

MARK ANTONY’S FUNERAL SPEECH – AN EMANCIPATION OF SOFT SKILLS TO DISCARD SPECIOUS THOUGHTS OF A RABBLE

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Soft skills represent the usage of language in the most promising way. The convincing tone of language makes others to work for someone. The personality attains fulfillment with the soft skills adopted in one’s language. The usage of the words and tone create a respectable picture of oneself in front of others. The person with soft skills has the efficiency not only to acquire a standard image but also to change a mob’s mind upside down. The illustrative factor for this type of soft skill started from the Shakespearean time onwards. The implication of the soft skills by Shakespeare is explicit in Mark Antony’s funeral speech in the play Julius Caesar. This paper is a focus on how Shakespeare has implied soft skills through the emotional and rational dialogues of his elite characters in certain plays. It attempts to prove that he has acted as the foundation stone for soft skills techniques.

The usage of soft skills in Antony’s speech is highly prominent. Though many figures of speech have been incorporated in the speech, the implication of the soft skills to turn the innocent and unknown mob into furious and raging mob is done. Antony uses the techniques like anger management, persuasion, decision-making, assertiveness, time management, presentation skills and personal impact in his speech. The effective usage of all these elements has led to the success of speech. Shakespeare has not thought of any name to these techniques. As people want to survive facing many difficulties now a day, they manage to adopt the soft skills.

Antony, a close friend of Caesar is given minimum timing to talk in Caesar’s public funeral. Brutus, the head of the conspirators, who is Caesar’s Angel, kills him considering Caesar to be ambitious. He states that he has done it on the grounds that, “Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more” (V.ii.16). He finishes off his oration, justifies his deed in front of the Roman people, and convinces them as his deed. He lets Antony to continue after him on the conditional grounds that he should not talk against the conspirators, instead he should justify their deeds. Antony in the mout of anger but without exposing it addresses the mob. He starts to address the agitated mob in such a way that “I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him”(V.ii.53). This line shows how ironically Antony starts to speak. He uses one of the soft skills techniques called presentation skill through which he captures the audience attention. He utters those words

first to script thrust in their minds that he is on the side of the conspirators, whom the people of Rome worship the most at that moment. He calls Brutus as,

The noble Brutus [...]
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men- (V.ii.56-61)

He calls Brutus as Noble and the conspirators as honourable men. He calls them in a satirical way because they have lost their loyalty with Caesar and they murdered him. He highlights the incidents that show the generosity of Caesar but praising Brutus ironically. He states that:

And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
[...]
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man. (V.ii.66-78)

From these lines, Antony proves that Caesar is not ambitious, as Caesar refused the Kingly crown thrice. Antony reminds the mob that Caesar safeguarded the Roman Captives. The Romans who have forgotten all these are informed then and they all begin to divert from Brutus. But Antony at the end prickly highlights again that Brutus is honourable as he calls Caesar ambitious. This persuading technique starts to turn the mob from Brutus to Caesar and breaks the wrong consumption of the people from considering Caesar to be ambitious. A citizen says:

Fourth Citizen. Mark'd ye his words? He would not take the crown;
Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious. (V.ii.92-94)

Antony drags the attention and interest of the mob towards Caesar by highlighting a “Will” Caesar has written for his people. It creates an interest in the minds of the listeners. They become anxious to know of it. Antony uses assertive skills and kindles the group by stating that the will is for the welfare of the mob. He reminds them that they are all human beings covered with love. He says that he will not read it, as it will become bad to Brutus.

Antony. It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you.
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;
And, being men, bearing the will of Caesar,
It will inflame you, it will make you mad:
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs;
For, if you should, O, what would come of it!(V.ii.121-126)

He informs them that the Romans are human beings. They will be grateful to Caesar and will fall up in mutiny if he reads the will. This is a time management technique, through which he activates the mob indirectly to turn against Brutus by hiding something. Because of this technique the people starts to say:

Fourth Citizen. They were traitors: honourable men!
[...]
Second Citizen. They were villains, murderers: the will! read the will.

(V.ii.133-135)

Even then, Antony does not read the will. He has acquired the support as par with his expectation. His decision-making ability that it must be read out at the end, is highly extraordinary. He decides that he must make the mob to realize the goodness of Caesar and to revenge the conspirators for his death. He tries to infuriate the mob to the uttermost level wherein which when triggered can give a disastrous explosion. He states:

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
 [...]
 Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
 See what a rent the envious Casca made:
 Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
 And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
 Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
 As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
 If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no;
 For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:-
 Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him! (V.ii.148-161)

Antony narrates it in such a way that the whole mob feels empathetic towards Caesar and feels sorry for his fall. He further quotes the love Caesar has towards Brutus. This highlights how he possesses the soft skill of handling difficult people. He manages the conflict of the individuals and clears their wilderness. He influences the people with his words and ideas. He further informs of Brutus's cut and Caesar's great fall after all. He makes the mob to be empathetic towards Caesar.

Antony. This was the most unkindest cut of all;
 For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
 Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
 Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
 [...]

Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.(V.ii.162-168)

Antony has the time management ability as he calls Caesar as Noble Caesar at the right time. When the mob is against Caesar, he claims Caesar to be ambitious. When he resets the mob towards Caesar, he calls Caesar as noble Caesar. Finally, he calls conspirators as traitors.

Antony. Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
 Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.(V.ii.175-176)

Antony starts to call them as traitors from honorable men. From here, his real anger is shown to the mob. Everyone is made to stir up.

All. Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!
 Let not a traitor live!(V.ii.183-184)

They all start to raise their voice against the traitors. In addition, Antony using his decision-making ability triggers the angry mob with the will. He reads the will and says that:

Antony. Here is the will, and under Caesar's seal.
 To every Roman citizen he gives,
 To every several man, seventy-five drachmas.
 Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,
 His private arbours and new-planted orchards,

On this side Tiber; he hath left them you,
And to your heirs for ever, common pleasures,
To walk abroad, and recreate yourselves.
Here was a Caesar! when comes such another?(V.ii.219-231)

After enacting his humble business of projecting Caesar and his good deeds, he leaves the rest at the hands of the crowd. The crowd that worshipped the traitors begins to worship the dead Caesar through the persuading speech of Antony. They at last take his body and say,

First Citizen. We'll burn his body in the holy place,
And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.
Take up the body.(V.ii.233-235)

With this Antony has attained a Himalayan success. The Herculean task is done and attained using soft skills. The exhilarating leadership skills that he possesses turn him to be a good orator. His skill in the management of time, decision-making, assertiveness, conflict management, persuasion, presentation, anger, assertion and personal impact has paved way to acquire the heart of the Romans. Soft skills are popular now. Even in ancient times, Shakespeare has effectively used in his plays ad one such instance is Antony's funeral speech. Shakespeare could be called as the "Soul of Soft Skills". Because form him only people are able to coin various strategies effectively and present it to the world. This paper is an attempt to show Shakespeare's masterpiece Julius Caesar as a powerful exploration of soft skills through Antony's funeral speech. This is successfully achieved and the author identifies Shakespeare as the 'Master of Soft Skills in the Early days'.

Works Cited

Shakespeare, William. Julius Caesar. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Westine. Washington: Mass Market Paperback, 1992.