

THE CHARISMATIC ART OF ARTICULACY AND ORATORY IN SHAKESPEARE'S SELECT PLAYS - AN OVERVIEW

Harcharan Singh Arora

*Associate Professor & Head, Post-Graduate Department of English Studies & Research,
D.A.V. College, Bathinda, Punjab, India*

ABSTRACT

Shakespeare is one of the greatest men of genius that have ever been born on this beautiful planet of ours. For though he is the pride and glory of an illustrious race, of a great nation, of a mighty empire, yet he is one of the chosen few, whose mission transcends the bounds of the nation and country and whose work is rather the property of the whole of mankind. Today he is read and enjoyed by one and all of his works have been translated into all the important languages of the world. He had a unique command over the resources of the language. His fertile imagination, command of words and his wonderful flow is present everywhere in his plays. His mature style is something incomparable, and for want of a better word, we call it Shakespearean. Rhetoric refers to the art of persuasion through spoken or written language. It is the ancient art of argumentation and discourse – an art of writing convincing stories by the appropriate arrangement of word structures. It is a device which is used to explore how people employ charismatic language to achieve certain targets and convince others and making people do what they want.

KEYWORDS: *Argumentation, Charismatic, Delivery, Device, Discourse, Eloquence, Emphasis, Epimone, Rhetorical*

Article History

Received: 29 May 2018 | Revised: 04 Jun 2018 | Accepted: 13 Jun 2018

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare is one of the greatest men of genius that have ever been born on this beautiful planet of ours. More than a century ago, declaring Shakespeare to be the brightest ornament and the most cherished treasure of the British Isles, Thomas Carlyle exclaimed: "*The Indian Empire will go, at any rate, someday, but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts forever with us; we cannot give up our Shakespeare!*" Now for us in India, British rule is gone; but Shakespeare will not go; he will last forever with us also; we cannot give up 'our' Shakespeare. For though he is the pride and glory of an illustrious race, of a great nation, of a mighty empire, yet he is one of the chosen few, whose mission transcends the bounds of the nation and country and whose work is rather the property of the whole of mankind. Today he is read and enjoyed by one and all of his works have been translated into all the important languages of the world. Shakespearean drama is like an over-flowing river of life and beauty, and all who thirst for art or truth can have their fill of it.

William Shakespeare had a unique command over the resources of the language. He sweeps with the hand of a master, the whole gamut of human experience, from the very lowest note to the very top of the compass. This is not the language of an ordinary dramatist. Even Milton with his majesty and grandeur does not come near to the master.

Shakespeare's vocabulary is computed to run to some twenty thousand words, while that of Milton contains hardly more than half that number. Satire, wit, ribaldry, humor, irony and pathos are the most important component parts of the world-renowned plays of Shakespeare. They are the very foundations of his ideas and beliefs. They help him to target at the deplorable prevailing conditions and systems of his age. His fertile imagination, command of words and his wonderful flow is present everywhere in his plays. Shakespeare makes frequent use of words from different languages, particularly, French, Italian, Greek, Spanish and Turkish. Besides, there is a wonderful play with words. He is not only a good linguist but also a good coiner. He also coins compound words, according to his need. Such compounds are scattered all over his works and may be picked up on a cursory perusal. The characters of Shakespeare are very much fond of using such phraseology and terminology, giving rise to the witticism and ludicrousness. The witty word play is quite evident whenever there occurs usual mixture of colloquial Romanic and British jargon. It is displayed through the constant repetition of little phrases that obviously please the audience. His mature style is something incomparable, and for want of a better word we call it Shakespearean. When at his best, Similes and Metaphors come out of his pen as sparks from a chimney fire. The mystery of his own Cleopatra seems to belong to him. Age cannot wither him, nor custom stale his infinite variety. Even if we read his plays the hundredth time, not a jot or tittle of their beauty is abated. It was his universality which led Matthew Arnold say, "*Others abide our question. Thou art free.*"

Rhetoric refers to the art of persuasion through spoken or written language. It is the ancient art of argumentation and discourse – an art of writing convincing stories by the appropriate arrangement of word structures. It is a device which is used to explore how people employ charismatic language to achieve certain targets and convince others and making people do what they want. Rhetoric works and removes disagreement from the arena of violence when sometimes even sober and intelligent people disagree with each other about deeply held beliefs. When such disagreements become pronounced, there are two typical results – either they begin to fight, or they engage in debate. The choice is up to every citizen and every country as to whether we solve our problems by using a bullet or by organizing a Rhetorical discourse which is a healthy sign and a necessary step in any setup. In classical Greek Rhetoric, there are three basic approaches – namely Logos, Pathos and Ethos which one can use to make a convincing argument. Today the term is sometimes pejoratively used to refer to language that sounds good but has little truth. Rhetoric was cultivated as an important art—an essential element of medieval university education. Modern critics sometimes refer to the rhetorical dimension of a literary work, meaning those aspects of the work that persuade or otherwise guide the responses of the readers. The five classically recognized components of rhetoric are (i) *invention* (ii) *disposition* (iii) *style* (iv) *memory* and (v) *delivery*. Eloquence is also an important ingredient and effective style in transmitting the message across to one's audience. The Roman plays Julius Caesar has the traditional disposition, Antony and Cleopatra have hyperboles whereas Coriolanus has invectives in it. The power of words and their rhetoric use is valued in the Roman plays of Shakespeare as these plays exhibit various instances in which the characters achieve their desired response through the use of rhetoric. Protagonists and kings in Shakespeare frequently engage in the rhetorical processes during their speeches or conversations. There was a time when Rhetoric superseded poetics as a subject of study in Rome and orators were held in high esteem and critics like Longinus could talk of Homer and Demosthenes in the same breath. The tradition of eloquent writing was popular in the Renaissance, which flourished in the chronicle and Roman plays of Shakespeare. Pulitzer Prize Winner, Professor Garry Wills, in his book Rome and Rhetoric demonstrates how Shakespeare in Julius Caesar so wonderfully made these ancient devices vivid, giving his characters their own personal styles of Roman speech. Wills shows how Caesar, Brutus, Antony and Cassius each has his own take on the rhetorical ornaments that Elizabethan learnt in school.

The conspirators make clear that they assassinated Caesar for the sake of Rome, not for their own purposes and after the murder they do not attempt to flee the scene. Brutus here delivers an oration defending his action, and for the moment the crowd is on his side. He uses the power of rhetoric in his attempt to appease the upset Romans by offering himself up to sacrifice in way of resolution to avenge Caesar's death: "*With this I depart, – that, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death.*" (III.ii.44–47.) In offering himself in the way of compensation for the loss of Caesar, Brutus is using here the technique known as *asphalia*, which he employs for two reasons. Firstly, he is perhaps distressed for having to murder his friend and secondly, he is attempting to show himself to the crowd as feeling remorseful in order to make them sympathize with him and ultimately choose not to rebel against him for his actions. His attempt is a success as the citizens cry out, '*Live, Brutus! Live, live!*' (III.ii.53.) Further, in the same scene, we read that Mark Antony, with an Eloquent and Rhetorical speech over Caesar's corpse, deftly turns public opinion against the assassins by manipulating the emotions of the common people in his most subtle and Rhetorical speech and gestures. With his highly evocative rhetorical questions, passionate emotive language and superb theatrical presentation, he succeeds in rousing the common people to mutiny. He reminds the citizens of the good Caesar had done for Rome and his compassion and sympathy with the poor and the downtrodden of the state. '*Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears; / I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. / The evil that men do lives after them; / The Good is oft entered with their bones; / so let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus / Hath told you Caesar was ambitious: / If it were so, it was a grievous fault; / and grievously hath Caesar answer'd it. / Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest, – / for Brutus is an honorable man: / So are they all, all honorable men, – / Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral. / He was my friend, faithful and just to me: / But Brutus says he was ambitious; / and Brutus is an honorable man. / He hath brought many captives home to Rome, / whose ransoms did the general coffers fill; / did this in Caesar seem ambitious? / When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept: / Ambition should be made of sterner stuff: / yet Brutus says he was ambitious; / and Brutus is an honorable man. / 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 honorable man. / I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke, / But here I am to speak what I do know.*' (III.ii.79–106.)

Portia in the same play is seen using rhetorical devices for the purpose of extracting information from her seemingly troubled husband, Brutus, who has stolen from her bed during night, musing and sighing with his arms across. She asks him to make her acquainted with his cause of grief, to which she receives the reply: '*I am not well in health, and that is all.*' (II.i.257.) Unconvinced by this feeble excuse, Portia proceeds to construct a brief argument in which she shows that such ill health, combined with present actions, is contrary to his nature and then she dexterously remarks: '*Is Brutus sick? and is it physical / To walk unbraced, and suck up the humors / Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick, / And will he steal out of his wholesome bed, / To dare the vile contagion of the night, / And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air / To add unto his sickness? No, my Brutus; / You have some sick offence within your mind, / Which by the right and virtue of my place / I ought to know of; and, upon my knees, / I charm you, by my once – commended beauty, / By all your vows of love, and that great vow / Which did incorporate and make us one, / That you unfold to me, yourself, your half, / Why you are heavy; and what men to-night / Have had resort to you, – for here have been / Some six or seven, who did hide their faces / Even from darkness.*' (II.i.261–278.) There are innumerable devices employed for emphasis by Shakespeare in his Roman plays. For instance, Antony in Julius Caesar applies the technique called *paralepsis while* addressing the furious mob and he remarks: '*Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it: / It is not meet you know how Caesar lov'd you, / You are not wood, you are not stones, but men: / And, being men, hearing the will of Caesar, / It will*

inflame you, it will make you mad: / This good you know not that you are his heirs; / For, if you should, O, what would come of it!' (III.ii.145–151.) Brutus uses the technique of *antithesis* while addressing a throng of citizens of the state when he states: *'Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.* And Antony says to Brutus in the 1st Scene of Act-III using the method of *asyndeton*:

'Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, shrunk to this little measure?'

(149–150.)

Addressing from the pulpit to the throng of citizens, Shakespeare makes Brutus use the technique of *epimone* while dwelling strongly on a point:

'Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him I have offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any speak; for him have I offended?' (III.ii.31–37.)

And again the same Antony, while addressing a mob uses *metonymy* in his opening lines of the famous speech: *'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;'* (III.ii.79.)

Shakespearean plays are important ingredients of language and technique. Any language is bound to result in beautiful prose and elegant simplicity, if used correctly and Shakespeare is the master craftsman in this regard. Use of adjectival phrases, epithets, elements of sensuousness, effective, terse, epigrammatic sayings makes his language beautiful and mark it with elegance and grace. Sometimes he uses the stream of consciousness technique to reveal the flow of thoughts and feelings, in his perpetual soliloquies, through the mind of his immortal characters. One of the characteristics of Antony and Cleopatra lies in the sensuous, powerful language in which numerous metaphors and hyperboles illustrate another aspect of the argument and the discussion. Apart from speeches and comments, soliloquies have also been used by Shakespeare as one of the rhetorical devices to enhance verbal expression. He employs the power of rhetoric in an even subtler manner when he silently requests the audience to imagine the setting in which he has placed his characters. There is rhetoric everywhere, in the treatment of history as well as nature. The bard also makes Rome present and animate by costing his troupe of experienced players and artists to make their strength, shine through the historical facts that Plutarch supplied him with. He frequently uses rhetorical devices that appeal to emotions, ideals and values. He uses *Balance* (paradox) as a means of revealing truth and dichotomy. For example, Agrippa calls Cleopatra a "royal wench", two words that seemingly contradict each other. The dramatist compares the Antony's face to a heavenly visage and his eyes to a sun and a moon.

'His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck

A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted

The little O, the earth.' (V.ii.100–102.)

Again the great bard compares Rome to a melt able thing, such as ice, and the dominion of Rome to an arch :

'Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch

Of the rang'd empire fall! (I.i.39–40.)

And yet again, the playwright makes Cleopatra, use *anthimeria* while rebuking the messenger in the same play when she says:

'I'll unhair thy head:' (II.v.65.)

Antony and Cleopatra presents a fine picture of Roman pride, esteem and magnificence : and in the struggle between the two, the empire of the world seems suspended, *'like the swan's down feather'*. The dramatist brings living men and women on the scene, who speak and act from real feelings, according to the ebbs and flows of passion. It is Shakespearean language, tone, style, rhetorical habit, articulate and expressive word rhythm and generic structure that appeal the reader most. Antony's language reflects his vacillation between the worlds of Rome and Egypt, and that Cleopatra's imaginative language and varied rhythms are contrasted with Caesar's straight forward and regular verse. The melodiousness arising from Cleopatra's use of assonance is set against the cacophony generated by Caesar's alliterations. From the first to the last scene, the player enters a rhetorical realm of unlimited imagination and unending desire. The linguistic extremes of the play become so great that the lead characters as themselves come to embody two powerful rhetorical figures: hyperbole and paradox. Cleopatra's character embodies the paradoxical nature of the play, whereas Antony is hyperbolic in all that he does whether in his rage, his valor, his love or his folly. While Cleopatra embodies the impossible combinations of everything and nothing, Antony represents the impossible heights to which man can never reach. And when they are together, they become a picture of an endless pre-Enlightenment universe. True to the play's form, their love is boundless, indefinable and rhetorically majestic. In the midst of the rhetorical heights and confusion, the messenger figures play a vital role in the communication between characters. The messenger as a character in the play becomes an independent rhetorical figure amid the background of linguistic hyperbole. In the First Act of the play we see that Antony and Cleopatra are talking about the intensity of their love.

Cleo: *If it be love indeed, tell me how much.*

Ant: *There is beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.*

Cleo: *I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.*

Ant: *Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth. (I.i.14–18.)*

Shakespeare uses Rhetoric to manipulate his audience so that they respond to Antony and Cleopatra as a play that *'glorifies romantic love in terms of politics,'* with love *'in essence an Empire.'* The use of metaphor is abundant in dialogue between the two lovers, as well as in speeches by other characters to describe Antony and Cleopatra. Most striking, perhaps is the speech by Enobarbus recounting of their first meeting to Agrippa. He describes Cleopatra's barge as *'like a burnished throne'* with purple sails *'so perfumed that / the winds were love – sick with them'* (II.ii.196–199.) Through Enobarbus's descriptions of Cleopatra, Shakespeare constructs her as being unnaturally powerful, to the extent that she even *'outworks'* nature, appearing more beautiful than the Cydnus river. The blending of rhetoric and romance proved deadly in Antony and Cleopatra and unfortunately it is Cleopatra's play with language which results in the tragic death of Antony, and eventually her own suicide. According to Aristotle *the orator has to arouse emotions exactly because emotions have the power to modify our judgments.* His treatise on rhetoric argues that it is not simply to be persuasive, rather the rhetorician must also reason logically... *understand the emotions – that is to know their causes and the way in which they are excited.* And it is this trait that Cleopatra lacks, and which causes her to push Antony over an emotional barrier, ultimately causing both of their deaths.

In the play Timon of Athens, Timon is rather more subtle in his manipulation of rhetoric and employs it in order to extract information from his flatterers through lulling them into a false sense of security. Here, he wishes to ascertain

whether they have come to him because they have heard about his gold:

'Ay, you are honest men'

... Y'are honest men; Y'have heard that I have gold;

I am sure you have; speak truth, Y'are honest men.' (V.i.67–68.)

By repeatedly terming them honest men, he assures them of his faith in their honesty and this device is known as *epanalepsis* which proves very effective as the painter, convinced of Timon's trust, admits to having such knowledge *'so it is said, my noble lord'*. (V.i.69.) In the play, the most original and one of the most fiercest of the speeches of Timon is when he parallels nature's destructiveness with human wickedness in his popular sermon to the bandits : *'I'll example you with thievery: / The Sun's a thief, and with his great attraction / Robs the vast sea ; the moon's an arrant thief, / And her pale fire, she snatches from the sun; / The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves / The moon into salt tears; the earth's a thief, / That feeds and breeds by a composture stol'n / From gen'ral excrement; each thing's a thief.'*

Coriolanus is generally interpreted as a play about language. Shakespeare's power of persuasiveness is strongly evident in the play when Martius, furiously, threatens his retreating soldiers:

'Mend and charge home,

Or by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe

And make my wars on you!' (I.iv.39–41.)

The tribunes, in the play, emphasize that eloquence can possibly be a mightier power than the sword and hence Sicinius encourages Menenius to go and persuade Martius to give up his plan by claiming that :

'... if you

Would be your country's pleader, your good tongue,

More than the instant army can make,

Might stop our countrymen. (V.i.36–39.)

Volumnia – the mother – admonishes her son Coriolanus to court the people in order to have his consulship confirmed. In the following lines political rhetoric is at the center of Volumnia's sound argument. Advising her son that *'action is eloquence'*, she encourages Coriolanus to dissemble humility in front of the people: *'Go to them, with this bonnet in the hand, / And thus far having stretched–here be with them– / Thy knee bussing the stones – for in such business / Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th'ignorant / More learned than the ears – waving thy head, / Which often, thus, correcting thy stout heart, / Now humble as the ripest mulberry / That will not hold the handling [...]* (III.ii.73–80.)

In all likelihood, Volumnia makes gestures appropriate to her, i.e. she kneels, nods her head, etc. Here she does not essentially advise her son on rhetoric only but suggests that he literally acts. Her postulate that *'action is eloquence'* implies the close relation of language and body language in the political arena.

Thus, it may safely be concluded that Shakespeare's language is voluminous as well as various, dramatic as well as poetic, marked by its plasticity, profundity, and reflectivity, encompassing within its folds all the changing shades of life as well as shifts of temperament. The great bard of Avon, is a gifted rhetorician, knew it perfectly well that the life of his

plays is in the language as feelings, thoughts and human emotions are released at the moment of speech.

REFERENCES

1. Bevington, David. *Antony and Cleopatra*. New Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, (1990).
2. Verity, A.W. *Julius Caesar*. London. Cambridge University Press, (1971).
3. Brockman, B.A. *Shakespeare, Coriolanus*:. Macmillan, (1977).
4. Jowett, John. *Timon of Athens*. New York. Oxford University Press, (2004).
5. Nash, Walter. *Rhetoric : The Wit of Persuasion*. Oxford : Blackwell, (1989).
6. Corbett, E.P.J. *Classical Rhetoric for the modern Student*. New York. Oxford University Press, (1990).
7. Conley, Thomes. *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*. University of Chicago, (1991).
8. Garver, Eugene. *Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, (1994).
9. Kennedy, G.A. *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*. Princeton University Press, (1994).
10. Richards, I.A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. New York : Oxford University Press, (1965).
11. Toulmin, Stephen. *The uses of Argument*. Cambridge University Press, (2003).
12. Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. *The Internet Classics Archive*. (February 16th, 2012).
13. Wills, Garry. *Rome and Rhetoric : Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*. Yale University Press, (2012).
14. Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley. University of California Press, (1969).
15. Charney, Maurice. *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*. Harvard University Press, (1968).

