**THE MYSTERIOUS RETIRAL: AADITYAMLAN PANDA’S ANALYSIS OF PROSPERO’S EPILOGUE**

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It was around 1611 when the vast multitude of readers and ardent spectators got dumbstruck as they witnessed the death of an era, an era of dramaturgy, rejuvenation and divertissement, when the most worshipped playwright of all generations withdrew his ink from the stage leaving the world in the murk of industrialization and imperialism. The retirement of William Shakespeare is remembered as one of major climacteric events in the history of English Literature. The exact and immediate cause of his untimed retirement has not been predicted yet, however some vague assumptions can be established from the play Tempest, presumed to be the last play of the Great Bard of Avon.

Shakespeare is known for his stark opposition to the augmenting class system. Right from the opening scene that characterizes massive Tempest shatters stereotypical social hierarchy that surrounded medieval Europe. The king and his royal company (so called Upper Class) are left at the mercy of the crew (who belong to the inferior order).

Despondency of Shakespeare at the drastically changing political scenario of Europe after ascent Queen Victoria could have led to the birth of Tempest. Imperialism and slavery have been sardonically depicted when Prospero overpowers Caliban to rule over the witch Sycorax’s island and enslaves Ariel, the “airy” spirit after relieving him from his imprisonment.

The extinction of blissful days are metaphorically represented when Prospero, on the advent of the conspirators, astonishingly calls off the masque and says

“And like the baseless fabric of this vision,   
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,   
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,   
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,   
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,   
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.”

There has been a great deal of speculation whether the Prospero’s farewell from magic in intended to announce Shakespeare’s retirement from the stage. The voice of Prospero asking freedom to audience is assumed to be Shakespeare’s will to descend from the stage. The epilogue goes on as,

“Now my charms are all o’erthrown,   
And what strength I have’s mine own,   
Which is most faint. Now ’tis true  
I must be here confined by you,   
Or sent to Naples. Let me not  
Since I have my dukedom got  
And pardoned the deceiver, dwell  
In this bare island by your spell,  
But release me from my bands  
With the help of your good hands.  
Gentle breath of yours my sails  
Must fill, or else my project fails,

Which was to please. Now I want  
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,  
And my ending is despair,  
Unless I be relieved by prayer,  
Which pierces so that it assaults  
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.  
As you from crimes would pardoned be,   
Let your indulgence set me free.”

Epilogues are used for tying up loose ends and clarifying loose ends. Some parallels do exist between the two great manipulators. Prospero brings forth masques while Shakespeare’s designs plays. Prospero asserts his supremacy over the island by directing the will of individuals by his occult charms. Shakespeare by his words captivates the onlookers’ thoughts.

However the author’s intention and tone cannot be predicted from the elements of a play. The rejection of powers might be an obligation to the law passed by King James VI banning witchcraft. So it might a poetic fallacy to relate Shakespeare’s retirement to Prospero’s epilogue. Moreover the rhythm and style are also not Shakespearean and is believed to be composed by Ben Johnson.

All these could be the cumulative cause for Shakespeare’s farewell. His everlasting compositions are thought to embody some remarkable hints. Yet the mystery of the retirement of the Bard of Avon, William Shakespeare remains unresolved.