



## A STUDY OF BOLLYWOOD'S COMEDY OF ERRORS: AN INTERTEXTUAL APPROACH

English

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### ABSTRACT

The cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's play never been antediluvian around the world. There are a plethora of films in Hindi cinema which have been adopted from literary works by film makers. When it shows up to adaptation of William Shakespeare's epic tales in Hindi cinema, Vishal Bharadwaj acclaimed trilogy of *Maqbool*, *Omkara* and *Haider* comes first in mind but not comes first in the history of Indian cinema. This paper will begin with analysing one of the first adaptation of Brad's epic-the 'comedy of errors' into Gulzar's enduring popular '*Angoor*' (grapes) considered one of the Bollywood's best comedies. This research article is an attempt to understand and answer these questions with intertextually approach. Why a comedy of error is an appropriate choice for an adaptation? How the Gulzar's *Angoor* has an accurate title for an adaptation of Brad's saga of two sets of identical twins? And how Gulzar has done justice to his Bollywood adaptation of an epic play with obvious similarities and difference in plot and characterization? The paper will end with the discussion over the very first adaptation of comedy of errors into Bengali theater well as Bengali cinema with the same name by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's -' *Bhranti Bhilas*' which can also be considered as inspiration for Gulzar's tribute to Shakespeare.

### KEYWORDS

Intertextuality, Comparative studies, *Angoor*, Comedy of Errors, Cinema.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Ben Johnson echoing the future with his famous assertion in the preface to the '*First Folio*' (1623) that Shakespeare-

'Was not for an age but for all time.'

Unequivocally Shakespeare is immortal in the field of theatre, cinema and literature. The history of Hindi cinema depicts itself that how much Indian audience and Bollywood filmmakers are obsessed with an adaptation of epic tales of England's national poet William Shakespeare (26 April 1564 – 23 April 1616) often called 'Brad of Anan.' Brad's epic- *Romeo and Juliet* influenced plenty of filmmakers of global cinema. However, when we look into the history of Hindi cinema, we have been witnessed an abundance of examples of movies that inspired by this tale of romantic-tragedy, namely *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak* ( From doomsday till doomsday), *Ishaaqzade* (Lover), *Goliyon ki Raasleela Ram-Lella* (A Dance of Bullets: Ram Lella) and numerous. Julie sadness, clarified adaptation as a, '.... Transposition practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mood, an act of revision in itself.'<sup>(1)</sup> Notwithstanding Bollywood filmmakers Vishal Bharadwaj's three adaptation of Shakespeare's most memorable tragedies- *Macbeth* as *Maqbool* (2003), *Othello* as *Omkara* (2006) and *Hamlet* as *Haider* (2014). These trilogies succeeded to grab the attention of the various profession of studies and academic researches too. Without hesitation, we can say that particularly Shakespeare's tragedy and romance epics have been the first selection of Bollywood filmmakers for a long time. However, there has been a scarcity of adaptations of Brad's comedies into Hindi cinema. Comedy adapted framework of Shakespeare in Indian cinema has only inspired by the play comedy of error. The play has inspired Indian movies which roughly illustrated as- *Do Dooni Char* (Two twos are four) in Hindi-language, *Uta Palta* (Topsy-Turvy) in Telugu and Kannada-language, and *Double Di Trouble* (Double Trouble in Punjabi-language).

The present paper is an attempt to make a comparative approach towards of errors and *Angoor* (grapes) as it's adaptation by the Indian director, lyricist Gulzar in 1982. The main framework of this article will be a focus on the technique of intertextuality as this choice of the framework will help readers find some relatable aspects in the comedy of error and *Angoor* (grapes). Sunders in her work, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) refers, "The connection between the source text and the adapted text as an intertextual link and declares the analysing the similarities and differences between the text involved in the central focus of adaptation studies."<sup>(2)</sup> Furthermore, this paper will analyses why *Angoor* (grapes) is an appropriate why *Angoor* (grapes) is an appropriate title for Bollywood adaptation of comedy of errors and article will certainly act as a bridge between these two artistic work (comedy of error and *Angoor*) as illustrating a table to make an understandable approach to understand the names of the characters and few more. With the end, the article will provide an overview of the very first adaptation of the comedy of errors in the Bengali language

comedy movie '*Bhranti Bhilas*' (1963) based on the Bengali play of the same name- '*Bhranti Bhilas*' (1860) by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

### 2. DISCUSSION

#### 2.1 Intertextuality in Plot

What is a Shakespearean film? The expression "Shakespearean film" can cover adaptation with more or less similarity to the plot and the original text, film that respect the plot but use a translated, adapted text, films whose framework is inspired by the plot of the play but may not involve one single word of the text, and films that use Shakespeare extracts but whose framework does not follow the plot of any play.<sup>(3)</sup> As a matter of existence, there are more than one methods to adapt a Shakespeare play and *Angoor* (grapes) may belong to the second classification. Certainly, in such cases, there is a lot of similarities between the adaptation and original play either smattering of areas or scenes are absent from the plot of an adapted framework.

There are some noticeable similarities and difference between the comedy of errors and *Angoor* (grapes). The very first similarity is relevant to the Aristotelian principle of 'Unity of Time', which is the event should occur throughout no more than twenty-four hours. This one of Aristotle's theory of classical units has been adapted in both the original play and it's translated work. Both works have been introduced in a comedy genre. The most prominent and foremost element of comic plot structure is 'confusion'. In both the original play and movie confusion takes place and made repeatedly as much as logical because of two sets of identical protagonists.

The additional major characteristic of the plot is a hectic or tense relationship between men and women in marriage, which is supplementarily enjoyable as a comic plot structure for an Indian audience. The central confusion turns on when the wife (Adriana and Sudha) demanded a gold necklace from her husband. However, turmoil increase when a gold piece of jewellery ordered by one of twin (from a master set of twins) is given to another twin and the first one refused to pay for the jewellery he never had received and is given to another twin and the refused to pay for the debt. Although in both comedy of errors and *Angoor* (grapes) the sequence of gold jewellery is thematically significant as whole confusion occurs because the demand for gold jewellery gives rise to several cracking scenes, as confusion plays a major role in the saga of two pairs of an identical twin. In addition to the plot of confusion and the hectic relationship of married couple, both artistic works also depict the similar romantic plot as a sister-in-law of married twin (from master pair) and other Twin fallen in love with each other.

However, when it comes to the difference between the plot original text and Indian adaptation of mistaken identities, there are few to mention. The original text begins with the Egeon, a merchant of Syracuse who condemned to death by the solinus, the duke of Ephesus for violating the prohibition against travel between the two rival cities (Ephesus and

Syracuse). Then he informed the duke that he has come to Syracuse in search of his wife and one of his twin sons along with one of his twin slaves whom were separated from his, decades ago in a shipwreck and Antipholus of Ephesus and his slave Dorino of Ephesus were already in Syracuse for the search of their twin and mother. On the other side, a similar unfortunate shipwreck has been portrayed in adaptation work which distributes the family, leaving both parents(Raj tilak and his wife) with one child out of each pair of twin. As the Raj Tilak(the father) has died just after a few days of the accident. Ashok and Bahadur of Dinkapur (one of each pair of doubles) arrive in the town for some agriculture business transaction. Where unaware to them, their respective twins leading their married life. And one of the major changes in this film adaptation is where they are first shown to be playing cards with his observing wife(Sudha) and sister-in-law. Additionally, Where the mistaken pair of master and slave( Ashok and Bahadur) formulate the plan to drug Sudha, Tanu and Prema to escape unnoticed. However, there is no equivalent of this scene in the play itself. Where brad's original play ends happily when the situation untangled. When Egeon is pardoned by the duke and reunited with his spouse(Abbess) and both sets of twins embracing. On the other hand, Gulzar's adapted work moreover ends with a happy note but the only difference is that mother of Ashok represented as a widow (as her husband already has declared dead in first 20 mins of the film).

Also, Gulzar has used one of the most valuable elements of Bollywood in his framework. As per Ganti, Indian cinema with its characteristic film music, not only spread all over Indian society but also been on the forefront of the spread of Indian culture around the world.<sup>(4)</sup>The film has been portrayed three Hindi songs. Titled as-

- 1) "Hothon pe Beeti Baat" (on the lips)
- 2) "Roz Roz Daali Daali" (Everyday, on the branch)
- 3) "Preetam aan milo" (come and meet me my love)

## 2.2 Intertextuality in Characterization

Shakespeare's mastery over developing characters is demonstrated in the comedy of error. At the beginning of the adaptation film(Angoor), the narrator foreground its indebtedness to William Shakespeare, he acknowledged-

"Several writers have penned stories revolving around twins, but Shakespeare is the only one to write a story based on four twins."(English translation of Hindi language)

Characterization is one of the critical parts of artistic work and complicated at the same time. Also in adaptation work, it is manageable and essential to refer to characters from original work and problematic for scriptwriters and directors to portraying similar character for a local audience with Bollywood touch. In the frame of characterization both original play and adaptation work share, more similarities and limited differences. Although, both frameworks have been illustrated with 'comedy' as a primary genre. Then all characters have been created for bringing comic-confusion with their unique qualities. The characters of the comedy of errors and Angoor(grapes) are following as-

**Table 1(Names of the Characters)**

| Characters                                | Comedy of Errors (Original Play) | Angoor (Bollywood Film) |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> set of master and slave   | Antipholus Of Ephesus(Master)    | Ashok 1 (Master)        |
|                                           | Dromio of Ephesus (Servant)      | Bahadur 1( Servant)     |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> set of Master and Servant | Antipholus Of Syracuse (Master)  | Ashok 2 (master)        |
|                                           | Dromio of Syracuse.(Servant)     | Bahadur 2 (Servant)     |
| Wife of Antipholus. Of Ephesus and Ashok  | Adriana                          | Sudha                   |
| Sister of Adriana/Sudha                   | Luciana                          | Tanu                    |
| Father of Antipholus/Ashok                | Egeon                            | Raj Tilak               |
| Duke                                      | Duke of Ephesus                  | —                       |
| Friend                                    | Courtesan                        | Alka                    |

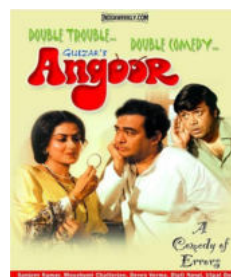
Antipholus of Ephesus and Ashok 1 shares ample similarities as he has been portrayed as a mature spirit, lovable partner and a protagonist with a short-tempered behaviour who lives with his wife, sister-in-law and his servant. He is well respected in his city. The additional similarities they share is that he does not have any knowledge about the existence of his identical twin brother since after the tragedy of shipwreck until he finally comes face-to-face with him. Also he has been showing as a husband, who is fed up with his wife's demanding nature.

Same as master, the servant Dromio of Ephesus and Bahadur 1 shares a lot of similarities. He represented as a comical, innocent who's master always criticised him for his stupidity but he has obeyed servant to his master and his family, and who seems always been worried about his master's health throughout the film he remains confused and grappling with his anxiety. Additionally, just like a play, he is bumbling, young and married who loves his wife and also gave attention to her suggestion.

On the other hand, opposite of his twin brother Antipholus from Syracuse and Ashok 2 does share the supplementary differences than similarities. As adaptation work's character-Ashok 2 is bitter and highly suspicious all the time about what is happening in the surrounding and represented as a passionate reader of Hindi crime thriller fictions. As his introduction scene illustrated in the train where he is reading a thriller novel named as-Aagyat Apradhi (unknown criminal), and questionable to everything and every person ( because his head has been filled with gangs and so on) and addicted to his smoking obsession. Additionally, in the original play Antipholus from Syracuse entered a revival city to search for his twin brother. However, in the movie Angoor (grapes), Ashok 2 remains unaware of his twin brother's existence too until they see each other at the end of the movie. Nevertheless, one of the limited similarity they share is that both characterised as a young bachelor who falls for his twin brother's sister-in-law.

Dromio from Syracuse and Bahadur 2 are next to be compared both are intelligent, present-minded, responsible, devoted to his master. Along with the familiar relationship with his master, he also calls Maa(mother) to his master's mother. As per original play, he is also young and bachelor. However, the only difference is that Bahadur 2 is suspected and fondness for bharg.

Next, the supporting character Adriana and Sudha, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus and Ashok 1. In the film, Gulzar represented this character exactly as it is been depicted in the original play. She is a hideous, and green-eyed woman, who always been in doubt about her spouse. The prominent similarity they share is the nature of a demanding wife, who can create havoc anytime over her demand for jewellery, which is also a central part of the storyline. The greediness of her character can visibly be glimpsed in one of the posters of the film (fig.1).



**Figure. 1(Poster of the Film)**

Next, Egeon and Raj Tilak, the father of two Antipholus/Ashok. In Shakespeare's play, this character is a merchant of Syracuse, who enter the revival city, in search of the missing half of his family( son and wife) and has been sentenced to death as the play begins. However, at the beginning of the film, Raj Tilak has declared dead in an accident.

Other supporting character is Luciana and Tanu both are similar almost in every manner. She is a bachelor sister of Adriana/Sudha, modern, sensible, acute and an object of the affection for Antipholus of Syracuse/Ashok 2

The other minor character is a courtesan/Alka which is a friend of

Antipholus of Ephesus/ Ashok 1. At the same time, this character remains unexplained, other than that being a source of jealousy for Adriana/ Sudha.

### 2.3 Title of the work

The title is a fundamental element of work either is play or a film. It gives the chance to the reader and audience to predicts the content of work of art. Although it evaluated the tone and summarises the major idea of the work an appropriate title is a phrase of fewer words which contains the keywords that adequately the description of the work and supports to grab the complete attention of the audience.

The title 'comedy of error' is well known globally and its Bollywood modification has the title 'Angoor'. The play's title has entered the popular English lexicon as an idiom for "an event or series of events made ridiculous by the number of errors that were made throughout."<sup>5</sup> As the matter of fact the theme of mistaken identity derived from a comedy of errors. At the beginning of the film, a portrait of William Shakespeare has been portrayed; and the narrator introduced Brad of England and his glory to the Indian audience. As he narrator-

"This is William Shakespeare he was a famous playwright of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is considered to be the greatest. This story is based on his play, which he called comedy of errors." (English translation of Hindi introduction of Shakespeare)

Angoor is one of the best comedy films in Hindi cinema. As per the fact, generally it has been released for Hindi adept audience that is why the title of the film has been named on Hindi word-'Angoor', which means Grapes. As per the characteristics of grapes like bitter, sweet, juicy and seedless fruit. Gulzar also attempted to make his film as per the characteristics of the original fruit. The film has bitterness as in the beginning a tragedy has been shown when the two sets of twins get separated in the accident. Next, The film has characteristics of sweetness as the innocence of all the characters is visualised as their first features. Then the movie has a juicy characteristics as the main genre is a most acceptable comedy and lovable genre by Hindi audience. At last, the movie is also presented as seedless as there are no forcefully hilarious consequences has been put to make the audience laugh. The title also seems relevant because one of Master-servant enters the city (where the rest of master-servant is inhabiting with their family respectively) because for buying and for grapes business. So, there is nothing wrong to say that the primary theme of mistaken identity goes on track because of a business deal of land of grapes. The title of the original play can also be seen acknowledged on the poster of the movie (can be seen in figure. 1)

### 2.4 Adaptation of Mistaken Identity in Bengali Theatre and Cinema

#### Bhranti Bilas

Bhranti Bilas (illusion of illusion) a Bengali-comedy film (1963) based on the Bengali play (1869) with the same name also by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Both play and film are the earliest adaptation in the Bengali language of Brad's comic play- comedy of errors. The movie is written by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and directed by Manu Sen. The film also depicts close intertextuality as the storyline shares a lot of similarities and theme of mistaken identity is also the same. The story of both play and film sets on the land of West Bengal of colonised and post-colonised India. When it comes to characters-Antipholus named Chiranjib Chowdhury, Dromio named Bhakti Kinkar. The movie also recreated in Hindi cinema several times itself.

### 3. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper took an intertextuality technique to the comparative study of the comedy of errors and Angoor (grapes) as it's Bollywood adaptation by Gulzar. After discussing all similarities and differences in characterisation and plot as Antipholus renamed as Ashok, Dromio renamed as Bahadur, Adriana renamed as Sudha and Egeon renamed as Raj Tilak and both the work has a jewellery scene which can be considered as the central scene. The paper showed that modification of comedy of errors has all the elements, luscious irony, several occasions, songs and characters which make it an acceptable and appropriate cinematic adaptation for an Indian audience with an Indian touch, as story lines having double roles/twins always been a trend in Hindi cinema. Also, this paper has illustrated the glimpse of the very first adaptation of Brad's mistaken identity as the form of 'Bhranti Bilas' (the illusion of illusion) as the Bengali play in the time of colonised India and as a Bengali cinematic adaptation also named as

'Bhranti Bilas' in the times of post colonised India, which can also be considered as the Gulzar's enthusiasm to pay an another and a remarkable tribute to Shakespeare in Bollywood style. In the end, it can be said that Gulzar has done justice with the original master piece of Shakespeare.

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