

DR. AMRITANSHU KUMAR
Assistant Professor English
D.K. College, Dumraon (VKSU)

Study material U6 Part-I, Paper-1

Joseph Addison as a periodical writer

Educated at the Charter house, Addison went to Oxford where he became a fellow of Magdalen College. He early made his mark as a serious and accomplished scholar and seems to have attracted the notice of the Whig leaders, who marked him out as future literary prop of their function. He obtained a travelling scholarship of 300 pounds a year, and saw much of Europe under favourable conditions. Then the misfortunes of the Whigs in 1703 reduced him to poverty. In 1704 it is said at the instigation of the leaders of the Whigs, he wrote the poem The Campaigns praising the war policy of the Whigs in general and the worthiness of Marlborough in particular. This poem brought him fame and fortune.

(2)

He obtained many official appointments and pensions married a dower countess and became a Secretary of State. Two years later he died at the early age of 49. In his Latin verses Addison attained early distinctions. These verses were highly prized at a time when prize for proficiency in such a medium was of some significance. Then in the comparison in 1704 gave him a reputation as one of the major poets of the age. The poem is poor enough but is written in the heroic couplet and with some truth it has been called a rhymed gazette. The story is little more than a pompous catalogue of places and persons. The style is but mediocre and warm only when it is feebly stirred by the ignorant enthusiasms that a sedentary civilian feels the glory of war. The hero is Marlborough who is drawn on a scale of epic grandeur. The most famous passage of the work is that comparing the general to the angel that writes the story. The poem literally made Addison's fortune for after reading it the Whig Lord Treasurer Godolphin gave him the valuable appointment of Commissioner of Appeals. His only other poetical work worthy of notice are

(3)

hymns which are medious, scholarly and full of cheerful piety. The one that brings the spacious ferment on high is among the best. His drama - Addison was lucky in his greatest dramatic effort just as he was lucky in his longest poem. In 1713 produced the tragedy of Cato, part of which had been in manuscript as early as 1703. It is of little merit and shows that Addison whatever his other qualities may be, his is no dramatist. It is written in laborious blank verse, in which wooden characters declaim long dull speeches but it caused the eyes of the political parties both of which is the course of the play saw pithy references to the inflated panics of the time. The play had the remarkable run of the 29 nights and was revived with much success. Addison also attempted an opera rosalind which was a failure and the prose comedy of the drummer 1715 is said with some reason to be his also if it is it adds nothing to his reputation. His prose - Several political pamphlets are ascribed to Addison but as a pamphlet, he is not impressive. He lacked the directness of Swift whose pen was a terror to his opponents. It is in fact almost entirely an Essayist.

That Addison is justly famed. These essays began almost casually. On April 12, 1709 Steele published the first number of the Tatler, a periodical was to appear three weekly. Addison who was a school and college friend of Steele saw and liked the new publication and offered his service as a contributor. His offer was accepted and his first contribution a pen-wit - political one appeared in no. 18. Hence forward Addison wrote regularly for the paper contributing about 42 nos. which may be compared with Steele's share of about one hundred eighty eight.

The paper finished in January 1711 then in March of the same year Mill began the Spectator which was issued daily. The paper had some variations of fortunes price and time of issue but eventually it ran until December 1712 obtained an unprecedented popularity. It was said that in its palmy days, it sold 10000 copies of each issue and also exercised a great influence upon the reading public of the period.