

## UNIT-4

(i) R.L. Stevenson : An Apology for Idlers.

### INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on November 13, 1850, to Thomas and Margaret Stevenson. Lighthouse design was his father's and his family's profession, and so at the age 17, Stevenson enrolled at Edinburgh University to study engineering, with the goal of following his father in the family business. Lighthouse design never appealed to Stevenson, though, and he began studying law instead. His spirit of adventure truly began to appear at this stage, and during his summer vacations, he traveled to France to be around young artists, both writers and painters. He emerged from law school in 1875 but did not practice, as, by this point, he felt that his calling was to be a writer.

In 1878, Stevenson saw the publication of his first volume of work, *An Inland Voyage*; the book provides an account of his trip from Antwerp to northern France, which he made in a canoe via the river Oise. A companion work, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879), continues in the introspective vein of *Inland Voyage* and also focuses on the voice and character of the narrator, beyond simply telling a tale. Also from this period are the humorous essays of *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers* (1881), which were originally published from 1876 to 1879 in various magazines, and Stevenson's first book of short fiction, *New Arabian Nights* (1882). The stories marked the United Kingdom's emergence into the realm of the short story, which had previously been dominated by Russians, Americans and the French. These stories also marked the beginning of Stevenson's adventure fiction, which would come to be his calling card.

A turning point in Stevenson's personal life came during this period, when he met the woman who would become his wife, Fanny Osborne, in September 1876. She was a 36-year-old American who was married (although separated) and had two children. Stevenson and Osborne began to see each other romantically while she remained in France. In 1878, she divorced her husband, and Stevenson set out to meet her in California (the account of his voyage would later be captured in *The Amateur Emigrant*). The two married in 1880, and remained together until Stevenson's death in 1894. After they were married, the Stevensons took a three-week honeymoon at an abandoned silver mine in Napa Valley, California, and it was from this trip that *The Silverado Squatters* (1883) emerged. Also appearing in the early 1880s were Stevenson's short stories "Thrawn Janet" (1881), "The Treasure of Franchard" (1883) and "Markheim" (1885), the latter two having certain affinities with *Treasure Island* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (both of which would be published by 1886), respectively. Stevenson died of a stroke on December 3, 1894, at his home in Vailima, Samoa. He was buried at the top of Mount Vaea, overlooking the sea.

### SUMMARY

In the present day age when man has become time conscious, it will seem strange that idlers are praised. Idleness is a sin as well as a crime in this age of science. Still only these persons know the joys of idleness who have actually enjoyed it. It is generally said that only in the kingdom of Devil persons remain active. In that kingdom the smallest waste of time is a crime. They want the people to be up and down. Similarly, they think that if a person is idle, his brain becomes a Devil's workshop. He does harm to him-self as well as to society. But idleness is one of the significant features of heavenly life. They say that those who are free from the cycle of death and birth get idleness as a reward. They sit in heaven and talk out their time or just lounge here and there. There is no work in heaven, they say, and man has not to bother about it. In fact it is only struggle for existence and survival of the fittest that has brought so many miseries upon mankind. Similarly, had man been idle, so many wrong things would not have been done. Now-a-days the conferences are held, decisions are taken but differences are depend, and the nations are unable to patch them up. It is all because of activity, that man has suffered.

Henry Davis has correctly said, 'What is this life if full of cares. We have no time to stand and stare'. In fact we cannot sit in the sun during winter and look vacantly here and there, we cannot enjoy the beauties of Nature and also favours of God. It is incorrect to say that idle brain is devil's workshop. Newton was lying idle under the tree when he saw an apple falling and gave the law of gravitation. Idleness helps man to store up his energy and one can utilize it at anytime one likes to use it. Idleness is one of the qualities which man is to cultivate with a lot of labour. For a busy person waiting for a bus or travelling by train or aeroplane would become miserable. An idle person looks here and there and passes hours together by just looking at the buttons of the co-passengers or by fondling with a pen or just closing his eyes and dreaming this or that thing. Such people never get bored in life. They always pass the hours of loneliness in the most comfortable manner. They never bother about their work or any-thing else.

Lotus Eaters of Tennyson give us a very appealing argument for remaining idle. They say "if death is the end of life why should all life labour be." It is a correct argument because human beings are the roof and crown of things and as such we should not work throughout our life. Life is meant for enjoyment and not for just working like animals. We can enjoy life if we have the patience as well as resources to sit idle and talk about this or that thing. Man has made life extremely complicated only through work. If man remained idle, his needs would have been very small and his capacity would have been enough to meet those demands. But man has never been living idle that is why there has been misery and unhappiness in this world. Idleness is the panacea for all ills. Many of the diseases of the human beings can only be overcome with the help of rest and leisure.

Some people say that complete idleness is not possible because if the body is at rest, then the mind is working; if the mind is at rest then body might be working. But it is mistaken view because it has been conclusively proved that if within a few minutes man feels that he is dead, i.e., he thinks nothing and does nothing and lies flat on the ground looking vacantly, he definitely recovers his mental as well as physical health.

The rush of life has added misery to life. The desire to speed up everything has nervousness and disorder. But modern man has been so habituated that now it has become difficult for him to give up active life. He has been a cog in the machine and this

mechanical habit of mind makes him somewhat miserable. If he is idle, he is open to all impressions. As Hazzlit would like to say a person must vegetate just like the vegetation in the country side, that is, it is necessary to remain idle. Idleness is an ideal, which can be enjoyed properly if one has faith in that ideal. The moment he loses his faith in it, the charm of it is completely lost.

## **(ii)GEORGE ORWELL : SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT**

### **INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR**

#### **His Early Life**

George Orwell was one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. He was born Eric Arthur Blair on 25 June 1903 in India. His father was a colonial civil servant and the family were middle class but not particularly well off. However when Orwell was only a year old his mother moved back to England while his father stayed in India until 1912. Meanwhile in 1911 George went to St Cyprian's School in Eastbourne. In 1917 he won a scholarship to Eton but in 1921 he joined the British police in Burma. However Orwell grew dissatisfied and he resigned in 1927.

George Orwell decided to become a writer. He also began living among the poor. In 1928 he journeyed to [Paris](#). For a short time in 1932-1933 Orwell worked as a teacher in a small private school. In 1934 Orwell got a part time job in a second hand bookshop. Meanwhile in 1933 his first book was published *Down and Out in Paris and London*. In 1934 his first novel *Burmese Days* was published. In 1935 George Orwell had another novel published. It was called *A Clergyman's Daughter*. It was followed in 1936 by *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. Also in 1936 Orwell married Eileen. (She died in 1945).

In 1936 George Orwell was commissioned to write a book about poverty in northern England. *The Road to Wigan Pier* was published in 1937. Meanwhile Orwell, a Socialist left for Spain in December 1936 to fight in the Spanish Civil War. (The civil war was between the left wing Republicans and the Fascist Nationalists. Some foreign volunteers took part). While there he was wounded in the throat. Meanwhile Communists began to arrest dissenters and Orwell was forced to flee from Spain. After arriving in Britain he wrote 'A Homage to Catalonia', published in 1938.

#### **The Great Writer**

However by 1938 Orwell was suffering from tuberculosis. He spent the winter of 1938-1939 in Morocco. In 1939 another novel, *Coming Up For Air* was published. At the beginning of the Second World War George Orwell was rejected for military service but from 1941 to 1943 he worked for the BBC. In 1943 he became literary editor for the *Tribune* a left wing magazine. Then in 1945 his great satire *Animal Farm* was published. In 1949 his masterpiece *1984* was published. But his health was failing. In October 1949 George Orwell married his second wife Sonia. George Orwell died on 21 January 1950. He was only 46.

### **SUMMARY**

The narrator of the essay starts with describing the hate he is confronted with in a town in Burma. He says that he is a sub-divisional police officer and is hated by the locals in "aimless, petty kind of way". He also confesses to being on the wrong side of the history as he explains the inhuman tortures of the British Raj on the local prisoners. After describing his conditions, he starts telling a story of a fine morning which he considers as "enlightening". He is told on the phone about an elephant which has shattered his fetters and gone mad, intimidating the localities and causing destructions. The mahout i.e. went in the incorrect way searching for the elephant and now is almost twelve hour's journey away. The Burmese are unable to stop the elephant as no one in their whole population has a gun or any other weapon and seems to be quite helpless in front of the merciless elephant.

After the phone call, Orwell goes out to search the elephant. While asking in the neighbourhood for where they have last sighted the elephant, he suddenly hears yells from a little distance away and immediately follows it. Going towards the elephant he finds a dead labourer around the corner lying in the mud, being a victim of the elephant's brutality. After seeing the dead labourer, he sends orderly to bring him a gun that should be strong enough to kill an elephant. In the meanwhile, Orwell is informed by the local people about the location of the elephant that was in the paddy field. After seeing the gun in Orwell's hand, a large number of local people start following him, even those who were previously uninterested in the incident. All of them are only interested and getting excited about the shooting of the elephant. In the field, Orwell sees the elephant calmly gazing and decided not to kill it as it would be wrong to kill such a peaceful creature and to kill it will be like abolishing 'a huge and costly piece of machinery'.

However, when he gazes back at the mob behind, it has expanded to a thousand and is still expanding, supposing him to fire the elephant. To them, Orwell is like a magician and is tasked with amusing them. By the first thought, he realizes that he is unable to resist the crowd's wish to kill the elephant and the right price of white westerner's takeover of the Position is white gentlemen's independence. He seems to be a kind of "puppet" that is guaranteed to fulfil their subject's expectancy. Consequently, Orwell decides to shoot the elephant or in another case, the crowd will laugh at him, which was intolerable to him. At first, he thinks to see the response of the elephant after slightly approaching it, however, it seems dangerous and would make the crowd laugh at him which was utterly humiliating for him. To avoid undesirable awkwardness, he has to kill the elephant. He pointed the gun at the brain of the elephant and fires. As Orwell fires, the crowd breaks out in anticipation. Being hit by the shot, the elephant bends towards its lap and starts dribbling. Orwell fires the second shot, the elephant appears worse but doesn't die. As he fires the final gunshot, the elephant shouts it out and falls, fast-moving in the field where he was placed. The elephant is still alive while Orwell shot him more and more but it seems to him that it has no

effect on it. The elephant seems to be in great agony and is "helpless to live yet helpless to die". Orwell, being unable to see the elephant to suffer, goes away from the sight. He later heard that the elephant took almost half an hour to pass away and villagers take the meal off its bone shortly after its death. Orwell's killing of the monster remained a huge controversy. The owner of the elephant stayed heated, but then again as he was Indian, he has no legal alternative. The aged old people agreed with the Orwell's killing of the elephant but for the younger one, it appears to be unsuitable to murder an elephant as it killed a coolie – a manual labour. For them, the life of an elephant was additional worth than a life of a coolie. On the one hand, Orwell thinks that he is fortunate that the monster murdered a coolie as it will give his act a lawful clarification while on the other hand; he wonders that anyone among his companions would assume that he murdered the elephant just not to look a fool.

#### **GENRE:**

Shooting an Elephant by George Orwell is a satirical essay on the British Imperialism.

#### **NARRATION:**

The story is a first-person narrative in which the narrator describes his confused state of mind and his inability to decide and act without hesitation. The narrator is a symbol of British colonialism in Burma who, through a window to his thoughts, allegorically gives us an insight into the conflicting ideals of the system.

#### **SYMBOLISM:**

The essay is embedded with powerful imagery and metaphors. The tone of the essay is not static as it changes from a sadistic tone to a comic tone from time to time. The elephant in the story is the representation of the true inner self of the narrator. He has to kill it against his will in order to maintain the artificial persona he has to bear as a ruler. The narrator has a sort of hatred for almost all the people that surround him. He hates the Burmese and calls them "evil spirited beasts", he hates his job, he hates his superiors, he hates British colonialism and even hates himself sometimes for not being able to act according to his will.

On the surface, the essay is a narration of an everyday incident in a town but represents a very grave picture on a deeper level. Orwell satirizes the inhumane behavior of the colonizers towards the colonized and does so very efficiently by using the metaphor of the elephant. The metaphor of the elephant can be interpreted in many ways. The elephant can also be considered to stand for the job of the narrator which has created a havoc in his life (as the elephant has created in the town). The narrator wants to get rid of it through any possible way and is ready to do anything to put an end to this misery. Also, the elephant is powerful and so is the narrator because of his position but both of them are puppets in the hands of their masters. Plus, they both are creating miseries in the lives of the locals. Yet another interpretation of this metaphor can be that the elephant symbolizes the local colonized people. The colonizers are ready to kill any local who revolts against their rule just as the narrator kills the elephant which has defied the orders of its master.

#### **SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT MAIN THEMES**

Following is the major theme of the essay Shooting an Elephant.

#### **ILLS OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM:**

George Orwell, in the narrative essay shooting an Elephant, expresses his feelings towards British imperialism. The British Raj did not care for anything but for their own material wealth and their ruling personas. The rulers were ready to take the life of any local who dared to stand or speak against their oppression. This behavior of the rulers made the locals full of hatred and mistrust. Therefore, a big gap was created between the colonizers and the colonized which was bad for both of them.

This theme strikes the reader throughout the essay. For instance, the narrator talks about "the dirty work of the empire". He narrates the conditions of the prisoners in cells who are tortured in an inhumane way. This shows the behavior of the British Raj towards those who dared to stand against their oppression. The narrator also uses bad adjectives for the locals like "yellow-faced" and even expresses his wish to kill one of them. He does on purpose i.e. to reflect on the point that the colonizers considered the colonizing low humans or probably lower than humans.