film Newsletter* are also resources for Shakespeare in cinema.

The analysis of Shakespearean cinema as cultural appropriations of his text has been an area in Shakespeare Studies. In this unit, we will be looking at 1) Shakespeare in silent films, 2) Shakespeare in Talkies 3) Locating Shakespeare in the present 4) Non-English Shakespeare films, and 5) Shakespeare in Indian cinema.

**Shakespeare in Silent films**

More than 300 Shakespeare films were produced across the world during the silent era, at a time when cinema was a lowbrow medium. These silent and short movies are not what one would expect from Shakespeare who is known for his language.

Most of these were only one or two reels long and were compressed versions or scenes from Shakespeare. Though most of these are lost, some like *King John* (Britain, 1899), *The Tempest* (Britain, 1908), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (USA, 1909), *King Lear* (Italy, 1910), *Twelfth Night* (USA, 1910), *The Merchant of Venice* (Italy, 1910), *Richard III* (Britain, 1911) are revived by British Film Institute from various archives. Even without sound, viewers could identify the iconic scenes such as the death scene from *King John* (1899), the duel scene from *Hamlet* (1900). The first 'colour' Shakespeare film was *The Tempest* (1905) with a 2-minute of a storm scene from Beerbohm stage production in colour.

Cinema, then considered as a disreputable industry, needed Shakespeare to enhance its reputation. It needed iconic scenes and classic authors to prop up the industry. Shakespeare provided movies with many iconic scenes-- Juliet balcony, Hamlet in the graveyard, the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, the cauldron scene in *Macbeth*, Lear carrying the body of Cordelia etc. – which communicated without dialogue. Moviemakers also found it easy to film scenes from stage versions of Shakespeare.

Right from the inception of the motion picture, Shakespeare plays have been adapted and filmed. Most of the early attempts were only scenes from Shakespeare because the technology was not that developed. Filming Shakespeare became an international phenomenon and hundreds of films were made in England, France, Italy, Germany, Denmark and the USA etc. during the days of the silent movie itself.

With the advent of the longer the reels, attempts are made to capture Shakespeare play in full. In 1907, an attempt was made to capture *Hamlet* in a 10-minute movie. American Vitagraph Company's 15-minute reels helped silent cinema use multiple reels to produce the full-length movie.

In 1916, the Metro and the Fox Studios released arrival versions of *Romeo and Juliet*. The Metro version was 9-reel long and used the reconstructed Renaissance town and caption cards. On the other hand, the Fox studio version advertised Theda Bara, its heroine, saying "Juliet lived in a period of passionate abandon. Italy in the days of Romeo and Juliet was no place for Sunday school girl", making it a more commercial production. Art and commerce blended well in Shakespeare film industry. Some of these films like Asta Nielson's *Hamlet* (1920) claimed Hamlet to be a woman in disguise, and connected the play to the gender politics in the post-World War I era, also engaged in creating cultural discourses.

Some of the Silent Era, Shakespeare cinema were the following films:

1. *King John* 1899 UK);
2. *Hamlet* 1900 France; 1908 USA);
3. *Macbeth* 1905, 1908 USA; UK 1911, 1916; 1913; Germany 1913)
4. *The Tempest* 1905 UK; 1912 France; 1911 USA)
5. *Julius Caesar* 1907 UK, 1911 France, 1909 Italy)
6. *Othello* 1907, 1909 2), 1914 Italy; 1908 Germany; 1908 USA; 1910 Denmark)
7. *As You Like It* 1908, 1912 USA)
8. *The Merchant of Venice* 1908, 1912, 1914 USA; 1910 Italy, 1913 France; 1916 UK)
9. *Romeo and Juliet* 1908, 1911 USA; 1908, 1911, 1912 Italy; 1908 UK)
10. *Taming of the Shrew* 1908; 1908 USA, 1914 Italy, 1911 UK; 1911 France)
11. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1909 USA, 1913 Germany, 1925 France)
12. *Richard III* 1909, 1913 USA; 1911 UK)
13. *Antony and Cleopatra* 1909 USA; 1910, 1913 France; 1913 Italy)
14. *King Lear* 1909, 1916 USA; 1910, 1912 Italy)
15. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 1910 USA; 1911 France)
16. *Henry VIII* 1911 UK)
17. *Cymbeline* 1913 USA)
18. *The Winter's Tale* 1910 USA; 1913 Italy; 1914 Germany)

More serious attempts were made to capture Shakespeare with the advent of sound films. Iconic scenes and conveyed sense in silent films, but with the advent of sound, fidelity to Shakespeare's text and native English sounds became major issues. In the final days of British imperialism Received Pronunciation was the standard English. In a way, this challenged the authority of the standards of

British English itself and led to the internationalisation of English, as people from many nationalities started producing Shakespeare in their local English standards and their local languages.

Some of the two-minute reels were later coloured and presented. But, most of these remain black and white. In this sense, the first 'colour' Shakespeare film was *The Tempest* (1905) with a 2-minute of a storm scene from a Beerbohm Tree stage production.

### **Shakespeare in Talkies**

The first known Shakespeare talkie version was *Taming of the Shrew* (1929). In 1936, the star-studded *As You Like It* by Paul Czinner, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Max Reinhardt, and *Romeo and Juliet* by George Cuckor failed to impress partly because of their wrong use of the medium and partly because films were considered inadequate to capture literature. The spectacular failure distanced Hollywood from Shakespeare.

Laurence Olivier's reverential approach to Shakespeare and Orson Welles's treatment of Shakespeare as raw material for the film established modern Shakespeare cinema. Olivier's *Henry V* (1944), a British war film in the wake of the Allied Forces invasion of Europe successfully de-linked theatre from film and used Shakespeare's language to acclimatize viewers to Shakespeare's original performance by beginning from the Globe and moving through stylised pastel scenery, to Battle of Agincourt. It projected Henry as a larger-than-life figure, and the British as defending an attack, justified the Allied invasion, a justifiable defence. Its speech "we few, we happy few" gets echoed in Winston Churchill's "first of the few" speech. It's phenomenal success led to more Shakespeare productions like Olivier's *Hamlet* (1947) and *Richard III* (1955).

Treating Shakespeare as raw material, independent films like *Macbeth* (1948), *Othello* (1952), and *Chimes at Midnight* (a.k.a. *Falstaff* 1966) by Orson Welles; and *Romeo and Juliet* (1953) by Renato Castellani challenged Olivier's reverential approach. If Olivier apologised for cutting down *Hamlet*, Welles asserted the director's freedom. Welles' anti-war *Chimes at Midnight* was an 'elegy for merry England' and parodied Olivier's Agincourt nationalist rhetoric. It portrayed the battle of Shrewsbury a meaningless slaughter prefiguring Hiroshima.

With the World War won at a heavy price, and with a war-drained economy, the British film industry could not afford expensive Shakespeare. Welles' ambitious modern-dress *Julius Caesar* failed to get funding and Olivier's proposal for grand *Macbeth* did not take off.

### **Locating Shakespeare in the present**

Shakespeare was contemporised through popular versions of his plays. If his stage versions became early silent films, later his popular Broadway adaptations became Hollywood films. *Taming of the Shrew* became *Kiss me Kate* (1953) and *Romeo and Juliet* became *West Side Story* (1961) in the backdrop of a gang war between white Americans and Puerto Ricans. Both these Broadway performances had multiple avatars like opera, play, musical and film.

Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) with teen actors, music, dance and the adolescent street fight became the first financially successful Shakespeare film. It helped to locate Shakespeare in the contemporary imagination. Later, the commercial success of Branagh's *Henry V* (1989), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993) and Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* (1990) as well as his relocations like *Othello* adaptation as *Jubal* (1955), Peter Hall's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1968), Peter Brook's *King Lear* (1970), Tony Richardson's *Hamlet* (1969) and Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* (1971) established Shakespeare in film.

Kenneth Branagh's *In a Bleak Midwinter* (1995), *Hamlet* (1996) and Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996) have been commercially successful. Budget films like Derek Jaman's *Tempest* (1979), Sonnets-based *The Angelic Concversations* (1985), Celestino Coronado's *Hamlet* (1976) and *Dream* (1984), were iconoclastic unlike Charlton Heston's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972). Shakespeare films got a new vigour with Kenneth Branagh's emotional *Henry V* (1989) with himself in the lead and Zeffirelli's prosaic *Hamlet* featuring Mel Gibson (1990). Branagh followed it up with the best portrayal of Elizabethan verbal comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), *Hamlet* (1996), the musical *Loves Labours Lost* (2000).

Branagh's populist success encouraged more films such as Richard Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995) set in late 15th century England in the backdrop of a civil war, Baz Lurhmann's romantic crime tragedy *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996) with mafia empires in present America, Julie Taymore's anachronistic *Titus* (1999). Peter Greenaway's digital experiment like *Prospero's Books* (1991) projects Shakespeare with a Caliban saving Prospero's books from drowning.

Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) is a romantic adaptation of *Taming of the Shrew*, retold in the late-1990s American high school setting. Worried about teenage pregnancy, a father restricts his teenage daughter Bianca from dating until her elder sister Kat does. Bianca gets Patrick the 'bad boy' arranged to date Kat. When a jilted lover reveals the arrangement, heartbroken Kat responds adapting Shakespeare's Sonnet 141 as "10 Things I Hate About You."

Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000) contemporise Hamlet as a film student who discovers that his uncle who killed his father Claudius and became the head of Denmark Corporation, headquartered at Hotel Elsinore. It uses Shakespeare's dialogues in modern settings with video cameras, polaroid cameras, surveillance bugs etc., and Ghost appearing on closed-circuit TV, and a video art montage "Mousetrap". Its Ophelia strews polaroid photos of flowers instead of real flowers and has a Fortinbras who threatens a corporate takeover using an army of attorneys.

William Morrisette's *Scotland, PA* (2001) sets Macbeth in 1975 around the fast-food restaurant 'Duncan's Café' at a Scottish hamlet Pennsylvania with McDuff investigating a crime. Joe 'Mac' McBeth and his ambitious wife Pat kills its owner Norm Duncan, hoping to run his business. Three hippies incite the murder. Pat burns her hand during the murder, self-medicates it, but cuts it off and bleeds to death.

Fred M. Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet* (1956) sets *The Tempest* within the context of an interstellar expedition. Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) reworks *Henry IV* and *Henry V* into a modern context, Joss Whedon's *Much Ado About Nothing* (2012) makes it a contemporary American romantic comedy, and Michael Almereyda's *Cymbeline* (2014) is in the background of a biker gang. Shakespeare comes close to teenagers through Tim Blake Nelson's *O* (2001) which sets *Othello* in an America High School basketball players, Andy Fickman's *As You Like It* version *She's the Man* (2006) with the girl Viola Hastings entering her brother's school in his place pretending to be a boy. More contemporary is Tom Gustafson's *Were the World Mine* (2008) recasts *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the story of gay empowerment portraying a gay student who plays the role of Puck uses the flower love-in-idleness to turn the entire town fall in love with same-sex friends.

### **The non-English language Shakespeare films**

In his *Shakespeare and World Cinema*, Mark Thornton Burnett identifies more than 70 films ranging from *Hamlet* of Serbia to Malagasy *Macbeth* called *Makibefo*, in non-English languages. He mentions Vishal Bharadwaj and Jayaraj in the title of his chapters. Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti list more

than 120 Shakespeare films in Indian languages. These films reveal the universality of Shakespeare's themes in foreign cultural and linguistic context. We shall look at some non-Indian and non-English films in this section at Indian Shakespeare cinema.

Three out of the five *Othello* adaptations made between 2001 and 2006—*Othello* (the UK, 2001); *O* (USA, 2001); *Huapango* (Mexico 2003), *Souli* (Madagascar, 2004), and *Omkaara* (India 2006)—come from outside English-speaking world speak a lot about the impact of Shakespeare across cultures. Some well-known films in foreign languages include Chinese films like *Legend of the Black Scorpion* aka *Banquet* (2006), *Yi qi liang fu* /One husband too many (1988), *Qing ren jie* /A time to love (2005); Danish film *Arven* / Inheritance (2003); French films like *L'appartement* (1995); *Le grand rôle* (2004); *Conte d'hiver* (1992); German film *Kebab Connection* (2005); Italian film *Cesare deve morire* / *Caesar Must Die* (2012); Japanese films *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960; *Ran* (1985), *Throne of Blood* (1957); Korean film *Oldeuboi!* / *Old boy* (2003); Russian film *King Lear* (1970); *Vam i ne snilos* / *Love and Lies* (Rom. 1981); and the Spanish film *Amar te duele* (2002).

From the early days of film-making, Shakespeare productions took place in French, German and Italian cinemas. Russian directors of Shakespeare consciously disagreed with the capitalist movie versions of Shakespeare. For example, while Welles' *Othello* opens with a death, Sergei Yutkevich's *Othello* (1955) opens with Othello's heroism and Desdemona's love; unlike Olivier's Freudian inertia, Grigori Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (1964) has social engagement;

Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa adapted *Macbeth* (*Throne of Blood*, 1957) within Japanese medieval samurai culture; *Hamlet* (*The Bad Sleeps Well*, 1960) within modern Tokyo's corporate world. *Macbeth* also uses the conventions of the acting conventions derived from Noh and Kabuki. He limits conversation to a minimum and allows the director freedom to use Shakespeare as raw material for the film.

The latest edition of the *Oxford Shakespeare Handbook* replaces the chapter on Akira Kurosawa with Vishal Bharadwaj, who adapted Shakespeare in various Indian contexts. His *Othello* in the Badlands of UP (*Omkaara*), *Macbeth* in Mumbai underworld (*Maqbool*), and *Hamlet* within separatist Kashmir (*Haider*).

### **Shakespeare in Indian Cinema**

The Indian film industry began in 1913 and is now the largest film industry in the world. It produces films in more than 40 languages and has produced more Shakespeare cinemas than any other country. Still, Indian Shakespeare cinema has not received the attention it deserves. Even Kenneth Rothwell's *A History of Shakespeare on Screen* (1999) lists only five Indian Shakespeare films when there were more than seventy such films. Two recent books—*Bollywood Shakespeares* by Dionne Craig and Parmita Kapadia (2014) and *Shakespeare in Indian Cinemas* by Poonam Trivedi and Paromita Chakravarti (2019)—have tried to do better justice to the topic.

The number of Indian feature films has been constantly increasing as the statistics available from the website of the Film Federation of India: <http://filmfed.org> show: 2005 (1041), 2006 (1091), 2007 (1146), 2008 (1325), 2009 (1228), 2010 (1274), 2011 (1255), 2012 (1602), 2013 (1724), 2014 (1778), 2015 (1827), 2016 (1902), and 2017 (1986). It also shows that the major languages in which Indian films were produced in 2017 were: Hindi (364), Tamil (304), Telugu (294), Kannada (220), Bengali (163), Malayalam (156), Marathi (117) and Bhojpuri (117). It even had 11 films in English. Mumbai (694), Kolkata (183), Chennai (340), Bangalore (256), Thiruvananthapuram (153), Hyderabad (249), Delhi (32), Cuttack (44) and Guwahati (35) were the major regions of production.

The legacy of Shakespeare in India is complicated. Even as he is criticised as an icon of English colonialism and west, Indianisation of cinematic art and Indianisation of Shakespeare go hand in hand. Shakespeare is the single-most filmed author; according to some scholars, Shakespeare is the biggest scriptwriter in Bollywood also as his pervasive influence remains largely unacknowledged. The trend seems to be only increasing and there is a steady increase in the number of film versions of his plays.

India has said to have produced about 1500 films during the silent era that is films produced without a soundtrack. Most of these were lost and only about 450 of the pre-1950 films survive. *Cymbeline* was a favourite for Indian filmmakers in the silent era. The exact account of Shakespeare in Indian films remains uncertain and there are many conflicting accounts of the early Indian cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare.

According to Trivedi and Chakravathy, the silent Shakespeare avatars in Bollywood are:

1.	<i>Champraj Hado</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>	1923
2.	Savkari Paksh	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	1925
3.	<i>Dil Farosh</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	1927
4.	<i>Kusum Kumari</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>	1928
5.	<i>Khoon-e-Nahak</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	1928
6.	<i>Bhul Bhulaiya</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	1929
7.	<i>Mitha Zahar</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>	1930
8.	<i>Khooni Taj</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	1930.

Silent films continued to get released even after the release of the first Indian sound film or talkie, *Alam Ara* (1931). Before the linguistic reorganisation of Indian states (1956), Shakespeare had many adaptations in Hindi/Urdu, Tamil and Telugu. The first Shakespeare talkie film was *Hathili Dulhan* (1932). It was a Hindi/Urdu adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. It was followed by *Hamlet* as *Khoon Ka Khoon* (1935), *The Merchant of Venice* as *Khudadad* (1935), *Antony and Cleopatra* as *Zan Mureed* (1936) and *Said-e-Hawas* (1936) based on *Richard III* and *King John*, *Measure for Measure* as *Pak Daman* or *Shaheed-e-Naaz* (1940) and *The Merchant of Venice* as *Zalim Saudagar* (1941), *Macbeth* as *Jwala* (1938), *Romeo and Juliet* (1948), *Antony and Cleopatra* as *Cleopatra* (1950), *The Taming of the Shrew* as *Aan* (1953) and *Hamlet* (1954).

In Tamil, *Hamlet* was adapted as *Manohara* (1936), *The Merchant of Venice* as *Shylock* (1940), *Cymbeline* as *Katakam* (1947), *Twelfth Night* as *Kanniyin Kaathali* (1949), *Macbeth* as *Marmayogi*, and *Hamlet* once again as *Manohara* (1954). In Telugu, *Gunasundarikatha* (1949) was the first desi version of *King Lear*.

Parsi theatre contained musical and comical interludes keeping in tune with the traditional domination of music in dramatic performances. In Indian cinema Portia sings singing passionately, Anthony survives Cleopatra; and *King Lear* becomes a comedy. These traditions which are seen in Parsi-theatre influenced talkies continue even in *Maqbool*. Indians liked the conflation of *Twelfth Night* with *The Comedy of Errors* and *Richard III* with *King John*. Agha Hashar Kashmiri (1879-1935) who was titled 'Indian Shakespeare' (Das 49), adapted *The Winter's Tale* as *Mureed-a-Shak* (1899), *King Lear* as *Safed Khoon* (1907), blended *King John* and *Richard III* as *Said-e-Hawas* (1908), and *Macbeth* as *Khwab-e-Hasti* (1909). Sohrab Modi made *Shaheed-e-Hawas* a film in 1936, and Rustom Modi made *Shaheed-e-Naaz* into a film as *Pak Daman* in 1940.

Shakespeare could be the biggest scriptwriter in Bollywood. Out of the 37 Bollywood/Hindi film adaptations and 8 films which draw heavily on Shakespeare till 2017-- *Izzat* (1968), *Karz* (1980), 1942: *A Love Story* (1994), *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), *Dil Chahta Hain* (2001), *Om Shanti OM* (2007), *Ekalavya*

(2007), *Matru ki Bijli ka Mandola* (2013)—Shakespeare’s presence in Bollywood has not been recognised internationally and he is perceived to have had only a limited place in Indian film.

The Bollywood Adaptations are:

<b>Hindi Film (Talkies)</b>	<b>Shakespeare Play</b>	<b>Year</b>
<i>Hathili Dulhan</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	1932
<i>Bhool Bhulaiyan</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	1933
<i>Khoon ka Khoon</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	1935
<i>Khudadad</i>	<i>Pericles</i>	1935
<i>Zan Mureed</i>	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	1936
<i>Said-e-Havas</i>	<i>King John &amp; Richard III</i>	1936
<i>Jwala</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	1938
<i>Pak Daman</i>	<i>Measure for Measure</i>	1940
<i>Shylock</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	1940
<i>Zalim Saudagar</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	1941
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1948
<i>Cleopatra</i>	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	1950
<i>Aan</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	1953
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	1954
<i>Aasha</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	1957
<i>Do Dooni Chaar</i>	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	1968
<i>Heer Raanji</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1970
<i>Bobby</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1973
<i>Manchali</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	1973
<i>Ek Duje Ke Liye</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1981
<i>Angoor</i>	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	1982
<i>Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1988
<i>Saudagar</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1991
<i>Rui Ka Bhoj</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	1977
<i>Heeralal Pannalal</i>	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	1999
<i>Josh</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	2000
<i>Baghbaan</i>	<i>King Lear</i>	2003
<i>Maqbool</i>	<i>Macbeth</i>	2003
<i>Omkara</i>	<i>Othello</i>	2006
<i>8x10 Tasveer</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	2009
<i>Dil Bole Hadippa</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	2009
<i>Isi Life Mein</i>	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	2010
<i>Isaqsade</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	2012
<i>Issaq</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	2013
<i>Goliyon Ki Raslila Ram-Leela</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	2013
<i>Haider</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>	2014

Most of Bollywood’s early films were celluloid versions of existing Parsi drama. Parsi theatre used Shakespeare to discover its style and materials. An exact account of the relationship between Shakespeare and Indian films is difficult as many of the early films are irrevocably lost.

The oldest surviving full-version of Bollywood *Hamlet* is Kumar Sahu and Mala Sinha starring *Hamlet* (1954). In stark contrast to contemporary adaptations, it was a faithful one. The language is typically Indian. Its lines transport the viewer to the Mughal court with expressions such as “*shahenshah-e-Denmark*.” It becomes a typically Indian reading with mad Ophelia break into a dance with the gravediggers, running motifs such as rich-boy-poor-girl (*Hamlet-Ophelia*), revenge against father’s

murderer (Hamlet), vengeance against sister's death (Laertes), mad lover (Ophelia), a loyal friend (Horatio) etc.

Among the non-Hindi Indian language films, Shakespeare first appeared in Tamil. Here, comes across as full adaptations, the adaptation of scenes, plays within the film, lines, usages, and as references. The 13 Shakespeare plays adapted as films in regional languages are:

<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	<i>Kannaki</i> (Malayalam 2001), <i>Zulfikar</i> (Bengali)
<i>As You Like It</i>	<i>Sollu Thambi Sollu</i> (Tamil 1959)
<i>Cymbeline</i>	<i>Katkam</i> (Tamil 1947)
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Manohara</i> ,(Tamil 1936, 1954), <i>Rajamakutam</i> (Tamil 1959), <i>Rajapart Rangadurai</i> (Tamil 1973), <i>Karmayogi</i> (Malayalam 2012), <i>Annayum Rasoolum</i> (Malayalam 2013), <i>When Hamlet went to Mizoram</i> (Mizo), <i>Hemanta</i> (Bengali 2016),
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	<i>Sorkkam</i> (Tamil), <i>Zulfikar</i> (Bengali)
<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Gunasundarikatha</i> (Telugu 1949), <i>Gunasundari</i> (Tamil 1955), <i>Life Goes on</i> (English), <i>Natsamrat</i> (Marathi), <i>Second Generation</i> (English/Bengali), <i>Last Lear</i> (English)
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Marmayogi</i> (Tamil 1951), <i>Veeram</i> (Malayalam 2016), <i>Yellamma</i> (Telugu)
<i>Othello</i>	<i>Anbu</i> (Tamil 1951), <i>Saptapadi</i> (Bengali 1961), <i>Ratha Thilagam</i> (Tamil 1963), <i>Kaliyattam</i> (Malayalam 1997), <i>Hrid Majharey</i> (Bengali 2014), <i>In Othello</i> (English), <i>We too have Our Othellos</i> (Assamese)
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Mahananda</i> (Kannada 1947) <i>Ambikapathy</i> (Tamil 1957), <i>Bhale Jodi</i> (Kannada 1970), <i>Jaya Vijaya</i> (Kannada 1973), <i>Eradu Kanasu</i> (Kannada 1974), <i>Rani Maharani</i> (Kannada 1990), and <i>Ulta Palta</i> (Kannada 1997), <i>Arshinagar</i> (Bengali 2015), <i>Maro Charitra</i> (Telugu), <i>Sairat</i> (Marathi), <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (Mizo)
<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	<i>Bhranthi Bilas</i> (Bengali 1963), <i>Double di Trouble</i> (Punjabi), <i>Ulta Pulta</i> (Kannada), <i>Ulta Pulta</i> (Telugu)
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Shylock</i> (Tamil 1940)
<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	<i>Abba Aa Hudugi</i> (Kannada 1959), <i>Arivali</i> (1963), <i>Veera Kesari</i> (Kannada 1963), <i>Periya Idath Pen</i> (1963), <i>Kumari Penn</i> (1966), <i>Pattikkada Pattanama</i> (Tamil 1972), <i>Bahaddur Gandu</i> (Kannada 1976), <i>Nanjundi Kalyana</i> (Kannada 1989), <i>Mahajanani Maradalu Pilla</i> (Telugu 1990), <i>Srimati Bhayankari</i> (Bengali 2001),
<i>The Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Kanniyin Kaathali</i> (Tamil 1949).

Indian Shakespeare movies look at Shakespeare through Indian lens. They use local frameworks to give Shakespeare local habitations and names. India is too large to be encapsulated in a singular format and therefore, Indian films adopt a host of formats to accommodate Shakespeare. To overcome this cultural and linguistic diversity, some have attempted multi-lingual filmmaking. Such attempts overlook



Indian cultural diversity and universalise the context so much that it loses the local and regional identity.

Even as Indian academia maintains Shakespeare as the ideal of classical literature and looks at him through the imperial lens of Macaulay, Indian stage and cinema, use popular frameworks to showcase him and treat him as a base to cook the Bollywood dish using Indian *filmi masala*. The kinship between Shakespeare and Indian cinema may not be obvious to the undiscerning eyes. It is not an understatement that if Shakespeare had been living today, he would have preferred to write for Bollywood, instead of writing for theatre and would have preferred it over Hollywood, as it suits his manners of presentations.

Indian stage and cinema conceive and locate Shakespeare who comes from another culture, time and mode of thinking into uniquely Indian cultures, time and place, as well as modes of perception and presentations. The question whether by rendering 'high' Shakespeare, Bollywood uses him to make itself globally presentable is to be analysed.