

Duke vicentio in shakespeare's 'measure for measure'

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The Following dialogue is spoken by Duke Vicentio in Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure', Act 3, scene 1. Duke Vicentio makes Lord Angelo the leader of Vienna temporarily and pretends to leave but instead dresses as a friar to observe the goings in his absence. Angelo is strict, moralistic, and unwavering in his decision-making; he decides that there is too much freedom in Vienna and takes it upon himself to rid the city of brothels and unlawful sexual activity. Claudio is arrested for impregnating Juliet, his lover, before they were married. Claudio is sentenced to death in order to serve as an example to the other Viennese citizens.

Vienna already has strict rules against these unlawful activities. But the rules were not being followed strictly. It is true that whoever enforces these rules will obviously become unpopular with the public. Hence the Duke cleverly arranges Angelo to do this enforcement. Hence he tells Friar Thomas, ' We have strict statutes and most biting laws. The needful bits and curbs to headstrong weeds, Which for this nineteen years we have let slip;'

He refer to ' o'ergrown lion in a cave' which is actually a reference to himself. The words like ' lion', ' prey' are significant here as they denote the extreme measure the Duke has in his mind. The punishment given by Angelo is already in the mind of the Duke. But fearing unpopularity he makes the latter the scapegoat and achieves his objective.

The Duke refers to ' terror', which is a little more that what Angelo is capable of. In the following passage, ' For terror, not to use, in time the rod Becomes more mock'd than fear'd; so our decrees, Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead; And liberty plucks justice by the nose; the baby beats the nurse,

and quite athwart Goes all decorum', one can understand that the Duke has accessed his town's situation thoroughly. In spite of knowing all this, what would have made the Duke pretend to leave Vienna under the care of Angelo in the first place? The next question would be why Angelo. This particular passage answers these questions.

The Duke is a clever man who knows his moves precisely. He uses Angelo because he is strict and a Moralist. He has judged Angelo's credential well enough to know that this man would bring havoc by over stressing on following the rules. The Duke expected an uproar in the town and in the opportune moment he would come and release those in Angelo's captivation. This way the Duke plans to enforce the rule and at the same time not get into the bad books of his subject. As per his plan everything turned out well and he gained popularity by releasing Claudio. He also utilized the women to heighten the seriousness of the situation.

The passage is also significant in showing the intensity of feeling of the Duke about Justice prevailing in his town. It is an indication that he may take to deception or any other means to make Justice prevail. This passage forms the essence of the attitude of the Duke.