

A LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S SHREW IN CONVENANCE WITH ILAAJ-E-ZID

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Abstract

Shakespeare's plays are an associate in the modern world for the critics and common reader to decipher them in their own social-cultural context. Although representative of Elizabethan society, Shakespearean plays represent the Pakistani patriarchal society and the issues ascended today in an exceptional yet striking way. Identifiable for the audience, Shakespeare rejoices through his plays in every context and ambience. This paper analyzes the Pakistani adaptation of Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew, that is, Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai, performed in Globe Theater in 2012. This paper links the characters to the characters and the title to the title significantly to draw a comparison between the two and to highlight the Pakistani contemporary issues that are presented in an amusing way in Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai. This paper conducts a textual analysis, using the lens of Linda Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation, and is essentially qualitative in nature.

Keywords: The Shrew, adaptations, theatre, patriarchy, social hierarchy, forced marriages, media, appropriations, contemporary problems

1. Introduction

“Shakespeare Globe has been very enterprising in presenting the plays of Shakespeare in a very dynamic way, replicating the way in which probably they represented at the time of Shakespeare.” said Susannah Harris-Wilson (in an interview), the producer of *Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai* (Madhavan, 2012).

Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai, as a Pakistani adaptation, was performed in the theater as a spreading medium of media to promote Pakistani culture and its attributes through it. Susannah wrote the proposal of the play with a particular set of women in mind with her own interpretation of the play which, according to her, was not a politically correct interpretation but she believed that is what was in Shakespeare’s mind. In an interview, Susannah argued that “There were many clues in it and I think it is about the Elizabethan educated woman, who is suddenly, through reading, able to be on a same plane with the men who are educated and finds that she is outstripping a number of men and thinking for herself and so no longer the feudal arrange marriage system applies to her, and Shakespeare in all of his plays is an advocate of the intelligent woman” (Madhavan, et.al. 2012).

Pakistan had a theater company that could participate in this presentation because the London Globe Theater was bringing all the 37 plays of Shakespeare and each one was to be presented by a different country in their own language.. The producer's involvement was to ensure that the play represented Pakistan’s culture.

Taming of the Shrew as *Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai* has an understanding of such contemporary problems in Pakistan. This theatrical play has the capability to sermonize all the disputed points and the problems that Pakistan is coping with, being a patriarchal society. It was a representation of Pakistani society that was performed in the Globe theatre in 2012 in Urdu language. The play carries the Pakistani context showing that two sisters got married in accordance with their birth order, and with the approval of their parents as a compulsion. “*Taming of the Shrew* goes with our culture and it has all the elements that are in our society” said Haissam Hussain, the director of the play (The Guardian, 2012).

2. Research Methodology

The current research study is essentially and factually qualitative in nature. Most of the sections are based on the parameters of Textual Analysis. The researchers have used various databases like stage performance of the adaptation in Lahore, Globe

theatre's original video and have accessed relevant research articles, news and other resources like interviews with the actors, director and the producer of the staged play. Being a qualitative study, the researchers have given importance to evidence based subjective views and opinions.

In order to achieve the desired objectives and systematically probe into the set research questions, the theoretical perspective of Linda Hutcheon is followed as prescribed in her work *A Theory of Adaptation*. This perspective explores the successful appropriation and adaptation of *Taming of the Shrew* in *Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai*.

3. Literature Review

The approaches to the colonial texts, in pre and post partition, 1947, have experienced modifications. Part of the reason for the change is the emergence of Pakistani English, pride in traditional culture, values and norms. Shakespeare's plays, having the colonial exuberance in it, have also undergone changes; particularly, they have been adapted by other cultures, in order to represent their own social issues. Bapat & Nagrikar (2015) stated that Vishal Bhardwaj, director of *Omkaara*, an adapted form of *Othello*, by Shakespeare, has used the same storyline, but with visual and cinematographic effects and different cultural settings, i.e. Indian. Further, *Omkaara*, being an Indian movie, reflects the Western concepts in Eastern cultural settings.

Similarly, the concept of revenge in *Hamlet* has been adapted in *Haider*, an Indian crime movie of 2014 (Sharif, 2017). In similar line of argument, the concept of revenge in the play has been compared with the existing cultural values of Pukhtun society, *Badal*; thus, taking the pervasive nature of Shakespearean plays across the borders (Sharif, 2017). Apart from revenge, there are multiple concepts in Shakespeare's plays that resonate with the Pakistani culture and current social conditions of the country. One such social problem is 'patriarchy'. The culture of patriarchy in Pakistan is still in practice, although, due to gender diversity and inclusiveness, critics put forth a progressive picture of the country in the media.

Moreover, the English dramas have not only been adapted in their concepts, but they have been completely translated into other languages and performed (Hustlehurt, 2016). *Taming of the Shrew* by Shakespeare is one of the translated texts. The text is translated into Urdu language, depicting the current social

problems of Pakistan. Shakespeare's plays not only give fictional image, but they can also be related with the current social situations of the world (Rich, 1972).

The importance of this reading is in "its insight into the tone and theatrical effectiveness of *The Shrew*, it should not dismiss for us the play's treatment of the social order and in particular of patriarchy - the authority of fathers over their families, husbands over wives and men in general over women." (Novy, 1979 p. 264). It is thus the production of a society that "in a not unfamiliar anomaly, the man in a position of relative social power, laughs at the conventions of the society that give him that power, while the women subordinated by her society worries about its judgment of her". Novy (1979 p. 268) in her research, talks about the significance of the title that "the suggestions of companionship of the play motif receive a challenge from the animal imagery here and elsewhere. In the title, "taming" identifies the hierarchy of husband over wife in marriage with hierarchy of humanity over animals." (Novy, 1979 p. 269).

Thea Buckley, a doctoral researcher in her research paper, brings into discussion the same aspect of patriarchy when "Nadia Jamil echoed this perception, telling Bhuchar that Kiran's father as a "broadminded" man who has "educated his daughters [yet is typically only] obsessed with [their] marriage" ("The Taming of the Shrew in Urdu at the Globe"). Rana added that he felt that the play reflected Pakistani patriarchy with "the dowry culture" and "the father wanting to wed off the elder [daughter] before the younger" ("The Taming of the Shrew in Urdu at the Globe").

While Shrew's audience was overwhelmingly positive in its reception of Kiran's concluding speech on marriage, Lawson (2018) expressed her disappointment. She posited that, in trying to stay true to its culture, the production actually restricted its options and thus suffered. She claimed: although this is an enjoyable and entertaining version of Shakespeare's play, it is in conformity with the restrictions of Pakistani society. In this production, it is not necessary to tame Kate into submission because society would dictate that she must obey her father and not stray very far from his command.

In *Taming of the Shrew*, thus, "Pakistanis' continuing struggles for social and sexual equality both in the UK and overseas are widely highlighted in the international media" (Buckley, 2012 p. 93). It continues to explain the rhetoric that *Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai* has put forth the question: "Would feminism or

patriarchy triumph in this Pakistani interpretation? A discussion of Shakespeare's *Shrew* inevitably centers on its controversially misogynistic conclusion, wherein Katherine (the "Shrew") publicly declares her unconditional obedience to her spouse, Petruchio (the "Tamer"). But what happens to the story if the protagonists' names are instead Kiran and Rustum, and the speech is made in the Urdu language? Would theirs be a "modern" love match of mutual choice, or a "traditional" parental arrangement? Theatre Wallay's vibrant production soon answered these questions, weaving intercultural threads into a magic carpet, reflecting, challenging, and ultimately soaring above such polarized stereotypes" (Buckley, 2012 p. 83).

Pakistan has, for the last few years, been consistently listed in the bottom three most dangerous countries worldwide for women on The World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report, which shows that Pakistan has "both large education gender gaps as well as economic ones" (Forum, 2018). The country, writes Meghan Casserly, is where the cultural, tribal and religious practices, harmful to women, are frequent. These include acid attacks, forced or underage marriages and punishment by stoning or other physical abuse (Forum, 2018). The WEF report data arguably shows a correlation between the decline in gender equality and the Taliban's rise. Gender equality is an issue of special importance to Pakistan, making the Urdu *Shrew* timely (Buckley, 2014).

4. Analysis and Discussion Forced marriages and Forced arranged marriages

The matter of contention about women highlighted in the play might seem general hence a common problem to the other male dominated communities but it is weighty in its own Pakistani perspective. The play aims not only to conspire for the Pakistani audience but the Pakistani communities living outside the country too, that follow the patriarchal norms and customs in their respective families, for instance, the nuisance of the forced-arranged marriages. This was one of the purposes behind performing it in a theatre, to make media a medium to assist the ulterior motive of the play. The objective of Hussain behind the play as an adaptation, according to Elizabeth Schafer, is to "raise awareness about the role of educated and strong women in a patriarchal society [...] to use the opportunity to address stereotypical views of Pakistan (as dysfunctional and consisting mainly of terrorists and other extremists" (Schafer, 2002 p. 257)

Besides, forced marriages are normally driven by the familial desire of meeting the right suitor for the daughter (Yunas Samad, 2010). Variation can be

observed in regard to forced-arranged marriages across different communities. Comparatively, in Bangladesh and Pakistani communities, the rates of such marriages are quite high, the reason being an endogamous culture -the culture where marriages are decided irrespective of the women's choice, rather the compatibility of ethnicities, nationalities and cultural practices are kept in mind (Forced Marriage Unit FMU statistics 2017). The concept of forced marriages is normally in conformation to the arrange marriages. Its commonality is not only found in the Third World countries, particularly, the South Asian countries, but the phenomenon is common in the South Asian citizens living abroad, in UK or other countries (Phillips & Dustin, 2004).

Viewing *Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai* as a representative of the Pakistani problems, especially forced-arranged marriages, it is necessary to have an understanding of the tangible difference between forced-marriages and arranged-marriages. In arranged marriage, women are given every right to choose the suitor or refuse the proposal, while in forced marriage, the suitor is forced and imposed on the girl. Hence, she has no right to have a say neither in practice nor in theory. This notion of forced marriages is an un-Islamic practice, while arranged marriages, having the consent of the girl, are exercised in an acceptable way.

4.1 Shafilea Ahmad's case

To illustrate an example, Shafilea Ahmad's tragic murder has made a history of violence in the thread of forced marriages and a male dominated society. Shafilea was a 17 years old schoolgirl, who was born to the parents, Iftikhaar and Farzana. The parents belonged to Gujraat, having an ultra-conservative mindset for their daughters. The family had moved to Warrington UK but the parents never approved of Shafilea to have a western lifestyle. She faced domestic violence and was beaten time and again by her parents. During a trip to Pakistan, she made a suicide attempt by drinking bleach which was a "stupid and obvious lie (by her family)", said the team of investigators later after her death.

Despite the fact that Shafilea extremely disliked her cousin, her parents wanted her to marry him, who was settled in Pakistan. "Over the last few years I have been experiencing domestic violence which has stopped me going to college on more than one occasion. They have also forced me to quit my job - from that I saved up £2,000, which they took out from my bank account. But my fear was that my parents were going to Pakistan to get me married and left there." Said Shafilea

in her note. Upon the denial of the proposal, she suffered from physical violence, by being beaten. In the aftermath, Shafilea's schoolteachers, friends and social community was kept unaware of the events of violence. However, her schoolteachers and friends reported that she had been disappeared from the school in September 2003. In its aftermath, a nation-wide search operation started. Consequently, she was found but dead in the Lake District, after two months, in a decomposed form. Only the femur bone was found, according to post-mortem investigation, which presumed that her body was shattered. Her parents could recognize her only through her clothes.

The parents were released due to the lack of evidence but in 2013 Alesha, the younger sister of Shafilea, reported to police that her parents had killed Shafilea by putting a plastic bag around her mouth and suffocated her to death. The reason of the murder she told was that Shafilea did not want to marry her cousin. Her parents were afraid that her refusal would bring shame to the family's honor.

4.2 Violence, honor killing and A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness

Tarar & Pulla (2014) argue that patriarchy and violence upon women have, in some incidences, the same reason, that is, to justify its cruel mantra: the consequence of bringing shame to the family. In regard to forced marriages, the parents become obsessed with their own honor being superior over their daughters, and subsequently, subject their women to violence, in other words, to the oppression (Phillips & Dustin, 2004). Furthermore, crimes that have the label of honor are usually, according to Human Rights Watch, "the acts of murder being committed by male family members against the female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family" (Human Rights Watch Events, 2016). The word 'dishonor' is defined by the 'inappropriate' acts committed by female family members. The semantics of the word is not extended to include the male members too (Nasir, 2018). When such crimes are committed by males, they further justify themselves and their heinous acts as a necessary and positive response to the 'devilish' acts by the female family member. They (the males) with their own irrational reason: indirectly inform the community about their power and control (Nasir, 2018). To exemplify this, *A Girl in the River: the Price of Forgiveness* is a story of a nineteen years old young girl, Saba, who was shot in the middle of the night, sacked and thrown into the river. She, fortunately, survived the injuries and tried to reach the near police station. The act was committed by her uncle, who

wanted her to marry his brother-in-law that she (Saba) denied. Thus, she had to suffer the brunt of refusal against a male member of the family.

4.2 Taming of the Shrew and Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai: Shakespeare speaks for Pakistani problems

Moreover, in Pakistan, cases like Shafilea's are common and familiar to the viewpoint of socially accepted and defensive term of "honor killing", which is ironically a murder in the name of honor. However, *The Shrew* was performed in 2012, the same year Shafilea's parents were imprisoned and the audience had more to relate to the real story of their culture, than merely getting entertained.

A BBC drama named "*Murdered by my Father*", written by Vijay Patel, highlighted the same issue. The girl is murdered by her father under the social pressure from his relatives. An advisor for the drama, Jasvinder, faced a similar issue in her real life and she had to flee from her home to protect herself. Her elder sister was also victimized by forced arranged marriage, who later after her marriage committed suicide. Azir Afzal, in stating for such cases, from Crown Prosecution Service, stated, "we have no idea how many unmarked graves there are in Britain, let alone the girls who are taken abroad, because their parents don't report them missing".

Likewise, the other issues associated with patriarchal society are addressed in *The Shrew* as *Ilaaj-e-Zid*, in an amusing and intelligent way in order to create a wave of laughter in audience as well as a purpose behind the dialogues of the characters. The scene, for instance, when Meer (the Tranio figure) and Ghazi (the Gremio figure) brag and boast about their wealth and assets, shows the class consciousness and the encounter between the people of elite class and middle class. They are the seekers of Bina's (Bianca) hand for marriage as her suitors. Meer suddenly, during the conversation, claims, "I have a British passport!" This makes the audience laugh out loud and gets the applause for its wittiness that having a British passport in Pakistan proves one to be an elite class person.

Similarly, the use of English sentences in between the dialogues and show off through it show the way English is considered to be the language of elite class people and the standard bearer in Pakistan. It suggests the general consensus in Pakistan about English that "it is the key to power and employment in the state and private sector" and is "associated with upper and upper middle classes".

In addition to this, the use of Urdu language serves different purposes in the play. Firstly, it helps the audience to understand the dialogues better and they can relate to the events, especially the switching between Urdu and English simultaneously. Secondly, it creates a humorous and delightful environment in the audience, for instance, the accent of Rustam (the Petruchio figure) and his servant Safarish confuse the gendered element in the sentences they utter. It is usually a lapse in Pukhtun's language when they try to speak Urdu. This makes the audience laugh and points the attributes of the language by different speakers in an entertaining way.

In the same playful manner, Rustam and Safarish identify themselves with another trait in Pukhtuns in a pleasant way when Rustam asks the latter to knock on the door. He uses the Urdu word "khatkathana" which means to knock on the door but metaphorically it means to knock someone down or to kill someone. Safarish confuses the word, takes out a knife in a rush and asks whom to kill. The audience bursts into laughing and at the same time tends to identify the aggressive nature and short temper of Pukhtuns.

The actor, Umair Rana, who performed in the play and acted as Rustam maintained in an interview that was of great importance to present different cultures of Pakistan to promote Pakistani cultures of different provinces. Shakespeare's plays have the dexterity to be played, appropriated and adapted even in the non-English communities but at the same time it is important to perform and go about it in a discreet manner in order to protect the people's sentiments as an audience who could relate their real life experiences and sufferings to it, especially on the subjects of forced-arranged marriages and male-dominance in a family. "The original play had elements of misogyny, so what we have done apart from adding local flavor is that we have created an interesting dynamic in which both the male or female characters are shown strong and neither of them is expected to bow in front of the other", said Usman Khalid Butt who played the role of Hasnat, a rich flamboyant boy in the play.

Karen David, who played the character of Beena in the play, expressed in an interview that the play exhibits the modernity and freedom of women in Pakistan. They are now free to exercise their right to choose their life partners on their own will. However, statistics of 2015 show the total opposite of the statement. According to HRCP, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, over 1005 cases were reported

of honor killing that included 923 women and 82 underage girls. The percentage had risen that year. The actors of the play may declare *Ilaaj-e-Zid* as an exposition of women empowerment in Pakistan but the statistics reveal the authenticity of still existing patriarchy in Pakistan. The notion is evident in the play with the appearance of Umair Rana as Rustam on stage. He is shown to be a Mianwali Pathan who is looking to marry a girl with much wealth, so he decides to marry Kiran (Catherine). This scene reflects intelligently the biases about men and women that how and how much they are free to make their choices in marriage. It depicts the situation when a man has the right to choose whom to marry while a woman doing the same may invite a disaster in the family's honor thus leading her to risking her life.

“There are harsh expectations from women in our society; they are expected to be obedient to their husbands, fathers and brothers and then the society also imposes religiosity and morality on them” says Rana. (Express Tribune). The same picture of the situation goes parallel with the scene in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* when Tranio sees Bianca for the first time.

Lucentio, aside to Tranio
But in the other's silence do I see
Maid's mild behavior and sobriety.
Peace. Tranio. (1.1.71-73)

He expresses his thoughts why he found Bianca an attractive woman and suitable for marriage. She was a quiet woman who obeyed her father that made her an ideal woman and most appropriate candidate to make a good wife.

5. Conclusion

Shakespeare, in his plays, signifies the complications of the society that is suffering from patriarchy and the dilemma of its ethical and social acceptance in the respective country. This paper investigated all the disagreements between the male and female social hierarchy; the obstacles for women to live a life, choosing a partner on their own; the ultimate solution to escape a forced marriage in the shape of either elopement like Jesvinder or suicide like her sister or being murdered like Shafilea. The paper also dealt with the issues that are addressed in a delightful and witty way in a successful adaptation of *Taming of the Shrew* as *Ilaaj-e-Zid Dasteyaab Hai*. The gravity of this adaptation lies in the title like that of “Taming” in the *Taming of the Shrew* that is “*Ilaaj-e-Zid*”, which literally means “the cure for stubbornness”. The title ironically elevates the notion of how men deal or want to deal with the

adamancy or determination of strong or independent women, by overpowering them. Further, the paper dealt with how Shakespeare brings into discourse the issues of a patriarchal society, forced marriages and honor killing, that represent Pakistani contemporary problems in a light and subtle way through its adaptations and appropriations, making media(stage) a platform to spread awareness about the issues as well as present Shakespeare's plays before a non-reader audience. They depict the present situation of Pakistan and other male dominated communities and their adaptations have the capability to represent the nature of the plays thus attaining its goals of reaching out the contemporary issues and call out for their solutions successfully.

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