



Darkness and Women: An Appraisal of Colourism in Shakespeare's "Sonnets" and Tagore's "Krishnakaly"

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Abstract: The concept of colourism signifies the superiority of skin tone, i. e appreciation of lighter skin over darker skin. The dark complexion of women is shown as a victim of the malice of prejudices in favour of the fair skin tone. William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) "Sonnets" (from 127-154) and Rabindranath Tagore's (1861-1942) "Krishnakaly" are the vivid cases in point of deviation of the typical colourism of women in literature. Shakespeare has used the term "Dark" both literally and figuratively. His beloved possesses dark complexion and at the same time, he keeps her identity mysterious that remains in the dark. The title of Tagore's poem itself is "Krishnakaly" and "Krishna" stands for "Black". Regarding the complexion of the human body instead of 'black', 'dark' is the corporate word to be used in literature. He directly has beautified the colourism of a lady unconventionally. It seems both of them have been revealing the beauty of the women in an avant-garde, moving away from the regular practice of highlighting the fair heroines in literature and offering their mysterious gestures towards the readers.

Keywords: *Colourism, Dark, Literature, Women, Unconventional.*

There might be an argument that this essay is offensively sexist. If question comes to the mind of the readers, that means, the paper creates a scope for further research. Another debate that may come up whether this article discuss the comparative study of Shakespeare's "Sonnets" and Tagore's "Krishnakaly"; and also, whether Shakespeare's a number of sonnets should be compared with a single poem of Tagore. The home truth is to the literary mind here is no point of comparisons between the two literary giants of the two culturally different nations and also from the two different centuries and the discussion point is the term "dark" which is used by both the poets. There is a fundamental difference between a dark complexion and a person who is racially coloured. Tagore's poem refers to the former, i.e. his "Krishnakaly" possesses the 'dark' complexion; and Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady' refers to the latter, i.e. from the racial point of view she is the victim of colourism. The concept of 'Dark' or 'Krishna' comes together in the high spot of discussion of two unconventional beauty described by the prolific poets of the centuries. William Shakespeare has not only shown the beauty within the 'darker skin' but also the 'darker self' has been associated metaphorically in his sonnets. Tagore has seen the sparkling beauty of a 'Krishna' or 'Dark' lady, which is utterly an unconventional approach from the accepted complexion factor of the women of Bangladesh. In literature, for the female protagonist, lighter skin is superior to the darker skin across the world. There cannot be any issue of comparison between William Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore as both are the iconic literary figures to the literature lovers. What matters in this study is their treatment of complexion of their heroines in the poetry. The most interesting fact is that two poets from the two different times and places have chosen few and far between the way of representing the beauty of the women successfully. This way-out look of the female beauty has made them special to the eyes of the literature readers defying the regular concept of colourism in literature. The portrayal of a heroine in the literature of west and east usually is determined by her fair skin. In terms of the physical beauty of the two ladies in the poems, the readers get almost the analogous portrayal of the prominent poets' description from the west, William Shakespeare, and the east, Rabindranath Tagore. Both 'Dark Lady' (Sonnets 127-154) from the west and "Krishnakaly" share the same skin-colour 'Dark' or 'Black' synonymously. From the time immemorial, skin colour matters a lot in every nation, where 'white' or 'blonde' is superior to 'dark'. 'dark brown' or 'brunette' as the white people are

2 Shahnaz Parvin : Darkness and Women: An Appraisal of Colourism in Shakespeare's "Sonnets" and Tagore's "Krishnakaly". always considered as superior to the other nations. This can also be considered as colour-colonization or colourism that makes the 'White' prejudiced against the 'Dark' or 'Black'. As a result, the symbolic meaning for the 'White' stands for 'Good' and 'Black' for 'Bad'. There has always been a bigoted treatment of one's skin colour by the comparatively fairer people.

So, what is Colourism? According to Jakira M. Davis (2015) "Colorism is the belief that one skin tone is superior to another. In many cases that I am aware of, it is the belief that lighter skin is superior to darker skin."(p 8) He also mentions Alice Walker (1983), "the internalized bias and favor for light-skin European features and 'good hair' has stratified the black community for generations" (p 8) The notion of 'colourism' refers two types, namely, 'Interracial Colourism' or 'similar to race-based' as in the sonnets of Shakespeare many identify the 'Black Lady' from the dark-skin race, and 'Intraracial Colourism', or "with members of the same race expressing bias against fellow members based on skin color" (p 8), as 'Krishnakaly' belongs to the same Bengali race of the poet. The complexion of the human race is marked as white, light-brown, dark-brown, tanned, or dark. The serial maintained in the previous line, the concept of 'Colourism' is followed automatically by beginning with the 'White' colour while mentioning different tones of the complexion. It almost becomes mandatory that skin colour determines the position of a race and again the categories of the complexion differentiate the position of the person in the society. The study pursues the position of the 'Dark Lady' and 'Krishnakaly' having their inter and intra-racial identity. There might be questions, "Is there any comparison between Shakespeare and Tagore; or the 'Dark Lady' and 'Krishnakaly'?". The answer is undoubtedly negative since there is no point of comparison between the two most shining literary stars of the two different places and time. Histories of slavery and European colonization and the caste system in India promote colourism and skin shade hierarchies since the dates back to long past. The link between affluence and skin colour pertained in the Elizabethan England in the form subjugating the darker people and in the Indian subcontinent overpowering the comparatively darker people of the intra-race as Aisha Phoenix (2014) refers to Glenn (2008), "light skin signified affluence in India, in contrast to the darker skin of the poor or working classes, which resulted from labouring outside." (Phoenix, 2014; p. 101). Nevertheless, here Shakespeare and Tagore have coloured their protagonists who have been considered from the lowering identity. Shakespeare's the 'Dark Lady' has been identified as 'black prostitute' of the Elizabethan period and Tagore's 'Krishnakaly' might be a farmer's or a shepherd's daughter who has been seen in the meadow.

William Shakespeare's Sonnets were published in 1609, and Tagore's "Krishnakaly" in 1900. There are almost two hundred- and ninety-one-years gap of composing the two poems in two different places in the world. The issue of the discussion can be how both poets have planned to fix this dark colour concept in their poems. It seems both of them are unveiling the unconventional beauty of "Darkness," when Shakespeare utters, "Thy black is fairest in my judgement's place." (Sonnet 131, Ln: 12) and Tagore announces, "My Black bud, I admire her." (Hakim, trans. 2004, p 588).

Rabindranath Tagore's famous poem, called 'Krisnakaly', is inscribed in the book of poetry 'Khanika'. He immortalizes a natural beauty by this composition. He does not worry about what other people call her because of her 'dark' complexion. He calls her 'Black bud' (Krishnakaly). From the time immemorial, the poets have been portraying the features of women associated with nature. Likewise, Tagore finds the beauty of the lady emerging in the field on the cloudy day where he can see her 'deer-eye' and without veil spreading her braid of hair on the rear. With a rhetoric question, 'Black?' , the poet reassures his appreciation towards the 'Black' lady and nature herself. The readers cannot but think of who is the ornament and who is ornamented; 'Krishnakaly' enhances the beauty of the external nature of the rural background or nature glorifies the beauty of that 'Black' lady. The poem is the complete celebration of natural beauty amidst nature as the poet portrays the rural setting through his words; two black cows are mooing and the dark lady comes out of her hut hurriedly, the eastern wind leaves the green paddy field with an unrest wave and the poet is standing beside the divider of the field attracted by the beauty of a 'Black Bud', and the poet feels for that charming black beauty when the black soft shade prevails in the dark forest during the rainy day or the rainy night.

My Black bud, I admire her.
She may be called 'black' by the villager
I saw her in the field at cloudy-day
With her black deer-eye
She had, then no veil upon her head
But a braid of hair on the rear
Black? She may seem to be black as coal
I feel always her black deer-eye. (Hakim, trans, p. 588)

The two poets start celebrating the eccentric beauty of darkness defying the traditional concept of 'colourism' or 'complexion racism'. In these poems, the standard of beauty is eccentric from the cultural outlook ground where only fair and white complexions are considered as the usual characterization of beauty. This treatment of the poets leads to appreciating the dark beauties of Shakespeare and Tagore. The crisis is not in the mind of the dark ladies, rather the poets have been attracted by their dark eyes which are at the same time fascinating and mysterious; and also surpasses the dark skin tone. Though the eyes of the Bard of Avon she has possessed 'raven black' (Sonnet 127), he declares, "Thine eyes I love" (Sonnet 132). Nevertheless, Tagore is also in the same line of fascination with the mystery of the black eyes,

On a cloudy day I did see
The dark lass on a stretch of green
Her doe eyes so deep and dusky. ("Krishnakaly", Ln no: 3-5)

The query automatically arises that what makes the poets celebrate the black beauty whereas the world is appreciating the fair skin irrespectively to English and Bangla literature. Tagore's almost contemporary poet Jibanando Das (1899-1954) has metaphorically highlighted the beauty of his beloved in the poem "Banalata Sen" (1934):
Her hair as if the dark night of long lost Vidisha,

Her face reminiscent of the fine works of Sravasti, ("Banalata Sen", Translated by Faizul Latif Chowdhury, Ln no: 8-9).

To the twentieth-century American novelist Toni Morrison the only characteristic that makes her main character in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola who is an eleven-year-old girl, beautiful is her blue eyes. According to the ancient Egyptians, the blue signifies the colour of water and sky. The watery blue stand for the female principle with the sense of the blue depths of water and blue sky determines the male power. The girl as a black Afro-American female child wants to be well accepted and appreciated by those around her. Toni Morrison also struggles in the novel to give a voice for the females who are facing racism from their community.

In English and Bangla literature colour and symbolism go hand in hand. The writers and poets have the distinct meaning of using certain colours. For the dark-complexioned mostly used adjectives are black, dark-hued, darkish, dusky, tawny, and swart etc. In colour and symbolism, all these signify absence, mystery, and sorrow, whereas white-complexioned are synonymous to bright, fair, illuminated, radiant, shining, and luminous. The Russian painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky interpret 'black' "is something burnt out, like the ashes of a funeral pyre, something motionless like a corpse." (Web) But the dark colour is authentic and gets legitimacy in Shakespeare's composition. He announces that the ladies of his time are trying to be fair artificially with the cosmetics to keep pace with the social milieu. That is why the so-called fair complexion has lost its acceptance to the Bard, and so he says:

For since each hand hath put on nature's power,
Fairing the foul with art's false borrow'd face, (Sonnet 127, Ln no: 5-6)
And Tagore repeats for five times in his poem:
A dark one? As dark as she may be
Doe eyes so dusky I have seen ("Krishnakaly", Ln no: 8-9)

Both poets are very sure about their celebration of the authentic completion of their 'black beauty' in the poems. Since the publications of Shakespeare's sonnets, some critics have always been hankering after Shakespeare's private life in this literary attraction. Another question is simply confined regarding the identity of the young man, namely W.H and the so-called Dark Lady. According to the past discussions of different critics, Shakespeare knows both of them and experiences the fatal mistake of introducing both of them. There creates a very popular triangular love story of time unbound, their abandonment to the speaker-poet, and erotic interest to each other. There are many more discussions for the heterosexuality or homoeroticism of the poet related to his 'fair' friend. This is not the concern of this paper. Many examples are starting from the "Biblical story of David and Jonathon; the Homeric account of Achilles and Patroclus; the classical legend of Damon and Pythias...who are friends must of necessity be closer than any possible relations between men and women because men bear a closer resemblance to one another." (Evans, 1997, p 18) Among the Victorian poets, this same-gender friendship is also prominent as Tennyson has composed his masterpiece "In Memoriam" to keep the memory of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, alive; and again Christina Rossetti has declared

"For there is no friend like a sister

In calm or stormy weather;

To cheer one on the tedious way,

To fetch one if one goes astray,

To lift one if one totters down,

To strengthen whilst one stands" (Rossetti, "Goblin Market")

Again, William Shakespeare also has announced the love of two friends Bassanio and Antonio in his famous tragicomedy *The Merchant of Venice*, as G. Blakemore Evans refers to the Geneva Bible, "Greater love than this hath no man when any man bestoweth his life for his friends". Then remains the chief question that to be addressed is the identity of the 'Dark Lady'. In her 'Introduction' to Shakespeare's *Sonnets* Katherine Duncan-Jones (1998) refers Frank Harries suggesting the idea that, "Shakespeare was stung into dramatic, as well as poetic, creating by an unhappy affair with Marry Fitton, and owed her the greater part of his renown." (p 50) She assures her explanation by referring A. L. Rowes's (1973) exclamation, "This is she! This is the lady" as he has confidently titled his book "Shakespeare's *Sonnets: The Problem Solved*" (Jones, p 50) The first possible name is Mary Fitton (1578-1647) who had been the Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth I. Though she is the supposed 'dark lady', she attracts the strong devotees of the powerful political and social personnel "despite evidence for her fair complexion; despite the fact that she was unmarried at the time of her affair with Herbert" (p 53) as Jones inscribes in her edited version of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. This edition questions the complexion of Fitton and put the readers in confusion about the word 'dark', whether her complexion or intention is dark can be the point of discussion. Here, Shakespeare remains silent and mysterious.

As per the historical background, the male-partner associated with Fitton is William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke (1580-1630) as 'W.H' in the sonnets of William Shakespeare; who was an English nobleman, politician, and courtier. At the age of twenty, he had an affair with Mary Fitton whom he impregnated but refused to marry. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* were first published in 1609 and the time frame also matches with the relationship of Fitton-Herbert. The reluctance to marry is apt to *Sonnets* 1-17 that. In a sense, makes W.H as William Herbert identical consorts of 'dark lady' and the poet-speaker's 'fair friend'. The colour-adjectives that Shakespeare uses with the lady and his friend reflect the misogynistic attitude of the poet. The Earl refuse the lady he has impregnated secretly is coined as 'fair' and the lady is termed as 'dark' for having socially unregistered sex with a powerful man. Moreover, the poet takes part in a politically and socially powerful side by using the adjective 'fair' with his friend and 'dark' with a female assistant who does not have that powerful political and social identity though she has been the Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth I.

There comes another name, the poet and a notorious Tudor lady Emilia Lanier, first proposed by A.L. Rowse who has been descended from the Venetian Jews; and the mistress of Henry Carey, first Lord Hunsdon who was the patron of Shakespeare's company, the Chamberlain's Men (Evans, 2007, p 243). She is also believed to be the inspiration of Shakespeare's most famous plays *The Merchant of Venice* (written between 1596-1610) and *Love's Labour's Lost*. The last name for the 'dark lady' is Lucy Morgan or Black Lucy who had been a well-known prostitute of the 1590's England. In recent studies, the researchers dismiss the nineteenth-century interpretation of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are very much autobiographical. Later on, the Irish novelist James Joyce (1882-1941) has also been influenced by the triangular love poem of a black lady and white man as Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom, and Blazes Boylan in *Ulysses* (1918-1920).

The 16th-century writers called any dark North African 'moor', 'a black moor,' or 'a blackamoor.' During the Elizabethan era, they were mostly slaves and they were believed to be tied with Spain, Elizabeth's enemy territory. In 1596 to abandon the black moors Elizabeth issued an open letter to the Lord Mayor of London. One week letter she restated "good pleasure to have those kinds of people sent out of the lande". (Web) In the beginning, only the black male slaves and musicians entered England, but gradually the women were occupied in the household jobs. When Queen Elizabeth I declared her letter most of the women lost their jobs and chose prostitution. From the historical point of view, there are a few candidates to be mentioned for Shakespeare's 'black lady' among these prostitutes.

Dante (1265-1321) and Petrarch (1304-1374) have been showcasing the platonic association of fair beauty and moral virtues in the lover's heart to highlight the beauty of his beloved. In the Elizabethan, Shakespeare defies the fourteenth-century views and adds a new value of by the saying of Hamlet to Ophelia that honesty overrides beauty in his famous tragedy *Hamlet* (1602),

...the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. (Act 3, Scene 1, Ln no: 120-123)

Following the aforementioned declaration regarding moral values of a character, he creates another masterpiece of the Shakespearean tragedy *Othello* (1603) and here he chooses the dark-complexioned protagonist. The interracial marriage makes the play more interesting to Bard's audience. It has to be mentioned that by this time Jacobean literary period began with the ascension of the Jacobean King James I of England (1603-25). Bradley does not emphasize on the racial issue in portraying *Othello's* character, rather he says,

But in regard to the essential of his character, it is not important and if anyone had told Shakespeare that no Englishman would have acted like the Moor, and congratulated him on the accuracy of his racial psychology, I am sure he would have laughed. (Bradley, p 187)

On the contrary, Calderwood stares at *Othello* with the detestable eyes, and says "Moors were simply outsiders, the other who is not like us." Dark *Othello* represents the qualities of a subhuman or 'deceitful infidel'. But, *Desdemona* appears as the spokesman of Shakespeare and announces the victory of inner beauty that *Hamlet* proclaims to *Ophelia*, "I saw *Othello's* visage in his mind." (Act 1, Scene 3. Ln 252). Though it has been shocking to the Shakespearean audience that a white lady gets the lock to a black moor and the moor proves his cruelty by murdering the innocent wife, this dark complexion has made the play more interesting and exciting as the theme of forbidden love Adam and Eve. Or, in the white world of *Desdemona*, she tries to get a kind of romantic venture of unveiling the distant black terrain! But, before death she declares that her love has not disappointed her at all, "his kindness may defeat my life, but never taint my love." (Act 4, Scene 2, Ln no: 162) That may be the reason, Bradley finds *Othello* who is more felt with 'love' and 'pity' than the other heroes of Shakespeare challenging the fact of becoming a black Moor.

Critics also have discussed that Shakespeare receives the concept of 'Dark Lady' from the portrayal of Sidney's *Stella* in *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) as in Sonnet 7:

When Nature made her chief work, *Stella's* eyes,
In color black why wrapped she beams so bright?
Would she in beamy black, like painter wise,
Frame daintiest luster mixed of shades and light? (Blog, Sonnet 7, Ln 1-4)

Shakespeare's the 'Dark Lady' with 'raven black' eyes in Sonnet 127 seems a little like the dark-eyed of Sidney's *Stella* in Sonnet 7; but unlike *Stella*, Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady' is described with disdain as well as admiration. Shakespeare's Sonnet 127 standardizes the concept of true beauty with honesty. The colour concept of 'black' has not been appreciated as 'fair'; it remains both in young and old ages, whereas the word 'fair' stands for 'pleasure', 'attractive', 'honest', or 'favourable'. The westerners are privileged with the part of the world they belong to, the zone where sun encourages less melanin production in human skin and hair; in turns, they possess the notion that light-skinned blonde women are superior to the dark-skinned and raven-haired women. But, in Sonnet 127 Shakespeare appears in an unconventional approach of the zone that beauty must come in an honest package.

For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrow'd face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profan'd, if not lives in disgrace. (Jones, p 127, Ln:5-8)

He shows how beauty has lost its naturalness by the use of cosmetics, and the falseness creates 'a bastard shame' (Ln 4) of the true beauty leaving it degraded and devoid of honesty. The fake can never be the beholder of beauty, believing this the poet introduces his lady friend as a raven-haired beauty and dark eyes:

Therefore my mistress' brows are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem: (Ln 9-12)

Unlike the prejudiced westerners, Shakespeare advocates that her naturalness is 'dark', and yet she is full of beauty blended with honesty by demolishing the concept that fake blonde is more beautiful than the natural brunette. He ends the sonnet by preaching that the dark-eyed, dark-haired, and dark-skinned beauties should not mourn to be light in complexion and light-haired as their natural beauty makes people realize that they have their standard. William Shakespeare does not only anticipate the 'praise of black' in the sonnets but also in *Love's Labour's Lost* he shows *Berowne* defends his lady, *Rosaline*, "against the king's charge that 'thy love is black as ebony' and that 'Black is the badge of hell.'" (Evans, p 243)

6 Shahnaz Parvin : Darkness and Women: An Appraisal of Colourism in Shakespeare's "Sonnets" and Tagore's "Krishnakaly". Such suggested literary connections do not mean that the concept of the Dark Lady does not allude to any historically known figure.

The sonnets of Shakespeare always does not only leave us with the query of being biographical or fictitious but also the 'Dark Lady' sequence promotes the question of whether 'Dark' implies to the complexion of the lady or her behaviour and attitude towards the poet-speaker. The first quatrain of Sonnet 31 focuses tyrannical behaviour of the lady towards the poet-speaker resembling the boastful and cruel beautiful women and she is very much aware of of the vulnerability of the poet's heart and causes him pain with impunity:

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
For well thou know'st to my dear dotting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel. (Jones, ed. Sonnet 131, Ln: 1-4)

He discards the negative opinion regarding the lady's dark complexion associated with her dark intention by convincing himself that the dark features of the 'dark lady' are in the highest regard: not the physical feature and colouring, it is her indifferent attitudes towards poet renders her to the 'slander' she is receiving. The poet is truly attracted with her natural dark beauty, but cannot uphold the ugliness of her deeds:

Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds. (Sonnet 131, Ln: 12-14)

After reading this sonnet, there cannot be any doubt regarding the poet's standpoint of the 'Dark Lady', as it highlights the clear voice of the poet that he is triggered not because of 'dark' complexion but because of the 'dark', mysterious, and indifferent behaviour of the lady towards the poet-speaker.

'The Black Lives Matter' campaign, in the present world, promotes debates and discussions on racism and colourism across the world. This conscious thought put pressure on several notable beauty conglomerates recently to remove words like white/whitening and fair/fairness from their products packs and advertisement so that the more inclusive vision of beauty get priority to the skincare portfolio. This move has resurfaced the debate that race and colour are distinct but overlapping ground of discrimination throughout the world. Although colourism is deeply entrenched across the world, both Shakespeare and Tagore portray two natural beauties, 'Dark Lady' and 'Krishnakali', overlooking the 'skin colour' that upholds the unconventional approach to the portrayal of the main lady-character in literature.

In terms of the physical features and complexions of the subcontinent people, including Bangladesh and India, the majority of them are either Proto-australoid, i. e the main ethnic race of newly established Bangladesh or Mongloid, and small number belongs to the Aryan origin. It is believed that two-thirds of Bangladeshi people race come to this country from Australia via Sri Lanka, who are considered, according to the so-called western-beauty, less attractive with round heads and black skin and of medium height and are also called 'Veddid' in Bangladesh. (Hakim, 2004, p 594). In this land, " 'high yellow' and 'brown' are considered 'fair' or 'bright' and equated with 'white'." (p 583) The complexion differences create a kind of 'chaos' in the sub-continent like the westerners. All the attitudes towards the concept of colourism are nothing but overgeneralization of the white world who consider themselves superiors to the entire universe. Hence, 'black' or 'dark' complexion is considered as the colour of low birth or underprivileged people in Bangla literature. The depiction of the women with dark skin in Bangla literature thus upholds the view of the culture and women's physical features and complexion thus become the 'text' to many poets and writers of Bangladesh as Prof. Hakim refers:

A woman's body is considered 'culture' and finally becomes 'text' in every society because it creates a communication approach with others, especially man, with the help of various kind of semiotic process such as semiosis, signification, decoding etc. (p 584)

Rabindranath Tagore composed the poem "Krishnakaly" in Shilaidaha, the place famous for Kuthi Bari which was built by Dwarknath Tagore and Rabindranath Tagore lived a part of his life there and created some of his masterpieces while living there. The beauty he portrays in the poem "Krishnakaly", is truly a Bengali rural lady who has dark complexion but endowed with celestial beauty. She is also dark like Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady' and her black complexion cannot deem her beauty, as Prof. Hakim believes, "the black colour solely cannot turn the woman beautiful, if she doesn't have some admirable physical beauty as well as an expression like open-braided hair, black-deer eye, etc."(p 588) As part of a

Bangladeshi rural woman, Tagore points out the tempting feathers of beauty along with the black complexion that makes the lady more attractive to the reader.

In the Bangla literature during the nineteenth and twentieth century, the writers and poets promoted traditional favour for the fair-skinned women. The sense of colourism or prejudice for fair or white skin demonstrates the upper-class women as in the prestigious position. The skin tones of Bangladeshi women determine their social acceptance and colourism assures the position of the women in the in-law houses too. In Arakhsanya, eminent Bangla novelist Saratchandra tells us about an orphan of black skin, Gyanada, who cannot attract any male to her. As a result, she remains alone in this world as unprotected and shelterless, so is the title of the text Arakhsanya. Tagore has created one of his masterpieces “Hotath Dekha” (1936) or “The Accidental Meeting”, where the beloved is the fair lady and compared with the illuminated colour of pomegranate:

I had seen her many times before
In a red sari
As bright as a pomegranate blossom
Today she was in black silk
The sari wrapped around her head
Around the glowing fair face so like a champaka flower. (Trans, Animikha. Ln no: 3-8)

Jibananda has assembled all the metaphorical description of his “Banalata Sen”, composed in 1942, and establishes her as

the icon of beauty in Bangla literature,
Her hair the ancient darkness of Vidisha,
Face a sculpture from Sravasthi.
A sailor in distant oceans, rudderless, lost,
When hoves into view
Island of grass through fronds of cinnamon,
A green relief
So she felt to me.
In the darkness she spoke -
"All these years, where had you been?"
Her eyebrows arched like the soaring wings of a bird -
She: Banalata Sen of Natore.
(Trans. Mukharjee, Ln no:7-12)

There was always a debate regarding “the caste system in India promotes colourism” (Phoenix, 2014, pp.101). It is believed that “light skin signified affluence in India, in contrast to the darker skin of the poor or working classes, which resulted from labouring outside” (101). From that ground, ‘Krishnakaly’ belongs to the rural background, almost the maiden of the mother-nature with her dark skin and dark eyes that are very near to the black muddy setting. Begum Rokeya and Issawar chandro Bidayshagor started circulating the necessity of female education and rights of the female community in the nineteenth century to change the stereotype treatment of women under the light of cast and colourism. But the British colonizers’ snobbish outlook has remained imprinted in the mind of the people. They had promoted the class and colourism concepts and the sub-continent people carried the legacy very religiously as Lord Babington Macaulay mentioned in the “Minutes on Indian Education” in the British Parliament on 2nd February 1835, “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be the interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and intellect.” The message reaches to the people that whatever it means to say about class, culture, and complexion they have to follow the white westerners. This begets the thought of giving appraisal to the fair-skinned female community in the real and the imaginary world of literature as well.

When the westerner like William Shakespeare appreciates the dark skin and defies the concept of colourism, no doubt it accelerates the food for thought of his treatment to the avant-garde beauty. Amidst all those historical and literary construals, the study finds out the celebration of the remote and unconventional by unveiling the worldwide concept of colourism in portraying the female skin tone. The black lady’s black eyes, black eyebrows, black hair are authentically identified beauty to the eyes of the poet. As if the poet is giving his appraisal, not to any ‘goddess’, but a very ordinary woman; and yet he believes,

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As anyshe belied with false compare. (Sonnet 130, Ln no: 13-14)

8 Shahnaz Parvin : Darkness and Women: An Appraisal of Colourism in Shakespeare's "Sonnets" and Tagore's "Krishnakaly". Tagore also has pointed out to the very ordinary beauty of black eyes, uncovered face, and open lock that surpass the skin tone and also turns her a lady to be adorned:

I saw her at Moynapara
Her doe eyes so deep and dusky
Her face uncovered, locks astray
Time she had not to feel abashed. (Ln no: 37-40)

There is no place of a cosmetic or artificial makeover in portraying the beauty of the dark lady. It seems the poets are the admirers of the natural beauty where black is also the reality of the universe. Shakespeare has tried to find out the goodness of soul in Othello by the comment of Desdemona, but here he is paradoxical by saying, "Thy black is fairest in my judgement's place." (Sonnet 131, Ln no: 12) Though people stare at her with a detestable look, the poet sees the beauty in her cruelty as she leaves the poet for a new suitor. The poet's appreciation for Krishnakali's beauty ties the two heart of the poet and the black beauty's and like Shakespeare, Tagore believes this is the heart to heart connection, nothing matters here,

I stood on a dyke all alone
No one else for miles around
Did eyes meet, I know so does she. (Ln no: 20-22)

Shakespeare has justified his fascination for the black lady by mentioning Cupid, the blind god of love. He is very well aware of the fair beauty of England, yet his blind love for the prostitute cannot take away his appraisal towards the black beauty of his eyes,

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
That they behold, and see not what they see?
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
Yet what the best is take the worst to be. (Sonnet 137, Ln no: 1-4)

Shakespeare's black lady has sexual relations with the poet-speaker and there is an appeal to her not to leave him for another suitor who is his very close friend to the poet-speaker. For most of the critical analysis, the subjective point of view comes to the discussion as the Sonnets are very much biographical. The poems directly involve various human emotions related to man-woman relationships like attraction, happiness, self-abnegation, jealousy, and fear of losing the beloved. The black lady of the sonnets has 'false speaking tongue' (Sonnet 138, Ln no: 7) to flatter her clients and knowing the fact the poet remains silent to cover up the faults of the pretenders like the dark lady and the poet,

Therefore I lie with her and she with me.
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be. (Sonnet 138, Ln no: 13-14)

Nevertheless, in Elizabethan times, the poets usually followed Petrarchism composing typical love poems. The Italian poet Frances Petrarch had fallen in love with a woman called Laura and for her, he wrote many love sonnets. The poet sang about the one and only beloved woman, who was the embodiment of perfection and beauty. Mostly, the poet reflected a kind of unaccomplished, desperate, unrequited and one-sided exquisite pain through his compositions. The renowned Petrarchan sonneteers were Sir Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard (the Earl of Surrey), Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, etc. When other contemporaries celebrate idealized women, "Shakespeare's sonnets are often introspective, brooding, and enigmatic." (Rambabu and Prasad, 2012, p 361) In his treatment to the 'Dark Lady' as attractive, Shakespeare differs from those traditional Petrarchan sonnets and somehow becomes Antipetrarchan, especially in the sonnets 130, 132, and 141 Shakespearean tradition gets its special hue with the 'Dark Lady'.

Tagore's "Krishnakaly" is a single poem of forty lines where the poet just passes his unconditional attraction towards the natural beauty of a rural maiden in the solace of nature silently and with the very seasonal harmony. There is only a kind of platonic touch of feelings between the two beings,

In such a way do clouds so dense
Darken the horizons in May
In such a way do shadows dark
Caress the forests in July
In such a way on rain swept nights
A sudden delight fills the heart
A dark one? As dark as she may be
Doe eyes so dusky I have seen. (Ln no: 25-32)

Finally, Shakespeare's disillusionment begins in Sonnet 142 where the poet finds, "Love is my sin" (Ln no: 1) as he has fallen love to a playful lady. As a white English man, Shakespeare cannot remain unbiased in the question of the triangular relationship of a black lady and two white men. He only blames the black lady not his friend, namely 'Mr W. H. The concept of colourism is not overcome almost at the end of the sonnets. The poet now reveals the symbolic meaning of 'black' forgetting all his infatuation for her and as a white male assures his racial and gender-based outlook,

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil. (Sonnet 144, Ln no: 1-7)

It is, therefore, more than just possible that people of Bangla (Bangladesh and West Bengal of India) have experienced the mixed genetics from the neighbouring countries like Myanmar, and Nepal, and the colonizers like British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, and Arabians. The mixed colours and physics have made the unique features of Bangla, so there comes 'Shaymal baron' or 'Shaymala baron' to be celebrated by the many poets and writers. Tagore has composed the poem in a village set up of Silaidah. He has portrayed the beauty of a lady with the dark complexion in the natural setting of a cloudy day. There is no indication of sexist view from the poet's corner which is unlike to Shakespeare. So there is no question of expectation from the lady and intraracial colourism cannot be marked. It may help to keep the poet attracted to his 'dark lady' till the end of the poem. Moreover, in comparison to the length of the sonnets, "Krishnakali" is a poem of only 40 lines. On the other hand, Socio-political histories of England have immense influence among the writers and poets of the time. Born in the white culture, and praising the 'black' seems a romantic venture, that leads to looking forward to an unknown world. Again, this can be taken as an appraisal to the unconventional mode of the belief that brings the writers or the poets in the limelight. Shakespeare remains stick to his romantic appraisal of the black beauty as long as the lady has been within his reach. The moment she is attracted to the other white man, Mr W.H., the group belongs to the poet, Shakespeare goes back to his original look for the 'black' and be prejudiced with the concept of colourism, and now the 'evil' is seen in the black lady's look. The study comes to the end with the notion that Shakespeare may be prejudiced with the sense of interracial colourism, and Tagore may not be prejudiced with the intraracial colourism in his masterpiece black beauty appraisal.

The degree of emphasis on the beauty of the Dark Ladies of William Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore assimilate in terms of the intense attraction to natural beauty. Shakespeare's appreciation of the Dark Lady's appearance is a little bit complex as he is glad that she does not use cosmetics to lighten her appearance, which would be "a bastard shame," and at the same time, she is unfaithful and inflicts pain to the heart of the poet-speaker with her erotic appeal towards the friend of the poet. Yet, he cannot but appreciate and attracted by her 'Dark Lady' because "That every tongue says beauty should look so." (Sonnet 127, Ln: 14) For Tagore, 'Krishnakali' is nothing but the name of natural beauty blossoms in the natural setting.

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