



## Muslim Women in the Hindi Movie Haider: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Muhammad Tariq<sup>1</sup> & Asma Safdar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Media and Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan  
Email: [xpertyz@gmail.com](mailto:xpertyz@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Media and Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan  
Email: [aasima.2014@gmail.com](mailto:aasima.2014@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*Hindi cinema, with its versatility of subjects, is among the top film industries in the world. It has touched on a variety of topics in its productions. From very domestic to social and from local to global, everything gets a certain treatment in Bollywood. Among those is the adaptation of the literary work. Shakespeare, an Elizabethan dramatist, with his remarkable contribution to literature, especially drama, could never remain unexplored by the Hindi film makers. "Haider" has served as one of the exemplary adaptations of Hamlet with regard to its social, political, and cinematographic context. Set in the Muslim and conflict-ridden society of Kashmir, it rendered it more significant. Amongst other important themes, one can find a depiction of Muslim society in general and that of a Muslim woman in particular. To study the portrayal of Muslim women in the movie, Fairclough's 3D model of critical discourse analysis has been employed to analyse the character of Ghazala, the hero's mother. The findings of the study reveal that Muslim women have been portrayed as immoral, disloyal, and insincere family members.*

### Keywords

CDA, Hindi Cinema, Muslim Woman, Family Member, Media

### Introduction

This study focuses on the critical discourse analysis of "Haider," a Hindi movie that hit the cinemas in 2014. The movie "Haider", a directorial by Vishal Bhardwaj, is actually a Shakespearean adaptation of his all-time favourite drama, *Hamlet*.

William Shakespeare is unquestionably the greatest dramatist of all time. His work has received widespread acclaim, not only in Western societies well-versed in English literature, but also in non-English societies that have admired it. The universality of his work has earned him prominence and distinction among a variety of societies. Despite taking place in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, he has lived on through the ages through the breath of his work and contributions to the drama. Although Elizabethan in literary tradition, he is still a modern dramatist who continues to dominate not only literature but also cinema around the world. Whether they are tragedies or comedies, almost all of his plays have left traces in films and cinema. The concepts and plots, and even characters, have never failed to inspire filmmakers and, consequently, the viewers. Multiple global cinemas have borrowed different themes in parts and drama as a whole from Shakespeare, making a huge success at the box office. Shakespeare's deconstruction and re-construction of Shakespearean ideology remains prevalent in today's modern society (Sachdeva, 2014).

Similarly, Bollywood, a major contributor in the arena of international cinema, has expressed no exemptions in this regard. Indian writers and filmmakers have been borrowing Shakespearean concepts and adapting them to the native social structure. This revisiting of his remarkable text is not a new occurrence in India. The world's greatest dramatists have been active in Indian literature and cinema for a very long time. Colonialization has served as the first source that brought English

literature to the Indian education system. The work of Shakespeare was brought to prevail in local culture in colonial subcontinent India, but independent India remained bound to draw inspiration from it in art, language, and literature (Goyal, 2017).

Vishal Bhardwaj's 2014 directorial "Haider" is the 3rd in a series of his Shakespearean adaptations, with two prior works, *Maqbool* (2003) and *Omkara* (2006), inspired by *Macbeth* and *Othello*, respectively. The remarkable success of this hat-trick revealed the obsession of Shakespeare among the masses, making him very much alive through the text he produced. Putting it into Vishal's words, "Shakespeare is the greatest storyteller ever." His stories have layers of spectacular human drama. I think they can be adapted anywhere and in any language. "I could live my entire life on Shakespeare." He is not the first filmmaker to be immensely inspired by Shakespeare, with more than one interpretation. The characters that Shakespeare created are everlasting, making them relatable even in the 21st century. Shakespeare's work is re-experienced across the world again and again, provoked by the eternal ideas and stories it conveys (Goyal, 2017).

Indian cinema has been purposeful in producing such content that has focused on social vices such as dowry, religious intolerance, class discrimination, racism, and many others. It helped them formulate the opinion of the masses against these immoralities. In the meantime, among the most popular themes is the depiction of Muslims and Islam. In most cases, underrepresentation of Muslims and Islam has been witnessed in the discourse of Indian cinema. There is a prevalent mistreatment of Muslims in terms of their portrayal on the silver screen. Such characters are being produced that lack optimism, especially in mixed societies like India. Muslim characters can be seen as terrorists, extremists, and lacking in nationalism. The subject is fuelled by making such movies that provoke negative conceptions about Muslims. Often, Muslim characters are seen as terrorist agents that are threats not only to Indian safety but also to global security (Bhat, 2019).

Since the movie "Haider" is an adaptation of *Hamlet*, every important character has their own representation in the background of the situation in Kashmir in the 1995 turmoil. Gertrude has been replaced by the character Ghazala, who plays *Hamlet* and Haider's mother, respectively. She is apparently the one who is unknowingly responsible for her husband's death in both cases. She married her former brother-in-law and seemed very happy with that till the arrival of her son. She loves her son. But here in the Bollywood version, Ghazala appears to be a different woman in two ways. The director presents her as a woman who lacks choice in her life. There is her struggle, prevalent against her fate. The thing she only chooses is death. Gertrude is a frail woman in comparison to Ghazala, who appears to fight her fate despite her lack of options. Gertrude has a vapid nature with more focus on self-preservation. On the other hand, Ghazala commits suicide, making her weak momentarily yet bold. Their affection is more of the sensuous and oedipal in nature. The dialogues of *Hamlet*; "*Frailty, thy name is woman!*" and that of *Haider*; "*Zahreeli Haseen Hain aap*" places mother-son relationship in two contrasting shadows. One is of despise and curse while the other is of scorn yet affection (Goyal, 2017).

As modernization entered the globe, the social orders could not keep up with the primitive norms. One of those major shifts can be witnessed in this woman. There has been a visible change in the role of women in society. Mediated treatment of women is the most perceptible example of such modification with respect to women. Since the media plays a key role in social modernization, the image of women it propagates is significant to the modern world. Film and cinema are significant in this regard. The change in women's portrayal in Indian cinema is of great significance while probing a modern woman in a modern yet highly patriarchal society like India (Agarwal, 2014).

In Indian cinema, women's characterization has been a key element in the success of the films individually. However, a noticeable change continues to take place in Bollywood as a whole and consequently in the depiction of women as well. They have been cast in different roles, from that of a passive female figure totally dependent on her male counterpart to an independent lead role who carries forward the whole storyline. With the start of the action era in the 1980's, it carried numerous modifications. The strength and role of the heroine apparently vanished altogether. She lost her space in front of the male lead characters. Her presence in the film was merely reduced to glamour, objectification, dancing in streets and public places, being easily kidnapped, raped and even killed (Agarwal, 2014).

However, such an altered form of women's depiction in the Indian film industry has also caused a certain distinction among the variety of female characters. A clear dissimilarity is established

between a "heroine and vamp", a good woman and a bad woman. A bad girl is always spoiled, morally corrupt, and drinks, smokes, and reveals her skin. For example, in Manoj Kumar's "*Purab Pachim*," he portrayed a female character who returns from abroad and has such a disposition that places her outlawed according to Indian society. Schooled by the hero, she improves and adapts to the accepted norms (according to the Indian culture). A good girl is composed, domesticated, nice, and well mannered. She is often seen as an exemplary daughter, mother, wife, or daughter-in-law in different mega projects with different names.

In modern society in general and cinema in particular culture plays a significant part. It serves as the mirror of the society reflecting norms, values, social constraints and life patterns.

It is proclaimed that to boost the viewership and attract the masses to the cinema, certain cinematographic devices are adopted. The objectification of women in accordance with the male gaze is among the most important apparatuses that filmmakers employ in their productions. Women in Indian cinema, as a lead role, have been placed in such characters that are the embodiment of Indian culture, norms and values. No multi-dimensional space has been left for the women in Bollywood rather they are placed as the one-dimensional characters lacking multiplicity of depiction. She is either good or bad. Her role is white or black but no space is left in between these two poles. This contrast has been strengthened in the most popular hits that endorsed rather distinct picture of both ends. A heroine is superior to a vamp and wife from the other woman (Sibal, 2018).

In some cases, she is portrayed as talented and independent, even more so than her husband, e.g., *Abhimaan* (1973). But again, she is dragged back to the accepted social norms to prove herself as a loyal wife to her husband. For the mere satisfaction of her husband's ego, she leaves her career and interests behind. She is seen as scarifying herself in order to adhere to traditional values, keeping up with marriage and motherhood at any cost. Bollywood shows its viewers such heroines that are domesticated and believe in the concept like staying happily ever after. The institution of marriage is their only safe haven. While professionalism and career orientation remains missing here (Sibal, 2018).

Through the juxtaposition of traits with which Muslim women are treated in Indian cinema, it is revealed that Hindi films deal with women not only as marginalised creatures but also as plain characterizations. Muslim women are often viewed as the victims of social oppression and are deprived of the equal rights prevalent in Muslim society. The use of Muslims as a subject in Hindi films began with their depiction as prostitutes. They were romanticised as "tawaifs." This tradition can be observed in the production of "*Mughal-e-Azam*" and later, "*Pakeezah*". In these projects, Muslim women were represented as marginalised creatures. They were shown as seeking social acceptance with respect and a man's love with the domesticity of married life. (Hassan, 2020).

Among all other themes, Kashmir has also remained a top interest for Indian filmmakers. In most cases, it is used to add aesthetic and visual appreciation to the film. At the same time, real issues like the political situation in Kashmir and the Indo-Pak conflict over the territory of Kashmir are also covered. In films like "*Kashmir ki Kali*" (1974), Kashmiri women are objectified. Their beauty, being the dominant theme, deprived the actual culture, norms, and values of the region from being propagated. The Kashmiri culture went missing in between the scenery of nature and romance. "The culture which both Kalhana and Mirza Haider Dughlat had praised was somewhere buried in the portrayal of romantic Kashmir and terrorised Kashmir." Moreover, it is also noted that Kashmir has continued to be overlooked by the Bollywood cameras and scripts that are more focused on natural beauty and the unnecessary depiction of "so-called bravery" of the deployed Indian army in Kashmir. Meanwhile, Kashmiris are portrayed as eternal victims for being the residents of disputed areas lacking their active and normal participation.(Hussain, 2018).

### **Objectives**

This study focuses on the following research objective;

- To examine the ideology of Muslim women in Hindi cinema.
- To analyze the representation of Muslim women as a family member structured in Hindi movies.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1. Is there any relationship ideological representation of Muslim woman and Hindi cinema?

RQ2. How does Hindi media portrays Muslim female structure as a family member?

### **Literature Review**

To review the related literature the researcher has consulted different journals and online sources.

Sibal (2018) noted that cinema is a perceived source of entertainment for the masses. It has the ability to take its viewers to a world that is more soothing and desirable to them, far from the real world of misery and despair. Thus, it provides an escape for the people, giving them a break from the daily routine of life. Since its inception, it has served as a popular medium due to the widespread consumption of its content by a large number of people. As a result, it has the power to shape public opinion, shape perceptions, promote values, shape images, and silence certain voices in society (Sibal, 2018).

Cinema has the ability to uniquely reflect human practises and experiences using its creative ideas and productive techniques that captivate mass audiences in the same manner as literature does. In a very short period of time, Bollywood with its range of themes and genres, has earned a wider and global scope. One cannot refute the notion that Indian cinema has always expressed a profound interest in following the inscriptions of the giants in the history of literature. That is why cinema has appeared as a potential source for expressing the beauty of literary work. As a result, inter-cultural negotiations can take place, as well as provocative debates about hegemonic powers and dominant political structures (Sachdeva, 2014).

Shakespeare is the most recurring writer in Indian cinema. His dramas have been revisited in a number of films, performances, and music. Starting from "the comedy of errors", his early drama, adapted by Gulzar in "Angoor 1982" to the most recent Bhansali's "Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram Leela" 2013 inspired by Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare never stopped to enthral Indian filmmakers and audience. Twisting according to Indian culture and settings equipped with modern themes his work is forever relevant to human experiences in all times (Goyal, 2017).

In addition to its variety of options, Indian cinema has been focusing on characterization. Some of the most remarkable characters were created on the silver screen under the banner of Bollywood, which left a lasting impression on the perception of the audience. Both male and female characters have grabbed the public's interest. Ethnic and religious minorities have won hearts on the big screen (Sarkar & Srivastava, 2011).

Media text is powerful in the development of the identity of an individual. Since it is strongly influential, a risk of identity crisis is also prevalent while describing "male" and "female" or "transgender" in a certain way. It is prone to a number of misconceptions and consequent exclusion of those who fail to fit such definitions (Paul, 2018).

Butler (1988) defined "gender" as a performative, whereas "sex" is a biological characteristic. He suggests that gender is described by the way a person behaves in a social structure and not by their biological traits. Consequently, the conception of "masculinity" and "femininity" is the product of cultural habituation and goes through modifications with time. As a result, it is extremely unjust that social norms associate gender with biological distinctions and define it in accordance with biological segregation of human bodies (Butler, 1988).

The media, accompanied by a number of factors that have the tendency to control minds, feeds them with commodified popular culture, supporting the conception of a dominant world view (Paul, 2018).

The depiction of Muslim women is not something new. With Islam being deeply rooted in the history of India, cinema has been strongly influenced by that. From a closer look at the Indian film industry, it is revealed that Muslim female characters lack in numerous ways. They are being portrayed in support of certain stereotypes present in contemporary society. Their passive and unadorned depiction is more frequent than being independent, active, or strong characters who take the storyline forward (Parag, 2013).

Roy (2016) notes that "films have long been constituted within the discourses generated in a particular society, reflecting and refracting contemporary issues, politics, and culture, as well as the historio-political realities of that culture". They play a constructive role in forming cultural tendencies and influencing prevalent opinions among the masses. She further observes that Hindi films disseminate such configurations that provoke stereotyping and negative pictures of particular ethnicities in terms of "their physical features, use of language, and professional classifications" (Roy, 2016).

The portrayal of the ideal woman in Indian commercial cinema has always been of grave concern to feminists. They attributed it to stereotypical representation. The portrayal of women merely as love interests and sources of affection for the hero, a good household woman, or a vamp is a prevailing trend in cinema (Sarkar S. , 2012).

However, it has been noted in a study that recently, the rise in the fame of heroines like Tris (Divergent series) and Katniss (Hunger Games) has supported the conception that such representation of women has rendered equality and fairness in films. In his book, Gautlett (2002) stated, "the traditional views of a woman as a housewife or low-status worker have been kicked out of the picture by the feisty, successful 'girl power' icons" (Gautlett, 2002).

Indian cinema apparently played the most central part in covering Kashmir in its productions as a romantic piece of land with a remarkably beautiful landscape. However, when it came to the question of its representation beyond scenery or landscape-like life of the inhabitants, pre-1986 Kashmiri Hindi cinema lacked in certain ways. During this era, films based on Kashmir either geographically or thematically hardly covered the identity of Kashmir in terms of culture, language, or dress in their text. The slightest glimpses of Kashmiri identity were first witnessed in "Kashmir ki Kali", a 1964 directorial by Shakti Samanta. While the production of "Roti" in 1974 proved to be the first attempt at replication of the most prevalent identities like "Pheran", the famous long gown and the traditional head covering of Kashmiri women, It was also observed that the Hindi filmmaker intermingled Kashmiri culture with the neighbouring state of Himachal Pradesh; consequently, the actual Kashmiri culture and its essence underwent distortion (Bhatt, 2015).

Similarly, in "Haider" (2014), director Vishal Bhardwaj did not represent Kashmir as an aesthetic beauty; rather, he came with a much deeper concern. He portrays a realistic picture of the present or post-1989 Kashmir, which has been made devoid of its natural charm, peace and stability due to political and social misfortunes (Prajapati, 2018).

Bhardwaj's Shakespearean trilogy is completed with "Haider". In this adaptation, Kashmir is represented as a Shakespearean tragedy, and through the protagonist Haider (Hamlet), Vishal reflects the whole of Kashmir as Hamlet, an exemplary tragic hero. The traditional depiction of Kashmir in Bollywood has been disrupted and two strong tragedies (one literal and the other geographic) have been mingled to give a realistic picture to the audience (Film sins, 2017).

Kashmir has always served as a favourite shooting spot for Indian filmmakers, and they admire it a lot. Even the big banners and production houses have shot a number of films in Kashmir. But almost all of these have depicted a monotonous picture of Kashmir and Kashmiris. Only "Haider" (2014) was successful in getting appreciation because it was far from "typical propaganda stuff". Ahmad, a Kashmiri analyst, opined that in Bollywood "a Kashmiri is always unlettered, wearing a skull cap or sporting a beard or smoking hookah, while roving in his boat on Dal Lake. And this Kashmiri will always be grateful to the visiting tourist from Mainland India who leaves a generous tip." Similarly, the portrayal of Kashmiri women also needs to be reconsidered in this regard. Mostly, she is represented as a jobless and submissive woman (Geelani, 2021).

As far as Muslim women are concerned, Indian cinema has long been placing her on the prostite (tawaif) (Sarkar S., 2014). These women were remarkable dancers, good singers, and skilled at attracting male admirers (Sarkar S. , 2014).

After reviewing the related literature, it was found that a wide gap exists in terms of the depiction of Kashmiri women in Hindi films. Studies need to be conducted on such a sensitive topic that makes it politically, culturally, and geographically significant for a researcher. Bollywood, women (Muslim women) and Kashmir all create a phenomenal blend with huge scope for research.

### **Methodology**

Under the theoretical realm of framing theory, Fairclough's 3D model of critical discourse analysis has been chosen to analyse the collected data.

### **Analysis**

#### **Critical discourse Analysis**

A well-acknowledged adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the Hindi movie "Haider" portrayed a different picture of not only conflict-ridden Kashmir but also Muslim women in its text. Two Muslim women play major roles in the film, both of whom have strong emotional attachments to the protagonist, "Haider," the mother and the beloved. Both of them are representing a Kashmiri Muslim woman through their appearance and dialogue. However, since the role of *Ghazala* is more dominant

in the movie, her character has been preferred to analyse the portrayal of Muslim women in Hindi cinema. For this purpose, critical discourse analysis has been employed while focusing on Norman Fairclough's 3 dimensional model. He proposed that language can never be neutral because it contains interoperation based on values and assessments about an issue. It performs certain functions, like bringing about certain changes in behaviour at a social level, or it can be used to exercise power. Communication is a social event, and the choice of language formulates the context of community and social relations. A discourse, according to his 3D model, can be analysed at three levels:

1. Text (analysis at word level)
2. Discursive practice (production of text, analysis at text level)
3. Social practice (analysis at social level in accordance with norms and values)

The dialogues of Ghazala were subjected to the abovementioned 3 levels of critical discourse analysis while keeping in view the text, its formation, and the social norms and values in which the film is set.

*"What is a home? 'It is brothers and sisters...' And sisters. 'And fathers and mothers.' And mothers. 'It is unselfish acts and kindly sharing.' Sharing. 'And showing your loved ones you're always caring...'Caring"*

The given text reflects the words of *Ghazala* when she is introduced in the film for the first time. She is in a classroom reading aloud a lesson from a book while students listen to her. Here she is defining the concept of "home" to the students. She describes a home as a grouping of close relatives like brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers, and their mutual devotion and loyalty.

There is a strong discursive approach prevalent with reference to her character in the film. On first hearing these words, it seems like a mere moral lesson that children need to learn, but later, as the storey moves on, a connection between her notion of "home" and her role in her own "home" is revealed. She is a mother, wife, and sister-in-law. Her contribution to each of her relationships places her in different ways till the end of the film, when she finally proves her words.

It is reflected in the given discourse that in eastern societies there is a different concept of "home". Blood relations exert a sort of birth right over one another. There are certain expectations that if mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters fail to meet them, the concept of "home" collapses all together. These relatives are required to keep themselves emotionally and materialistically shared. An eastern morality is being revealed where home is more than a mere walled structure. Additionally, these words also support her Muslim beliefs that loyalty to the family is the essence of a good society. The concept of "home" is really important in the whole movie, as it is in Kashmir. Conflicts in the 1990s left many houses burned, leaving people homeless.

*"Not just a house, you will get the whole village burnt".*

Here she responds to her husband, who asks her to calm the flames of anger and fear in her as it may leave their home in ashes by the military. In her anger and anxiety she warns her husband of putting the whole village in the danger.

The burning is depicted with the flames of the stove in the kitchen, where some surgical tools are being sterilised in a pot of water. *Ghazala's* husband is treating a leading militant wanted by the Indian security forces. When he asks her to slow down the flame in the stove and her anger as well, she is devastated. That she is not the one putting the "home" in danger of being burned, but rather her husband Hilaal, who is provoking it with more than expected damage of "home" in her 2<sup>nd</sup> utterance as well, again places her in a strong connection with the fate of her house. Although unaware, she is the reason behind the burning of her own "home".

The combination of words like "home", "flames", "burning" and "village" has been used to reflect the militarised society of Kashmir, particularly in the 1990s. Burnt houses, homeless people, and curfew-ridden villages have been the image of Kashmir for decades. The society of Kashmir has suffered from "burning" in all its forms. The flames of anger, revenge, love, and fear have been there. Moreover, due to the looming political instability, she suspects her husband and warns him against the possible danger of his actions, i.e., bringing a militant into the house.

*"Doctor! Do you really realize what you have gotten into?"*

In a warning is tone is prevalent she her husband to be reconsider her actions. As he does not understand the severity of the issue he must think again.

With a questioning gaze she asks her husband to be understand to situation he has created and be a realist. Another important approach is mentioning of the word "doctor" for Hilaal. She does not

call him by his name throughout the movie she always calls here “doctor”. It renders her weak relationship with her spouse. Similarly he is very professional doctor and his profession gets upper hand over their relationship. Even the strict curfews and patrolling security personals could not detach him from his profession. His all devotion is for his profession no space is left for the wife Ghazala.

In conflict trodden society of Kashmir of 1990s with brutality caused by the anti-militant operation by Indian Army was it peak everyone was required to abide by the so called law enforced by the Armed Forces Special Act. Everyone was to support the security forces in catching and killing the militants. And showing any sort of affiliation with them could render one with the same status i.e. a militant. However Dr. Hilaal goes against this prevalent social norm and follow his conscience to treat a militant in his home. This is the reason that Ghazala ask him as if he has committed a huge sin and there is going to be no mercy for him.

*“Which side are you on?”*

Noticing her husband’s contentment with what he is doing, she asks, whom does he support? The Indian military or the militants?

This is the text from the same conversation, taking place in the same settings. Here, doubt is reflected in her tone. She suspects her husband of being on the side of militants because he has taken a huge risk in this regard.

The situation in Kashmir is reflected in these words of Ghazala. She is a pro-regime woman, warning her husband of the expected bad consequences. In the disputed territory of Kashmir, one had to make a choice between the militants and the armed forces. It was a clear one. The expected choice in favour of the military is being questioned by a wife and her husband. Due to the unstable political circumstances, a confused and unusual form of relationship between a long-married couple is also being reflected here.

*“Hilaal! There’s a crackdown in our village”.*

The text announces news of a crackdown in the village. Ghazala is the first to wake up in the morning, lying beside her husband Hilaal. She seemed always nervous and afraid, and finally, she was the one who announced the arrival of the thing she foresaw psychologically. When she calls him by name this time, she has a worried tone in her voice.

Kashmir in those days was exposed to frequent crackdowns and curfews and people became accustomed to these circumstances. Any time, any place in the valley, it could happen without any resistance.

*“You sing so out of tune”*

While laughing after listening to Khurram’s singing, she declares him a bad singer and says she deservingly laughs at him.

After the arrest of her husband, she starts living with her brother-in-law, Hilaal’s brother. She appears to be in a very cheerful mood. Both of them are enjoying this union that would have been possible only after Hilaal’s disappearance. Considering the society in Kashmir, which is predominantly a Muslim society, it becomes evident that a married Muslim woman living with her husband’s brother soon after his horrible disappearance is something beyond reality. She is, however, not only living with him but also judging his singing abilities. Here, the Van Dijk concept of ideology is also prevalent, which approves the Bollywood stance on Muslim women in general.

*“My dear...*

*You have become frail of excessive study*

*Have you completed your thesis?*

*Why don’t you speak a word?”*

In the same sequence, Hiader, her son, appears. Like a typical mother, she is concerned about her weight loss. She accuses his studies of being the reason for his bad health. At the same time, she inquires about her final dissertation, which he has been working on. First accusing the studies and then asking about that is ironic. The silence of Hiader provokes another question.

Coming back from Aligarh and visiting his burnt house, Hiader reaches his uncle's house to see her mother. On seeing her mother in a cheerful mood, singing and laughing, he is shocked and doesn’t announce his arrival till Ghazal sees him standing watching over them. She calls her "My dear" and starts questioning his health, studies, and then his silence.

In normal circumstances, when sons return home after prolonged absence from home, they are received warmly by their mothers. But the given example shows otherwise. It reflects the picture of the conflict area.

*“What?”*

*This is what you learnt in Aligarh?*

*Let their Doctor return...”*

These expressions, uttered in the same situation, are the Ghazala's response when her son begins speaking as she desired. These are two questions first, as if one does not believe what they have just heard. She gets the same response, celebrating her husband's disappearance in solitude with Khurram. Now, as a traditional parent, she disapproves of what he has learnt in Aligarh. These expressions are ironic because she was the one who forced him to leave and get educated in Aligarh. In eastern societies, the father has the upper hand over children. That is why *Ghazala* vows to get Haider scolded by his father on his return. This is once again ironic because she seemed very happy living with her husband's brother and enjoyed his provoking admiration. Psychologically, she is not waiting for Hilaal to return, but she expresses a false desire in order to nullify the accusation being made by Haider about his character.

*“Haider... I will explain everything to you”*

*“Haider... Come back... It is time for curfew”*

*“The army will grab him too...please save him, stop him”*

She could not stop Haider from leaving, despite insisting. She pleads with Khurram to do the job.

Hilaal been taken up the army she is afraid that Haider will also experience the same. In the given social circumstances she is makes herself dependent on Khurram, her admirer and brother in law at the same time. Beseeking for help she seems a weak woman who is dependent on a "N-mehram". She does that knowing his intentions towards herself places her as woman who takes advantage form her admirer. Mention of the army depicts the power propagation that in Kashmir there is nothing beyond Indian army and a prevalent fear it has on the psychology of the people.

*“Where? Why what have I done?”*

Here, *Ghazala* plays innocent when Haider admires and acknowledges her acting skills for emotional blackmailing. She makes her son come after refusing anything to eat. While eating triumphantly, she reacts as if she has done nothing. It's ironic as she has done a lot to change the fate of the whole family, both in the past and present. She is portraying a woman that takes advantage of the feelings of her admirers (her son and lover) to get things done in her favor. Emotional blackmailing is a very recurrent weapon, especially in eastern societies where people expect that they have the right over others (close relatives in particular). A similar notion is being expressed in these discursive expressions.

*“If you hadn't to Aligarh... you know well where you would have gone!”*

Listening to Haider's regret of going to Aligarh for studies, she reminds him of the expected dire circumstances. It is revealed in the consequent flashback from a few years back when she discovers the revolver in Haider's school bag. She is actually referring to Pakistan, where she would have the destination of Haider instead of Aligarh. Here is the ideological expression in the form of a comparison between Pakistan, as a land that promotes militancy, and Aligarh (India), a place of salvation knowledge. In Hindi cinema, this is the strongest ideology that is promoted while dealing with Kashmir as a subject. Thus, general Kashmiri society is also shown to be overwhelmed by this dogma.

*“Now you befriends militants? It is a pistol today, tomorrow it will be a Kalashnikov... and then you'll cross border”*

The dialogues are from a flashback when *Ghazala* on discovering pistol from the possessions of Haider scolds her angrily. Again a conventional ideology of Hindi cinema is expressed in the words of *Ghazala*. Crossing the border is the worst and the least admired practise in Indian Occupied Kashmir as there is only one thing may happen, to be trained as a militant. On the other in terms social structure the smooth and frequent penetration of weapons and extremism is prevalent.

*“Doctor Sahib won't let him go”.*

Not calling his name again endorses his profession above family relations. On the other hand, she is expressing dominance over her husband. In eastern and Muslim societies like Kashmir, a man



has the right to the final word in every matter. Similar ideology is being expressed in these lines, which is actually satirical because later in the film she does not respect his decision and goes against him. She badly fails at keeping his secret, thus putting him in the worst circumstances.

*“Why so Khurram Mian”*

A strong contrast is present in her lexical choices. Not using the husband’s name but addressing his brother by name places her in a questionable position, particularly when she is well aware of his intentions. She asked Khurram directly (looking into his eyes) why he had been refusing marriage. She is a married Muslim woman with a child, but still enjoys admiration from her husband’s brother. She does not resist or avert her gaze when she knows what is going to be the answer to her question?

*“No matter what I do I’ll be the ultimate villain”*

Acknowledging Haider’s perception of her, she takes help from her emotions. She plays the same innocent woman deprived of her husband’s attention and seeking refuge in her son’s arrival. Implicit yet powerful message is being delivered as till now her every action proves her to be a villain.

*“I know you love your father more than me”*

This expression appears in the following line of a similar dialogue. She implicitly complains that Haider is more concerned with his father and less concerned with her situation. In the subsequent lines, she expresses herself as a victim of loneliness. Actually, she wants to overpower her son, who is only thinking about his father. It is general social practise that mothers want their sons to be "mommy’s boy" in full obedience, especially those who receive less attention from their husbands.

*“I am fated to long, to wait...First for you... Now...”*

She is still trying to be a conventional woman who always waits for her male relatives, i.e., husband or son. She wants her son to acknowledge the kind of longing she feels amidst his absence. She tries to be a loyal woman (as a mother and wife) who is never tired of waiting. Trying to adjust to the social and cultural norms, she bespeaks of her longing in an emotional way. But at the same time, she is reluctant to express her wait for her husband. This really places her as a woman who has found another man behind her husband’s back.

*“Here the wives of disappeared people are called ‘half-widows’. We have to wait. I can also do the same....wait”*

This is another important discursive approach being employed with regards to Ghazala’s character as a family woman. She never mentions whether she misses her husband or not; rather, she calls herself a "half widow". What she can do is wait. There is no mention of any effort to find her husband. She portrays a disloyal woman with no concern about her lost husband. She has his replacement, so waiting is something that is binding for her. At the same time, a bitter social reality is also being revealed. "Disappeared people," a long-standing affliction in Kashmiri society, renders the majority of women "half widows." Those who are taken up by the army never return.

*“Or for his corpse”*

She has no physical or emotional hope left for her husband’s return. Or maybe she just wants him to return. In those social circumstances, only bodies return, not the living people. For her, the corpse of her husband would be liberating for him from her so-called prolonged wait. As a family woman, this seems unethical to expect the husband’s body to leave, even with false hopes of his safe return.

*“Let me get completed...I am half widow and half bride”.*

This is one of the most deciding lexical expressions. She has planned her wedding with Khurram, but the only thing stopping her is the non-recovery of Hilaal’s body. It would be her licence to marry Khurram. A woman cannot marry another man while she is married in Muslim society. Either she has to be divorced or widowed. The juxta positioning of widow and bride not only decisive to the portrayal of Muslim woman but also the overall Muslim society.

*“When I grow up I will marry my Mommy”*

This narration places the character of *Ghazala* in an oedipal relationship with her son. She is getting ready for her Nikkah with her brother-in-law, Khurram. She is portrayed as a woman who is proud of her beauty and enjoys admiration from the opposite gender. She tries to make Haider recollect his childhood claim of marrying his mother. In a given Muslim society, this is something abnormal. Rather, a reminder of the Greek historical drama *Oedipus Rex*, whose fate makes him marry his mother.

*“You would snuggle between your father and me. Even if he touched me, you would fight with him”.*

Similarly this expression also supports afore mentioned oedipal relation between mother and son in more evidently. She reminds him that how he would not appreciate the physical intimacy between his father and mother. Socially this places her out of the system. Such provoking statements from a mother to son are anti-social utterances. As for as the character of Ghazala is concerned she reflects a woman who want appreciation from the opposite gender undermining her relationship.

*“This is not true! I swear by God... this is not true!”*

She denies accusations from Haider that she conspired with her lover, Khurram, to kill his father. She swears by God that places her as a Muslim woman who believes that taking God's name can only prove her innocence in front of Haider. Generally, in Muslim societies, swearing by God is respected and understood as the t. When no proof is there, God's name is the only proof.

*“You're going across border?”*

*“If anything happens to you, I won't survive”*

Yet again, the mentioning of crossing the border as a lethal idea is prevalent in the text. There is danger and death. If it happens, there is no chance of survival left. This is the prevalent ideology of Indian cinema that is being propagated through Ghazala. At the same time, she tries to express motherly devotion to Haider. It is his life that gives life to her.

*“I'm scared, Khurram. Hilaal's has brought Ikhlakh home”*

This utterance is from a flashback that takes the viewer's back to the start of the film. Scared and bewildered, Ghazala receives a phone call. On the other hand, Khurram flirts with her and invites him to his place in a romantic way. His tender voice encourages her to tell the secret of her husband to another man. Socially and morally, this places her as an immoral and disloyal woman who has romantic relations outside of her marriage. At the same time, the political situation of the setting reflects that it is a sinful act to have any connection with the militant.

*“I never wanted your father to die. I did not hate him.. But loved Khurram”*

These lines are a confession as well as a denial of Ghazala. On the one hand, she expresses a complete lack of knowledge about Hilaal's death, and on the other hand, she also admits her love for her husband's brother. Again, rending her as a woman of dubious character, having an affair with her brother-in-law. In this social context, having an affair outside of the marriage, especially with a brother-in-law, is an unusual and unappreciated practice.

*“Dear! Would you do me a favor? I am tired of this life. Kill me?”*

Meeting Haider among the remains of their home, she seems to realise certain facts. When Haider expresses his desire to get her widowed again, she clasps his hand with a revolver and, putting it on her forehead, pleads for death. Here, a different picture of Ghazala's character starts to emerge. From a newlywed bride to a worn-out woman who is tired of life and wants to die in the hands of her son. When you realise you've been betrayed by the most trusted people in your life, it's natural to lose hope. On her realisation of Khurram as the informer of the army for the raid on their home, she is disappointed. Overall, the political situation also supports her utterance, where life is suffocating for the people.

*“At least he is not a snake in the sleeve”*

On listening to the criticism of Khurram about Haider, she defends him in short but bitter words. Indirectly, she calls Khurram a backstabber who betrayed her trust. She says whatever Haider has become, it is fortunate enough that he did not prove to be a snake in the sleeve. Here she keeps morality on top of everything, in contrast with her previous discourses. Being a militant is better than manipulation and deception. This is quite an unconventional notion against the norms of Bollywood, especially with regards to Kashmir.

*“Everyone's is his blood thirsty.. no safety for him”*

Like above mentioned dialogue this line is uttered at Pervez funeral. She explains to Arshia, Haider's love, that Haider has killed her father in self-defense. If he had not fired Pervez would have killed him. She realises the fact that since everybody wants kill Haider there is no way of survival is left. Pervez, Liaqat and Khurram all wanted his death. The promise of Khurram to Liaqat of getting Haider killed also render supportive conception behind these expressions.

*“Please spare my son's life. He'll surrender...I never disobeys me. If you truly loved me, give me one chance...”*

These words are from the last scene. Haider lives in a house adjoining a graveyard, and the house is surrounded by the Ikhwaanīs (pro-army militants) under the command of Khurram. They are about to fire another rocket on the house when Ghazala appears. She pleads with Khurram for the life of her son. She refers to emotional affiliation for both sides in a passionate yet confident manner. She claims her emotional control over Haider yet demands proof of Khurram's affection for her. As always, she succeeds in this game of emotions. In such a dire situation, only true sentiment can do the job, so she uses it perfectly.

*“see you have bathed in blood... and I can't do a thing”*

She once again seeks assistance from sentiments and emotions. On seeing Haider covered in blood, she recalls how she would make a mess if he got even a mere scratch. By hugging and crying, she is expressing a conventional motherly love for her child on the verge of death.

*“Don't you want to see me as a widow again..Dear?”*

This is powerful discourse as *Ghazala* announces her intention to get Khurram killed. She shows that she respects her son's desire. Haider refuses to surrender, so she convinces her through getting him to fulfil his most looming desire, i.e., revenge for his father. No woman wants to be widowed, especially twice. Here she becomes an unconventional woman once again and endorses her husband's death for the second time. The mention of the word "Janaa" throughout the text reveals that she loves Haider more than her own life.

*“There's no greater pain... than to see the corpse of your child”.*

Yet again, it is evident that she does not want Haider to die at any cost. Witnessing the death of one's child is the greatest pain in the world. A powerful narrative justifies her as the most loving mother. She wants to make her surrender as she had some other plan. In conflict-ridden Kashmir, where parents bury the dead bodies of their children daily, these words are ironic. In Kashmir, parents witness the greatest pain almost daily.

*“Revenge only begets revenge. Until we don't set ourselves free from revenge, no freedom can set us free”*

These are the last words uttered by her. She teaches her son a moral lesson to give up on his revenge as this is actually freedom. In Kashmir, with the prolonged struggle for freedom, many people have been killed. This proves to be a strong message. Avenging never ends, thus no freedom reaches there. True freedom is mental freedom. And these are the only words that change Haider's mind and he gives up on his revenge. With reference to the political situation in the region, these words also refer to the anti-militant stance. People, like Haider, keep joining militancy to avenge their innocent loved ones being killed. This discursive approach promotes change at an individual level, which may lead to social and political wellbeing in Kashmir. The concept of freedom has been attempted to be moulded from physical to psychological, undermining the most audible realities in Kashmiri society. The psychology of people in need of a change, lacking a stance on heavy militarization, has been shown.

### **Conclusion**

"Haider," a Shakespearean adaptation of Hamlet, depicts a different image of a Kashmiri Muslim woman. She demonstrates loyalty, sincerity, and devotion as a family member. She is the woman with an extra-marital affair with her brother-in-law, who, although unknowing, gets her husband brutally killed. Despite being wrapped in Muslim attire, she does things that are against Muslim ideology. With oedipal appeal, she has control over her son. Appreciating the admiration of her physical beauty, she forgets morality and who can admire it or not. She is a mouthpiece of the Indian ideology towards Kashmir that demands sacrifice, both physical and psychological, from Kashmiris and promises nothing in return. The victory of her words in the end reflects the social and political effectiveness of Hindi discourse.

### **References**

- Agarwal, R. (2014). Changing Roles of Women in Indian Cinema. *Silpakorn University Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts*, 117-132.
- Bhat, S. H. (2019). Muslim Characters in Bollywood Cinema: Representation and Reality? . *Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* , 06-16.
- Bhatt, A. (2015, May 8). *Bollywood's [Re]presentation of 'Kashmir' And 'Kashmiri': from romace (Kashmir ki kali) to Tragedy (Haider)*. Retrieved from [www.countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org): <http://www.countercurrents.org>

- Butler, J. (1988). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40 (4), Doi: 10.2307/3207893 , 519-531.
- Film sins. (2017). *Haider-A Shakespearean disruption of Kashmir*. Retrieved from Filmsinsblog.wordpress.com: <http://www.filmsinsblog.wordpress.com>
- Gautlett, D. (2002). *Media, Gender and Identity; An introduction*. . London: Routledge.
- Geelani, G. (2021). *Bollywood aims shoot more films in Kashmir, but can it improve its image?* Retrieved from [www.thefederal.com](http://www.thefederal.com).
- Goyal, R. (2017). SHAKESPEAREAN CLASSICS HAIDER AS A REFLECTION OF HAMLET . *Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)*, 48-52 .
- Hassan, Z. (2020, July 15). *Popular Cinema and Muslim Women: A Toneless Portrayal*. Retrieved from The Second Angle : <https://thesecondangle.com/popular-cinema-and-muslim-women-a-toneless-portrayal/>
- Hussain, G. (2018). In between Real and Rhetoric: Kashmir in Indian Cinema . *London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*.
- Paul, S. (2018). Stereotypical Characterization of Men in Bollywood Cinema: A study on Gender Performativity.
- Prajapati, A. (2018). Representation of Kashmir as ‘Paradise Lost’ in Haider via Hamlet. *International Journal of English, Literature, Language and Skills* .
- Roy, S. (2016). *Communicating differences* . London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sachdeva, A. (2014). Haider : Textualizing Tragic Flaw in 20th Century Indian Cinema . *Dialogue: A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation*, 47-50 .
- Sarkar, & Srivastava, M. (2011). *Globalisation and Gender*. Jaipur : Rawat Publications.
- Sarkar, S. (2012). An analysis of Hindi women-centric films in India. *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*.
- Sarkar, S. (2014). Globalisation and Women at Work. *A Feminist Discourse*.
- Sibal, V. (2018). Stereotyping women in Indian cinema. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies* .