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## Omkaara: The adaptation of William Shakespeare's tragedy Othello

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### Abstract

Omkaara is a 2006 Indian crime drama film adapted from Shakespeare's Othello, co-written and directed by Vishal Bhardwaj. It starred Ajay Devgan, Saif Ali Khan, Vivek Oberoi and Kareena Kapoor in the lead roles, supported by Naseeruddin Shah, Konkona Sen Sharma and Bipasha Basu. The director Vishal Bhardwaj himself composed the entire music for the film, including the background score, with lyrics by Gulzar. The film is set in Meerut, a town in Western Uttar Pradesh.

**Keywords:** Omkaara, drama film, Shakespeare's Othello

### Introduction

The film was showcased in the Marché du Film section at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival along with a book on the making of *Omkaara*. It was also selected to be screened at the Cairo International Film Festival, where Bhardwaj was awarded for Best Artistic Contribution in Cinema of a Director. The film also won three awards at the Kara Film Festival<sup>[5]</sup>, an award at the Asian Festival of First Films, three National Film Awards, and seven Filmfare Awards.

Omkaara Shukla or Omi (Ajay Devgan) is a *bahubali*, a sort of political enforcer. He is the leader of a gang which commits political crimes for the local politician Tiwari Bhaisaab (Naseeruddin Shah). Ishwar 'Langda' Tyagi (Saif Ali Khan) and Keshav 'KesuFirangi' Upadhyay (Vivek Oberoi) are his closest lieutenants.

Dolly's father Advocate Raghunath Mishra (Kamal Tiwari), mostly referred in the movie as *vakeelsaab* (lawyer sir), is furious and confronts Omi. He puts a gun to Omi's head and demands the return of his daughter. Bhaisaab intervenes and resolves the conflict by mentioning the current political conditions and prevents bloodshed. Still unconvinced, Raghunath grieves to Bhaisaab the next day. To bring an end to this issue, Dolly is made to appear in front of her father and clarify that she eloped with Omi and was not abducted. She also tells the events of how she fell in love with Omkaara. The father leaves feeling betrayed and ashamed. The director here references one of the most significant lines of the play Othello, with Dolly's father repeating the couplet almost verbatim, albeit in translation. The original lines read, "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see. She has deceived her father and may thee."

After some crafty political arm-twisting, involving an MMS sex scandal, Omkaara eliminates a powerful electoral rival. Bhaisaab is elected for parliament and Omkaara is promoted from *bahubali* to the candidate for the upcoming state elections. Omkaara appoints Kesu over Langda as his successor once he enters politics himself. Langda, disappointed with Omkaara's poor judgment and jealous of Kesu, his younger, less-experienced, superior, hatches a plot to avenge both his offenders. He first causes a violent brawl between Kesu and Rajju by taking advantage of Kesu's low threshold for alcohol. Such irresponsible behaviour by Kesu infuriates Omi, who now starts having doubts over his decision.

On the one hand, playing the role of a concerned friend, Langda convinces Kesu to appeal to Dolly, Omi's lover and newly wedded wife, to mollify Omi. On the other hand, he starts to disrepute Dolly by implicating Kesu's visits to her as an illicit affair between the two. A *kamarbandh* carelessly dropped by Dolly and stolen by Langda's wife Indu (Konkona Sen Sharma), which eventually reaches Billo Chamanbahar (Bipasha Basu) as a gift from Kesu, plays an important part in the plot, as evidence of Dolly's infidelity.

During the climax, on the night of their wedding, Omi is convinced that Dolly and Kesu have been having an affair behind his back. In rage, he smothers his new wife to death. Langda shoots Kesu with a silent approval from Omi. Kesu is hit with a bullet on his arm. Hearing gunshots and in shock, Indu enters the room where Omi is sitting next to Dolly's

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corpse in remorse. Indu notices the *kamarbandh* and confesses to stealing it; they both understand the fatal misunderstanding with Langda as its root cause.

In retribution, Indu slashes Langda's throat and Omi commits suicide. The movie closes with Omi lying dead on the floor and Dolly's dead body swinging above him, while Kesu looks on.

**Table 1:** Cast and Character

Actor	Character in the movie	Character in the play
Ajay Devgan	Omkara 'Omi' Shukla	Othello
Vivek Oberoi	Keshav 'Kesu Firangi' Upadhyaya	Cassio
Saif Ali Khan	Ishwar 'Langda' Tyagi	Iago
Kareena Kapoor	Dolly Mishra	Desdemona
Bipasha Basu	Billo Chamanbahar	Bianca
Konkona Sen Sharma	Indu Tyagi	Emilia
Deepak Dobriyal	Rajan 'Rajju' Tiwari	Roderigo
Naseeruddin Shah	Bhaisaab	Duke of Venice
Kamal Tiwari	Advocate Raghunath Mishra	Brabantio

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