

SHAKESPEARE'S IDEA OF LOVE IN *OTHELLO*

فكرة شكسبير عن الحب في رواية عطيل

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This paper is significant not only because it contains the very sensitive and unique account of love in the brief married life of Othello and Desdemona as revealed by the multifaceted art of Shakespeare. It is important because it takes note of what happens when the lover is a public figure. Shakespeare has produced in this love affair such a complex picture of the lovers that it has taken hundreds of critics and scholars to decide what this love is all about. Yet, a clear picture of what Othello and Desdemona actually were is still to emerge. A.C Bradley's brilliant analysis of *Othello*, which has provided the basic picture of the man as he is understood today, was refuted by F.R Leavis in an account that made Bradley seem erroneous. Then after many other assessments, in between these antipodal positions, many of which cannot be denied merit, Harold Bloom came forward to precise Bradley and oppose Leavis even though much of what he said was a result of Leavis' basic arguments. He couldn't avoid the anxiety of influence Leavis' had on his analysis of the play and therefore Bloom's account would best be understood if seen under the psychological parameters of his own theory of influence. What is new on the subject in this paper is looking upon Othello as one who could hardly be called a lover or husband of much standing. He needed some kind of security when He assumed the role of lover and for this he needed nothing less than magic, which the charmed handkerchief of this tale provided. With the help of this object (that had come under a magical spell of resources) he tried to persuade his wife how necessary it was not to lose it and therefore save his love from getting lost. Othello seems to have been ever anxious that he could easily be given up by Desdemona (because of his racial and other differences) and therefore his responses to her were far from what would seem justified in a true lover. The arguments in this paper will gradually lead up to this point of view which the paper is putting forth.

To study Shakespeare's conception of the nature of love as it is presented in *Othello*. It is necessary to first analyse the character of Othello and Desdemona. Othello was not like other men in that he was placed in circumstances which were not of the usual kind. He was an outsider in Venice, a man married to a woman of a different race, much older than his wife and plagued by the villainy of Iago. It seems

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that Othello's love for Desdemona is no one constant entity. It is subject to changes at different points of time. Othello's love for Desdemona emerges out of his statements and responses (Act 1. Sc. 2 25-28) Othello claims to possess great love for Desdemona mainly it known through fine rhetoric:

*But that I love the gentle Desdemona
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the Sea's worth*

This account of love matches well with the statement that he makes at the end. When he asserts that he was "one that loved not wisely but too well". (Act 5, Scene 2, 344)

But here, as in the earlier lines, Othello is telling others about his love for Desdemona. He is a public figure first and anything else later. His chief effort is to construct his own picture of a lover. He is making an effort let the world know what a great lover he was. Whether he actually felt what he says is a matter difficult to decide. There are people who actually love, and there are others who claim that they love. From Shakespeare's *King Lear* comes the lesson that love is hardly genuine when it is merely expressed through words. Othello is black and Desdemona is white, so they are racially different to each other. That is why Brabantio scoffs at Othello's visage and on his physical appearance that what his daughter fears to look on now she is married with that black moor; we see that Brabantio is rather confused to see his daughter being ungrateful and disobeys his commands. However, love is something which grows from inter-personal relationship. It needs intimacy and attachment, Othello was a great story teller and he often visited Brabantio's house and narrated his adventurous tales of difficult situations and how he overcome them. Desdemona listens to the heroism of Othello with love and amazement. She likes Othello's thrilling and wonderful stories told to her father and falls in love with him. We find that Othello also loves Desdemona through the nature of his love seems self-centred, and he wants to make her his life partner. Desdemona sees Othello's beauty in his mind. Her love for Othello is spiritual rather than bodily. Her choice is different from the other girls in Venice. Her love is immaculate and contains utmost faith in Othello. She suffers a lot throughout the whole play because she is a loving wife matched with a husband who is mere a public figure than a lover.

Though, Othello is racially black and culturally different from Desdemona but she goes beyond race and colour in her utmost relationship with him. Racial trauma is one of the most significant problems which cause the tragedy to happen in their lives. Before the court Othello delivers a long speech and speaks about his love for Desdemona. How he became able to win the sweet Desdemona. He narrates the story in these following lines:

*She loved me for the dangers
I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them
(Act1, scene 2, 167-68)*

Othello's admitted reason for loving Desdemona is that she pitied the plights through which he passed. This does not auger well for a lover. In fact Brabantio's understanding of Othello's true nature should not be under estimated. Brabantio is suspicious that neither his daughter nor the moor has real love for the other. He feels that she has drifted towards him due to "fear" rather than "delight" (Act1, scene 2, 70-71). He suspects Othello for casting a spell or using witchcraft on Desdemona. Brabantio knows that Othello was no ordinary citizen of Venice; he was indeed one of the most celebrated ones. It is significant to note that the father of a daughter does not reject a prospective son-in-law merely for sake of his looks if he is as distinctive as Othello is. The father in Brabantio fears that Othello will never truly love his daughter. He has been meeting him and listening to his stories and has formed some idea about the man from close quarters. His understanding of Othello should not be taken lightly.

However, it must not be thought that Othello's love for Desdemona is no more than the love of a self-centred egoist as F.R. Leavis has believed. If that were so Othello would be no more than a typed, uninvolved character. Shakespeare's characters particularly his tragic hero grows and evolves as people do in life. Othello, once Desdemona's husband, wants to possess her and, in the process, displays his love for her. He does not possess her as he would a piece of furniture but as one does another human being, in particular a wife. His emotions are not exactly the emotions of a romantic lover but of a husband proud to possess a devout and caring wife. Iago has further given us a glimpse of Othello as lover:

*I know my price. I am worth no worse
a place.
But he, as loving his own pride and
purposes,
Evades them, with a bombast
circumstance
Horribly stuffed with epithets of war
(Act 1, scene 1, 11-14)*

When Othello arrives at Cyprus and when he sees his wife, Desdemona, he immediately holds her in his melting-arms and starts hugging her in love. His deep and indescribable love is vividly clear in these following lines:

*O' my fair warrior!
It gives me wonder great as my
content
To see you here before me
O' my souls joy (Act2, Scene 1, 182-
84)*

Here Othello's intense love for Desdemona seems unconditional and without any carnal desire. For Othello, Desdemona can become his soul's joy; therefore, he communicates his love in words. Like Lear and Cleopatra he too thinks words can express hope that their love for each other will expand within the span of time.

Perhaps, she has felt that as yet it is not enough for if it were enough why does she ask for divine help to make it grow:

*The heaven forbid
But that our loves and comfort shall
increase
Even as our days do grow
(Act2, Scene1, and 193-95)*

As a husband, Othello's love for Desdemona is strange. He says he will deny her nothing if she allows him to remain away from him. He is disturbed as she wanted him to reconsider the case of Cassio and reinstate him. Herein these following lines Othello shows how irritable he can get if she as much as recommends a man's case to him:

*I will deny thee nothing:
Wherein, I do beseech thee, grant me
this.
To leave me but a little to myself
(Act3, Scene 3, 83-85)*

The condition in which Othello's love for Desdemona deteriorates with every petition made by her in favour of Cassio is noteworthy. In the beginning he merely asserts that he will deny her nothing.

*Prithee no more, let him come when he will,
I will deny thee nothing (Act 3, scene 3, 76-78)*

Here is a man who would not lose his newly won trophy (his bride) because he knows how difficult it was for him to find a bride in Venice. When Desdemona continues to press her demand saying that she is not asking for a boon but for what a wife asks a husband to do in a routine manner, like wearing his gloves or feeding or nourishing dishes that he will "deny" her nothing if she leaves him alone. The word "deny" implicates that he will not grudge granting her what she desires. It is not the word a lover would generally use. Already, between the lines 76-78 and 84-86 Othello's dislike for Desdemona seems to have grown. He is avidly becoming intolerant to her wife for this cause. This tendency expands till Othello "dwindles from a magnificent, heroic, self-possessed general into a cramped, suspicious wife-abuser, shrivelled of soul". (Linda Wood, p.227)

As we know that before his marriage Othello never met Desdemona. But Desdemona unconsciously start loving him for his bravery and chivalrous nature. Othello is a black man in the country of white peoples and he does not know about their culture and language. He loves Desdemona so profoundly and intensely that he cannot live even a single moment without her. However, she offered her purest love for him. Therefore, he has little option but to value and love her when he is by himself free to speculate on her love and his need for her. Her love is the only stable source for him. He knows that when it is missing he has nothing but wretchedness and chaos:

Excellent wretch!

*Perdition catches my soul
But I do love thee!
And when I love not,
Chaos is come again (Act3, Scene3,
90-91)*

Othello begins to think of what he can do to Desdemona if he finds that she is guilty or not properly trained in the social sense:

*...if I do prove her haggard,
Through that her jesses were my
dear heart-strings,
I would whistle her oft, and let her
down the wind,
To prey at fortune (Act 3, Scene3,
264-266)*

Othello cannot bear to think of her as one who has chosen another in preference to him. He at once begins to contemplate punishment for her, which seems from the above lines to be some sort of desertion or abandonment. He even comes the institution (lines 272-74) of marriage a few lines later. He also suspects her of choosing Cassio over him because he is black, and does not have the sophistication of the whole race and is becoming old. Here, Othello uses the words “excellent wretch” which means his intense love for her. The word “wretch” added to “excellent” is significant. She may be excellent but for him she is still no more than a wretch. Without Desdemona, Othello exists nowhere, because she is his world and life. If she be not with him, then he cannot live happily.

Later in the scene we find that when Iago starts inciting him against her against Desdemona saying that she is interested in Cassio. Hearing this news Othello becomes mad with sexual jealousy:

*Haply, for I am black
And have not those soft parts of
conversation
That clamberers have, or for I am
declined
Into the vale of years- yet that's not
much
She's gone (Act 3, Scene3, 263-267)*

Let us analyse what are the reasons and factors which compel Othello to kill his wife. If we closely read the text then we approach at the point that handkerchief plays a significant role in Othello's decision to slay Desdemona.

However, in the middle of the play, the handkerchief comes in the light and its relevance begins from its loss. As Emilia tells us that it was the first remembrance from the Moor, even she knows that if she will steal the handkerchief from the Desdemona, she will get confounded and crestfallen. As Emilia utters these lines before the spectators:

*Poor lady, she will seem mad
When she shall lack it (Act 3, Scene 3, 295)*

In the play Othello reminds the audience that the handkerchief was his first token to Desdemona. As we know that Iago keep on requesting his wife Emilia to steal it from her. Because he knows the mystery behind the loss of handkerchief, therefore he persuades his wife to do so. However, in the text we find that Desdemona herself depicts the worth of handkerchief to Emilia. As Emilia avers:

*She so loves the token
For he conjured her she should ever keep it*

*That she reserves it ever more about her
To kiss and take to,
(Act3, scene 3, 297-300)*

Othello's belief in the possession of the handkerchief is based on a superstition and the fact that he loses faith in Desdemona for the sake of a superstition is an implication of the amount of love he had for her. His mother has got the handkerchief from an Egyptian enchantress who claims that its loss will result in the loss of a married partner. A loving husband should love his wife more than believe in such superstition. Again in the play Othello asserts that it was an antique token which was given by my father to my mother as a token of love and faith. He indicates:

*An antique token
My father gave my mother
(Act3, Sc.3)*

However, handkerchief is an object of security for Othello. He needs it to save his love. A significant feature of this lover is that he is always insecure in love. He knows that he is double in age in the comparison of Desdemona, and he is racially and culturally different to her that is why tragedy occurs in their lives. Theirs is a match which resembles the "beauty and the beast" in the well-known fairy tale. Othello is psychologically unstable in this relationship of love and fidelity. He never feels sure and certain of what she may be thinking about his looks, his eye and his race. Her love and affection for him is based on the factors that could have resulted from pity and concern rather than actual attraction that came about due to love or attraction. She has valued his adventurous exploits and his romantic sojourns into strange and unknown places. She has, besides, loved his story-telling. Othello's narrations have gripped her mind and soul than anything else. Othello is dexterous enough to know that the reasons for Desdemona's love for him are not very deep and sound. He therefore, needs the security or back up of a superstition conveyed through a little narrative. He tells her that his mother has passed on to him a handkerchief that was given to her by sorcerers. This handkerchief bears a magical charm due to which if the bearer loses it, then the bearer's love will be lost. This means that in the handkerchief depends the marital relationship of the husband wife.

Even though Othello could have actually believed in the magical powers of the handkerchief, it is equally possible that like a successful leader controls people through narratives, Othello could have been using this object merely to psychologically pressurize Desdemona into believing that the loss of the object could revolt the loss of their love bond. If Desdemona took him seriously, she would take the case of this object (the handkerchief) and in trying to keep it and preserve it. She would also be sub-consciously trying to preserve her relationship with him. He could have merely been using fear and anxiety as tools to make her relationship with him seem like something that could be lost like a handkerchief. Readers are capable of using such strategies to keep us working hard to stay loyal with them. Othello was a public figure, a natural leader of men. He may have wanted to be a leader of his wife as well and therefore was subjecting her to the fear of losing him she was not careful. Desdemona on the other hand did not take the handkerchief because she had faith in her love for him and did not a public figure need strategies to keep her husband securely with her. A.C. Bradley has tried condoning Othello's crime in killing Desdemona by saying that Othello suffers from sexual jealousy and it is more than obvious that this kind of jealousy can ruin a man:

...there is no subject more exciting than sexual jealousy rising to the pitch of passion; and there can hardly be any spectacle at once so engrossing and so painful as that of a great nature suffering the torment of this passion, and driven by it to a crime which is also a hideous blunder. Such a passion as ambition, however terrible its results, is not itself ignoble; if we separate it in thought from the conditions which make it guilty, it does not appear despicable; it is not a kind of suffering, its nature is active; and therefore we can watch its course without shrinking. But jealousy, and especially sexual jealousy, brings with it a sense of shame and humiliation. For this reason it is generally hidden; if we perceive it we ourselves are ashamed and turn our eyes away; and when it is not hidden it commonly stirs contempt as well as pity. Nor is this all. Such jealousy as Othello's converts human nature into chaos, and liberates the beast in man; and it does this in relation to one of the most intense and also the most ideal of human feelings. What spectacle can be more painful than that of this feeling turned into a tortured mixture of longing and loathing, the 'golden purity' of passion split by poison into fragments, the animal in man forcing itself into his consciousness in naked grossness, and he writhing before it but powerless to deny it entrance, gasping inarticulate images of pollution, and finding relief only in a bestial thirst for blood? This is what we have to witness in one who was indeed 'great of heart' and no less pure and tender than he was great. And this, with what it leads to, the blow to Desdemona, and scene where she is treated as the inmate of a brothel, a scene far more painful than the murder scene, is another cause of the special effect of this tragedy. (Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1905, pp. 177-78)

Bradley has shown great insight in pointing out that sexual jealousy "liberates the beast in man" and therefore makes him bestial and chaotic in behaviour. In fact according to studies in psychology sexual jealousy is shared both by humans and animals and this is what makes them similar in this one respect. In males sexual

jealousy acquires a different aspect in that it makes them worried that it will lead to their having to look after another's off spring. When Othello talks of Desdemona as a whore, which according to Bradley is even more painful than her murder. Othello has that image of Desdemona in mind which is the typical outcome of sexual jealousy.

I would like to go a step further than Bradley by bringing into this paper the finds of a paper by John Todd and Kenneth Dewhurst, "The Othello Syndrome: A Study in the Psychopathology of Sexual Jealousy". (Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease: October 1955- Volume 122- Issue 4, 367-374). These scholars consider Othello's problem a specific kind of disease which they call the "Othello Syndrome" which is claimed to be a dangerous kind of psychosis (367). The scholars compare this syndrome in Shakespeare's Othello with similar creations in Boccaccio and Tolstoy (367). This clubbing together of three writers, who employ the syndrome, suggests that the literary mind, is often driven to seeing sexual jealousy as a cause of this chaotic behaviour in the male partner in a relationship. They say that this jealousy turns homes that should be sanctuaries of love into hells of discord and hate. Todd and Dewhurst then go on to say that the male sufferer begins to have "delusions of infidelity". If Othello has such a delusion when he sees Bianca with Cassio, it is part of his psychotic behaviour which makes him do so.

If Bradley and those who use the ploy of Othello's sexual jealousy to pardon him for his crime towards Desdemona are right then most people who murder or make innocent wives into whores should be pardoned because most crimes are committed due to certain psychological disorders. Conversely criminals with psychological disorders should not be considered to be criminals. In fact only those criminals are pardoned for murders that are declared insane and such criminals are generally kept in mental asylums. Othello has not been accorded the status of an insane person, even by Bradley and his followers. Hence he ought not to be pardoned for killing anyone, least of all the one who had given up her own people to marry an outsider like him.

Where does Othello's crime actually lie? It begins from the point in Act 2, Scene 3) when Othello has become one with the devilish Iago and accepted him as his own; when he has begun thinking of Cassio's murder as well, which Iago promises to help him with:

*Iago: My friend (Cassio) is dead; 'tis
done at your request:*

But let her live.

*Othello: Damn her, lewd minx! O,
damn her!*

*Come, go with me apart; I will
withdraw,*

*To furnish me with some swift means
of death*

*For the fair devil. Now art thou my
lieutenant.*

*Iago: I am your own forever. (Act3,
Scene 3)*

The lover in Othello, the little there was in him, has left him when he has joined the diabolical side of Iago. He has actually joined the evil's party when he and Iago come together in a major way. After this killing anyone is no longer so difficult. To exonerate Othello for killing Desdemona on the ground that he suffers from sexual jealousy, Bradley virtually does, is not quite right even though having discovered the sexual jealousy in him is a mark of his perceptiveness.

A point in the play comes when one begins to wonder whether Shakespeare's intention in this play is to show that love in its entirety is a myth. It is possible to interpret the play (or at least the part in which Othello is under the spotlight) as one that does not confer complete faith in loving consistently for long. Desdemona's father, Brabantio, has already given the impression that his daughter loves Othello only because of some magical spell that Othello has cast upon her: "(Desdemona) is abused, stolen from me, and corrupted by spells..." (Act 1, Scene 3). This belief of Brabantio's is perhaps in Othello's mind too when he decides to come up with the "magic in the web" theory that he decides to bias Desdemona with. Both Desdemona's father and her husband seem to of the view that love is either induced (Brabantio) or retained (Othello) through magical agencies or witchcraft. Both these men therefore do not think love is possible without external aid. In *A midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare shows how love is induced by the juice of a plant and how bottom begins to love Titania due to this magical juice (Act2, Scene2).

It may therefore be surmised that in *Othello* Shakespeare was giving us another version of love; a love which comes into our hearts not naturally but with external aid. Desdemona has undoubtedly started loving Othello but not as Juliet has started loving Romeo. We have no evidence of Othello using witchcraft to induce Desdemona's love. If Shakespeare had mentioned that in the text, Othello would seem a lesser hero. Her love is a result of pity for him, her attraction by his stories rather than his personality and possibly a compassion for his position as an outsider who would find no woman in Venice to marry. But who knows Shakespeare may have left it for the reader's imagination to work out the ways in which Othello won over the beautiful lady and got her to see his visage in his mind. Her father sees no reason for her to start loving him without the effect of an external factor like a spell and fathers normally know and understand their children well. Othello seems to have felt himself in a shaky position in his relationship with Desdemona initially because of which he hands over a charmed object, the handkerchief, to her and insists that she never lose it. That in his understanding of her is the only way that she can retain her love for him.

In the middle of the play Othello laments, "O curse of marriage, that we can call these delicate creatures ours, and not their appetites!" (Act 3, Scene 3) calling marriage "a curse", Shakespeare reiterates love's association with witchcraft. A curse is originally a witch's weapon. One can see that Shakespeare can consider marriage a curse because for him it was not something that is natural. Animals that live naturally also suffer sexual jealousy but they are not doomed to remain married as humans

living in society normally are. Shakespeare is therefore an author for whom society, and its institutions like marriage, is no more than what has resulted from man's needs and far from something that comes naturally to him. It is no wonder that in *Othello* Shakespeare comes out with the external agent (witchcraft) that is needed to retain it for any length of time.

Othello has decided consciously and knowingly, much before he kills Desdemona that he will throw out any traces of love that remain in his heart for her. He has decided to become like the water of a sea current that has gone beyond a cliff never to be able to return into the main mass of the Sea. His love life is to stagnate here like this trapped in water:

Othello: O, that the slave had forty thousand lives!

One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.

Now do I see 'tis true. Look here, Iago;

All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.

'Tis gone.

Arise, Black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!

Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne

To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught,

For 'tis of aspics' tongues!

Iago: Yet be content.

Othello: O, blood, blood!

Iago: Patience, I say; your mind perhaps may change.

Othello: Never, Iago: Like to the Pontic Sea.

Whose icy current and compulsive course

Never feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on

To the Propontic and the Hellespont, Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,

Shall never look back, never ebb to humble love,

Till that a capable and wide revenge Shallow them up. Now, by yond marble heaven,

(Kneels)
In the due reverence of a sacred vow
I here engage my words.
Iago: Do not rise yet.
(Kneels)
Witness, you ever-burning lights
above,
You elements that clip us round
about,
Witness that here Iago doth give up
The execution of his wit, hands,
heart,
To wronged Othello's service! Let
him command,
And to obey shall be in me remorse,
What bloody business ever. (They
rise.)
(Act3, Scene 3,)

Othello's love for Desdemona (the little that he had) does return in the end after he has killed her and realized his mistake. He admits that he did not love her wisely though he loved her too well. But the question may be asked, did Othello have any option but to kill himself and maintain this position after becoming a murderer? He would not be respected in society and possibly would have been tried for killing Desdemona if he chose to live on. He realizes his mistake and then decides to kill himself because that act will bring back some honour for him in the public eye. He is a public figure and he does care for his public image, if he cares for anything. He tries to kill Iago as well because the idea of having been deceived by someone lower than himself in social rank is one he cannot bear. Harold Bloom in a classic assessment compares Othello with Julius Cesar saying that there is "an ambiguity in both figures that makes it very difficult to trace the demarcations between their vainglory and their grandeur (445). Bloom has a rather high opinion of Othello, considering him a great soul, hopelessly outclassed by Iago. He believes the love between Othello and Desdemona to be authentic yet would have ended in tragedy even in the absence of the demonic genius of Iago (448). Bloom goes on:

Nothing in Othello is marriageable: his military career fulfils him completely. Desdemona, persuasively innocent in the highest of senses, falls in love with the pure warrior in Othello, and he falls in love with her love for him, mirroring of his legendary career. This romance is his own pre-existent romance; the marriage cannot and does not change him, though it changes his relationship to Venice, in the highly ironic sense of making him more than ever an outsider (448)

The case of Desdemona is very different to Othello's. She has decided to love him after she has begun to see "his image in his mind" rather than in his face. Her love is as true and selfless as that of any of Shakespeare's lovers. Her mind remains

preoccupied with what is good for husband. There is virtually nothing that she seems to have done for her own self. She has learned to believe that her good is in her husband's advancement. She has so much faith in her husband that she cannot visualize a situation in which her husband can begin to distrust her in any matter; least of all in matters of sex with another man. She has been swept off her feet by the same charm which Othello has displayed as a public figure. She cannot imagine that he is so easy to mislead and made to suspect her for a crime she has not committed. She can never get herself to believe that he will suffer sexual jealousy due to her. She has a certain kind of simplicity and a genuineness which makes her see the same quality in her husband. Her husband is crude in comparison and is unable to see these qualities.

Critics in the West have considered Desdemona silly and unintelligent because of her persistence in pleading Cassio's case to a husband who does not want her to interfere with his professional matters. Critics like John Wain, for instance, believe that she does not understand enough and she definitely does not understand her husband. (John Wain, "Introduction", *And Othello: A Case Book* (London: McMillan, 1971). Shakespeare did not seem to generally value intelligence because it could take one toward evil. Iago is the most intelligent character in all Shakespeare and what does his intelligence do? Shakespeare probably valued collective intelligence or wisdom as is to be found in the words of some of his characters like the Fool in *King Lear*. There is something lacking in people who are merely intelligent. They think that their intellect will take them very far but they are often devoid of feeling because of which they fall short of their expectations. It is as though Shakespeare is conveying that intelligence has its limitations and ends up in miscalculation. Even Iago has miscalculated ends up merely doing negative work. Desdemona is a feeling woman. She has not depended on intelligence but feeling and faith. Both these latter virtues are no ordinary qualities; they are what make people excellent human being. Desdemona is an excellent human being, whether Othello matches up to her is debatable. Harold Bloom calls Desdemona a "blameless wife" (441) and a "miracle of sincerity" (446). He finally pays her the greatest tribute when he says that, "Desdemona is the most admirable image of love in all Shakespeare (447)". Bloom mentions Johnson view of Cordelia's death being the most painful thing in Shakespeare but believes Desdemona's to be even more painful (471).

Hence, we can assert that Shakespeare has returned again and again to the subject of love in his tragedies and comedies. In *Othello*, too, he has dwelt at length on this subject. This paper implicates Shakespeare's understanding of love as revealed in *Othello*. Shakespeare in his tragedies depicts love in various molten aspects such as filial love, the lover-beloved love, husband-wife love, love between friends, and love for country and for the whole humanity. For him love cannot be defined in the narrow gamut of class, creed, tradition and racial differences.

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