

**I B.A. English**

**Semester – II**

**Subject & Code: Neo-Classical Age (17UENC22)**

**Unit –II Prose**

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### **Joseph Addison as an Essayist**

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Joseph Addison, a stylist essayist, a great moralist, a perfect preacher, a scholarly critic, a judicious journalist, a didactic philosopher, a keen observer of the contemporary society and a great literary figure of the eighteenth century, is regarded as one of the most famous founders of modern prose style. Most of Addison's essays are social documents of the eighteenth century English life of middle - class people. To him goes the credit of inventing the middle style. Addison is regarded by most of the eminent critics to have created and wholly perfected English prose as an expression of social thought. There had been writers before Addison who contributed a great deal to the development of English prose style. But Addison developed a style along with his friend Steele which has become famous as *The Middle Style*, a style that is familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, a style that is always equable, always easy, without glowing word or pointed sentences. In fact, Addison's style has been said to be model style.

The first and foremost feature of Addison's prose style is its clarity and lucidity of expression. He expresses his thoughts and ideas in simple and ordinary language without complexity and ambiguity, without obscurity and superfluity. His expression is so direct, clear, spontaneous, free, frank and vivid that the readers face almost no difficulty to understand. Addison is equally capable of expressing his ideas in short and compact sentences. He does not try to produce effects by straining. It comes to him spontaneously because he has an easy mastery of

language. No pretentiousness, affectation, pompousness or verbosity characterize his essays. His essays have been enriched with sincerity, moderation and purity of style. So the essays have become the expression of his character. Felicitous choice of vocabulary and an equal felicitous arrangement and a combination of words mark his style.

One of the striking qualities of his style in essays is his humour, which becomes in effect a fine irony. His study of society is mildly satirical. His humour does not evoke serious laughter and is, therefore, neither offensive nor stinging. Yet he has attacked social vices and follies no doubt, but it is not directed to any individual - men or women. He makes use of irony not to hurt but to make others aware of their characteristic faults.

Addison's style is not highly figurative. He uses many allusions, anecdotes, references etc. Though his style is near to the language of conversation, it is not too informal. Addison's aim and endeavour was "to enliven morality". In fine, we cannot but admit Addison's great service to English prose as well as English literature. He showed a perfect English prose style to a large extent, and freed it from extravagances and excesses of eighteenth century writers, and brought in it clearness, lucidity and exactness.

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