

Caste Discrimination Attitudes Reflected in the Cinematic Adaptation of Shakespeare in Omkara

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Abstract- To address the caste and sexual identity accusations that drive Omkara's plot, this article reads two Othellos around each other: Shakespeare's 17th-century play and Vishal Bhardwaj's 21st-century film. This work illustrates how casteism, a phenomenon reinforced by colonial India and so representing the neo-colonial (as opposed to post-colonial) reality of the subcontinent, coupled with ingrained misogyny and ableism, combine to bring about the catastrophe of Dolly and Omkara. This work is an intentional exercise in the kind of transtemporal and transcultural thought that literary criticism should encourage. It does this by bringing several seemingly unrelated texts together and committing to an intersectional examination of embodiment.

Index Terms- Sexual identity, Colonial India, Catastrophe, Transtemporal and Transcultural and Intersectional Examination

As two men sit and discuss, a slanting sun reveals a red-eared, hillock-dotted, strikingly stunning North Indian countryside. Rajan "Rajju" Tiwari, who is dressed as a groom, hears Ishwar "Langda" Tyagi say, "Teri dulhan ko aadha-Brahman 'uthake le ja raha' hai." Your bride is being taken away by the half-Brahmin. The remark is provocative. Rajju (Roderigo) initially rejects Langda's offer of bait (Iago). But Rajju quickly understands who Langda is referring to when he uses the unusual term "adha-Brahman" ["half-Brahmin"]. "Omi Bhaiya?" he enquires. In the film Omkara by Vishal Bhardwaj, the main character, Othello, is introduced in this way (Bhardwaj, 2006).

This article will focus on the caste-and gender-based confessions that elevate the response in Bhardwaj's 21st-century film while also considering Shakespeare's seventeenth-century play alongside. The paper will then argue that Moor's story within the drama and the half-caste inside the movie represents a post-colonial confluence of race, disability, sexuality, caste, and ethnicity. The phenomenon we observe in post-colonial societies is what I call "weird" because it is actually neo-colonialism, a transfer of power in which the disenfranchised merely choose new leaders. The Indian subcontinent's caste system predates European colonization. In spite of this, it was the Raj that was responsible for helping to transform a system of sociocultural discrimination into a system of systemic oppression. That's why I

say that modern-day casteism isn't just a legacy from the colonial era; it's a living kind of colonial ideology. So, I contend that the fact that Omkara feels like an outsider is indeed a true aspect of the outcaste-ness, and this outcaste-ness is based on his patriarchal entitlement. My research is in dialogue with that of Loomba Ania and Hall Kim, who has shown that racism and sexism work hand in hand to bring about Othello and Desdemona's tragic end and who have also highlighted the material benefits of colonial racism and patriarchy (Loomba, 2002; Hall, 1996). During this research, I analyze two sets of confessions to show how caste discrimination, sexism, and the concept of able-bodied-ness all contributed to the tragedy of Omkara and Dolly. The confessions come mostly from Dolly and Omkara but also include those of Langda and Indu (Emilia).

This article is an intentional practice of transtemporal and cross-cultural attention in which literary criticism should also be involved. Despite the fact that we live in a supposedly "post-colonial" era, crimes based on gender and caste continue to destroy people's lives. Stories from the past, like those written by Shakespeare, that continue to captivate us and be told repeatedly offer a helpful vocabulary for describing today's challenges. Large parts of India still do not value the lives of Dalitbahujans. Most people in the upper castes still take part in a "Project of Unseeing" that normalizes caste discrimination to the point where it is no longer noticeable.

Perhaps this explains why the mechanisms of caste in Omkara have not been thoroughly dissected by critics, despite the abundance of scholarship around Bhardwaj's critically praised film. Omkara tries to adjust the story of Othello by situating it in Uttar Pradesh in order to draw attention to clan rivalries and competitions over race and gender," writes Nandi Bhatia (Bhatia, 2007). However, she concludes that "any comparison based on race power-play, that is core to the actual text, vanishes" (Bhatia, 2007, 171). Despite mentioning that the film's lead cast all have "clearly recognizable Brahmin surnames," Lalita Pandit Hogan doesn't elaborate on the essential affordances of this detail. Rather than focusing on racism, "Bhardwaj's film is mainly focused on violent acts in general" (Hogan, 2010, 54). Omkara's "identify as" a half-caste" is given importance at the start of the movie, as stated by Itanjali Shahani and Brinda Charry (Shahani & Charry, 2014, 115). In contrast to Othello's racial tension, the one in Bhardwaj's film is not dependent on Omkara's caste. For example, see Shahani & Charry, 2014, 115–16. While Saksham Sharda recognises the association between the characters' skin

tones (fairness vs darkness) and their castes in Omkara, he avoids any substantial investigation into this mapping by avoiding race and caste. Of course, Omkara isn't the first movie to try and address the racial tensions in Othello from another perspective. The idea that Othello's racial tensions are central to the play and any subsequent adaptations are also unhelpful (Sharda, 2017, 601). It is concerning since Sharda is attached to the Indian government and has the privileged-caste view that "racial prejudice has little part in existing caste inequality" (Sharda, 2017, 609). To switch things up, Jonathan Gil Harris uses caste as a critical perspective to examine the movie. However, the shocking lack of critical reflection in his rendering of Kanjari as a "whore" undermines the integrity of his work (Harris, 2018, 183). In my essay, I also talk about gender and disability, but I also focus on caste. This is because I think that as pre-modernist scholars who want to use their knowledge worldwide, we should use our stories and writings right away to solve urgent problems.

"And, until she [Desdemona] appears as certain as heaven,

I do confess the vices of my blood.

So, justly to your grave ears, I'll present

How I did thrive in this fair lady's love." (Othello

I.3.124-7)

Othello foreshadows the story of a lover and his beloved, and when he tells it to the officers of Venice, the Moor appears to have won over everyone but Brabantio. On the other hand, Omkara is without an equivalent confession. Raghunath Mishra (Brunito) breaks down at Bilawal (Venice) when he meets Bhaisaab (the Duke). Who, he seems to be implying, doesn't know that he tried to set his daughter in an arranged marriage, but she ran away? No one will take him seriously as a guy anymore. There is also the issue of caste. It's true that ["Jaat ki bhe tooh bat hai"]. When Omkara finally enters, having been called by Bhaisaab just as the Duke has called Othello, he makes no confession. Omkara ultimately shifts the narrative focus to Dolly. She admits that she has fallen in love with Omkara and that she has a sincere desire to be saved from a marriage she cannot bring herself to. Because the entrenched rape culture of small-town North India intends to make his daughter his property, he is also responsible for properly disciplining her; thus, Dolly's ability to care for herself, to love from somewhere outside her caste, and to express and behave on such a love is enormously provocative in a community where Raghunath's peculiar sufferings are real. Raghunath would listen to his daughter's confession and not abandon her. He was never courageous in his role as an upper-caste lawyer for a corrupt politician from a small rural town.

However, he doesn't need to pull over on the way out, so he rolls down his windows and talks to the guy who already apparently owns his daughter instead of his father, even though he had just called the man's owner "daitwa". What do you mean, ksi or ki sagii kiya hogi, jo larki apny baap ko thug skti hai? Will a girl stay loyal to any other person if she can deceive her father? Raghunath's objectification is taken from Brabantio, his literary predecessor. His statements reveal his patriarchal entitlement and

would eventually inspire Omkara's nightmares. They also allow him to converse with Omkara in a way similar to how the deceased Othello confides in the deceased Desdemona in Toni Morrison and Rokia Traore's *Desdemona* (2012). Othello is talking to Desdemona about his friendship with Iago. "Recall your previous confession?" The lover who was once hers asks the deceased Desdemona, "The very last story you told?" 7.18-9.1

Othello, who has now passed away, remembers. He tells the story of how he and Iago raped two women and how they both agreed to it. as they enjoyed it. When they know that a child has witnessed their rape, they are not ashamed of it. It gave us the joy to observe the depravity we had brought about (7.20-4).

When Omkara finally confesses, it almost feels irrelevant. Following Golu's (Langda's small son) birthday party, it's indeed late at night. Omkara and Dolly are relaxing on a swing. An extraordinary softness permeates this picture, considering the scene of open gun battles, political drama, and planned murders. Taking up the subject from somewhere else, Omkara says to Dolly, "shadi se koi aulaad nahe jani gae is ghr mein." salon takor phr baba ko muhabat hui or os muhabat say hum hwy ." hmari Maa, Dosri Biradri ki thi , "Isi liye jaat ka aadha kehty hai humko" For many years, this house had no children for many years. My father then just happened to be in love. I came from that love. My mother's caste was different. They refer to me as a half-caste because of this. In contrast to Othello in Shakespeare's play, who describes his life as a slave, his travels, and his military advancement to a courtly assembly (Othello, I.3.130-71), Omkara informs Dolly about his past during their private time. Additionally, unlike Shakespeare's text, this statement is unprompted and without apparent justification because it occurs after Dolly and Omkara have returned to Sipra, Omkara's home hamlet (Cyprus). However, it is clear to viewers that this is an answer to an earlier discussion on the eve of Dolly's nullified wedding. Raghunath had taken his men to Tyagi Hostel after discovering his daughter had left home, where Kesu and Langda (Cassio) were playing a game of marbles and Omkara was hiding. Raghunath had rebuked Omkara by saying, "Bhool giaya kay tu Brahman toh hai, pr aadha! Adhdaa khon tere badn!Kanjarii kaa hai. Do you completely forget that you're half Brahmin? That Kanjari woman is responsible for half of your blood in your veins! The Kanjars, a lower and migratory caste in northern India, are the ones Raghunath is alluding. It serves as a reminder to any spectator who is aware of caste issues that Omkara's father, the older Shukla, fell down the caste scale as a result of his "isaq" ["love"] of a Kanjari woman, a wandering stranger. Omkara has the surname Shukla, which signifies an upper caste class, but people familiar with his history realise that he isn't truly a Shukla. Caste can be acquired as readily as it may be lost, and interactions with members of lower castes, according to those who protect caste purity, taint upper caste members. The older Shukla's caste and gender provided him with privileges that Omkara would never have (despite their marriage to a Kanjari). He is half-caste, as Omkara now reveals to Dolly, probably having overheard the conversations behind his back. Omkara had not refuted the charge even during the argument with Raghunath. Wakeel Sahab, Hamari Jaat, apny khub pehchanii hai, par apni

beti ky dil ki baat nahe suni. ["You have learned well, Lawyer Sir, my caste, but you have not heard the heart of your daughter"]

Omkara is holding that baby girl in his arms while he speaks to her about his own love and his father's love. Omkara's realisation that there was/is a violation of such love on all sides is implied in his multifaceted confession. Omkara's statement contains a small amount of uncertainty or perhaps a code word: his mom was a "dosri biradari," or "different caste." We are unable to determine if Omkara was hesitant to identify his mom as a Kanjari. If she were given such a name, this would imply that she was not only not a Brahmin but also very cheap on the caste level. We see this as an admission of complex but deeply held feelings of inadequacy. The larger historical context of India reveals that even after seven years of political liberty and a judicial proclamation of every person's equality in a representative democracy and a secular republic, many aspects of its functioning and a large percentage of the Hindu population still make great efforts to keep the upper castes "in their place." Omkara belongs to a social system that is unbalanced since B. R. Ambedkar's suggestion to abolish caste is still too extreme for India's democracy to implement. Omkara is now a part of the caste system because even Dolly acknowledges his worth. She puts her word up against everybody's when she says, "Chaand jab aadha ho jawe hai, naa, tab bhii chaand hi kehlawe," in response to Omkara's confession. Also, in a caste-based society, her acceptance of him is casteist because she chooses to identify with Omkara's "brighter" half rather than his "darker" half. It would take more than a woman's promise of undivided affection to convince a man who is an outcast because he is half-caste that he deserves her whole love. And like the Venetian foreigner of a Moor after him, Omkara's misery is greatly exacerbated by the fact that he is unsure of whom to believe. Surprising places are where Langda and Indu make their confessions.

Rajju's moment of utmost clarity also validates the ableism that permeates the universe of the movie, which is what inspires Langda's. Omkara's caste is again brought up in a discussion concerning him, but without him present. Langda asks Rajju, who is spiteful and mocking, "Main nahin jaanta?" Shukla, for fifteen years, you've been scrubbing behind such a half-Shukla with the twisted leg! "Langda is detained by Rajju's visceral loathing, which is unevenly distributed between the abjectness of caste and handicap because he is aware of it and takes part in it himself. Following a crooked leg, especially if that person is half-caste, and responding to a name that constantly alludes to that limb's deformity ('Langda'), is one strategy if doing so pays off. It's quite another one to continue to be dishonest and loyal while being ignored. It's as if Langda just recently became aware of his twisted leg, or "ter taang," which then forced him to plot Omkara's demise. The association of the corruptness of limb with corruptness of thought, which serves to advance the plot, is insensitive storytelling prosthetic at work in the film. The harsh and obligatory ability that Langda himself is an enforcer of is also put up at this time. Langda exploits the physical weakness of others to his advantage: The fight that hurts Kesu is instigated by Billo's (Bianca's) distaste for tobacco smoke, and Langda uses Kesu's aversion to alcohol to encourage him to start fighting in the first place. The ingrained sexism that counters the pervasive

misogyny is there, along with Langda's ableism. When Kesu announces that he won't be drinking with the males, Langa commands, "Get Kesu a nipple-shaped bottle of milk! An elegantly obscene hand motion accompanies these words by Langda. The group burst out laughing mockingly. He puts the wine to his lips.

The moment when Indu admits to being a trans woman is also the one that could have prevented the tragedy. She asked Omkara moments before the marriage, "Why are you looking so sad?" Omkara responds that he keeps thinking about what Dolly's dad said: "If she can betray her dad, who else will she betray?" Her response to Omkara was, "Jab granthonn nay kalaank ko hamare mathy ki bindii bana diya hai, too apki ka galti, Omi Bhaiya." Agnii se bhii nikal jawwe, na, toh bhi sage nahin, thage hi kehlawe' Where do you go wrong, Brother Omi, when Scripture makes infamy a badge of honour for us women? It doesn't matter if we survive the fire; we'll still be labelled unfaithful. Omkara fails to understand Indu's clarity regarding the predicament in which she and Dolly find themselves—far from home and, in the instance of Dolly, without any chance of ever returning. As a result of his insecurity and his terrible social setup, he frequently discusses his wife with others but never with her. Even though he loves Dolly very much, he cannot believe in her mentally. Perhaps, as with Desdemona, if Othello was ever to discuss his concerns about Desdemona, he would be revealing his self-doubts. In both Othello and Omkara, some loves can't see themselves as having a stable future. These are stories about the rise and fall of racial and social stratification and the place where race and gender meet.

There's just one more confession to make before we wrap up here. When Omkara finally points the finger at Dolly, Dolly has had enough and refuses to confess. Omkara is devastated by Dolly's death and the 'proof' of her sexual involvement with Kesu. ka bistarr game kr rahe ke suu ka bistarr game kr rahe? For how long have you been keeping Kesu's bed warm? I mean, it's not like there's a secret child hiding out ('kahin koi bachcha waccha')? He promises to let her live if she admits: "Daikh, kabool kar lah." Say it out loud: ["Look, admit it."]. It looks like he's attempting to talk some sense into her. Just like she did when she was with her dad, Dolly clasps her hands together. Her continued silence is just as clear as her earlier declaration of love for Omkara. "Na jii, bas, aur nahe jeena humain" I do not want to live anymore, so no, thank you/fine/enough. She moves in close for an intimate kiss on Omkara's cheek. Because she is trapped, she has no choice but to give herself completely into his arms. Maybe she realises that if Omkara asks for her confession (or any truth that Omkara has not accepted), it won't be sufficient. "Kuchh kami reh gayi thi hum mein, hyan?" he says, expressing feelings of inadequacy. Was I missing something important? The remainder is unspoken conversation but not completely quiet. The camera stays on Dolly as she slowly suffocates to death in Omkara's hands.

One might reasonably speculate how the plot of this narrative would change if Omkara did not identify as half-Shukla or believed that others did not. Would it be enough if he never

doubted his perfection because of his undying love for Dolly Mishra? After all, Othello's story would be far less compelling if he weren't a Moor living in Christian Venice and madly in love with his "beautiful woman," Desdemona (1.3.127). What if the Moor and the half-caste, who claim to love women so much, actually believed them and had meaningful conversations with them instead of sharing the basic lack of emotional confidence that drives misogyny? We, like the Kanjari, dare to have some faith that we'll find out what happens when the film cuts off.

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