

Unit III

Periodical Essays

1) The Club by Richard Steele

The Club is the second essay of *The Spectator*, written by Richard Steele and published in 1711. The essay introduces the members of the Spectator Club, a group of six men from different backgrounds. Through these characters, Steele presents a realistic picture of 18th-century English society, its values, manners, professions, and social classes. The essay is entertaining as well as morally instructive.

The 18th century is known as the Age of Reason or the Augustan Age. During this period: Coffee houses became centres of discussion and debate.

Periodical essays became popular among educated readers.

Steele and Joseph Addison started *The Spectator* to educate and entertain society.

The Club is One of the finest periodical essays in English literature. Gives a vivid picture of 18th-century England. Introduces unforgettable characters, especially Sir Roger de Coverley. It Combines entertainment with moral education.

The Spectator Club represents people from different sections of English life.

1. Sir Roger de Coverley

Sir Roger is the most memorable character in the essay. A wealthy country gentleman., Kind, generous, and honest. He loves old customs and traditions. Treats servants and tenants with care. Sometimes behaves in a humorous and old-fashioned manner. He represents the goodness and simplicity of rural England.

2. Sir Andrew Freeport

A successful merchant. Believes trade and commerce make England prosperous. Hard-working, practical, and intelligent. He represents the growing middle class.

3. Captain Sentry

A brave soldier. Honest, disciplined, and modest. He does not flatter others for promotion. Represents courage and integrity.

4. Will Honeycomb

A fashionable gentleman from London. Experienced in love and social life. Enjoys conversation, fashion, and entertainment. He represents urban society and modern manners.

5. The Lawyer

A learned lawyer with deep knowledge. Loves reading history and literature. He speaks wisely and logically. He represents education and justice.

6. The Clergyman

A religious and educated man. He guides people through moral values. Calm, thoughtful, and respected. Represents religion and ethical life.

Major Themes

Social Representation: Different classes and professions of English society.

Morality: Importance of honesty, virtue, and good conduct.

Human Nature: Every individual has unique qualities and weaknesses.

Unity in Diversity: People with different views can live together peacefully.

Satire and Humour: Steele gently criticizes society through humour.

The Club is an important essay because it reflects the social, moral, and cultural life of England in the 18th century. Richard Steele shows that a good society is built through honesty, wisdom, courage, and respect for others.

3) On Idleness by Samuel Johnson

Introduction

On Idleness is a periodical essay written by Samuel Johnson, one of the greatest essayists of the eighteenth century. It was published in The Rambler. In this essay, Johnson discusses the harmful effects of idleness and teaches readers the importance of hard work, discipline, and proper use of time. The essay has a moral purpose and gives practical guidance for everyday life.

Explanation of the Essay

Samuel Johnson explains that idleness is a habit of wasting time without doing any useful work. According to him, every human being has duties and responsibilities. When a person avoids work and spends time lazily, it becomes difficult to achieve success and happiness.

Johnson says that idleness does not always mean sleeping or resting. It also includes postponing work, avoiding responsibilities, and spending time on meaningless activities. Such habits gradually become part of a person's character and lead to failure.

He further explains that an idle mind becomes the home of negative thoughts. Laziness brings boredom, worry, anxiety, and many bad habits. An idle person often regrets wasting time but continues the same habit instead of changing.

Johnson advises people to remain active and engage in useful work. Hard work improves knowledge, builds confidence, and develops good character. A disciplined life gives satisfaction and helps people achieve their goals.

Central Idea

The central idea of On Idleness is that time is the most valuable gift in life, and wasting it through idleness leads to misery and failure. Johnson encourages everyone to use time wisely and live a productive life.

Characteristics of On Idleness

1. Moral and Didactic Essay

The essay teaches a moral lesson by advising readers to avoid laziness and live a responsible life.

2. Reflective Style

Johnson reflects on human nature and explains how idleness affects people's lives and behaviour.

3. Logical and Practical

The essay uses clear reasoning and practical examples from everyday life to explain its ideas.

4. Simple but Powerful Language

Johnson's language is formal yet easy to understand. His ideas are direct and convincing.

5. Universal Message

The message of the essay is timeless. It is relevant to students, workers, and people of every age because everyone needs to use time wisely.

Themes of On Idleness

1. Importance of Time

Samuel Johnson says that time is the most valuable resource in human life. Once time is wasted, it can never be recovered. Therefore, every moment should be used for useful and meaningful work.

2. Dangers of Idleness

The main theme of the essay is that idleness is harmful. Laziness makes people neglect their duties, waste opportunities, and become unsuccessful. It also leads to boredom and unhappiness.

3. Value of Hard Work

Johnson believes that hard work is the key to success. Regular work develops knowledge, discipline, confidence, and a strong character. An active life brings happiness and satisfaction.

4. Self-Discipline and Responsibility

The essay teaches that every person has responsibilities. A disciplined person completes work on time and uses time wisely, while an idle person keeps postponing work.

Important Quotes:

"Idleness is the parent of misery."

"Time once lost can never be regained."

Conclusion

On Idleness teaches that success comes through hard work, discipline, and proper use of time. Samuel Johnson warns readers against laziness and inspires them to live an active and responsible life.

Q. Critically analyse Samuel Johnson's essay On Idleness

Q. Bring out the autobiographical elements in the essay On Idleness

Unit IV:

The Pulley- George Herbert.

Text:

When God at first made man

Having a glass of blessings standing by,

“Let us,” said he, “pour on him all we can.

Let the world’s riches, which dispersed lie,

Contract into a span.”

So strength first made a way;

Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.

When almost all was out, God made a stay,

Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,

Rest in the bottom lay.

“For if I should,” said he,

“Bestow this jewel also on my creature,

He would adore my gifts instead of me,

And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;

So both should losers be.

“Yet let him keep the rest,

But keep them with repining restlessness;

Let him be rich and weary, that at least,

If goodness lead him not, yet weariness

May toss him to my breast.”

Summary:

This poem was published in 1633, in George Herbert's poetic collection 'The Temple: sacred poems and Ejaculations.' It presents myth, moral & spiritual note.

The first stanza states that when at first God decided to make man holding a glass of Blessings, he said, "Let us pour on him all we can." The world's riches should be Contracted into a span. God poured all his blessings – strength, beauty, wisdom, Honour, and pleasure. Almost everything was out from that glass & God stopped Realizing that only single blessing remained behind at the bottom of the glass and that Was 'Rest.' He thought that if he gifted man with 'rest', man will adore his gifts & not 'God' So, both should be losers. So, at last, God decided not to give rest to man & so, man Is restless. He said that man may be rich and weary. If not goodness but, weariness May lead him to the God. The poet says that God has used a different method to lift Man to him.

3.2.4 Analysis of the Poem:

George Herbert is labeled as the saint of the metaphysical school. He presented Sublime thoughts in this poem. He was much influenced by John Donne but, he never Attained the effect of Donne. Through this poem, Herbert forwards the plan and Scheme of the God to create man. The poet says that when God at first created man, He had a definite scheme in his mind. From his glass of blessings, he poured almost Everything – strength, beauty, wisdom, honour, pleasure and blessed man with these Gifts.

When he realized that only 'Rest' left behind, God paused thought over and Decided not to bless man with this gift. He offered all good things to man because he Wanted to pull man to him. He wished to provide man spiritual needs. He kept man Restless because he knew that only 'restlessness' of man will make his creature to Worship him. Otherwise man will adore God's gifts and not God. He bestowed man With all material things but not with spiritual peace. He knew that man will get tired Of these material things and then he will turn to God. Here, the poet speaks logically. He sings of the glory of the God in this small Poem. God has created man, a creature, that can understand and think. But, he Controlled man by not giving him 'Rest.' So, man must turn to the God for rest and peace. The meaning of Herbert's 'The Pulley,' can be drawn as, 'man is always Restless and needs it more.' So, he turns to the God. Pulley is a mechanical device Used to lift things that are too heavy. Here, Herbert states that God has set up the Pulley as a spiritual device that will draw man to him. 'The Pulley' makes use of Chains & wheels to lift heavy load. Here, 'rest' will lift man to the God. Its deeper Meaning is very

vast and useful for mankind. Whatever Herbert expresses, he expresses it through images. They are simple And homely. Use of paradox and synecdoche as poetic devices is another marked Feature of this poem. Following are the examples.

Paradox = ‘ Let him be rich and weary.’

Synecdoche = ‘Let us’, said he, ‘ Pour on him all we can.’

This poem can be read as an explanatory tale about the creation of the mankind. We notice simplicity of the language here. The title of the poem is significant. It Presents core meaning of the poem. The religious idea is conveyed through a Scientific image of the pulley. It requires knowledge of some basic laws of Physics. It Is the metaphysical note in the poem.

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