

UNIT – 5

(I) A.G GARDINER : ON THE RULE OF THE ROAD

INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR

Alfred George Gardiner (2 June 1865 – 3 March 1946) was an English journalist, editor and author. His essays, written under the alias "Alpha of the Plough", are highly regarded. He was also Chairman of the National Anti-Sweating League, an advocacy group which campaigned for a minimum wage in industry. Gardiner was born in Chelmsford, the son of Henry James Gardiner, a cabinet-maker and alcoholic, and his wife, Susanna Taylor. As a boy he worked at the Chelmsford Chronicle and the Bournemouth Directory. He joined the Northern Daily Telegraph in 1887 which had been founded the year before by Thomas Purvis Ritzema. In 1899, he was appointed editor of the Blackburn Weekly Telegraph.

From 1915 he contributed to The Star under the pseudonym Alpha of the Plough. At the time The Star had several anonymous essayists whose pseudonyms were the names of stars. Invited to choose the name of a star as a pseudonym he chose the name of the brightest (alpha) star in the constellation "the Plough." His essays are uniformly elegant, graceful and humorous. His uniqueness lay in his ability to teach the basic truths of life in an easy and amusing manner. The collections Pillars of Society, Pebbles on the Shore, Many Furrows and Leaves in the Wind are some of his best-known writings. A reviewer of Pebbles on the Shore said Gardiner wrote with "fluency, deftness, lightness, grace, and usually a very real sparkle". The end of the essay "The Vanity of Old Age" is typically neat: "For Nature is a cunning nurse. She gives us lollipops all the way, and when the lollipop of hope and the lollipop of achievement are done, she gently inserts in our toothless gums the lollipop of remembrance. And with that pleasant vanity we are soothed to sleep."

'On the Rule of the Road' is a famous and amusing essay by A.G. Gardiner. In this essay "The Rule Of The Road." Gardiner strikes the bull's eye when he declares that, in order to preserve the freedoms of all, it is necessary to curtail everyone's freedoms. He points out what constitutes true liberty. Freedom and liberty have become the watchwords of today's society and every action taken is in the interests of personal freedom. Liberty, both human and political, has acquired tremendous significance in the contemporary world of constructed social and political anarchy.

SUMMARY

The essay starts with an amusing anecdote of a fat old lady walking down a busy street in Petrograd in the middle of the road. The traffic was, of course, confused and there followed a traffic block. When someone pointed out to her that pedestrians had to walk on footpaths, her answer was intriguing. She answered that she has the freedom to walk wherever she likes. Nothing can be said against this because it is a public road. The author, busy the next paragraph, goes on to clarify the boundaries of personal liberty. He says these days people are liberty- drunk. On this point, the reader cannot but agree with the author as we see today that everyone wants individual freedom. Over the course of time, the problem has become more acute and fighting for freedom begins early when children are very young. Independence and dependence took on many colours and shades.

According to Gardiner, sacrifice seems to be the foundation of liberty because "in order that the liberties of all may be preserved, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed." He gives the example of traffic police at a busy junction. The policeman may seem like a nuisance at first, but later we realize he's actually a blessing. If everyone were driving wherever and whenever they wanted there would be utter chaos and no one could reach anywhere. So in a sense, in order to make the neighbours, a reality neighbour's liberty is restricted. The author introduces freedom as a social contract not a personal. He says it's an adaptation. If our freedom does not interfere with others, we can do as we please. He gives many instances where we do what we like to wear, what to eat, which religion to follow, which author to prefer, and many others. We rule over a kingdom where we have all the freedom, but when we come into contact with the freedom of other people, both parties will have to restrict their own free lives. For this again he gives the instance of playing the Trombone. If he wishes to play it at midnight he will have to leave to the Everest or else his family and neighbours will object.

The author tells the reader that there are a lot of people in this world and adjustment is the key to liberty. Gardiner points out that unfortunately, we are quicker to see the faults of others than our own. He says that consideration for the rights or feelings of others is the foundation of social behaviour. He concludes saying that it is these small matters that decide whether we are civilized or uncivilised. Great moments of heroism and sacrifice are rare but our life is made up of these small adjustments which make it sweet. The main point of this essay is that people need to consider how their actions affect others, not just what they want to do themselves, and how they affect society. The rules of the road in this sense are rules of politeness and altruism. They are rules like "do not play your trombone too loudly or at the wrong time" or "do not have loud public places conversations." The author concludes the essay by saying that both anarchist and socialist must be a judicious mix. We need to preserve individual liberty as well as social freedom. It is in the small matter of behaviour in observing the rule of the road, we pass judgment on ourselves and declare that we are civilized or uncivilised.

The essay bears upon its reader that he/she should consider others convenience superior to his/her own. Everybody has the right to live according to his/her will and one is free in most of the matters of life but everyone should remember that his/her freedom ends where another person's freedom starts that is why it is said that "you are free to walk down a street revolving your stick but your freedom ends where another person's nose begins". In short, it lays base, the fact that there is nothing like "absolute freedom" and that everyone should be contented with the curtailment of liberty in order to enjoy a happy, safe, fear-free social life which ushers in greater liberty though indirectly. In Albert Como's words "you cannot be happy when all around

you are sad", you cannot even smile when you are surrounded by gloomy and sullen faces. Our joys and sorrows are determined not only by our personal conditions but mostly by the content of joy and sorrow experienced by people around us. Thus when people around us are free in their private affairs, we also can have a similar amount of freedom and that is possible only when we follow laws of the society in every walk of life; when we conduct ourselves according to the norms set by our societies.

(ii)E.M FORSTER : WHAT I BELIEVE

INTRODUCTION ABOUT AUTHOR

One of the most gifted writers of his time, Edward Morgan Forster was an English novelist, short story writer, essayist, and librettist. He penned some of the best novels of the 20th century that were well-plotted and ironic and included themes of class and hypocrisy in English society. He began his literary journey at the age of six. His only ever interest in life was writing and he used his time and experiences to contribute to this interest immensely. The testament to his greatness is his nomination for the Nobel Prize in Literature for 13 different years. Forster was widely travelled and narrated these events in his stories. His homosexuality and romances were the subjects of his novel, 'Maurice' that was published well after he was gone. His popular works include 'A Room with a View', 'Howards End', and 'A Passage to India'. He was a constant opponent of adapting books into films; he was of the view that a film or stage performance does not do justice to a literary work. Despite this view, many of his works were adapted into highly successful films and have kept his legacy alive.

'A Room with a View' (1908) was his most optimistic work. Set in Edwardian England, the book is a critique of English society. It ranks 79th on the '100 best English-language novels of the 20th century' compiled by Modern Library. His masterpiece was 'Howards End' (1910). The novel explores many themes such as social conventions in England, codes of conduct, and personal relationships. The epigraph narrates his impulse towards understanding and sympathy. It ranks 38th on the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century' compiled by Modern Library. Perhaps his greatest work was 'A Passage to India' (1924) based on his experiences in India. With the British Raj and Indian Independence Movement as the backdrop, this novel went on to become a part of the 'All Time 100 Novels' list by 'Time Magazine.'

Awards & Achievements

While working at the BBC, E. M. Forster was awarded the "Benson Medal" in 1937 for his weekly book reviews. The theatre at Tonbridge School, his alma mater, is named in his honour. He was voted as an honorary 'Fellow' of King's College in 1946. He was given an 'Order of Companions of Honour' in 1953 and was awarded 'Queen Elizabeth's Order of Merit' in 1969. During the mid-1960s, he suffered from strokes that weakened him greatly. May Hockey was his nursemaid at this time. His last stroke on June 7, 1970, ended the life of this remarkable literary genius.

Introduction to What I Believe

E. M. Forster is an individualist and liberal thinker. He is an artist, finds difficult to adjust with the changing world. He does not believe any organized religion or social or political creed. He is a democrat. He is not a hero – worshipper. He does not believe in Great Men or Gospels. Respect for the individual, love, tolerance and sympathy had been the cherished ideals of democratic principles. He observes that the world is changing from bad to worse. Violence, cruelty plus racial religious persecution dominate the world. This essay is the honest confession of the Personal Faith. It guides his life. In other words, he follows the dictates of his conscience. He is truly a secular democrat. He does not claim to be a member of any religion or sect. This essay throws light on his personality.

SUMMARY

E. M. Forster begins 'What I Believe' with a note of clean confession. He does not believe in Belief. Most of the creeds are militant. The world is full of religious or racial persecution. He admits that Faith is a mental starch. He differs from the world. He believes in personal relationships. The world is surrounded by violence and cruelty. We must love people and trust them. Reliability is the basis of personal relationships. It is not a matter of contract. It is a matter for the heart. without natural warmth, reliability is impossible. Most men possess this warmth. Politicians want to keep the faith.

Personal relations are despised today. We are urged to get rid of them. We are told to dedicate ourselves to some movement or cause. He halts the idea of the causes. Democracy is not a beloved Republic really. It is less hateful than another form of government. The individual is important. All types of individuals make civilization. There is no division of people between bossers and bossed. He is the admirer of ordinary people. They get a chance in democracy. They are creative in their private lives. They are confined to their domestic work. Only democracy allows them to express themselves.

Democracy allows criticism and allows varieties of expression. Public criticism can check scandals. He believes in The Freedom of Press. (The press is not – free from lies and vulgarity) Parliament is sneered as a Talking Shop. He values parliament because it criticises and talks. Its chatter gets wide exposure. The police and the army represent force. They represent the Government. All society rests upon force. All the great creative actions and decent human relation occur during intervals. We need not get habituated to Force. Force or Violence is the ultimate reality on our earth. No form of Government or Christianity will bring peace to the world. No change of heart will occur. It is a wrong presumption that we cannot improve. What is good in people is their insistence on creation. Their belief in human values and loyalty creativeness alerts the people when violence sleeps. In order to escape the trials, we need not turn to hero-worship. Hero worship is a dangerous vice. It is a minor merit of democracy. It cannot produce Great Man. Democracy can produce different kind of small men with varieties. A

hero is an essential part of dictatorship.

He distrusts Great Men. They are surrounded by a desert of uniformity around them. They are deprived of ordinary pleasures of the average man. He believes in Aristocracy. It is not the Aristocracy of power. Aristocracy is based on Power and Influence. He believes in Aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. It has a universal existence. They are found everywhere. They represent the true human tradition. It is the victory of the queer race over cruelty and chaos. They are sensitive towards the world. They are generous. They have the capacity to endure. They can take a joke. They can't give up laughter. He disapproves the public image of the Aristocrats. He declares that he would like to go with the old Scotsman. He wanted less chastity and more delicacy. He accepts his aristocrats with all their human imperfections. He doesn't reject sensuous joys or pleasures. The terminology (Phraseology) describing aristocracy is false. Authority (Political Power) can utilize them or ignore them. They are not restricted to iron bars or Holy Kingdom. Their canvas is wide open. There is complete pleasure in earthly life. One needs eyes to see and hands to feel. The power makes people crooked. The man without a status symbol is happy. Member of Parliament or Government does not trust each other. Suspicion, treachery, robbery and cheating are seen in public life. This is practised in the name of decency. The primitive man restrained these elements through certain taboos. There will be no messiah to preach a new Gospel. Only good temper or goodwill can strengthen. All theological prayers are a part of wishful thinking. One must under native goodness of man to explore New Universe to make life worth living. Christianity can't answer or solve the problems before us. In modern society Money behind the spiritual institutions will influence the people. The organized religion is a failure. His faith is very small. As an Individualist, he fears that the dictator hero cannot help the people solve their difficulties. Every human being is born separately and will die separately. Everybody is born naked and will die naked.