

## UNIT – 2

### (i) JOSEPH ADDISON : SIR ROGER THE THEATRE

#### INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR

Joseph Addison was a distinguished 18th century English poet, author, playwright, politician and classical scholar. He is recognised as one of the finest periodical essayists, who along with his friend, Richard Steele founded the daily journal, 'The Spectator'. 'The Spectator' became a popular and well-read publication of that time. He contributed over 274 essays for 'The Spectator' and also wrote essays for the publication, 'The Tatler'. He wrote the legendary play, 'Cato, a Tragedy', which is believed to be the literary inspiration behind the American Revolution. He has also authored, 'Account Of The Greatest English Poets', 'The Campaign', 'Dialogue on Medals' and the unsuccessful opera libretto 'Rosamund'.

He served as the Under-Secretary of State, Commissioner of Appeals in the government of the 1st Earl of Halifax, Member of Parliament, secretary to the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wharton and as the Secretary of State for the Southern Department. He was known for his magnanimous character and cool personality. He also helped establish the English literary congregation, 'Kit-Cat Club', which had powerful political connections.

#### Major Works

The play, 'Cato, a Tragedy' was his seminal work and enjoyed success all over England, the New World and Ireland. The play is widely regarded as a literary inspiration behind the American Revolution. He co-founded the daily 'The Spectator', which at that time was a well received and popular publication. An estimated one tenth of the population read the paper making it the most read publication.

He died at the age of 48 at the Holland House, London. He was laid to rest at the Westminster Abbey, City of Westminster in London.

#### SUMMARY

Sir Roger de Coverly at the theatre is an essay by Joseph Addison. Sir Roger expresses his desire of watching a good tragedy to Addison. They meet at spectator club, Sir Roger says that he has not watched any good play in the last 20 years and the last play he watched was a church of England comedy named 'Committe'. thus they plan to watch a good tragedy a story of Distress woman named Andromach. it is the classical tragedy that revolves around Hector's widow (Andromach).

Knight is one of the friends of Roger and Addison he plans to take Captain Sentry for the play. Thus Addison, Sir Roger, Knight, Captain Sentry along with a Butler and a servant takes their coach to the theatre. They get the ticket and a comfortable middle seat at the theatre, the play begins. Pyrrus (Son of Achilles who killed Hector in Trojan war) is the character that enters the stage first. At the end of every act Sir Roger passes comments about the characters and the scene to his friends.

Sir Roger was not fond of the character Andromach who is the widow and he anxiously wonders what it would become of Pyrrus who is after Andromach. On the other hand Knight adores the characters on the stage and he passes good comments about Andromach.

Captain sentry nudge his friends not to be explicit in their comments about the characters on stage as two of the audience were keenly observing their conversation. At the fourth act Hector's ghost was expected on stage and Knight misunderstands a page for Astynax (Andromach & Hector's son).

The play ends with Andromach killing herself and Pyrrus left to feel sorrow about his mistakes. the friends of the spectator club was the last to leave the theatre. They all leave the theatre with the satisfaction of watching a good tragedy. the friends escort Roger and drops him at his house safely in the coach.

### (ii) RICHARD STEELE : THE SPECTATOR CLUB

#### INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR

The British essayist, dramatist, and politician Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) is best known for his collaboration with Addison on a series of essays for the Tatler and the Spectator. Richard Steele was born in Dublin, Ireland, in March 1672. The exact date of his birth is not known, but he was baptized on March 12. Steele's father, an attorney, died in 1676, and his mother died the next year. He was placed under the guardianship of his maternal uncle, Henry Gascoigne, who was secretary and confidential agent to the Duke of Ormonde. In 1684 he began attending Charterhouse School, London, where he met Joseph Addison.

Both Steele and Addison went to Oxford, Steele entering Christ Church in 1689 and transferring to Merton College in 1691. His Oxford career was undistinguished, and he left in 1692 without taking a degree in order to volunteer for cadet service under the command of the Duke of Ormonde. Steele then served in the Life Guards and later transferred to the Cold stream Guards. In 1695 Lord Cutts, to whom Steele had dedicated a poem on the funeral of Queen Mary, became Steele's patron. Steele first served him as private secretary and then became an officer in Cutts's regiment in 1697. Two years later Steele received a captaincy in a foot

During these years of military service in London, Steele became acquainted with a circle of literary and artistic figures, and he began to write. His first comedy, *The Funeral, or Grief A-la-mode*, was performed successfully at Drury Lane Theatre in 1701. This play was a satire on the new profession of undertaking. It was followed by *The Lying Lover* or *The Ladies' Friendship* in 1703. His third comedy, in 1722 he wrote his last and most successful comedy, *The Conscious Lovers*. In 1724—still notoriously improvident, impulsive, ostentatious, and generous—Steele was forced to retire from London because of his mounting debts and his worsening health. He went to live on his wife's estate of Llangunnor in Wales, and in 1726 he suffered a paralytic stroke. His health broken, Steele died at Carmarthen.

#### **SUMMARY**

##### The Spectator Club – Summary

The Spectator Club is perhaps Richard Steele's finest achievement. This essay was published in *The Spectator*. In this essay, Steele has given an account of the members of the Club. These members represent important sections of society. Steele describes six of the members of the Club they are Sir Roger de Coverley, Captain Sentry, Sir Andrew Freeport, Will Honeycomb, the Clergyman and the Student of Law. Steele talks about the first gentleman of his company whose name is Sir Roger de Coverley. The people, who knew about the county of Sir Roger, knew Sir Roger. Sir Roger was a man of extraordinary nature and had a good sense. He always found fault with the ways of the world but this unusual nature never made him any enemies. Sir Roger had a unique capacity to please others. Sir Roger was a bachelor because he was disappointed in the love of a beautiful widow. Before this disappointment Sir Roger was a normal happy young man. He moved in society of important persons like Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege. However, after being ill-used by the widow he lost all his joviality and interest in social life for more than a year. He became very serious. Gradually his joviality returned. However, he grew careless about his dress. He wore a coat and jacket of a cut, which was in fashion at that time. Now Sir Roger was fifty-six years old but was quite hale and hearty. He had a house in village and town. He had such a good nature that people loved him. He also treated his servants well. He was also the justice of the quorum and showed his judicial abilities on the hair of the justice at a quarter-session.

After this, Steele has described another companion of the club. He is a lawyer. He was also a bachelor. He was a man of sharp wit and clear understanding. He chose his occupation rather to obey the direction of his old father than to incline to his own tendencies. He took to the study of law in obedience to his father. He was more interested in the study of drama and dramatic criticism. The philosophers like Aristotle and Longinus were well understood by him. His father used to send to him various questions on law in order to ensure his son's progress in legal studies. The son outwitted the father by getting them answered through a lawyer whom he had engaged for the purpose. No body took him as a fool but only his friends knew that he had a great wit. He liked to read the books, which were not of the age he lived. He was familiar with the writings, customs, actions and manners of ancient writers, which made him a keen observer of the worldly affairs. He was a good critic. His real hour of business was the time of the play. The presence of an able critic among the audience would rouse the actors to give the best performance possible.

Next the author has discussed about Sir Andrew free port who was is a good businessman of London. He was very laborious, experienced and had a great understanding. His knowledge of commerce was extensive. He had his own ideals of the ways of enlarging a country's trade. He was of the opinion that a dominion may be extended by art and industry than by power. Diligence or industry alone would help the country to gain things of permanent value, and sloth or idleness more than the sword had caused the ruin of many nations. He knew many short maxims. He had a unique art of speech. He was a self made person and believed that England too could become richer than other kingdoms, by methods which had so benefited him.

After Sir Andrew, the author has described the merits of Captain Sentry. He was very courageous intelligent and had good understanding. He was such a man who had not received good consideration of his abilities. He had been Captain in military for some years and fought bravely on fronts. He left the army because even though he rendered meritorious service, which any one could see and appreciate, promotion did not come to him. He used to say that only that man could hold a position in military who gets over his false modesty. He was of the opinion that it is cowardice to stand back modestly. Similarly a man who failed to assert himself and demand what was his due was a coward. He was frank in speaking about the weaknesses of his officers. This frankness was a part of his character. Though he commanded many persons in military, he was never haughty. He never became a flatterer, although he obeyed his superiors.

The author then talks about Will Honeycomb. Though he was old, there were no traces of the passage of time in his brain or in his person. He had an attractive personality and could impress women by his talk. He dressed well and was well acquainted with the history of every fashion that remained in vogue in England. Will Honeycomb was always interested in matters pertaining to women. In his conventions he talked mostly of women, their dresses, their manners and their fashions. He had a good knowledge of history. He could tell that the hairstyles or hats of our wives and daughters resemble to those of the wenches of French Kings. But the author says that he was a gentleman. Leaving the relations of women he was an honest and worthy man.

At the end of the essay, the author tells us about one of his companions who seldom waited him. He was a philosopher and clergyman. He lived a sacred life. He was very weak in constitution. Because of ill health, he could not fulfil the responsibilities which promotion in the church might have brought him. He spoke on divine topic with authority. He wished for the good of the world even after his death.