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## **William Shakespeare's *Othello*: A *rasa* Reading**

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William Shakespeare occupies a unique place in India. Indians have been fond of his works for decades like others all over the globe. His comedies appealed and won our hearts immediately. His tragedies also, though they seemed complex and difficult to make aesthetic appeal initially, became very popular later. *Othello* along with *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* is one of the greatest Shakespearean tragedies. No doubt, most of his tragic heroes do not fit well with the idea of a hero in Indian drama, both classical and popular; as a result they posed complexity for us. *Othello* was one such complex protagonist in the initial stage of its reception in India.

*Othello* is primarily a soldier professionally having all the qualities of a soldier and successful as well. As a human being, he is simple, humane and generous. He is a sincere and dedicated lover. He loves Desdemona very sincerely, but unfortunately, such an unexpected crisis comes in his life that he himself murders her. This makes his life and story tragic. He happens to lose faith on Desdemona's moral character and feels a sense of having been betrayed by her. He actually gets trapped into Iago's conspiracy against himself. Being primarily a soldier, he thinks and feels betrayal to be the greatest sin and loyalty, the greatest virtue. Due to his misunderstanding of Desdemona's integrity, he becomes unlike himself and under the influence of Iago, ultimately kills his innocent and virtuous wife. What is very sad is the fact that a good person like him falls a victim to Iago's conspiring intelligence and an innocent and kind couple meets with a very sad end in such a short period of their marriage. This arouses compassion in the audience.

The play does arouse compassion. The issue is whether audience sympathizes with *Othello*? Or, at least in India, does the audience appreciate such a protagonist, who kills his innocent wife? In Indian aesthetic value system, a protagonist cannot be credulous to this extent that he can kill his wife, because all the other good qualities of any person get diminished due to the lack of *stridakshinya* (a suitable manner of interacting with a woman). Lack of *stridakshinya* is considered a prime demerit of character in India. Also, Indian aesthetics does not appreciate protagonists indulged in sinful acts for personal ego or ambition. Perhaps, that is why Sri Aurobindo found barbarism in these tragedies. Sri Aurobindo states (it can be applicable to *Othello* also) that, while reading *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, one feels that they belong to 'the cruder civilizations and more barbarous national types.' (as quoted in S K Das 56) (Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1972, Vol. III pp. 302-306)



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Pioneer of Indian aesthetics, Bharatmuni, who shaped Indian way of appreciating artistic performances, equally applicable to literature also in a comprehensive manner, speaks of eight *rasas* which correspond with eight Permanent States in every normal human being. They universally appeal to all types of spectators. He includes in these eight sentiments 'Compassion' (*karuana*) also, which is close to the 'tragic' sentiment in the west, but it is not exactly the same. The Greek tragic sentiment is typical of tragedies and pertains to 'tragic heroes'. In Indian dramatic tradition of the ancient time, there was no concept of a tragic hero, who would be overall good, rather better than common men, but due to one fatal flaw in him would fall. Further, in spite of his fall, he would win the sympathy of the spectators, as they would be relaxed that they were not like him. In other words, they tended to both pity and fear him. Such a tragic experience was not found in Indian literature. Bharat discusses different categories of protagonists but does not speak of any such protagonist. His categorization includes *nayakas* like *dhirodhatta*, *dhirodatta*, *dhiralalita* and *dhiraprasanta*. None of them is like the tragic hero in western traditions.

Indian response of pity (*karuna*) towards a character was certainly different. The characters of Indian type were good but sad things happened to them. The sad things used to occur in their lives not because of their fault, but due to other external factors. Moreover, they did not 'fall' at all and hence the question of pitying them never arose. In fact, they were always able to overcome their crises successfully in the course of time and therefore also the issue of pity on them did not arise in Indian dramatic traditions. Indian drama always had poetic justice in them. Thus, tragedy was a new experience for Indians. Naturally, it took some time on our part to come to terms with it. Now, we too feel pity for the tragic heroes under the influence of the west.

In this context, it is worth examining to see what is that which Bharat did not discuss, but a playwright can create in his plays to give tragic experience and make the audience feel compassion (in an alternative way also). India did not have tragedies until it came in contact with the Europeans. It is a very surprising fact that India came in close contact with the Greek people and their culture right from the Maurya period of Indian history. And yet, India did not get acquainted with the literary traditions of tragedy. Or, the tragedy did not appeal to Indians then also and hence it could not grow on Indian soils. Anyway, it is a matter of conjecture only. Now, if one tries to examine a tragedy through Indian perspective, particularly, *rasa* theory, what does one come across can be an interesting investigation. So, here, an endeavour is made to examine Shakespeare's *Othello* from the *rasa* perspective and to see whether the protagonist Othello earns the compassion of the audience or not. If he does not, then what are the reasons for the same. Or, if he is able to



command the compassion or *karuna* of the audience in the new socio-cultural context of India, what is it that makes it possible? What is that which was not visualized by Bharata, but Shakespeare could bring in his play that appealed and has been appealing to the Indian audiences also? Also, whether Shakespeare, by chance or coincidence, follows the formulae of Bharatmuni or he does not? How does he succeed in generating *karuna rasa* in his own way? It is also to see whether the readers/spectators feel pathos and sympathy with the protagonist because of his helplessness against his circumstances. Do the spectators excuse him for his errors just because they think that it is but human to act in that way? Is it so, in other words, that, because Othello is basically good, realizes his errors, feels remorse for his actions and opts for self-punishment that readers appreciate his actions and excuse him of his act of killing his wife too? Do his final gestures i.e. true remorse and self punishment liken him to the Indian audiences and win their compassion as a tragic hero?

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee has commented upon Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Othello* and other plays. His was among the first Indian responses to the great playwright way back in 1870s (in *Bankim Rachanabali Vol. II, 1872*). His views are comparative in nature. Much time has passed then. In nearly more than a century and half since then, systematic and elaborate studies of Shakespeare have been made in India. Scholars have applied almost all emerging Western theories for the interpretation of Shakespearean works, but, proportionately, the application of Indian theories is almost negligible.

Every society subscribes to a certain value system and accordingly it judges and evaluates characters in literature and people in society. By and large, in India, the heroes were those who were supposed to be models of their kinds and were always seen as worth following. Hence, in literature, before the arrival of the Western aesthetics, such characters who were good and worth emulating were presented to the readers/audiences as central characters or protagonists. No doubt, in the west also such characters were available. However, they also had other category of good characters, whose actions were to be observed in such a way that the audience learns from their lives what not to emulate from their actions. In other words, literature, in addition to teaching what should be done also taught through such characters what people should not become or do. Our audiences/readers were not accustomed to respond in this manner and hence our responses were not similar to those of the western audiences of the drama. Our literature did not employ the protagonists to proscribe something. Nevertheless, gradually, we also started understanding the western perspective and started appreciating tragic circumstances correctly, though, for us, the heroes were always



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for admiration and not for pity or compassion. Who were we to pity them, when they were better or greater than us? Secondly, Indian heroes were not supposed to make such errors which caused serious harm to someone innocent. If at all any harm was caused, there was always a scope to mend the loss in the end and poetic justice imparted in the end. Thus, the one who was overall good remained good and one who was basically bad only remained bad. On the other hand, in the western tragedy, a good person turns otherwise or degenerates morally on some occasions under pressing circumstances and then he has no scope to recover his goodness and re-establish himself as good again. Though his realization of the errors does occur, the damage that it costs him and others is beyond repair. He sincerely repents but the realization has come so late and he has no scope to undo his wrong actions. This tendency of him, of not sincerely excusing himself, appeals to the audience and makes it sympathize with him. The bad phase is very short in his life. He succeeds in giving us an impression that he was essentially good and had he survived further, he would have certainly remained good after the hard lesson of life. But sadly, he is not fortunate enough to survive anymore.

Indian readers and spectators had to prepare themselves for this type of life pattern and its evaluation and appreciation. In Indian poetics and its various theories, the sentiment of compassion was very much there; it was very important also, but it differed significantly from its western counterpart, and hence, was quite unfamiliar. In our traditions, when we felt compassion, we tended to share their grief and there was a one-to-one relationship of the reader with the hero. This was not the case in western tragedy.

In the western tragedies, the audience does not share the feelings of the protagonist, because it knows the reality. It is not under any illusion. In other words, there is no common evaluation of the reality on the part of the character and the audience. The audience and the protagonists have different perception of the reality and hence the evaluation of the circumstances. The audience all the time is worried, lest the hero commits a wrong action, because it knows that the hero may do something wrong. Audience wishes that the hero does not do what the hero himself thinks of doing. This gap was something new for Indian spectators to bridge initially. However, the audience of a tragedy in the west sympathizes with the protagonist, because it is aware that the protagonist is not aware of the facts. He is considered good, though his perception of the people and circumstances is not correct, because anyone else also would have felt the same in his place. In Indian traditions, the hero is not supposed to be a victim of illusions for a very long time. Or, at least, before it becomes too late, he is able to manage his circumstances. Very often the hero knows the reality, but to



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please the dear ones, he has to do what he would not like to do otherwise. This may often lead to such a situation, which is full of pathos. However, the hero struggles with the forces and manages to restore the situation in his favour and thus the question of pitying on him does not arise. Only while he undergoes the adverse circumstances and the resulting sufferings, we feel compassion. We know that he is innocent and hence our compassion. Whereas in Shakespearean tragedies, we know that the hero is not innocent. He has contributed himself to the worsening of his circumstances. Moreover, because of his errors other innocent also have to undergo suffering. The only excuse on the part of the hero is that he did not intend it. His intentions were always good (except Macbeth among the Shakespearean tragic heroes), but the circumstances prevailed in such a manner that the hero is left helpless against the fate and reality.

Othello faces several crises. The first one is that of allegations against him by the Senator and father of Desdemona, Brabantio. Othello addresses all the grievances and convinces the Senate and the Duke that he has not played any witchcraft to marry Desdemona. He comes out safe. He faces another crisis, when there is a strife between Michael Cassio and Roderigo leading to Cassio's wounding of the Governor Montano. As a man of discipline, Othello shows his displeasure with Cassio and confiscates his Lieutenantship. Yet, when Desdemona intermediates for Cassio (both were not aware of the conspiracy of Iago), he again agrees to review his decision and do justice to him.

Shakespeare makes very good use of the circumstances of Othello for his tragic course of life. Othello asks her to wait for some time. Desdemona, however, takes up the issue sentimentally, out of her innocent desire to use the privilege of the newly married wife and more of course out of her sympathy for Cassio, whom she understood as a trustworthy Lieutenant of her husband. This provides a strong chance to Iago to play his dirty game. In his tension of not displeasing his wife, or giving an impression that his wife is the super General or that he may excuse indiscipline among his officers, Othello feels some emotional pressure. He gives a defensive posture in the matter, when he gets cornered by Iago and his allegation of infidelity of Desdemona. He is further humbled by Iago informing him that the man is none other than Michael Cassio. Thus, he is given an impression that Desdemona favours her for the other reason. Iago aggravates his jealousy by telling him that he knows Venetian women better. Othello almost succumbs to his argument that if she can deceive her father, why can't she cheat her husband in favour of a young and handsome Venetian? Othello emerges very weak in handling the domestic emotional crises, though he has the habit of handling the external professional pressure very smoothly. As an army personnel, fidelity is a very prime virtue. So,





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he cannot tolerate betrayal from someone whom he loved so much. This makes him impatient. Still, he demands powerful and ocular evidence from Iago to trust him.

Now, it is certain that he will decide the fate of Desdemona on the basis of the ordinary evidence of an object i.e. a handkerchief. He will take it as objective and ocular evidence. He does not understand that the handkerchief might reach Cassio in some other ways also. It can be stolen also. Audience knows how it reached Cassio who himself did not know anything about it. Unfortunately, Othello does not look at it as a matured individual. He just buys the idea and interpretation of Iago. At the most, he could have assessed Desdemona as careless and insincere with regard to his magical gift to her, but he thought that she was not loyal to him. His error of judgement leads to his failure in handling the domestic crisis resulting in his tragic fall. His conventional interpretation of the situation brings disaster in his life. In one pattern of thinking, his conclusions were correct, but in another pattern of thinking he was utterly wrong.

Bharatmuni gives a *rasasutra* - a formula – that reveals the process of the arousal of *rasa* in the audience. According to this formula, “the Sentiment (*rasa*) is produced from a combination of Determinants (*vibhava*), Consequents (*anubhava*) and Transitory States (*vyabhichari bhava*).” (As quoted in Seturaman, 21, Prose passage after the couplet 32) When these three components harmoniously come together and move in the direction of a specific Permanent State (*sthayi bhava*), the Sentiment (*rasa*) corresponding with that Permanent State, gets aroused. Bharata speaks of eight Permanent States which are inherently there in every normal human being. They are love, mirth, sorrow, anger, energy, terror, disgust and astonishment (Couplet 18). When these Permanent States are activated by the three factors i.e. Determinants, Consequents and Transitory States, in a harmonious manner, the Sentiments (*rasa*) are produced. The Sentiments corresponding with them are respectively erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, terrible, odious and marvelous (Couplet 16). As stated above, Bharat mentions eight Permanent States and eight Sentiments. He mentions two types of Determinant i.e. *vibhava* (objective condition causing an emotion) i.e. Context (*uddipan*) and Experience (*alambana*). The *alambana vibhava* is further classified into two i.e. Event (*visaya*) and Experiencer (*asraya*). He then speaks of four aspects of *anubhava* i.e. Consequents (bodily gestures or expressions by which the emotions are expressed) as Gestures (*angika*), Words (*vachika*), Make-up (*aharya*) and Representation of the Temperament (*sattvika*). The Temperamental States (*sattvika*) are classified into eight i.e. Paralysis, Perspiration, Horripilation, Change of Voice, Trembling, Change of Color, Weeping and Fainting (Couplet 23). Lastly, he mentions 33 *vyabhichari bhava* i.e. Temporary States



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(secondary emotions or sensations that feed the dominant emotion). They are discouragement, weakness, apprehension, envy, intoxication, weariness, indolence, depression, anxiety, distraction, recollection, contentment, shame, inconstancy, joy, agitation, stupor, arrogance, despair, impatience, sleep, epilepsy, dreaming, awakening, indignation, cruelty, assurance, sickness, insanity, death, fright and deliberation (Couplets 19-22). (Different critics have employed different English words to translate these Sanskrit terms of Bharata. I have used the English terms employed by V S Seturaman) The Sanskrit terms used by Bharata are respectively *nirveda*, *glani*, *shanka*, *asuya*, *mada*, *shrama*, *alasya*, *dainya*, *chinta*, *moha*, *smriti*, *dhriti*, *vrida*, *chopalata*, *harsha*, *avega*, *jadata*, *garva*, *vishada*, *autsukya*, *nidra*, *apasmara*, *supta*, *vibodha*, *amarsha*, *avahitta*, *ugrata*, *mati*, *vyadhi*, *unmada*, *marana*, *trasa* and *vitarka*.

Bharat then explains briefly the possible combinations of the three factors for arousing each Sentiment. What did he discuss about the *karuna rasa*? According to Bharata, the Pathetic/*karuna rasa* can be aroused when the Dominant State is that of sorrow. Moreover, the Determinant (*vibhava*) can be affliction under a curse, separation from dear ones, loss of wealth, death, captivity, flight from a place, dangerous accidents, other misfortunes etc.. Then, the Consequents (*anubhava*) i.e. the actions on the stage, can be shedding of tears, lamentation, dryness of the mouth, change of color, drooping limbs, being out of breath, loss of memory etc. And, the Transitory States (*vyabhichari bhava*) can be discouragement (indifference), weakness (languor), anxiety, yearning, excitement, delusion, fainting, sadness, dejection, illness, inactivity, insanity, epilepsy, fear, indolence, death, paralysis, tremor, change of color, weeping, loss of voice etc. (As qtd in Seturaman, P. 27, Couplets 62, 63 and the prose passage preceding them).

When *Othello* is examined, one does feel that the Dominant State of the play is 'sorrow'. When the play begins, Brabantio is sad that his beautiful daughter has fallen in love with a Moor called Othello. The State of Venice is facing a sad situation of the invasion by the Turks on its island of Cypress. However, the atmosphere of sorrow is short lived because the Senate after hearing all involved rightly feels that Othello was innocent. He, on the contrary, is elevated in his position in the army and asked to sail to Cypress to tackle the Turk crisis. The protagonist is very happy for his marriage and his elevation in the army. Of course, the joy also remains short lived, because Iago who feels jealous of Othello becomes active against him and is bent upon ruining his life. He gets opportunities and is able to manipulate the circumstances against Othello.





After Othello reaches Cypress, he learns that the Turk crisis was resolved by nature itself. Now, there was an occasion for celebration. However, due to the conspiracy of Iago, the celebration turns violent and Cassio becomes the first victim of the conspiracy and is demoted from his position in army. He is sad now. Then, through Cassio, Iago brings Desdemona in the fold of sorrow because she knows Cassio well. She is unaware that she is inviting a greater sorrowful situation for all of them. Poor lady takes it as a challenge to convince Othello and reinstate Cassio to his original position. The pressure on all of them is saddening for the audience, because the audience knows the reality of Iago's conspiracy turning successful. Confidence on the part of Desdemona and guilt on the part of Cassio worsen the situation.

Coincidentally, when Cassio is to leave Desdemona, Othello and Iago return. Out of uneasiness, Cassio leaves without meeting Othello. When Othello inquires whether it was Cassio who just parted from his wife, Iago picks up the opportunity to ignite Othello's jealousy and replies, "No, sure, I cannot think it, / That he would steal away so guilty-like, / Seeing your coming" (III.iii.37-39). Cassio avoids meeting and facing Othello out of both regards for him on the one hand and also the guilt regarding his indiscipline on the other hand. However, his going away without meeting Othello is interpreted as his fear of getting discovered of his affair with Desdemona by Othello.

The handkerchief incident makes the situation very sorrowful for both Othello and Desdemona. She does not know how to convince her lord of her innocence and Othello can't understand that the handkerchief is not given to Cassio by her. Because Othello wanted ocular evidence, Iago asks him to hide nearby and watch how he would extract from Cassio the story of his affair with Desdemona, as Cassio was to come and see himself. While Othello hides to hear what Cassio would utter, Iago talks to Cassio for information about Bianca. He makes him laugh while conversation and thus confirms Othello's suspicions, because Othello would feel that he was talking about Desdemona and not Bianca. Later, Bianca herself enters with Desdemona's handkerchief and scolds Cassio for asking her to copy out the embroidery of a love-gift given to him by another woman. This makes Othello get fully convinced of the affair between the two.

Now, Othello has determined to kill her. He does not listen to any explanation from her and keeps on humiliating her as a whore and what not and ultimately smothers her. At that time, Emilia enters into the room to tell Othello that Roderigo is dead. She hears Desdemona utter that she has been murdered. However, when Emilia asks her, who has done it, she replies, "Nobody. I myself. Farewell./Commend me to my kind lord. O Farewell" (V, ii, 127-8). This makes it even more sorrowful, because in spite of being



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murdered by Othello, she does not blame him.

Situation becomes very sad when Othello tells Lodovico to relate about himself as the “one that lov’d one not wisely, but too well;/ Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,/ Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,/Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away/Richer than all his tribe; (V, ii, 347-51) Thus, in the play, the Permanent State is basically that of sorrow in the lives of all for one or the other reasons.

As the Determinant (*vibhava*), Shakespeare makes use of ‘affliction under a curse’ (the handkerchief myth), ‘separation from dear ones’, ‘death’ (of himself and his wife) and ‘other misfortunes’ like the crisis of the loss of faith on his wife and the resulting pain and unworthy associates (*kusang*) in life, unworthy person like Iago takes him away from all those who were genuinely with him.

Then, the Consequents (*anubhava*) i.e. the actions on the stage, are ‘shedding of tears’, ‘lamentation’, ‘dryness of the mouth’, ‘change of color’, ‘drooping limbs’, ‘being out of breath’ etc. that occur to Othello on different occasions after he starts facing this domestic crisis and acts wrongly. He realizes the worth of Desdemona after he kills her. All these too add to the sorrow in the play.

When one examines the text, one does feel that Shakespeare has certainly not chosen a person as a protagonist who corresponds with Bharata’s classification in the strict sense of the terms. For Bharat, a protagonist (Naayak) is “One who relieves himself from any contingency and triumphs over all hurdles and appears to be the protagonist amongst all the other male characters of the play.” (Parimal Phadke, “Concept of Naayaka in Bharata's Natyasastra” web) Bharata categorizes characters into three-*Uttam*, *Madhyam* and *adham*. He does admit a character having a mixed category of any of the three. However, he does not admit of the protagonist having mixed nature. The other characters can be of mixed nature (categories) in different degrees. Othello does not belong to any one category strictly. He does not possess the qualities of the *Uttam naayaka* like control over one's senses. He is neither Intellectual, vichakshana, philanthropist, well-versed in various *sastras*, having depth of character, magnanimous, patient. Nor is he munificent. At the most one can find dexterity of a good soldier in him and also he is a deserving person to enjoy the joys of life.

He does not possess the qualities of a *madhyama naayaka* also. He is not a *vishaarada*, wise, having sweetness of manners. Nor is he good in communication skills.



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The qualities laid down by Bharata seem to be in relation to the status and the duties required to be performed for that particular social role by the protagonist. This means that if a General is a Naayaka, he would be Dhirodatta. The guna-s mentioned are -- Good character, truthful, energetic, polite, aware of the enemy's activities, weaknesses and the proper time to march against him, sufficient knowledge about the economics of a country's wealth, loyal to one's king etc. (Phadke) Since Othello is a General we can see these qualities in him except the one having good name in his clan, because he does not belong to the place and his clan is not there.

Bharata divides the qualities of the protagonist into three sections i.e. physical, acquired and psychological. Othello does not possess four of the five physical qualities described by Bharata. He is not handsome or of a desirable age. He does not belong to a noble family and does not have a pleasant demeanour. He has only one quality specified by Bharata i.e. he is strong. Among the three 'Acquired qualities', Othello possesses one only and that too partly. He is skilled in crafts and arts (military art or craft). He is not an expert in the practice of love and nor he is well-versed in *sastras*.

Othello possesses many psychological qualities. He is amiable, good-natured, modest, brave, clever, honest, trustworthy and having self-dignity. He is also capable of enticing a woman easily. He however is not patient, munificent, elegant and alert. If Shakespeare was to show these qualities in him as a General, we may find them to some extent. Shakespeare is portraying Othello not an army officer, but as a lover and husband. He is being tested in his domestic life and not in his professional life. In personal life he lacks in patience, elegance and alertness. As a result, person like Iago can easily interfere in his life and can take his mind into his possession for manipulation. The interesting complexity in Shakespeare is that he chooses characters from different walks of social lives, but portrays them as basic human beings and thus focuses on their personal lives. Hence, the presence or absence of a certain quality may or may not be so significant in one aspect of one's life but can be so in the other.

Thus, for Shakespeare, the story is not the story of an army general, but an individual. Since, Bharata did not visualize a protagonist having mixed qualities of what is good and bad, Othello or for that matter any tragic hero would not fit into Bharata's frame work. A tragic hero has many merits, but he also has at least one fatal flaw. Thus, Othello does succeed in arousing compassion, but that is primarily due to his being a good, noble and well-meaning individual. He respects basic human values and so when he realizes that he has himself violated the moral code of humanity, he punishes himself. Audience realizes that had he come to



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know the reality earlier, he would have punished Iago and done justice to all. Unfortunately, he did not survive to restore the equilibrium in life. Further, Desdemona also does not blame him for her murder. She too perhaps knew how much he loved her. We pity him because he gets manipulated and misused by Iago. Though he is alert in his own way before arriving at any judgement, Iago keeps him confused by responding to his queries and convincing him of Desdemona's betrayal to him. In the colonial period, we had started experiencing our own helplessness against our circumstances. Only due to that new reality, we could appreciate tragedies and *Othello* is one of the examples. Thus, Shakespeare does adhere to the formula of Bharata in broad sense, but in minute sense, he does not follow many things. Yet, he successfully arouses pathos, because the audience was new, with new learning and new awareness of life.

Thus, the examination of Shakespeare's *Othello* from the *rasa* perspective, leads one to believe that the protagonist Othello earns the compassion of the audience. Othello is able to command the compassion or *karuna* of the audience due to the new socio-cultural context of India i.e the context of the receivers of the text. Bharata had not visualized such a socio-cultural context of the spectators. As a result, though Shakespeare does not follow the formulae of Bharatmuni, he succeeds in generating *karuna rasa*. It is so because by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we had started experiencing what is helplessness against the circumstances very well. We had learnt to excuse someone for his errors, provided we thought that it was but human to act in the given way. We had learnt that a good person also falls a victim to illusions or gets manipulated, or that a good person also may have some serious flaws in his personality. Therefore, we learnt to appreciate good and criticize the bad qualities in the same person simultaneously. In the case of the play, Othello is basically good, he realizes his errors and feels deep remorse for his actions. He then goes in the Indian way of self-punishment. We appreciate his sincere efforts to know the truth about Desdemona and excuse him of his act of killing her, because what he concluded would have been concluded in his situation by anyone. Othello's final gestures i.e. true remorse and self punishment liken him to the Indian audiences and earn their compassion and sympathy for himself as a tragic hero. Thus, Shakespeare opens a new avenue to generate pathos in a play.



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