

## Racial Conflict in the Selected Plays of William Shakespeare

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### Abstract

William Shakespeare embraces the racial concerns of the seventeenth century in his various plays. The racial clash was one of the significant inquiries of the seventeenth century. There were numerous prohibitions against the relationship of black and white. The etymological colonialism was at the core of the Shakespearean dramatization that rendered on racism. The language utilized as a pioneering instrument for racial discrimination. Moreover, Shakespeare's play was effectively associated with darker-looking individuals during Elizabethan times. Therefore, the darker-looking *Othello* and the Jewish *Shylock* have assumed a significant role in the play. They dominated their respective play, that's why Shakespeare's works depict the dramatization of racial conflict. There are numerous cases of racial segregation in the current situation, so the issue of race is expected to be re-evaluated with a fresh point of view. This knowledge will help to solve the problem of racial conflict with ground breaking thoughts.

Keywords: Colonialism, Race, Elizabethan, Conflict, Black.

### Introduction

Human conflict in society has caused by a variety of factors. Initially, everyone tries to avoid the conflict because it is not popular in society. In the following stage, some people try to suppress the conflict, while others create conflict based on democratic principles and

fight against societal injustices. According to Marx, conflict leads not only to ever changing relations within the existing social structure, but the total social system undergoes transformation through conflict.(P. 200)<sup>1</sup>. The first conflict is based on interpersonal relationships, particularly those between close relatives. Furthermore, the administrative conflict affects the relationship in the administration's working area. Besides that, conflict is based on cultural perspective, and finally, it progresses to global conflict. Misunderstanding, different goals, and different morals are at the root of the conflict. The major source of the conflict is misunderstanding, different goals, morals, beliefs, and thoughts among the people. No one can avoid conflict in life; therefore, rather than avoiding conflict, it must be accepted as a part of life. The need is that people understand the conflict thoroughly and face it with confidence, so that it can be converted into positive energy. What exactly is the nature of conflict? How is conflict created? How can the conflict be avoided? And how should people handle the situation? These are some of the issues addressed in the research paper.

As previously stated, difference causes conflict; if there is conflict, the person attempts to negotiate with the conflict in order to achieve peace. However, the other person feels satisfied with his power performance and behaves in the same manner, resulting in post-conflict between them. Furthermore, the person expresses grievances against another person, which creates a chaotic situation in the mind of the distressed person. As a result, there was more insecurity and conflict in the mind. To break the cycle of conflict, a person attempts to match with the subject, but there is a significant difference, which causes anxiety. The individual's high anxiety caused conflict. Tolerances can help to alleviate anxiety. To successfully face the conflict, the individual's capacities must be increased. To successfully face the conflict, the individual's capacities must be increased. A lack of tolerance leads to violent behaviour, and violent behaviour creates another cycle of conflict, anxiety, and stress in the individual. It also becomes a major impediment when responding to and reacting to

others. Individuals are afraid of developing a behavioural disorder. The cycle of conflict continues in life, while the cycle of avoiding conflict also runs continuously. So, understand the problem of conflict calmly and respond appropriately to create peace in relationship, administrative, cultural, and global conflict. Peace leads to growth in the individual, the administration, and the nation.

William Shakespeare's plays are closely associated with the theme of race. The early modern British society was tainted with racial problem. As Geraldine Heng explains, "race has no singular or stable referent" because "race is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content."<sup>2</sup> on the other hand James Peterson says that, "Race, for the most part here, refers to socially constructed phenomena associated with the experiences of Africans in America: Colored folks, Negroes, Afro-Americans, and eventually African Americans." (P. 291)<sup>3</sup> The racial discrimination based on the caste, creed and colour. The person's superiority and inferiority has judged on the basis of their skin colour. The colour of the skin has become major hurdle in the progress of the humanity. They are outcaste through the major stream of the progress. There was exclusion on the basis of colour and the share of their life was always rejected. It was in every sector of the life, the black has rejected the opportunities to live the respectable life. That was the major reason to create the hate and negativity among the people. The hate among the people is also dangerous to the white people because black always struggles to snatch their opportunities. The struggle resulted in crisis among the society. Thus, the result of racial discrimination explodes bloodsheds and violence. The politics of the discrimination also leads to the colour discrimination that was resulted in partition among the people. Now the contemporary society has facing the problem of racial discrimination so the present research makes modest attempt to refresh the issue of racial discrimination with new grounding breaking ideas and judgments.

Shakespeare has painted characters of different types some thinks more and more like Hamlet and makes action very less, some makes very fast action like *Macbeth* but think very less so the tragedy of their life occurs due to such follies. But there are some character related to racism to highlight the contemporary surrounding of the racial discriminations. Shakespeare's plays like *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Titus Andronicus*, and the *Tempest* uses the terms like bond, slave and the primary concepts of the race, so why in those drama's he uses terminology regarding racism. What is the Shakespeare's contemplation on the racism? *Tempest* has the theme of racism, and racial presentation of the Caliban. There are many terminology used to highlight the racism. The word "*Ocular Proof*" (3.3, P.361) has used in the drama *Othello* to remarks as the racism. *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Tempest* used words such as 'Witch', 'Monster', and 'Slave' in the play to symbolise racial inferiority.

#### Racial Conflict in the Play *Othello*

The hero of this drama is *Othello* who loved Desdemona, the daughter of the Venetian Senator and she secretly married Othello. The name of this Senator was Brabantio. In this play Brabantio can't agree with this love relationship and he was against the marriage. Desdemona has supported to the Othello, despite the fact that he is a Moor. Iago, works under the Othello in the army but he was against the Othello because he was the Moor. Iago plotted doubts with the help of Emilia his wife and Desdemona's attendant. Here is also one important character Michael Cassio, who works as a lieutenant in the Othello's army. He was appointed to the higher position despite having the least knowledge in the army. As a result, racism was used in the play to destabilize the grand character of Othello, the great warrior. Though, Othello was black, he was a great and successful war fighter. Othello faces the tragedy due to racial conflict. Othello believes that he was never meant to marry Desdemona but she adored him by heartily. The prejudice created by Iago disturbed the couple. Othello

was greatly affected by colour; he thought that Desdemona loves his war skill but not his black body. The tragedy produces jealousy when Othello puts Cassio as his second in command and he neglects Iago and Rodrigo. Here jealousy bursts against Cassio and the politics of the colour played by the Iago. The main thread of the play has a racial discrimination to fulfil the expected ambitions. We see in the drama like;

“Brabantio warn the Venetian Senate

‘Bond slaves and Pagan shall our statesman be’

Brabantio argues in effect (1.2.98-99)

The treatment of inferiority based on their physical weakness, these physical weaknesses are not caused by weakness but rather by conspiracy of subjugation. The comments about the body weaken the character, which had a lot of potential. Iago’s remark has inflected with slanging of ‘the Moor’.

“Even now, now, very now, an old black ram /

Is tipping your white ewe.” (1.1.88-90 Iago)

The drama Othello has based on the racial conflict, and the conflict of the race is the primary source of dramatization. Here, Jones, Eldred comments that “in the end, the character of Othello emerges as a distinct individual and not a particular type of Moor. Hence his fall does not typify the weakness of Moors, but the weaknesses inherent in human nature.” (Jones, 1965) (P.)<sup>4</sup> The tragic effect has been created by the weaning of the powerful character. The compassion has framed with the great fall of the major character. Iago defines those points of view through the following quote,

“But I will wear my heart upon my

Sleeve for daws to peck at: I am

Not what I am. (Iago, Act1 Scene 1)

In the act first Roderigo has been pursuing Desdemona a Venetian distinguished woman. Since, Desdemona had covertly married to his General, the Moorish Othello. But Desdemona's father was a senate member and Othello was a General. Here Brabantio disdains Othello as a son in law of senate member. As a result, Brabantio has angrily summoned the militia to arrest the Moorish Othello. When the officer arrived, he summoned the Othello to face the hearing regarding his secret marriage. But Brabantio has must attend an urgent meeting of the senate. In the meeting of senate, Brabantio interrupts the council claiming the punishment against the moor Othello. At the same time, Desdemona was with Othello; she has called to reinforcement the account and deafens her marriage. Her father leaves her and she decides to go with Othello on his campaign. But before it, she talked with her father,

“My noble father,  
I do perceive here a divided duty,  
To you I am bound for life and education  
My life and education both do learn me  
How to respect you  
You are the lord of duty  
I am hitherto your daughter.

(Desdemona, Act1, Scene3)

In the second act, Iago plots the conspiracy against the Othello and persuades Cassio to seek help form Desdemona in regaining his position. When Cassio asks, Desdemona innocently approves for his position. Even, Othello has given softly one of the first dedications to beloved Desdemona. When, Lodovico creates a misunderstanding between Othello and Cassio about the relationship. *Othello* enters his resting spouse's bedroom with the intent of murdering her as punishment for her alleged in fidelity. He believes that she may

admire his heroic deeds but not his body as a Moor so he feels doubt against the Cassio's relationship with Desdemona. Here, Shaw, Rudolph says that "in presenting Elizabethans with Othello, Shakespeare uses the presence of the Moor as tragic hero to confront the conscience of his countrymen." (P. 9)<sup>5</sup> Thus, the racial clash is at the heart of the great *Othello* tragedy.

Racial Conflict in the Play *Titus Andronicus*:-

Titus Andronicus is Shakespeare's early tragedy of retribution. The play paints the picture of heavy blood shade against the Romans by Goths, tribal community of the German inhabitants. Aaron is the moor, secret lover of the Tamora Queen of Goths. He was the main villain of the play, mastermind behind the revenge of Tamora's son Alarbus. At the beginning of the play, the fight against Goths was clarified, and the Roman Nobel General Titus returned from the battle after a long period of time. Aaron and Tamora were taken captive at the hour of the triumphant struggle against Goth. So Tamora and Aaron got in the war prisoner. In those days, the propensity is that the Negroes are slaves. So in the dramatization, Titus Andronicus Shakespeare used the character that denotes the racial clash and presents them in negative shed like the character Aaron. The darkness of the Aaron highlights the cruelty behind the black body. Here, M. C. Bradbrook comments on blackness that, "Aaron... is portentous and diabolic: his blackness an outward symbol of his diabolic nature, recognized by all." (P. 48)<sup>6</sup> Even, his black son was the result of his secret love affair with Tamora. About the first moor character of Shakespeare J. S. White says that "Moor, who makes his unforgettable appearance in Titus Andronicus, cares about how others perceive him, finding in his colour no reason for embracement of self-loathing. No apologist, he is quite comfortable with his hue, never mind that the plays other characters find in his blackness a symbol of negation." (P. 336)<sup>7</sup>

This is one more Shakespeare play that depicts racial mediocrity in the higher situation against white people. The contention between two communities white Roman and dark German has been determined by the shade of the community. The white Romans are painted as virtuoso warier, while dark Germans are portrayed as brutal, ignoble individuals. The power of the race figures on their shade of the skin, instead of scholarly capacity of the individuals.

#### Racism Conflict in the Play *Tempest*:-

Shakespeare's another play *Tempest* is an excellent example of the racial discrimination. Caliban is a significant character in the drama associated with the racial perspective. Prospero, the magician lived on Island with his daughter Miranda, but before them, Sycorax was the native witch and proprietor of the Island. Prospero assassinated the Witch and makes slave to her child named as Caliban. In the play, character of Caliban, signifies the black slave. The connection between the Prospero and the Caliban was the master and the slave. Here Upasona Kath Borahex claimed that, "Caliban and the natives of the particular island are the representatives of the black race of America. And due to the racial discrimination, the colonizer becomes more powerful than the natives. The white hegemony always puts the 'blacks' into the position of the margin. The blacks are the slave under the white hegemony and they are locating in the centre." (P. 7678)<sup>8</sup> Further, He teaches his language to Caliban and become master like a colonial impairer. He has treated as a barbaric and uneducated so Caliban has to pursue all the instructions of his master. When Caliban learns to live life like cultured person Prospero will give up his authority on the island. Thus the play has the racial conflict between sophisticated Prospero and black ferocious Caliban.

Bruner, Charlotte H. expresses that "Caliban... is the product of colonization. His differentness, pretended, imaginary, imposed upon him by the psychological need for self -



justification of the colonizer, now ac- quires a new label, that of race.” (P. 241)<sup>9</sup> so, Caliban as a slave endeavours to murder his master Prospero. He also attempted to rape the Prospero’s daughter Miranda for the sake of revenge. Here Caliban adored on Miranda, but he was slave. So, it is clear that this drama Shakespeare used the racial conflict. Here the Caliban’s battle to reclaim his Island which was initially of his mother’s and after mother, he was the proprietor of his mother’s Island. However, Prospero made slave to Caliban and assigned lot of work to Caliban. Prospero inculcate language inferiority to the Caliban, he has to learn secondary language. Prospero used the words regarding the slave to the Caliban, when he attempts to rape Miranda, he punishes Caliban. Prospero treats both differently, Caliban worked like a slave and Mirandaenjoys her life. Prospero consistently utilized words like slave to Caliban in following lines,

So, slave; hence!

Exit CALIBAN

Re-enter ARIEL, invisible, playing and

Singing FERDINAND following

ARIELS Song.”

(Tempest,Act 1,Scene 2)

At first the association among Caliban and Miranda resembled as Mistress and student but he cherishes Miranda. The principal issue is that Miranda was from a predominant family means master’s daughter and he was a slave. The right to love has reserved for equals and not for the substandard individuals. Specially, those are attractive and reasonable in complexion. Caliban was absolutely dim, no any indication of the love relationship. The person may be dark or fair has the same emotional graph. But this was completely discarded to the Caliban; this was point of racial clash between the Caliban and his lord. In the play, one of the sentences Caliban describes his relationship with Miranda,

“I have seen thee in her and I do  
 Adore thee:  
 My mistress show’d me thee and thy  
 Dog and thy bush.”

(*Tempest*, Act 2, Scene2)

The racial propensities have found in the Shakespeare's drama *Tempest*, affected by the racism in the manners in which adduct with the race and treat him as lower rank individual. In the play first and foremost Prospero had an authority on the Caliban however, when Sebastian, Alonso and Trinculo told the Caliban they will save Caliban from Prospero. He makes them a God and gave the most noteworthy respect. So this was done simply because of the racial addiction, this is clear from the Caliban's following word.

“Ay, That I will: and I'll be wise hereafter  
 And seek for grace .What a thrice -double ass  
 Was I, to take this drunkard for a God  
 And worship this dull fool!”

(Act 3 Scene3)

*Tempest* is the depiction of racial clash, the contention between the dull and reasonable has painted with numerous shades. Language is one of the variables in the racial clash. Language has been used to overwhelm others make them slave. Caliban utilized language to revile his lord since he discovers that the language is the mode for his enslavement. Other's language is problematic, that inculcates guilt conscious in the mind of the people. Each language has its own potential, none of language predominant and substandard but the mind-set moulded to create inferiority among the others. Thus the language was the weapon used to dominate the people in imperialism.

Racial Conflict in the Play *Merchant of Venice*:-

In the play *Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare problematizes the racial conflict between two religions. In earlier drama, Shakespeare highlights the conflict based on the colour but in this drama conflict is based on the Judaism and Christianity. The idea of justice is the centre of the conflict, two religions perspectives regarding the justice are presented in the drama. Judaism represents the justice means punishing the bad peoples. On the other hand, Christianity believes on the aspect of justice but more it is believed on the aspect of mercy. Justice become softer in Christianity but Judaism is unrelenting about the mercy. It highlights the idea of justice is better than the rigid Judaism. The conflict of the play has based on justice versus mercy. When Shylock loses the case his property has confiscated and asked to convert in the Christianity. In Christianity, there are discriminations of Protestants and Catholics. Jews are also contaminated as inferior product of the race in Germany. The conflicts between the various religions and in the same religion are the serious question of particular time. The play has a conflict that Jewish Shylock and Christian Antonio stands against each other. In this regard, Spiller Elizabeth argues that racial difference becomes important in *The Merchant of Venice* not just in political terms but in representational ones. (P.138)<sup>10</sup> Here, Shylock quotes related to the race in the accompanying lines,

“How like a fawning lines,  
I hate him for that in low Christian  
But more for that in low simplicity  
He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate ousance here with us in Venice  
If I can catch him once upon the hip  
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him,  
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,  
Even there where merchant’s most do congregate,

On we, my bargains and my well won thrift,  
 Which he call's "interest", cursed be my tribe  
 If I forgive him!

(1.3.41-42)

Here the word Shylock used which he hates Christian. Shylock and Antonio is staunch enemy of the each other for money. Shylock hates Christian means he hates Antonio. Antonio also hates Shylock for misbehaviour against the money lending. Moreover the Shylock talks about how he had superior, he used the religious word Jewish, in certain lines,

"You call me miss believer, Cut-throat  
 Dog, And sort on me on Wednesday last,  
 You sounded me such a day;  
 Another time  
 You called me dog, and for these Courtesies  
 I'll lend you thus much money?"

ANTONIO

I am as like to call thee so again  
 To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.

( 1.3,121-122, 135-141 )

Antonio's cannot fathom the possibilities that Shylock the Jew is just being kind, hesays,

"Hie Thee, gentle Jew  
 The Hebrew will turn Christian, he  
 Grows kind "

(1.3 191-192)

Here he used the word *Gentle* for the Shylock overall in the drama. The word used in paradoxical way thinking that Shylock should behave reasonably. The conflict moves on the

points to the Jewish wealthy but lack of remorse. Shylock was the representation of the Christian belief with inclusion of humanity. The prejudices regarding the race and their beliefs are attached with each other. Loomba remarks in her thesis, "Racial difference was imagined in terms of an inversion or distortion of" normal gender roles and sexual behaviour- Jewish men were said to menstruate, Muslim men to be sodomites, Egyptian women to stand up while urinating ...(P. 7)<sup>11</sup> Thus, the drama focuses on issue of racial discrimination based on belief system of religion. Shylock says that

“Hath not a Jew eyes, hath not a Jew hands, organs,  
Dimensions, senses, affections, passions? (1.3.53.54)

In William Shakespeare's play, there are many plays about the racial conflict in England. As Bartels, Emily Csays that, “Shakespeare fashions a Moor from the materials of his culture, he creates two figures, Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* and Othello, whose differences reflect the discrepancies and contradictions within those materials.” (P. 435)<sup>12</sup>The play, *Othello* focuses on the race issue between the senator and Othello. In this regard, I think that Othello should dialogue with Desdemona in order to avoid misunderstanding between their relationships. Here, racism is used to create misunderstanding with the conspiracy in this case. Racial prejudice makes Othello blind that resulted in the serious tragedy of life. The play, *Titus Andronicus* concentrates on the association between Andronicus and *Nigger* Aaron. Here Shakespeare depicts conflict between two race that German moors are cruel, adulterous and conspirators. On the other hand, Romans are generous, genius and worrier. Even, the play *Tempest* focuses on the association between Prospero and Caliban. Here, Shakespeare promotes imperial theme of master and slave. White is always a genius and born to rule as a master, while black is born to serve *Others*. Finally, the play "*The Merchant of Venice*" highlights the racial conflict between Antonio (Christian) and Shylock (Jewish). Here.

Shakespeare emphasised the philosophical conflict between Christianity and Judaism in terms of justice and humanity. Religions have different points of view and ideologies. Here need is the solidarity. In this regard, Pranav Jani recommended that Solidarity is more than a mantra: it takes hard work and gentleness, creating spaces where mutual trust can build and grow, where we can be challenged while always being supported, where unified action can take place through joint deliberation and thought. (P. 6)<sup>13</sup>I think that “Judaism celebrates Passover feast to commemorate Exodus from Egypt. Christians observe Good Friday to commemorate crucifixion of Jesus. Anti-Semites saw Jewish feast as vicarious ‘celebration’ when Christians were mourning and mocked them as Christ-killers. Karma does not mean justice. The Hindu and Islamic worldviews are not the same. In nature, there is no such thing as balance. Droughts are occurring. There have been floods. Greed is the source of all inventions. Complacency is the result of our generosity. Nothing is correct or incorrect. Simply put, there is the existence of life.” So, taking everything into account, Shakespeare has chosen racial conflict for dramatization. The primary goals are position, religion, and ancestry, all of which depict race as a source of contention. Henceforth this all substance portrays the racial clashes in chosen plays crafted by Shakespeare.

### Conclusions

To overcome the problem of the racial conflict, people must work together to build trust and rapport. First, challenge racist conflicts and take discriminatory action through human rights commissions, which can use their compliance, enforcement, and litigation powers to challenge policies that either cause unjust arise from racial conflict. The government should establish a care quality commission to investigate racial issues and take disciplinary action against racial conflicts in society. Third, improve transparency in the public sector regarding facilities and equal opportunities for the public, free from racism. Develop a training course for police officers that include practical skills for developing a

good empathy with racial communities and building community trust in order to scrutinise and solve problems through dialogue. The second broad theme is to promote fairness by investing in meaningful and substantial research to understand and replicate racism-related factors. Furthermore, educational resources should be made available to improve outcomes while taking into account variation, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, in order to diagnose racial conflict, it is necessary to avoid print or media publications that promote racial conflict then to devise action plan in response to such publications. It is also necessary to provide students with opportunities to participate in Cultural and physical activities that enhance lives of the human being and shape cultural and social capital. Moreover, it is necessary to create high-quality teaching resources through independent experts in order to inculcate the histories of different groups and their contributions to the building of one nation. It must create and publish a set of ethnicity data in order to improve understanding of the group and avoid misunderstandings. Lastly, it has to stop the use of the racial terminology that will change social attitude and mind-set to achieve inclusivity. No doubt, inclusivity is wonderful thing in the world so fair society will provide fair participation with an equal opportunity to build harmonious human civilization.

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