

# THE CLASH OF CULTURES BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS PORTRAYED BY SHAKESPEARE IN HIS *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* THROUGH THE CHARACTERS OF SHYLOCK AND ANTONIO

Martinraj.A  
II MA English  
PG- Department of English  
Don Bosco College (Co-Ed)  
Yelagiri Hills

## Abstract

Cultural clash is a type of battle that happens when different cultural values and principles clash. It has been used to describe violence and law-breaking. Ethnocentrism is judging the cultures based on the preconceive notions of the other cultures in the mindset of a particular people. Here is a paper attempts to describe the battle between Jews and Christians based on their culture. The researcher has taken the drama *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare. The playwright was one of the leading figures in the Elizabethan period, contributes different kinds of characters and thoughts in his each play. This play clearly describes the clashes between Jews and Christians with the characters of Shylock, a Jew and Antonio, a Christian. Christianity is rooted from Judaism. But there are few inappropriate notions between these two religions. Christians emphasized on New Covenant but the Jews emphasized on Mosaic Covenant. Christians have faith in specific redemption from sin and death through Jesus Christ as their Savior and God through devotion. It is recorded in the New Testament. Rather Jews have faith in separate and communal contribution in an everlasting dialogue with God through customs, ceremonies, ethical actions and prayers. As the same, Christianity believes in Triune God, a person who became human. But Judaism highlights on the singleness of God and discards the Christian perception of God in human form.

**Key words:** Christianity, Judaism, cultural clashes, forgiveness, eternity, morality, ethics.

Ethnocentrism is an ideology in which a person from a particular culture who judges the other culture through his preconceive notions. There are two different cultures described in *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. Christianity and Judaism are the different religious cultures represented by the dramatist. Antonio, the protagonist of the play stands for Christianity and Shylock, the antagonist who stands for Judaism. Both the characters are very strong and effective in their thoughts and actions. Christianity is rooted from Judaism. But there are very few differences between these two religions. Christianity highlights accurate belief. It concentrates on the New Covenant as mediated through Jesus Christ. It is documented in

the New Testament. As the same, Judaism seats emphasis on accurate conduct. It concentrates on the Mosaic Covenant. It is documented in the Torah and Talmud.

Shakespeare depicts the Jewish character of Shylock denotes to the biblical story of Jacob cheating his uncle Laban by interfering with the procreative procedure of Laban's flock of sheep (Genesis 30.25-43). In the following, the researcher will try to point out why Shylock tells this story, and in which literary perspective he contemplates upon it. Moreover a critical comparison of how his speech interrelates with the innovative biblical story. The researcher will additionally discuss this similarity leading in terms of its spiritual and dramatic purposes within the play. Against this circumstantial, it will be made obvious that 'usury' as an undesirable Jewish typecast, supposed by the judging eyes of medieval Christians. It is put in the center of thought here. It will be contended that as a general statement in *The Merchant of Venice*, a preeminence of the New Testament to the Old Testament, of Christianity to Judaism, can be consequent, and that this conclusion is powerfully connected with the majoritarian attitude in Shakespeare's times and cultural sphere, rather than with Shakespeare's individual boldness towards Jews or Judaism, an often theoretical attitude of unprovable environment.

After Antonio has communicated Shylock, whose career is that of a moneylender, that he himself "neither lends nor borrows / by captivating nor by giving of excess", but in "order to stock the suitable wants of his friend / he would halt a custom". Shylock checks the biblical story in which Jacob is talented to encourage an upsurge in particolored offspring of his uncle Laban's sheep and goats by engaging marked poles before the eyes of the animals which leads to the anticipated outcome. According to his contract with Laban, the descendants belongs to Jacob. Shylock calls the result a "thrift which is blessing, if men steal it not". At first, it is perceptible that Shylock expresses of Jacob's father as "our holy Abram", not Abraham. Thus, he only denotes to the father of the Israelites, as he beforehand expresses of "our sacred nation", not to the father of all countries which Abram later converts: The accurate meaning of the entire allusion in the form of a confrontational effort is to explain Shylock's improvements through interest conflicting to the Christian Antonio. The latter at first involves in this quarrelsome conversation and answers that this was a venture that Jacob helped for produced by the hand of heaven". Antonio not only repudiates that Jacob himself was the creator of the upsurge, he also does not consent the similarity among living beings and physical items: "[I]s your gold and silver ewes and rams?" Therefore, he still worries the good environment of attention. Though Shylock denotes to the contract that Jacob had with his uncle Laban, Antonio is concerned whether Jacob himself was the creator of the upsurge or not.

The interconnection of Jews and money can be outlined back to the level of Judas in the New Testament: "Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?' And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus." (John 26:14-16). In 1179 Catholic governments on

the III Consilium Lateranum had banned moneylending at interest for Christians. It even developed part of the seven deadly sins. Every border of income that was not attained by improving the situation of goods through someone's own energies was measured being moneylending. Meanwhile Jews were not permitted to acquire a profession or to procurement property, moneylending was one of the residual types of action for them in order to make a living. The consumers of the despised Jews were people who were not creditworthy anyplace else, and consequently had to wage high interests. This detail also added to the image of the Jewish scammer. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century however, the reassessment of the credit scheme experienced an important alteration because of a improved financial scheme. Christians progressively started to contribute in that gentle of professional, but essentially borders of income were still predicted negatively. As we see, the quarrelsome argument among Shylock and Antonio is suddenly completed, when Shylock associates economic upsurge with the natural procedure of upbringing, and furthermore, attributes this natural procedure to the energies not of God, but of a human being, in this case himself: "I make it breed as fast". At this juncture, Shylock denotes to an Aristotelian disagreement against money, an unmotivated object, upbringing itself in an unusual way. Antonio proceeds Shylock's possible mischievous humor literally here. This is satirical since it is Shylock who is continuously challenged with the accusation of merciless literal understanding in expressions of religion and law. Antonio answers with a deceptive simple well-known simplification: "The devil can cite scripture for his purpose". What Antonio states here can be outlined back to the Gospel according to Matthew and Luke in the New Testament: "Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written'" (Matth. 4:6), "for it is written 'He will command his angels '" (Luk. 4:10). Both references designate the theological layer in which the devil cites scripture as he tempts Jesus. The New Testament also elucidates the role of the Jews, shamefaced in particular offence, in that matter: Jesus cracks to the Jews and says "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was an assassin from the establishment, and does not stand in the fact because there is no fact in him. Whenever he states a lie, he declares from his own environment, for he is a deceiver and the father of lies" (John 8:44). According to Derek Cohen, the equalization of Jew and devil arises nine times in *The Merchant of Venice*. One illustration is conveyed through

Launcelot: "Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation" (MoV, 2.2.22-23). Antonio endures and mentions to Shylock as "a villain with a smiling cheek, a goodly apple rotten at the heart" (MoV, 1.3.99- 100).

The perception of Jews consuming a good precise outside, but a wicked divine inside, like a good looking apple rotten at the heart, "may be projected to replicate the theoretical decomposition of literalistic Jewish hermeneutic observes", argues Janet Adelman. This conception is a recurring theme in *The Merchant of Venice*. One case in point is the well-known scene of the excellent of the three caskets, where, according to Coolidge, the attractive confidential of an appropriate Christian scriptural understanding, characterized by the central casket is used as a metaphor. As we will appreciate, this subject will lead to the genuine victory of

Christian love and forgiveness over the idea of Jewish vengeance because of literal exegesis at the end of the play where Shylock mislays his money, his daughter, and where he is forced to transfigure to Christianity.

The equalization of Jew and devil can also be initiated in the situation of Martin Luther, the father of Protestantism: "Know Christian, that next to the devil thou hast no opponent more painful, more venomous and ferocious than a accurate Jew". In England, this assertiveness did not ascend with King Henry VIII who did not only have counsellors who were understanding to the new philosophies of Martin Luther, but who also fragmented the English church off from the Roman church. The detestation against Jews has its commencement in the Christian accusation that they had declined to agree to take Christ as their Messiah *abs initio* and also in the Christian entitlement that the Jews were accountable for the victimization of Christ. Again, not only Shakespeare, but also the Elizabethan spectators who survived in a Christian England that had slaughtered Jews on a outstanding scale in the 13th century and that had ultimately disqualified them in 1290 by a announcement of King Edward I, were highlighted with something that in modern terms would be called attitude of anti-Semitism, grounded on spiritual convention that had in progress to cultivate in ancient times and that had progressed into a strong cultural consequence in European humanity in primitive periods. However, there is an authentic reference between the Christian outlook of the envelopment in Christ's victimization and Shylock's circumstances on experimental in *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia brands a tongue in the courtroom in which she declares: "kindness is overhead this sceptered influence" and "Consequently, Jew, / though impartiality be your petition, consider this- / that in the development of impartiality none of us / should see redemption. We do implore for kindness" (MoV, 1.4.201-204). Shylock thus far states "I crave the law" (MoV, 1.4.210).

In the scriptural correspondent it is Pilate who says: "'Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They [the Jews] all said, 'Crucify Him!'" (Matth. 27:22-23). Shylock, numerously gives a lecture as simply the Jew, recurrences his mandate innumerable periods. Only one illustration is his undeviating declaration to Antonio, where he articulates: "I charge you by the law" (4.1.43). Shylock who, from a Christian point of outlook, appeared to have been practically more Christian than an authentic Christians by recommending the other denotes to Shylock as "a villain with a smiling cheek, a goodly apple rotten at the heart" (1.3.99-100).

Although, there are many differences between the culture of Christianity and the culture of Judaism, people are together in front of God, the almighty. God never see any differences and qualities among his creatures. No God wishes his children to fight with the other. When He created the world, it was so silent, peace, happy. He wants the society to be as the same. Whether one God or three God, the purpose is the same for all religions. It is love, love your enemies. Only love can make a change in the society.

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