

The Merchant of Venice-William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare's play The Merchant of Venice is about Antonio, a kind merchant, his friend Bassanio, and Shylock, a Jewish moneylender. The most exciting part is the trial scene.

In a Venetian court, Antonio is in trouble because Shylock demands a pound of his flesh as payment for a loan. The Duke asks Shylock to show mercy, but he refuses, wanting revenge. Bassanio offers double the money, but Shylock insists on his bond.

Just then, Nerissa, dressed as a court clerk, brings a letter from a famous lawyer, Doctor Bellario. It says that a young lawyer, Balthazar, will fight the case. Portia, Bassanio's wife, arrives in disguise as Balthazar.

Portia gives a speech on mercy, saying it is a divine gift. She then cleverly argues that Shylock's bond allows him to take a pound of flesh but not spill blood. Since this is impossible, Shylock loses.

Shylock agrees to take the money instead, but Portia refuses. She says Shylock has broken the law. The Duke spares his life but takes half his wealth. Antonio lets him keep it if he becomes a Christian and leaves his property to his daughter, Jessica.

The Princess and the God: A Tale of Ancient India- Aaron Shepherd

The Princess and the God: A Tale of Ancient India is a retelling of the Indian folktale of Princess Savitri by Aaron Shepard. The story comes from The Mahabharata and is about love, devotion, and wisdom.

King Ashvapati of Madra prayed for eighteen years for a child. The goddess Savitri blessed him with a daughter, Savitri, who grew up to be beautiful and wise. No prince dared to ask for her hand, so her father told her to choose a husband herself.

Savitri travelled and met Prince Satyavan, a kind man living in exile with his blind father. She chose to marry him despite the warning from Sage Narada that Satyavan would die in a year.

On the day of Satyavan's death, Savitri followed him into the forest, where he collapsed. Yama, the god of death, came to take his soul, but Savitri followed him and spoke wisely.

Impressed, Yama granted her three wishes but told her not to ask for Satyavan's life. She wished for her father-in-law's sight and kingdom to be restored, her father to have more children, and children of her own with Satyavan. Yama realized he could not grant the last wish without reviving Satyavan and returned his soul.

Satyavan woke up, and all of Savitri's wishes come true. This story teaches us that love, wisdom, and determination can overcome any challenge.

On the Love of Life- William Hazlitt

William Hazlitt, an English essayist, wrote On the Love of Life in 1815. He explains that people want to live not because life is always happy but because of their passions, ambitions, and fear of the unknown.

Hazlitt says even those who suffer still cling to life. He gives examples of a child chasing his shadow and an old man near death, both showing a strong will to live. Life is valuable because it allows action and pursuit of desires.

Hope also keeps people going. A schoolboy waits for holidays, and a young person looks forward to adulthood, showing how hope sustains us. Hazlitt argues that fear of death is not about losing happiness but about fearing non-existence. Even tyrants, who have power, fear death despite their guilt.

In the end, Hazlitt tells that love for life comes from passion and fear of the unknown, not just happiness. His essay makes us reflect on why we hold on to life despite hardships.