



## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: SOFT-LIFE SKILLS

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**Article Info:**

Article Received: 31/07/2013

Revised on: 18/08/2013

Accepted: 20/08/2013

**ABSTRACT:** In the globalised scenario, soft skills are given much importance, which were in fact, learnt by living in a joint family by observation. With the changed scenario and emergence of nuclear family concept, there is a lot of change in the attitudes of the people, particularly, children are deprived of valuable knowledge of education (life skills) given by family. Thereby, many people are not good at their soft skills such as positive flexible attitude and interpersonal relations. Hence, the need for formal training / grooming of soft skills has come into vogue. Soft Skills are something one may have learnt indirectly from one's family, community and society and through literature. For, literature mirrors life and those who read literature have better perception of life and people. Among the great literary works, William Shakespeare's plays and poems have universal appeal and serve as a valuable treasury to learn life skills and develop one's personality.

**Key words:** globalization, soft/life skills, attitude, human emotions, human relations, human perception and personality.

### INTRODUCTION

In the globalised scenario people are giving more importance to soft skills which were, in fact, learnt by living in groups and observation. With the emergence of nuclear family concept, the people, particularly children, are deprived of valuable knowledge of education (life skills) given by family. Hence the need for teaching and training or grooming in soft skills has come into prominence. Soft skills may be described as desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that not only depend on acquired knowledge but also include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude, social capital, friendliness, optimism, listening, ethical behavior, honesty, responsibility, collaboration, and creativity. Soft skills are something one may have learnt indirectly from one's family, community and society or a kind-hearted person. For example: the way a nurse interacts with her patients and soothes them. Can anyone teach someone to be nice in job. Therefore,

soft skills are very essential for success in one's future. People who have the reading habit, especially, understand the world in a better way and take wise decisions. For, they see the world through literature and characters in literature and learn how to behave in their lives and become cautious.

### Critical Analysis and Discussion

People of late, are neglecting literature by forgetting its importance and how it inculcates long lasting impressions in forming values. They tend to ignore the valuable treasure of knowledge which is relevant to individual life is hidden in literature, besides providing entertainment and enjoyment. As stated earlier, soft skills can be imparted through relevant examples from literature. Soft skills are those skills related to one's attitude, behavior, emotions, decision-making, inter-personal relations, problem-solving ability, which can be learnt through great works. Among the great writers, William Shakespeare is known for his plays and characters which have universal appeal and seem very close to

every human being. "It is in literature that the concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression"<sup>1</sup> said Alfred North Whitehead. Literature is time immemorial. It withstands the test of the time and its relevance is seen through ages and generations. It speaks of the past, the present and the future. It enables one to gain knowledge without virtually undergoing the harsh and painful experiences in one's life. It also reflects the period in which it is written. William Shakespeare is one among such great masters who is a pioneer of all times. He has written plays, poetry and criticism. He is known as the **'father of modern English drama'** for producing a variety of plays with diverse themes. Life in his works represents all strata of the society. His works are encompassed in the social milieu not only of his time but also of times ahead. His characters are universal in nature and are gripped in the social matrixes who firmly believe in the superstitions and sentiments. People, irrespective of any generation and

People of late, are neglecting literature by forgetting its importance and how it inculcates long culture, can associate themselves with Shakespeare's characters. Some dialogues of his characters are most valuable and note worthy. They have become quotable quotes even today.

William Shakespeare was an English poet, dramatist and popularly known as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is called England's national poet and the *'Bard of Avon'* He has 38 plays, 155 sonnets and two long narrative poems to his credit. Though he was a respected poet and playwright during his lifetime, his reputation did not rise to such peaks as it is in the later years. Particularly the romantics accolade William Shakespeare, while the Victorians hero-worshipped him with great reverence. In the later years, the scholars have repeatedly adopted and rediscovered him. His plays remain popular even today i.e. in the era of liberalization, privatization and globalization. They receive highest accolades as he deals with the themes that range from broad comedy to historical nostalgia, tend to be grandeur in terms of their themes dealing with betrayal, murder, lust, power, ambition and jealousy and many more human characters and their emotions which are closer to everyman's heart and find around them and sometimes experience in their lives. Besides plays, his sonnets also deal with themes of love, beauty and mortality. The characters of his plays are so realistic and exhibit

natural emotions that, people belonging to any society and any generation will associate themselves with them whether it is a minor or a major character.

William Shakespeare's great masterpieces have been read and staged over years. They have been translated into many languages for their sagacity, vulnerability and strength. His influence extends from stage (theatre) to literature and from there to movies not only in English but also in different languages of the world. It is said that real literature withstands the test of the

time and Shakespearean literature has been proven since his plays are read and enacted even after five hundred years. They have been a source delight, pleasure and a study of them gives the knowledge of validating ideologies and aesthetic values, old or new. To the present generation they serve as rich sites for the exploration of cultural identity, power structures and other complex issues pertaining to humanity in general such as gender, class, race and ethnicity. He is one among the very few dramatists who have excelled in writing both tragedies and comedies. His plays reflect a blend of popular appeal with complex characterization, poetic grandeur and philosophical depth and they are the treasure house for the later generations to reap immense sustainable knowledge for their lives. Though William Shakespeare is not a university product, varied experiences of his life at different stages made him gain enough experience to produce world's great master pieces. His dramatic career falls under four periods in which he has written tragedies, comedies, historical plays and tragic-comedies.

Shakespeare depicts the human qualities in their utmost natural way. His characters are strongly humanized. They are neither gods nor devils but real human beings with most common human emotions and weaknesses. He portrays vices and follies of men and women, their sins and passions, their sorrows and misfortunes, their weaknesses and strengths, treacherous friends and open enemies, base flatterers and sincere friends and the cruel fate and avenging conscience that overtake and kill them. His characters sound so realistic that anyone can find; some of them like Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Polonius, Laertes, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Banquo around him or her in almost all societies and cultures. Also, some of their wise and experienced utterances have become quotable quotes and are used in everyday life by people of all classes and generations. We find Hamlet in every one of us is left with Hamlet's dilemma - **'To be or not to be'**,<sup>2</sup> most of the times.

Most of his quotes can be used in personality development training as they are lessons of life skills, to develop one's attitude, perspective and the dangers of being under emotional impulses as in the great tragedy 'Othello'.

In spite of globalization and modernization, people are eager to read and perform Shakespeare's plays, for they serve as rich sites for the exploration of cultural identity, power structures and other complex issues such as gender, race, class and ethnicity, besides embodying great truth and wisdom in them. For example, even in the modern world, an anxious parent advises his son in the same manner as Polonius advises his son, Laertes in Hamlet as to how to maintain friendship and human relations, "*Neither a borrower nor a lender be; for loan oft loses both itself and friend*"<sup>3</sup> and also makes a truthful statement related to one's thinking and attitude like it is the mind that makes hell out of heaven, and heaven out of hell. Similar utterance we find in Hamlet,

*"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"*<sup>4</sup>

How realistic it is! Even in decision making how one should act is i.e. listen to every one's words but use your wisdom in making a decision is evident from the following lines.

*Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;  
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment*<sup>5</sup>

Some of his love quotes such as,  
*"But love is blind, and lovers cannot see the pretty follies that themselves commit."*<sup>6</sup>

*"The course of true love never did run smooth."*<sup>7</sup>

*"Love looks not with eyes, but with the mind."*<sup>8</sup>

*"All that glitters is not gold"*<sup>9</sup> are so prominent, that they have become very common in day to-day usage. To cite a few other quotes which serve as sources of inspiration, motivation in one's personality development are:

*"our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt"*<sup>10</sup>

*"Cowards die many times before their deaths; The valiant never taste of death but once."*<sup>11</sup>

*"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!"*<sup>12</sup>

*"Nature teaches beasts to know their friends"*<sup>13</sup>

*"All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."*<sup>14</sup>

A certain philosophy of life is implicit in Shakespeare's plays; it was perhaps mainly unconscious, but the ultimate may be evinced from these expressions:

*"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their*

*entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts"*<sup>15</sup>

Macbeth comments on the fleeting and futile human life in the following words:

*Life is like a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And ten is heard no more, it is a tale*

*Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*<sup>16</sup>

Shakespeare generally, expresses his views through his fools, how he feels life to be equally insignificant. Shakespeare's great works deal with human emotions such as lust for power, jealousy, flattery, love, revenge, which are common in modern people, bringing them closer to his characters. He seems to believe that evil does exist-evil that is in perpetual conflict with good. The conflict between good and evil involves sacrifice of the good and also punishment to the evil. It brings us into the very root of the things that confront us with the deepest mystery of life. He seems to be sympathetic towards nobility and grandeur of life; yet, seems to be of the view that the gods are on the side of good:

*"As flies to wanton boys,  
Are we to gods,  
They kill us for their sport"*<sup>17</sup>

So remarks Shakespeare in King Lear. Desdemona dies in spite of her spotless chastity, Cordelia is murdered in spite of her filial devotion and kindness, Duncan is killed in spite of his humility and serenity and Hamlet himself dies in the end in spite of his noble qualities of head and heart. In Shakespeare's characterization, one can find novelty and uniqueness; for, he was never the same but always changing and evolving with the changing times.

#### CONCLUSION

Many of his quotes and dialogues are valuable ideas that can be used in soft skills' training. One can learn a lot about life skills and understand human emotions from his characters. He has produced everlasting plays in blank verse which are translated into many languages; read, and enacted even after five hundred years. He is a bright star in the brilliant galaxy of men of letters that illumined the darkness of ignorance. He was such a poet who explored the secrets of nature as few mortals have ever done and interpreted the same to fellow beings as best as possible.

To quote Dr.Johnson, "the poet that held up his readers a faithful mirror of manners, and life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places.....they are the genuine progeny of

common humanity such as the world will always supply, and observation will find.”<sup>18</sup>An enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare, William Hazlitt remarks, “he had a mind reflecting ages past and present. There was no respect of persons with him. His genius shone equally on the evil and good, on the wise and the foolish; the monarch and the beggar.”<sup>19</sup> Besides, Shakespeare also survived from the criticism of learned authors of every description and emerged triumphant.

To conclude in the words of Thomas Carlyle “The Indian Empire will go, at any rate some day, but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts forever with us, we cannot give up our Shakespeare!”<sup>20</sup>It is proud to say that the more one reads Shakespeare’s plays, the more one may reap from his works. No other dramatist’s plays have been published so many times and so widely read in so many lands and languages. It is of no exaggeration to say about Shakespeare that a person, who began his life from Globe, a theatre in a humble way rose to global level setting himself as an example for the youngsters to aspire to fulfill their dreams; as long as the Sun and the Moon are there he would be read as an unforgettable dramatist. Thus, William Shakespeare has been recognized as an outstanding dramatist across the world in all cultures.

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