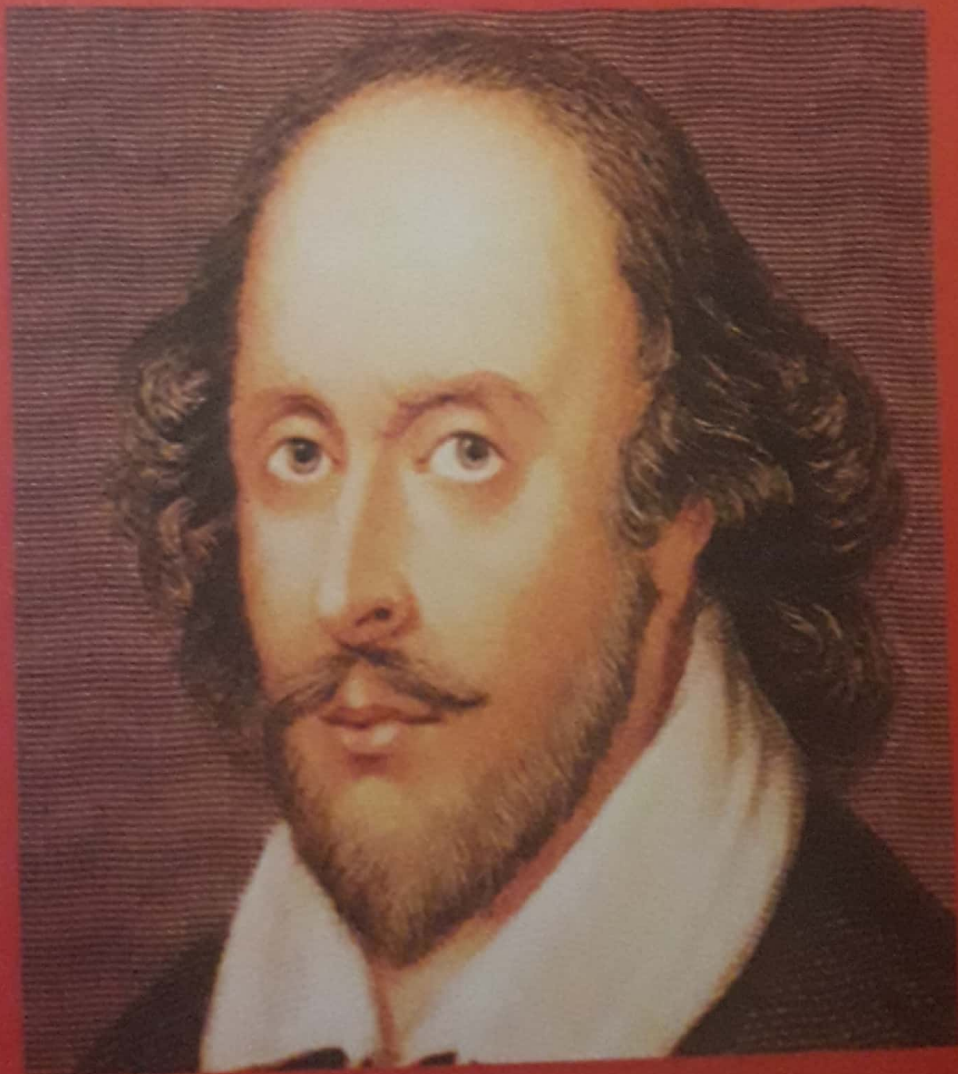


# SHAKESPEARE FOREVER

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## THEME OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION IN 'THE TEMPEST'

G. SARADHA

'Happy are those whose sins are forgiven,  
Whose wrongs are pardoned' (psalms 32:1)

The *Tempest* is one of the most perfect and original of Shakespeare productions, and he has shown in it all the variety of his powers. It is full of grace and grandeur. The human and imaginary characters, the dramatic and the grotesque, are blended together with the greatest art, and without any appearance of it. *The Tempest* has two major themes; one is the pursuit of power and its consequences and the other is regeneration, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The theme of forgiveness and reconciliation is a striking feature of the play and at the same time, this theme offers a positive vision to us.

### **The three sinners, denounced and rebuked for their crime:**

Prospero has now to deal with his three enemies, namely Antonio, Alonso, and Sebastian and he decides to deal with them in a group instead of dealing with them individually. Some of the spirits, acting under Prospero's orders, now assume strange shapes and, carrying a banquet, appear before the three men, and lay the banquet before them. These shapes then begin to dance around the banquet, making gestures to Alonso and the others to start eating. After a few moments, these shapes disappear. Alonso and his companions feel bewildered by what they have

see. Indeed, Alonso feels terrified by the mysterious phenomenon which he has beheld. However, he decides to eat the viands lying before him because he is feeling very hungry. Just when he is about to start eating, Ariel appears in the shape of a harpy. This harpy now administers a stern rebuke to the three men, namely Antonio, Alonso, and Sebastian, reminding them of great crime which he had committed against Prospero and Miranda. The other two men, namely Antonio and Sebastian, are also sternly rebuked and denounced for their crime. All three are told that the only way, in which they can obtain any relief in their present distress, is through a feeling of repentance over their past crime. The harpy now disappears, while the banquet had vanished at the very time of the harpy's appearance. We can now imagine the feeling of these three sinners. They are feeling stunned by what has happened. In fact all three now seem to have lost their wits. Alonso seems to have gone mad, while the others two are looking utterly bewildered and dazed. Gonzalo, who has not lost his nerve, now feels afraid lest any of these three men should take some desperate step or perform some reckless action. He and the other lords try to soothe the feeling of the three sinners who are in a crazed state of mind.

### **Prospero's Forgiveness of His Enemies:**

After a while Ariel reports to Prospero that the three sinners are feeling distraught and that the good old lord Gonzalo is actually shedding tears of distress. Ariel then appeals to Prospero to relent towards the sinners who are feeling utterly miserable. Prospero assures Ariel that he has no intention to



make those men suffer physical or mental torture beyond a certain point. Prospero says that his main purpose is to make the three sinners realize the gravity and the enormity of the offence which they had committed against him and his daughter twelve years ago. He further tells Ariel that, according to his present thinking, "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance". Prospero means that human action shows itself as nobler in forgiveness than in revenge. Prospero further says that, these three sinners being no full of repentance, he would not impose any further punishment upon them. He then asks Ariel to bring Alonso and all his companions to him. When they all appear before Prospero, he greets Gonzalo with great warmth, and offers his sincere thanks to the good old lord who had been instrumental in saving his life and providing him not only with food and water but also his valuable books. Then Prospero turns to Alonso and reminds him of the great wrong which Alonso had done to him and his daughter. Next, Prospero turns to Sebastian, who was Alonso's accomplice in helping Antonio, and says that Sebastian has now justly been punished for his share in the crime. Lastly, Prospero turns to his brother Antonio and says that Antonio had become so ambitious that he had turned out all pity and all natural affection from his heart and had done a great injury to Prospero and his daughter Miranda. Having thus reminded Antonio of his unnatural crime, Prospero says to him "I do forgive thee, unnatural though art". This is great scene of forgiveness in the play and this scene marks the climax of the development of the theme of forgiveness. This scene may also be regarded as the climax of the theme of regeneration.

### **Theme of Reconciliation**

The Bible tells us in Genesis 39-47 about the story of Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, Hebrews were living in the land of Canaan. He was the favorite son among his brothers, and they were so jealous because of that, that they plotted to kill him. However, they did not fear to kill him and decided to throw him into a pit, and then sell him to some Midianites merchants on their way to Egypt. The merchants finally sold him to the Egyptians, and once there, even though Joseph went through some distress (getting in jail for example), God's favor was always with him. This made him able to interpret the Pharaoh's dreams, and due to that, they could predict and get prepared for seven years of hunger, and Joseph won the Pharaoh's trust. He finally had the possibility to meet with his brothers again, and forgive and reconcile with them for their betrayal.

In this play, Prospero also forgives each of them, allowing them to live and return to Italy. In appreciation, they promise to faithfully serve Prospero. It is a picture of full reconciliation. This shows that the theme of this play is the 'chain of forgiveness and reconciliation. Prospero has now completed his plan. He has taught the necessary lesson to his three enemies, and he has given his sincere thanks to Gonzalo who had been very helpful to him. He now takes Alonso and his companions to his cell where he shows them Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. Alonso is delighted and thrilled to find that his son Ferdinand is alive after all. He feels even more pleased when he learns that Miranda, the daughter of Prospero, has promised to marry Ferdinand with her father's full approval.



This is the scene of reconciliation between Prospero and Alonso, as it is the also scene of reunion between Alonso and his son Ferdinand.

If the persons have supernatural power they may do evil things but instead of doing evil things Prospero makes them repent for their sins and also he forgives and reconciles with them so that they can return to Italy and live forever. Scripture says:

“Turn away from your sins,” he said “ because the Kingdom of heaven is near!. (Matthew 3:2)

I came not to call righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32)

If we turn away from our sins Lord Jesus Christ is ready to forgives our sins so that we can reach Kingdom of Heaven and live forever.

*The Tempest* is distinctly a tragicomedy, with characters from several strata of society, comic and serious kinds of action, and several averted disasters. As late as the beginning of Act V there is still the chance of a serious ending but, when Prospero assures Ariel of his softening towards his enemies, a happy ending seems a certainty. Prospero is then happily reconciled to King Alonso, forgives even the unresponsive Antonio and Sebastian, while Stephano and Trinculo feel humbled and Caliban penitent. All will return to Italy to celebrate the wedding of Ferdinand and Miranda. The melancholy mood of the audience, caused by the earlier parts of the action, gives way to delight, and the working of a beneficent Providence are demonstrated.

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