



SHAKESPEARE'S ORIENTAL VIEWS IN OTHELLO

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ABSTRACT :

Shakespeare's most of the tragedies are studied in the specific aspect and considered that they are exposing the universal aspects of human life. None of the critics dares to talk about his oriental views laid in his bottom of heart. In each tragic plays, these aspects obviously seem in nutshell. Only Tempest is considered as a play of oriental views. But every character who suffers from his tragic flaw, can be considered as a occidental character and orients deliberately create such system or mind pattern by which the audience feels that the sufferers should suffer more to get rid from their black deeds. Othello is such a play which is ever considered as a play of racism. None of the researchers tried to tread beyond racism. The next step of study the play Othello is to look at it with the oriental views presented in this play. The protagonist of the play Othello belongs to the black race. Yet Desdemona falls in his love. Actually, many incidents in the play expose that it was not a love but the hate against black community which leads Desdemona to drag Othello in the jaw of death. The present article minutely concentrates on playwright's oriental views through the play Othello.

KEYWORDS : racism, oriental, occidental, tragic flaw, etc.

INTRODUCTION:

The oriental aspect is one of the important features that affect people's lives. When such cruel ideology becomes dominant in the society, its bitter fruits begin to spoil the lives of all those whose subconscious mind protect this destructing ideology. Even it leads and shapes the fates of the major characters in the play because of the reality that the acceptance of such people to a different society can be difficult, and as it has been one of the biggest problems of human being from the very beginning of history. The Orientals always try to demolish the existence of the occidentals or make them their slaves. The bravery and greatness of the occidentals is unbearable thing for the white or western or oriental ideology. In his article, Howard states that from the beginning of the classical theoretical statements and formalization of it, Oriental aspect has always been a considerable sociological subject hitherto (2000: 169). Even today there is unending war between Orientals and Occidentals. Occidentals have been defeated by the immodesty of exalting their races and make the mistake of tyrannizing over other races. As a result of not accepting and looking down on occidentals, it has already taken place in societies. The researchers like Miles and Brown state that Orientalism deflects mankind and interpersonal connections, barbarizes and depersonalizes its object, as a result of this barbarizes and depersonalizes people who pronounce this expression as well. Orientalism is a study of how orientals deny the existence of the eastern people or occidentals. It is a rejection of mankind and a means of legalizing diversity. Whence, it is a big issue and a threat to the community in which it is pronounced and the community which favour ostracizing exercises (2003:10-11). Though Racism was a reality of Elizabethan Era and society, the Elizabethan writers didn't indulge the oriental views in their plays. Only it was Shakespeare who unconsciously poured the plant of Orientalism in

his most of the plays. In this article, the researcher attempted to expose Shakespeare's Oriental views portrayed in *Othello*.

Though racism constitutes the origin of the play, oriental aspect of the playwright matters a lot. According to Robeson, "Othello is a tragedy of racial conflict, a tragedy of honor, rather than jealousy (qtd. In Andreas, 39)". Racial prejudice leads Desdemona to attract Othello and to be the cause of his destruction. It turns the lives of both Desdemona and Othello into hell. Othello can be shown as one of the deplorable representative of occidental world. As he was brave, he was a favourite knight of the king. But he wouldn't give his daughter's hand to Othello as he was from the occidental class. It is shown in the play that Desdemona falls in love of Othello after listening to him his life story. She was born and brought up in oriental class which would hate the occidentals. Since her childhood, she might have observed that her father's battle is against occidentals who are going to challenge the false ideology of universalism of the orientals. It was natural for Desdemona to be curious to know the world of Othello, a representative of occidentals. Othello proves himself to be a successful soldier. Although he is a Moor, he dedicates himself to serve to society's goals. He was the most hardworking man and respected soldier in the army. When the relationship of Desdemona and Othello leads them to the matter of marriage, Shakespeare succeeds to strengthen the oriental ideology among other characters like Iago and Brabantio. The prejudice of his being occidental puts up a wall in front of the eyes of others. The thought of discrimination cannot or should not always have to display itself as torturing or chafing physically the one that is different or being alienated. The use of language may possess a cruel function and serve the ones who are in want of emphasizing otherness. So Othello is being insulted by the others mercilessly. The modern philosopher, Edward Said states, "There's no orientalism without a language." The thing here is not that actions of oriental violence comprise just words; however, rather than this they must have a word. Although it gives the apology of 'blood, color, birth' or rather it makes use of 'naturalist and sometimes creationist discourse' racism constantly unclashes the corruption of a man, the "talking animal". It does not ascertain; it 'discriminates' (1985: 39). He (1985: 41) adds that from the very beginning of the *Othello*, 'traditional racist sentiment and prejudice' infuse the language and break out as an anticipated 'violence' at the end of the play when "Chaos is come again" (III.iii.92).

The play, *Othello*, first of all gives the signal of Orientalism and the same is developed in the last play of Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. The words like "Moor" and "Black" are repeated several times in the play. They expose the image of occidentals in the eye of orientals. Most of the characters directly hate Othello. There is most brilliant character Desdemona who hides her hate about Othello and her subconscious is always busy in thinking of how to destroy the lives of Othello. It was impossible either for king or Iago to end the life of Othello. She wanted to kill him because her subconscious ponders on the future of her father's empire. She knows that people will accept Othello as their king due to his braveness. Though she wants to be the emperor of her father's nation, she will not get the opportunity due to Othello. So she wants to destroy him. Even she knows that none can kill him except her. She was conscious about the enmity between the white Iago and her husband. Yet she doesn't expose the fact to Othello. She wanted to finish him by serving him slow poison of love. When her handkerchief was stolen, she doesn't explain what might have happened, instead she embraced to death so that he would naturally die if he gets the fact. Even she manages unconsciously to know him the fact that Iago is guilty. She even knows that the Moor neither will excuse to Iago nor himself. She bears her death very silently but after her death everything happens as her subconscious had planned. The death of Othello proves that he was really mad in the love of Desdemona she wasn't because if so she would have tried to get rid from the objection of Othello. In this way, the oppressor succeeded to destroy oppressed. The subconscious of Desdemona was under the impression if she dies, nothing will happen but if Othello dies, the nation will be saved from black's governance. In this way, Desdemona is in some extent responsible to sustain the duel between the oppressed and oppressor or Orientals and Occidentals. At the very beginning of the *Othello*, instead of the name of the protagonist Othello, the words of "thick-lips" (I.i.66), and "an old black ram" are articulated (I.i.87). It is surprising that

before the name, comes the bad definitions made by the people who are at Othello's service. Adler emphasizes that in the first scene prior to the meeting of the audience with Othello, several insulting attributions are made, "the stereotyped lasciviousness" is emphasized by various brutal bindings and the race's black and devil's black are incorporated (1974: 250- 251).

Iago is Othello's malignant 'ancient' ensign who begins to talk against him and spreads poison among other characters against Othello. He exposes his inner voice with "Now, sir, be judge yourself/Whether I in any just term am affined/To love the Moor." (I.i.37-39). It shows that it is not the voice of Iago, but the writer himself is talking against the occidental Moor. He succeeded to create negative atmosphere against Othello through the utterances of Iago which continue until the end of the play. Likewise, the other characters contribute to the occidental situation of Othello: For example, Desdemona's father Brabantio, Roderigo- a Venetian gentleman, Duke of Venice, Gratiano- Desdemona's uncle, Lodovico- Desdemona's cousin, Cassio, Emilia and finally Montano- the governor of Cyprus. There are other attributions except for "Moor" and "Black" like "an old black ram" (I.i.87); "... the sooty bosom of such a thing as thou – to fear, not to delight" (I.ii.70); "... what delight shall she have to look on the devil" (II.i.220-221); "O murderous coxcomb"(V.ii.234). According to Adler (1974: 250- 251) the devil's blackness and Othello's blackness, the abnormal integration of 'evil with good and of African with European' are equated with each other through the replacement: "Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you" (I. i. 91). When the audience meets the noble Moor, his blackness has been verbally linked with ugliness, the strange and unnatural, gross animal sensuality, and the evil of the devil himself.

Iago is shown busy to make destructive plans against Othello all over the play. When his devilish plans continue in his speech to Roderigo, he asserts that the feelings of Desdemona will fade away in time and fed up with her husband. He creates his own theory about Desdemona's search for beauty in Othello. He thinks that after getting bored with the stories of the Moor, Desdemona will naturally depart from Othello. He feels that she will not take pleasure from looking this devil's face:

Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark
Me with what violence she first loved the Moor, but for
Bragging and telling her fantastical lies. And will she
Love him still for prating? Let not thy discreet heart
Think it. Her eye must be fed; and what delight shall she
Have to look on the devil? When the blood is made dull
With the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame
It and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in
Favour, sympathy in years, manners and beauties; all
Which the Moor is defective in. Now, for want of these
Required conveniences, her delicate tenderness will find
Itself abused, begin to heave the gorge, disrelish and
Abhor the Moor. Very nature will instruct her in it and
Compel her to some second choice. (II.i. 216-229)

The hatred of occidental identity fertilizes the seeds of disgusting plans of Iago against Othello. Iago is infected with Othello's suspicions of his wife. The inferiority complex of Othello leads him to believe blindly all other character around him. Not only Iago ostracizes Othello, but also turns others against him and it represent his thoughts of being black, to some extent proving natural possibility of being cheated. Othello is alienated personality in the play so he easily believes on Iago against his wife and feels that Desdemona can cheat him. A well known critic of Oriental study Özen (2004: 3) points out that Othello's estrangement is connected to his 'ethnicity and culture', and the color of his skin cause him feel alienated by the 'white Venetian' society as a result he does not thrust Desdemona considering that he is not well enough for her. She says: "Othello's blindness on love is due to his lack of self-knowledge as well as self-confidence for he is a Moor," that is to say as a beautiful Venetian woman's appealing to a Moor is not natural according

to society, Othello more 'strengthens his belief in his wife's infidelity': "Haply, for I am black...She's gone" (III.iii.263-9).

Othello was a good character except for his being a 'Black and a Moor', but his killing of Desdemona makes him bad even in the eyes of the people who think good of him. Emilia, Iago's wife and servant of Desdemona shows her hatred against Othello when she comes to know that Othello killed Desdemona as "O, the more angel she, And you the blacker devil!" (V.ii. 129-31). Berry indicates: "Her cynical attitude towards men has apparently masked a revulsion against Othello's blackness. Having exposed his evil, Othello becomes for her a "blacker devil," the phrase revealing that in her imagination he has always been a black devil" (1990: 320).

CONCLUSION:

As a result, the inescapable and caustic effects of Orientalism change lives of Othello and Desdemona intensely. It is observed that a society having the intolerance of oriental aspects can control love and sometimes there cannot be the restraint of oriental people at destroying the people's contentment. Iago's bad character growth progressing on the way of hurtful Othello with feeling of oriental ideology and even dedicating himself to working under the shocking power of the Orientalism is experienced. Othello cannot stretch the clouds in front of his own eyes, and persist on being unaware of Iago's step by step poisoning of him against his wife. Basically, Othello has antipathy of his roots and Iago is already aware of this and it provides him to devastate Othello's life. Othello's psychology is affected by his origin and he has the feeling of segregation. This is the most steadfast arm that Iago has and the gun which triggers the idea that as others peril him as inferior, his wife can also cheat him. He becomes so blind with manipulations of villain Iago that he prepares the death of his faithful Desdemona and his own destruction. In this way, the playwright seems successful to view the oriental aspects throughout the play.

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