Shakespeare’s Macbeth and Vishal Bharadwaj’s Maqbool: A study of Evolving Consciousness

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Abstract

The evolution of consciousness in William Shakespeare’s Macbeth and Vishal Bharadwaj’s Maqbool subverts the idea of a unified self. The evolution in their consciousness is confronting their own unconscious self (the unconscious self within) which would justify them as flat characters as they do not change but discover their real selves having a natural inclination towards evil. The term ‘evolution’, the moot point for discussion, is based on a series of interrelated concepts blending into other subtle notions primarily the unseen inward movement between the conscious and unconscious creating such propensity to vary. The characters of Macbeth and Maqbool alike display such variability as they constantly and consistently merge into the realms of the unconscious to define their conscious thoughts. Therefore, the tenets of variability would serve as a basis for the study of evolution of consciousness. Underlining such variability in the characters of the protagonists we would take refuge to the subtle notions of the inherent unconscious of human nature – suppressed yet dominant and assertive self. The paper through the text Macbeth and film Maqbool would attempt to unearth the perspective of static variability by emphasizing on the unique human quality of an individual which may appear to be evolving, but in reality is bound by fixity.

Keywords: consciousness, evolution, variability, flat characters, fixity
1. Introduction

The term variation refers to the actually present differences among the individuals in a population or a sample, or between the species in a clade. Variation can be directly observed as a property of a collection of items. In contrast, variability is a term that describes the potential or the propensity to vary. Variability thus belongs to the group of “dispositional” concepts, like solubility. Solubility does not describe an actual state of a substance, but its expected behaviour if brought into contact with a sufficient amount of solvent. Similarly, variability of a phenotypic trait describes the way it changes in response to environmental and genetic influences (Wagner & Altenberg, 1996).

Pursuing research on Performance Studies made us observe how Gunter P. Wagner and Lee Altenberg provided a clue to strengthen our argument on the evolution of consciousness since their argument deconstructs the idea of a unified self. The characters of Macbeth and Maqbool display traits of variance being soluble in nature. The presence of solubility reflects their expected behaviour in response to the environment. Therefore, although their phenotypic traits are controlled by their genetic makeup, they are also influenced by the conditions of the environment in the process of their ontogenetic development. Agreeing to this idea on evolution, we would highlight an important fact on the consciousness of an individual, which is soluble in its movement from the conscious to the unconscious, while the process is insoluble as its tendency of oscillation remains constant in an individual. There can be no denial to the constant fluctuations within the mind of the characters in the midst of their ontogenetic development.

2. Macbeth and Maqbool as Characters Exemplifying the Notion of Static Variability

The term ‘evolution’, the moot point for discussion, is based on a series of interrelated concepts blending into other subtle notions primarily the unseen inward movement between the conscious and unconscious creating such propensity to vary. The characters of Macbeth and Maqbool alike display such variability as they constantly and consistently merge into the realms of the unconscious to define their conscious thoughts. Therefore, the tenets of variability would serve as a basis for the study of evolution of consciousness. Underlining such variability in the characters of the protagonists we would take refuge to the subtle notions of the inherent unconscious of human nature – suppressed yet dominant and assertive self. In particular, the perspective of static variability gains momentum with the idea that there exists an intrinsic human quality in an individual, which may appear to be apparently evolving but in reality is driven by fixity. The articulation of a fixed evolution fractures the notion of evolution as a dynamic process only by emphasizing on the protagonist’s constant flirtations with the conscious and unconscious thoughts. Such inward conflicts of the mind are more vividly pronounced when the audience visually observe the protagonist in a state of dilemma,
the blinking of the eyes, head movement forward, a characteristic facial expression, raising and drawing forward of the shoulders, abduction of the upper arms, bending of elbows, pronation of lower arms, flexion of the fingers, forward movement of the trunk, contraction of the abdomen, and bending of the knees (Landis & Hunt, 1939).

In an endeavour to understand human thoughts and actions, the perspective of variability is one that rejects an essentialized view of human self and replaces it with the notions of fragmented self, interdependence and alterity. This paper would be one of the rare and sustained engagements with the question of Macbeth’s and Maqbool’s evolvability. They display traits, which appear changing and constant at the same time. The psychic trait of constant oscillation between good and evil, which is hidden and unseen, is constant throughout but remains unnoticed by the viewers. What the viewers seem to notice is the dominant outward change in their behaviours while the rare, observant ones would transcend the apparent reality to discover that their behaviours have remained unchanged throughout. Therefore, to class Macbeth and Maqbool as round characters would be to undermine an important and inevitable aspect of their personality, which is the consistent and constant tug of war between the conscious and unconscious. The protagonists of the play and film justify themselves as flat in their disposition as they display a temperament, which is universal and genetically influenced. It would be intriguing to unfold the essence of Shakespearean film criticism by examining the ways in which the text is translated into the mechanics of cinema through adaptation.

Hutcheon argues, “[f]or an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences” (Buhler, 2011). The contradictory impulse towards dependence and liberation has been highlighted here. The readers, closely familiar with Macbeth (1606), would be able to participate in the intertextual exchange as viewing a film alongside an informing awareness of events enriches the potential for production of meaning. In other words, the viewers armed with the knowledge of text could easily communicate to the ideas in the film. “A movie is also a text, but a special kind of text – an audiovisual one” (Dick, 2010). Therefore, it engages in the production of meaning when translated from the medium of a written text and also when viewers create their own meaning based on their individual perception guided by the notion of culture, convention etc. Besides, there is a working of a cognitive process in the viewer through the text.

Having dwelled with the question of evolution and its association in character study, we would brood on another facet of evolution, as an expansion of meaning by redefining the working of traditional patterns in a text through a reader centric approach. This would lead to the viewers culmination of their own space in the process of observing the film based on their understanding of the text, their cognitive associations and allusions to the ideal universal truth. Therefore, Vishal Bharadwaj’s Maqbool (2003). would allude to the original text only to render a combination of prismatic experience of the universal truth coupled with the director’s vision and the readers/audience power of reception.
It can be stated “the inherent textuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning, and an ever expanding network of textual relations” (Sanders, 2016). In other words each text whether a film or a play may evoke diverse meanings depending on the audience and reader’s understanding of it. This experience of generating meanings finds expression in Maqbool as the film oscillates between suppressing its dramatic origins as well as exemplifying those origins. Probably it engages in evolvability, as it moves away from the apparent textual reality. The association brought about by such disassociations through a cognitive process between the text and the reader underlies adaptations of the contemporary era.

Macbeth is one of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies, revolving around the themes of crime, punishment, remorse and retribution. The play renders these themes as a psychological rendition of human ambition, desires and treachery. Some of the speeches in the play mirrors inner divisions, pangs of conscience common to all. The film, Maqbool on the other hand is one of Vishal Bharadwaj’s widely acclaimed ventures, which meditates on the themes of betrayal, remorse and retribution in an Indian context.

The narrative of Maqbool engages with the popular film genre of the twenty first century as it presents the contemporary world of ambition and power play clothed in the domain of Mumbai underworld. Bharadwaj’s Maqbool follows the story line of Macbeth in which a man aggressively pursues his vaulting ambition under the influence of a woman. The witches in the play exhibit the temptation latent in the mind of Macbeth to which he succumbed at the end. Their presence is logically and comically represented through two corrupt officials who like the witches watered the seeds of Maqbool’s criminal aptitudes.

In the film, King Duncan and Macbeth are depicted as Abbaji, (Jahangir Khan) played by Pankaj Kapur and Maqbool played by Irfan Khan. Unlike Macbeth who is the distant cousin and trusted noble warrior of King Duncan, Maqbool is the foster son of Abbaji. Abbaji and Maqbool share a very strong bond of love and respect but it is shattered by their love for Nimmi. When Abbaji cheats on Nimmi, for the other woman in his life, Maqbool gets motivated to kill his father figure. In contrast to the original text, Nimmi (Lady Macbeth) is the mistress of Abbaji, (Duncan) not the wife of Macbeth. It is obvious that there are variations on the characters and the incidents of the original play but the film successfully maintains the psychological dimension of the gradual taint of moral conscience as found in the source. Most suggestive of the source text is the manner in which Nimmi’s instigations have the same effect that Lady Macbeth had over her husband. “What beast was’t then /That made you break this enterprise to me? / When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And, to be more than what you were, you would /Be so much more the man” (Shakespeare, 2000).

Nimmi criticises Maqbool by saying ghar me kutte bhi pale jate hain [even dogs are kept in homes] (Bharadwaj, 2003). Similar to Lady Macbeth, Nimmi hurts the manliness of Maqbool and instigates him to carry on with the murder. “The roles of the sixteenth century Eve and Lady Macbeth coincide – each ignites the ambition latent within her husband’s
These instigations by Lady Macbeth and Nimmi are made on the ground that Macbeth and Maqbool would be replaced by their rightful heirs.

There are few apparent references to the original text. The most significant one is the portrayal of Macbeth and Maqbool in constant conversation with their silent unconscious self. They are both imaginative and their imagination acts as a stimulating force. They sometimes retrace from action, which is restrained as well as provoked by their imagination and sometimes by their fears, but finally they fall victim to it. Macbeth, most of the time, engages himself in abstract imaginative repentance as a product of his fear which is very momentary as he regains his original sinister self. He could never translate his abstract imaginative repentance into reality. “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood/Clean from my hand?” (Shakespeare, 2000). Soon after this, he engages in a series of murder and transforms into a bloodthirsty tyrant. The film Maqbool focuses on the recurring pattern of the inherent temptation lurking within the mind of its protagonist, suggestive of the unconscious at work. Nimmi tells Maqbool sarcastically tumhara nigah nahi ha hame nazar dalne me phir bhi tumhara niyat pata hain [You may not look at me but I know your intentions] (Bharadwaj, 2003). His intentions are suggestive of the incoherent faculties underlying his personality becoming fragmented in their movement from the conscious to unconscious. This tendency becomes an invincible part of Maqbool’s nature.

Talking about the film, the emphasis is on the appearance of truth rather than the factual details underlying the text. The character of Kaka lacks the poise and sophistication of the original Banquo. But they unite as foils to the characters of Macbeth and Maqbool. Thus, clinging on to Shakespeare, Bharadwaj manages to exploit the context rather than the content by trying to underline the universal themes of politics, power play and jolting ambition. When the corrupt police officials are introduced in the film, we can sense them as sinister beings like the witches in the original text. The prediction of one of the corrupt officials in the film that Maqbool would become the king of Mumbai is similar to any standard Shakespearean expression in the text. Although the prophecies and predictions differ in language, they carry a similar tone of irony “Thou Shall get kings, thou shall be none” (Shakespeare, 2000). shakti ka santulan bana rehna jaroori hain.....aag ke liye pani ka darna jaroori hain.( Bharadwaj,2003). In other words to keep the fire burning, it is important that water should fear its energy” Besides, the lines “look like th’ innocent flower, / But be the serpent under’t” (Shakespeare, 2000). This idea finds expression in the character of Nimmi who pretends to be loyal to Abbaji. Her walk to the holy shrine intensifies the idea of fair being foul, as foul play has taken root in a fair and pious atmosphere of the holy shrine in the midst of a spiritual number Tu meri rubaru hain meri akhon ki ibadat hain (Maqbool, 2003). invoking the divine presence.
3. Allusions to Morality as a Guide in Uniting the Text and the Film

We might expect the mythical allusions as a custodial guide for the rest of the film. The film is structured on common beliefs in morality, sin, repentence as well as retribution. It is heart renting to see how a great warrior like Macbeth and fearless Maqbool are drown in the pool of their own wrong doings. Lady Macbeth’s frenzied state of mind and her hallucinations are like that of Nimmi’s or even worse as Bharadwaj through his tragic vision makes her even more pitiable as she says before dying although we have wronged wasn’t our love “paakh” or pure? Both Macbeth and Maqbool are made to feel the burden of guilt in defying divine providence. But it is Lady Macbeth and Nimmi and not their husband’s who seem to be slain by their conscience. It is Lady Macbeth’s and Nimmi’s characters that evolve through their repentance unlike their husbands who do not show signs of repentance but a regret on realising that the evil forces have deceived them.

The film very deftly removes the small but central visual reference to its dramatic source text and keeps it out of sight in effect but not in essence. Although, parallels have been established with Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, the film ceases upon open acknowledgement to its source. Macbeth, lacks the passionate urge of Maqbool to own Nimmi as Lady Macbeth is already the wife of Macbeth.

The film exemplifies the evolution of consciousness in the protagonist through an interaction of landscape and body. Just before the murder of Abbaji, Maqbool witnesses raw blood, which is suggestive of the pangs of inward conflict. The sight of blood before the murder of Abbaji, even after the floor has been washed off its stains, shows the progression and regression of his consciousness between acceptance and resignation. The absence of bloodstains in the floor may mark the growth of his conscience while its presence signifies the conscience being nipped in the bud. It is obvious that the sight of the blood signals him towards the murderous act. To be explicit, the protagonist struggles with himself to live up to the level of his conscience. The seventeenth century protestant treatises ventured upon a unique view of the working of the conscience in an individual. This view relegated the working of conscience to the understanding of self only by making it transcend the barriers of religiosity and moral considerations. Having acknowledged this in Macbeth, one can see him struggle hard to measure the level of his conscience by probing into his consciousness. Very rarely does he engage with the question of divinity in the play as he more strongly engages with the question of self-knowledge leading to the growth of consciousness within the conscience. “Turn of the seventeenth century Protestant treatises on conscience increasingly define it as self-knowledge instead of knowledge shared with God, exemplifying the growing importance of consciousness within the concept of conscience” (Servius, 2012). It is as if the presence of blood marks his inclination towards the murderous act and its absence his resignation. This is continued through images of Nimmi in the lustful captivity of Abbaji’s arms. As the screen flickers with such scenes in flashes of black and white shots it heightens the intensity of suspense as it unfolds the corners of Maqbool’s hideous thoughts lying in the
realm of the unconscious. These images may be fragments of Maqbool’s imagination but it unravels the fact that the main motive behind the murder was guided by his impulse to own Nimmi rather than becoming the king of the underworld.

Maqbool engages with the popular understanding of the main concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The character of Maqbool marks the split into conscious and unconscious mind, his unconscious being the source of his real self. The behaviour of Maqbool deconstructs the view of Descartes, “I think, therefore I am” (Barry, 2007), and replaces it with “I am where I think not” (Barry, 2007). Perhaps, it points to the realm of the unconscious wherein lie our repressed desires. Macbeth and Maqbool alike were subject to the call of the unconscious. There are instances in the film where Maqbool only justifies and doesn’t flatly refuse when Nimmi instigates him to commit the crime. Eventually, both Maqbool and Macbeth commit crimes by pleasing their call of the unconscious. Macbeth’s and Maqbool’s journey in discovering their true self in the unconscious is an evolution. “Conscience is said to be knowledge with another. Many now interpret this ‘other’ as the self, redefining conscience as knowledge of self with self” (Servius, 2012). Therefore, the claims made on his transformation from good to bad is a myth, an appearance, for his true evil self was hidden in the realms of the unconscious.

Maqbool had not evolved by nature but he only discovered what was latent in him. Always what was constant in his nature was his aggression, which could lead to violence. He was ready to strangle anyone who went against his wishes whether it was the police officer who arrested Abbaji, the minister who taunted him or even his beloved Nimmi. When Nimmi tells Maqbool nahi sone deta hame baap ko mara hain na humne (Bharadwaj, 2003), he slaps her and says that he is the father of the child and not Abbaji. So to say that Nimmi ignited the fire of ambition within him is false as he already had that fire within him but in a latent form only till he discovers it.

Maqbool’s criminal aptitude was lying in a dormant state, which responded immediately to what is known as “object petit”, or the little other that keeps him in touch with his repressed desire for his lost object. Here the “object petit” is the corrupt officials and the lost object is his desire to own Nimmi. The films combined reinscription and problematisation of evolution of consciousness in Maqbool continues in the process of discovering his true self, lying in the unconscious. This would lead to a decentring of the conventional view of characterisation in literature based on the notion of unique separate self. Identifying a similar temperament in Maqbool, one may question like Lacan “Who is this other to whom I am more attached than to myself, since at the heart of my assent to my own identity it is still he who wags me” (Barry, 2007). It is this ‘other’ which was not visible in Maqbool as it was lying in the realms of the unconscious clothed by the conscious. The other being more vicious and attractive.

The evolution of the protagonists character as well as consciousness was confronting the other within himself, which would at the same time justify him as a flat character as he has
not changed but discovered his real self, having a natural inclination toward evil. This enables us to view Maqbool as a character who may appear to be the faithful son of the Nawab but someone who is judgemental, conflicted and dubious. When Nimmi passionately advances towards him, he doesn’t stop her rather enjoys her company. Besides, more than the guilt of the murder of Abbaji, he suffers from shame for he has injured his self-respect. These scenes owe more resonance and less dissonance when it is linked to the source text as Maqbool like Macbeth seems to be overpowered more by shame of dishonouring his ego and less by guilt.

Given the film’s concern with Lacanian psychoanalysis, we could explore the extent to which Bharadwaj and his crew members consciously link Lacanian concept of unconscious as being the “kernel of our being” and so the unique individual self of Maqbool is a mirage, an illusion of his greatness. Maqbool, has undoubtedly evolved but his evolution is within his mind, a psychological growth into the hidden evil, sinister thoughts already inherent in his unique being. The dynamics of unconscious being the “kernel” of our being are effectively explored through a variety of means including some powerful display of sublime acting skills. The actor, Irfan Khan seems to be constantly in conversation with his other self as if it is encouraging him to react to the predictions made by the corrupt officials. When Maqbool is told that he would be the “king of kings” after taking over the throne of Abbaji, he behaves like Macbeth after he heard the prophecy of the witches which is of a man lost in his own broodings, “That he seems rapt withal” (Shakespeare, 2000). The camera pans and our gaze settles on the expression of Maqbool who seems to quickly acknowledge the prophecy as if he had been secretly harbouring the desire to become the king of the underworld. “I have no spur/ To prick the sides of my intent,/ but only /vaulting ambition/ which o’erleaps itself,/ And falls on th’other” (Shakespeare, 2000). Employing a sound scape to unfurl his dubious nature, Bharadwaj makes it serve as an interpretive framework for the text. There is a repetition in the manner of an alliteration of a typical sound evoking supernatural connotations, the moment Maqbool flies to the realm of his unconscious. It reflects his attraction for the other self where he secretly plans what many feel have been planned by the external forces. The internal struggle of the protagonist is not a mere conflict of the mind but is a fight within the depths of the soul.

Throughout the play Macbeth hovers in a moral divide as he possesses the ability to ignore his conscience when he wants something badly enough – whether its to attain the crown, impress his wife or attempt to regain his eroding hold on his subjects (Jolley, 2009).

As the purpose of sound in films were to startle and produce an orienting response, the mythical allusions in it are relevant in initiating the discourse with its symbolic codes. Nimmi’s instigation is supported by the image of beheading of a goat suggesting the ideology behind the image which is of impending danger and also of Maqbool’s willingness to indulge in the murderous act. Like the dagger in the original Macbeth the beheading of the goat
aggravates the already existing desire in Maqbool. Having noticed it, Maqbool seems to awaken from the slumber of his good self as he embraces the other vicious self by murdering Abbaji. The image of the goat sacrifice acts as a catalyst in aggravating what was already hidden in him just like the dagger in the original Macbeth prompted the killing of Duncan. “In Macbeth’s soliloquy, the dagger takes on the role of the intentional object. It catalyses Macbeth’s consciousness of his own criminality and at the same time teeters playfully on the frontier between idea and object” (Curran, 2012).

Emerging from the cocoon of his good self, as if triumphant in the discovery, Maqbool seems to passionately and enthusiastically murder anyone who acts as a foil to his evil designs. Kaka is one of them whom Maqbool confronts and pushes him only to end up convincing him of his loyalty towards Abbaji and once again tactfully submerging his evil intentions. When Maqbool directs his pistol towards his head, the isolated space in which the two were in conversation is filled by other curious men amidst sounds of gunshots. The camera shot is limited to capture the expression of Kaka and Maqbool, thereby projecting the conflict in their minds, a constant inward movement to reach the truth of each other’s intentions. Kaka listens to his good self by accepting Maqbool’s loyalty towards Abbaji but Maqbool on the contrary defies his good self once again and listens to his sinister self by planning Kaka’s murder.

4. The Play of Consciousness within the Cinematic Space

The theme of consciousness gets an innovative treatment through the film’s alliance to the use of spectacle like lighting, music and acting leading to a disassociation as one is thrown into the process of cognition, independent of the texts central meaning. Talking about Maqbool’s consciousness, his inward temptation and its reliance on the baser instincts of man may be considered genuine by some though many consider it to be a sin. Vishal Bharadwaj seems to have a contemporary approach in discussing the themes of sin and repentance. Amidst the spectacle of song and music, or rather song acting as an interpretive medium, the audience is made to feel the pain of Maqbool and his beloved who long for each other’s company. It seems to pose an indirect question to the viewers, whether it is a sin to harbour thoughts of union and togetherness, which again challenges the notion of conventional ethics and morals nurtured by many.

The film is successful in its depiction of the breach in Indian society by highlighting its shams and dualities thriving in the consciousness and mindset of its masses. Through the film, the viewers are transported to the way of life, beliefs and ideologies of Muslims in Mumbai, living as minorities. The film satirizes the religious hypocrisy of Maqbool who at times is seen reading “namaz” only to falter from its righteous ways. In fact, he never faltered from the right path as he always embraced the wrong path independently, without any force. The plan of killing the son of Kaka has taken root in his mind even before Nimmi suggested it. However, it is disheartening to see it taking shape just after bowing down before “Allah”
which suggests the spiritual vacuum ingrained in the Indian society. But more importantly it would highlight Maqbool’s independence from any external influences be it his beloved or the corrupt officials as he seems to be guided by his own impulse for evil.

When Kaka gets killed and his body is brought before Maqbool, he loses his sense as he imagines Kaka opening his eyes while Nimmi tries to revive the apparently disturbed Maqbool. The film once again focuses on the psychology of Macbeth which seems to subvert the supposition that there has never been a problem with Maqbool to control his conscious state of mind as in this scene his unconscious leanings almost overpowers him. Although the film highlights the repentance of Maqbool, what seems to be interesting is his loosening grip over his conscious thoughts as he diverts into a dream world imagining and hallucinating. His trait in taking refuge in the realms of the unconscious was constant in him from the beginning till the end. He imagines Abbaji dancing to the tune, which Maqbool was very familiar to. When he stands there looking fixedly to what he thinks really exists the argument appears to be even more genuine. These images fail to awaken the guilt in Maqbool completely as he regains his normal conscious self very quickly. Maqbool, seems to have no room for repentance as he could quickly suppress the voice of his conscience in favour of the latent sinister thoughts lying within the unconscious.

Maqbool, renders his inner turmoil through cinematic space. This is heightened through the song as it fills the morbid, isolated space not only by endowing a shape to its formlessness but proves to be successful in creating meanings of utter desolation. The musical number rone de jiya kare rone de na jee bhar ke khali nahi hote kabhi naina, Bahar mein jeena wale ke bhi gam hote hain (Maqbool, 2003). meaning let me make an outpour of my pent up feelings is an indication of the emptiness and morbidity of their relationship and barrenness of their existence. It is this barrenness, present in Maqbool as a repressed desire, which took its toll when Maqbool became resolute in his decision to own Nimmi. Thus, we find a beautiful rendering of verbal elements in Shakespeare’s text visually through cinematic space where Bharadwaj employs a sound scape structured according to cultural codes. The songs in the film resonate with the essence of Sufi music, subtle and endearing having philosophical connotations. They serve as an interpretive framework for the text as it enhances the progression of the story through the process of cognition wherein meaning is evolved.

With these associations in the play, the film works its way through issues of betrayal, despair, regret as they pertain not only to the characters but also to the crafting of mass market entertainment. The huge popularity of Maqbool lies in the integrity in the vision of Bharadwaj in adapting Shakespeare without any burden. As the film nears its conclusion, it highlights the theme of betrayal of the evil forces like the original text. The coming of the “dariya” or sea and “birmam wood” are symbolic of the impossible becoming possible. The witches and the corrupt officials had promised that nothing could harm them unless these impossibilities occur. Both Maqbool and Macbeth break down in the end, less by their guilt and more on knowing that the evil forces have deceived them. The repentance is more significant in Nimmi
and Lady Macbeth where Lady Macbeth suffers from the guilt of murdering Duncun and Nimmi of murdering Abbaji. On the contrary, in case of Macbeth and Maqbool, one can sense fear and hopelessness but not guilt. Just after the death of Lady Macbeth, Macbeth quickly gains his consciousness and instead of crying out of grief, he says; “Out, out brief candle! Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player/ that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, /And then is heard no more (Shakespeare, 2000). These philosophical lines suggest Macbeth’s firm grip over his conscious state of mind.

The interplay of questions in the working of the protagonist’s consciousness is constantly at work in Maqbool. Obscuring Shakespeare’s play as a source has an independent effect on Bharadwaj’s film in having a more critical approach rather than a straightforward and direct one. The character of Maqbool has more facets to his personality. His crime is even more intense as he has to bear the burden of guilt of not only killing Abbaji but also secretly falling for his mistress. Besides, it surpasses the discussions of remorse and retribution more vividly enshrined in the original text as it encompasses the idea of betrayal and distrust.

The film engages in discussions about the validity of psychological approaches as a key to understand human behaviour. The tragic dimensions of its dramatic source have a special significance for Maqbool in its concluding sequence of remorse and retribution. Maqbool, who embodies the idea of divided self, has completely succumbed to his destructive impulses. Even as Macbeth’s and Lady Macbeth’s plans are collapsing, Macbeth cannot resist his obsession for power. Macbeth in spite of everything remains unchanged in his purpose to become the king. He never lost touch with his other vicious self even in times of trial. The murder Macbeth committed each time leaves him with a sense of satisfaction and not a speck of guilt can be traced. It is difficult to identify whether Maqbool is lured by Nimmi to kill Abbaji or whether his mind lured him to do so. More specifically, it is his mind since he is aware of his life going astray and his duties never acknowledged. He makes an outpour of his repressed desire of being undermined when he tells Kaka pacchis saal kute ki tarah sale wafadari ki, goli khayi gale kaate (Maqbool, 2003). meaning I served with loyalty for twenty five years but was never acknowledged. The film, bound by the dictates of this difficulty cannot be explicit about who is more dominant, Maqbool’s mind or Nimmi’s instigation. Maqbool displays a trait which resembles Macbeth’s aptitude for good and evil and his failure in mastering the latter. The witches seem to have grasped Macbeth’s repressed wish as their prophecy mirrors his own secret hopes and ambitions of his evil designs although the answer is disguised in the shape of a prophecy.

Conscience acts as the other person within the mind, discovering man’s sins to himself. Macbeth builds his consciousness from noble opinion gathered from the people who surrounded him. Most of the times his social self exerts a perpetual influence over his conscience making him concerned more about the violation of his social obligations than the guilt of indulging in such acts of crime. As Maqbool tells Nimmi on being instigated baap hain woh, is ghar mein baccho ki tarah palan hun (Maqbool, 2003). Maqbool says he grew
up in this house since childhood pointing to his obligation rather than love for Abbaji. Maqbool’s taste for evil is visible in his tendency to imagine his inclination towards evil. Like the dagger in the original source text, the images of blood stained floor marshals him the way he was going. Throughout this process, Maqbool seems to get abstracted from his conscious being, a condition which reasserts itself in Macbeth. The ringing of the bell seems to heighten the emerging evil in Macbeth which overpowers him completely making him his slave. Mesmerised by this new state of consciousness Maqbool like Macbeth is eager not to disrupt the fantasy as if he was obsessed by it. “Yet the act of witnessing prompts in him now not a terrifying sense of exposure but a sensation rather of pleasure, the thrill of recognising his own enthusiasm for the uncanny (Tilmouth, 2009).

Maqbool’s call of unconscious was so strong that he would abandon anyone or anything which came on his way. He isolates himself from Kaka, as Kaka doubts his intentions. His intentions become obvious when Maqbool hugs Abbaji, the camera’s focus shifts to his eyes which mirrors his hidden thoughts of criminality. Outwardly, he pretends to be loyal but secretly plans his murder. He refrains and escapes from anything that would make him confront his sense of shame and guilt. Both Macbeth and Maqbool struggle not to resist the growing terror of their guilt but the exposure of their murderous act. In this context, it becomes important for them to sweep Banquo or Kaka from their sight. The same fear is later transferred to Macduff or Riyaj Boti. Macbeth and Maqbool may interpret the anxiety as a fear of their own safety but the underlying fact is their conscience. The discovery of their helplessness, in locating their true selves is something they cannot eliminate from beginning till the end.

The film also intriguingly anticipates several eventual responses to the challenge of adapting Shakespeare specially the psychological strategies in which much of Maqbool’s villainy are rooted in the hidden corners of the unconscious. In the same manner, Shakespeare’s witches are translated from transcendent beings into voice of his true self. By employing Lacanian’s interpretation to Shakespeare’s Macbeth can help us to gain a better insight of how Macbeth’s desire to become the king drives his action. The study examines Macbeth through a Lacanian psychoanalytic lens in order to argue how language catalyses Macbeth’s desire to become king. The witches like the corrupt officials represent linguistic power over Macbeth’s and Maqbool’s thoughts and actions. To substantiate, Maqbool’s mind responded to their calling since he already had a latent desire to become the king of the underworld. In simplest sense, criminality in Maqbool is phenomenological because it deals with the intentional dimension of committing the crime guided by the voice of the unconscious. The doctrine of intentionality, the cornerstone of Husserlain phenomenology states that every act of consciousness and every thought are directed towards an object of some sort. In other words, the thought and the object are united in Maqbool which he achieves by trying to constantly take refuge in his fragmented other self, repressed and hidden but very essential.
5. Conclusion

To conclude, it would be intriguing to see how in spite of the varied adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, each adaptation not only mirrors the reality of human existence but also reiterates the invincible truth of transgression. This transgression is shown in terms of the journey of the individual not only physical but a psychological one. To class it as an evolution or growth of consciousness may be more appropriate. We find in *Macbeth* the same technique of the duality of the tragic hero. Under the impulse of his ambition, Macbeth thought of killing Duncan. His conscience appeared to overpower him temporarily and he refused to proceed with the murder till it gave way to his repressed desires. After doing the deed, he stood stunned, imagined that there were knockings at the door as if he wanted it be undone. “The desire for power repressed emotions and dichotomies of human behaviour frame the core elements of Macbeth” (Wang, 2011).

Maqbool like Macbeth exhibited the temperament of being torn between two selves. Identifying this trait in their disposition, they justify themselves once again as flat characters. The acceleration of the constant flux between their conscious and unconscious thoughts were inevitable in the film as well as in the text. This inner division was obvious in Maqbool’s decision to murder Kaka followed by Riyaz Boti. Likewise it was also obvious in Macbeth’s decision to murder Duncan followed by Banquo and Macduff.

This tendency of inward conflict is heightened when Maqbool refuses to accept the child of Nimmi thinking it belongs to Abbaji. Eventually in the film, he seems to be temporarily overwhelmed by his good sense. This is evident when he goes to the hospital, after Nimmi’s death to accept her child, though in doubt.

The continuity of such moral dilemmas seems to exert a considerable influence on the viewers. Perhaps the viewers through their cognitive associations would create a space of their own. In that created space, they would imagine the death of the child in the hands of Maqbool. The viewers would be able to perceive this based on the trait demonstrated by Maqbool throughout the film, which is listening to his other, sinister self.

References


