

On Good Resolutions- Robert Lynd

Introduction : Robert Lynd is one of the greatest of the essayists in English literature. His essays are called “familiar essay”, because they are filled with his personal anecdotes, broad sympathies, gentle humour, elegant style and gifted fluency. His essay “On Good Resolutions” also reflects these qualities.

New Year Resolutions: Every New Year people take a lot of good resolutions and seldom put them into practice. If a man wants to reform his life with good resolutions, his neighbours and friends may discourage him by saying that “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions”.

Types of Resolutions: Robert Lynd lists **three kinds** of resolutions. They are fairly easy, difficult and most difficult. Most people take the most difficult resolutions which Lynd calls the Himalayan resolutions such as getting up early in the morning to do exercises or winning the trophy for the school football team. These good resolutions are like day dreams and cannot be fulfilled. Common man cannot change his habit of getting up late.

Morality: Robert Lynd says that good resolutions are very delightful form of morality and we must encourage people to take more and more good resolutions because this world is lack of moral qualities. Good resolutions are golden anticipations of the day’s work, fresh and untarnished and full of song.

Silly Resolutions: Some people take resolutions which are so silly and very easy to put into practice in one’s life. These resolutions are contemptible and to be rejected. For example going to bed before midnight, getting up before noon, giving up tobacco etc. are some of the good resolutions. But even these resolutions are put into practice only from tomorrow or next New Year or next month. No need to postpone them to the next New Year day. Lynd says that good resolutions are the intelligent anticipation of events always postponed. They are the April of virtue with no September following.

Resolutions to be maintained: First time practicing any resolution, it gives people thrill and joy because of its novelty. For example if one decides to get up early morning, the first day he will get great joy and thrill because of the freshness and silent beauty of the morning. But if it becomes a rule every day, only the habit is left. In this context, Lynd quotes the story of the prodigal son in the Bible and says that when the prodigal son came back home a grand reception was given to him by his father and even killed a fatted calf. But the following day he was not given such grand dinner. Similarly if we do any good thing, for the first day or two we will get thrill and joy and after that it becomes a dull habit.

Impossible Resolutions: Some other resolutions cannot be put into practice even for a day. For example learning grammar of a new language or doing exercise with the help of mechanical apparatus. Robert Lynd says that human being is a slave of old habits and he needs a mighty will on the heroic scale to change his old habits. It means he must sacrifice or throw away some of his old habits and pleasures. He wants to be reformed and perfect in his character.

Conclusion: According to Robert Lynd, the characteristics of good resolutions should be related to man’s strong belief. This is why common man always takes good resolutions, but not able to complete it. **Lack of will power** is the cause of his failure. Again next New Year he will take a number of good resolutions and forgets them soon. Lynd concludes the essay by saying that people should have strong willpower to practice the Resolutions.

On Doing Nothing- J.B. Priestley

Introduction: On Doing Nothing is an essay by J.B.Priestley debating over the idea of work and relaxation. He talks of the idea of unwinding oneself and the benefits people would enjoy from doing nothing. He, thus, stresses on the idea of doing nothing and spending time in leisurely

activities which is as necessary and beneficial to human life as work. The life of man is fraught with work and people are involved in that rat race directly or indirectly. Such a life is necessary and can also make us prosperous. But it isn't the be all and the end all of all matters. There, thus exists a world outside work-the world of leisurely activities and past times. People have to spend sometimes consciously in such matters. Nature is beautiful and it, not only soothes the mind, but also a teacher and a nourisher. Nature only regains our mental health and achieves a position where we can work better and more efficiently.

Value of leisure : However, the irony is that not many people realize this value. They spend most of their lives at break-neck speed and pass away without even looking at nature. The author does not conform to such an idea of life. However, the author does not instruct us against work. Work is important and necessary and absolute, no work would only mean laziness couple with aimlessness. He only wants us to blend our work with the perfect mixture of rest and pastimes. Balancing work and leisure helps people to perform better. Thus, people should make conscious efforts to enjoy nature and relax. It is only then, that, their lives become a complete circle.

Union with Nature: This is the reason why he enjoys his outing with his artist friend at Yorkshire Falls. Such communion with nature helps him to retain his sanity intact. On the other hand, he denounces the likes of Mr. Gordon Selfridge (British merchant) who curse the waste of time. Such people work only for profit motives and in reality miss out a considerable portion of life. The tragedy, however, is that many people don't even realize the value of past times.

The importance of the past (history) : This makes the author suggest instances in the history, who would uphold the author's notion of life and its' value. Thus, William Wordsworth would only be happy to vouch for such a kind of life. Priestley goes on to say that a devil is usually busiest being and majority of the world's fuss is created by overwork and impatience. A break from the usual, monotonous and humdrum affairs of life only helps people to avoid such irritation.

Conclusion : In short, the author tries to hold before the readers a way of life and its' intrinsic value. There is more to life than just working ceaselessly. Work and leisure, if blended properly not only helps us to go a long way, but also in a better and more fruitful way.

SELECTED SNOBBERIES- ALDOUS HUXLEY

Introduction: Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894–1963) was an English writer, novelist, philosopher. He was the author of nearly fifty books. Huxley was best known for his novels, especially *Brave New World*, set in a dystopian future. Huxley tells about three uses of essays. The first is the personal and auto-biographical. The second is the objective, the factual.. The third is the abstract-universal

The snobbish men: All men are snobs about something. For everything in their life, they feel they are superiors. But, they cannot feel proud of any of their diseases. For example, that there are any leprosy-snobs. Yet, some rich people are boasting about their diseases too. Being a sick person makes the rich people every much important. It is a source of snobbish self-importance. Many young people whom Huxley met had tuberculosis. But they behaved like Keats or Marie Bashkirtseff. They were consumption -snobs, who thought that it would be romantic to-fade away in the flower of youth. Their final days would be pathetic.

Disease –snobs: In the case of those commoner disease-snobs, whose claim is that they suffer from one of the diseases of the rich to create sympathy. Some people who don't have any work always go for doctor- shopping, from an old doctor to fashionable doctor, in search of cures from problematical (imaginary) diseases. Disease-snobbery is only one out of a great multitude of snobberies.

Booze-snobbery: There are changes in boasting off things since the ancient times. What were good snobberies a hundred years ago is now out of fashion. From America, English people have learnt the booze-snobbery (alcohol drinking). The bad influences of this snobbery are rapidly spreading all over the world. Even in France, known for delicious wine, who never had booze party now follow American booze-snobbery known as cocktail party, especially among the rich people. Booze-snobbery has now made it socially permissible. Even women seem to be drunk in private parties.

Modernity-snobbery: Many people want to boast off about their love for modernity. The reasons for this are simple that many wish to buy the latest things, throwing off the old ones. It adds money to the producer. People try to substitute motor-car, boot, and suit of clothes. The modernity-snob is this industrialist's best friend. The newspapers do their best in advertising the new arrivals. Advertisement also gets money for developing modernity-snobbery.

Art- snobs: Most of us are also art-snobs. There are two varieties of art-snobbery- the platonic and the unplatonic. Platonic art-snobs merely 'take an interest' in art. Unplatonic art-snobs go further and actually buy art. Platonic art snobbery is a branch of culture- snobbery. Unplatonic art snobbery is a hybrid or mule (donkey like). It is possession snobbery. It is also a collection of wealth symbols. For an art collection can represent money more effectively than a whole fleet of motor- cars.

The effect of snobbery: Most art-snobs collect only the works of the dead. But some art-snobs are also modernity-snobs. The value of snobbery in general, is dangerous to society. A society with plenty of snobberies is like a dog with plenty of fleas. The society -snob must be perpetually lion- hunting.

Buddhist view: The Buddhists considered every desire in this world of illusion as bad. In that case, all snobberies are bad only. If the snobberies do something good, then it is better.

For example, most professional intellectuals will approve of culture-snobbery, as it only appreciates art. But, a manufacturer of motor cars, on the other hand, will rank the snobbery of possessions above culture-snobbery. He will do his best to attract people to buy his car.

Conclusion: To be an essayist, a writer must have the gift of style and this Huxley undoubtedly had in an abundant measure too. Huxley had a vast knowledge also, which was gained from much travel, immense reading, and constant meeting with intelligent people. His essays are relevant to the situation of any times.

Shooting an Elephant – George Orwell

Introduction : Shooting an Elephant (1936) by George Orwell is a narrative essay about Orwell's time as a police officer for the British Raj in colonial Burma. George Orwell works as the sub-divisional police officer of a town in the British colony of Burma. Because he is a military occupier, he is hated by much of the village. Though the Burmese never stage a full revolt, they express their hatred by being unkind to Orwell at every opportunity.

Orwell as an Imperialist: This situation provokes two conflicting responses in Orwell: on the one hand, his role makes him despise the British Empire's systematic mistreatment of its subjects. On the other hand, however, he dislikes the locals because of how they torment him. Orwell is caught between considering the British Raj an "unbreakable tyranny" and believing that killing a troublesome villager would be "the greatest joy in the world."

The event: The narrative centers around the event of a day when all of these conflicted emotions manifest themselves and Orwell faces them and understands them. One day, an incident takes place that shows Orwell "the real nature of imperialism." A domesticated elephant has escaped

from its chains and gone wild, threatening villagers and property. The only person capable of controlling the elephant—its “mahout”—went looking for the elephant in the wrong direction, and is now twelve hours away. Orwell goes to the neighborhood where the elephant was last spotted. The neighborhood’s inhabitants give such conflicting reports that Orwell nearly concludes that the whole story was a hoax. Suddenly, he hears uproar nearby and rounds a corner to find a “coolie”—a laborer—lying dead in the mud, crushed and skinned alive by the rogue elephant. Orwell orders a subordinate to bring him a gun strong enough to shoot an elephant.

The decision of shooting : Orwell’s subordinate returns with the gun and locals reveal that the elephant is in a nearby field. Orwell walks to the field, and a large group from the neighborhood follows him. The townspeople have seen the gun and are excited to see the elephant shot. Orwell feels uncomfortable—he had not planned to shoot the elephant.

Orwell’s hesitation: The group comes upon the elephant in the field, eating grass happily. Seeing the peaceful creature makes Orwell realize that he should not shoot it—besides, shooting a full-grown elephant is like destroying expensive infrastructure. After coming to this conclusion, Orwell looks at the assembled crowd—now numbering in the thousands—and realizes that they expect him to shoot the elephant, as if part of a theatrical performance. The colonizers are “puppets,” bound to fulfill their subjects’ expectations. Orwell has to shoot the elephant, or else he will be laughed at by the villagers—an outcome he finds intolerable.

The firing at the elephant: The best course of action, Orwell decides, would be to approach the elephant and see how it responds, but to do this would be dangerous and might set Orwell up to be humiliated in front of the villagers. In order to avoid this unacceptable embarrassment, Orwell must kill the beast. He aims the gun where he thinks the elephant’s brain is. Orwell fires, and the crowd cheers up in excitement. The elephant sinks to its knees and begins to die. Orwell fires again, and the elephant’s appearance worsens, but it does not collapse. After a third shot, the elephant trumpets and falls, rattling the ground where it lands.

Orwell feels sorry: The fallen elephant continues to breathe. Orwell fires more, but the bullets have no effect. The elephant is obviously in agony. Orwell is distraught to see the elephant “powerless to move and yet powerless to die,” and he uses a smaller rifle to fire more bullets into its throat. When this does nothing, Orwell leaves the scene, unable to watch the beast suffer. He later hears that it took the elephant half an hour to die. Villagers strip the meat off of its bones shortly thereafter.

Conclusion: Orwell’s choice to kill the elephant was controversial. The elephant’s owner was angry, but, as an Indian, had no legal claim. Older British agreed with Orwell’s choice, but younger colonists thought it was inappropriate to kill an elephant just because it killed a coolie, since they think elephants are more valuable than coolies. Orwell notes that he is lucky the elephant killed a man, because it gave his own actions legal justification. Finally, Orwell wonders if any of his comrades understood that he killed the elephant “solely to avoid looking a fool.”