

On Avoiding Foolish Opinions- Bertrand Russel (1872-1970)

The short and thought provoking lesson, “On Avoiding Foolish Opinions” is written by Bertrand Russel. He is a great British philosopher, mathematician, thinker and writer. He got Nobel Prize in literature in 1950. He is an agnostic and polymath. In this lesson, Russel writes about the need and the ways of avoiding foolish opinions.

According to Russel, foolish opinions can be avoided by observation. He quotes the examples of Aristotle, hedgehogs, unicorns, Manchus, Chinese and Gandhi in support of his analysis. He says that we should not be prone to dogmatic and biased opinions. Logical knowledge and careful introspection avoid controversies and keep us cool instead of angry.

Russel says that wide travelling and looking from other’s point of view can reduce prejudice and foolish opinions. Imaginary dialogue with hypothetical opponents helps us to become rational and logical. Everyone should avoid the opinions that flatter self-esteem in the matters like gender and nation. We must understand that man is a brief episode in the life of a small planet in the vast universe. So we should always avoid foolish opinions to lead a happy and peaceful life.

Ode to the West Wind – P.B. Shelley

P.B. Shelley was a rebellious poet. He greatly loved liberty and wanted all mankind to be free from all kinds of bondage. In this poem, he gives a loud and clear message that joy would follow grief. After despair, there would be hope.

The poet uses the West Wind as a symbol of wild untamed energy. He personifies it and shows its impact on the earth, the sky and the ocean. He calls it the breath of autumn. It drives away the dead and rotten seeds. They fly away like pestilence driven multitudes. But while the West Wind brings death to old and rotten leaves, it carries seeds to distant places thus bringing rebirth.

The West Wind scatters the clouds all over the sky. They look like bright hair uplifted from the head of some fierce maenad. The West Wind awakens the ocean sleeping peacefully. It ruffles its waves and clefts them. Even the plants at the bottom of the ocean feel its power. They turn grey on hearing its terrible thunder.

The poet requests to the West Wind to lend him some of its power. These were a time when the poet was as wild and untamed as the West Wind but now the life has tamed him. He has fallen on the thorns of life and is bleeding. Now he needs the help of the West Wind to give support. He wants the West Wind to lift him like a wave or a lead or a cloud.

The poet wants to spread his message of hope throughout the world. But his thoughts are dull and grey like the dead leaves. That is why the poet wants West Wind to make him his lyre. In this way he would be able to spread his message of hope and joy to the whole world.

The Doll's House- Katherine Mansfield

The short and beautiful lesson, "The Doll's House" was written by Katherine Mansfield. She is a great modernist writer in English from New Zealand. In this lesson, Katherine writes about the social discrimination prevailing in New Zealand in her days through the episode of the Doll's House.

Mrs. Hay sent 'the Doll's House' as a gift to the Burnell children, Isabel, Lottie and Kezia. The children were very much impressed by the beauty and freshness of the Doll's house and wanted to show it to their school friends. With the permission of their mother, Aunt Beryl, they invited all of their friends except the Kelveys sisters, Lil and Else and showed it to them. Their mother warned them not to invite the Kelveys as they were very poor. Mrs. Kelveys was a poor washerwoman and had to work in many houses to keep her daughters happy. The kelveys sisters were ill-treated at school because of their poverty by their school mates and even by the teachers but they suffered silently.

Kezia, the youngest of the Burnell children observed the discrimination and decided to set it right. One day Kezia invited the Kelveys sisters to home and showed the Doll's House secretly. But Aunt Beryl found it and shouted at the Kelveys. They ran away from her and became happy as they saw the Doll's House and its wonder lamp at last.

Thus Katherine Mansfield presents how the elder people spoil the innocent children with their jealous and stupid thoughts through the episode of the Doll's House.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

- **ABRAR MOHSIN**

Abrar Mohsin is an educator who has worked in a variety of positions across Africa. Florence Nightingale, an English nurse and reformer who was born in Florence, Italy, is the subject of the current lesson. She is referred to as "the lady with the lamp." The wars are not glorious in any way. They only brought death, ruin, suffering, starvation, and illness. Some people were immortalised in their demise, but who cares about the injured, gone missing, and disabled from the battles?

Florence Nightingale, a young woman, expressed sadness over the injured, lost, and disabled. Her parents tried to convince her not to become a nurse, but she was adamant in her choice. Crimean hospitals experienced a systemic collapse during the Crimean War. The British government then requested that she would go and organize the care of the injured. She consented to go as a genuine hospital nurse rather than a lady officer. She had to deal with her health issues, the worst medical conditions, and the lack of cooperation in Scutari's administration. The sufferers were grateful as they regarded her "the Lady with the Lamp."

Even though she was disabled when she arrived in England and was confined to a bed, she never considered her job to be finished. For as long as she lived, she intended to fight and work on behalf of the victim. At the age of 90, she passed away.

The Night Train at Deoli - Ruskin Bond

Ruskin Bond (born 19 May 1934) is an Indian author of British descent. His first novel, *The Room on the Roof*, received the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957. He was awarded the SahityaAkademi Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, his novel in English. Bond has written hundreds of short stories, essays, novels and books for children. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014. He lives with his adopted family in Landour, Mussoorie.

The Night Train at Deoli is a story of adolescent infatuation presented with great sensitivity. It expresses the narrator's love for a poor basket-seller whom he encounters at a small station while on his way to Dehra Dun. He meets the girl only twice, never to see her again, but she remains in his memory ever after. The story focuses on the meeting of the two strangers and their brief acquaintance. It captures the essence of a few moments with the unrestrained suspense and all pervasive romanticism.

The story, that is woven against the backdrop of Deoli-a small station where the train would briefly halt before entering the heavy jungles of the Indian Terai belt, begins with the eighteen-year old protagonist narrating an incident about one of his regular visits to his grandmother's place during his college vacations. The train would reach Deoli station at about five in the morning and halt there for about ten minutes. The narrator vividly describes the ambience of the small railway station with just one platform, that was dimly lit with electric bulbs and oil lamps and the jungle across the railway tracks would just be visible in the faint light of dawn. No one ever got down or got into the train here.

UPAGUPTA

- RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The Poem “Upagupta” by Rabindranath Tagore, establishes the temporary sensual pleasures, the root cause of sorrow and the realization of truth. Tagore achieves this through the incidents in the life of a dancing girl and her meeting with an ascetic called Upagupta.

Upagupta is a disciple of Buddha. He is a simple, handsome young man. He lays asleep in the dust by the city wall of Mathura. One night, the dancing girl returned home after her dance. She touched Upagupta’s breast with her feet, who slept in the dust by the city wall of Mathura. She requested Upagupta to come to her house. Upagupta refuses and tells her “I will visit you when the time is ripe.” Later, Upagupta finds the dancing girl lying on the ground outside the town, having sores all over her body and forbidden by the town people. He applies balm on her body and when asked who he was, he replies “The time has come to visit you and I am here.”

On her first meeting with the monk, it is the rainy season of August (1 to 12 lines). The sky is dark, with no stars. On her second meeting, it is Spring of April (13 to 23lines) with the sky is bright with a full moon. The branches of the trees were full of flowers. The air was warm, and the breeze made musical sounds. On her first meeting, though it is a night, the dancing girl is bright with her jewels shining like stars. On her second meeting, the sky is bright with a full moon, whereas her life is dark with sorrow, being stricken with ‘black’ pestilence.

The Coromandel Fishers – Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu was an Indian political activist and poet. She was an important figure in India's struggle for independence from colonial rule. Naidu's work as a poet earned her the sobriquet 'the Nightingale of India', or 'Bharat Kokila' by Mahatma Gandhi because of colour, imagery and lyrical quality of her poetry.

Sarojini Naidu in the poem, 'The Coromandel Fishers', has described the beauty of nature and the folk culture of the Coromandel Coast of India. It depicts the relationship of fishermen with nature. She asks the fisher folks to wake up and offer their prayers to the morning light. The wind is calm and quiet like a child that sleeps soundly after crying the whole night. She asks the fishermen to gather the nets and set their catamarans free and set out into the sea to gather the leaping wealth of the tide as they are the kings of the sea.

She comforts the folks by saying that the sea is their mother, the cloud is their brother and the waves toss their boats at sunset and drive them far. God who controls the storm will protect their lives from its rage. She also says that the coconut glade gives shade and the sweet fragrance of the mango grove is soothing. Moreover, the sight of the sands on a full moon night is very beautiful, mixed with the voices of the birds early at dawn. But beyond all this, the kiss of the spray and the dance of the wild foam in joy is far sweeter. So, she asks the fisher folks to row their catamaran to the edge of the borders, the horizon, where the low sky appears to unite with the sea.

An Astrologer's Day – R K Narayan

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami commonly known as **R. K. Narayan**, was an Indian writer known for his work set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. He was a leading author of early Indian literature in English along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao.

“An Astrologer's Day” opens as its title character arrives at his workplace, at midday, and as usual spreads his charts and other fortune-telling props before him, though no one comes seeking his aid for many hours. Later, with nightfall approaching, he begins preparing to go home when, all of a sudden, he beholds a man standing in front of him. In the exchange of talk, the astrologer carefully tries to spread the net of his craft around the client, and the client, Guru Nayak, responds with a challenge: Would the astrologer tell him whether he, Guru Nayak, will be successful in a search he is carrying out, returning double the fee he has paid if the prediction cannot be made? The astrologer alternately accepts, declines, and feigns indifference, all the more to whet Nayak's appetite and make him press his offer.

The astrologer then catches a glimpse of Nayak's face in the light of the match Nayak has struck under his cheroot, and, though at first chilled by the sight, decides to play out Nayak's game. The astrologer tells him that he was once left for dead by another man, who had attacked him with a knife; Nayak, astonished, bares his chest to show the scar and wants to know if his assailant is alive. The astrologer adds that his assailant is now dead and that he, Guru Nayak, should go back to his village and live out his life peacefully. To placate the still angry Nayak, who demands to know if the assailant met the kind of death he deserved, the astrologer replies that he was crushed under a lorry truck. Nayak pays him the fee and hurriedly departs.

The astrologer returns home late to his anxious wife and gives her the money he earned that day, adding that it all came from one client. The wife is happy but notices a slightly changed expression on her husband's face; she asks him if there is something wrong. “Nothing,” he says but after dinner tells her that he is relieved that the man he thought he killed in a drunken brawl many years earlier is, in fact, alive. He says that it is late and goes to sleep on a pyol.