



**DESDEMONA:  
DISMAL DISPOSITION IN DOWNRIGHT DAYS**

**SURESH D. SUTAR**

Asst. Prof. & Head Deptt of English  
Dr. Tatyasheb Natu College of Arts and  
Senior College of Commerce, Margtamhane.  
Tal- Chiplun, Dist-Ratnagiri MS India.

**ABSTRACT**

*Art is the vision of a sensitive soul that with the wings of imagination always aspires to heal human life. It takes us to our origin, brings us into the present and compels us to dream for fine future. Men of letters like Shakespeare have always figuratively fought for the justice in their tragedies by revealing the pungent plight of fair and fragile female. Detail delineation of Desdemona in 'Othello' speaks a lot. Not the Boss but submissive servant is many times right though the servant is unwilling to unveil and utter the fact. House is transformed into home by the fixed point of a compass in the family and not the moveable one who tours tirelessly away from home mostly for his own gains. Still, the wife (a fixed point) is always compelled to be flat and always loyal to the husband, to the gifts given by him and to the home built by him that he asserts persistently. The wife is all the time tied with a golden chain to the pillar of the house. On the contrary, the husband (a movable point) has been intentionally given almost a liberated license to do much injustice to his wife by all means granted by the so-called patriarchic society. Desdemona in 'Othello' lives and dies for the other who is her rich father, a Venetian senator in the beginning and her jealous husband later. It reveals the fact that lack of poetic justice again underscores the dismal disposition of Desdemona.*

**Keywords:** Art, God, Mythology, Monalisa, suffering, fair female.

The term 'God' has three letters which stand for three unique Gods in Hindu religion referred as 'G' for generator, 'O' for operator and 'D' for dissolver. It means Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahesha /Shankar respectively. It is said in Hindu Mythology that Lord Vishnu once asked Lord Brahma to generate species which will have pious particle of Him. Accordingly, Lord Brahma generated the species called 'Man'. The creation of rational and social animal on the earth called 'Man' has such kind of deep, dense and pious origin, etymology and history. This very foundation significantly underlines the fact that God sees His own image in the image of man that is His own creation. Ultimately, it is the moral and



ethical liability of this rational creature called man to maintain his divine outline from both internally and externally, apparently and realistically. His physic and psyche should be earnestly and sincerely enthusiastic to discharge his own moral responsibility in life towards innumerable species. And this can be done only through the due respect shared by both man and woman being both the equally integral parts of human being which cannot survive without each other that is they are reciprocal by nature. To glorify this fine fusion we have half man half woman God called Ardhanari Nateshwar in Hindu religion. Thus man has to give due respect to his better half called woman who can be either a daughter, a sister or a wife or a mother in the life of him. But in fact, things are quite different for right from the inception of life women have been insulted by all means and ways by the male patriarchy. They are hardly consulted in any domestic or non domestic matter within the four walls or outside the family fortifications. They have been beautifully labeled as the weaker section of the society. They are made the goddesses confined within the four walls of the house specifically generated by its creator. Tennyson one of the representative poets has rightly uttered the pungent plight of women in the Victorian society of his time as:

**“Man for the field and woman for the hearth,  
*Man for the sword and for the needle she*  
*Man to command and woman to obey*  
All else confusion” (01)**

Literature is a fine art. It reasonably reflects the quite acute happenings in human life. Hence, it has mirrored the bitter crushing of sensitive, fragile female minds and physics at the hands of harsh boastful and authoritative men. It has delineated the hard and one sided approach and attitude of male-dominated society towards women, purposefully popularized as the delicate section of society.

William Shakespeare has rightly proved to be one of the authentic and creative writers of the world. In his plays, he has genuinely and legitimately delineated the imaginative reconstruction of human life of his period. Ultimately very uniquely all his plays have undergone through his generative experience, sense of understanding, unique style of expression and all his plays come out as a magnificent mirror to us in which we can rightly apprehend our own feelings emotions and aspirations crystal clearly. In this sense, all have rightly stated that Shakespeare is the Monalisa of English literature. Each and everyone irrespective of his or her cast and creed acutely view himself or herself in reading or watching the plays of the world-famous dramatist. No doubt, his plays have been realistically relied on various sources available or made available at his time. But, this man of letters has rightly fused the fact with the fiction, reality with the imagination, qualities of head with the qualities of heart and has proved that literature is not an escape from life but it is an escape into life. It is another world where every suffering soul obtains solace.

Shakespeare's four great tragedies have placed him on the peak of popularity. The tragedy of "Othello" has quite authentically depicted the pungent plight of poor Desdemona, a pathetic female persona in the play. Desdemona is a Greek name which means "ill-fated, unfortunate". She is from rich and wealthy dynasty. But she has been treated as an object not an emotional subject. Her husband Othello calls her an "ill-starred wench". He regards her as his own possession too. He has also a sense of fear in his mind for Desdemona is quite charming and fascinating fair sex but he is a valiant moor having no streak of apparent handsomeness. This very superficial slit in their appearance cultivates the psyche of Othello in such a way that it begets the bead of distrust in their married life which engenders the life of innocent Desdemona. Having become insane by jealousy and being known in this state by the devilish spirit Iago, the black mind awakens Brabantio with the news that Othello has eloped with Desdemona.

**“Awake! what, ho Brabantio! thives! thives! thives!  
Look to your house, your daughter and your bags!  
Thives! thives! (02)**

Desdemona, Brabantio's unmarried daughter is basically considered as her father's private property. So, tragically both her father earlier and her husband later in her married life regard her as their own belonging respectively and both want to treat her as a material object not an emotional subject. In fact, she has been sandwiched between her father and her husband which compels her to utter:

**“My noble father,  
I do perceive here a divided duty” (03)**

Since she's married to Othello, a man several years senior to her without her father's permission, Iago suggests that Othello has stolen her from Brabantio. He suggests that Desdemona's elopement is a kind of thievery. Not only this, he makes Othello to believe that Desdemona is having a secret affair with his lieutenant Michael Cassio whom he has promoted recently. Iago takes deep disadvantage of the unique trust that Othello has in him which leads to the total suffering of Desdemona, the fair sex being she the better half of Othello. Wives being the fine foundations of homes of men have been basically attacked by the avengers for no fault of them. Ultimately the writer of the play has given due space (1097 lines) for the bitter actions of Iago. The hero has been nicely neglected by giving less space as compared to the schemer. And this splendid space has been totally used by the devilish schemer to devastate and demolish the innocent Desdemona which underlines the fact that the author has made an injustice to the weaker characters keeping in line with the feature of his tragedies that his tragedies have no poetic justice.



The clean and clear intention of Iago is to take revenge of Othello's promoting younger and inexperienced Cassio to the higher rank in military and not him a battle-tested soldier by neglecting the long experience of him on the battle field. Being Desdemona the wife of Othello, and being she more fair and beautiful becomes an ultimate and eventual prey for Iago.

God has given sensual organs to human being in order to obtain sense and thereby make the living quite considerably meaningful and consequential. But, in fact, the so-called rational and so-called social animal called man hardly uses his meaningful organs constructively for the betterment of life around him. If he uses them, or has used them it is for the destruction of his self or the selves of other and not for the betterment of whole life. Thus, merely believing in the words of Iago and the sight shown to him, Othello unfortunately proves his wife unfaithful and untrue to him and smothers the innocent Desdemona nicely sleeping on the bed.

Desdemona is in the form of an object and not in the form of a living emotional subject who has her own feelings and knows what is better for her and her husband. No doubt, she enrages and disappoints her father, a Venetian senator, by eloping with Othello a man several years senior to her. It is against the prestige of her own father. But instead of blaming her, Brabantio blames Othello of seducing Desdemona by witchcraft Though Othello defends himself that she was impressed by the stories of his dangerous military life, Brabantio curses his son-in-law.

**“Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see.  
She hath deceived her father and may thee.” (04)**

He affirms and assures that one day Desdemona will betray Othello which sows the first seed of suspicion in the fertile land of Othello's psyche that causes for the sad death of Desdemona. Thus, father paves her path for plight. And it is the devilish schemer Iago who continuously and persistently waters and cultivates the land of Othello which is full of doubts. Ultimately Othello strikes Desdemona in public and calls her a whore too which confuses her a lot. She totally fails in understanding the nature of her husband. Still she boldly believes in her love for him. All this finally marginalizes the fair sex and she is smothered by a pillow in a bed covered in her wedding sheets by her own jealous husband. But before breathing her last, she tries to defend her husband which underlines the fact that married women do not defame both their home and husband even at the cost of their own life. In response to Emilia's question, “O, who hath done this deed?” Desdemona's final words are:

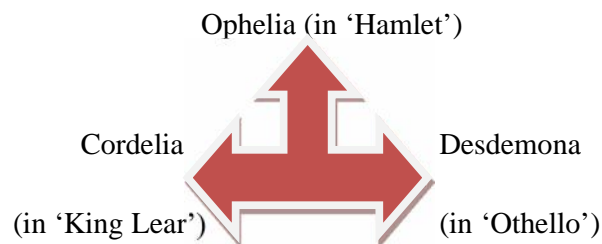


**“Nobody, I myself. Farewell.  
Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell” (05).**

Tragically, Desdemona is actually aware of her imminent death. She asks Emilia to put her wedding sheets on the bed. She also asks Emilia to bury her in these sheets should she die first. The last time we see Desdemona before she awakens to find Othello standing over her with murder in his eyes, she sings a song she learned from her mother’s maid:

**“She was in love; and he proved mad  
And did forsake her. She had a song of willow.  
And she died singing it. That song tonight  
Will not go from my mind” (06).**

Love, War and Death are the vital universal themes around which every literature in the world revolves radiantly. Love is the fundamental ingredient of human life. Rather it is the very vital force of human being in all his stages. It is the pure oxygen which increases the span of mortal human being. However in “Othello” it does not provide any proper direction to Desdemona. On the contrary, it buys a coffin for her for her eternal sleep. She gets an access to the heart of Othello. However it does not empower her to enter the mind of him. Ultimately, the element of chance and her innocence destroy her in detail. The same happens in the case of Shakespeare’s other heroines causing for their pathetic journey.



Othello realizes that love in marriage requires time to build and rebuild trust between the husband and wife. However, the villain lessens the time required by Othello by working quickly on the conspiracy. Othello and Desdemona immediately get attracted to each other. This attraction is based on passion. And it is on this passion that Desdemona builds a hasty marriage and a house of devotion. She is so speedy in her love-making that she is ahead to Othello in the race. This reminds us the message by Friar in “Romeo and Juliet” as:

***These violent delights have violent ends  
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,  
Which as they kiss consume. (07)***



Shakespeare's plays often put emphasis on the role of the female characters and their influence on the male protagonists. Thus, Ophelia's insanity influences Hamlet, Romeo's love for Juliet leads both to the churchyard, or Lady Macbeth influences the devilish deeds of Macbeth. All these instances underscore the fact that Shakespeare has only heroines suffering at the hands of their heroes. But are these heroines in sound solace or in pungent plight is the question an industrious mind has to answer.

## WORKS CITED

1. A History of English Literature Vol. III by J. N. Mundra and Dr.S. C. Mundra  
Published by Prakash Book Depot Tenth Edition Bareilly 1994  
Page No.31, Line No.07to
2. William Shakespeare Othello published by Surjeet Publications First Edition New  
Delhi 1993 Page No.05, Line No.26 to 29
3. ----- Othello published by Surjeet Publications First Edition New  
Delhi 1993 Page No 30 Line No. 180 to 181
4. ----- Othello published by Surjeet Publications First Edition New  
Delhi 1993 Page No 23 Line No. 292 to 294
5. ----- Othello published by Surjeet Publications First Edition New  
Delhi 1993 Page No 111 Line No. 120 to 127
6. -----Othello published by Surjeet Publications First Edition New  
Delhi 1993. Page No 98 Line No. 27 to 31
7. ----- Romeo and Juliet ed. by Ramji Lal published by Rama Brothers  
Ninth Edition New Delhi 2008. Page No. 100, Line No. 9 to 11