

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 7 | Issue 3

2024

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Shakespearean Parallels: Bridging Past and Present Legal Debates and Modern Views

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ABSTRACT

The classic and well-known drama "The Merchant of Venice" by William Shakespeare in the 16th century continues to attract the interest of young minds today with its rich tapestry of themes and characters. It is a love comedy written by William Shakespeare. In this research paper, the themes, ideologies, legal issues, and—most importantly—the contemporary perspective were explored through an analysis of William Shakespeare's play The Merchant of Venice. This article examines a variety of topics, including the well-known courtroom drama, romance, inequity, a small portion of the LGBTQ+ population, the distinctions between Jews and Christians, women's empowerment, and many more topics. This research attempts to comprehend the complex moral and ethical difficulties that drive the story by thoroughly examining major moments and characters such as Shylock, Portia, and Antonio. The play revolves on a number of individuals, one of which is the Jewish moneylender Shylock, who serves as a central figure for examining themes of discrimination and prejudice. This encourages contemplation on age-old problems of acceptance and tolerance by illuminating the cultural attitudes toward "the other" in Shakespearean Venice. In addition, the article explores the ethical and legal aspects of justice, especially as they relate to the well-known trial scenario that Portia ruled over while posing as a legal expert. All things considered, this paper provides a thorough analysis of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice,". Through exploring the intricacies of character relationships and thematic complexities, it aims to highlight how Shakespeare's works continue to influence our comprehension of core human values.

Keywords: Classic, Themes, Courtroom Drama, Portia, William Shakespeare.

I. INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on a number of topics, beginning with a synopsis of Shakespeare's life and ascent to popularity. It will also offer a critical evaluation of the play and its governing principles.

Shakespeare's preface.

The life of William Shakespeare is a town and city narrative. While he received his wealth and

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notoriety from London, he was raised in Stratford. Prior to becoming one of the most well-known writers of that century and the modern era. William Shakespeare grew up in a prosperous community. During that time, stores and marketplaces in Stratford closed on Sundays and holy days. Everyone was required by the Kingdom's laws to attend church sermons, and anyone who disobeyed the rule would face consequences in their local court. Shakespeare's community trained him in both Orthodox and Protestant religion. If his education had been totally devoted to upholding the kingdom's laws, it would have led him toward the Church of England. Shakespeare was also educated at grammar school at Stratford King's New School. At that age, it was a very good institution of its sort. Shakespeare's tutor was highly trained and had a university degree.

He would have transitioned from the lower school's advanced curriculum to the upper school's in 1574. Shakespeare, literary speaking, received the same formal education at Stratford as any of his peers, but the miracle happened in London. The historian was unsure about Shakespeare's precise tenure at Stratford-upon-Avon's King's New School, although he thereafter worked at his father's store. The poet knew that his father's leather shop had skins of every variety.

Marriage is a momentous milestone in most men's lives, but it holds a special significance for National Poet. William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, despite their age difference, and they resided in a home near the Forest of Arden. Shakespeare and Anne have three children. Their first kid was a daughter named Susanna. In less than two years, Anne gave birth to twins, Hamnet (male) and Judith (girl). William Shakespeare finished his family in 1585.

Nobody was quite sure when Shakespeare left his family to travel to London because Stratford was a long way from London. The London Bridge, the enormous cathedral, and the Thames were the focal points of the city. The homes with their lush flower-filled gardens next to big trees. Life in the large metropolis had become more difficult due to the growing population and the influx of migrants from other nations who were escaping religious conflicts.

However, some people continued to seek amusement in spite of the challenging circumstances. Street theatres were constructed as stages for performances by groups of six men, most of which had dramatic finales that involved the death of a character. Nevertheless, Stratford, which was a hundred miles away, had its own issues. In 1577, the theatre's curtains first went up. When Shakespeare first appeared on London stages, these were the theatres located in the northern suburbs.

Shakespeare had to maintain himself after arriving in London alone, without friends or money, and as a stranger. He therefore took care of the gentlemen's horseback that came to witness the

performance at the playhouse, earning money in the process. Shakespeare made his debut onstage at this theatre. Shakespeare had no intention of publishing his plays since, in those days, writers had little control over the things they created when they were no longer in their own. Authors were not covered by copyright laws. Shakespeare's plays were therefore published in quarto editions for nearly half of his lifetime; however, this was all done after 1592.

Until the mid-1990s, he persisted in creating, producing, and performing in his own plays. Shakespeare authored six poetry, ten historical plays, eleven tragedies, and seventeen comedies—among them the Merchant of Venice—during his lifetime. Shakespeare arranged his life to suit his career demands: the theatre came first, then the Globe, which he maintained throughout the years while also mending his relationship with his hometown of Stratford, where he left a wife and three children. It was never mentioned in the record if they paid him a visit in London.

Shakespeare passed away and was buried at Stratford, where he had lived out his final years in a magnificent home known as "New Place". At the age of fifty-three, Shakespeare passed away on April 23rd, 1616. Within the extensive literary canon of William Shakespeare's work of art, 'The Merchant of Venice' is a singularly remarkable work that elicits contemplation and evokes strong feelings even centuries after its original publication. The drama, which is set in Renaissance Venice, explores a variety of deep topics, including justice, mercy, prejudice, friendship, love, wealth, hatred, and retaliation, while navigating the complex webs of trade, law, and human connections. (AL.Farhan, 2019)²

II. THE MERCHANT OF VENICE- A SHORT SUMMARY

The merchant of Venice is written by William Shakespeare and it is a complex tale of justice love revenge and many other themes its core lies between the contract made by Antonio and Shiloh which unravels and proceeds the play further into different scenes.

The act one opens with Antonio being in a melancholic mood stating “In sooth, I know not why I am so sad”.³ Wherein, Bassanio, his dear friend approaches him seeking financial assistance from Antonio so that he can go to Belmont and woo a heiress named Portia. Which leads Antonio to Borrow money from Shylock a Jewish merchant who distaste Christians, as Antonio’s money is tied up in ventures at sea. Shylock agrees to give Bassanio the money on a condition that is using Antonio’s pound of flesh as a collateral to the contract. Meanwhile in Belmont Portia faces Many suitors who try their luck in choosing the right casket to win her

² A Critical Analysis William Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" By: Mrs. Eqbal A AL.Farhan Instructor at Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Kuwait

³ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare.

hand in marriage.

As the story unfolds, Bassanio goes to Belmont and chooses the right (lead) casket saying “He who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath”⁴ and wins Portia.

Back in Venice, all of the Antonios ship were lost at sea. Shylock’s thirst and obsession for revenge escalated leading to the infamous trial scene.

When Bassanio was in Belmont he got to know about the happening in Venice, due to which he immediately took the money offered by Portia and returned back to Venice to save his friend. To help Antonio, Bassanio’s friend, Portia disguised as a boy and stole the name of her servant, Balthazar as asked him from her cousin to help her be present in the court.

Portia disguised as a lawyer delivered her striving speech on mercy quoting “The quality of mercy is not stained. If droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven.” But Portia confidently outwits Shylock and proves her smartness and cleverness which a lawyer should have quoting “Tarry a little. There is something else.

This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood.

The words expressly are “a pound of flesh.”

Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh,

But in the cutting it if thou dost shed

One drop of Christian blood, thy lands, and goods

Are by the laws of Venice confiscate

Unto the state of Venice.”⁵

AND

“Tarry, Jew.

The law hath yet another hold on you.

It is enacted in the laws of Venice,

If it be proved against an alien

That by direct or indirect attempts

He seek the life of any citizen,

⁴ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare.

⁵ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 4 Scene 1, Lines 321-328.

The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods. The other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state,
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the Duke only 'gainst all other voice.
In which predicament I say thou stand'st,
For it appears by manifest proceeding
That indirectly—and directly too—
Thou hast contrived against the very life
Of the defendant, and thou hast incurred
The danger formerly by me rehearsed.”⁶

Portia not only proves that Shylocks intentions were wrong toward Antonio but also makes the future of Jessica and her lover, Lorenzo by awarding them half of Shylocks property and sets Antonio free of the contract.

In the end, Justice was delivered but not with the convict being punished. Antonio was set free from the contract as it was an unlawful contract with an unlawful object leading to half murder by Shylock in attempt to seek his revenge. Therefore, Shylock was stripped of his wealth of which half was given to Antonio and the other half would be passed on to Lorenzo and Jessica after his death and he also had to give a part of his wealth as a fine to the states. Quoting

“So please my lord the duke and all the court,
To quit the fine for one half of his goods
I am content, so he will let me have
The other half in use to render it
Upon his death unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter.
Two things provided more: that for this favor
He presently become a Christian;

⁶ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 4 Scene 1 Lines 365-382.

The other, that he do record a gift
Here in the court, of all he dies possessed,
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.”⁷

(A) Objective

The Objective of this research paper is to:-

1. Identify and understand the main characters.
2. Learn about the minor characters.
3. To have a short summary of the play.
4. To identify the different themes involved in the play.
5. To understand the modern prospective of the play.

III. THE MERCHANT OF VENICE- MAIN CHARACTERS

(A) Portia

A wealthy heiress of Belmont who is bound by a clause in her fathers will for her marriage. In which the person who wants to woo Portia must go through a casket test (Containing Gold, Silver, and bronze caskets) and whoever chooses the right casket gets to marry her. Portia though as said in the text is impressed and wants to marry a Venetian, Bassanio, her true love but is bound by the will. This shows how much Portia respects and values the wish of a father, a devoted daughter. She is also shown as somewhat as a racist as she portrays her distaste for dark complexion suitor *The Prince of Morocco*. Though it can not exactly be concluded as racist in some peoples opinion and every person has a choice, a wish of how their life partner must be. Portia is also a devoted wife and lover as she keeps her hopes high when Bassanio comes to woo her and she also sings a song during his meditation that indirectly indicates to the word “lead,” the right casket, through which he can woo her. She is also shown as a generous character because she gives Bassanio the money to repay his debt and free his friend from the contract.

She is highly intelligent and trained in law and secretly decides to save Antonio, her lovers friend. This shows her humanity and selfless nature as she dresses as a man to help Antonio because if she would get caught she would be jailed for Convict of perjury. But this also portrays the difference and inequality between sex that used to happen in the 16th century because of

⁷ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 4 Scene 1 Lines 399-409.

which she had to dress as a man to fight in court.

In the end we also see her as Saviour for Antonio and Bassanio as she wins the case and free's Antonio from the contract but indirectly also help Jessica and Lorenzo and also informs Antonio of his one ship returning to the shore safely.

(B) Shylock

A Jewish Moneylender living in Venice. He is a competitor of Antonio and he has a hatred and detest toward Christianity. He dislikes Antonio and agrees to enter into a contract out of ill will of Antonio, as Antonio was bound in that contract. He bounds Antonio for a pound of flesh if they were not able to pay him back the money within three months which in a way portrays him as inhuman. Shylock is known to be a villain in the merchant of Venice as he had hatred towards Christianity as a whole and also had hatred towards Antonio and his business. He is also a miser who only thinks about money as he was shown in one of the acts where his own daughter Jessica fled with Lorenzo with his ducats but he was only worried for his money . In one of the scenes, we have also seen Shylock saying bad things about Bassanio to Launcelot, and he also provokes and motivates him to go and work with Bassanio out of ill will so that Bassanio spends his money more and would be unable to pay his debt.

Shylock is not only a villain in the story but he also has a bad character as it is shown in many ways in the drama and play one, of which is his own daughter dislikes him and considers him cruel.

Shylock is so keen on taking revenge from Antonio and Antonio being a Christian just add fuels to it, that he forgets humanity and morality by asking a pound of flesh and being so determined on taking it as seen in the courtroom scene. He also refuses to show any money and insist the Duke to upheld the law and get him the right that is according to him a pound of flesh of Antonio but in the end he was not successful because of a lifesaver, Portia who fought for right and saved Antonio.

Shakespeare also made the character of Shylock a very complex character so that people see him as a villain not only because of his callous and bad thinking towards others but also because of his hatred towards Christianity which happened in the 16th century in Venice during that time he wanted to portray that thing through his work due to which he portrayed Shylock in such a way.

But in a way I feel that Shylock was not only a villain but also a victim of the hatred and the rivalry between the Christians and the Jewish people because Shylock's hatred increased towards Christians also because his own daughter left him to marry a Christian with all his

duckets. He was also sad for his daughters elopement with a Christian because when she eloped, he would shout “Oh my daughter!, Oh my ducats!”⁸ which shows how much he was distress and sad when his daughter left. This not only develops a complex character of Shylock but also tells us that in a way he is a miser but he also loved his daughter he also knew about her feelings that is why he warned her earlier before his departure to the party which Bassanio had held. Here he not only considered Lorenzo as bad but he also badmouthed about Antonia that because of him my daughter eloped he blamed everything on Antonio, which in a way shows that that he was obsessed with the hatred feeling towards Antonio and Christianity which he had and it developed more after his daughter’s elopement like it was a catalyst to his hatred. After this turning point, Shylock became more obsessive with the bond so that he could take his revenge on Antonio.

This victim and villain portray of Shylock develops another major theme that revolves in the play is APPEARANCE VS REALITY as Shylock is also a villain and a victim in the play and he is considered to “be a villain with a smiling cheek” which confuses the audience more about his character.

(C) Antonio

A Christian merchant living in Venice whose ship are yet to return from their voyage. However, he is highly respected and has a very good goodwill in the Venice market. Antonio is seen as a very sad and helpless character as in seen one only he is seen to be in a very melancholic mood and he does not know the reason behind it but according to the modern perspective to the people think that he is in love with Basanu and Bassanio does not know about it and when Bassanio shares his feelings about Portia and his willingness to go to Belmont and woo her, which in a way depresses him more.

Antonio can also be seen as a scapegoat in the contract between Bassanio and Shylock. And his love interest towards Bassanio also shows his selflessness that even after knowing that his ships may or may not come from their venture still he asked Bassanio to take money on his goodwill from Shylock who is one of his competitors and has hatred towards him still he agrees for that loan and bounds himself in the collateral for a pound of flesh shows his loyalty towards his friend and lover. Further, the evidence of Antonio’s love for Bassanio is seen in the play when he is taken into jail, he only asks his fellow members to call Bassanio as Antonio’s last wish is to see him before dying. Furthermore, the love feeling for Antonio and Bassanio highlights the LGBTQ+ community not being recognized in that time.

⁸ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare.

(D) Bassanio

A young gentleman of Venice and a good friend of Antonio. Bassanio acts as a catalyst throughout the play. The character of Bassanio is considered to have many layers like he is considered selfish, gold digger, insensitive, reckless, impulsive, Smart, helpful, loyal, etc. In the start we see that Bassanio uses and manipulates Antonio for borrowing the money from Shylock, he bounds Antonio in it this shows his selfish behaviour. He is also considered insensitive as he is not able to understand the feelings that Antonio has for him this also shows his selflessness towards his own desire.

Furthermore, as quoted by many of the main characters of the play he is known to be impulsive and reckless about the money, he is has known to spend money like water. And this nature somewhat makes the audience feel that he might be a gold Digger and might be behind Portia's money rather than the love but in actual Bassanio is in love with Portia as he very smartly understands the play of caskets and chooses the right casket and woos Portia in the end.

He is also seen as a helpful person as he helps Lorenzo and Jessica to elope from Shylock's homes as he calls and distract Shylock with him by calling him in the party. The courtroom scene also plays an evidence that even Bassano had a very good friendship and he believed in that friendship with Antonio but Antonio had one-sided love with Bassani, which he couldn't understand but in the end the support, the friendship, and the companionship he showed towards Antonio was a remarkable as when he woos Portia and he gets to know about Antonio's condition he immediately departures for Venice this shows his loyalty towards his friends and friendship he also reassures Antonio by saying that "the Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones and all" and "ere thou shall lose for me one drop of blood"⁹.

Other character of Merchant of Venice**(E) Jessica**

Shylock's daughter. She does not have the happiest of home lives living with her father but is happy with the presence of Launcelot in the same house. She fell in love with Lorenzo and elopes with him.

(F) Lorenzo

One of the Friends of Antonio and Bassanio fell in love with Jessica and makes a plan to elope with her to Belmont.

⁹ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare.

(G) Gratiano

Friend of Bassanio and quite a talker who is impossible to shut up and can be unmannerly at times. Due to which Bassanio had kept a condition that he will keep himself under control to accompany him to Belmont. He also helps Lorenzo in elopement with Jessica. He falls in love with Nerissa, Portia's lady in waiting who agrees to marry him on a condition.

(H) Nerissa

Portia's lady in waiting. A fully supportive partner and friend of her mistress and have high hopes that Bassanio will win the caskets. She desires and agrees to marry Gratiano on the condition that Bassanio should succeed in the task of caskets.

(I) Launcelot Gobbo

Shylock's servant. Wishes and is successful to change his master from Shylock to Bassanio. He is friendly with Jessica and he also teases and jokes around with his blind father. In one of the scenes, he also acts as a mediator to send a letter between Lorenzo and Jessica.

(J) The Prince of Morocco

One of the suitors to Portia. A dark skinned and a boastful warrior who is not ashamed of his skin tone and boastful of his worth and achievements. He chooses the gold casket

(K) The Prince of Arragon

The Prince of Spain and one of the suitors to Portia. He chooses the silver casket.

(L) Salerio

A merchant of Venice and also a friend of Antonio and Bassanio. With Gratiano, he also helps Lorenzo and Jessica to elope. And is worried about Antonio's ship and the bond signed between him and Shylock.

(M) Solanio

Friend of Antonio, who tries to cheer Antonio up when he is sad. He also has a dislike towards Shylock.

(N) The Duke of Venice

The judge in Shylock and Antonio's case. The Duke also hopes for mercy in Antonio's favour by Shylock. He also plays an important part in delivering the right judgement at the end of the courtroom scenario where he declares Shylock to be guilty of unlawful object and a half murder of a Venetian Christian Antonio and also gives punishment to Shylock for the crimes he has committed.

(O) Tubal

A friend of Shylock and a Jew. Shylock sends him to track down Jessica though he is unable to do so. He also brings the news to Shylock that Antonio is on the verge of bankruptcy.

(P) Doctor Bellario

A wealthy lawyer and Portia's cousin and provides her the letter for her appearance in the court.

(Q) Balthazar

One of Portia's servants. Portia steals his name and disguise herself as a boy to fight Antonio's case.

(R) Old Gobbo

Launcelot's father. He is an old blind man who is not comfortable with long words. He wishes good for his son and also brings gifts for his son's master.

(S) Leonardo.

One of the servants of Bassanio.

IV. THEMES OF THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**1. Prejudice and Discrimination. (Anti-Semitism)**

One of the things dividing and isolating the inhabitants of Venice is prejudice. Shylock despises Christians much since he is a Jewish guy. Shylock says, "I hate him for he is a Christian,"¹⁰ when he first appears in the play to express his views for Antonio. Throughout, Shylock refers to his hatred of Christians. Like, he tells Jessica to lock the house because he doesn't trust "the Christian fools with varnished faces."¹¹ One of the reasons Jessica flees to live with Lorenzo is because of Shylock's intense anti-Christian prejudice, which irreversibly ruins the father-daughter bond. Shylock, for one, considers his daughter's decision to wed a Christian to be the height of treachery.

Shylock's Jewish identity is a source of great enmity for the Christian characters as well. By stating, "I am as like to call thee [dog] again / To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too,"¹² Antonio makes it apparent that taking out a loan from Shylock does not alter his feelings toward him. Many characters unfairly associate Shylock's Jewish heritage with his unwillingness to extend pity or make sacrifices when Antonio defaults on his debt, and Antonio's request that Shylock

¹⁰ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 1 Scene 3 Line 34.

¹¹ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 2 Scene 5 Line 32.

¹² Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 1 Scene 3 Lines 128-129.

become a Christian suggests an attempt to bring down Shylock. Many of the characters in the play harbour prejudices against outsiders and anybody who is different from them, however anti-Semitism is the most overt kind of prejudice. When the dark-skinned Moroccan prince fails to solve the casket riddle, Portia expresses satisfaction by stating, "Let all of his complexion choose me so".¹³ She expresses her ingrained prejudice against those who appear different from her by refusing to marry anyone who looks like him if they are able to solve the puzzle properly.

2. Justice Vs. Mercy

The question of justice and mercy becomes the crux of the struggle between The Christian Characters and Shylock. The characters expect him to show some mercy and compassion toward Antonio which he does not. And Shylock addresses Portia for a reason for him being Merciful, in response Portia address a lengthy speech to him starting with "The quality of mercy is not strained".¹⁴ When after many tries Shylock still remains adamant for the completion of contract and satisfaction of his desire (revenge), Portia then steps in with a strong legal loophole and turns the table from in favour to against Shylock. The irony is that she turns his greatest weapon against him only due to which he is not only stripped of his wealth but is also forced to accept Christianity.

When Antonio was given the choice of mercy for Shylock and he decided not to seize his goods must to convert to Christianity, was it the right thing, justified and merciful for Shylock to give away his religion and accept the one he hated most of his life.

3. Appearance Vs. Reality

Throughout the play we have witnessed many scenes where the appearance and reality does not match. One of the scenes being the casket scenes where The Prince of Morocco and The Prince of Arragon try to judge the right casket either on the bases of their metal on the basis of the scripture on it. Like he mentions that the lead is too low for Portia, then Silver is 10 times less than Gold, So Gold being the highest metal there should contain the picture of Portia. Quoting "To think so base a thought. It were too gross

To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave.

Or shall I think in silver she's immured,

Being ten times undervalued to tried gold?

O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem

¹³ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 2 Scene 4 Line 83.

¹⁴ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 4 Scene 1 Line 179.

Was set in worse than gold. They have in England

A coin that bears the figure of an angel

Stamped in gold, but that's insculped upon.

But here an angel in a golden bed

Lies all within.— Deliver me the key.

Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!"¹⁵

The Prince of Arragon also quotes during his selection that only a fool will go on the appearance and choose the gold casket. Quoting "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire."

"What many men desire"—that "many" may be meant

By the fool multitude that choose by show,

Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach;

Which pries not to th' interior, but like the martlet

Builds in the weather on the outward wall,

Even in the force and road of casualty.

I will not choose what many men desire

Because I will not jump with common spirits

And rank me with the barbarous multitudes."¹⁶

Shylock also plays a part in this theme as he is considered a villain and a victim in the play, he is considered to "be a villain with a smiling cheek" which confuses the audience about his character. He is portrayed as a multi-faced character in the play. On the appearance he is shown as cold, selfish, and hateful character who wants to have his revenge on Antonio, but if we dig deeper one may feel these outer characteristics are his experiences and the prejudice he faced by the people mainly Christians.

I also feel that his character is greatly influenced by the hatred that Christians have for him because even they badmouthed about him and humiliated him, but only Shylock's wrong behaviour is highlighted by most of the audiences.

4. Friendship and Loyalty.

The Merchant of Venice revolves around the topic of friendship for the most part. When

¹⁵ Merchant Of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 2 Scene 7, Said by Prince of Morocco.

¹⁶ Merchant Of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 2 Scene 6 Lines 23 – 33, Said by Prince of Arragon.

Bassanio runs out of money, he goes to Antonio, who has previously provided him with significant financial help. Without hesitation, Antonio offers to support his buddy in any way he can, even if it means giving Shylock a pound of his own flesh if he defaults on the loan. Bassanio led Antonio into the scenario that ultimately put his life in danger, yet Antonio never confronts him for it. Rather, Antonio makes it clear over and over again that he would be content to die for his friend. "Life itself, my wife and all the world / Are not with me esteemed above thy life,"¹⁷ Bassanio responds.

The drama therefore portrays friendship as one of the strongest and most significant emotional ties that people may have and implies that Bassanio and Antonio's friendship may even be more enduring than their romantic love. The value of friendship is further demonstrated by the relationship between Portia and Nerissa and between Bassanio and Gratiano.

5. Love and Sacrifices.

This theme is seen in all the relationships present in the play. One partner or the other is sacrificing something to get his love or other relationships. Like in Jessica elopement she is sacrificing her relationship with her father Shylock and her Jewish heritage to elope with Lorenzo. Then Antonio is also seen as a very sacrificing and selfless character in the story as he is willing to risk his life for Bassanio, by entering in the bond. This highlights a modern view of this story that maybe Antonio considered Bassanio more than a friend, a lover for whom he was ready to die happily as while he was in jail he would only request to meet Bassanio once before he dies. His sacrifice for his lover showcases the power of love and friendship. Then one more character is seen sacrificing her identity for her loved one. As we see before the courtroom scene, where Portia disguises as a man and presents before the court. Portia's love for Bassanio extends to his friends as well, especially Antonio. For whom she sacrifices and takes the risk and disguises as a man. Because if she would be caught in her disguise before the court she would be punished for perjury. She risks all these to free Antonio from the bond and she was successful in doing so.

6. Religious Differences.

William Shakespeare has used religion in this play not as a matter of faith and spirituality but to express and show the discrimination took place in that period within the people. The two religions portrayed in this book are Christianity and Judaism. And throughout the play we have seen both the Christians and Jew trying to humiliate and degrade each other. We have even seen most of the time Shylock giving references from the book and trying to defend and portray his

¹⁷ Merchant Of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 4 Scene 1 Lines 275-276.

religion nicer than Christianity. It also highlights the prejudice done by the people among them on the basis on one's religion. This not only highlights the deficit in our society but also tries to portray a message that "*Hatred towards one, only attracts negativity towards others*" and it also tells us that "*One's action is always a reflection of others actions towards him*".

7. Self- Interest and Love.

In the play the Christian characters are seem more inclined towards love and value their relationships more while the Jewish Character, Shylock is mainly concerned for his money and revenge from Antonio, a Christian. We could say that Shylock is so inclined and obsessed for money and revenge that he forgets humanity and human emotions. Those feeling have made him blind as his own daughter eloped because of this nature and greed for his ducats and revenge.

And also, one Christian character is somewhat seen to have both the feeling that is Bassanio, i.e., to satisfy his self-interest he uses and manipulated the emotions of Antonio but he does this to woo Portia his love, so here he falls in both categories.

8. Revenge And Hatred.

Revenge is a potent, corrupting, and devastating element in the drama. Shylock wishes to harm Antonio because he seeks vengeance against the entire Christian society, whom he accuses of tormenting and demeaning him, as well as taking his young daughter and the money she took when she fled. Shylock explains why he feels right in seeking vengeance: "If you prick us, would we not bleed? Don't we laugh when you tickle us? If you poison us, will we not die? And if you wrong us, will we not take revenge?"¹⁸ The phrases show that Shylock believes he has been mistreated by Christians and is right to pursue vengeance in reaction to their dehumanization. He sees this act of retaliation as a typical human reaction to abuse. Shylock refuses to even contemplate changing Antonio's bond's terms because of his thirst for vengeance. Ironically, his concentration on the precise substance of the legislation being established leads to his demise when Portia exploits a legal gap and then uses the same law to convict him. Because of his thirst for vengeance, Shylock acts irrationally rather than rationally, and as a result, he loses everything.

V. MODERN VIEWPOINT OF MERCHANT OF VENICE

The Modern and The Young Generation have a bit different viewpoint about the Merchant of Venice. Which Includes:-

¹⁸ Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare, Act 3 Scene 1 Lines 54 – 56.

1. **Gender Roles And Inequality**- There is indirect mention of gender inequality in the Merchant of Venice. Portia one of the major characters had to dress as a man to be able to present in court because at that time women were not allowed to work just like a man. Thou Portia being intelligent, courageous, and confident she had to disguise as a male.
2. **LGBTQ+ Community** - The concept of LGBTQ+ is recently recognized in India as well and is still not acceptable by many people. The character of Antonio has shown many evidences that he loves Bassanio, who is not known about the fact. According to the opinion of the young minds, they think that Antonio was not able to tell his love to Bassanio might be because of the society and because of the conflict going between him and Shylock this might be one of the reasons. Or because Bassanio had already confessed his love for Portia to Antonio, may be because of that also.
3. **The Sentiments of Jews** – the young generation also pinpointed the discrimination that happened with the Jews in the Merchant of Venice. Like there was only one Jew, Shylock against all the Christians, that may be seen as they were trying to oppress him and in the courtroom scene also when he was forced to convert into Christianity shows the hate and hurts the sentiments of Jews and the readers.
6. Shylock being portrayed as a villain is only the one part of the context, the discrimination he faced and his bad experiences with people were bot highlighted. Because I feel somewhere down the line the hatred and attitude of Shylock was because of his bad experiences he faced by Christians earlier. He is also portrayed as an outsider in the story which further explains us that he was considered as an outcast by the people.

(A) Research methodology

The research is done using a qualitative technique. The materials come from both original and secondary sources. William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* serves as the major source of information. Secondary sources of information include Shakespeare's writings, websites, publications, and research papers. The researcher analysed study articles from many universities, both domestic and international, to get insight into the topic.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *The Merchant of Venice* is still a timeless drama that is not limited by its historical setting. Its examination of concepts like justice, discrimination, love, and sacrifice has had a lasting impact on viewers for generations. Reviewing this work, we see how pertinent it is to discuss issues like gender roles, religious diversity, and the intricacies of human

relationships. Shakespeare's Portia, Jessica, Antonio, and Shylock, among other characters, encourage us to examine our own prejudices, question social standards, and look for compassion in a world where looks may be deceiving.

VII. REFERENCES

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