
Character Sketch of Desdemona in Shakespeare's Othello

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ABSTRACT:-

Shakespeare lived during Elizabethan age, this age was mainly man dominated age. During this age women did not have any voice and choice. They were deprived of all rights. They were mainly sufferers in that society. They were not so well educated; they did not have any political power like men. Their main occupation was to do household work. They were mainly considered as home makers. They were not given proper education; they were married off at an early age. William Shakespeare in his plays seems to capture that essence of femininity. His women characters enjoy power for a while, but at the end they return back to their conventional roles. His work is full with such types of examples. His plays present women as sufferers at the end of plays. We can take any example whether it is Desdemona in Othello, Ophelia in Hamlet, Lady Macbeth in Macbeth, Celia in As you like it, Rosalind in As you like it, Cordelia in King Lear. No doubt some women are very strong and bold they are able to assert themselves, they often surpass the male hero but at the end why they have to return to their conventional role, a role where they don't have any voice and choice. As women living in the 21st century this thing really saddened me to see that why the hell women are deprived of such rights? What is their fault? Why cannot we treat them as equal? Has not God made them equally powerful? John Milton in his famous book treats them as equal when Adam says "Eve is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" this thing inspired me to do something for women. It is praiseworthy the way W.Shakespeare gives power and freedom to his women characters then why he is going back. Same situation I observe in 21st century. Today women are educated and independent yet they are dependent on their father and husband in one way or the other. Today they all political and economic rights they are suffering in male dominated society. We claim that we are educated and modern but when we talk about a baby girl child birth the education is no use. Why do we need a baby boy to carry our name forward. Are not girls capable enough in doing this task? Why are we behaving like Shakespeare giving them voice and choice only at a fictional basis?

KEYWORDS- suppression, Domination, patriarchal, Subservience, Conventional, hierarchy

INTRODUCTION-

Despite the power of Elizabethan women during that time had very little authority, autonomy, or recognition. They did not enjoy social status, they used to power on the basis of the position of either their father or husband. They had limited freedom. Their social and political rights were restricted. They were silent observers, and supposed to be chaste and honest to their husband. They were supposed to be submissive to their husbands. Women who attempted to assert their views were seen as a threat to social order. The father had the sole right to make decision about daughter's marriage, after marriage their main function was to produce an heir. During that time women used to disguise themselves as men, and women always revert to their female role and conclusion was marriage and declaration of their subservience to men and their reversion to the conventional female role. During that time women were silent observers. They were not independent they used to depend on their husband or father to support them. They were considered as inferior to the man. They were not allowed to enter in university. They could not be heirs to their father's property. They could not become Doctors and Lawyers. They were deprived of all rights and were not allowed to enter in politics. They were not allowed to act in the theatre. Disobedience from them was considered as a crime. John Knox wrote women in her greatest perfection were made to serve and obey man. They were not born women rather they were made women (Elaine Showalter). They were not provided room of their own (V. WOLF)

Only women from upper class had the privilege of education. Women from lower class were expected to obey their husbands. After marriage they used to run house and produce children. They did not have any voice and choice. They were mainly sufferers in the man dominated society. They were mainly sufferers in that society. They used to suffer for no reason at all.

This really saddened me why we tend to think this way? Why do we do not consider equal? Aren't they an important part of our society. Can we imagine our life without them? Can God create a world which is full of

man only, why even if we are living in 21st century we tend to think that we should have a baby boy? We don't we feel proud when a baby girl is born, cannot we say that our mentality is same as it was in Elizabethan age. Today women are educated and independent still we find that they are the sufferer in the society, today they are more silent sufferer. We must think about it twice. We must do something for them; my paper is an attempt to do something for them. Through this paper I want to make a difference to the society no matter even if it makes a small difference. If after reading my paper I am able to change the mind of a man then I'll think my writing of this paper is successful

ANALYSIS-

Othello is one of the most important plays in English Literature. As we know that it is a domestic tragedy. In this play Desdemona is an example of perfect womanhood. She is beautiful, tender and gentle women. She is a naïve victim in this tragedy. She falls in love with a man who is poor and ugly. She displays her courage and tells her father that she must show her 'duty' to her husband. She does not want to be 'moth of peace' while her husband is fighting for the country. She is loved by everyone. Even Iago the villain often speaks about her honest and goodness. She is most wonderful and exquisite lady. She is si simple that she can trust anybody blindly. She is so naïve that she can't even think of cheating her husband. She is not like Emilia. Emilia also believes that she is 'Honest, chaste and true'. She is true to her husband. She tries to defend him. She is an unselfish victim.. Even after death it seems that she does want her husband to be responsible for her death. She claims 'nobody but I myself committed this tragic deed'. She is not brave like Emilia. Emilia tries to teach her evils of society. She knows the women who can cheat and betray their husbands. She is not afraid of man like Desdemona. Desdemona is not confident, calm and rational like Emilia. She does not have uncontrollable tongue like Emilia. . Emilia is also loyal to her husband. Desdemona is naïve like Ophelia in Hamlet. Both seem too lost in the world; both are obedient, childish and loving woman. Both are involved in a tensioned human world, always torn between between fateful decisions. Both seem to belong to other world. Both are incapable to fit this world, because of their naivety they are lost in this world. They seem to be torn between father 'decision and her lover not respecting her feelings and her brother treating her like a child. Same tragedy is marked by Gertrude Hamlet's mother. For Lady Macbeth only salvation is death.

No doubt Desdemona is powerful like other women characters. She was both blessing and a curse in the life of Othello. Like Cleopatra she is able to influence Othello life. She is not given main character yet her role is important. Despite Iago's innuendoes she is an ideal wife to her husband.

We take any example whether it is Beatrice in Much ado about nothing, Celia in As you like it, Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra, Cordelia in King lear, Lady Macbeth in Macbeth, Ophelia in Hamlet, Rosalind in As you like all enjoy power for some time but at the end there is marriage and declaration of their subservience to men and reversion to the conventional female role.

CONCLUSION-

Shakespeare's heroine plays a vital role in his plays. Shakespearean is trying to capture the essence of feminism. He gives them power. They seems to be stronger than Elizabethan women but this power and freedom ends in marriage and declaration of their subservience to men and their reversion to the conventional female role .They have power to influence other characters but also often underestimated . Even though they are given power still they are suppose to be honest and chaste. They enjoy power for some time, at the end they are made to return to their conventional role.

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