

TRAUMA AND HONOR IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF
*THE WINTER'S TALE AND FASANA-E-AJAIB*Sumayya Wisal¹, Saba Ayub Khan², Khuzaima Danish³^{1,2,3}M. Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan¹sumayyawisalkhan@gmail.com, ²saba.hmzk@gmail.com, ³khuzaimd06@gmail.comDOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20715953>**Keywords**

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Abstract

Shakespearean plays have the potential to bring about a social reformation by adapting and appropriating it in a relative context, as his plays provide alluring materials for the adapters around the world. As has been identified by Sharif (2021) on the Pakistani adaptation of *The Winter's Tale*, that is, *Fasana-e-Ajaib*, which is directed by Gregory Thompson; the study has drawn parallels between the two plays and the potential for the later to address contemporary social issues of Pakistan, especially honor killings, targeted killings, and political groups/slogans. Triggered by the incident of Farzana Perveen, *Fasana-e-Ajaib* has the capability to highlight social issues in Pakistan. Contextualized in terms of Pakistani Society while addressing the case of Farzana Perveen, this study will compare both the plays and will probe into real life issues by demonstrating trauma and honor killing. Essentially qualitative descriptive in nature, this study uses the parameters of David Greenham Close Reading Technique (2019) and Linda Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation (2006 and 2012). In doing so, it will unveil the essence behind the major conflicts in both the plays, that is, *The Winter's Tale* in general and *Fasana-e-Ajaib* in particular by questioning and addressing social issues in order to bring social reformation in a society and add to the significance of Shakespeare in addressing social/local issues.

1. Introduction

The plays of Shakespeare are eclectic in nature and its themes have sought attention from different cultures and societies. According to Sharif (2022), Shakespeare's plays are available worldwide in a variety of formats, including performances, translations, editions, and adaptations. Shakespeare is now recognized on a global scale. Like other people's works, his plays are adapted, appropriated, and used all over the world. It is simple to translate his themes to contemporary life as his ideas are timeless. Shakespeare's plays are being adapted to fit the social, cultural, and political concerns of new audiences who are not from the same region,

or period as Shakespeare. Not only this, his plays are created and altered for modern situations by people from various nations. It tends to address social issues in any locality. When one reads and understands Shakespeare as per his or her own socio-cultural beliefs, it ceases to be English, and, as a result, gives a new dimension to the plays in a new given context. For instance, Laura Bohannan (1998), in *Shakespeare in the Bush* gives a different interpretation to the story of *Hamlet* while keeping in view her own socio-cultural beliefs of the African tribes. This is similar to the adaptations of Shakespearean plays as they are understood in a different context and thus his

plays are localized while addressing contemporary problems.

Dennis Kennedy (1993) makes the point that "he [Shakespeare] regularly crosses national and linguistic boundaries with apparent ease". Similarities and differences are drawn between the play in question and the relevant socio-cultural beliefs and traditions of a given country. In such contexts, it has led to the adaptation of various Shakespearean plays, partly because of an empathetic connection that the readers render in order to represent his/her culture/region/country (Sharif et al, 2021, 2022). Through this empathetic association, cultural/regional identities are foregrounded to show cultural/ regional disparities in various societies. This connection, once established, works on different levels and in different societies. It has the potential to highlight and bring to the forefront the different socio-cultural issues at hand. Thus, in the contemporary era, Shakespeare is a tool for social reformation. For instance, *Shakespeare Behind the Bar* is one of the successful running art, theatre Shakespeare, and original writing prison programs in the US, which was founded in 1995. *Shakespeare Behind Bars* have been providing incarcerated, post-incarcerated, and at-risk communities with theatrical encounters with social and personal issues since 1995. This has helped these communities build the necessary life skills for successful reintegration into society. The youth and adults undergo personal transformation. This results in building life skills, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies essential to successfully re-integrate into society (Tofteland, 2022).

In the context of the subcontinent, Shakespeare's tragedies - *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello* have been adapted and appropriated as *Haider*, *Maqbool*, and *Omkara*. The dilemma of *Hamlet*, for instance, itself is a great fascination for readers, and his character, though fictional, seems to be an actual representation of 'human' in real life. *Haider*, an adaptation of *Hamlet* highlights the problems related to Kashmir, and the issues of missing people, target killings, and water wars between India and Pakistan. In addition to this,

Shakespeare's plays are frequently cited in and quoted from, particularly in Pakistani media coverage of social, cultural, and/or political events, incidents, or issues. He is one of the authors who is frequently cited in news stories in Pakistan. Because they are presented in a way that highlights current social, cultural, and political issues in an appropriately enlightening way; his plays and references to them are growing in popularity with audiences.

Sharif (2021) has carried out research on the Pakistani adaptation of *The Winter's Tale*, *Fasana-e-Ajaib*, which is directed by Gregory Thompson in collaboration with the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) in Karachi. His research draws parallels between the two plays and the potential for the latter to address Pakistan's current problems, particularly honor killings, targeted killings, and political groups/slogans. However, limited or no significant research has been carried out on the relationship between honour and trauma in the two texts.

Building up on the recommendations of Sharif (2021), this paper specifically probes into research questions:

1. How are honour and trauma interrelated in *Fasana-e-Ajaib* and *The Winter's Tale*?
2. How do trauma and honour lead to social extremism or domestic violence alluding to *The Winter's Tale* and *Fasana-e-Ajaib*?
3. How far are *Fasana-e-Ajaib* and *The Winter's Tale* successful in highlighting as well as addressing social extremism and domestic violence, especially in relation to honour and trauma?

The play *Fasana-e-Ajaib* addresses the issue of honour and honour-based killings, which are a cry for assistance in Pakistani society. Given that the theme of honour and honour-based killing is a problem that needs to be addressed and academically challenged, this paper identifies and demonstrates the play's potential to bring attention to the problem at hand, address it, and offer conceivable but realistic reforms to reduce honour-based killing and violence in Pakistan. Moreover, it adds to the significance of Shakespeare as a global icon in addressing local issues.

Essentially qualitative in nature, this paper uses David Greenham's parameters of Close Reading in order to delve deeper into the text's content, linguistic structure, and hidden messages. A case study of *The Winter's Tale* and *Fasana -e-Ajaib* has been carried out. Moreover, relevant information on research papers, articles, news, other resources, and various databases have been accessed. The text for this study is taken from the script of the adapted play *Fasana-e-Ajaib*. Evidence-based subject opinions and views have been given importance.

The theory of adaptation by Linda Hutcheon (2006 and 2012) is used as a theoretical lens to address the prevalent issues of Pakistani society, mainly honour-based killings. Adaptation and appropriation according to Linda Hutcheon, are for the purpose to provide multiple perspectives on texts, dramas, films, and other art forms, with the goal of highlighting the values and ideologies of different cultures, as well as the timeless stories that are often retold within these cultures for meaningful reasons.

2. Literature Review

Shakespeare's plays are used for the depiction of societies in an appropriate way through appropriation or adaptations. However, in the same manner, Pakistani society is also influenced by the plays of Shakespeare and is analyzing them for drawing parallels between Shakespeare's plays and Pakistani society for addressing social issues or contemporary problems of the day. Sharif (2021) argues that adapting and appropriating the plays of Shakespeare worldwide help in understanding and localizing the plays for gaining the respective objectives. One of the most highlighted issues in Pakistani patriarchal society is the honor-based killing of females, leading to domestic violence or social extremism.

Yerebaken (2014) revealed that Shakespearean contemporary extensions played by traditional cultures are rich in themes of honour-related violence and are appropriately explaining the traumas of all the times, although, Shakespeare's societies/Elizabethan age, as well as East and West, have the same issues, neither the discoveries of sixteen century nor the technological advances of the present era have

eradicated this practice of honour killing from the society. Balasundri (2018) states that due to its association with religion, honour killing has become a sensitive issue worldwide. Honour has relation to a particular group and for men, it is an ability to preserve while for women honour sticks to their moral behavior, virginity, and chastity. Women are considered the major retainer of family honour (Balasundri, 2018). Therefore, the ratio of women alleged is greater than that of men. Females are more reportedly found the victims of this culture in the name of honour and are traumatized by the ill-treatment of family members in many ways. Mukherjee (2022) argues that in order to retain honour of the family, females are considered responsible for reserving it, if not so they are traumatized and killed in the name of securing the so-called lost honour of the family (Mukherjee, 2022). It exhibits the interrelatedness of trauma and honour.

Iqbal (2007) asserted that in Pakistan a patriarchal mindset is viewed where honour is associated with the sexuality of women than power with honour. The motive behind honour-based killing is to keep the status of one's family preserved within the community. Most of Pakistani societies believe in the Jirga system, the Jirga community is the authoritative force that implements such practices and is considered prestigious by the people. Honour-based killing factors in Pakistani society are mainly on the property, choice of marriage partner, husband's consent for second marriage, illicit relations, and other factors.

A scholar Nafsia Shah wrote on the factor of honour killing occurring for centuries due to illicit relations that are termed as 'Karo Kari in Sindh, 'Siyah Kari' in Baluchistan, 'Kala Kali' in southern Punjab, and 'Tor Tora' in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Referring to the meaning of 'blackness' expresses the social stigma that is attached to the act of adultery as well as the person guilty of it that stigma is deemed to be removed only through the death of the accused one (Rabia, 2001).

Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy's documentary, *A Girl in the River: Price of Forgiveness* is a true story about an 18 years old young girl Saba Qaisar, from Gujranwala, Punjab, who was almost killed by her

own relative and father and thrown away into a river. Although she survived, she was shot in the head because of her elopement with her fiancé which was against her family's honour. She refused to marry her uncle's brother-in-law, escaped with her fiancé whom she loved, and married him (Hafeez, 2016). Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy was interviewed where she exposed the story of honour killing in Pakistani society from the perspective of a girl who survived. Sharmeen Obaid demonstrated in the documentary the heinous act of killing in the name of so-called honour through the voice of a survivor. She was asked by the interviewer, how did she come across the case of Saba? And she expressed her reason behind the story of Saba. She told that somewhere in a newspaper she read about that girl who was shot in the head and dumped into a river, survived, and was hospitalized. She contacted to find the hospital. And that way found her and listened to her story (Clark, n.d.). The traumatic situation that Saba faced was due to the ill-treatment of her family. She fought against them but end up forgiving them because of public pressure.

According to Al Qahtani, Almutairi, et al. (2022), during the time of 1998 to 2003 the Pakistan Ministry of Interior reported a total of 4101 cases of honor-based killings to the court which is believed to be the highest ratio in Pakistan. The estimation in 2013 increased to 869 cases while in 2014, it was 1000 cases, and in 2015, the ratio of cases increased by 1100 in the report of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Furthermore, honour killings, in a study, were reported in Pakistan of about 1957 women who were killed and blamed for extramarital affairs. It was reported that the number of married women was found a total of 88%, whereas the number of young age girls was 18% in them (Al Qahatani et al. 2022). According to Dawn News (2022, 5 Feb), Karo Kari in the local parlance of Sukkur, honour killing, was reported as 176 people, mostly women in them. It shows an alarming issue in Sukkur where women became prey to the uncontrolled custom of the area. It was reported by Sindh Suhai Sath which is a non-governmental organization. Traumatic situations lead to serious stress and dangerous consequences for the

families of victims and victims who survived that situation. These situations include sexual abuse, terror and war, domestic violence, physical and psychological abuse, violence against others, and accidents and natural disasters. According to a BBC news report (2012), some officials in Pakistan were found traveling to a north-western region to find the story of four women who were murdered in an honour killing because they were seen singing wedding songs and watched by two men who were dancing on those songs. The report shows that the family was interviewed and they thought that this action brought dishonour to their family and community on the basis of this, they murdered them in the name of so-called honour.

In another globally highlighted murder case of Farzana Parveen in BBC News 2014, a 30 years old pregnant woman was beaten, stoned, and dragged in front of the Lahore High Court for marrying a man of her choice. Parveen was defending her husband, Muhammad Iqbal, in the High court who was accused of abducting her, a case filed by her relatives. The BBC report says that four people were found guilty in the murder of Parveen, her father, brother, cousin, and her former fiancé. In order to follow the trend of so-called Honour-based killing Parveen was traumatized by her own family and then murdered inhumanely in front of the court. It is important to mention that where there is honour, there will be traumatizing situations a person can go through for the sake of securing that honour of the family. If not so, it leads to social extremism and domestic violence.

3. Data Analysis

In a patriarchal society like Pakistan, laws and rules are twisted in a way that has to do with how women should walk, talk, live, or even breathe. Culturally and ethnically diverse, the country has its own values, and customs but the concept of honour and respect is always related to women's actions and behavior. In all cultures, women are subjugated to a level that certain parameters are set by the patriarchal society in the name of religion and are targeted and traumatized if violates the family's respect and honour. Particularly, the male members of the house have

the freedom to violate any such rules without punishment because, to men, there is no honour attached as per society. Honour-based killing has been restricted only to women rather than men. One wrong move of a female destroys the social respect of her family in society. This has become the reason that the lives of women are strongly controlled by the male members of society which has now and then become socially constructed.

Since Pakistan is an Islamic state so even the Islamic laws have given women all the due rights of inheritance, and free will to accept or reject a proposal, the right of education is somehow taken away by twisting the Islamic principles for their own sake, making women the center of protecting family's honor without disobeying. But the harsh reality of women's life is that they are living a suppressed life by accepting all the orders of men and forced marriages have become one of the grave issues of the day. If a woman refuses to obey the orders, she is terrorized and traumatized through domestic violence for forced marriage and confronts brutal violence or social extremism in the hands of a patriarchal society.

These honour killings are mainly caused due to refusal of arranged marriages, false accusations, suspicion, and elopement, etc. Furthermore, women in rural areas are treated like slaves, they are expected to work in the fields and houses and obey their men, abide by their rules and orders to sustain their honour. Refusal of any order will eventually cause them to lose their life in a most traumatic way. Almost in every society around the world, honour is attached to women and not men. Everywhere around, men can be seen cheating on multiple women, even then, society never overlooks it. But, if the same act is done by a woman, she is classified into certain groups with certain slang in Western culture. Whereas, the Eastern culture is more primitive. The entire concept of honour in familial reputation is attached to women. Women are advised to act, live, walk, and talk in a certain manner. Refraining from all these leads to the agitation of men's ego and the result leads to domestic violence, trauma, and honour-based killing.

The Winter's Tale is another masterpiece of Shakespeare that critically touches on the theme of violence against women, honour-based killing

leading to trauma precisely for women. A Pakistani adaptation of *The Winter's Tale's Fasana-e-Ajaib* deals with the same themes of honour killing, trauma, and violence against women in a patriarchal society. In both stories we see that women are subjugated to extreme violence i.e., only on the basis of suspicion where no chance of explanation is provided to the victim and a brutal punishment is announced. The scenes from both plays put us in a state of complete shock and despair at the subjugation that draws our attention to masculine power and authority that has been confiscating the lives of women for such a long time.

In both plays, we come across the fact that the Queen is imprisoned first, on the basis of suspicion and false accusations. It shows that even the powerful woman in the kingdom could not get away with this. It also portrays the lack of power and authority a woman has, and in spite of everything, a woman is falsely accused of illicit relations with a friend and there is no way to escape from it, especially if the allegations are made by a male gender. In Act 1 Scene 2 of *Fasana e Ajaib*, we can see that King Leontes asks Queen Hermione herself to say something to make the Bohemian king stay longer as she is standing quiet.

Leontes: *Tongue-tied, our queen? Speak you.* (ACT 1 SCENE 2)

And when the Queen finally starts speaking and acts according to the order of her husband by persuading the Bohemian king, the male ego of the king is hurt and without any evidence, any speculation, and any rumor, she is accused of unfaithfulness and characterless woman. Here, it also shows that throughout the conversation between both the kings she waits for the permission of her husband to speak. She herself does not dare to talk which shows the very power of male over female gender on a certain scale.

Leontes: *Such warmth, such spontaneity, such closeness, it can be the result of sexual intercourse.* (ACT 1 SCENE 2)

These lines also uncover the mentality of men who look at women only from the perspective of deception and infidelity. The king's malicious words are shots in the dark that depict his ill-

mentality and nature against the female gender. When Leontes further utters generally regarding women that:

Leontes: *But what about a woman, she says anything. It is like that, no matter what ornaments and jewelry she wears, she is like a fake ornament (ACT 1 SCENE 2). Undoubtedly, many wives warm up their husband's beds with someone else before this. And in this all that I am talking about, there are many men who are holding their wives in their arms without them knowing about it, but in their absence, their neighbor has already achieved love with their wives. (ACT1 SCENE 2)*

The above lines highlight the scale of serious allegations drawn at a woman by her own husband without any evidence or proof. These cases can be found almost all around the globe and are evidently found in Pakistan as well.

Social Extremism and Domestic Violence in Pakistan

Literature has always had the potential to highlight the serious social, political, and cultural issues of the society. Many problems and issues that cannot be discussed and talked about directly are pointed out and highlighted through literature in order to address the desired message by targeting the grave and serious issues of society. In the same manner, *The Winter's Tale* and *Fasana-e-Ajaib* serve as a base for highlighting the issues such as violence, honor-based killing, and traumas. These issues can be found in a large proportion in Pakistan where honour is entirely related to the status of women. *Fasana-e-Ajaib*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is powerful enough to highlight cases that are honour-based killing, especially in Pakistan.

One of the triggered cases is that of Farzana Parveen. Looking at *The Winter's Tale* and the Pakistani adaptation *Fasana e Ajaib*, we can draw a line of similarity not only of the similar issues such as violence, patriarchy, honour killing, and social extremism that are highlighted and discussed through the adaptation, but also light up ways for addressing the issues related to honour killing in Pakistani society. It deals with how women are brutally killed in the name of so-called honour by their family members.

The medium of adapting and appropriating the plays is powerful enough to address the social issues of Pakistani society i.e., honour-based killing, especially the murder case of Farzana Parveen- a local resident of Pakistan who was killed by men of her own family outside a court for marrying a guy of her own choice. The family members including her father, brother, and her ex-fiancé stoned her to death outside the court because of the shame that she had brought to the family by marrying a man of her choice. It draws our attention to the problem faced by women in Pakistan, where their free will and consent seem impossible to show in front of the family, even in the 21st century.

The mass murder of women to please the ego of men in Pakistani society is a big red flag, for which active laws should be implemented in such cases. Otherwise, the cases like Farzana Parveen would be repeated without any halt. There are many such cases of honour-based killing. One of the most prominent cases is the murder of Farzana Parveen and a documentary made by Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy by the name *A Girl in the River: Price of Forgiveness*, which tells the story of Saba, a 19 years old girl who is dumped into the river by her father and uncle for violating the so-called honour of the family by eloping with her fiancé. Likewise, the murder of Qandeel Baloch, Saba Qaisar, and many more females have suffered and are still suffering at the hands of patriarchy in Pakistan, where law and religion are both twisted by men of the society to impose an upper hand on women in order to control their lives, deprive them of their due rights, free will, and freedom of expression.

As demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, 'Trauma' and 'Honour' go side by side. For the sake of so-called honour, a patriarchal society traumatizes females and tortures them mentally, emotionally, and physically. Their voices are suppressed by men in order to rescue their wounded pride. Females are used mostly as an object rather than humans in this regard and targeted for expressing their freedom of choice. Their lives are taken and this is considered a prestigious act. On the basis of false accusations and wrong allegations, females are subjugated and

traumatized for opening up about their choices in life.

Similarly, in *The Winter's Tale* Queen Hermione a pregnant woman, is traumatized and banished from her young son and treason by her husband, King Leontes. Just like Hermione is bearing with the grief and excessive trauma of the same intensity and extremity in the Elizabethan era, the same is the case with today's Pakistani society where so-called honour is prevalent and is a base for most tragic and traumatic events regarding women and their issues. The case of Farzana Parveen triggered the story of Hermione and many more in the list that is off the record because not everyone speaks publicly about such issues due to the fact that it has taken shape as the most esteemed cultural or societal practice. Therefore, people talk less about tormenting females in the process of protecting their honour.

4. Conclusion

Drama is an important tool used not only for entertainment but as a medium to highlight various social, cultural, religious or political issues in order to bring reformation in society, and through such construction it is possible to create an empathetic connection by localizing it to a particular context. *The Winter's Tale* in general and *Fasana-e-Ajaib* in particular have the potential to foreground the issues of Trauma and Honor. This study positively asserts how real-life problems such as social extremism and domestic violence in Pakistani society can be highlighted through adaptation and appropriation of Shakespeare's plays. Moreover, parallels between the two plays have led to addressing and highlighting the case of Farzana Parveen, which can bring about a change in society through academia.

Contribution Note:

All three authors contributed equally to the conception, design, analysis, writing, and revision of this manuscript.

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