

English (Hons) Part-3; Paper-5; Unit-B; Topic
"Dr Johnson"; Lec. series-57: by- GANESH
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Dr Johnson:

Samuel Johnson was born on 18 September 1709 [O.S. 7 September] in Lichfield, Staffordshire in England. He is often referred to as Dr Johnson in literary circles as his contribution to English literature has been immense. He made his contribution to English literature as a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer. He got himself admitted in Pembroke College, Oxford just for over a year, as he was forced to leave the college on account of the lack of funds. After leaving the college he started working as a teacher and moved to London, where he began to write miscellaneous pieces for "The Gentleman's Magazine".

Johnson was a devout Anglican and committed Tory, and has been described as "arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history". He is also the subject of "the most famous single work of biographical art in the whole of literature": James Boswell's "Life of Samuel Johnson".

Johnson's early works include the biography "The Life of Richard Savage"; the poems "London" and "The vanity of Human

Wishes", and the play "Irene". After nine years of work, Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language was published in 1755; it had a far-reaching effect on modern English and has been described as "one of the great single achievements of scholarship". The Dictionary brought Johnson popularity and success.

Until the completion of the Oxford English Dictionary 150 years later, Johnson's was viewed as the pre-eminent British dictionary. His later works included essays, an influential annotated edition of William Shakespeare's plays, and the widely read tale "Rasselas". Towards the end of his life, he produced the massive and influential Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; Collection of biographies and evaluations of the 17th and 18th Century poets. After a series of illnesses he died on 13 December 1784 and was

buried in Westminster Abbey. In the years following his death, Johnson began to be recognized as having had a lasting effect on literary criticism and even as the only great critic of English literature.

Johnson's works, especially his "Lives of the Poets" describes various features of excellent writing. He believed that the best poetry relied on contemporary language, and he disliked the use of

decorative and purposefully archaic language. In particular, he was suspicious of the poetic language used by Milton, whose blank verse he believed would inspire many bad imitations. Also, Thomson opposed the poetic language of his contemporary Thomas Gray. His greatest complaint was that obscure allusions found in works like Milton's *Lycidas* were overused; he preferred poetry that could be easily read and understood. In addition to his views on language, Thomson believed that a good poem incorporated new and unique imagery.

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