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## **Shylock's demand: Provoking Palestinian's fortune of torture**

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**Abstract:** Palestinians' sufferings are not just mere illusions or imaginations, but it is very much real and the core truth where humanity is trapped and human beings especially women and children are dying every day. The occupants' Israelis have tried to justify their actions against Palestine by the sufferings they endured during the holocaust created by the Nazis that is mentioned in Philip Roth's book. In this write up, the justification has been dissected to comprehend how and why the Palestinians' fall into this misery. Arab Muslims and Palestinians' have not only saved and helped the Israeli occupants from the Nazis during the holocaust but the Arab rescue efforts also crossed all boundaries to extend help to outside of Middle East as well during World War II and after the fall of France . Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit, an Arab Muslim had arranged forged papers to protect for about 100 Jews to certify them as Muslim besides arranging the Jewish refugees hidden in the masjids at times of German roundups and also saved almost 500 Jews by disguising them as Muslims to avoid arrest and deportation. In this write up author has brought up the depiction of the Shakespearean Shylock's characteristics and mental state to understand Palestinians' fate of this sort. Nevertheless, all justifications seem to fall short while describing the sufferings of Palestinians.

Keywords: Palestine, Holocaust, Shakespeare, Elizabethan society

### **Roth's prediction**

Philip Roth's semi-autobiographical novel Operation Shylock in 1993 once put a great deal of effort into finding the appropriateness, comprehension and answers of Shylock's demand. His depiction was based on a Zionist perspective that described Palestinian's torture as the

avenge of the Holocaust. Shiham and Mahmoud in their article published in 2022 thoroughly dissected Philip Roth's arguments that tried to provoke the Israeli occupants by legitimizing the victimization of the Palestinians. The prediction of Philip Roth also mentioned that the sufferings of the Palestinians are their fate to be accepted since Hitler's xenophobic nationalism hurt the self-esteem of the occupant Israelis. Philip Roth also justified the Palestinians' issue as a mere issue of Orientalism described by Edward Said in 1978. This entire contemptuous portrayal against the Palestinians and showing soft corners for the Israeli occupants should raise eye-brows of humanity. United Nations hold a pride for establishing UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), the acknowledged and bestowed rights of every human being on earth. Then on the contrary, how come certain depiction of thoughtlessness, grave silence on the Palestinians' intolerable victimization are seen? How can their continual repression be neglected?

#### **Elizabethan society's depiction**

Awan (2023) described William Shakespeare's drama "The Merchant of Venice" and Shakespeare's analysis of relationships and strains between the Christian and Jewish Faith, where the author not only have tried to translate the tension in literary pieces but also focused in the themes of ethnicity, race, nationality and identity through deliberate orations in the drama. Awan also pointed out that the discrimination against the Jewish character Shylock and Jews, as a race in the drama named The Merchant of Venice is a prominent theme that reflects the prejudice and intolerance of the Elizabethan society. Meanwhile, Shakespeare portrays Shylock as a complex and controversial figure who is both a victim and a villain of the anti-Semitic attitudes of that era. The Shakespearean drama explores multiple perspectives where Shylock and Jews are discriminated and persecuted in parallel. In spite of Shylock being the continual social victim of his time and in spite of his prolonged social trauma belonging in a particular race "The Jews", could not justify his absurd demand and it was not accepted by the mass too. Nevertheless, Philip Roth in 1993 argued with a statement as in the prolonged traumatic struggle before and after the Holocaust drained the self-esteem and tolerance meter of the Israeli occupants and as a result they have the right to ignore the Palestinian's rights. This argument reveals only one picture and that is the expectation of mercy and humanity are rare to be found in the Zionist ideologies because as per them that's what they have learnt in the process of time.

### **The monologue**

From the novel, a monologue presented by Shylock puts a great impact and propels the deeper thought in a further notion that usually we avoid. The monologue says, "To bait fish withal. If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies, and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath, not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrongs a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrongs a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why revenge? The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction." This monologue pointed out a lot of stress and discriminatory factors among the Jews and the Christians of that time.

For decades, Israeli occupants have not only cordoned off the Gaza Strip and have taken decisions of halting food, water and all supplies indispensable for human existence but also have promised themselves to give a life-lesson to the Palestinians. In the Palestinian locality the kind of torture, killings, destruction and misery scenes have repressed all of humanity but the Israeli occupants are not repentant in any sort for this, rather as per their belief system they are doing it because they have perceived themselves as the victims and they are doing it all because they deserve to do it. As per Shakespearean analysis and Shylock's monologue, this similar ideology is perceived by Shylock too, which indicates a deeper meaning behind this continual conflict.



Figure1 : Source : Tamimi (2017), Gulf news

In fine, the discrimination against Shylock and Jews in *The Merchant of Venice* reveals how Elizabethan society contained a supremacy belief and remained intolerant to other religions and cultural differences. Shakespeare presented Shylock as a complex character who has been both discriminated against and discriminated towards others but also through his character, the author questioned the prejudices and stereotypes against Jews and other minorities. Therefore, while symbolizing the drama with the Israel-Palestinian conflict, it discloses that human species act and react differently when the power dynamics and pattern change around them. Once, Israelis thrusted out of their homelands found shelter in a land of people besides care, honor and love, when they have been in their weakest phase. Nevertheless, those same group of people have been acting mercilessly, occupying more and more Palestinian lands by the efforts of wiping out the entire Palestinian race to establish their own region.

### **Shakespeare's Antonio versus Shylock**

As per Muir (2005) the Shakespearean Shylock and the Jews race, once discriminated, mocked, insulted brutally for his religious believes and practices, social status by the Christian majority for instance Antonio, Gratiano, Bassanio and Portia respectively and also in the end was forced to convert to Christianity when his demand attempted to kill Antonio by demanding a pound of flesh from Antonio as a collateral

for Antonio's unpaid debt by not showing any sort of humanity or compassion for the other human being upon receiving the opportunity to claim "something" from Antonio. Shylock and Jews were discriminated against because of their religious beliefs and practices, which were seen as inferior and alien by the Christian majority. Shylock was constantly mocked and insulted for his faith, such as being called a "dog", a "misbeliever", a "cut-throat dog" and a "damned, execrable dog" by Antonio, Gratiano, Bassanio and Portia respectively. He was also forced to convert to Christianity at the end of the play as a punishment for his attempt to kill Antonio, which is a violation of his religious identity and freedom. Moreover, Jews are stereotyped as greedy, ruthless and vengeful moneylenders who exploit Christians with their usury, which is forbidden by the Christian doctrine. Shylock has been depicted as a typical example of this stereotype, who demands a pound of flesh from Antonio as collateral for his loan and refuses to show any mercy or compassion as per William (2009).

Shylock and Jews have been discriminated against because of their legal status and rights mentioned by Nashan in 2017 and Awan in 2023, which have remained very limited and unequal compared to those of Christians of that era. Shylock was subjected to the laws of Venice which was biased and unjust towards him as a foreigner and a Jew, where he was denied the justice he sought rather Portia, disguised as a lawyer, tricked him into forfeiting his bond by using a technicality which was taking Antonio's pound of flesh without shedding any blood and in lieu if failed his property would be snatched away but if converted to Christianity then would not have to face any charge. This shows how Jews were required to live in confined ghettos and had to wear red hats to distinguish themselves. The drama also depicted that Shylock and Jews were discriminated against because of their human dignity and emotions, which were disregarded and devalued by Christians as a result Shylock was treated as an inferior and subhuman being who did not deserve any respect or sympathy from his Christian counterparts and that is why his emotions and dignity had no importance to anyone and he was easily spat upon, kicked, cursed and abused by Antonio and others, who considered him as an enemy and an obstacle to their glee. Shylock mentioned a dialogue, "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?" . Here, he referred to his Jews race and ethnicity.



Figure 2: Source: Melvin and Khadder, CNN (2015)

### **Blind-eyed Zionism:**

The irony is in today's world, the Zionists of Israel have remained a blinded-eye to their horrific, excruciating painful chapter of holocaust during the Nazis era of establishing Volksgemeinschaft, the purification of blood meaning the separation of Jews impure blood as per Britannica in 2023 and instead the Zionists as in the Israeli occupants are conducting continuous massacre, unbearable torture and genocide on the Muslims specially on the children and women of Palestine themselves in the most merciless manner anyone can imagine. Strangely, this country Palestine and their people gave shelter during and after the holocaust tragedy, which seem to be completely forgotten by the Israeli occupants. Not only forgotten but also the horrendous betrayal took place when the guests replaced their identities with the hosts and kicked out the hosts from their own home. Satloff (2006) and Aidi (2014) discussed about several incidents where Jews were saved by the Arab Muslims and Palestinians by disguising the Jews as Muslims to save them from arrest, by preparing forged certificates for the Jews indicating them as Muslims to save their lives, by hiding Jews people at different Masjids as Muslims to protect them. One of the popular Algerian singer Salim Halali was provided a false birth certificate as a Muslim to hide his true religion to protect him from deportation from Berlin and torture. Yad Vashem declared in 2013 that Mohammed Helmy, one Egyptian doctor, put his own life at risk for

three years and was involved in saving many Jews from being exterminated by the Nazis during holocaust and was recognized and honored as one of the righteous among the nations. Helmy helped and rescued Anna Gutman (boros) , her mother Julie, her grandmother Cecilie Rudnik, her stepfather Goerg Wehr to survive holocaust. Historical many such evidences are imprinted where today's Israeli occupants have been helped in many ways. Nevertheless, instead of being thankful, the brutality conducted by the Israeli occupants went inhuman to bizarre. The strange illusion of the Israeli occupants that wants a payback on the Nazis somehow are obstructing and hampering the lives and livelihoods of the Palestinians. If avenge could have been the only solution to all the problems then in what particular logic Israeli occupants have been torturing the Palestinian civilians? They should have chosen their previous home and the civilians of that home instead from where they have been pushed out. But, interestingly, that has not been the case.

However, at today's context various dimensional peace talks can ceasefire this invasion and aggression with an effort to create a win-win situation only if Israeli occupants are willing to have an open mind and intending to behave in the most humane way by not getting encouraged by the Shylock way. United nations with International Humanitarian Laws need to come forward to obstruct their audacity to kill humanity, Otherwise, history has its own ways to show repugnance, the faster it is comprehended the better the life circumstances of Palestinians can be ahead.

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Dr. Tarnima Warda Andalib is currently working as an Assistant Professor at BRAC Business School in BRAC University, Bangladesh and also as the Advisor of BuReD (Brac University's Research for Development Club). She was employed as a Postdoctoral Fellow (Entrepreneurial Bricolage, Innovation Management and Manufacturing smes Framework) and Lecturer in the School of Management at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia from 2019 to 2021. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy (phd) with Doctoral Scheme Scholarship (DSS) and PGRS grant from the Faculty of Industrial Management at University Malaysia Pahang, Malaysia focusing on the Organization behaviour, Human Resource Management and Assimilated Technology Framework development in 2018. She has earned few academic excellence awards like being 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> positions in the 3 mins competitions, Citrex Silver Medals in two different research competitions as well. She has been a Lecturer of Strategic Management (SM) and Management Information System (MIS) from 2013 till 2018. She also has Corporate skills and Experiences for 8 years, where she has worked as a Senior Executive in the Telecommunication company, Grameenphone Ltd., one of the group companies under Norwegian Telenor Group of Industries. She has more than 50 Academic Publications indexed in Scopus, Wos and others with 237 citations, h-index:8 and i-index:8. Her current interest areas are Block-chain Technology, Innovation Management, Entrepreneurial Bricolage, Organizational Psychology, Assimilation of Artificial Intelligence, Integrated Framework Development. Besides her academic works, she has nine poetry books, where four are in English and five of them are in her mother-tongue Bangla.