

Analysing Race in William Shakespeare's Plays

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Abstract:

This research paper engages in a comprehensive examination of the intricate thematic presence of race in William Shakespeare's body of work. Positioned within the broader historical context of Elizabethan England, the analysis navigates the multifaceted ways in which racial representation, identity, and societal attitudes manifest across a selection of Shakespearean plays. Utilizing critical race theory and postcolonial perspectives, the research seeks to uncover the nuanced layers and implications of Shakespeare's engagement with race. William Shakespeare often hailed as the quintessential playwright of the English Renaissance, crafted works that transcend temporal boundaries. This research paper delves into the profound exploration of race within his plays, interrogating the nuances of racial discourse embedded in the cultural fabric of Elizabethan England. To fully appreciate Shakespeare's treatment of race, one must first delve into the historical backdrop of Elizabethan England. The socio-cultural tapestry of the time, woven with colonialism, religious tensions, and hierarchical structures, provides a foundational understanding of the racial attitudes that influenced Shakespeare's works.

Keywords: Hierarchical, Elizabethan, Colonialism, Race, Postcolonial, Socio-cultural, Colonialism.

Through his many plays, William Shakespeare addresses the racial issues of the seventeenth century. One of the major concerns of the seventeenth century was the race conflict. A number of laws were in place prohibiting black and white relationships. Shakespeare's portrayal of racism was fundamentally based on etymological colonialism. The terminology that served as a groundbreaking tool for racial discrimination, Shakespeare's play was also successfully linked to people of a darker appearance in Elizabethan times. As a result, the play's darker-looking Othello and Jewish Shylock have come to play important roles. Because they were the dominant characters in their own plays, Shakespeare's works dramatise ethnic struggle. Given the many instances of racial segregation in the current context, it is predicted that the topic of race will be re-evaluated. This information will aid in the development of novel solutions to the problem of racial conflict.

Numerous reasons have contributed to human conflict in civilization. Everyone tries at first to stay out of the fight since it is unpopular with the public. In the subsequent phase, a few individuals attempt to put an end to the dispute, while others instigate confrontation in the name of democracy and battle against social injustices. Marx argues that conflict not only results in constantly shifting relationships within the current social structure, but it also transforms the entire social system. Additionally, the working relationships inside the administration are impacted by the administrative dispute. In addition, conflict is founded on cultural viewpoint before developing into a worldwide conflict.

The core of the disagreement is a difference in morality and goals. The main causes of conflict include miscommunication and divergent objectives, morals, beliefs, and ways of thinking among the parties. Conflict is an inevitable part of life, therefore instead of trying to avoid it, one must learn to live with it. In order for conflict to be transformed into positive energy, people must fully comprehend it and approach it with confidence. What constitutes a conflict? How can conflict arise? How is the war preventable? and how ought one to respond to the circumstances? These are a few of the topics covered in the study report.

As was previously said, differences lead to conflict; in the event that there is conflict, the individual endeavours to reach a peace through negotiations with the conflict. But, the other person acts in a similar way since he is content with his power performance, which leads to a post-conflict between them. In addition, the person airs grievances against someone else, which adds to the troubled person's mental confusion. There was thus more mental conflict and insecurity. A person tries to match with the subject in an attempt to end the conflict cycle, but there is a big gap that makes them anxious. The person's extreme nervousness led to disagreements. Tolerances can be useful in reducing anxiety. An individual's capacities need to be expanded in order to effectively confront the conflict. A lack of tolerance breeds violence, which in turn feeds a vicious cycle of tension, anxiety, and conflict in the person. It also becomes a significant obstacle while reacting and responding to other people. People fear that they will become ill with a behavioural problem. In life, there is an ongoing cycle of conflict and an ongoing cycle of avoiding confrontation. Thus, recognise the issue of conflict calmly and take appropriate action to bring about peace in interpersonal, organisational, cultural, and global conflicts. Individuals, governments, and the country all flourish when there is peace.

Shakespeare's plays frequently deal with the subject of race. The initial racism was a scourge that plagued modern British society. In contrast, James Peterson states that "race, for the most part here, refers to socially constructed phenomena associated with the experiences of Africans in America: Coloured folks, Negroes, Afro-Americans, and eventually African Americans" (291). Racial discrimination based on caste, creed, and colour. Geraldine Heng explains that "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." Based on the colour of their skin, people have been regarded superior or inferior. The colour of skin has emerged as a significant barrier to human advancement. They are marginalised by the main current of advancement. People were excluded based on their skin tone, and their requests to share parts of their lives were consistently turned down. Black people have turned off opportunities to lead decent lives in every area of their lives. That was the main cause of the animosity and hatred that the populace felt. Because Black people always struggle to seize opportunities, animosity among the populace also poses a threat to White people. The conflict caused a crisis in the community. Consequently, racial inequality leads to an explosion in violence and bloodshed. The politics of prejudice also contribute to the colour discrimination that caused the population to be divided. Given that racial discrimination is currently a problem in modern society, the current research attempts in a modest way to reframe the topic of racial discrimination using novel, ground-breaking concepts and conclusions. Shakespeare created a variety of characters; some, like Hamlet, think a lot and act very little, while others, like Macbeth, act quickly and think little, leading to tragedies in their lives. However, some characters deal with prejudice to draw attention to the current climate around racial injustice.

Shakespeare's plays, including *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *The Merchant of Venice* utilises phrases like "bond," "slave," and the fundamental ideas of race, so why in those dramas the dramatist makes use of language related to racism. What is the Shakespearean reflection regarding the bigotry? The topic of *Tempest* is racism, as is the Caliban's racial depiction. Numerous terms are employed to draw attention to racism. In the play *Othello*, the phrase 'Ocular Proof' is used to allude to racism. Words like "Witch," "Monster," and "Slave" were employed by *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Titus Andronicus*, and the *Tempest* to denote racial inferiority in the play. Racial Conflict in the Play *Othello*, Othello, the protagonist of this drama, secretly married Othello after falling in love with Desdemona, the Venetian Senator's daughter. This senator went by the name of Brabantio. In this play, Brabantio was opposed to marriage and couldn't agree with this romantic union. Despite the fact that Othello is a Moor, Desdemona has remained loyal to him. Iago is employed by Othello in the army, but since Othello was a Moor, he opposed Othello. Iago schemed doubts with the assistance of his wife Emilia and Desdemona's attendant. Additionally, here is one Michael Cassio, an influential figure in Othello's army, is a lieutenant. He was despite having the least amount of experience in the army, promoted to the higher post. As a consequence, Racism was employed in the play to undermine the heroic persona of Othello, the legendary warrior. Despite being black, Othello was a superb and accomplished combatant. Othello confronts the catastrophe brought on by racial tensions. Othello feels that Desdemona was not the right woman for him to marry. However, she had a deep affection for him. The couple was troubled by the prejudice that Iago fostered. Othello believed that Desdemona loved his combat prowess but not his dark body because he was highly influenced by colour. When Othello places Cassio as his second in command and ignores Iago and Rodrigo, the tragedy causes jealousy. Here, Iago's politics of colour and Cassio are the targets of jealousy that explodes. The play's central theme involves racial prejudice in order to achieve the desired results.

Shakespeare's first revenge tragedy is *Titus Andronicus*. The drama depicts the image of the Goths, a Germanic tribal group, smearing blood on the Romans residents. Aaron is the Tamora Queen of Goths' moor-secret lover. He was the primary antagonist of the play and the mastermind of Tamora's son Alarbus's retaliation. Throughout the play, the Goth war was made clear, and after a protracted conflict, Roman Nobel General Titus made his way back from the front lines. At the moment of the victorious battle against Goth, Aaron and Tamora were captured. Thus, Aaron and Tamora entered the battle prisoner. The norm back then was for Black people to be slaves. Thus, *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare employed the character of Aaron in the dramatisation to symbolise the race conflict and depict them in a negative light. The Aaron's blackness draws attention to the black body's brutality. M. C. Bradbrook remarks on blackness in this passage, saying, "Aaron... is diabolic and portentous; his blackness an external representation of his demonic essence, acknowledged by all" (P. 48). In fact, his secret love affair with Tamora produced his black kid. According to J.S. White, "Moor, who makes an iconic appearance in *Titus Andronicus*, cares about how others perceive him and finds no reason to embrace self-loathing in his colour." He is not an apologetic and is content with his skin tone, despite the fact that other characters in the drama perceive his blackness as a sign of rejection.

Shakespeare's other drama, *The Tempest*, serves as a superb illustration of racial prejudice. One important figure in the drama around the racial issues is Caliban. The island was once owned by Sycorax, a native witch, before Prospero, the magician, and his daughter Miranda moved there. Following the Witch's murder, Prospero sold the Witch's kid, Caliban, into slavery. The play's Caliban figure represents the black slave. The master and the slave served as the link between Prospero and

Caliban. Here Upasona Kath Borahex asserted that "Caliban and the indigenous people of that specific island are the representatives of the African American race in America." Furthermore, the coloniser gains more power than the natives as a result of racial discrimination. The "Blacks" are consistently relegated to the periphery by the white rule. According to P. 7678, "Black people are the slaves of white hegemony, and they are settling in the centre." (8) In addition, he teaches Caliban his language and assumes the role of a colonial impairer. Caliban must follow all of his master's directions because he has been treated like an ignorant and primitive person. Prospero will cede his power on the island to Caliban once he learns how to live a civilised life. Thus, there is a race clash in the play between the black, fierce Caliban and the cultured Prospero. Bruner, Helena H. claims that "Caliban... is what colonisation produced. Caliban, a slave, attempts to kill his master Prospero because of his assumed and imagined differentness, which was placed upon him by the colonizer's psychological need for self-justification.

Shakespeare problematizes the racial tension between two faiths. Shakespeare emphasises the tension in previous plays based on colour, but the conflict in this drama is rooted on Christianity and Judaism. The key concept is that of justice. Two religious viewpoints on justice are discussed in the drama in relation to the dispute. Judaism stands for the idea that justice entails punishing evildoers. Conversely, Christianity places greater emphasis on the concept of mercy than it does on the concept of justice. Christianity softens the law, while Judaism never gives up on mercy. It emphasises that fairness is preferable to dogmatic Judaism. The play's central conflict is between kindness and justice. Shylock is asked to convert to Christianity and has his property seized after losing the case. There is prejudice against Protestants and Catholics in Christianity. In Germany, Jews are likewise tarnished as subpar members of the racial product. The most important issue of our day is the disputes that exist both within and between different religions. Christian Antonio and Jewish Shylock are pitted against one another in the drama. According to Spiller Elizabeth, racial differences become significant in *The Merchant of Venice* not only from a political standpoint but also from a representational one. Christian doctrine that takes humanity into account, prejudices against different races and their respective ideologies are intertwined. The drama thus focuses on the issue of racial discrimination based on belief system of religion, as Shylock states that "Racial difference was imagined in terms of an inversion or distortion of normal gender roles and sexual behaviour" (7). Muslim men were said to be sodomites, Egyptian women to stand up while urinating, and Jewish men to menstruate.

In order to solve the issue of racial strife, people need to collaborate to create confront racial tensions and take discriminatory action through building trust and rapport. The government should establish a care quality commission to investigate racial issues and take disciplinary action against racial conflicts in society. 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 scrutinize 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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