

## ALEXANDER POPE AS A SATIRICAL AND QUOTED POET

Dr. SATKALA\*

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**Abstract:** - Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was one of the most well known poets of the early eighteenth-century. In addition to several major poems--*Essay on Man, Essay on Criticism, the Rape of the Lock, the Dunciad, and Windsor Forest*--Pope translated Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into English. He is considered among the greatest satirists in English literature, and his two great satires, *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*, are considered the best in the eighteenth century and.

**Introduction:** - he is one of the most satiric and quoted poets in the English language. From about the age of 12 on, Alexander Pope was really responsible for his learning, and he took it pretty seriously. He taught himself by reading classic Greek and Roman works of all kinds; he read satires by Horace and epics from Virgil and Homer. These two styles - satire and epic - really pop up a lot in Pope's own works. He was influenced by those writers that he studied as a child. Of course, one must also be well-rounded, so during this time he also enjoyed some classics of the English literary tradition, most notably Chaucer and Shakespeare. Pope was the most eminent and the most representative poet of his time. He directed and satisfied the poetic taste of his contemporaries. He expressed the predominant thought and sentiment of men about him, and he won for himself a central place among the wits, philosophers, and statesmen of a brilliant age. To most of the critics he is the spokesman of a dead time, separated from others by the most fundamental differences in its ideals of literature and life.

**As a Satirical Poet:** - He is best known for his **satirical** verses. He is considered among the greatest satirists in English literature, *and his* great satires are *Essay on Criticism, The Prologue, The Epilogue, the Moral Essay, The Dunciad, The Rape of the Lock* are considered the best in the eighteenth century. He is specially known for his satires. He developed his talent for satire and argument in verse.

*The Rape of the Lock* which is, a mock-heroic poem is, however, Pope's greatest satiric poem. As such the characters are to a large extent, mocking versions of epic characters. The portraits are not realistic; they are not meant to mock at the follies and foibles of the aristocratic society of Pope's times. The objective being to expose human follies, especially the feminine,

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\* Assistant professor Department of English, J. J.T. University

characterization is naturally from the general rather than the individual point of view. Exaggeration is one mode through which a portrait assumes ironic or satiric light. The excessive praise bestowed on Belinda's charms, for Instance, Belinda shedding her gaiety on all and sundry like the sun sheds its light, suggests flippancy and inconstancy in character.

**John Dennis** in his monumental book, *The Age of Pope* remarks **“It is a satirist that Pope, with one exception, excels all English poets.”**

His own words in *An Essay on Criticism* seem to describe him best: **“True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, as those move easiest who have learned to dance.”**

**As a Most Quoted Poet:** - He is the second-most frequently **quoted writer** in The Oxford Dictionary after William Shakespeare. Pope discusses the presence of evil throughout the universal chains in his ‘**The Essay of Man**’: **“If the great end is human happiness then nature deviates; and can man do less?”** This implies that there is beauty in nature, but there is also evil when nature destroys towns, homes and human life. He says that, If nature can be evil, how can man be expected never to be evil? Man has the power of good to help feed the hungry, care for the sick, and comfort the dying. Yet, man chooses to exercise his evil side also: destroying, killing and bringing down those that are weaker.

At one place he describes happiness **“Oh Happiness! Our being's end and aim! Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content! What're thy names?”**

In ‘The Rape of the Lock’ Ariel says to Belinda: **“Warned by the Sylph, O pious maid, beware! / this to disclose is all thy guardian can: / Beware of all, but most beware of man!”**

Alexander pope, quoted in his ‘**Moral Essays**’:

**Its education forms the common mind,  
Just as the twig is bent, the trees inclined.**

Alexander pope, quoted in, ‘**An Essay on Criticism**’:

**To err is human, to forgive, divine.**

His most famous quote in, **Essay on Man** that:

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring;

**As the Representative of the 18<sup>th</sup> century:-** Alexander Pope is known as the representative poet of the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to his writing, writing style and the presentation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century societies. His work is the great work of art, though universal in its appeal, is the most typical

product of its time. It is rooted in the contemporary social and cultural life and reflects, implicitly or explicitly, that life is in its essence and totality. It is an indispensable prerequisite for the greatness of a work of art. If it fails to be of its own age, almost as a rule, it will also fail to be universal in its appeal. **'The Rape of the Lock'** is a mirror of the society. Of which Lord Petre and Belinda are the representative figures. Belinda is presented as dazzling charming like the sun, and lap-dogs were another indispensable ingredient of their lives.

**Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,**

**And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:**

Here Pope describe that lap-dogs are so important and as though lovers were no better than lap-dogs. Moral confusion prevailed in the aristocracy society is also the main theme in Pope's most of the poetry. Serious purpose had evaporated from their lives. Men were chiefly concerned with getting richer and carrying on sexual adventures with fashion-frenzy coquettish ladies. Their love letters were more sacred to them than the Bible. Lord Petre's sense of victory at the cutting of Belinda's lock is symbolic of the shallowness, triviality, in fact, the emptiness of the youths of the contemporary aristocratic society of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Alexander Pope shows the Shallowness of Judges, the fashion of coffee-taking.....

**The hungry judges soon the sentence sign**

**And wretches hang that the jury-men dine**

**Coffee, (which makes the politician wise,)**

**And see through all things with half-shut eyes**

Alexander Pope was so prominent a poet that the age in which he wrote is named after him, the age of Pope. He beautifully holds, in his writing, the demands of the time through the prevailing spirit of satire and moral preaching. In this connection **Leslie Stephen**, says:-

**'No writer reflects so clearly and completely the spirit so clearly and completely the spirit of his own day as Pope does''.**

**Conclusion:-**Pope fully bears the witticism of its age. His method of satiric portraiture varies, not only from portrait to portrait, but within the characterization of a single person itself. He uses the mode most fitting to the situation concerned. He appears to praise, but the result is quite the opposite—one is all the more clearly aware of the essential smallness and ridiculousness of the character involved. He represents the 18<sup>th</sup> century to represent that kind of life led by the

fashionable people of the upper classes in the age of Pope. Through the very knowledgably, very interesting and graceful quotation he became the topmost poet of his age.

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