

LEC-NO-104 36
ENGLISH; Mon's Part-II; Paper-III; Unit-I; Essay.

Pleasure: Critical appreciation. Lec-Notes-104

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'Pleasure' is a piece of essay written by Aldous Huxley and is taken from his anthology 'On the Margin'. In this essay Huxley tried to illustrate the various reasons which causes threat to modern civilization. He presents a contrast between the modern types of pleasures and kinds of distractions with which people entertain themselves. Here essayist does not favour the growth of the cheap variety of entertainment of the present day. Huxley cites examples from Roman civilization as well as from First World War and tries to demonstrate how modern man's behavioural approach and his low-level taste or interest makes civilization endangered. Since the conclusion of the First world war and specially with rise of German (Germany) military power, nations have been concentrating their effort only on consolidating their military positions and adopting other kinds of measures to over-awe others. Secret treaties, Pacts etc are proving more dreadful to piece and progress in life. Apart from these, there are other kinds of dangers as well. The more fearful than external dangers such as wars, economic depression, wildness in human beings etc are those

that come from within. The minds of the people have been poisoned by conflicting ideas and views. Hatred, distrust and Jealousy have destroyed the whole atmosphere. These are the real dangers that come from within. Because of the effects of these ^{inter} internal dangers the mind of the modern man has become mechanical. It does not have intelligent pleasure. It enjoys organised, readymade distraction. This is the dangerous sign. In the past, people relished intelligent pleasures. In the 17th Century, all sections of people wanted rich mental entertainments. In Elizabethan age musics were highly appreciated by common man though they were complex in nature. Even the Royal Personages preferred healthy debates. Such were the essence of the civilization. But nowadays, the modern situation has drastically changed. 'Pleasures' have come to stand for mechanical and readymade distractions. Entertainments are just for the sake of entertainment, not for mental requirement. Once dancing was supposed to be a high quality subtle art, now it has become purely mechanical. The lowering level of cinema; cheap publications and other lowering sources of amusement have weakened the modern civilization.

As Huxley says, modern civilization is doomed because of self-poisoned. It stands in danger of being vitiated through its inner weaknesses. It is on the way of Roman civilization, as the civilization had lost its past glory because of indulgence in cheap entertainments. Such indulgences lead them to violence. They adopted violent means to get pleasures. Modern Man, too, follows the examples of Romans. Man is fast becoming a machine even with regard to his pleasure. Pleasure must have either somethings to do or they are sure to lead to mental boredom. Huxley points out the psychological weakness of modern man. The following lines are remarkable:

"Self-poisoned in this fashion, civilization looks as though it might easily decline into a kind of premature senility". Our civilization will decline if we do not revive our taste for intelligent pleasures. We have lost the proper sense of values. These are our dangerous symptom that may lead to the destruction of modern civilization.

Thus Huxley, in this essay, very realistically illustrates the pathetic conditions of the modern man and his secret pleasures and compares his activities ^{with} those of "Kl Klux Klan, an anti-social organization. In this way essayist hammer at the low taste of people in present day.