

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

GLOBAL SHAKESPEARE: A CRITIQUE ON THE PRESENCE OF
SHAKESPEARE IN THE MEDIA REPORTS OF PAKISTAN

Mutuahira Yousaf¹, Sadia Nazeer², Mohammad Muazzam Sharif³, Iqra Nisa⁴, Raheela Nisar⁵

¹English Instructor, Frontier Corps, Warsak. M Phil Research Scholar Northern University,
Nowshera, Pakistan.

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University,
Peshawar, Pakistan.

³Lecturer, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan.

⁴MPhil Scholar, Northern University, Nowshera, Pakistan.

⁵Teaching Assistant, English Works Project, ERCP, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women
University Peshawar, Pakistan.

Email: ¹mutuahirayousaf@hotmail.com, ²sadianazeer33@yahoo.com,

³sharifmuazzam@gmail.com, ⁴iqrakhanktk6@gmail.com, ⁵Raheela111.nisar@gmail.com

Mutuahira Yousaf, Sadia Nazeer, Mohammad Muazzam Sharif, Iqra Nisa, Raheela Nisar. Global Shakespeare: A Critique on The Presence of Shakespeare in The Media Reports of Pakistan -- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 19(1), 2143-2151. ISSN 1567-214x.

Keywords: Media Reports, Current Issues, Newspapers.

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's plays continue to be circulated on an immense scale in a variety of guises—as performances, translations, editions, and adaptations. In media reports, ready references are made to and from his works on a regular basis. Research has been carried out on the presence of Shakespeare in Pakistan. However, limited or no work has been carried out on the presence of Shakespeare in the media reports of Pakistan and the ways in which he is used to address modern-day Pakistani problems through his plays. Therefore, this paper focuses on the presence of Shakespeare in the media reports of Pakistan and probes into the ways in which he and his plays are used, and in what context. For this matter, popular, best-selling, and well-reputed newspapers are taken into account. This paper has taken into consideration Catherine Belsey's Textual Analysis and Marshall McLuhan's Media Theory for this paper.

INTRODUCTION

In the present age, Shakespeare is a worldwide cultural icon. Similar to his borrowing of works from others, Shakespeare is borrowed, appropriated, and adapted worldwide. From love and loss to war and politics, it is not difficult to apply his themes to contemporary times. His themes are universal. Shakespeare's plays have reached out to the people of new localities and are appropriated according to the social, cultural, and political concerns of the new audiences who are far away from Shakespeare's own culture, region, and time. People from different countries reshape and revise the plays of Shakespeare to suit their situations in modern times accordingly.

The situation is no different in Pakistan. Numerous references are made to and from the plays of Shakespeare to refer to a particular social, cultural, and/or political event, incident, or issue. He is one of the most frequently quoted authors in the media reports from Pakistan. His plays and references to and from them are becoming more and more popular among the public as they are presented in ways that highlight contemporary social, cultural, and political problems in an apt and illuminating manner. This paper thus focuses on the presence of Shakespeare in the media reports of Pakistan, and further traces the ways in which he is used and/or referred to in these reports/news articles. Furthermore, this paper probes into the presence and use of Shakespeare in the media reports of Pakistan. This paper draws various such references from the media reports of Pakistan and, as a result, highlights the contemporary Pakistani problems explained through the former, categorically as well as metaphorically. This not only adds to Shakespeare's existing criticism of the subject at hand, but also aids in highlighting and addressing the relevant problem in and of itself.

Although research has been carried out on the adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare around the world in general and Pakistan in particular, limited or no significant research has been conducted on the presence of Shakespeare in Pakistani media reports and the way the plays have the potential to address Pakistani contemporary problems. There is a rise in the number of references made to and from Shakespeare, which needs a probe as to why there is an increase in the number and what purpose it serves for the journalists, columnists, and analysts. Therefore, essentially qualitative in nature, this paper, through the use of the parameters set for textual analysis by Catherine Belsey (2013) and of the lens of Marshall McLuhan Media Theory (1966), determines the presence of Shakespeare in Pakistani media reports. In order to do so, well-reputed Pakistani newspapers like Dawn, The News, and The Express Tribune are taken into consideration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Zia Mohyeddin (2017), a famous Pakistani actor, director, and theatre guru, in his article 'Why is Shakespeare, Shakespeare' (2017) explains to the Pakistani audience the ways in which Shakespeare is relatable in today's world. It is the universality of the themes of Shakespeare that makes him so relatable to the modern world. This is precisely why there is an increase in the number of references to and from Shakespeare in Pakistani media reports. There are loads of parallels between the dramas of Shakespeare and modern-day Pakistan.

To take an example, the dialogue "the first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" (Act VI, Sec II) of Dick the Butcher in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II*, makes the audience laugh because it has contextual humour embedded in it. The dialogue is uttered to make the audience laugh. However, if the same dialogue is used in the context of Pakistan, it may take on a completely new meaning – far more serious than the original. In the provincial capital of Baluchistan, Quetta, lawyers were attacked on the 8th of August 2016. The majority of them lawyers, the attack left 70 people dead and over a hundred wounded. The lawyers had gathered then as a protest against the target killing of their community member, who was shot dead by unknown gunmen earlier that day. In this case, the dialogue mentioned above takes on a completely new meaning and dimension. Apart from this, the dialogues fit best to describe the situation; however, unlike Shakespeare's, it makes the audience/reader cry instead.

It is the presence of such parallels that attracts critics, writers, and researchers alike to make references from the dramas of Shakespeare and fit them into Pakistani contexts to best describe the concerned situation. While references to Shakespeare appear more frequently in Pakistani media reports, articles about Shakespeare and his plays are published on a regular basis in the country's newspapers. One such example is the publishing of literary articles, which frequently includes articles on Shakespeare and related criticism, in well-reputed nationwide newspapers like DAWN and The Express Tribune. For instance, the following are a few of the titles of such articles that were published in the newspaper *Spotlight*: *The Shakespeare wali* (2016); *Shakespeare creates a parallel universe* (2015); and *Bard-ji on the beach: Post-colonial artists write back to Shakespeare* (2016).

In addition, numerous references are made to and from Shakespeare to describe a modern-day Pakistani problem in the domestic media reports. *Hamlet*, one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, is often mentioned and quoted in Pakistani. This is one way that Shakespeare is still present in the language. There are numerous parallels between *Hamlet* and modern-day Pakistan. Comparisons have been drawn between *Ophelia* and modern Pakistani women, especially those who are the victims of honour-based killings (Yousaf, 2020). Similarly, such parallels are drawn and references are made to and from Shakespeare's plays, in this case *Hamlet*, to point out and highlight various problems in Pakistan. In order to present a clear picture of the argument, a few examples where references are made to and from *Hamlet* are selected from the Pakistani media reports. The following are some examples:

Murshad (2015) notes,

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif lives in an etherized world where time is of little consequence. Like *Hamlet*, he is given to indecision. The prince of Denmark prevaricated because of self-doubt on life and death issues—whether or not to kill his father's murderer, Claudius—but the prime minister of Pakistan is indecisive even on routine matters such as the appointment of

In another instance, Peter (2003) described the then President of Pakistan, General Musharaff, as a *Hamlet* in Khaki, and that too, torn between action and inaction. Here, reference was intended towards the reluctance of General

Musharaff to counter terrorism by explicit and direct means to fight the terrorists and/or terrorism.

Similarly, Ali (2014) also notes: "just as Hamlet had to put aside everything else in his life in order to deal with Claudius, our government too must prioritise to make terrorism its main challenge to be tackled" (para. 3).

Furthermore, according to Nizami (2019),

To be or not to be? ", the opening phrase uttered by Prince Hamlet sums up PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) president Shahbaz Sharif's predicament. In William Shakespeare's seminal play by the same name, Hamlet contemplates death and suicide, bemoaning the pain and unfairness of life, but acknowledging that the alternative might be worse. Our present day prince, Sharif, is faced with a somewhat similar conundrum. His heart is not in Maulana Fazlur Rehman's dharna, march, or whatever the cleric prefers to call it. The PML-N president, unlike his elder brother and mentor, Nawaz Sharif, is simply not cut out for confrontational politics (para. 1, 2).

The above mentioned examples strongly suggest that references are made to and from Shakespeare frequently to refer to relevant contemporary Pakistani problems. The main reason is that loads of parallels are present between the dramas of Shakespeare and Pakistani socio-cultural-political situations and circumstances. Pakistani analysts, journalists, as well as researchers alike, see their own reflections in the plays of Shakespeare. According to Kott (2010), many generations have seen their own reflections in the plays of Shakespeare because of the similarity of incidents, plots, and events. In order to achieve the set objectives for the paper and answer the set questions, the well-reputed Pakistani newspapers like DAWN, The News, and the Express Tribune are taken into account and analysed through the lens of Media Theory set by Marshall McLuhan (1966). In addition, textual analysis of the news articles is carried out using the parameters of textual analysis set by Catherine Belsey (2013). According to McLuhan (1966), "communication tells stories, and perhaps more importantly, they retell stories." Considering this, the news articles retell the stories of Shakespeare by adjusting and appropriating them to Pakistani socio-political contexts. Furthermore, he adds, "medium [media reports] is the message." Through the medium of news and media reports, journalists, columnists, and analysts spread the message of social awareness by making references to and from Shakespeare. It certainly serves the purpose of understanding the subject at hand in a much clearer way.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Although Shakespeare has been present in Pakistan in the form of English Literature courses taught at universities, performances at theatres, translations, and adaptations, his plays are more relevant in modern times. Whether it is the Pakistani Taming of the Shrew as in Ilaaj-e-Zid Dastyab Hay (2012) or the Pakistani The Winter's Tale as in Fasana-e-Ajaib (2014), frequent parallels are drawn between the texts of the plays and modern-day Pakistan. Both the adaptations have much to offer to the Pakistani audience as well as the international audience. The former deals with the issues and problems related to the patriarchal setup, and the second is concerned with honour killing in

Pakistan. With so much to offer to the Pakistani audience, both the adaptations address two grave issues in Pakistan. The focus here is not on the adaptations but on the fact that there are loads of parallels that are present in the plays of Shakespeare and modern-day Pakistan. Thus, the presence of these parallels and similarities enables journalists and analysts to make references to and from Shakespeare's plays to refer to a specific similar problem or nuisance in the country. For instance, Mushahid Hussain, Information Minister of the government in September 2004, made a reference to Hamlet while commenting upon the Pak-India relationship. Hussain (2004) mentioned that 'You cannot have Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark [...] Similarly, India and Pakistan cannot have peace and normalisation without resolving Kashmir (para. 2).

It is a known historical fact that the conflict/dispute between Pakistan and India dates as far back as 1947—partition of the subcontinent. During the division, the then prince of Kashmir decided to stay independent but later decided to become part of India, despite the wishes of the Muslims, who were in majority. Therefore, since then, Pakistan and India have fought several times and have held numerous negotiations to resolve the dispute, but in vain. It was not the first time that references have been made to Hamlet while referring to the Pak-India dispute over Kashmir. Kifner (1998) argues, while referring to the subject at hand, "It would be like staging Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark." It is Kashmir that has been the cause of war' (para. 3). The remark 'staging Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark' refers to the importance of Kashmir for the peace between Pakistan and India.

Similarly, referring to the inaptitude of the Pakistani government over serious matters like fighting corruption, violence, and terrorism, Ali (2014) suggests that the dialogue that occurs between Hamlet and Horatio in Act 1 Scene 5 is good advice to the government to think out of the box to resolve the mentioned issues.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. 1.5.174-175

Ali (2014) uses these lines in her report to reflect upon the inaction of the government over the serious matters mentioned above. This inaction has resulted in a further increase in violence and corruption in the country, which Majeed (2013) refers to in the following words: "Something is rotten in the state of Pakistan" (para. 2). The reference here is to Hamlet's famous line, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," which he says when told about the ghost's appearance in Act Scene 2.

Similarly, taking into consideration the conflict between Pakistan and India over Kashmir and the role of the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir (in 2015), Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Naqvi (2015) remarks,

He [Mufti Mohammad Sayeed] also has the distinction of being the only Muslim to have become India's home minister. That is where the King Lear imagery comes into play. Like Shakespeare's tragic hero, his eldest daughter Mehbooba Mufti, like Cordelia in the play, has largely shaped Mufti

Mohammed Sayeed's political journey. And like King Lear, one of his other two daughters, Rubaiya Saeed, nearly brought his political career to an abrupt end (para. 10).

The use of such references allows journalists and analysts to not only highlight the issue at hand, but also allow readers to grasp the gravity of the situation. Furthermore, it enables the readers to relate to the issue in a more vivid way. In this case, as it is not possible to stage Hamlet without the prince of Denmark, it is not possible to resolve the conflicts between Pakistan and India without resolving the issue of Kashmir first. Similarly to how Hamlet, King Lear, and Cordelia are important in the two texts, Kashmir is important for peace talks and conflict resolution between Pakistan and India. So, these Shakespeare quotes help the media reports paint clear and vivid pictures so that readers can understand them better.

In a similar line of argument, referring to the toppling of the government of former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Ehsan (2017) opines:

Macbeth is the last of Shakespeare's four great tragedies. In Macbeth, Shakespeare adds a supernatural dimension that continues to conspire against Macbeth and his kingdom. Since the Panama verdict, every time I hear Nawaz Sharif speak, I am reminded of Macbeth and the supernatural dimension that caused him to lose his kingdom. Considering that neither Nawaz Sharif nor any member of his ruling party is willing to share the name of 'those conspiring to oust him from power', I am inclined to believe that losing his power and kingdom may just as well be because of supernatural forces (para. 1).

Due to the Panama case and subsequent consequences of the toppling of the government and the way the former prime minister dealt with the scandal, Ehsan calls Nawaz Sharif "Pakistan's very own Macbeth," who brought the downfall upon himself. The focus here is not on the reasons how and why it brought the downfall but on the fact that how parallels are drawn by the analysts and apt references are made to and from Shakespeare to elaborate on the point for the better understanding of the situation.

In addition, there are references to, and from, the romantic tragedy of Romeo and Juliet. While patriarchy's rules and family feuds are common in Pakistan, lovers suffer a similar fate as Romeo and Juliet. While referring to similar suffering, Khokhar (2013) notes,

A romantic getaway, conversion to Islam, marriage and the opposition of the families are the ingredients of a new Romeo and Juliet story. He is Christian, she is Muslim, and the two are at the centre of a family feud in Pakistan (para. 2).

After a long feud between the families of the two lovers, the 13-year-old sister of the groom ultimately became the victim of it. She was abducted by the bride's family as a ransom for the return of the groom. Although the story deviates from the original plot of Romeo and Juliet, however, reference to and from the play remains the centre of the argument.

Such marriages may result in violence and even death, also known as "honour killing." In a similar case of marriage, another reference is made to Romeo and Juliet. The title of the report is 'Pakistani Romeo and Juliet seek refuge' (Hussain, 1998) Kunwar Ahsan (referred to as Romeo) was shot for marrying a woman of the rival ethnic group in Karachi, Pakistan. He was shot by the father and brother of his wife, Riffat Afridi. Ahsan said in the report that "We just fled." They were hunting us '(para. 8). Marrying without the consent of the family is not permitted in the Pukhtun tribal code of life. Doing so is followed by consequences. There are several similar incidents where the lovers are referred to as Romeo and Juliet in Pakistani newspapers. Frequent references are made to and from the play because every now and then, similar incidents take place in Pakistan.

'A young couple committed suicide like Romeo and Juliet because their families would not let them marry' (Wilson, 2021), 'Heer Ranja: Pakistan's Romeo and Juliet' (Blight, 2018), 'Pakistani Romeo and Juliet': Romeo and Juliet's Story Ignites Deadly Mob Violence in Karachi' (Deseret News, 1998), 'Pakistani Romeo betrays Chinese Juliet' (Samma, 2015), 'Kiyya and Sadu are Romeo and Juliet in Baloch Folklore' (Rafiq, 2019) are few of the numerous self-explanatory titles of the examples that regularly appear in the media reports of Pakistan. This is not the focus of the study; however, a separate study is required for further probe into the presence of Romeo and Juliet in Pakistan and its comparison with Pakistani local folklore or real-life contemporary related problems.

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration all the examples mentioned above, it is demonstrated that Shakespeare is largely present in the media reports of Pakistan and plays a vital role in the understanding of the problems faced by the society. It is concluded that journalists and analysts use the plays of Shakespeare while reporting a relevant problem or issue in Pakistani society. Direct quotations/references as well as indirect references from the plays of Shakespeare are frequently used to report news. These quotations and references are used to highlight a certain problem in society by relating it to the play in question. By doing so, the journalists and analysts enable the readers to understand the severity, nature, and seriousness of the subject at hand. In addition, these references also give a literary touch to the news articles/reports and are equally appreciated by educated readers. It is widely assumed that referencing to and from Shakespeare lends a scholarly air to the subject. One may question the very authenticity of this statement. However, what is evident from this paper is that Shakespeare is a strong part of the media reports on Pakistan and has a pivotal role in addressing the respective Pakistani problems and issues.

This establishes the universality of Shakespeare and adds to the existing criticism of the subject at hand. The plays' universal themes certainly help the journalists, columnists, and analysts use the quotations from Shakespeare as a yard stick to elaborate on the matter under discussion. Thus, it adds to the establishment of the fact that Shakespeare is a cultural icon and a global writer.

REFERENCES

- Ali, Y. A. (2014, March 03). Recalling Hamlet's indecisiveness. *Pakistan Today*. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/03/03/recalling-hamlets-indecisiveness/>
- Anwar, S. (2017, November 13). Zia Mohyeddin on how Shakespeare is so relatable in today's world. *The Express Tribune*. Retrieved October 1, 2021, from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1557045/zia-mohyeddin-shakespeare-relatable-todays-world>
- Associated Press. (2019, June 29). Romeo-and-Juliet story ignites deadly mob violence in Karachi. *Deseret News*. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://www.deseret.com/1998/2/11/19362911/romeo-and-juliet-story-ignites-deadly-mob-violence-in-karachi>
- Belsey, C. (2013). Textual analysis as a research method. *Research methods for English studies*, 157-74.
- Blight, T. (2018, September 18). Heer Ranjha: Pakistan's Romeo and Juliet | *UrbanDuniya*. *Urban Dunya*. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://urbanduniya.com/heer-ranjha-pakistans-romeo-and-juliet/>
- Chambers, C. (2016, January 10). Bard-ji on the beach: Post-colonial artists write back to Shakespeare. *DAWN*. Retrieved April 12, 2021, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1231973>
- Desk, W. (2015, November 2). Pakistani Romeo betrays Chinese Juliet. *Samaa News*. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://www.samaaenglish.tv/news/618136>
- Ehsan, M. A. (2017, September 27). Nawaz Sharif: Pakistan's very own Macbeth. *The Express Tribune*. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1517531/a-defiant-nawaz-and-macbeth>
- Hosh Media. (2012, June 14). Shakespeare gets a Pakistani makeover in London. *DAWN*. Retrieved January 10, 2021, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/726539/shakespeare-gets-a-pakistani-makeover-in-london>
- Kifner, J. (1998, June 01). Nuclear Anxiety: In Pakistan; complex pressures, dominated by Islam, let to testing. *The New York Times*. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/06/01/world/nuclear-anxiety-in-pakistan-complex-pressures-dominated-by-islam-led-to-testing.html>
- Khokhar, S. (2013, October 9). Faisalabad: Pakistan (anti-Christian) Romeo and Juliet. *Pime Asia News*. Retrieved June 24, 2020, from [https://www.asianews.it/news-en/\(South-Asia,Pakistan\)-Faisalabad:-Pakistan's-\(anti-Christian\)-Romeo-and-Juliet-story-28968.html](https://www.asianews.it/news-en/(South-Asia,Pakistan)-Faisalabad:-Pakistan's-(anti-Christian)-Romeo-and-Juliet-story-28968.html)
- Majeed, A. (2013, December 16). Pakistan's Image Problem. *ARY News*. Retrieved 24 June, 2020. <https://blogs.arynews.tv/pakistans-image-problem/>
- McLuhan, H. M. (1966). Marshall McLuhan. *Information Theory*, 234.
- Media. (2014, February 28). Analysing Texts: Media and Theory – *Media Studies* 101. *Pressbooks*. Retrieved June 10, 2021, from <https://opentextbc.ca/mediastudies101/chapter/analysing-texts-media-and-theory/>
- Murshed, I. (2013, October 22). The Hamlet in Nawaz Sharif. *The News*. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/461798-the-hamlet-in-nawaz-sharif>

- Naqvi, J. (2015, March 5). Profile: Meet Kashmir's King Lear and Cordelia. DAWN. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1167482>
- Nizami, A. (2019, October 12). To be or not to be. Pakistan Today. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from <https://archive.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/10/12/to-be-or-not-to-be-4/>
- Noorani, A. (2016, March 6). Spotlight: Shakespeare wali. DWAN. Retrieved April 8, 2021, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1243499>
- Peerzada, S. (2015, April 10). Shakespeare creates a parallel universe. DWAN. Retrieved June 12, 2021, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1174923>
- Peters, R. (2003, January 28). Pakistan: Important role of bedfellow-bogeyman. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved June 20, 2020, from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1043721128373256704>
- Rafiq, S. M. (2019, February 27). Kiyaa and Sadu are the Romeo and Juliet in Baloch folklore. Daily Times. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://dailytimes.com.pk/359031/kiyaa-and-sadu-are-the-romeo-and-juliet-in-baloch-folklore/>
- Shakespeare, W. (1999). Henry VI, Part II. Renaissance Edition.
- Salman, P. (2014, August 23). Shakespeare's Fasana-i-Ajaab set to be staged from 28th. DAWN.COM. Retrieved January 11, 2021, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1127087>
- Wilson, G. (2021, November 18). A young couple committed suicide like Romeo and Juliet because their families did not let them marry. 24 News Recorder. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://24newsrecorder.com/world/58469>
- Worthen, W. B. (2010). Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary. In *Forum Modernes Theater* (Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 91-97). Forum Modernes Theater.
- Yaseen, F. (2004, September 01). You can't have a Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from http://cpdr.org.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=593:you-can-t-have-a-hamlet-without-the-prince-of-denmark&catid=51:news-blog&Itemid=445
- Yousaf, M. (2020). Hamlet and A Girl in the River: Redefining Honour. (Unpublished MPhil Thesis). Northern University, Nowshehra, Pakistan.