Appendix - I

Is Shylock a tragic character? Does he deserve the punishment meted out to him in the Trial Scene?

Or

Is Shylock fairly treated in the Trial Scene of 'The Merchant of Venice'?

Or

How far is it correct to say that Shylock is more sinned against than sinning? Give reasons in support of your answer?

Ans. **Shylock’s Sins:** Shylock is certainly a very clever, cunning and wicked man. He is nothing short of a villain. He has deepoorted hatred for Antonio. He has two reasons for hating Antonio. Antonio is a Christian. To the needy he lends money free of interest and thus brings down the rate of interest in Venice. Antonio is his rival in business and he wants to eliminate him. He wants to take the life of Antonio. If antonio is removed from the scene, he will be able to make as much profit as he likes. Thus he is a mean murderer at heart.
Devilish in Revenge, Shylock is devilish in revenge. He can never forget or forgive a wrong done to him. Antonio his, no doubt, been insulting and abusing him from time to time. He goes to the extent of plotting against the life of Antonio. He coerces Antonio into singing the bloody bond. When the bond is forfeited, he is relentless in his demand for a pound of flesh from near the heart of Antonio. He turns down the appeals for mercy made by the Duke, Portia, Antonio and Bassanio. He is afraid neither of man nor of God. He insists upon the penalty and forfeiture of the bond. He is so inhuman that he refuses to call in a surgeon at his expense because it is not mentioned in the bond. He shows no mercy and deserves no mercy. He is devilish in revenge and his motive for revenge is very mean and selfish.

His Punishment. Portia turns the tables on him and he is caught in his own trap. His villainy is proved. He is held guilty of plotting against the life of Antonio. His life is at the mercy of the Duke. The goes to Antonio. He is forced to become a Christian. That is all the punishment meted out to him. This punishment is quite just and fair. His sins are far greater than his punishment.
His deeds come down upon his head. He is not at all more sinned against than sinning. His fate is well deserved. It does not arouse pity, fear or sympathy. So he is not a tragic character. He has been fairly treated. If at all there is anything unfair, it is his forcible conversion to Christianity.

Portia's Game in the Trial Scene: Portia consults her cousin, Doctor Bellario, on the legal aspects of the case. She gets notes and garments from his. She comes to the court of the Duke of Venice fully prepared to defend Antonio and save him from the clutches of the Jew. It is clear to her that Shylock's motive behind his demand for a pound of flesh is the murder of Antonio. He wants to take his life. She has to trump card with her. At any moment, she can play that card and defeat Shylock. She can tell him that according to the terms of the bond, he can have a pound of flesh, but he must not shed a single drop of blood.

Playing with Shylock. But she is not hurry to play the trump card. She does not explain this point to Shylock right in the beginning. She gives him every chance to relent. She gives him hope. She interprets the law in his
favour. She holds Antonio guilty of forfeiting the bond. She explains that Shylock has a legal right to cut a pound of flesh from near the heart of Antonio. Thus she wins Shylock’s confidence and hails her as a noble and upright judge. She pronounces the judgement in Shylock’s favour. He can have a pound of flesh. The law allows it and the court grants it. Shylock is all praise for Portia’s judgement.

Caught in His Trap. Portia gives a long rope to Shylock. Then suddenly, she turns the tables on him and catches him in his own trap.