

Of Parents and Children -- Francis Bacon

Bacon is the father of English Essay. He was much influenced by the French essayist Montaigne. Bacon's essays are on popular topics, dealing with both materialistic and metaphysical themes. "Of Parents and Children" is a suggestive essay, in which Sir Francis Bacon provides some suggestions, through which parents can bring up their children. There are some common practices related to children, which are being followed in every society and the author wants to rectify them. For instance, people think that children themselves should choose a profession as per their interest. Bacon thinks the opposite and says that instead, the parents should select a profession for their children. Bacon has also quoted some wise words to fortify his stance. In fact, it is a guide to those parents, who do not know how to bring up their children in a way that they can get success in future.

Griefs and Joys of Parents:

Children are the greatest gift of God but at the same time, they make parents' condition miserable, considers Sir Francis Bacon. However, all the parents keep their joys as well as griefs secret. He, epigrammatically, illustrates this situation in these words: "The joys of parents are secret, and so are their griefs and fears". Parents work hard for their children and try to make them happy. They have hope that their children will live a life of content; therefore, parents enthusiastically struggle for them. On the other hand, they also fear their bad luck because it can impact the lives of children. Children are blessings of God but they increase the anxieties of parents, says Sir Francis Bacon. Nevertheless, the parents feel delighted while seeing their children with the hope that they

would continue living their life through their children. Thus, children are source of pleasure as well as grief.

Difference between Human and Animal Species:

Every species can continue living in this world through reproduction but there are some differences between humans and animal species. Humans have memory; they can make history and remember it. For example, ancient Roman and Greek History can still be found in libraries. Besides, humans are intellectual; they cannot swim but they can make submarines; they cannot fly but they can make airplanes. They have the ability to survive in every situation: whether by hook or crook. Additionally, they are not only remembered because of reproduction but because of their good deeds. For instance, we still remember Homer because of his poem Iliad. Similarly, Aristotle is still known because of his knowledge. Indeed, there is a vast difference between human and animal species.

Bacon thinks that people who are married and have children cannot do noble deeds. They focus their attention on their family and children. Thus, Sir Francis Bacon calls children as a barrier for parents on the path of success.

Unequal affection of parents:

Some parents make a difference between their children. In many families, some children are more affectionate, whereas some are less. This kind of attitude of parents against their children is unjustified in the eyes of Sir Francis Bacon. He advises parents to love every child equally. Especially, the mother's affection should be equal towards every child. He mentions legendary words of Solomon, who said: "A wise son rejoiceth the father, but an ungracious son shames the mother." These words are true even today. When a child does something good, his father is praised but whenever he does a shameful act, his mother is alleged for his act. Besides, in most of the families, the youngest child and the eldest child are respected, whereas middle children are ignored. This common practice is also not

acceptable; in most of the cases, middle children prove themselves best and bring fame to families.

Suggestions to parents:

Bacon has some suggestions for parents as well as for children. He recommends that parents should not fix pocket money of the children. If pocket money is too low then the child will try to learn every such method through which he can make money. He would start spending his time in a bad company, where he will learn new means of cheatings and earnings. Finally, he will become greedy and do anything to get a large sum of money. Hence, the attitude of parents should not be strict nor liberal especially in the matter of pocket money.

Parents should also not create competition between their children. Particularly, brothers should not be inspired to compete for each other. This method will increase hatred between them; they will become jealous and ultimately, they will consider each other enemies. Sir Francis Bacon in “Of Parents and Children” gives an example of Italians, who does not make any difference between the son and nephew. He encourages such kind of practices. Sometimes a nephew earns better respect for his uncle as compared to a real child for his father.

Children cannot decide their future:

Some parents think that it is the duty of a child to choose a profession for himself. Bacon does not think that it is a right decision. Children cannot decide their future. They, in most of the cases, just have temptations; therefore, it is the duty of parents to show them the right path. Parents should select a profession for their children. However, in exceptional cases, a child may be allowed to decide. For instance, if he has strong feelings for a specific field, he may be allowed to adopt it. Nevertheless, the decision should be made as early as possible.

At last, Bacon illustrates his another experience. He says that the young children are fortunate. They are also good at making their careers. However, it is not true if they are going to inherit a lot of wealth.

Bacon was a keen observer of the activities of children and parents. He does not favour anyone; instead, he tries to make a balance. He guides the parents through examples; he also quotes authentic words of ancient people. In simple words, he convinces the parents to rectify their wrongdoings. Many epigrammatic sentences are also there in the essay. Whenever he makes a comparison between two things, he uses an epigrammatic sentence. However, they have no ambiguity; rather they clear doubts from the heads of readers. Philosophically, this essay is rich. Every advice of the author is applicable even in this era. Due to these qualities, the essay “Of Parents and Children” by Bacon gains universal relevance.

OF DEATH - FRANCIS BACON

Death is a reality of which much has been said and written by philosophers and writers like Valluvar, Bharathi, John Donne etc. Bacon has a unique vision of death. He has written “Of Death” in order to end the fear of death from human minds. He suggests that a person should either nip the fear of death in the bud or at least overpower it. Bacon has written “Of Death” in order to end the fear of death from human minds. He suggests that a person should either nip the fear of death in the bud or at least overpower it. Bacon fully explains the fear of death and elucidates its different perspectives. He also speaks against false preaching of Monks and religious scholars. In his views, they have exaggerated death, due to which it has become dreadful. The essay has many ideas; he supports every idea through an example. He also mentions proverbs of old philosophers, through which he strengthens his stance.

Why people fear death:

It is true that people are afraid of death just like children are afraid of the darkness. Why do they fear? Bacon answers it. Children listen to stories of ghosts; elders tell them that ghosts appear at night; therefore, they feel afraid of darkness. Similarly, agonies of death are told to human beings due to which they fear from it. When a person thinks about death, he imagines it from one of the two perspectives: religious and natural. If he is thinking that death is a procedure to travel from one world to the other and he would be punished because of his sins, then he is thinking from a religious perspective. Conversely, a person may think from a natural perspective; he may think that death is certain; it is the law of nature. However, Bacon thinks that in case of natural death, fear is an act of cowardliness.

Bacon then criticizes religious beliefs. He believes that scholars have mixed religion with superstition. There are some books, in which it is mentioned that death is painful suffering. He then quotes an example of squeezing a finger; “a man should think with himself what the pain is if he has but his finger’s end pressed or tortured, and thereby imagine what the pains of death are, when whole body is corrupted and dissolved”. In Sir Francis Bacon’s eyes, death has been exaggerated due to which people are afraid of death. Death Vs. Its Concept:

Death Vs Its Concept

What is more horrifying? Death or its concept? The author refers to Roman Philosopher Seneca, who said that it is not the death but its concept, which is fearful. When people put their feet in shoes of the person, who is near to death, they become frightened; his groans, his face and his convulsions increase the fear of people. Moreover, the dead body of near and dear one also enhances the fear of people. Death itself is not as dreadful as circumstances and funeral ceremonies are. Thus, it is not death but its concept, which is horrible. Furthermore, Sir Francis Bacon believes that anyone can overpower the fear of death. However, he should have the wish to do so. If he has, he can control his fear. Even the feeblest desire of a person subdues the fear of death.

The Fearless People

Bacon has prepared a list of people, who are not afraid of death. Even they deliberately pursue death. Here is the list of those people.

1. A person who wants revenge has no fear of death. Even if he knows that his enemy would kill him. What he wants is just revenge.
2. Passionate lover; he can die for his beloved.
3. A man of honor; he can die to protect his honor.
4. Downtrodden man (a sufferer); he would prefer death to sufferings.

Bacon has also quoted an incident of Roman Emperor Otho, who committed suicide. His followers also killed themselves because they were his true supporters. Afterwards, the author again refers Seneca, who says that a person may commit suicide if he is fed up from life. Similarly, due to boredom and feelings of monotony, a person may kill himself.

Brave Men from the History:

Bacon then mentions those people who were not afraid of death, even when it approached them. Here is the list of those people who remained calmed at the time of death. Bacon then mentions those people who do not afraid of death, even when it approaches them. Here is the list of those people who remained calmed at the time of death.

1. Augustus Caesar, Roman Emperor; he was so calm that he gave a compliment to his wife.
2. Tiberius, Roman Emperor; died during maintaining up appearances. His death was fearless.
3. Vespasian, Roman Emperor; he said, he was going to be a god and died.
4. Galba, the Roman Emperor; was killed. He died gladly for the welfare of his people.
5. Septimius Severus, Roman Emperor was curious to die after realizing that death is approaching him.

Numerous similar examples are there in the world when people died gladly.

Suggestions of Bacon to overcome fear of death

Bacon supports the opinion of Juvenal, a Roman writer, who has said that we should not be afraid of death. It is natural; it is certain. When a person came into the world, he bore pain; the same pain which the elders go through at the time of death. Bacon does not support the concept of preparing for death. In Athens, Stoics used to prepare for death. Bacon is of the view that it just increases the fear. A person, who remains busy in his works and suddenly dies, suffers less pain as compared to a person, who prepares for it. A person should concentrate on doing good deeds; if he does so, he would suffer less pain at the time of death.

The last example, which Bacon quotes, is of Simeon. He wished to see Christ and when he achieved his goal of seeing Christ, he happily died. Thus, everyone has goals in this world. If a person achieves them, he can gladly die.

The first benefit of death, which Bacon mentions is that people glorify good deeds of the dead. This custom is very common in every society. When a person dies, people appreciate him. However, in his life, fewer people talk about his good deeds. The second reason, which Bacon has mentioned is sarcastic. He says that when a person dies, his enemies do not feel jealous for him.

Bacon encourages his readers to accept death as a law of nature. Instead of being cowards and running away from death, people should become brave and feel its beauty. The author has a good knowledge of Roman history and Greek philosophy. He makes references from ancient Roman history. He has also read philosophy of ancient Romans; therefore, he supports his depositions through examples and solid references. Latin phrases have also been illustrated in this essay. In short, the essay is highly optimistic, as death has been presented as a natural thing.

Of Adversity - Bacon

Many writers have written on adverse situations in life and the ways of coping with them. 'Of Adversity' is an example of Bacon's keen and critical insight into human

nature and firm faith in Providence. Regarding admiration of adversity, Seneca rightly hold that the good things which belong to prosperity are to be wished and the good things that belong to adversity are to be admired. Triumph over nature is called miracle. Such miracles taken place in adversity.

The true greatness is to have the frailty of man accompanied by the security of God. This security of God is freedom from care. It happens only in adversity because in prosperity man is lost in materialism.

The sweetness of adversity can best be explained in poetry 'where the transcendence are more allowed and the poets indeed have been busy with it. The subject of adversity has been well dealt with by the ancient poets

To have the weakness of man simultaneously with the God like freedom from care is true greatness. Such a situation arises in adversity. The determination of Hercules of liberate Prometheus illustrates the great and noble endeavour and which a weak human being is capable under the heavy odds of life.

Temperance is the virtue of prosperity, whereas fortitude is the virtue of adversity. Fortitude is a heroic virtue. Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament. Adversity is the blessing of the New Testament. However it cannot be said that Adversity finds no place in Old Testament. Instead Adversity also finds mention with the prosperity in the songs and psalms of David in the, Old Testament. The afflictions or miseries of Job in the Old Testament are mentioned with the wisdom and magnificence of Solomon.

Prosperity also has fears and distastes or unpleasantness. Thus, it can be said that immaculate prosperity or the prosperity devoid of least trace of pains is not possible. Likewise, Adversity is not all painful and formidable 'Adversity is not without comforts and hopes'. In other words Adversity is relieved by many hopes and comforts 'we see in the needle works and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a light-some ground.

Prosperity reveals the evil in man whereas Adversity shows the noble and the virtuous in man. Virtue is like the precious odours. They are most fragrant when they are incensed or

crushed. Thus the virtues inherent in man are revealed when he is grounded between the stones of Adversity.

OF EXPENSE - FRANCIS BACON

Many writers have written on money/property and the ways of spending them. “A penny saved is a penny earned.” Dickens’ character Micawber and Valluvar advocate the need of frugality.

In this essay, Bacon deals with the human ways of spending money. Money and wealth are to be spent one day. People spend money for enhancement of one’s own standing in society and for better living. Money is also spent for charity, social good, and other such benevolent causes. While spending large sums of money or investing a good amount of wealth, one must weigh the wisdom of such parting of resources. Spending for the cause of one’s country, or for noble and lofty causes can be justified as good enough reasons.

Normal day-to-day expenses of the apparently routine type need to be done commensurate with one’s income and assets. No money should be spent for furthering dishonest and immoral causes. Servants are valued human assets, and the employer must never spend any money to dishonor or humiliate them. Expenses must be less than the income, and should not exceed it.

Ideally speaking, expenses must be around half of one’s income. For those who want to become rich, their expenses should be a third of their incomes. To be calculative and cautious in spending is not a mean thing. Keeping an eye on the income while spending is a prudent policy.

Some people do not stick to these principles of judicious spending not only out of negligence, but also for the fear of feeling sad. Inevitably, abandoning caution in spending leads to their financial ruin. If a ruined man wants to rebuild his finances, he must entrust the job of scrutinizing his budget to someone else, who can do the job dispassionately. A person can’t scrutinize his own spending pattern himself, because he will be biased. Even, the ‘Finance Manager’ brought in to restore the health of the finances needs to be replaced periodically. This is because, a newly-recruited Finance Manager will tend to be very alert and strict.

A person who is too pre-occupied to manage his own business, property and wealth, must hand over this charge to an outsider who knows the job better. Due to certain circumstances, if a person over-spends on something, he should cut his expenses on other items to neutralize the excess outgo of funds. For example, if he spends too much on food, he must economize on his clothing expenses. In the same way, if a person spends excess amounts in furnishing his living quarters, he must spend much less on building his stable.

A man who spends without restraint, is bound to come to grief, sooner than later. Consequently, he may impulsively sell his estate, or liquidate any such wealth to free himself from the creditors. Such sudden action is really very harmful to his long term interests.

The man who frees himself from his debts so suddenly will revert to his ways of extravagant spending. This is devastating. On the other hand, a debt-ridden person who liquidates his loans gradually by incremental cut in his expenses, will be really happy in the long run. This is because, the period of controlled spending will change his extravagant habits, and he will imbibe the habits of thrift and caution.

Lastly, it is much less embarrassing to make small cuts in one's expenses, than to become a bankrupt, and invite ridicule from the society. A man in such distress might resort to petty and often criminal ways to get some money. This is the worst possibility. A man who judiciously steers clear of such pitfalls will be treated with respect by the society.

Of Simulation and Dissimulation—Bacon

In the essay, Bacon talks about the strategy of deceit, an act of deceiving someone, when to apply and when to avoid. Bacon discusses that simulation and dissimulation, both, are convenient and advantageous but the fruitful use of them obliges brainpower and a strong heart. Bacon starts the essay by saying that dissimulation is a shadowy sort of strategy as it not only requires a strong humor/ intelligence but a strong heart as well. He argues that if a person is smart enough to recognize what to speak, whom to speak and when to speak, moreover, not to communicate more than required, then double-dealing will only get into his way. Bacon gives two options that one should either hold his tongue or should learn how to lie. For instance, if you can't afford to be that discriminating the "be evasive" than "telling falsehoods.

Bacon argues that in order to hide the real self of a person, there are three degrees of concealment. The first degree is closeness or reservation in which a man doesn't denounce his feelings and emotions where anyone can get hold of him. The second degree is dissimulation that he called a negative degree. In this, a man lets other to misinterpret what he is thinking or doing. The third degree of concealment is the simulation, a positive one, in which a man pretends himself to the world what he is not.

Bacon explains all the three degrees of concealment in detail. Firstly he deeply argues about the secrecy and reservation of a person. He thinks that reservation is the most supreme virtue of a man. He claims that a reserved man hears more secrets from others than he reveals.

He points out that the man who makes himself secret and not tells the secrets to everyone is often told secrets by others. A reserved person, with the passage of time, knows how and to whom he should open himself. This openness is not for the worldly use but to discharge his mind. He argues that all the mysteries in the world are due to secrets. While, on the other hand, the nakedness is not attractive. One who reveals himself to the world is not of that significance than the one which is veiled. This case implies both to the mind of a person as well as to his body. A person loses his respect for his actions and manners by being too much open to the world. The talkative people, to Bacon, are mostly ineffective and useless. As they not only talk what they know but also talk about what they don't know. Therefore, Bacon advice to set out the habit of secrecy in both public and private life as the man's facial expression is of more importance and believable than of his words.

The second degree of concealment is dissimulation, which is necessarily followed by secrecy. Bacon argues that a person for his secrecy should be a dissembler, a person who pretends something that he is not, to some extent. The men around us are too sly that they won't let a person to discreet. They will trouble a person with questions and if one doesn't answer them, they will assume it by his silence than his speech. So one cannot stance saying nothing. So for avoidance, Bacon says, that one should give himself a little scope of dissimulation in order to be secret, as one cannot hold his silence for too long.

The third degree of concealment is the simulation that he thinks as a false profession and less political. Bacon considers the use of simulation as a vice as it symbolizes the habitual deception and lying. He argues that such people have some mental disorders that they practice simulation in general.

Bacon speaks of the three advantages of simulation and dissimulation. The first advantage is by keeping one's intentions secret, one can surprise his adversaries. As when one's intentions are denounced, the opponents are alarmed. Be unclear and surprise opponents. The second advantage is that one won't be ashamed of any failure, by keeping one's intentions hidden. Once a man declares his goals, he has to achieve them, in case if he is not capable of achieving, he will face the fall. The third advantage is that by keeping oneself quiet, one can discover the minds of others. Bacon argues that the one who opens himself, other would hardly show themselves and it will turn his freedom of speech to the freedom of thought of others. He quotes the shrewd proverb of Spaniard: "Tell the lie and find the truth"

Bacon, now, speaks of three disadvantages of simulation and dissimulation. The first disadvantage he mentions is it makes a person weak and fearful. The second one is such attitudes makes the people riddle and confused and they don't want to work with that man anymore and will leave him alone. The third and the last one is it deprives a man from one of the most fundamental principle of life which is trust and belief.

Bacon, in the end, advice that the best composition that a man should have is openness in fame and opinion, reservation in the habits, dissimulation for a particular use, and a strength to pretend in necessary situations.
