

ACT-IV, SCENE I

Stanzas for Comprehension

1. (i) The 'stony adversary' referred to in the above lines is Shylock. He is called stony because of his rock-hard determination and obstinacy to take a pound of Antonio's flesh as penalty.
- (ii) These lines mean that Shylock is an inhuman, unyielding wretch, without the power of feeling pity for another person. He lacks the quality of mercy.

- (iii) We come to know that the Duke has taken great pains to soften the severity of the proceedings, but Shylock has remained obstinate and obdurate in his demand for a pound of flesh.
 - (iv) We come to know that Antonio has completely resigned himself to his fate. He is ready to accept whatever judgement the court might give. He is determined to suffer with a quiet spirit the utmost that tyranny and rage can do.
 - (v) The lines mean that Antonio has braced himself to suffer Shylock's fury and tyranny with a calm and quiet spirit. He has resigned himself to the will of fate.
2. (i) According to the Duke, the world thinks that Shylock is only keeping on in this revengeful spirit till the last moment. But when the actual moment of exacting the penalty comes, he will suddenly show mercy.
- (ii) These lines mean that it is thought when the moment of cutting a pound of flesh from Antonio's body comes, Shylock will suddenly become merciful and repentant. This sudden change in him will be unexpected and more surprising than his apparent cruelty.
- (iii) Antonio has suffered losses recently. Almost all his ships, richly laden with merchandise, have not touched the harbour. They are either lost or sunk in the sea.
- (iv) The Duke is revealed as a generous, upright and merciful person. His heart is full of the milk of human kindness. He asks Shylock to show mercy to Antonio. But when the Jew refuses to accept the appeal for mercy, the Duke upholds the laws of Venice.
- (v) This line means that when the moment of exacting the penalty written in the bond comes, Shylock will act according to human gentleness and love. He will not only forgive Antonio but also give up the payment of some portion of the original amount.
3. (i) These lines have been addressed to the Duke. Shylock speaks these lines when he is brought before the Duke and the Duke indirectly makes the last appeal to him to show mercy. The Duke tries to flatter Shylock. Then Shylock answers him.
- (ii) Shylock has sworn an oath by the Sabbath (the Holy Festival of the Jews) that he will have full penalty incurred by non-payment of the amount.
- (iii) This line means that if Shylock is refused the penalty as mentioned in the bond, it will endanger the municipal charter and freedom of the city. The Duke will never like that this should happen.
- (iv) Shylock gives no reason why he prefers to have a pound of dead flesh rather than three thousand ducats. He says that it is his humour.
- (v) Shylock's speech reveals that he is very revengeful. He asserts that he will not act according to human gentleness. No law can compel him to be merciful. So he asserts that he will have the penalty as mentioned in the bond.
4. (i) In the court the Duke appeals to Shylock to be merciful but the latter refuses to do so. Then the Duke asks him how he will hope for mercy from God when he himself renders none. To this Shylock replies in these words.
- (ii) Shylock says that the Christians have many slaves whom they have purchased. They use them in service tasks. If someone asks them to free them, they refuse to do so. Their plea is that the slaves are theirs. They may use them the way they like. In the same way Shylock says that the pound of flesh he is demanding is his because he has purchased it.
- (iii) This line means that if Christians are asked to free their bought slaves and marry them to their sons and daughters, they refuse to do it. The slaves belong to them. They have the right to refuse. In the same way Shylock has the right not to give up his claim.

- (iv) Shylock says this because he had given a loan of three thousand ducats to get the bond signed by Antonio. That is why he says that the pound of flesh mentioned in the bond is clearly bought by him.
 - (v) This speech shows that Shylock is very obstinate. When he is determined to do something, he can easily find out arguments in support of his plea. His argumentative power is indeed marvellous.
5. (i) The above given conversation takes place in the court of Venice, where the Duke, Shylock, Antonio and others are present.
- (ii) When Shylock refuses to relent, the Duke says that he has sent for a learned Doctor of law named Bellario. He has not yet arrived and he has the power to dismiss the court till Doctor Bellario comes. At this Salerio tells him that a messenger with letters from the learned Doctor has come. The Duke asks him to call the messenger. This is the occasion. Bassanio tries to cheer Antonio.
- (iii) Bassanio is the best friend of Antonio. Like a true friend he tries to encourage Antonio to be brave. He adds that the Jew shall have his blood, flesh and bones before he touches Antonio.
- (iv) This line means that Antonio considers himself a sick sheep in the herd more liable to death than the others. He feels that he is like the weakest fruit that falls earliest to the ground.
- (v) The conversation awakens the feelings of sympathy for Antonio. Antonio is too good to say no to a dear friend. He is now caught in a difficult situation. He has lost all hope. He wishes that his friend should continue to live and write his epitaph. This is the height of sadness.
6. (i) In the trial scene, Shylock remains adamant in spite of prayers and appeals. Gratiano, then, angrily asks him "can no prayers pierce thee?" At this Shylock says that no prayer that he can make will move him. Gratiano loses temper and starts abusing him.
- (ii) Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher. He believed that souls of animals may sometimes enter the bodies of men. Gratiano adds that Shylock's vile spirit once inhabited the body of a wolf who was hanged for killing men. That is why his desires are bloody and wolfish.
- (iii) These lines mean that the soul of some blood thirsty beast must have entered his body when he was in his mother's womb. That is why his desires are bloody, wolfish, starved and ravenous.
- (iv) The lines reveal that Gratiano has some knowledge of history also. The justification which he gives for Shylock's blood thirstiness is no doubt remarkable. But it shows that he talks too much.
- (v) Shylock does not react sharply to Gratiano's words. He tells Gratiano that by speaking so loud and in abusive language, he is only offending his lungs. His words can't remove the legal seal from the bond.
7. (i) With the permission of the Duke, Portia, dressed as the representative lawyer of Doctor Bellario, looks at the bond. She says that it is a strange case. She reads it and asks Antonio whether he confesses it or not. Antonio confesses it. Portia then asks Shylock to be merciful. In this context this speech is made.

- (ii) Portia says that the quality of mercy is not forced. It comes as freely as the gentle rain which falls from heaven. It blesses the person who shows mercy and also him who receives it.
 - (iii) In these lines Portia says that mercy becomes a king more than his crown. The king's sceptre shows his worldly power. It reminds men to give respect to the royal king, that is his due. But mercy is above this. It is a noble quality coming from the very heart of a king. That is why it becomes him more.
 - (iv) Portia's eloquence, argumentative power, and wisdom are revealed through this speech.
 - (v) As soon as Portia finishes her speech, Shylock says, "My deeds upon my head". That is, he bears responsibility for his act. Then he repeats his demand of forfeiture of the bond.
8. (i) The speaker of these lines is Portia. The speaker appealed to the Jew for mercy because according to the terms of the bond Antonio's life was in danger. If Shylock were allowed to have forfeiture of the bond, Antonio might lose his life in the process. Earlier the Duke has also appealed to Shylock for mercy.
- (ii) The three qualities of mercy are the following :
 - (a) It is not strained. It drops like the gentle rain from heaven.
 - (b) It is doubly blessed. It blesses the giver as well as the receiver.
 - (c) It adorns a king more than his crown and sceptre.
 - (iii) This line means that mercy is above the earthly power. The sceptre is the emblem of worldly power. It awakens fear in the minds of people. But mercy is above this. It is a tribute to God. The power of a king becomes most divine when it is mingled with mercy. Shylock says that he takes the responsibility for his actions and rejects the appeal for mercy. He insists on having the penalty stated in the bond.
 - (iv) Bassanio is ready to give twice or thrice of the borrowed money in the court if Shylock agrees to cancel the bond. When Bassanio says that the law should be changed in this case to do a great good, he is snubbed by disguised Portia.
 - (v) Shylock is not only obdurate but also extremely cruel. He turns down the appeals of the Duke and Portia and remains adamant. He refuses to call in a surgeon to stop the flow of blood because it is not mentioned in the bond.
9. (i) In the Trial scene when Portia as judge pronounces that a pound of flesh from the body of Antonio is rightfully his, Shylock feels very happy. But when he is ready to cut the flesh from near the chest of Antonio, Portia asks him to stop. Then she speaks the lines mentioned above.
- (ii) When Shylock is ready with his knife Portia asks him to stop because there is another point. The words precisely in the bond are 'a pound of flesh'. The agreement does not allow him to take even a drop of blood.
 - (iii) These words of Portia surprise and shock Shylock. The bond does not permit him to take an atom of blood. Portia allows him to take the forfeit due in the agreement but he must not shed even one drop of Christian blood because that is not written in the bond.
 - (iv) Portia's speech throws great light on her character. She has complete understanding of the legal system. She knows all the ins and outs of the law. Very cleverly she turns the tables on Shylock.
 - (v) Gratiano is extremely happy when the tables are turned on Shylock and he has been caught in the intricacies of law. He says, "O upright Judge – Mark, Jew !"

Assignment : For Practice