

# THE TRIAL SCENE: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

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## Abstract:

William Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist and his place in English literature in particular and world literature in general. Shakespeare's gained prominence during his life time. His contemporaries like Ben Johnsons gave him a credit for not only making English literature great but also creating a special niche for English language, which was not considered a great language event in East Europe till then. He wrote 37 plays and changed the world's opinion about English language and literature. His plays are varied in nature and can be divided into three categories: - the comedies, the tragedies and the historical play. Shakespeare's play The Merchant of Venice is much more popular and he has handled the dramatic situation of how the bond came being into Act IV, scene I. Shakespeare's mastery is seen in the trial scene.

**Keywords:** Dramatic, prominence, pledge, bond.

## Introduction:

William Shakespeare is considered the greatest dramatist. He's thought-through matchless because of his range, his universality his coining of phases, his capability to create memorable villains, art of characterization ,his handling of the human psychology, understanding of social, political and economic issues, so this play is the brilliant precedent of most of these qualities which adds to the greatness of the Bard. Shakespeare's plays were inspired other by history or by some work that already existed before he started writing, but it is interesting to renowned that People have lost trace of the original sources and reminisce only Shakespeare's work which have gained popularity over the years and its similar stance true for *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*. Christopher Marlowe had written a play called THE JEW OF MALTA (1591-1592) and in the same manner. Shakespeare wrote *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* around (1598) as compared to Marlowe's Jew, Shakespeare's Merchant is much more well known and he has handled the dramatic situation of how the bond came into being and how it was about to be executed and how's the Portia shows brilliance right in the nick of time and saves the day for Antonio, Bassanio and for the whole Of the Venice.

In Act IV scene I of William Shakespeare's THE MERCHANT OF VENICE involve the climactic trial scene in which Shylock and Antonio comfort one another in person, before Portia who will determine Antonio's fate.

The trial scene is the critical perspective in the play. Antonio is trialed in the court of the Duke because he has failed to repay the debt which he had taken from Shylock. According to the condition he is free to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio's body. The Duke expresses sympathy for Antonio's

I m sorry for you . You have come to answer a cruel enemy, an inhuman wretch incapable of pity, devoid of any drop of mercy.

Then Shylock gets in the court. The Duke apprise Shylock to show pity to Antonio- Shylock , the world thinks , and I think so too, that thou but lead's this fashion of thy malice to the last hour of act, and then 'tis thought thou'.

So the Duke utter that perhaps Shylock is the only temporarily keeping up the appearance of cruelty and Shylock replies:

I have possessed your grace of what I purpose;

And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn

To have the due and forfeit of my bond

If you deny it, let the danger light

Upon your charter and your city's freedom .

Shylock speak to the Duke that he stands sworn on his bond and already informed that he sworn on oath to demand the penalty mentioned in the bond . If the court denies him a lawful decree on his bond, it will endanger the very liberty of his state. The Jew appears so confident of his legal position that he holds out a threat to the Duke.

Shylock asserts that he will not explain why he prefers a pound of human flesh which he has bent on having.

Then the Bassanio comment;

That's no answer 'you unfeeling man .There's no excuse for your cruel behavior. Then the Antonio speaks to Bassano:

Therefore I request you to stop asking for any more favors, using any other means, and as briefly and plainly as possible, let me have my judgment and the Jew his will.

Bassanio proffer to pay shylock for your three thousand ducats, here are six thousands.

But Shylock wouldn't accept it and he wants to have only the forfeit mention in the bond.

And the Duke state that:

How can you hope for mercy, when you give none yourself?

But Shylock is immovable. He demands of the Duke that the justice may be made available to him at once. But the Duke is waiting for the arrival of a lawyer named Bellario who will try his case.

Just then Nerrisa disguised as a lawyer's clerk. She presents a letter to the Duke. According to the majuscule, Bellario has appointed a young lawyer in his place. Nerrisa mention the young lawyer named Balthasar is waiting outside. The Duke order the lawyer may be brought into the court.

Then Portia enters the court, disguised as a young lawyer named Balthasar. The two parties introduced to him and she studies the bond. The lawyer (Portia) tells Shylock's demand is unusual but quiet legal. She notifies that Antonio's only hopes that Shylock would show mercy to him. Then Portia makes a passionate appeal to him for mercy.

The quality of mercy is not strained;

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

Portia imparted Shylock; mercy is not attributing of weakness. It shows itself in the noblest form in those who hold place of power. It adorns a mighty king more than the crown and it is the symbol of sovereign authority. It gives him awful

majesty and fills his subject with dread and fear of him. But mercy, if it is enthroned in the heart, more befits a king than his crown or his scepter. It's a nobler power and it's a true place is in the heart of the king. Forgiveness is an essential quality of god almighty. A human authority acquires a divine character by softening the hardness of justice with sympathy. It is on both the giver and the taker but Shylock is deaf to all her pleas.

Then Portia inquire If Antonio not able to make the payment? But Bassanio elucidation this, he is ready to by twice the amount or even ten times the amount. He appeals to the court if Shylock doesn't be seen mercy on forfeit of my hands, my head, and my heart. If even that's not enough, then it seems malice weighs heavier than the truth – and the court should depart from the strict following of the law.

Furthermore Portia retort that there is no authority is high enough to go against the law of a country. At this Shylock express his admiration for the lawyer and comparing him with the Daniel.

A Daniel come to judgment, yea a Daniel!

O wise young judge, how I do honor thee!

AT that point take a glance at the agreement and read out the lines why, this bond is forfeit! And lawfully by this the Jew may claim a pound of flesh to be by him cut off the nearest the Merchant's heart. Moreover, Shylock alleges that when it is paid according to tenor. It doth appear you are a worthy judge. You know the law and your exposition hath been most sound. I charge you by the law, where of you do a well deserve pillar, but my soul I swear. There is no power in the tongue of man to alter me. I stay here on my bond.

At that time Antonio spoke most heartily I do beseech the court to give the judgment. Shylock gets ready to the knife But then Portia ask him to wait a little. According to the bond:

And you must cut this flesh from off his breast.

The law allows it and the court awards it.

But there's something else. The contract doesn't give you any drop of blood. The words specifically state 'a pound of flesh', take your pound of flesh But in cutting of flesh, if you shed even a drop of Christian blood, your lands and goods will be confiscated by the state of Venice as per the laws.

At this Shylock is willing to release Antonio from the bond if he pays three times the amount mentioned in the bond. Bassanio steps forward to give him the amount. But Portia declares that Shylock can now have only what is written in the bond as he has already refused payment in lieu of it. Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more but just a pound of flesh.

Now, Shylock is trapped into his own net. He would be content if he is given the amount originally lent to Antonio. The lawyer says that even that is not possible. Now Shylock is ready to give up his claim on that mercy also. But Portia states that wait Jew there is another law which is applicable in this case. It's written in the laws of the Venice if a foreigner makes a plot or attempt to take the life of any citizen, the person has contrived to kill shall receive one half of his good. The other half goes directly to the state, and the offender life lies is at the mercy of the duke and only the Duke. But in your case it is apparent that you have indirectly- and directly to as well- plot to kill the life of the defendant here, and you have now incurred on yourself the danger. So get down on your knees, and beg to the Duke to show you leniency.

But Antonio shows the sympathy to the Shylock. He request to the Duke to exempt the Jew from the confiscation of half of his good and he will be content in taking to the gentleman who recently married his daughter. But there are two

conditions to it. The first is that for his own good he convert to Christianity and that he promises here, one record to bequeath all his property to his Son-in – law Lorenzo and his daughter upon his death. Shylock agrees but request that he may be allowed to go as he is ill. He promises to sign the bond later on and Antonio life is saved.

Bassanio thanks the lawyer (Portia) and plea him to accept three thousand ducats unto the Jew. We freely cope your courteous pains withal; Portia says that she has not done that kind deed in the hope of any reward. At Bassanio request he should agree to take something as a token of their friendship. At this Portia she would like to have Antonio's gloves and the ring which he is wearing. Bassanio is reluctant to give the ring and lawyer (Portia) departs. But at Antonio's insistence Bassanio sends Gratiano after him with the ring.

Conclusion: Shakespeare's mastery is seen not only in the trial scene but also in his creation of characters like Portia and Shylock. The trial scene is very important from dramatic point of view. It is the climax of the bond story. Here the bond reaches it's the highest point of interest. Antonio is saved from the clutches of Shylock because of the wisdom of Portia. The trial scene further strengthens the connection between the bond story and the casket story. The heroine (Portia) saves the life of the hero of the bond story, Antonio. Thus the trial scene shows that the casket story and the bond story are interdependent. This scene is also the result in the development of the ring episode. Towards the end of the scene, Portia and Nerrisa obtain their rings from Bassanio and Gratiano. Later they will rebuke their husband for parting with the rings and the trial scene is a master piece of the dramatic writing.

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