



# The Moor and the fair lady- An analysis of Othello, Shakespeare's play through the lens of marginalisation

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**Abstract**— William Shakespeare's play *Othello* features the life of Othello, a black Moor, a Muslim, who although is the most trusted man of the King of Venice, struggles to fit in with the prominent White, Christian medieval framework of Venice. He indirectly subscribes to the prevailing morality and thinks himself inferior to the rich, white European Christians. He tries to be like them, imbibing their values and their codes, but still struggles with his different color and has an inferiority complex. This ultimately leads to his downfall and it results in him killing his beloved wife, Desdemona and it ultimately led to his suicide.

**Keywords**— *Othello, black Moor, King of Venice.*

## INTRODUCTION

This article tries to view the Shakespearean play *Othello* through the lens of marginalisation and tries to ascertain the possible harmful psychological effects for marginalisation and how it destroys the marginalised people in their desperate bid to conform to societal expectations placed upon them and not be outsiders. Such an attempt on their part does not give them the access to society as a member which they crave, but rather destroy their entire notion of identity and brings great physical and mental after-effects.

The marginalised are a group of people who had been removed from the mass society either socially, politically or economically. (Literature- A medium allowing us to understand the notion of marginalised communities). William Shakespeare's play *Othello* speaks about Othello, a Moor, a black man, who is a Muslim (Othello) He is a trusted man of the King of Venice and holds immense power. But, he still has a feeling that he is somehow not equal to the White Europeans surrounding him, and in a way to be like them, concurs to the dominant philosophy of that time which forbade erotic love between a man and a wife and likened that to adultery. Desdemona's father could not make himself accept that Desdemona eloped with Othello out of her own free-will, and thinks that Othello used witchcraft upon her to make her fall in love with him. He cannot understand how her fair daughter could choose

*Othello*, a black Muslim. This shows the prejudice that was associated with Othello, who represents the unknown, and on whom is accused demonic and evil powers. This shows the typical colonial mentality which treats the outsiders, the black, the different, as something to be hated and avoided. The villain of this play is Iago, a European white man, who loathes being under the service of the Moor, Othello, whom Iago thinks is beneath him. He swears revenge when Othello appoints Cassio, another officer on a post which Iago believed would be his. He poisons Othello's ear about speculations of Desdemona's infidelity which was his method of revenge against the Moor.

After countless veiled "hints" by Iago about Desdemona's affair with Othello's trusted man, Cassio, Othello strikes Desdemona and had an epileptic fit due to jealousy. This shows his underlying insecurity about his color and his anxiety about how a fair lady like Desdemona chose a black man like him. These thoughts might have been in his head after the incident with Desdemona's father, a Venetian nobleman, who accused Othello of bewitching his daughter. This shows the European mindset which would never accept someone who is not White or Christian and deems it impossible for a European woman to love a colored man in lieu of his own worth and not by any supernatural assistance.

Othello gets swayed by Iago's "suggestions" purely because of his feeling of subordination to the dominant European society in which he lives and which unconsciously defines his actions to appear like everybody else. He sees Cassio as the embodiment of everything he is not - fair, white, European man of good origins, as compared to himself – a black Moor with thick lips. He feels himself not deserving of Desdemona and feels that he is less of a romantic partner for her.

Desdemona, too, is marginalised – before marriage, she is under the control of her father, after marriage it shifted to her husband Othello. She fell in love with Othello by hearing his stories of valour and for her that decision, she is disowned by her father. She is the archetypal fair European lady, who is under the grip of philosophy that dictates that love between a man and his beloved should be strictly for reproductive purposes and anything more steps on the close territory of prostitution. Her standing as an upper-class, white European woman is used as the trump card by Iago in his master plan to bring Othello down as that position is used by him to make Othello feel himself as undeserving of Desdemona's affections. She loves Othello and had to bear his beatings which were borne out of his jealousy and suspicions which had no solid proof, which was just a mind-game played on him by Iago.

She is a character burdened by the patriarchal expectations placed upon women regarding purity and chastity and this coupled with Iago's ploy, led to her getting killed by her own husband Othello.

### CONCLUSION

Othello and Desdemona are two characters who are marginalised by the dominant European, white, Christian Venetian society. Othello by his religion as a Muslim and his black color, Desdemona as a noble woman, a Christian and a fair lady. Both of them tried to "be like" everyone they saw around them, one by conforming to societal standards and the other by trying his utmost to become a member of the society, even at a cost of great personal loss. Both of them show what disastrous consequences can marginalisation wreak and how such people fall victims of scheming people who use their feeling of not-belonging and a social position dictated by societal morality for their own selfish ends.

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