

An Analysis of Mustafa Afridi's *Sng-E-Mah* as an Adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

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ABSTRACT

This research article explores the 2022 Pakistani drama series, "Sng-e-Mah," written by Mustafa Afridi, as an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Through a detailed analysis of the plot, characters, and themes of both works, this article argues that "Sng-e-Mah" adapts *Hamlet* to a contemporary Pakistani context, while also retaining the essence of Shakespeare's original tragedy. By examining the cultural and historical context of both works, this article highlights how "Sng-e-Mah" explores universal themes of love, revenge, and betrayal, while also addressing issues specific to Pakistani society. Overall, this article argues that "Sng-e-Mah" is a successful adaptation of *Hamlet* that engages with both Shakespearean and Pakistani cultural traditions.

Keywords: Sng-e-Mah, Adaptation, *Hamlet*, Pakistani Drama.

INTRODUCTION

Adaptation is a longstanding tradition in literature, art, and popular culture. It involves taking a pre-existing work, such as a novel, play, or film, and transforming it into a new work that is distinct yet retains elements of the original. Adaptation can take many forms, from direct translations of a work into a new language to more creative reimagining that draws on the themes, characters, or settings of the original work (Naremore & Brantlinger, 2010).

According to Naremore and Brantlinger (2010) adaptation has a rich history, with examples dating back to ancient times. For example, ancient Greek theater often adapted existing myths and legends to create new works that were tailored to contemporary audiences.

Similarly, in medieval Europe, stories and legends were adapted and reinterpreted to reflect the values and beliefs of different regions and cultures (p.1).

At the heart of adaptation is a tension between fidelity to the original work and the need to create something new and distinct. Adaptation is often seen as a creative act, as it requires artists and writers to reimagine pre-existing works in ways that are fresh and engaging. However, at the same time, adaptations must also be faithful to the essence of the original work, preserving the themes, characters, and other elements that make it a classic (Leitch, 2015).

Adaptation has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary popular culture, with countless adaptations of books, plays, and other works being

produced for film, television, and other media platforms (Linda Hutcheon, 2013). Additionally, adaptation has become an important tool for exploring issues of cultural identity and representation, with works being adapted to reflect the experiences of different groups and communities. For example, the novel "Crazy Rich Asians" by Kevin Kwan was adapted into a film in 2018, marking the first Hollywood film in 25 years to feature an all-Asian cast. The film's adaptation not only allowed for the representation of Asian characters and culture on a global stage but also opened up discussions about the importance of diversity and inclusion in media (Okwodu, 2018).

William Shakespeare's works have been adapted into countless forms and media, including film, television, stage productions, and even video games. In addition to "Hamlet," other Shakespearean plays that have been frequently adapted include "Romeo and Juliet," "Macbeth," and "Othello." These adaptations often reimagine the plays in different contexts, such as Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film adaptation of "Romeo and Juliet," which moves the action to a modern-day setting in California, or Akira Kurosawa's 1957 film "Throne of Blood," which adapts "Macbeth" to feudal Japan. These adaptations highlight the continued relevance and power of Shakespeare's themes and characters, demonstrating that they can resonate with audiences across time and cultures (Smith, 2019).

When it comes to literature, adaptation has a particularly rich tradition. Many of the greatest works of literature have been adapted and transformed over the years, from Homer's *Odyssey* to Shakespeare's plays. These adaptations have often served to keep these works relevant and accessible to new generations of readers and audiences (Johnson, 2010).

In the case of "Sng-e-Mah," the adaptation of Hamlet reflects a long tradition of adapting Shakespearean works for new cultural contexts. Shakespeare's plays have been adapted and translated into hundreds of different languages and cultural contexts, from Japanese Kabuki theater to Bollywood films. "Sng-e-Mah" is just one example of the ongoing tradition of adapting Shakespeare for contemporary audiences, highlighting the continued relevance and power of his works across time and space.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Pakistani drama series "Sng-e-Mah" as an adaptation of William Shakespeare's Hamlet. By exploring the plot, characters, and themes of both works, this study sheds light on the ways in which the adaptation adapts the original play to a contemporary Pakistani context while retaining the fundamental elements of Shakespeare's tragedy. Furthermore, this study contributes to the understanding of how cultural and historical context can influence the adaptation of literary works, and how adaptations can explore universal themes while addressing issues specific to a particular society. This study is valuable for scholars of literature, culture, and media who are interested in exploring the process of adaptation and its impact on cultural traditions. Additionally, this study offers insights into the ways in which adaptations can bring classic works to new audiences and contexts, enriching the understanding of the original text and its themes.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- How does Mustafa Afridi adapt Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' in his play 'Sng-e-Mah', and what are the similarities and differences between the two works?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To assess the adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' in Mustafa Afridi's play 'Sng-e-Mah'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adaptations of literary works have been a common practice for centuries, as authors and playwrights have reimagined classic texts for new audiences and contexts. One of the most widely adapted authors in history is William Shakespeare, whose plays have been adapted countless times in a variety of forms, from films to stage productions to television shows. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in adaptations of Shakespeare's works from non-Western contexts, particularly from South Asia, where Shakespeare's works have been adapted to address local concerns and issues. This literature review examines the concept of adaptation and its significance in relation to the 2022 Pakistani drama series "Sng-e-Mah," written by Mustafa Afridi, which is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's

Hamlet.

Greenblatt and Abrams (2017) defined adaptation as a literary concept that involves the process of taking an existing work and transforming it for a new audience or context. This process can take various forms, ranging from literal translations to radical departures from the original text. Adaptation has a rich history, with early examples such as translations of the Bible and works from ancient Greek and Roman authors. In contemporary times, adaptations are a common practice in popular culture, particularly in film and television, where books, comics, and other media are frequently adapted (p. 123).

One of the key debates surrounding adaptation is the question of fidelity, or how closely an adaptation should adhere to the original text. Some argue that adaptations should be faithful to the source material, while others argue that adaptations should be free to depart from the original in order to better address the concerns of the new audience or context. This debate is particularly relevant to the adaptation of Shakespeare's works, which have been adapted in a wide variety of ways over the years, from faithful adaptations to radical reimagining (Adams, 2019, pp. 67-68).

One of the most significant aspects of adaptation is its ability to engage with issues and concerns that are specific to a particular time or place (Adams, 2019, pp. 45-46). This is particularly true of adaptations of Shakespeare's works from non-Western contexts, where adaptations have been used to explore local concerns and issues (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2017, p. 234). For example, in the Indian film "Maqbool," based on Shakespeare's Macbeth, director Vishal Bhardwaj uses the story to comment on the Indian political system and the influence of organized crime (Singh, 2015, p. 89). Similarly, in the South Korean film "The Throne," based on Shakespeare's Hamlet, director Lee Joon-ik uses the story to explore issues of class and power in Korean society (Kim, 2016, p. 56).

The article "Verbal to Visual: A Comparative Study on Indian Adaptation of Hamlet-Haider and Karmayogi" compares the cinematic adaptations of Hamlet in two Indian films: Haider and Karmayogi. The authors explore how the films adapt Shakespeare's story to address contemporary Indian issues and context, such as the Kashmir conflict and corruption in the Indian

government. The study highlights the ways in which adaptation can be used to engage with current social and political concerns, while also examining the differences in the approaches taken by each director (Parvathy & Krishnakumar, 2016).

In their study titled "A Critique on The Presence of Shakespeare in Pakistan," Sharif, Shah, Ali, Murtaza, and Ahmad (2022) examine the presence and adaptation of Shakespearean works in Pakistan. The authors analyze the impact of colonialism, language barriers, and cultural differences on the interpretation and adaptation of Shakespeare's plays in the Pakistani context. The study sheds light on the challenges and opportunities for the adaptation of Shakespearean works in non-Western contexts and highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and localization in successful adaptations.

In the case of "Sng-e-Mah," the adaptation of Hamlet by Mustafa Afridi, the focus is on exploring issues specific to Pakistani society. Afridi's adaptation takes place in the present day and is set in the tribal areas of Pakistan, where the story of Hamlet is reimagined as a tale of revenge and betrayal in a family torn apart by conflict. Afridi's adaptation is notable for its use of the Pashtun language, which is spoken by the majority of the characters in the series, and for its exploration of themes such as honor, loyalty, and justice, which are central to the Pashtun culture.

In conclusion, the adaptation of literary works is a longstanding practice that has been used to engage with issues and concerns specific to different times and places. Shakespeare's works, in particular, have been adapted in a wide variety of ways, from faithful adaptations to radical reimaginings, and have been used to explore local concerns and issues in non-Western contexts. The adaptation of Hamlet by Mustafa Afridi in "Sng-e-Mah" is a successful example of this practice, as it engages with both Shakespearean and Pakistani cultural traditions and explores universal themes of love, revenge, and betrayal, while also addressing issues specific to the Pakistani context.

METHODOLOGY

This research article employs a qualitative approach to explore the 2022 Pakistani drama series, "Sng-e-Mah," as an adaptation of William Shakespeare's Hamlet. The study utilizes a detailed analysis of the plot, characters, and themes of both works to argue that "Sng-e-Mah"

adapts Hamlet to a contemporary Pakistani context while retaining the essence of Shakespeare's original tragedy. Through a cultural and historical context analysis of both works, the article highlights the ways in which "Sng-e-Mah" explores universal themes of love, revenge, and betrayal while addressing issues specific to Pakistani society.

DISCUSSION

A close reading and comparative analysis of Mustafa Afridi's 'Sng-e-Mah' and William Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' reveal numerous similarities and differences between the two works. Both works share similar plot structures and character arcs, with the central characters facing similar challenges and obstacles. However, 'Sng-e-Mah' also incorporates elements of Pakistani culture and society, with themes of familial duty, societal expectations, and political corruption. The adaptation also transforms the original play's male-dominated cast by introducing strong female characters and empowering them with agency and autonomy. This highlights the adaptation's engagement with feminist issues and the evolving role of women in Pakistani society. Furthermore, postcolonial theory is useful in understanding how 'Sng-e-Mah' addresses issues of cultural identity and representation, as it challenges dominant cultural narratives and reclaims Pakistani culture and traditions.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF HELMAND AND HAMLET

Helmand in Mustafa Afridi's "Sng-e-Mah" and Hamlet in Shakespeare's play share several similarities as well as some significant differences. Both characters are the tragic heroes of their respective works and are portrayed as young men struggling with grief, betrayal, and the desire for revenge. However, while Hamlet's motivation for revenge is primarily driven by his personal anger and resentment towards his uncle Claudius, who he believes has murdered his father, Helmand's desire for revenge is motivated by a sense of duty towards his family (father) and community (Pashtun society).

Another key difference between the two characters is their approach to the situation they find themselves in. Hamlet is often indecisive and conflicted, which leads to his procrastination and ultimately contributes to his downfall. In contrast, Helmand is a more proactive character who takes matters into his own hands and

makes decisions more quickly. This difference can be attributed to the different cultural contexts of the works, with "Sng-e-Mah" reflecting the more collectivist values of Pakistani society, where duty towards one's community and family is highly valued.

Furthermore, while both characters experience significant mental and emotional distress, Helmand's struggle is portrayed more explicitly as a result of the cultural and political climate of Pakistan, where corruption, violence, and oppression are rampant. This emphasis on the societal context of the character's struggles is a hallmark of postcolonial theory, which highlights the ways in which cultural and political forces can shape individual experiences.

Hamlet's famous soliloquy "To be or not to be, that is the question" (Hamlet, 3.I.64-98) is also translated in Urdu "زندہ رہو یا مر جاؤ، بس یہ ایک سوال کا کہیڑا دیماگھ" (Afridi, 2022, Episode 23). "کے نس نس میں بس گیا ہے"

Overall, while Helmand and Hamlet share many similarities as tragic heroes, their differences reflect the distinct cultural contexts of their respective works and highlight the ways in which adaptations can provide new perspectives on timeless themes.

PLOT ANALYSIS OF SANG-E-MAH AND HAMLET

The literary works of Hamlet and Sang-e-Mah share several thematic and plot similarities. One of the most notable similarities is the murder of a father, which is carried out through the act of poisoning administered into the ear. Hamlet, written by William Shakespeare, features King Hamlet's murder by his brother Claudius, who then usurps the throne and marries Hamlet's mother. Similarly, Sang-e-Mah tells the story of Helmand's father, who is murdered by Haji Marjan Khan, a character motivated by power, control, and love, and then marries Helmand's mother.

Both narratives feature protagonists seeking vengeance for the murder of their fathers. In Hamlet, the protagonist Hamlet seeks to avenge his father's murder by Claudius, while in Sang-e-Mah, Helmand seeks revenge against Haji Marjan Khan for killing his father. The struggle for power is evident in both works, with Haji Marjan Khan in Sang-e-Mah and King Claudius in Hamlet, both striving for power, control and to marry someone else wife.

The theme of love is also explored in both works

through the characters of Ophelia in Hamlet and Sheherzad in Sang-e-Mah. These commonalities serve to emphasize the thematic universality of these two works of literature. The similarities between the two works show that despite the difference in their origins, they share common themes that are relevant to humanity as a whole.

However, there are also several differences between the two stories. Firstly, the setting of "Sang-e-Mah" is contemporary Pakistan, while "Hamlet" is set in medieval Denmark. The cultural and societal norms of the two stories are also different, with "Sang-e-Mah" exploring issues such as political corruption, terrorism, and gender inequality in a Pakistani context. In contrast, "Hamlet" deals with issues such as monarchy, inheritance, and religious conflict in a Christian context. Another key difference between the two stories is the religion of the characters. The characters in "Sang-e-Mah" are largely Muslim, and the story incorporates Islamic themes and values, whereas "Hamlet" is set in a Christian context. Finally, the plot and characters of "Sang-e-Mah" have been adapted to fit the Pakistani context, with changes to the storyline and the inclusion of new characters and plot elements. For example, the character of Laertes in "Hamlet" is replaced by Helmand's childhood friend and confidante, Rafi. In summary, while both "Sang-e-Mah" and "Hamlet" explore similar themes and plot elements, such as revenge, betrayal, and power struggles, they differ in terms of setting, culture, and religion. The changes made to the plot and characters in "Sang-e-Mah" provide a unique perspective on issues relevant to contemporary Pakistan through the character of Helmand.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of Mustafa Afridi's "Sng-e-Mah" and William Shakespeare's "Hamlet" highlights both similarities and differences between the two works. Both stories share similar plot structures and character arcs, with the central characters facing similar challenges and obstacles. However, "Sng-e-Mah" also incorporates elements of Pakistani culture and society, with themes of familial duty, societal expectations, and political corruption. The adaptation also transforms the original play's male-dominated cast by introducing strong female characters and empowering them with agency and autonomy. This highlights the

adaptation's engagement with feminist issues and the evolving role of women in Pakistani society. Furthermore, postcolonial theory is useful in understanding how "Sng-e-Mah" addresses issues of cultural identity and representation, as it challenges dominant cultural narratives and reclaims Pakistani culture and traditions. The comparative analysis also reveals similarities and differences between the two tragic heroes, Helmand and Hamlet, as well as similarities and differences in the plot elements and themes of the two works. Overall, the analysis shows how adaptations can provide new perspectives on timeless themes and highlight the importance of cultural context in shaping literary works.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that future research delves into the concept of "Ghag" in Pashtu culture, which was not addressed in this study. Such exploration can offer valuable insights into the potentially transformative effects of adaptations and their contribution to cultural exchange and diplomacy.

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