

Department of English

Raja N.L Khan women's college (Autonomous)

Offers

Course Material on

**Sir Roger at Church**

For

**Semester II**

CC3 (British literature (Fiction and nonfiction)18th century).

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Faculty

Department of English.Raja N.L Khan women's college.

### **Life and works of Joseph Addison:-(1672-1719)**

Addison was born on May 1, 1672 in Milston, Wiltshire, but soon after Joseph's birth his father was appointed Dean of Lichfield, so the Addison family moved into the Cathedral Close.

He was educated at Lambertown University and Charterhouse School, where he first met Richard Steele, and at Queen's College, Oxford. He excelled in classics, was especially noted for his Latin verse, and became a Fellow of Magdalen College. In 1693, he addressed a poem to John Dryden, the former Poet Laureate, and his first major work, a book about the lives of English poets, was published in 1694, as was his translation of Virgil's Georgics, in the same year

For a short time his circumstances were somewhat strained, but the Battle of Blenheim in 1704, gave him a fresh opportunity to distinguish himself and later "The Campaign," which gave such satisfaction that he was appointed as a Commissioner in the government of Halifax.

Addison's next literary publication was an account of his travels in Italy, which was followed by a libretto, Rosamund. In 1705, the Whigs gained the ascendancy, and Addison was made Under-Secretary of State, accompanying the Earl of Halifax on a mission to Hanover.

### **Literary career:-**

Besides the above-mentioned works, Addison wrote a Dialogue on Medals, and left unfinished a work on the Evidences of Christianity.

### **Cato**

In 1712, Addison wrote his most famous work, a play entitled Cato, a Tragedy, based on the last days of the stoic philosopher Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis, it deals with such themes as individual liberty vs. government tyranny, Republicanism vs. Monarchism, logic vs. emotion. Although Addison was deeply committed to the Whigs, he was able, in Cato, to produce a play that was direct, unbiased, and, above all, profoundly moving.

The character of Addison, if somewhat cool and unimpassioned, was pure, magnanimous, and kind. The charm of his manners and conversation made him one of the most popular and admired men of his day. His style in his essays is remarkable for its ease, clarity, and grace, and for an inimitable and sunny humor which never soils and never hurts.

### **Contribution:-**

Addison is best remembered today, as having perfected the form of the periodical essay. His essays, reproduced in Tatler and The Spectator are considered timeless masterworks of English prosody;

moreover, the Classicism and Libertarianism which Addison articulated so clearly in his essays influenced a number of writers and politicians of the 1700s, including Samuel Johnson and the Founding Fathers of the United States.

The best of his essays are those which center round the figure of Sir Roger De Coverley, and hence are known as the Coverley Papers. Two things Addison did for English literature which is of inestimable value. First he overcame a certain corrupt tendency bequeathed by restoration literature. Addison set himself squarely against this unworthy tendency. Secondly, prompted and aided by the more original genius of his friend Steele, Addison seized upon the new social life of the clubs and made it the subject of endless pleasant essays upon types of men and manners.

### **The Tatler and The Spectator:-**

The Tatler and The Spectator are the beginning of the modern essay: and their studies of human characters as exemplified in Sir Roger de Coverley, are a preparation for the modern novel. Richard Steele was Addison's literary collaborator and friend. Steele has an originality and spontaneity whereas Addison was polished and refined. Steele's writing, it seems, comes directly from the heart. The episode on Sir Roger's disappointment in love had been written by Steele. It is no wonder that it touches our heart to the very core.

He is still one of the masterful and intelligent essayists in the English language, and a seminal figure in the history of eighteenth century English literature.

### **Paraphrasing of the essay:-**

The author is always very happy on Sunday in his village. And he thinks the holy Sunday is only human institution that can make people civilize.

He thinks that if there were no Sunday villagers would degenerate into savages. The return of Sunday saves them from being barbarians. On this day, the whole village assembles looking fresh and cheerful in their best dresses. Everyone discusses about their everyday life's problem with one another. Priest in church explains to them their duties social and spiritual. They pray together to supreme being. This way they get morality that makes them civilize and more humble.

The author says that Sunday clears away the rust of six days of a week both physically and spiritually. This refreshes their notion of religion and they thank to god for his mercy. At this time everyone tries to impress their opposite sex by their best behavior. They try to show their best quality before the whole villagers so that they are admired by all. In city area people can be seen in market while people can be seen like this on Sunday in village. This occasion is utilized by the people to discuss the village politics before or after the sermon. Then they return to their houses as new and better human being.

Being a good church man, sir Roger had made the church attractive and beautiful from insight through several quotations from the holy Bible at his own choosing. Like this he gives a beautiful clothe of his own expense, and railed the communion tables. He told the author many times that when he came here he found people of this village very irregular to church, in order to teach and make them kneel before

God, he gave every one of them a hassock, and prayer book; and hired a singing master in order to teach right tune and rhythm of prayer to the villagers. On this they feel proud now that now they can sing their prayer in more better way. Indeed, it is the best church of all that the author seen before his life.

Sir Roger is the landlord of whole congregation, and he has all the responsibility of church and prayer .so he is very strict for this rules and regulation and he keeps them in a very good manner in every way possible. And sir Roger never let anyone sleep while praying. It is other thing that sometimes he sleeps for a short time. If by chance after a short nap at sermon, he stands up suddenly and looks around, if he sees anyone sleeping either he goes himself to wake him up or send his servant to do this. He is like an old knight, who is little whimsical by nature and this type of particularities are seen on these occasions. Sometimes when all people have sung their psalms he is keep singing verse for a minute, sometimes when he became happy with his own devotion he says amen three or four time in same prayer. And sometime when all people kneel before God but he stands up to count and to see if anyone is missing.

The last day the author was very surprise to hear his friend sir Roger in the midst of the prayer, reminding a man name Johan Matthews not to disturb the people in church while praying. This Johan Matthews was famous for being idle person and this time he was kicking his heels on floor to play,

Sir Roger's behavior appears very odd. He seems to excreting his authority as a knight in church but he is not peculiar to his behavior that always with him in all circumstance of life, that inspire people to be a good man. There is not anything bad in his character to see. It is more so because they know that sir Roger is essentially a man of good thinking. He is really a well-wisher by heart, therefore, they see the singularities in his behavior in an opposite way. These do not hide his good quality rather it highlights and has a deep effect upon the people.

As soon as the prayer finished, nobody dares to go out until sir Roger is gone out from the church. Sir Roger comes down from his seat near to sitting people, and asks about their mother, family member or their relatives, whom he doesn't see in church. That is considered a hide insult.

Once priest told the author that on the day of religious practice, when sir Roger became happy with a boy, who answered sir Roger correctly. He gives him Bible to encourage and sometimes he gives piece of meat for his mother. Sir Roger increases five pounds every year to clerk's post. In this way he tries to encourage the youngsters to became active in church services. He promised to give good value to new clerk according to his merit when present clerk would be retired.

Relation between sir Roger and with his chapman is very good, the importance of this relation is realized when they are compared with the relation between the squire and chapman of a nearby villages. These villages are famous for their quarrels between both. The result is that people are losing interest in church. Everyone tries to prove himself best upon other. Squires does not go into church and chapman criticizes him openly. This is very harmful. Priest always teaches peoples against the landlord, and landlord takes revenge on him. Sometimes he does not come to church. Landlord makes his villagers atheist and he advises them not to give funds to church. While priest teaches them every Sunday and tells them that in every prayer that he is a better person than landlord. After all this result has gone so

far, that landlord didn't pray either in private or in public this half year. Priest threatens him that if he does not mind his behavior he would pay for him before whole congregation.

The quarrels between the landlord and priest are common in the village and also very harmful for the ordinary people. It is a common thing that ordinary people are deeply charmed by the wealthy people. Even sometimes, it became very difficult to convince by the priests when they come to know that many persons who earn five hundred pounds do not believe in church or God. These things impact upon all people; therefore, it is essential that rich and learned people should maintain a good relationship. Only then preaching of church can be effective upon common people.

### **Character analysis of Sir Roger de Coverley:-**

Sir Roger de Coverley is a fictional Tory character who was created to serve as a farcical squire stereotype of the bygone era by the Whig authors, Addison and Steele. His character is a well mixture of hospitality, humanity, love, helpfulness, disappointment, superstition, singularities, kindness, honesty and goodness. Although the character was created to deride the Tory mannerisms of the bygone era, Addison's satire is very mild, and that makes Sir Roger a rather agreeable character. Sometimes his behaviour seems to be very odd but they proceed from his good sense. He is beloved rather than esteemed by all who know him.

Sir Roger portrayed the antiquated country gentleman stereotype, allowing for The Spectator to deride him as a nostalgic relic. The traditional paternalistic attitude of Sir Roger when dealing with his tenants and servants is another example of a country trait that the authors attempted to mock. Instead their efforts resulted in Sir Roger appearing sympathetic and commendable, as the attitude stood in sharp contrast to the new generation of hard-hearted landed aristocrats. Unlike these new landowners, Sir Roger continued to observe traditional forms of country hospitality.

To some extent Sir Roger can be considered to be eccentric. In the essay "Sir Roger at Church" his eccentricity is seen in which he exercised his authority. While the healthy living and paternalistic communal relations demonstrated by Sir Roger are portrayed with subtle admiration, his dealings with the local church are highly satirized in "Sir Roger at Church". Mr. Spectator could not suppress a hint of bemusement over Sir Roger's complete authority in the church writing that, 'As Sir Roger is Landlord to the whole congregation; he keeps them in very good order, and will suffer no body to sleep in it besides himself...' The squire routinely caused disruptions such as lengthening the verses of psalms, standing while others were kneeling so as to note any absences and interrupting the sermon to tell people not to disturb the congregation with fidgeting or making noise. Mr. Spectator opined that the worthiness of his character made these behavioural oddities seem like foils rather than blemishes of his good qualities. He also noted that none of the other parishioners were polite or educated enough to recognise the ridiculousness of Sir Roger's behaviour in and authority over the church. These observations of Sir Roger's love of the high-Anglican church in the countryside are essential to the authors' original purpose for creating the character, to mock the seemingly backwards rural Tory.

In summing up, it can be said that despite being a man of great honour, Sir Roger is regarded as a humorist and sometimes eccentric because of possessing some oddities or peculiarities in him. However, the ultimate aim of Addison was not to show his humorous expressions to make us laugh only, rather to make us correct for our follies and absurdities. But the main intention of Mr. Spectator was to correct the society, to reform every corner of life by presenting the character Sir Roger.

### **Addison's Prose Style :-**

Addison is one of the greatest prose stylists in English literary history. He was the pioneer of a style that was very simple, lucid, natural, moderate, free from extravagant expression, and called 'middle style'.

The most striking feature of Addison's style is clearness and lucidity of expression. There is no complexity or obscurity or difficulty in his expression. Even, his long sentences are not difficult to understand. We can guess the meaning of his long sentences very clearly at the very first reading. Addison has also used short sentences when situation demands. For example, 'As soon as the sermon is finished, nobody presumes to stir till Sir Roger is gone out of the Church.'

Humor is one of the most notable qualities of Addison's style. His humor is mainly ironical and satirical and sometimes funny. It is not harsh or bitter but gentle and mild with a view of correcting the society.

Addison's style is not highly figurative. Fanciful similes and metaphors are not found in his writings. Rather, when he thinks that his use of figurative language would be more useful and effective, only then he uses them. Addison uses many allusions, anecdotes, references. Additionally, most of his essays are headed by quotation from classical or modern authors and these quotations are very apt to the subjects of the essays. For example, Sir Roger at Church begins with the motto from Pythagoras-

***'First, in obedience to thy country's rites,***

***Worship th'immortal God'.***

Addison's style is near to the language of conversation, but not to the informal conversational style of Montaigne. His prose style is neither the informal language of conversation nor the ultra formal language of a serious and heavy treatise.

Thus, Addison showed a perfect English prose style to a large extent and freed it from extravagances and excesses of eighteenth century writers, and brought in it clearness, lucidity and exactness.

### **Addison's approach to society as revealed in the Essays, Sir Roger at Church:-**

Addison was a great critic and social reformer who wished to bring about a change in the life of the contemporary people through his contribution to The Spectator, which he founded in collaboration with his friend Richard Steel. In periodical essays, he appears as a judicious critic of the manners and morals of the society. The main aim was to reform the society and it was Addison's task "to enliven morality with wit; and to temper wit with morality." He satirises the vanity of the society but he is very careful

and mild in his satire and, unlike Pope or Dryden, he is never personal in his attack, his mission being to correct the manners of the people and to improve their moral standards.

Through the observations of Mr. Spectator, Addison and Steele attempted to usher a complicated and subtle change in English society. The best of all the characters is Sir Roger de Coverley, the fictional stock-type of a Tory squire. Sir Roger portrayed the antiquated country gentleman stereotype, allowing for The Spectator to deride him as a nostalgic relic and depicted the Tory party as dated and out of fashion.

The traditional paternalistic attitude of Sir Roger when dealing with his tenants and servants is an example of a country trait that the authors appears to be sympathetic and commendable, as the attitude stood in sharp contrast to the new generation of hard-hearted landed aristocrats. Unlike these new landowners, Sir Roger continued to observe traditional forms of country hospitality. Sir Roger's power in the household came from the fondness his servants showed him due to his genuine concern for their well-being. . Sir Roger's ruling his household and the village with a genial yet somewhat autocratic way, is a relic to be adored, but impossible to emulate.

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The idea that Sir Roger and the country were frozen in a previous era demonstrates why Sir Roger de Coverley received such satirical yet partial treatment. He had the ability to represent both the positives and negatives of England's past, as evidenced by his paternalistic charity and derided etiquette. Despite being light-heartedly satirised as a symbol of a past way of life, Sir Roger was an admirable pastoral character with a nostalgic appeal. Nonetheless, Sir Roger de Coverley served as both the lovable outdated Tory and, more importantly, also the epitome of those Addison and Steele did not want governing the nation.

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