

## ***Romeo and Juliet*, the Reinvention of the Romantic Love and the Blind Spots of the Kerala Model**

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“Kerala Model”, a famed economic model, established around 1975, academically noted because of the likes of Amartya Sen and hugely popularised by the global media around the Covid-19 pandemic, has allowed this southernmost state of India a certain exceptionalism through debates in both the mass and social media since the 1970s. But away from this, Kerala could also be read as a hyper capitalist economy with feudal social values and a socialist political rhetoric, if the blind spots are explored. Among the Malayalam movies that started reflecting on these contradictions in the 21st century, two adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*, stand out: *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013) and *Eeda* (2018). Both movies point to the impossibility of romantic love in a certain set of givens, pointing to the social vacuum that has come up due to the discourses becoming incapable of narrating the global techno-economic givens of the state, a condition translated as “Keralites are a lost people” in the suicide note of Subramanya Das. This paper attempts to look into how the Shakespearean trope, something of an archetype by now in the psyche of most Indians, negotiates social realities and how it points to the need of undoing the social order. The paper will also try to compare and contrast other Shakespeare adaptations in Malayalam and see how the spatio-temporal locations of these two movies are necessitated by their insistence on political critique.

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“Pale Hecate’s offerings”: Love as witchcraft in *Macbeth* and *Maqbool*

Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool* (2003), an Indian film adaptation of *Macbeth*, grafts familiar attributes of contemporary Indian cinema to Shakespeare’s play to highlight the destructive coupling of witchcraft and love. Demonstrating the capacity of adaptations to stretch Shakespeare’s texts, *Maqbool* shifts a familiar trope in Hindi films—love as madness—into the realm of the supernatural.

Popular Indian cinema often portrays love as driven by intemperate passions, as *junoon*, *pagal*, a mysterious force that cannot be controlled by reason or the norms of everyday life. While Indian cinema often explores this form of love madness through comedy or farce, in *Maqbool*, this madness absorbs darker strains of early modern experiences of destructive passions, melancholy, hysteria, and witchcraft, elements resonant in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

While the love-as-madness theme would have been more suited to the film’s young lovers—Samira and Guddu—the dark matter of early modern passions and witchcraft bleeds into the relationship of the film’s older romantic couple, Nimmi and Maqbool. Nimmi’s sexual appetite is externalized through recurrent images of feeding, and her *invidia* or malice is expressed through the poison infecting Maqbool’s body and mind. As a third witch, Nimmi animates the latent connection of witchcraft and love in *Macbeth* as well as plays such as *Othello*. Repurposing Hindi cinema’s habitual correlation between love and madness, *Maqbool* expands our understanding of Shakespeare’s play and the early modern nexus between witchcraft and love.

[233 words minus title]

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“These violent delights have violent ends”: Love in Two *Romeo and Juliet* Appropriations in Indian  
Cinema

This paper proposes to examine the portrayal of love in two Shakespearean appropriations in Indian Cinema: one, the Hindi remake of a Telegu film titled *Ek Duje Ke Liye* (1981) and the other, the Hindi film *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak* (1988), none of which overtly acknowledged their debt to Shakespeare (although the former had two direct references to Shakespeare’s play in the plot), and both of which were unprecedented successes.

Shakespeare had portrayed love in *Romeo and Juliet* as an ecstatic, passionate and overpowering force that supplants all other values, allegiances and emotions. Although we experience this passionate heady romantic love in both the Indian appropriations, this paper will delve into how romantic love in these films is far more influenced by the cultural forms, gender expectations/roles, questions of women’s sexual honour and values of the society to which the characters belong.

In *Ek Duje ke Liye*, the fearless lovers ultimately try to prove the authenticity of their love by succumbing to parental pressure exerted by their warring families and following through an absurd “agreement” of staying apart for a year, thereby exhibiting their allegiance to what Victor Karandashev would call a “collectivist culture” (12). On the contrary, the young lovers in *QSQT* throw caution to the winds and elope depicting what Karandashev would define as “individualistic love” (12). The paper will analyse both these films and show how Shakespearean love is depicted differently by being coloured by the Indian cultural rituals and expressions of love.

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## Juliet and Juliets on the Indian Screen.

Ishita Sehgal

Shakespeare has always been an inspiration for theatre in India and subsequently Indian cinema. Translations and adaptations of his plays started appearing in the early 20th century. Though regional Indian Cinema has had its own versions, in various languages, the real experimentation with Shakespeare has been done in Hindi film Industry, erroneously labelled as Bollywood.

Romeo and Juliet, the quintessential romantic tragedy from The Bard has held sway over the minds of Hindi film makers. Retaining the basic tenets of the play, the narratives that have emerged on screen have been embedded in the Indian culture and shifting ethos over the last half century. This paper will follow the adaptations and reemergent Romeo and Juliet who do not remain uniform, especially Juliet in Indian Cinema. She may be caught in the frame of Indian Capulets but her own identity has transformed in her onscreen avatar in sync with the changing feminine discourse in India, giving the film maker a leeway to fiddle with the eventual fate of the lovers. The paper will explore and map how Juliet in India is not one but many Juliets, each carving her own path even if it converges with the original plot.

This exploration of Juliet is about her journey from Raj Kapoor's Bobby (1973) to Dhadak (2018) and in Bengali/Marathi cinema alongside. This will further be entwined with the changing women of India too.

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Jain, Jasbir, and Sudha Rai, eds. *Films and feminism: Essays in Indian cinema*. Rawat Publications, 2002.

This paper broadly conceives of the term romance as it relates to the genre of tragicomedy. Tragicomedy or romance was an emerging, popular genre both in Shakespeare's England and in post-independence Tamil films. Plays like *Cymbeline* captured the early modern audiences' imagination in the same way films like *Manohara* spoke to the Tamil audience. Tragic-comedies such as *Cymbeline* and *Manohara* offer a nostalgic engagement with the nation's past while relying on narratives of female exemplarity to weave a fantasy of nation making.

In this paper, I juxtapose the narratives of female exemplarity and the genre conventions of tragic-comic romances in the two texts, to explore the relationship between wonder, fantasies of nation-making, and woman's sexual honor.

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#### **Bio:**

I am Sharanya Sridhar, a PhD candidate from University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I am working on my dissertation titled *Global Narratives, Local Shakespeare: Fantasies of Sexual Honor, Racial Hierarchy, and Nation-Making*. Broadly, my work brings together early modern English plays and post-independence, Tamil film-adaptations/appropriations of Shakespeare. More specifically, I am looking into narratives of taming, shaming, female exemplarity, and honor killing in Shakespeare's plays and their Tamil appropriations.

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Appropriating Shakespearean Romance in Indian Cinema

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## **Bollywood and Romantic Comedies**

Recent Bollywood Shakespeare films (*Maqbool* (2004), *Omkaara* (2006), *Haider* (2014), *Ram-Leela* (2015)) have seen a great evolution in the depiction of female characters. What Poonam Trivedi has called “avenging heroines”, I would venture to expand into “heroines with agency”: starting with a Lady Macbeth that orchestrates Duncan’s murder in order to escape a precarious situation, this new crop of “based on Shakespeare” female protagonists are women much less “done against” than “doing”.

But this shift towards agency does not occur in a vacuum: these heroines of Shakespearean tragedies have been molded by Bollywood Manic Pixie Dream Girls. In a country where dowries and arranged marriages curtail Western notions of romantic love and of female agency, the Manic Pixie Dream Girl trope has been adopted to the Hindi popular screens to portray strong, independent women, particularly women who are trying to get out of an arranged marriage.

In this paper I will explore how the Manic Pixie Dream Girl has taken a new significance in Bollywood films, and how this new depiction of strong female characters has bled over into Shakespearean adaptations, investing even the most monstrous of Shakespearean women—Lady Macbeth—with the light-hearted, distracted, and naïve characterizations of the pop culture female protagonists.