

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN SIR FRANCIS BACON'S ESSAYS

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ABSTRACT

A true essay is essentially personal. It is a subjective form of composition like the 'lyric' in poetry. As compared to poetry, essays are easier to read and comprehend. The reason behind this is the language in which both are written. The language of a poem is little vast. Some words and symbols used in poetry are not identical and not easy to understand by a common reader or less educated person. But the language of an essay is quite easy and crispy to understand and identify the message of the content. The similarity between an essay and a poem is that both are written in less amount of words as compared to a novel or a play.

Keywords: *Lyric, Novel or a Play, Words and Symbols, Poetry.*

Introduction

The Essay is one of the most remarkable and attractive forms of English literature. It is a species of prose composition which resembles a short story in size. Both the essay and the short story are written keeping in mind a definite aim and purpose and when it is fulfilled they are finished. But both are independent and different in form and manner. The root meaning of the term 'essay is an attempt or trail. It suggests incompleteness, a sketchy quality, a lack of form, system and logical thoroughness, a brevity, a lightness of touch.

The essays are more informative and situation based. While writing an essay, the subject is visible to the reader but a poet cannot be sure of his emotions to compose a poem. It means a poet can loose his or her pace of writing but an essayist cannot. William Wordsworth has rightly said,

"Poetry is an spontaneous overflow of emotions"

The above quote clearly depicts that poetry is spontaneous but the essays are written along with having the subject in mind.

Sir Francis Bacon is "the father of English essays", still his language and the selection of words are much easier than any other essayist of the English language. In most of his essays, Bacon tried to find out the solution for the problems of his readers. This quality of Bacon made him famous and lovable among the reader of English literature.

We know that Bacon was a child of Renaissance. The word 'Renaissance' literally means 'rebirth.' So, in the age of Renaissance, there was a rebirth and revival of learning. The scholars of the age were inspired with noble ideas upheld by saints and sages in the past. The scholars of the age had a strong urge for the acquisition of wisdom and scientific knowledge. They were curious to know many things, which we also see in Francis Bacon's characteristics. The scholars and authors of Renaissance were curious to know many things regarding the nature, and constitution of this universe. People of this age were enthusiastic and adventurous and went out to discover new things.

Bacon's essay "Of Delays". When compared with the Indian philosophical saint Kabeer Das' famous quote,

"Kaal kare so aaj kar, Aaj kare so ab,
Pal me parlay hoyegi, Bahuri karega kab."

In the above lines, Kabeer says that works should be done as soon as possible and there must not be any "delay." But when we read "Of Delays" of Bacon. We have completely opposite suggestion.

Bacon says, 'delays' are both advantageous and harmful. He explains further, that the true wisdom consists in knowing when to delay and when not to delay for. Bacon writes,

"There is surely no greater wisdom
then well to time the beginnings
and onsets of things. Dangers are
no more light, if they once seen light;
and more dangers have deceived men
than forced them."

If we stay totally unprepared for danger, our danger is very much enhanced, but if we anticipate danger too early and make preparations for it, we often invite them beforehand. Bacon suggests his readers, if we prepare for anything, the preparation should be secret. If we execute anything, the execution should be swift. The whole thing should be like the motion of bullet – secret in preparation and swift in execution.

One more thing, which everyone wants in his or her life, is "goodness." We know that "goodness" shows humanity in its perfect form. Goodness is a part of human nature. To know more about 'goodness', we must read Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "Self – Reliance", which has been considered as one of the best essays. In this essay, Emerson writes :

"Whoso would be a man must be
a nonconformist. He who would gather
immortal palms must not be hindered
by the name of goodness, but must
explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at
last sacred but the integrity of your
own mind."

['Self – Reliance', Essays, First Series, 1841, Page – 2, Paragraph – 7th]

In the above quotation, Emerson describes the importance of pursuing one's own thoughts and intuitions, rather than adhering to public norms. For one's goodness, Emerson requests his readers to follow their individual will instead of fulfilling the social expectations.

A reader must know that "goodness" and "goodness of nature" are two different aspects of human being. To know about the difference between these two things, we must consider Bacon's essay titled, "Of Goodness, and Goodness of Nature," in which he writes,

"Goodness I call the habit, and Goodness
of Nature the inclination.....Goodness
answers to the theological virtue Charity;
and admits no excess, but error."

Here, in the above lines, Bacon says that being good to poor people is great, but we must do the "real good" of the people and not their "fancied good." It means suitable charity is to be given to deserving persons. We must not forget the duty we owe to ourselves in benefitting others. We must be careful while helping others. It must be examined that whether the person deserves help or not.

When we do good to others, it gives satisfaction to our soul. Goodness of nature must be their in everyone's life. Goodness of nature is shown in :

- Courtesy to strangers,
- Feeling compassion towards the errors of others,
- Forgiving or pardoning offences,
- Thanking people for small benefits, and
- Having the spirit of self – sacrifice.

All of the Bacon's essays are filled with "the spirit of life." He has written on almost every subject of common people's life. Bacon suggests his readers to be practical in life and he writes his thoughts and suggestions after examining scientifically. In his essay "Of Love", he writes :

"The stage is more beholding to Love,
 than the life of man. For as to the stage,
 love is ever matter of comedies, and now
 and then of tragedies; but in life it doth
 much mischief; sometimes like a siren,
 sometimes like a fury,"

Can we define "love" in words? Of course not! 'Love' may be divine, 'love' may be a spiritual union, 'love' may be a strong feeling, 'love' may be the reason of attachment between two persons, and many more considering may be for 'love', But when we talk about the description of 'love' by Bacon, it is practically and scientifically explained. He says :

"That it is impossible to love and to be wise."

Bacon says, it is impossible to be wise while being in love with someone. That is why great and worthy men have kept themselves away from love. A lover has neither riches nor wisdom.

Bacon suggests, that all men are equal and a man kneeling before a woman, is a sort of idolatry and it is not proper for a man to use his eye in his affair which was given him to execute higher purposes.

Man is inclined to love and if he does not spend his love on one particular person or a group of persons, it expands itself into universal love and such men become very kind and charitable to others. With it is life or love, we should hear the voice of our heart but forget not to keep the mind with us.

Bacon's definition of 'love' is different from the other great authors. Bacon's views on 'love' is from the real life experiences and practically evaluated facts. Though, there are numerous definitions and quotes on love, I would like to quote Lao Tzu's words about 'love', he writes,

"Being deeply loved by someone
 gives you strength, while
 loving someone deeply gives
 you courage."

Though, we do not find humour in Bacon's essays, we find ample wit in them. He knows how to make a clever use of words, and succeeds in expressing even common ideas in a pointed and witty manner which gives great pleasure to his readers. And that is the reason he is more quotable than any other English writer except Shakespeare. Many of his lines and phrases have become household proverbs. Bacon's essays are even today, fresh, original and delightful as they were in his own time period.

The purpose of this piece of writing and research is to convey "The spirit of life in Bacon's essays." We are bound to regard his essays as the greatest of all time. We find everything in his works, specially the essays, which are the best tools for everyday life of a common person. Bacon's thoughts and practical thinking make him a universal thinker. Being a universal thinker, Bacon has affected the thinking process and life style of the mass. We find the greatest spirit for life in his essays. Almost every aspect of life has been touched by Bacon. We must regard him for his essays and his attitude towards life.

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