

## PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO AND PASHTO FOLK TALE SHER ALAM MEMUNAI

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**Neelam Farid, Muhammad Ali Dinakhel. A Comparative Analysis Of Shakespeare's Othello And Pashto Folk Tale Sher Alam Memunai-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 20(2), 698-713. ISSN 1567-214x**

**Key Words: Pashto Tale, Sher Alam And Memunai, Shakespeare, Othello, Comparative Analysis.**

#### ABSTRACT

This study has focused the comparison of the two literary works of English and Pashto, Othello, a Shakespearean play and Sher Alam and Memunai, a Pashto folk tale. Besides the comparison of the two protagonists, Othello and Sher Alam, thematic affinity, other points of convergence and divergence, in these two tragedies belonging to different ages, languages, cultures and areas have been explored and analyzed. Thematic affinity and contrast in terms of different characters besides the protagonists, like villains, heroines and fathers of heroines have also been analyzed. The center of discussion are the protagonists, as both of them suffer from the tragic flaw of jealousy and suspicion, which play an important role in leading them towards the cruel act of murdering their innocent wives, on the incitation of the villains, and bringing upon their own tragic end as well. In this study an effort has been made to provide the thematic affinity and also the striking contrasts in the two works of literature, Shakespeare's Othello, and the Pashto folk tale, Sher Alam and Memunai.

#### INTRODUCTION

Literature, as we know, is the sincere depiction of human nature, feelings and emotions. The current study is an effort to make a comparative analysis of the two works of literature, Shakespearean tragedy, Othello and the Pashto folk tale, Sher Alam and Memunai. In Shakespearean tragedies, the protagonists suffer from a flaw in their character, which are responsible for their reversal of fortunes and ultimate down fall. According to the traditional concept of tragedy the tragic hero meets with a tragic disaster despite his noble nature. In Shakespearean tragedy Othello, it is the protagonist's jealousy and suspicious

nature that leads to his destruction. This flaw in Othello's character plays havoc with his life as through an impulsive action in a fit of fury he commits the murder of his chaste wife. We can assert from the tragedy of Othello that the protagonist's credulity and simplicity is played and his his jealousy and suspicion are aroused by the urgings of the villain Iago, who knows quite well that Othello is prone to suspicion and jealousy. He realizes his mistake but after it has been too late to mend. Pashto folk literature also abounds in this quality and runs parallel with the great literature of the world in this regard. The work in question, namely, the tale of Sher Alam Memunai, is an example in this capacity of Pashto folk literature. According to the tale Sher Alam and Memunai, the protagonist, Sher Alam also suffers from the same flaw in his nature, which is jealousy and suspicion and, in this tragedy, also he commits the murder of his chaste wife on the goading of the villain. Besides the points of strong analogy between the tragedies, there are points of contrast also in the story and the characters. In Othello, the protagonist is a North African Moor and is an outsider in the Venetian society. Moreover, the villain of the tragedy is one of the best organized Shakespearean villains. On the contrary, in the folk story of Sher Alam and Memunai, different versions testify to the fact that Sher Alam and Memunai were cousins and used to play since childhood. There is also uncertainty about the villain in different versions of the tale. One version says that Sher Alam's cousin was behind the whole evil game of the murder of Memunai at the hands of her husband (Heston et al, 1988: pp.1-6). There is another version of the story, according to which the villain was Sher Alam's neighbor. The unanimously accepted version of the tragic story says that the protagonist's first wife, by the name of Ajaba, was the actual character behind the innocent murder of Memunai.

After the establishment of the fact that Sher Alam's first wife was the villain of the story, it will be better to mention this story in a bit more detail. This version tells that Sher Alam had already a wife by the name of Ajaba, when he fell in love with his cousin Memunai. The proposal for her marriage with Sher Alam was accepted by her father. Memunai was married to Sher Alam but his first wife was jealous of her husband's happy second marriage as Memunai was the favorite wife of the husband. She a three years old daughter, while Ajaba was issueless. Sher Alam used to bring tobacco and other articles for his shop. One night when he was away to Shabqadar Deri, for the afore mentioned purpose, Ajaba got the opportunity to materialize her diabolic plan. The door was knocked late at night by a man who come from the hujra to take tobacco for guests from the shop. Sher Alam's first wife handed over the key to Memunai, to give the man tobacco and later on spread the news that she was talking to a man in the shop during the dark of night. When Sher Alam came back the other day, the news about Memunai had already spread in the village. After he listened to the words of his first wife, Sher Alam in a fit of fury without any proof killed his chaste wife Memunai. He ran away from the village and was followed by the whole tribe, which is a proof to Memunai innocence. There are two Pashto tappas by Nigar (2022, p. 178) which are expressive of the fact that Memunai was killed through the evil intrigue of Sher Alam's first wife by the name of Ajaba:

دا مېموني خواره يې مړه كړه  
د بنو كور دے شېطاني كوي په غلا  
خېر كړي الله

Translation [ Memunai has been killed by the rival wife through a bloody intrigue. O Allah, protect us.]

مېموني نه ده خبرداره  
عجبي ايښي دي د غم پري دامونه

Translation [ Poor Memunai is unaware of the trap which Ajaba has villainously set for her.]

The famous couplet of the Pashto folk poetry laments the same aspect of the story:

په خوارۍ خوار شي شېر عالمه  
د تماكو په پانو چا كړي مرگونه

Translation: (May you be miserable in miseries, Sher Alam, who killed for the leaves of tobacco).

The comparison and contrast in the two tragedies establish that Shakespearean tragedy is a globally celebrated work of literature. It has attracted the attention of critics especially for the well-planned and organized villain. Iago is also considered as one of the greatest villains in English literature. On the contrary, different versions of the Pashto folk tale Sher Alam has been narrated differently by different folk poets. Similarly, three versions of the story mention villains differently. The unanimity of opinion prevails about the first wife of Sher Alam by the name of Ajaba. Shakespearean tragic heroes suffer from a tragic flaw in their character, which brings upon the tragic disaster and so does Othello. The protagonist of the Pashto folk tale sher Alam is also credulous and suspicious like Othello and due to the same flaw plus on the instigation of the villains that the commit the heinous crime and that is the murder of their innocent wives. Both the tragic stories prove the fact how women have been treated cruelly throughout history.

### ANALYSIS OF THE TWO WORKS AND THE PROTAGONISTS

Sher Alam Memunai is a Popular Pashto folk tale. This tragic incident occurred in 1920, in the village Ghiljo, of Tehsil Nawagai. Nawagai is still a Tehsil in the present day district of Bajaur, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The story, due to its fame and the tragic death of its heroine, Memunai, has been narrated by different folk poets in verse. These poets include Mian Jan, a folk poet of village Mamazo of Tehsil Nawagai, Hassan Peshawri, Fida Mutahhir, Jamal of Sangar, Talib Wali Muhammad, Amir Ghulam Sadiq and some others (Abid, 2011:368). Hassan Peshawari has described this tale in the form of charbeta. Jamal Sangar has also composed the story in verse form. (Patang, 1978: 78). The third folk poet who has composed this story in verse is Talib Wali Mohammad. The composition is 64 pages and has been published in Peshawar. He begins the story like this:

اے سامعہ ورورہ واورہ پہ قرارہ  
 دا قیصہ د شېر عالم میمونئی یارہ  
 زہ پخپلہ باجور تہ وومہ تلے  
 دا قیصہ می ناوگی کنبی اورپدلی. (Patang 1978: 78).

Translation: O listener, o brother listen to this story with patience as this is about Sher Alam and Memunai. I myself had gone to Bajaur and heard it in Nawagai. The story says that there were two brothers, Syed Muhammad and Khair Muhammad. According to Ashna Bajauray (Gulyar, 2022) they had migrated to Ghiljo, a village of Nawagai tehsil, located in district Bajaur, from another village Doda, where their ancestors had lived. They belonged to Dinar Khel, a clan of Pashtuns. Syed Muhammad had a son, Sher Alam, while the other brother, Khair Muhammad, had a daughter by the name of Memunai. Memunai and Sher Alam had been playmates since childhood. Sher Alam was tall and dark complexioned but he was famous for his hospitality and bravery. His first marriage, which had been arranged by his parents, took place with Ajaba, a girl of Nasar Khel tribe. Later on, Sher Alam fell in love with his cousin, Memunai and married her with the consent of parents. He ran a small shop near his house, where he sold tobacco along with other articles of daily use. There has been a common custom of smoking tobacco through a traditional pipe in this region, known as chillum. Sher Alam would sell tobacco in his shop to fulfill the need of the villagers. Guests in hujra would also be entertained by providing them with chillum. Memunai was Sher Alam's younger wife and the stories of her beauty were spread everywhere. Ajaba, Sher Alam's first wife, was not happy with the whole situation and felt strong jealousy towards Memunai. Memunai had a three years old daughter, while Ajaba was issueless. Memunai was the beloved wife of her husband, therefore, Ajaba, felt neglected and her jealousy against her rival wife knew no bounds.

Ajaba hit upon a diabolic plan against Memunai and started waiting for a suitable opportunity. Shopkeepers from the nearby villages would go to Shabqadar Deri, which was a whole sale market. One day sher Alam also left for the nearby town of Shabqadar Deri to bring different articles for his shop. He stayed there for three days. Memunai and Ajaba were alone at home. Late at night, guests in the hujra needed tobacco, so, they sent a man to Sher Alam's home for tobacco. The man came and knocked at the door. It was Saida Khan, an unmarried man with a reputation for being a sleaze and with no sense of honor. Ajaba, the person behind the whole wicked scheme, gave the key to Memunai, told her to go and open the shop and give the man, whatever he wanted and that she would be right behind her. Being the younger wife, Memunai felt compelled to obey the words of Ajaba. She went out in the dark, opened the shop and gave the man tobacco, in the pouch, which she had woven for Sher Alam. The other day Ajaba spread the false news that she had caught Memunai red-handed, talking to Saida Khan, during the dark of night. When Sher Alam came back to the village, the fake news about Memunai's affair with Saida Khan had spread like the jungle fire. The poetic version of the story by Fida Mutahir reveals that Sher Alam was clear about her chastity, but he was compelled by the code of the Pashtun culture. Pashtuns never allow their women to be seen by strangers, especially during the dark of night as has been expressed by the discourse of Pashto proverbs, one of which says that "I

remained covered all my life and so shall I leave the world” (پتہ وم او پتہ به خم) (Farid et al, 2023a: 187). He, in his book “Da oor Lambe” (Flames of fire) has added this tale. He begins the tale in this manner (Patang, 1978:78):

خلفه واورى عجيبه بنكلے داستان دے  
ميمونى حلالوي زور سوران دے

Translation: Listen! O people, the story of Sher Alam Memunai is beautiful but will fill you with gloom as it is about the innocent murder of Memunai.

مطهر د ميمونى صداقت ستائي  
شبر عالم تحقيق و نه کر دبر نادان دے. (Patang 1978: 78)

Translation: Mutahir knows fully well the truth and innocence of Memunai but Sher Alam did not make proper inquiry into the affair.

According to Mutahir, Sher Alam is to be blamed for his hasty action, but he was actually bound by the Pashtun code of honor. The only code he knew was the code of honour and only blood could wash away his shame. He grabbed a knife in one hand. He was blind in rage and did not see the truth in Memunai's eyes and innocence on her face and slashed at her throat. When Sher Alam slaughtered her he fled away. He was chased by a lashkar of the tribe because all people knew that she was innocent. Chasing him by lashkar also confirms her chastity. It is among the top seven Pashto romantic tales (Gulyar, 2022). A pool in Ghaljo village from where Memunai took water still exists. She was buried in the graveyard of Ghaljo village. The place is known but the grave has disappeared as it was of raw mud. Sher Alam later on, tried to kill that person, but could not find him, rather he found his father, Syed Jan, in a mosque and killed him. Sher Alam fled to Swabi and stayed there with tobacco businessmen for the rest of his life. He died in 1940. His enemy died in 1970 (Tribal News Network, 2022). At that time Sher Alam and Memunai had one daughter, Khubani. She was three years old. It is said that Khubani died twenty years ago, probably in 2000 AD. She had one son by the name of Shah Jehan Sahibzada, who is still alive. The remnants of Sher Alam such as his shop, the stone on which he used to grind tobacco, the remnants of Memunai, like the pool in Ghiljo village, from where she would take water and the stone on which she was slaughtered are still there and known to people. There are different verses by different folk poets which stand witness to this tragedy, an inhuman and savage incident in the name of false honor (Jhawak, 1955: 277):

ميمونى شنه شوه په خندا شوه  
د كاكاءو دے ما به نه حلالوينه

Translation: Memunai could not stop herself from laughing in disbelief as she thought how could her first cousin who is also her husband, kill her.

ميمونى گور كينې ارمان وكړو  
د كټ غوتى كينې مې اوگى ده زنگ به شينه

Translation: The young Memunai longed in the grave for her necklace in a small pouch hanging by the bed side. She feared it will get rusted.

Othello, the Shakesporean tragedy was written somewhere between 1604 and 1605. Literature asserts that the main source of the tragedy comes from Cinthio's Othello (Draper, 1931; pp.724-37). It is one of the four great tragedies of Shakespeare, including Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear. All these tragedies are read appreciated all over the world. In Shakesporean tragedies the protagonists suffer from a flaw in their character which bring their tragic downfall, but the role of fate in this context cannot be ignored. Compared to other tragedies, there is a strong and well-planned villain in Othello who plays upon the tragic flaw of the protagonist which is the killing of his innocent wife Desdemona at the hands of Othello and thereafter, his own suicide. Othello remains for a long time the guest of a Venetian senator, Brabantio, whose youthful and beautiful daughter Desdemona would listen to his tales of adventure in wars. She falls in love with him and they marry secretly against the will of Brabantio. In the meanwhile, Othello chooses Cassio, a competent Venetian to the position of his ensign, which the villain Iago aspires for himself. This makes Iago feel that his better claims to the high position have been ignored and in this way his animosity is aroused and he decides to destroy the lives of both Othello and Cassio. Othello is sent by the Venetian state to Cyprus to protect that island against the invasion of a Turkish fleet. Before leaving he appoints the 'honest Iago' (which he is referred to ironically throughout the play) to bring Desdemona after him. Iago is obsessed with one thing to displace Cassio and harm Othello. He now hits upon a diabolic plan of making Othello be certain that his wife Desdemona is engaged in an illicit relationship with Cassio. The first step taken in this regard is making Othello demote Cassio from his position. Secondly, he convinces Cassio to ask for Desdemona's intercession for his restoration to the previous position and at the same poisons Othello that his wife is going to plead Cassio's case and that she loves him secretly. Othello, who previously loved his wife to be chaste and innocent, discards that idea and starts believing in the words of Iago. As a tragic hero he suffers from the tragic flaw of jealousy and suspicion which in Aristotelian term is known as hamartia (Grolier, 1983). Through hamartia, Aristotle defines the tragic flaw of the tragic hero as "a tragic hero is a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty (hamartia), traditionally called the tragic flaw." This flaw becomes the cause of the inconsistency in Othello's character. His jealousy is aroused with full fury and instead of discouraging Iago from the character assassination of his wife, he asks him for other proofs. This encourages Iago and he provides him with further information about the same affair by telling him about the handkerchief which he (Othello) had presented to Desdemona. Iago testifies to Othello that he saw the same handkerchief in Cassio's chamber. Othello in a rash and impulsive way reaches the conclusion that Desdemona is no more faithful to him and that his gifts hold no value to her. The idea has been expressed beautifully in a tappa of Pashto folklore:

راشه رومال منبرز دي وځله  
نه دي ياري كرم نه دي نخښي گرځومه

Translation: O, Come and take away your gifts of comb and handkerchief. Neither do I love you and nor will I keep your tokens of love.

Desdemona tries her best to convince her husband of her of her innocence but he does not listen to her words and slays her in the bed. Soon after her death, he comes to know about the reality and stabs himself and dies after kissing the lips of his dead wife. The tragedy of Othello occurs due to his doubtful, credulous and jealous nature who after some hesitation submits to the urges of the villain on the basis of ridiculous proofs.

Both the tragedies speak about the untold sufferings and injustice through which women have undergone throughout different periods of history in different cultures around the globe. Many women have even lost their lives due to the unjust practices of societies. Othello and Sher Alam are such tragic stories in which the chaste, innocent and faithful heroines lose their lives due to the evil working of the villains, and also due to the credulous, suspicious and jealous nature of the heroes. In Othello, the protagonist by the name of Othello is a North African Moor in the service of Venetian state, who is a valiant general and has to his credit many tales of success in the wars as is usual with Shakespearean tragic heroes who come down from the higher ranks of society. Whereas, in the Pashto folk tale of Sher Alam Memunai, Sher Alam is an ordinary native of Bajaur. He would have lived in anonymity, if the murder of his innocent wife had not taken place at his hands. This tragic death of the innocent Memunai at the hands of her husband is highly mourned in Pashto folk poetry:

په خواری خواری شېر عالمه  
د تمباکو په پاڼه چا کړي مرگونه (Khalil, 2008; 106)

Translation: May you be miserable in miseries, Sher Alam, who killed on the instigation of the villain (Heston et al, 1988; 1)

Othello is a dark complexioned North African Moor, and this color complex performs a key role in leading him towards murdering his wife. The Response of Othello confirms this color complex when Iago tells him about the betrayal of his wife:

Haply, for I am black.

The prose version of the story of Sher Alam Memunai by Heston et al (1988, pp.1-6) depict the hero as being dark complexioned. The same phenomenon of color complex of Sher Alam has been confirmed by Ghaznavi (2006) who says that Sher Alam was dark complexioned and there were spots on his face as he had suffered from smallpox.

There is no proof from the folk versions of the story that Sher Alam suffered from color complex like Othello. The point of diversion in the two stories about the complexion of the protagonists is that Othello's complexion is associated with his race as he is an African Moor. On the contrary, Sher Alam's

complexion has nothing to do with his race. He is Memunai's cousin and is not an outsider like Othello.

Othello, during his stay in Venice would spend most of his time in the house of Brabantio, the Venetian senator, whose youthful daughter, Desdemona would listen to the tales of his adventures and bravery. She got so much inspired by his qualities of bravery and courage that she fell in love with him. As a result of this love, she eloped with Othello in extra haste and married unceremoniously without the consent of her father. As the play begins, we listen through the mouth of Iago when he along with Roderigo awakens Brabantio during the midnight and tells him in an indecent language that that his daughter has entered into a matrimonial bond with the Moor:

“ . . . an old black ram is tugging your white ewe” (Ridley, 1928; 9).

Desdemona's father was greatly hurt by the infidelity of his daughter and wished that he had been issueless. He also hinted to Othello to beware the fidelity of a wife who had betrayed her father: “Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see/ She has deceived her father, and may thee” (Shakespeare, 1918; 39). But in contrast, Desdemona proves herself a loyal and sincere wife to her husband as she responds to her father's taunts: “I do perceive here a divided duty/I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband” (Ridley, 1928; 31)

On the contrary, in the Pashto folk tale, the marriage of Sher Alam and Memunai took place with the consent of their parents in a well-celebrated manner. After their marriage Memunai whole heartedly took care of her husband. The sole purpose of her life was to safeguard the honor of her husband, the same way wives are true and sincere to their husbands in the Pashtoon culture. A point of convergence between the two tragic stories is that both the heroines are beautiful and more than that they are chaste, faithful and sincere wives to their husbands. The unfortunate thing about both of them is that they get murdered at the hands of their husbands on charges which they never committed. The villains in both the tragedies are evil by nature but the motives of Shakespearean villain are very clear as his personal interest in carrying out his cruel plan is to avenge both Cassio and Othello for the injustice which he feels to have been done to him. On the other hand, there is ambiguity about the villain of the Pashto folk tale and his name is also not mentioned in the folk versions of poetry. The version which is considered as the most authentic mentions the villain to be Sher Alam's first wife.

The fact of the matter remains that the villains in both works of literature cannot be considered as equal as the Shakespearean Iago is the most pernicious villain ever created by him. Different critics have studied the villain Iago from different perspectives, but in contrast, the villain in the Pashto folk tale does not possess the strength of the evil nature of Iago. However, both the villains played with the lives of innocent women through their malicious motives. Though a contradiction exists between the villains of the two works as there is no concordance between the way they planned the conspiracy against the protagonists and heroines, but their motives were devilish and the result of jealousy.



As about Othello, in the first two acts of the play certain elements have been carefully provided which make the seduction of the protagonist plausible. Othello as a simple person develops his trust in Iago. By a series of events we observe that Othello doubt his own powers of judgment and perception and a series of actions lead him to question the goodness of Desdemona. Iago very systematically attempts to arouse the curiosity of Othello through his consciously ambiguous statements and thereby he attempts to create suspicion in the mind of Othello about the loyalty of Cassio. Iago wants to give Othello the impression that he has some information about Cassio's dishonesty but he does not want to unveil it and further says to him: "O, beware my lord, of jealousy" (Ridley, 1928; 103). He further tells Othello that it is this green eyed monster which torments those people who entertain it. It is really an enigma to be in love and yet to be suspicious of the fidelity of the love partner. Othello says to Iago:

Why, why is this?  
 Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,  
 To follow still the changes of the moon  
 With fresh suspicions? No; to be once in doubt  
 Is once to be resolv'd: exchange me for a goat (Ridley, 1928; 104).

The irony of the situation is that Othello falls by the same flaw which he rejects in the beginning. Iago is a man of iron will and he never believes in giving up on an evil scheme. He exploits the ignorance of Othello about the Venetian culture and society by telling him repeatedly that the outward chastity and innocence of Venetian women may not be the genuine virtue. To strengthen the argument, Iago reminds Othello of Brabantio's words for his daughter. He is moving towards success when Othello replies: "And so he did" (Ridley, 1928, 105). When Iago leaves, Othello soliloquies:

This fellow is of exceeding honesty,  
 And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,  
 Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,  
 Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings,  
 I'd whistle her off, and let her down the wind  
 To prey at fortune (Ridley, 1928; 109).

Othello has accepted falsehood over truth and this is the beginning of the great tragedy as a man is looking at the character of his through the eyes of another person. Jealousy and suspicion are without doubt monsters which play havoc with the lives of people, benumb their reason and madden them.

Compared to Othello, Sher Alam had familiarity with Memunai as a cousin (ref needed). Furthermore, Sher Alam like Othello does not suffer from the racial complex, but when he hears about the infidelity of his wife, he at once believes in the words of the villain and his response and action is the same. He decides to kill his wife, though he has not been mentally prepared in the same systematic way as Othello. The abrupt decision of killing his wife portrays the same inconsistency in his character from which Othello suffers. Both the protagonists

unquestioningly accept the words of the villains and whatever ridiculous proof they are provided with. They renounce unconditional love upon lies and falsehood and accept revenge. Both the protagonists commit murder in the name of false honor. True love appears to them mere lust and they fail to understand the difference between spiritual union and mere sensual appetite. Othello charges Desdemona with adultery in very strong words by calling her 'whore' and 'strumpet' (Ridley, 1928; 154) and his hatred for her is very open and derogatory. This language of intense passions is one of the chief characteristics of Shakespearean tragic heroes. Similarly, Sher Alam, after he has listened to the words of the villain charges Memunai with infidelity and betrayal but his language is not derogatory for his wife. It can be reflective of the fact that Sher Alam is not convinced of the faithlessness of his wife but a member of the Pashtun culture he more concerned about his honor in the community. It can also mean that Sher Alam for a few moments may have been convinced about the infidelity of his wife. The views about women being morally frail may have struck his mind as there are so many proverbs in Pashto which portray women to be untrustworthy. One specimen proverb here conveys the idea, "Winter's wind and woman's thoughts are not to be trusted" (د بنځې سوچ او د ژمي باد زر) (بدليري) (Farid et al, 2023b: 28). Misogynist ideas expressed by discourses leave a lasting imprint on the psyche of different groups in societies. According to the folk tale by Jamal and as has been cited by Hayat (2016, pp.185-86), Sher Alam addresses Memunai:

خُان مي په غټ درياب لاهو كړو  
چي مي باور د زنانه په خوله كاونه

Translation of the lines [ I have been drowned in deep waters by belief in the words of woman. You had assured me that I will be in control of your life at the time of marital contract. You obeyed me apparently showed obedience to me but when I was away, you defamed my name by your dishonorable acts. I enjoyed respect in the community but that honor is lost now). In response to the allegations by the protagonist, Memunai clarifies her innocence as depicted in the following verses of of the Pashto folk poetry (Hayat, 186):

ميمونى وټېلي شېر عالمه  
نه بېمه گرمه په الله كرم سوگندونه

Translation: Memunai says that she has not committed anything wrong but neither Sher Alam nor others will believe even if she swears by the Almighty or by the Holy Book. None would believe in her due to the false charges, so she would not say anything to defend herself.

After providing clarification for the charges which have been levelled against her by people and which Sher Alam has believed in, Memunai like an obedient Pashtun wife submits her will to the will of her husband. She allows him to kill her if his lost honor can be restored that way:

د سر او مال اختيار مي ستا دے  
چي څه دي خوښه وي په سر سترگو يي منمه (Hayat, 186)

Translation: You are sole owner of my life and I willingly submit to what you would do to me. As you have lost your good fame just because of me, you may kill me if your honor can be restored through that act.

An interesting aspect of the two stories is the handkerchief which Othello had presented to Desdemona and tobacco pouch which Sher Alam would take to the hujra. Desdemona lost the handkerchief which was of immense significance to Othello. He himself tells Desdemona about the hankerchief after she has lost it: "That's a fault. That handkerchief did an Egyptian to my mother give/ She was a charmer, and almost read the thoughts of people" (Ridley, 1928; 127). Similarly, gives tobacco to the stranger who comes from hujra late at night. She had woven the tobacco pouch for Sher Alam and the giving of it to a stranger is considered a blunder on her part, which is manipulated by the villain for evil design. Memunai never knew what terror would the tobacco pouch bring into her life. In fact, both the heroines do not have the least suspicion about the inconsistency of their husbands. They love their husbands more for their inner qualities and unaware of their superficiality. Desdemona expresses these feeling about her husband like this:

My heart's subdued  
Even to the very quality of my lord  
I saw Othello's visage in his mind,  
And to his honors and his valiant parts  
Did I my soul and fortune consecrate... (Ridley, 1928; pp. 35-36).

In the similar way, the heroine of the Pashto folk tale loves the protagonist for his friendly nature and hospitality as has been expressed by Ghaznavi (2006,52). Sher Alam was a hospitable man. He was a friend of friends and an enemy of enemies. All the hustle and bustle in his hujra would remain due to him. As is usual with Shakespearean tragic heroes, they go through a mental enigma and Othello also goes through the same mental agony. His mental suffering is due to the reluctance to accept the charge of betrayal against his wife:

By the world,  
I think my wife be honest, and think she is not;  
I think thou art just, and think thou art not.  
I'll have some proof. Her name, that was as fresh  
As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black  
As mine own face. If there be cords or knives,  
Poison or fire suffocating streams,  
I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied (Ridley, 1928; 117).

Compared to Othello, Sher Alam's feelings have not been expressed with the same intensity, but he is seen as going through the same mental enigma as has been expressed in a quatrain of the Pashto folk poetry by Jamal Sangar and cited by Hayat (2016, 187):

يو خوا ته تۀ بل خوا پښتو ده  
کومه يو پر پر دم خدایه فکر واخسته

Translation: I am faced with two extremes, what to decide between your life and honor Either to choose your life or honor.

Desdemona is unable to understand the reason behind Sher Alam's anger and that why does he not trust her. She asks him: "Alas, what ignorant sin I have committed?" (Ridley, 1928; 154). Upon this query from Desdemona, Othello strongly condemns her as he seriously believes her to be guilty of debauchery. He considers that her disloyalty is unforgivable and that all the forces of nature if come to know about her heinous crime will be hushed for a moment. Heaven itself along with the moon, wind, and the earth will lament her crime for the gravity of its nature and, therefore, he responds to Desdemona in indecent words:

Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed,  
Heaven stops the nose at it, and the moon winks,  
The bawdy wind, that kisses all it meets  
Is hushed within the hollow mine of earth  
And will not hear it what committed,  
Impudent strumpet (Ridley, 1928; pp. 154-55).

There is a striking point of divergence as the protagonist of the Pashto folk tale Sher Alam does not use derogatory words for his wife Memunai, the reason of which could be that he not believed in the words of the villain about his wife. The fear in the mind of Sher Alam could be ostracism (paighoor) from any quarter about this act of his wife or any dishonorable words about her as has been expressed by Jamal Sangar in his poetic composition of the tale and cited by Hayat (2016, 189).

د شېر عالم صبر تمام شو  
چېرې ته يې لاس کړو ميمونې حلالوينه

Translation: Sher Alam lost patience and took hold of dagger to sly Memunai. He hit Memunai's throat with it as she was looking at him with her large eyes. The wall of the room war reddened with her blood. Her body was soaked in blood and it happened to restore the false honor of Sher Alam.

One difference between the two protagonists is clear, Othello takes time to establish the guilt of Desdemona though the basis for the establishment of his guilt is just a misconception. On the contrary, Sher Alam is cousin to Memunai and knows her since childhood but as soon as he hears the about the charge of adultery against her, he takes no time for rethinking or any further proofs but believes in the words of the villain. He says to Memunai:

شېر عالم ووئېل ميمونې ته  
په ځانې دې نه کړل راسره کړي لوظونه (Hayat, 2016; 188)

Translation: Sher Alam told Memunai in utter disappointment that you did not prove yourself worthy of fulfilling the promises which had made.

Desdemona, as Iago tells Othello, has presented his (Othello) gift to another person, which she has not done in reality, but it means the loss of love to Othello. Similarly, if Memunai in the absence of her husband gives the tobacco to another man it means the same to the Pashtun protagonist, loss of love and faith. A couplet of the folk poetry expresses it very aptly:

راشه رومال منبرز دي واخله  
نه دي ياري كرم نه دي نخيني گرځومه

Translation: O come, and take away your gifts of handkerchief and comb, neither do I love nor will I keep your tokens of love.

There are no genuine roofs about both the heroines about the charges of adultery. Both the protagonists of the two different stories on the basis of suspicion accept whatever ridiculous proofs they are provided with by the villains. Both the protagonists lose in their faith in the pure and chaste ladies ironically. They come to the realization of reality but the tragic calamity in the form of the death of the heroines. Both the heroes fail to understand the difference between pure love and mere sensual appetite. An admitted fact about Shakespeare is that his tragic heroes are drawn on the broader scale, and he is also a master of human passions and emotions. It is in the basis of this assertion that Othello goes through mental agony and is most of the time reluctant to believe that how can an apparently innocent and pure woman be a complete antithesis of what she seems to be on the surface. He thinks over this issue from different angles and the more the thinking, the more the spiritual enigma. Shakespeare is the master of human psyche the way the way he digresses the delicacies of different characters through their words. If now the lines and words of the Pashto folk tale are compared to the delicacies of Shakespeare, these cannot match the same depth. Still, it can be assumed that human nature, covering passions, emotions and psyche are the same everywhere and on that basis it can be said that Sher Alam may have gone through the same agony before committing the murder of his innocent wife in a state of fury.

An interesting and genuine about Othello and Desdemona has been raise by Samuels (2014, 20). According to him Othello and Desdemona belong to different cultures and her elopement and secret marriage with Othello threaten the patriarchal authority and racial purity:

“Desdemona’s rebellion is experienced by her father as general rebellion of daughters against patriarchal authority. Once again, in this passage, Shakespeare stresses the cultural and ideological foundations of subjective fear and desire: Brabantio’s fear and honor is a personal reaction that is found out of the dominant ideological system of patriarchal and racial purity.”

In the case of Sher Alam and memunai, both are a part of the same culture their marriage has taken place with the consent of their parents. Memunai’s father has not gone through such personal reaction and does not feel any threat to the system of patriarchy or racial purity due to the marriage of his daughter. While Brabantio’s hysterical rage is at the climax when he declares that Desdemona’s

interracial marriage threatens to undermine the very roots of his own culture and religion:

The duke himself,  
Or any of my brothers of the state,  
Cannot but feel this wrong as't were their own;  
For if such actions may have passage free  
Bond slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be (Ridley, 1928; 20).

If we study Brabantio's state of mind and the threat felt by him to his own religion and culture from the inter-racial marriage of his daughter to the Moor and apply it to the heroine of the Pashto folk tale and her father, we see that Memunai's father does not experience such a trauma because his daughter gets married to her own cousin with his (father's) consent in a ceremonious way. If Memunai had gone against the will of her parents and had eloped with a person of lower caste, the resentment of her father might have been greater than Brabantio's as the Pakhtoon culture strictly forbids such marriages. Such couples become outlaws and are killed if found out. Othello loves Desdemona excessively and when he gets certain that she is guilty of illicit relationship, he says to Iago:

Damn her, lewd minx! O damn her, 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 (Ridley, 1928; 123).

So, Othello through the vision of Iago has come to know about Desdemona's infidelity, but is still thinking of the easiest ways of death for her. A striking analogy is found in the situation which the protagonist of the Pashto folk tale goes through:

په حلاله مې پېرزو نه شي  
چې دې د سپين بشر شغلو ته وگورمه (Hayat, 2016, p.187)

Translation: The matchless beauty of your face fill me with hesitation about slaying you as you do not deserve death.

The lines which have been uttered by both the protagonists justify the fact that that they love their wives, but due to their response to the charges of impurity against their wives on impulse their rationality and wisdom is benumbed. They consider their false honor more important than their love and become the victims of superego. Both the protagonists act on the basis of impulse which leads to the disaster in both the tragedies. Their jealousy, doubt and egotism make them blind to the love and sincerity of their partners. While acting on impulse, they see themselves as an instrument of justice but unfortunately, their act becomes the destruction of love and truth. They reject true and sincere love and accept revenge in its place. They are too much overpowered by the evil designs of the villains that sinful vengeance becomes for them a lawful justice.

## COCLUSION

The study has provided the general comparative analysis of literary works, Othello and Sher Alam and Memunai, in order to bring out the thematic affinity between them. Best highlighting the thematic affinity between these works, a comparative analysis of the two protagonists was made. The comparative analysis between the villains, heroines, and other characters has also been provided. Along with the similarities, the contrast between the two works and the different characters has also been analyzed. The aim behind the comparison of these two works is to establish the fact that basic human nature, feelings, emotions and psyche are the same despite the barriers of age and clime. The two protagonists with some differences suffer from the same flaw; jealousy and suspicion which lead them to commit the murder of their innocent wives on the evil urgings of the villains without confirming the charges of infidelity against them. It is due to suspicion and jealousy in their nature that they violate the law of Nature which is taking the life of another person and it also results in their own destruction in more or less the same way. The unjust murder of the two innocent ladies proves that both of them became victims of the malicious designs of the villains and that women throughout the ages have faced similar fate at the hands of man in the name of honor. The tragedies provide a lesson for adopting a rational and logical approach in day to day life and to confirm the information before reacting to any such charges of infidelity against women because in both the works women were killed on the basis of mere doubt and the very serious charges of infidelity against them were not confirmed.

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