

## Stirring Men's Blood: A Gustavean study of the Power of Speech and Crowd Psychology in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

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### ABSTRACT

*Mob mentality or crowd dynamics frequently manifest in various aspects of society, influencing collective behavior in significant ways. It exists among individuals gathered for a common cause. It causes them to think, behave and act differently from the way they would, were they alone in the same situation. The scientific enquiry about this phenomenon was first carried out by the French polymath, Gustave Le Bon. This study explores Crowd Psychology (also known as Social Psychology) as a powerful force for social control in William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar. It also focuses on how leaders and politicians exploit masses by creating a false consciousness via their prestige and subtle use of language by focusing on the speeches of Antony and Brutus. Moreover, this research traces the general characteristics of crowd displayed in the play, by looking at the contagion theory and the de-individuation theory. It also enquires about the means and tools used to manipulate crowds stirring them to do as their leaders wish.*

**Keywords:** Social Psychology, the Contagion theory, De-individuation, Prestige, Julius Caesar

### INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is one of the towering figures in the world of English literature. The last decade of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the century to follow was the prime time when he wrote his most famous works. He is known for writing plays like dark tragedies, whimsical comedies, intriguing historical plays, and problematic tragi-comedies. Shakespeare's plays encompass completely and present truthfully every dimension of human nature whether it be political or personal, social or individual, religious or liberal, physical or psychic. Shakespeare has written thirty-seven plays, one hundred and fifty-four sonnets, and two long poems. Almost every work of Shakespeare explores a different theme. His tragedies explore the most general and universal themes: *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (1601) is a revenge tragedy; *Macbeth* (1606) is

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about ambition; *King Lear* (1606) deals with human pride; and *Othello* (1604) delves into the themes of jealousy and envy. The comedies of Shakespeare are written with a view to themes of love, friendship, and family relationships.

*Julius Caesar* (1599) is one of the most important historical plays by William Shakespeare about the theme of friendship and deceit. It revolves around the incident of the murder of Julius Caesar at the hands of Brutus and other conspirators, and its subsequent consequences on the socio-political fabric of Rome. Although the play is named after the Roman General, Julius Caesar, its significance, however, is due to other characters: Mark Antony, Marcus Brutus, and Caius Cassius. The climactic point of the play is the murder of Julius Caesar and two speeches, by Brutus and Antony respectively, delivered at his funeral; and their effect on the people of Rome. Brutus tries to assuage the raging crowd gathered therein through the use of logic and reason. But he succeeds only so long as Mark Antony does not show up, who, in opposition to Brutus, incites the people to avenge the murder of Julius Caesar by making use of emotive language. Antony's speech adds fuel to fire and the crowd rises against the conspirators in a body, and as a result of this upsurge the conspirators are forced to flee.

This act of the crowd seems bizarre and contrary to logic; however, it can be explained using the lens of social or group psychology, crowd behavior and role of leaders in directing and dictating it. Let us first define what Group Psychology is:

“Group Psychology is therefore concerned with individual man as a member of a race, of a nation, of a caste, of a profession, of an institution, or as a component part of a crowd of people who have been organized into a group at some particular time for some definite purpose (Freud, 1949, p. 3).”

The characteristics of an individual, who is part of crowd, and of the leaders, who control it, have been discussed by the French polymath, Gustave Le Bon, in his path breaking book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. First of all, whenever an individual becomes a part of crowd, he or she undergoes a change in the personality and their individual identity is lost as they start acting in accordance with what the majority is doing. Le Bon (2002, p. 8) says that an individual becoming part of a crowd “is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will”. He has undergone a process of de-individuation to become contagious and suggestible to the temptations of the leader whose “will is the nucleus around which the opinions of the crowd are grouped and attain to identity”. He is a subtle rhetorician whose means of swaying the crowd are affirmation, repetition, and contagion, using which he/she evokes vivid images in the collective imagination of the crowd.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

William Shakespeare is one of the most widely read writers of all time. His plays have been interpreted from various perspectives by a number of different literary critics and scholars. His play, *Julius Caesar*, likewise, has been interpreted through different lenses.

Mehta (2019) discusses *Julius Caesar* from the perspective of political morality. It focuses on the political insinuations and its efficacy for democracy and general public. Political leaders achieve their vested interests by using verbal fallacies and murders. It also focuses on the influence of one's character and personality on one's political morality. It is symbolic from the perspective of personalities of Cassius, Brutus and Antony. Their speeches reflect their political views as well as their personalities and character.

Mohan J S (2017) talks about the crowd dynamics and the art and "psychology of persuasion" in *Julius Caesar*. He maintains that in human beings there is an innate capability to be persuaded and manipulated which he calls "frailty". Then, there are manipulators who can lead and direct the people in a particular desired direction. In Ancient Greece and Rome, rhetoric was considered a necessary art and tool of any great statesman in the sphere of public as well as political speaking. According to him, knowledge is power, but it is the knowledge of the art of persuasion which has both power and control over others. In the article, he has shown how Cassius uses his rhetoric to persuade Brutus. On the other hand, Brutus himself and Antony make use of language and their skills in oratory to persuade the Roman crowd at the funeral of Caesar.

Schupak (2018) analyzes *Julius Caesar* from a politico-feminist perspective, illustrating the marginalization of women in the play in the context of the politics and history of ancient Rome. The feminist and the political aspects are perfectly merged and blended showing how two marriages—one being hierarchal, the other equal—are in alignment with the two modes of governance—monarchy and republicanism. The marriage of Caesar and Calpurnia is a "dysfunctional monarchy", based on a clearly delineated power structure of patriarchy in which Caesar commands and Calpurnia obeys. The marriage of Brutus and Portia, in comparison, represents a marriage of (almost) equals – a "felicitous republicanism". Here, Shakespeare has deconstructed the traditional stereotyping of women by showing Portia strong, having "a man's mind". According to Portia, their marriage made them "one", which also suggests their being equals in marital status. In presenting these contrasting relationships, Schupak offers two models, not only for male-female relationships, but also for political system. In portraying Caesar's dominance over Calpurnia, the drama associates patriarchy with autocracy, and conversely, Brutus's republicanism with a more enlightened balance of power within relationships. The manner in which each of these leaders, Caesar and Brutus, each conduct the gendered power relations within his marriage metonymically represents political power relationships.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the role of Contagion, Suggestibility, and De-individuation in shaping the character of Marcus Brutus in particular, and the Roman people in general?
- ii. How does Mark Antony use language and prestige to influence the crowd and how Brutus fails in doing so?

- iii. What the general characteristics of crowds are as discussed by Le Bon and displayed in *Julius Caesar*?

## LIMITATIONS

1. Applying Gustavean theory to Julius Caesar involves subjective analysis, as interpretations of crowd dynamics may vary.
2. The research takes into account only the speeches of Marcus Brutus and Marc Antony and does not focus on the broader dynamics in the play.

## METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative in nature. It concentrates on understanding and interpreting that how speech can stir men's blood in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. It focuses on the power of a leader who can influence individuals and make them to act in certain ways. Gustavean theory of crowd psychology is applied as theory. Textual analysis is adopted as methodological approach.

## POTENTIAL AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research will pave the way for researchers to apply Gustavean theory on other Shakespearean plays like *Coriolanus* and *Henry V*, where crowd dynamics are evident. Moreover, it can be applied on the speeches of populist leaders, in the present times. Populist leaders stir humans' blood by appealing to their emotions.

## DISCUSSION

Marcus Brutus is the central character in *Julius Caesar*. He comes from a well-to-do family and has a good social and political reputation which is exploited by Caius Cassius. Brutus's personality stands in sharp opposition to that of Antony. Brutus himself avers: "I am not gamesome. I do lack some part/Of that quick spirit that is in Antony (Shakespeare, 1984, I, 2, p. 104)." Not being "gamesome" and lacking "that quick spirit" which, as Le Bon asserts, are among the chief characteristics of a leader, Brutus is unable to lead the crowd from the front. Though he is politically more active and has a far better understanding of power politics than Antony yet Brutus does not have the capability to lead the crowd. Instead, he undergoes a sharp change in his own personality through the process of de-individuation which, in the context of Social Psychology, is complete disappearance of an individual's personality and consciousness when he becomes part of a group. It is a state of loss of self-awareness during which people act differently than they would individually and separately, reason being that they are part of a social group. Le Bon (2002, p.1) writes that the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in crowd move in one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. Although the term "de-individuation" was coined by Leon Festinger in 1952, Le Bon had described its characteristics as well as reasons in his book on Social Psychology, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* much earlier. According to Le Bon (2002, p. 8), the process of de-individuation involves:

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“The disappearance of the conscious personality, predominance of the unconscious personality, and the turning of feelings and ideas in an identical direction by means of suggestion and contagion, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts; these, we see, are the principal characteristics of the individual forming part of a crowd. He is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will.”

From the beginning till the murder of Caesar, Brutus is seen constantly moving away from his conscious personality towards an unconscious state which renders him suggestible to Cassius' temptations. As the dialogue between Brutus and Cassius begins, Brutus is self-aware and actively reflecting on having been torn between two conflicts. Brutus himself reveals this to Cassius: “Nor construe any further my neglect / Than that poor Brutus, with himself at war” (p. 105).

From here onwards, the process of de-individuation in Brutus begins as Cassius influence him. He finds that Brutus can be easily seduced, and offers himself as a “mirror” to reveal Brutus's true qualities to him. Brutus agrees with Cassius that he himself is unable to think. When Cassius asks Brutus if he can think for himself, Brutus replies in a metaphor: “No, Cassius; for the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things” (p. 105).

Shakespeare uses the irony to show that Brutus becomes part of the crowd on the exact moment when he tells the other conspirators, who are gathered in his house on the night before Caesar's murder, that Cicero will not become part of their “faction” because, in his view, Cicero cannot be de-individuated, since unlike Brutus he can think individually. The irony is that Brutus himself has become de-individuated when he says: “O, name him not. Let us not break with him, / For he will never follow anything/That other men begin” (p. 137).

According to Le Bon, when a person becomes a part of crowds, they sacrifice their personal interests in favor of the interests of the group of which they become part. Le Bon calls this the Law of the Mental Unity among people in crowds, which is the result of a hypnotic cause–contagion. Contagion means the quick spreading of ideas, beliefs and notions among people in a group. Le Bon (2002, p. 7) writes, “In a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest.” As Brutus is influenced by Cassius' words and has become de-individuated, he agrees to undertake any task if it is for the good of Rome – people in general. He becomes de-individuated to such a degree that he is ready to lose both honour and life for the fulfillment of their cause. He says:

“What is it that you would impart to me?

If it be aught toward the general good,

Set honour in one eye, and death i'th' other,

And I will look at both indifferently.” (p. 107)

Impressed by Cassius's words when he is degrading Caesar, Brutus informs him that he shares his view and holds Caesar in the same contempt as Cassius does. Brutus reveals to Cassius, "What you would work me to, I have some aim (p. 111)". In words of Gustave Le Bon (2002, p. 6), "In the collective mind the intellectual aptitudes of the individuals, and in consequence their individuality, are weakened. The heterogeneous is swamped by the homogeneous, and the unconscious qualities obtain the upper hand." As a result of his dialogue with Cassius, Brutus becomes open and highly suggestible to his temptations for the reason that he is no more a conscious personality as he has been at the beginning of the dialogue. His will is completely lost in his discussion with Cassius and he has become, to use the term used by Le Bon, "an automaton".

Although Brutus replies that he shall consider with concern what Cassius has suggested to him and that he will be ready to hear what else Cassius has to say, he does not actually think about it like an individual when he is met by the conspirators at his home. When he takes his leave from Cassius, Cassius too avers this: "I see / Thy honourable mettle may be wrought / From that it is disposed" (p. 118). He also notices the infirmity in the personality and character of Brutus. As a result of Brutus's having undergone de-individuation, he can be seduced into undertaking any endeavor that is suggested to him. Cassius remarks, "For who so firm that cannot be seduced" (p. 118). The cause that renders the people in crowd open to seduction is suggestibility. Le Bon discusses that suggestibility determines in individuals of a crowd special characteristics which are quite contrary at times to those present in the isolated individual. According to Le Bon (2002, p. 7), "Under the influence of a suggestion, he will undertake the accomplishment of certain acts with irresistible impetuosity". In the play, Brutus has this quality in abundance. In his dialogue with Brutus, Cassius notices this and, when Brutus leaves, he resolves to use this quality of Brutus to make him change sides. He says that Brutus can so easily be fooled into taking the effect of suggestion. "If I were Brutus now, and he were Cassius, / He should not humour me." (p. 118). Furthermore, he plans to anonymously tell a false news to Brutus that people of Rome are against Caesar's reign. As a consequence of the suggestion and owing to his being contagious, Brutus gives in to the decision of the majority and joins Cassius to murder Caesar.

Himself being contagious, Brutus spreads this view to other individuals as well. First, he undergoes de-individuation, and becomes part of Cassius "faction". Then, he further spreads these ideas to others through contagion which is the quick spreading of ideas, beliefs and notions among people within a group. When Brutus is visited by the conspirators to discuss the murder of Caesar, he sends for Legarius, one of his friends, in order to win his favor. Brutus says, "He loves me well, and I have given him reasons. / Send him but hither and I'll fashion him" (p. 141).

On the night before Caesar's murder, Brutus is at unease as to whether or not he should proceed in the act of killing Caesar. When alone, he ponders over Cassius' suggestions in earnest, and is aware and fully conscious about his own individual personality. However, no sooner do the conspirators arrive than he blends in with them. His conscious personality and will power are completely vanished, and he attains a state of "mental unity" in which his feelings, thoughts and actions are aligned with those of the

other members. As Le Bon (2002, p. 9) asserts that individuals in the crowd are “always intellectually inferior to the isolated individuals”, Brutus starts thinking, speaking and acting just like the others in the group. He is ready to partake with them in the act of killing Caesar without weighing it against reason, which is soon hinted at in Act II, Scene III, when Artemidorus mentions and alludes to their “mental unity” in a letter addressed to Caesar. He puts it thus: “There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Caesar” (p. 154)

At Caesar's funeral, Brutus comes to the front and tries to appease the enraged Roman plebeians by explaining to them why they have murdered Caesar. However, Brutus lacks what it takes to sway the crowd, because he is not a leader per se. Brutus is an idealist, and therefore, tries to persuade the crowd by giving them reasons for killing Caesar and using his prestige. His tactics, though they work for some time, go in vain in the long run. He does not have a strong will and faith, which, as is asserted Le Bon, are a must in winning the heart and loyalty of the crowd.

Le Bon holds the view that it is the belief and strong will power of the leader, and not the hard and tedious facts that affect crowd. The major cause behind Brutus' failure in appeasing the crowd is his use of reason as a tool. When Cassius stops Brutus from allowing Antony to speak in Caesar's funeral, for he might succeed in making the crowd go against them, Brutus says: “I will myself into the pulpit first, / And show the reason of our Caesar's death” (p. 171).

Choosing reason as a tool to sway the raging crowds is a mistake for which Brutus and his fellows have to pay dearly. Although, Brutus manages to gain some favor from the crowd, it is, however, because of his “acquired prestige”, and not the use of reason and facts, which does the trick. Gustave Le Bon discusses that “prestige” is one of the tools of the leaders using which they can get the loyalty and following from the crowds. The least effective, however, is the acquired prestige which, as in case of Brutus, does not last long. Acquired prestige is that with which one is endowed by virtue of one's birth, wealth, or high social position. Brutus has this acquired prestige by virtue of all three means – birth, wealth, high social position – and he uses it in order to persuade the crowd that he is justified in their act of killing Caesar. Addressing them he says: “Believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe” (p. 175).

After this Brutus plays his second card which is, appealing to the mind and reason of the people. The speech which he delivers on the funeral of Caesar is full of rationality fit for individual thinkers, but it accumulates very little interest from the people, who are in a state of “mental unity”. Although Brutus does his best. He invites them to judge him using logic and wisdom. He addresses the people and says, “Censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you may the better judge” (p. 175). The people, however, do not awake their senses; they censure the situation not in their wisdom, as Brutus has demanded, but in their own liking. It does not matter that Brutus does his utmost to render any reason possible to persuade the people, they simply cannot follow Brutus in his reasoning. The crowd is literally dumb when Brutus says:

“Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? ... Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak, for him have I offended” (p. 175).

Mark Antony, on the other hand, appears a politically passive character at the beginning of the play. However, he shows great capability for leadership after the murder of Caesar when he asks Brutus to let him deliver a speech in front of the public on the occasion of Caesar’s funeral. He tricks Brutus into thinking that his intentions are not against the murderers and that he only wants to mourn over the tragic death of Julius Caesar. Believing that Antony is not a harm for them because he does not have the knack for public speech and cannot change the public opinion once Caesar’s murder is justified, Brutus agrees to let Antony have his wish on the condition that Antony will not speak any ill of Brutus.

Having got the permission to speak in front of public, he cashes on the opportunity and brings around the plebeians using his strong will and faith. As Le Bon (2002, p.73) avers, “The intensity of their faith gives great power of suggestion to their words. The multitude is always ready to listen to the strong-willed man, who knows how to impose himself upon it”. He further adds that these leaders are often subtle rhetoricians. Mark Antony infuriates the crowd against the conspirators with mere words, just like a leader. He starts off his speech by praising Brutus (because he is now a public hero) and mourning for Caesar; but by the time his speech comes to an end, the tables are completely turned against Brutus. The damage he has caused to Brutus is irreparable. Just through the use of words and his magnetic personality, Antony succeeds in changing the opinion of the crowd, thus fulfilling the vow he has taken on Caesar’s corpse. When the murderers leave the capitol to go outside and sway the crowd, Antony says, “Into the marketplace. There shall I try, / In my oration how the people take / The cruel issue of these bloody men.” (p. 174). Saying this Antony makes a prophecy and takes the oath in these words:

“Over the wounds now do I prophesy

A curse shall light upon limbs of men.

Domestic fury and fierce civil strife

Shall cumber all the parts of Italy.” (p. 172)

He does create “domestic fury and fierce civil strife” through the use of his oration. First, he wins the trust of the people by using dead Caesar’s prestige and his own rhetoric. The qualities of a leader are there in Antony and he uses them just on the right time to gain the favor of the crowd. According to Gustave Le Bon, a leader has to have a magnetic personality and strong will power in order to make the crowd follow him. He (2002, p. 73) avers, “Men gathered in a crowd lose all force of will, and turn instinctively to the person



who possesses the quality they lack.” In case of Antony, he has an energetic spirit and magnetic personality. Even Brutus notices that he “lack the quick spirit that is in Antony” (p. 104).

Next, Le Bon avers that a leader must have mastery on rhetoric—the art and skill in the effective use of language used as a means of persuasion in public speaking. A leader must know what to speak, how to speak, and when to speak. It is the work of a good leader to conjure up the right image in the unconscious personality of the individuals in the crowd through what Le Bon calls “affirmation and repetition”. Le Bon (2002, p. 77) defines what he means by affirmation and repetition. He writes, “Affirmation pure and simple, kept free of all reasoning and all proof, is one of the surest means of making an idea enter the minds of crowds.” Antony starts his speech with various affirmations which are taken for granted. He speaks:

“The noble Brutus

Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.

If it were so, it was a grievous fault,

And grievously hath Caesar answered it.” (p. 178)

Having affirmed that Brutus is “noble”, Antony then utters the most famous irony in literature, “Brutus is an honourable man; / So are they all, all honourable men” (p. 178). Le Bon (2002, p. 77) says, “Affirmation, however, has no real influence unless it be constantly repeated, and so far as possible in the same terms”. Antony repeatedly uses the line “Brutus says Caesar was ambitious, and Brutus is an honourable man”, as he is addressing the people. This goes in line with what Le Bon believes is the exact way how a leader can appeal to the crowds. Le Bon (2002, p. 77) writes, “The thing affirmed comes by repetition to fix itself in the mind in such a way that it is accepted in the end as a demonstrated truth”. However, Antony uses the phrase with varying degrees of connotation so as to change the viewpoint of the people regarding Caesar’s being ambitious and Brutus’s being honourable. First, he seems to agree with the people that Brutus is an honourable man.

He assures the crowd that he has come only to speak in Caesar’s funeral, as he says, “I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him” (p. 178), and his intentions toward Brutus are harmless. The words he employs are so arranged as to not give any hint against the conspirator. Antony calls Brutus in such commendable words as “noble” and “honourable”. However, in praising Caesar, he repeats the same phrase with such artistry over language that the word “honourable” becomes a condemnable title for Brutus. He repeats this phrase “Brutus is an honourable man” four times, in order to suggest to the people that Brutus is not honourable in killing Caesar. Then he uses the same phrase but with a negative connotation – inciting the people to “mutiny and rage” against Brutus. Antony also utilizes suggestibility which makes the crowd open to and act upon the suggestion made to them. As Le Bon asserts that the leader must engage with the crowd by rapid suggestion. Mark

Antony changes the connotation of his famous line so rapidly that the crowd could not help but take its influence. Antony suggests:

“O masters, if I were disposed to stir  
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,  
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,  
Who – you all know – are honourable men.” (p. 180)

The repetition of the phrase by Mark Antony infuriates the people of Rome to such a degree that they declare the conspirators as traitors. As one of the plebeians utters, “They were traitors. ‘Honourable men!’” (p. 181). Another adds, “They were villains, murderers” (p. 181). Having successfully affirmed that Caesar was unjustly murdered, and that his murderers are traitors of the country, Antony lets contagion (the quality of the crowds to quickly spread any idea) does its work. According to Le Bon, contagion is the third means of action of leader. He (2002, p. 78) says, “When an affirmation has been sufficiently repeated and there is unanimity in this repetition ... what is called a current of opinion is formed and the powerful mechanism of contagion intervenes. Ideas, sentiments, emotions, and beliefs possess in crowds a contagious power.” English, H., and English, A. (1958, p. 117) define ‘Contagion’, or Social Contagion, as “the spontaneous imitation, by other persons in a group, of a behavior imitated by one member but without overtly shown intention to stimulate such imitation”. Seeing that the crowd has turned against Brutus, Antony descends down near the dead Caesar’s body and rebukes the murderers openly. He shows to the people the cuts made in Caesar’s cloak and wounds inflicted by the murderers, using daggers.

At this point, another effective quality of leader is used by Mark Antony. Le Bon notices that a successful leader is he who uses exaggerated words and speaks in terms of images and not concrete and tedious facts, because crowd is persuaded only if its imagination (and not the rational faculty) is appealed to. Unable to think consciously using reason, a crowd turns to a leader who, if he projects the right images in the unconscious mind of the people, can make the crowd do anything. Under the influence of the magnetic personality of the leader and powerful images evoked by him via words, crowds easily become susceptible to any suggestion that is made to them. To evoke pity for Caesar and hatred for his murderers, Antony gives a long picturesque description of dead Caesar’s wounds:

“Look, in this place ran Cassius’ dagger through  
See what a rent the envious Casca made.  
Through this, this well-beloved Brutus stabbed,  
And as he plucked his cursed steel away,

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Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,  
 As rushing out of doors to be resolved  
 If Brutus so unkindly knocked or no –  
 For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.  
 Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!  
 This was the most unkindest cut of all;  
 For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,  
 Ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms,  
 Quite vanquished him. Then burst his mighty heart,  
 And in his mantle muffling up his face,  
 Even at the base of Pompey's statue,  
 Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.  
 O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!  
 Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,  
 Whilst bloody treason flourished over us.” (p. 182-183)

In doing so, Antony achieves something which he himself deliberately negates. Although he avers, “I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts” (p. 184), but, at the end of the day, he does steal away their hearts. In saying “let me not stir you up / To such a sudden flood of mutiny” (p.184), Antony actually stirs them up against the conspirators. In short, he has all those qualities of leader, which he says he does not have.

“I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,  
 Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech  
 To stir men's blood; I only speak right on.  
 I tell you that which you yourselves do know.” (p. 184)

Summing up, Mark Antony has the personality of a leader. Not only does he prove Caesar's innocence in front of the people, but also does he “move the stones of Rome to rise and mutiny” against Brutus. He knows that crowds are “impulsive, mobile and irritable” when disposed to a suggestion. This quality of impulsiveness and irritability

makes them blind to any reason or other hindrance, and they all move and work violently for the immediate fulfilment and realization of their desire. Having set the people in motion against Brutus, Antony thus ends his speech, “Now let it work! Mischief, thou art afoot, / Take thou what course thou wilt” (p. 186).

In Act III, Scene II, apart from focus on Brutus and Antony, William Shakespeare also explores the psychology and thinking capability of the Roman people. He shows that in crowds it is stupidity and not mother-wit that is accumulated, as averred by Gustave Le Bon (2002, p. 6). Shakespeare has successfully portrayed the characteristics of the crowds: credulity, impulsiveness, and irritability – discussed by Gustave Le Bon in Chapter II of Book I. Roman plebeians gather outside the capitol in order to demand from the murderers an explanation for Caesar’s murder. But instead of thinking over Brutus’ reply, they readily give in, showing the psychological law of the mental unity which causes them to lose their capacity to reflect, and the dominance of the unconscious personality. When Brutus finishes his speech every plebeian shouts, separately, that Brutus is right and justified in killing Caesar. They start to look at Brutus as their leader and compare him with Caesar, conferring and showering upon him such titles as suited to Caesar. The third Plebeian shouts, “Let him be Caesar” (p. 176). And the fourth plebeian adds, “Caesar’s better parts / Shall be crowned in Brutus.” (p. 177). The first plebeian demands to “Bring him with triumph onto his home” (p. 176). He further adds, “Give him a statue with his ancestors” (p. 176). The first plebeian further shouts: “We’ll bring him to his house with shouts and clamours” (p. 177).

The crowd even looks at Antony with doubt when he first appears on the scene. One of them says, “Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here” (p. 177). But as Mark Antony starts his speech, the crowd is influenced by his words and, by the time Antony has finished his speech, the crowd partakes with Antony and turns against their former hero – Marcus Brutus. The third plebeian utters, “There’s not a nobler man in Rome than Antony” (p. 181). This prove Le Bon’s argument that crowds are credulous to any suggestion made to them. As Le Bon (2002, p. 18) puts it that the starting point of the suggestion is always an illusion which is produced in an individual by more or less vague reminiscences, contagion follows as the result of the affirmation of this initial illusion by the leader. In his view, a crowd’s own observations are erroneous, and they follow whatever line of action is “suggestioned” to them by the leader. The Roman people are so credulous that when Antony suggests to read out Caesar’s will, they all shout, in a body, that they will hear the will, changing their former opinion about Caesar, Brutus, and Antony without any hindrance or reflection. They even call the conspirators traitors, villains, and murderers which is completely opposite of what they initially opined about them.

Le Bon further avers that “A crowd thinks in images” (2002, p. 15). He further adds that images lead to other images without any logical connection among them. By virtue of its nature and instincts, crowds are blind to the incoherence among the images, and confuses the workings of its imagination with the real event. Le Bon (2002, p. 15) asserts, “A crowd scarcely distinguishes between the subjective and the objective. It accepts as real the images evoked in its mind, though they most often have only a very distant relation with the observed fact”. During his speech, Mark Antony uses certain

images to evoke pity for Caesar. He does not use any logic, and befools the people merely by evoking images in their unconscious mind. Impressed and caught up by the images created by Antony through his art of rhetoric, the Plebeians start to think in favor of Antony. The first plebian says: "Methinks there is much reason in his sayings" (p. 179). The fourth plebian goes on to say: "If thou consider rightly the matter, / Caesar has had great wrong" (p. 179). And the third plebian adds: "I fear there will a worse come in his place" (p. 179).

The second characteristic which is to be found there in the Roman people is that of impulsiveness. Having lost their faculty for thinking and reflection, the crowds are naturally more impulsive, and in consequence more mobile, than individuals. They are slaves to impulses, which according to Le Bon always come from the outside. Being impulsive and mobile, it is natural that the crowd wants to immediately transform the suggested ideas into reality, which makes them violent. Le Bon (2002, p. 13) calls this characteristic as "irritability of the crowds". He defines irritability as the capability of the crowds not to admit anything to come between its desire and the immediate realization of that desire.

Antony notices that the people are highly impulsive, and that he only has to suggest to them to "rise and mutiny" against Brutus through affirmation and suggestion. He also observes that being irritable the crowd will take the influence without showing any objection. We see that first Antony uses their credulity to make Caesar a hero and his murderers as villains, then he goes on to suggest to them: "O masters, if I were disposed to stir / Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage, / I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong" (p. 180).

Hearing this the crowd becomes extremely mobile, following their impulses. One of them declares, "Some will dear abide it" (p. 180). Another says, "We will be revenged" (p. 183). Being irritable, they all seek to transform their ideas into reality without any delay. They all shout, "Revenge! About! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! / Let not a traitor live!" (p. 184).

Irritability gives way to violence and spontaneity. Being ignited by Antony's speech, the people go about in streets of Rome in search of the conspirators. They become so much mobile, violent, and blind to reason that they kill Cinna the poet, instead of Cinna the conspirator. Shakespeare wants to show the stupidity and irritability to which crowds can succumb, so he adds this comic scene of killing of Cinna the poet right after the scene of murder of Caesar. The crowd does not care whether or not Cinna the poet is involved in killing Caesar. They kill him for the sole reason that he is the namesake for Cinna the conspirator. Although Cinna tries his utmost to relieve the confusion caused by the similarity of names, but the people are too blind and irritable to listen to his pleas. Even when they come to know that Cinna is not the one, they are looking for, they kill him anyhow for his bad verses. The fourth plebian replies, "It is no matter, his name's Cinna! Pluck but his name out of his heart, and turn him going!" (p. 188).

This shows how stupid, impulsive, mobile, and irritable crowds can be. Once they are set in motion and become out of control, it becomes very hard to sway them, especially

by using reason and logic. Roman plebeians in the play show all the typical characteristics that are present in crowd. There is not even one instance throughout the play where they show any faculty of rational thinking or aptitude for logic and conscious reflection. They are always open to suggestion, and if ever they change their former opinions, as they turn from Brutus to Antony in no time, it is because another better suggestion has surfaced, and not due to any thinking on their own part.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up the whole discussion, the phenomenon of mob mentality and the role of leadership in directing the mob have been aptly and accurately displayed in the play *Julius Caesar*. The characters of Marcus Brutus and Mark Antony have been thoroughly analyzed and it is found that there is a sharp difference in their personalities. Antony proves to be a leader manipulating the crowd in whatever direction he likes by appealing to their emotions and feelings. On the other hand, Brutus becomes the part of crowd as a result of losing his conscious and individual personality.

It highlights that although Brutus has a prestige and mastery over rhetoric. He uses both in his speech, however, he seems to be lacking the spirit and enthusiasm of Antony. The qualities that Brutus lacks are the first and foremost means of persuading the masses. Therefore, analysis shows that crowds are dumb to any tedious logic that involves act of thinking. In contrast, they respond to the suggestion which has nothing to do with reasoning. Individuals in the multitude lose their capacity for critical thinking, as a result fall prey to contagion, and start imitating other members of the group without thinking whether it concerns them or suits their aptitude. The only thing that appeals to crowd is the determination and will power of the leader to whom it reverts. Consequently, crowds becomes violent, intolerant and uncontrollable at times – highlighting the negative social aspects of herd mentality and mass madness.

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