

## II BA ENGLISH

### FOUNDATION III – BLE30

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#### UNIT I – PROSE

### 1. The Right to Public Amnesia – Santhosh Desai

#### Santhosh Desai

One of India's best-known social commentators and advertising and marketing professionals, Santosh Desai is a columnist with several prominent publications. He heads Future Brands, a branding services and consulting company, and was earlier the president of McCann Erickson India.

#### **The Right to Public Amnesia: An Overview.**

Santosh Desai 's column Chity Chity Bang Bang in the latest Monday article The Right to Public Amnesia is bang on a complex issue of individual's rights over his/her life and actions. Despite his lucid and argumentative style, the article that starts with a bang ends almost with a whimper as he has no answers to the disturbing question of one's right to be forgotten in the age of internet where the ready availability of information renders it impossible for the erasure of one's actions from public memory. The cliché's truism 'public memory is short' has no validity in today's age of advanced technology with its remarkable storage space in megabytes. Can public amnesia be restored as an individual's right is only one part of the question. Implied in this question is that the action and sayings of the individual leave such a damaging imprint on the society that cannot be forgotten and swept under the carpet. The ethical question is how far an individual can claim as his right to privacy when s/he inhabits a collective space called society. The modern paradox is the current faith in individualism overstressing the importance of the individual to live and act as s/he wishes, stays cheek by jowl with the public scrutiny of his/her private life. Nothing can be hidden as everything gets recorded by technology and safely vaulted for posterity. Albert Einstein said: "Memory is deceptive because it is coloured by today's events." But internet memory is permanent and cannot be changed. For example, the acrimony and invidious personal attacks by politicians on their adversaries in the pre-poll days stay

permanently recorded on the net that all the bonhomie they display post elections cannot be wiped out from the hard disk. To project oneself in a new avatar and get accepted is a gargantuan task because it is no longer the human memory at work but the internet memory with its vast storage space and instant retrievability.

So, in this era, it is not possible to be forgotten- yet another modern paradox as human nature always loves to be remembered. The modern technology thus puts the onus on us to act and say that leaves a lasting and feel-good imprint on the society that we live in. One small slip and we are netted into eternal incarceration. Instead of asking for a revival of public amnesia, we should accept the fact that we are today digitally born and should try to avoid being an embarrassment to our space in this new technological society of memory. Jean Paul Sartre speaking about human responsibility to the society wrote: "the only possibility of creating a human community is to accept the human condition-that we exist, that we must work, that we are mortal, that we are involved, that we must choose and that in choosing we invent ourselves and take full responsibility...it is up to us to give life a meaning and value is nothing else but the meaning that we choose." In choosing our ethics, we make ourselves.

## **2. On saying “Please” – A.G. Gardiner**

### **A.G. Gardiner**

Alfred George Gardiner (2 June 1865 – 3 March 1946) was an English journalist, editor and author. His essays, written under the alias "Alpha of the Plough", are highly regarded. He was also Chairman of the National Anti-Sweating League, an advocacy group which campaigned for a minimum wage in industry.

### **On saying “Please”: An Overview**

In On Saying Please by A.G. Gardiner we have the theme of courtesy, civility, morality, responsibility and control. Taken from his Many Furrows collection the reader realises after reading the essay that Gardiner may be exploring the theme of courtesy and the benefits of being courteous to others. The story of the lift-man and his pushing of the man out of the lift leaves two people to suffer. The lift-man who is likely to be charged by the police and the man himself who was pushed out of the lift. Though some critics might suggest the lack of courtesy shown by the man who was pushed out of the lift is enough for the lift-man to take matters into his own hand. The lift-man only suffers by his actions. Whereas if he had taken the moral high ground and continued to be polite to the man. He may have in fact changed the man’s approach to him. By showing civility the narrator argues that more is to be gained than if one is ill-mannered or ill-tempered towards another person. If anything, the lift-man has lost his peace of mind and possibly his freedom.

The narrator’s example of the conductor is also interesting as the conductor at all times appears to take the higher moral ground despite what he may think of his passengers on the. He never judges anyone and is apologetic when he makes a mistake. Something that is noticeable when he stands on the narrator’s feet. Though an accident the conductor ensures that he apologises and that no offence can be taken. This may be important as Gardiner may be suggesting that just as the lift-man lost his patience and peace of mind. The conductor on the other hand remains morally upright. He is sensible enough to know when he has made a mistake and when he must apologise. Unlike the lift-man who has taken matters personally and as a result has broken the law. Which takes precedence over any ill-mannered approach that one may receive from another person. Legality takes precedence over moral laws in the eyes of society and one

is left to deal with a perceived moral injustice by themselves without the support of the law. As to whether the reader agrees with this is a different matter as loss of peace of mind over a moral slight can result in the law being broken or others who are innocent being affected.

Gardiner may also be exploring the difficulties that can be incurred by an individual when dealing with the public. The lift-man acted inappropriately while the conductor on the other hand is wise enough to know that it is better to be sweet to each passenger than to offend them. Not only does the conductor keep his peace of mind but he also ensures that he is not responsible for breaking the law. Though the conductor may feel like doing so. In contrast the lift-man and the conductor are two very different types of people. The lift-man loses control because he feels slighted in some way. That he may be deemed by the man entering the lift as being inferior to him. While the conductor on the other hand does not lose control of his emotions. Rather he continues to be polite, well-mannered and civil to all his passengers. It is by losing control that the lift-man faces the more serious charge of breaking the law. Morally the law is not responsible for how the lift-man has been treated. The law only deals with issues of a legal nature.

It is also clear to the reader that the happier of the two men is the conductor. The lift-man having lost control acts irresponsibly. Whereas if he takes the higher moral ground that is shown by the conductor. He still keeps his peace of mind and acts morally superior to the man who did not say please. Which leaves the reader realizing that regardless of how one is morally treated by another person. The path to follow is not to retaliate or query an indiscretion that may have been felt but to rise above the indiscretion and maintain one's dignity. At all times ensuring that one can keep one's peace of mind without having to lower themselves to the level of the perceived offender. Something which may be difficult to accomplish though worth the effort. As matters of gratitude can have an effect not only on the offended party but also to those in the offended party's circle. Something which only leads to further disruption and misfortune to an individual. Despite themselves being innocent of any law that they perceive may be broken. In reality it is better for a person to overcome how they might feel having been slighted morally and to take the higher moral ground.

### **3. With the Photographer – Stephen Leacock**

#### **Stephen Leacock**

Stephen P. H. Butler Leacock FRSC (30 December 1869 – 28 March 1944) was a Canadian teacher, political scientist, writer, and humourist. Between the years 1915 and 1925, he was the best-known English-speaking humourist in the world. He is known for his light humour along with criticisms of people's follies.

#### **With the Photographer: An Overview**

Stephen Leacock is a modern English prose writer. He has written many prose pieces. All his prose pieces are known for their subtle humour. They talk about real life situation. With the Photographer is a short prose that describes the Leacock's experience with a photographer. Leacock, as is the regular case, gets a bitter experience.

Leacock goes to a photographer to get himself photographed. He waits for an hour and he is called into the inner room. The photographer is a grave man. The photographer is not satisfied with the Leacock's face. He says that Leacock looks ugly. He then concludes that he would shoot three quarter view of Leacock. Leacock acknowledges this and starts reasoning about the decision but the photographer do not respond or care for what Leacock is talking.

The photographer hides himself behind the camera and comes out of it. He comes close to Leacock. Leacock thinks that the photographer is going to kiss him but he turns Leacock's face that would be good for a pose. The photographer gives a series of instructions like close mouth, droop ears, roll eyes, turn face, expand lungs, etc., to Leacock. Leacock is confused and he is frightened. Leacock becomes impatient, he scolds the photographer, and the photographer clicks a shot. Leacock is shocked.

The photographer asks Leacock to check the proof on Saturday and the photograph would be delivered by Sunday. On Saturday Leacock is further shocked on seeing the proof. The photographer says that he has edited the eyebrows and the mouth. He also plans to edit his ears. Leacock shouts at the photographer asking for a photograph that would resemble him. He says that he loves his original face than the altered one. He leaves the photo studio with tears.

## **4. Indian Women -Dr. S. Radhakrishnan**

### **Dr. S. Radhakrishnan**

As an academic, philosopher, and statesman, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) was one of the most recognized and influential Indian thinkers in academic circles in the 20th century. Throughout his life and extensive writing career, Radhakrishnan sought to define, defend, and promulgate his religion, a religion he variously identified as Hinduism, Vedanta, and the religion of the Spirit. He sought to demonstrate that his Hinduism was both philosophically coherent and ethically viable. Radhakrishnan's concern for experience and his extensive knowledge of the Western philosophical and literary traditions has earned him the reputation of being a bridge-builder between India and the West. He often appears to feel at home in the Indian as well as the Western philosophical contexts, and draws from both Western and Indian sources throughout his writing. Because of this, Radhakrishnan has been held up in academic circles as a representative of Hinduism to the West. His lengthy writing career and his many published works have been influential in shaping the West's understanding of Hinduism, India, and the East.

### **Indian Women: An Overview**

In this essay titled "Indian Women," Dr. Radhakrishnan, says that womanhood has been highly respected in Indian tradition. They have equal right to development and advancement in life as men do. Sadly, certain periods of our history have neglected the education of women and hence, women had to remain illiterate and mired in superstitions. Swami Vivekananda once complained that, "India cannot yet produce great women," only because of the inhuman degradation to which they were subjected in recent times. Dr. Radhakrishnan reveals his great concern and anguish for the weakening of the union of marriage and hence of the family. He concludes by saying that the position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level.

Indian tradition has generally respected womanhood, though occasionally we find derogatory references to women. Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. In regard to opportunities for intellectual and spiritual development, we should not emphasise the sex of women even as we do not emphasise the sex of men. In early

times, education of women was encouraged in the Vedic age, women enjoyed equal opportunities for education and work.

While spiritual life and social service are open to women, marriage and motherhood are treated as the normal vocation for them. Modern anthropology brings out clearly that marriage and family are found in one form or another as fundamental institutions in every human society, primitive or civilized. Each is a self which requires the other as its complement. The division of the sexes is a biological phenomenon, not a historical event like the division of races and classes. Male and female constitute ordinarily a fundamental unity.

It has been the tendency of man to use woman as an object of amusement and pleasure. Woman is asked to look upon man as the meaning and justification of her existence. This is in line with the well-known saying. "He for God only. She for God in him." It is often said that the Oriental man is a slave. It only means that self-assertion is not her quality. The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level. Men who are responsible for many of the views about women, have woven fantastic stories about the latter's glamour and instability, and their inferiority to men as well as their mystery and sanctity.