

The Rape of the Lock as Social Satire / Satire on Contemporary Society

(Part-2)

[BA (Hons.), Part-1, Paper-II]

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All the women and beaux gather at the place where they exchange talks on trivial things such as visits, balls, films, motions, looks, eyes, ‘at every word’ and ‘a reputation dies’.

“A beau and witling perished in the throng,

One died in metaphor, and one in song.”

Man’s favourite activity is to take suffered women to play with fan. There is singing, dancing, laughing, ogling and nothing else. Women are busy alluring the dukes and lords. The poet reflects the hollowness of men in the character of Sir Plume who is coward, foolish and senseless, lacking courage. Women are on the whole irresolute and they have made toyshops of their hearts. They have even illicit relations with the beaux. Women are meant only for the entertainment of men, who play toy with them.

Pope also satirises of the husbands and wives of the day. Husbands always suspect their wives. They think that their wives have been merry-making with their lovers. On the

other hand, wives are also not virtuous at all. They love their lap-dogs more than their husbands. And the death of husbands is not more shocking than the death of a lap dog or the breakage of a china vessel.

“Not louder shrieks to pitying Heave are cast,
When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last;”

So through the medium of satire, Pope paints a picture of 18th century English society. His satire is didactic and impersonal. It is not inflicted against any person or individual, rather against the society and that, too, owing to some moral faults. He is dissatisfied with the society around which he wants to reform. The society he pictured is the aristocratic group of 18th century fashionable English society. But there are several allied subjects, too, on which he inflicts his satire. For example, he satirised the judges who make hasty decisions.

“The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;”

He also satirised those friends whose friendship is but lust, those politicians who do not have a deeper insight and cannot see beyond the shows and take steps just for their own interests and ends.

Thus, Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* is a reflection of this artificial and hollow life, painted with a humorous and delicate satire. Pope’s satire is intellectual and full of wit and epigram. It is quite visible that no other poet or writer could depict the contemporary society so vastly and perfectly as Pope did and therefore, he is regarded as the true representative poet of the 18th century English society.