

Anti-hero in film Maqbool : A Socio-political study

Mrs. Munish Nandal
Associate Professor
A.I.J.H.M. College
Rohtak, Haryana, India
Email- munishnandal03@gmail.com

Maqbool

The protagonist of literature and cinema has always been the most fascinating characters as the topic of study. Literature and cinema both are mirror to life and most sensitive and aesthetically rich means of storytelling. Cinema owes a lot to literature in terms of providing itself as the most of influential, popular and pervasive medium to appeal common mass.

In this paper, I shall try to seek and unravel the historical and social reasons that influenced the projection of a strong anti hero in Vishal Bhardwaj's powerful and intriguing film 'Maqbool' (2003), an adaptation of Shakespeare's famous play 'Macbeth'. As the paper proposes to study the projection of anti hero in Maqbool with references to social political design, it is quite obvious to go with details of social design of that time as the films manifest and project the social and political issues all times. After 1990, society emerged remarkably with a great materialistic consciousness and the wave of globalization opened up. This specific era is marked with the terms like liberalization and industrialization. People were driven by the force of individual interest and self-centeredness. Hence to attain power and wealth in the society people lost moral and ethical values. They were least concerned with social and self-profit welfare became the core-motif of public. The protagonist of cinema of this time started adorning criminal and whimsical destructive means to get power and money. As the paper proposes study the projection of anti hero in Maqbool with references to social political design, it is quite obvious to go with details of social design of that time as the films manifest and project the social and political issues all times. After 1990, society emerged remarkably with a great materialistic consciousness and the wave of globalization opened up. This specific era is marked with the terms like liberalization and industrialization. People were driven by the force of individual interest and self-centeredness. Hence to attain power and wealth in

the society people lost moral and ethical values. They were least concerned with social welfare and self-profit became the core-motif of the public. Hence, the protagonist of cinema of this time started adorning criminal and whimsical destructive means to get power and money projecting his identity in tune with the tune of the social design.

The term anti-hero is used for a protagonist who abandons the ideal virtues and attributes of the conventional archetypal hero, yet provides himself a pivotal force in the dramatic action. The traditional hero is classically endowed with larger than life image who fights against vice to redeem people from sufferings and pains. He works for a social cause sacrificing his personal gain and is very attractive, impressive and charismatic. On the contrary anti-heroes are simply the characters who are conspicuously flawed and have a grey shade rather than purely black and purely white. In M.H. Abrams's words anti-hero is

"The chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that which we associate with the traditional protagonist or hero of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power or heroism, the anti-hero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual or dishonest".

As the paper proposes study the projection of anti hero in Maqbool with references to social political design, it is quite obvious to go with details of social design of that time as the films manifest and project the social and political issues all times. After 1990, society emerged remarkably with a great materialistic consciousness and the wave of globalization opened up. This specific era is marked with the terms like liberalization and industrialization. People were driven by the force of individual interest and self-centeredness. Hence to attain power and wealth in the society people lost moral and ethical values. They were least concerned with social and self-profit welfare became the core-motif of public. The protagonised of cinema of this time started adorning criminal and whimsical destructive means to get power and money.

In Maqbool, Vishal Bhardwaj has chosen a cast to portray the nightmarish underworld of Mumbai by a strong and emphatic anti hero. The portrayal of the character is beyond anything imaginable in terms of cinematic expression and magic. Bhardwaj reveals the politics of lust and passion with a sure handedness which has

been rarely witnessed in Hindi cinema. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth playing by Nimmi (Tabu) has passionate love for Maqbool (Irfan Khan) and she rips her life and soul apart. Mian Maqbool is symbolizing the lust for power and passion. He falls in love with Abba Ji's mistress, Nimmi, who always provokes Mian to betray and usurp her husband's position power in the gang. Both of them plan and plot to become successful in taking over Abba Ji's place.

Mian Maqbool is a complex character in the film exhibiting rare blending of contradictory qualities. His valour and faithful towards Abbaji, in the film impress the audience and arouse a feeling of pity for him throughout the dramatic action and make him an anti-hero. On the other side, his heroic qualities betray him before Nimmi's frightfully determined will power with which she influences Mian ji. With the progress of events, as his conscience becomes blackened and the power of evil gradually grabs him, he loses his noble qualities and surrenders to the temptations which becomes his reason of doom. Nimmi is deeply in love with Mian ji and she is ready to sacrifice her humanity and femininity for him. In two pivotal scenes Nimmi instigates and provokes Mian to carry out the sinful act of murdering Abbaji. He is transformed into a monster but always showing the glimpse of a good man he might have been – a kind of sincere man full of honesty, loyalty. Nimmi always accuses Mian ji of cowardice which adds fuel to the flames of love and lust. Her forceful arguments revive his ambition and lust to such an extent that he is ready to commit heinous act of murder. In two pivotal scenes Nimmi instigates Mian ji to kill Abba Ji and continuously provokes him to carry out the murder of Abba Ji. She says :

Nimmi : “Abba ki jagah tum kabhi nahi le sakte. Darpok ho tum.”

Mian : “Is ghar mein mai bachho ki tarah pala hoon.”

Nimmi : “Ghar mein to kutte bhi paale jaate hai Mian. Kisi ek ko maarna hoga tumhe, humein ya Jahangir.”

In the film, the Pandit also plays a vital role to fuel the fire burning in the heart of Mian by telling him constantly how Abba ji had murdered his Boss. The secret desire of becoming the leader of gang germinates in Mian's mind by the prediction of Pandit and he is engrossed with the idea of becoming the boss by hook and crook. His ambition makes him unscrupulous and the thought of murdering Abba ji occurs instantly in his mind.

Mian's character keeps overpowering his nobler feeling and lead him to his gradual but certain damnation. Initially Mian follows a conflict in his mind between his lust and his conscience and he continues the fight of his lust, thus helping to make his self-damnation more intense. Nimmi constantly influences Mian, provokes him and guides as well. She is full of deep love and admiration for Mian ji and ready to sacrifice her humanity and femininity for him. She is a noble human endowed with the natural tenderness of a woman – a quality she simply suppresses in order to be a party to a foul and treacherous murder.

Maqbool carries audience to the verge of pain and redemption which was unknown to Hindi Cinema. Film takes us to feel the intensity of emotional content beyond cinematic grammar known at its time. Vishal Bhardwaj lays open the world of passion to that intensity that it surpasses the original text. The 'King' of Shakespeare becomes more authentic under world king Abba ji (Pankaj Kapoor) whose ethereal 'Lady Macbeth' is the powerful Nimmi (Tabbu). Vishal Bhardwaj projects a narrative control that most film makers don't achieve in their career.

Reference

- Maqbool*. Dir. Vishal Bhardwaj. Perf. Irfaan Khan, Tabu, Pankaj Kapoor, Ompuri, Naseerudeen Shah. Kaleioscope Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. 2003. Film.
- Tabu. Dir. Vishal Bhardwaj. Perf. Perf. Irfaan Khan, Tabu, Pankaj Kapoor, Ompuri, Naseerudeen Shah. Kaleioscope Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. 2003. Film.
- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms 10th Edition*. Cengage Learning. 2014. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Simon & Schuster. 1623. Print.
- Guha, Ramchandra. *India after Gandhi*. HarperCollins. 2007, Print.
- Chakrabarty , Bidyut. *Indian Politics And Society Since Independence : Events, Processes and Ideology*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London and Newyork. 2008. Print.