

M.A (English)

Semester - 4th

CC - 15

Paper - (d) 16th and 17th Century proseShallesh Ranjan
Assistant Professor
Dept. of English
Maharaja College, Ara

Topic:- Give the critical appreciation of Bacon's essay "Of Revenge"

The essay, 'Of Revenge' is one of the well known essays written by the father of the English Essay, Francis Bacon. Bacon was a social philosopher through and through. He was a man of letters and had profound knowledge of law. He was the Lord Chancellor of England in the reign of James I. So one can guess his capability and efficiency of writing the essay like "Of Revenge". The main theme of the essay is as he himself says in the very beginning that "Revenge is a kind of wild justice which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out." According to him the idea of revenge, doubtlessly, is the idea of witches or mischievous men. It should be avoided by heart. He says, "This is certain that a man, that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well." Thus, the main theme of the essay is that the revenge is an act of disbalanced mind, it should not be done by a common man, as it pinches the mind and heart both. "Of Revenge" may be a short but meaning essay that carries the author's personal views about the good upsurge of now a day society that's "revenge". Bacon says that the more one's nature turns towards for taking revenge, the more he's taking law in to his hands. If one commits a criminal

offence or does some harm to anybody, he/she is offending and violating the law but when the victim counterattacks, it makes the law of no use. Undoubtedly by taking revenge, the wrong doer and therefore the counter-attacker are equal and at an equivalent level.

Bacon highlights the purpose that revenge is completely against the law.

Bacon says that all the religions and religious men, saints and sages, philosophers and scientists, who love the human race, follow the path of love and kindness and have the power of mercy which has been given by the Almighty God. They must not go through the revenge. Revenge is an act of a wicked man. As Bacon says, "That, which is past, is gone and irrevocable and wise men have enough to do with things present and to come therefore they do but trifle with themselves that labour in past matters." These utterances prove that what has passed away need not be worried about. A poet says, "I know today that today is the all, past and future are only their scroll." So one should not worry for what has gone before, but we should care to save the present and to secure the future. Bacon praises the man who has the power of mercy with him. He writes - "The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs for which there is no law to remedy." If one tolerates that wrong done, undoubtedly one is regarded as a super man. He gives the example of saint Job who has been regarded as a symbol of patience and fortitude in acute distress and pain. He forgives even his enemies too.

Bacon distinguishes the public and private revenges. According to him the public revenges are for the most part fortunate. It is because those revenges are above the law. There are kings and crowns who are anarchists and have not been controlled by the power of law. If they are subdued by the revenge of power, those revenges are pardonable. But on the other hand, the revenge which is private and committed only by a man for his own self, it should not be forgiven at any cost, because

law is capable to punish such a man.

Thus, in the essay "Of Revenge" Bacon gives very accurate and authentic ideas about revenge and shows the way how to behave with a man if he indulges in the act of vice feelings of revenge.

So far as the diction and style of the essay are concerned, they are certainly, superb. The language is simple, short, crisp and pithy. There are few connectives. Each sentence stands by itself and is the concentrated expression of a weighty thought. Every sentence presents a proverbial thought as for examples :- "Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out." How great a thought and universally true idea have been presented by him in a very simple diction. The style of the essay is didactic and descriptive. One may expand the thought as much as he can. As he says : "There is no man who doth a wrong for the wrong's sake ; but thereby to purchase himself profit or pleasure or honour or the like." Here the didactic style has been used by him.

Thus, we can say that the essay "Of Revenge" is fully effective, full of suggestions and has many moral teachings and affects the mind and heart to ponder and to act according to them.

— X —