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**FRANCIS BACON DEPICTS UTILITARIANISM IN HIS ESSAYS**M. S. A. CHOWDHURY<sup>1</sup>, A. M. ALAM<sup>2</sup>, M. E. I. KHAN<sup>3</sup>, M. RAHMAN<sup>4</sup> and M. S. ISLAM<sup>5</sup>**ABSTRACT**

Francis Bacon was the most distinctive essayist of the Elizabethan era. There is much utilitarianism depicted in his essays in our day to day life. He was a social reformer of the then time. We find strategies, optimism, truth, practicality, explanation, allusions, straightforward morality and didacticism in his essays. Consequently his influence upon the readers is still prevailing in the modern era. At the modern spiritual sterility, his essays can show us the right path to live a simple and successful life. His writings show the way to improve and develop in all aspects of life. Especially, he deals with the lifestyle of the youth which keeps a deep impact on the modern youth at present. Some of the essays are concerned with the external behavior of human being. Some are discussed internally. Some essays are concerned with eternal human passions like love, ambition, revenge, envy, anger. Friendship, studies, marriage, seditions, death, boldness and faction are in focus in the essays which have universal appeal to the multitude. The study was conducted in the period from December 2012 to March 2013.

**Keywords: Utilitarianism, Aphorism, Didacticism, Pantheism, Antithetical, Human interest, Negative points, Remedy for Mental Cure and Refinement of Man.**

**INRODUCTION**

Francis Bacon is the most notable and influential essayist of the Elizabethan period of the English Literature who is recognized as a philosophical essayist to the critics. His essays are dealt with the universal thoughts and ideas which are mostly needed in almost all spheres of life. Here, the modern utilitarianism lies in his themes and worldly wise philosophy of his mind. He presented all these themes with the use of a great number of versatile utility which is a bit upper than the general level of normal writing style. Bacon has given moral lesson with aphorism and impersonality. He has also given the proper direction to the readers of all ages of different natural aspects. Bacon possesses a complex and contradictory natures. He is a politician, cold, calculating, selfish as well as a literary and scientific man with an impressive devotion to truth for its own great sake. He also possesses a great mixture of intellectual strength and moral perfection. He also deals with the spiritualism of man's life. He has successfully exposed the problem, socio-economic condition and solution for those problems of all ages through the versatile utilitarianism of his essays. His methodologies are also often denoted as Baconian method. Based on the criticism of Francis Bacon, enough critical essays and analysis were published in the shapes of different books and in many literary journals which are very useful as the supporting materials for further study of the research work. Different critical books composed by S C Sinha and David Silvester etc remain helpful for the part of the study on Francis Bacon's essays. Moreover, the different literary web sites of internet are also helpful in this regard. English Elizabethan essayist Francis Bacon is versatile and universal in utilitarianism of his essays to present the universal needs of people not only of his contemporary age but also of all ages. His essays have a great impact on modern people. This work will find out the utilitarianism in his essays for all ages.

**METHODOLOGY**

To develop this hypothesis, the primary idea is found from the study on English essays of Francis Bacon in the different course of the honors and masters level syllabus and from different critical studies on Francis Bacon. In fact, the only helpful method was 'Observation Method' for this research job. By using this method, the researcher will go through different literary articles, critical compositions, and websites to find related study materials, in order to be acknowledged in the related topics and will also collect

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critical journals from different libraries to have specialized information on both the writers and compose the work in a more credible way. The study was conducted in the period from December 2012 to March 2013.

## DISCUSSION

Francis Bacon was a legendary English philosopher, scientist, lawyer, author, statesman, jurist and father of the scientific methods. He was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> January in 1561 at York House near the Strand in London. Bacon was one of the most influential personalities in natural philosophy and was also a key thinker to develop new scientific methodologies. He served both as Attorney General as well as Lord Chancellor of England. Leaving apart the disgraceful ending of his political career, throughout his life, Bacon continued to be quite an influential politician because of his work, specifically as philosophical advocate and practitioner of the scientific method and pioneer in the scientific revolution. He has been known as the "Father of Empiricism". These The rhetorical and theoretical composition for science faced a new turn as a result of the Bacon's appeal for a planned procedure of investigating all things natural, most of which still encircle ideas of proper methodology even today. On April 9 1629, Francis Bacon died at Arundel mansion at High gate outside London due to severe pneumonia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis\\_Bacon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon)). "Utilitarianism is the doctrine that actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority- the doctrine that an action is right in so far as it promotes happiness, and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle of conduct. Utilitarianism is a theory in normative ethics holding that the proper course of action is the one that maximizes utility, specifically defined as maximizing happiness and reducing suffering (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/>).”The most famous exponents of utilitarianism were Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mill. It has been criticized for focusing on the consequences rather than the motive or intrinsic nature of an action, for the difficulty of adequately comparing the happiness of different individuals, and for failing to account for the value placed on concepts such as justice and equality.

### Loftiness of Francis Bacon in Utilitarianism

The grandeur of Francis Bacon lies in aphorism (Aphorism means a terse statement with a principle or truth, usually a keen observation about life; a maxim which expresses a general truth ) that means the terseness of expression and epigrammatic brevity in the essays of Bacon. In fact, the essays have to be read slowly because of the compact and condensed thought for the readers. There are a number of lines, which are read like proverbs. He has kept several meanings for the common people in a single line which have vast utilitarianism in our practical life. This aphoristic style again depends on the device of balance and antithesis (Antithesis is a balance where some opposing or contrasting ideas are put in a grammatically parallel syntax). In the essay *of studies*, Bacon says, “*Studies serve for ornament and for ability*”. Further he says, “*Read not to contradict, nor to believe, but to weigh and consider*”.

In a word, it has to be admitted that Bacon’s essays are full of epigrammatic terseness. Bacon is famous for his compact style of aphorism. Some other examples are:

- “*Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them: for they teach not their own use; that is wisdom without them; and won by observation.*” (*of Studies*)
- “*Lookers on many times see more than the gamesters.*” (*of Friendship*)
- “*Let a man in the choice of his mean, rather choose the fittest mean than the greatest mean, and rather them that deal in certain things, than those that are general.*” (*of Suitors*)

He scrupulously presents the advantages and the disadvantages of a particular issue. In the essay *of Marriage and Single Life*, Bacon says that an unmarried man is a good friend, good master and good servant, but he is unreliable as a good citizen. He says in the essay: “*Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants; but not always best subjects.*”

### **Authoritative Feature of Francis Bacon**

The most important feature of the essayist is that his essays are of human interest. The universal appeal is the turning factor of his essays' being so much famous and utilitarian. 'Man' is the subject of his essays. This human interest is the reason why his essays are universally popular, because human beings are interested most of all in Bacon. The essays of Francis Bacon are broadly divided into three categories according to the human interest. These are:

- Man in relation to the world and society
- Man in relation to himself (the author)
- Man in relation to his Creator

For Bacon, in the first category which is the largest, come essays such as *of Love, of Marriage and Single Life, of Suitors, of Parents and Children, of Friendship, of Seditions and Troubles, of Great Place, of Simulation and Dissimulation, of Riches, of Friends and Followers etc.* For second category Bacon has composed *of Revenge, of Ambition, of Studies, of Envy, of Travel etc.* Under the third point Bacon's essays are *of Death, of Atheism, of Goodness and Goodness in Nature, of Unity in Religion etc.*

One has to merely look at the titles of the essays to realize the wide range of subjects that the essayist deals with. There are topics to interest people of every taste, age or profession. There are essays which deal with ethical and moral topics such as truth, goodness of nature and nobility. All these varied topics are supported by a variety of allusions, quotations, references and incidents from great men's life and a wide observation of men and manners, and often a rich collection of metaphors and similes. His essays appeal to men of variety of tastes ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis\\_Bacon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon)>).

### **Utilitarianism in Prose Style**

**Didacticism:** Bacon wrote for the edification of Renaissance Youth. He wrote a series of counsels for these young men. But those counsels are yet brighter advice for the modern youth. *Of Studies* is one of those. The beginning of the essay is colored by didacticism. According to Bacon spending too much time in study is lethargic. Ability and judgment help the perfection of nature that is more perfected by experience. Bacon suggests being smart by studying in several ways. He says in this regard: "*Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.*" He again says, "*To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar.*" Reading should be in a perfect way. Every book doesn't deserve the same attention for reading. Bacon depicts the different types of reading different books. He says: "*Some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention.*"

**Mannerism:** Bacon deals with different manners like honesty, dishonesty, chastity, greed, integrity and jealousy between a husband and his wife. As he exposes: "*It is one of the best bonds both of chastity and obedience in the wife, if she think her husband wise; which she will never do if she find him jealous*" (*of Marriage and Single Life*).

**Refinement and Ethical Development of Man:** Though unmarried men are good to be friends and masters but they are not law abiding people. Bacon assumes that marriage can train a man to be discipline: "*Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity*" (*of Marriage and Single Life*).

**Description of Negative Topics:** Bacon has always discussed negative topics in elaborative manner. *Of Simulation and Dissimulation* is the proof in this regard. It is because that he wants to alert the readers. He says that the weak man follows the practice of dissimulation. They lack the power to tell the truth as the situation demands but strong minds and hearts can have such power. Bacon says in the first line, "*Dissimulation is but a faint kind of policy, or wisdom; for it asketh a strong wit, and a strong heart, to know when to tell truth, and to do it.*" Bacon has given three degrees of hiding and veiling of a man's self. In his words, "*The first, closeness, reservation, and secrecy; when a man leaveth himself without observation, or without hold to be taken, what he is. The second, dissimulation, in the negative; when a*

*man lets fall signs and arguments, that he is not, that he is. And the third, simulation, in the affirmative; when a man industriously and expressly feigns and pretends to be, that he is not."*

Remedy for Mental Cure: Bacon has showed the remedy for mental drawbacks by reading. The study of a particular subject may help to remove a particular defect. History can increase our wisdom; poetry makes us more intelligent and sensitive. Mathematics makes us acute in thinking. Moral philosophy helps to be more serious and deep. Logic makes us reasonable and rhetoric helps to have a good command over the language. He exposes in his essay *of studies*: "*Histories make men wise, poets witty, the mathematics subtle, natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend.*" Finally showing all the merits of studies, he says: "*So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.*"

Treatment of Worldly Love: Here, love is treated as a folly of men which keeps a man from being beneficial to society. And Bacon suggests guarding against this folly. Bacon most probably deals with the worldly love. Love has provided material for comic plays and sometimes for tragedies. In a man's real life, love breeds mischief, either as allurement or as a violent passion according to Bacon. He says: "*That it is impossible to love and to be wise.*" Bacon says that love may fall to achieve the love and kindness of beloved. There is all the more reason to be careful to avoid love which can lead not merely to the loss of other things but to the loss of its very object that is the kindness and fondle ness of beloved. In Bacon's line: "*By how much the more men ought to beware of this passion, which losseth not only other things but itself.*" Bacon considers love as a contemptible idolatry. He says that love brings exaggeration; it deprives a man of wisdom. For example, Paris had chosen Helen and lost his wisdom and empire. Bacon summarizes his essay in the last line: "*Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embassheth it.*"

Spiritual philosophy: Bacon deals with learning philosophy in the essay *of Atheism*. He says that little learning is a dangerous thing. Improper knowledge about God may misguide us; as he says: "*It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion.*"

Pantheism: Bacon says that atheists are a few in number but they seem to be many. He who denies a God becomes the kin member of the beasts. On the contrary, the people who admit the existence of God become human being indeed. If a man becomes an atheist, he is considered as an ignoble creature. But the people who believe to be made of God's spirit see the Almighty God everywhere. In Bacon's Language: "*They that deny a God, destroy man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts, by his body; and, if he be not of kin to God, by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature*" (*of Atheism*).

Suggestion for health: In the essay *of Regimen of Health*, Bacon suggests two ways for being well. He gives two different remedies for the body and the mind. "*To be free-minded and cheerfully disposed, at hours of meat, and of sleep, and of exercise, is one of the best precepts of long lasting.*" And for the mind he suggests to avoid some negative attitudes. "*As for the passions, and studies of the mind; avoid envy, anxious fears; anger fretting inwards; subtle and knotty inquisitions; joys and exhilarations in excess; sadness not communicated*" (Sultan, 1984).

Pardon prefers to revenge: Bacon here dislikes the act of taking revenge. Wise men forgive their enemies because the habit of taking revenge makes one evil or a devil. Pardoners have the moral superiority. According to Bacon: "*Certainly in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior; for it is prince's part to pardon*" (*of Revenge*). Again revenge is acceptable due to failure of accomplishing law. But in this way the avenger must be careful to take revenge, otherwise, he will be faulty for violating existing laws and the enemy may get advantage over him. Bacon says in this regard: "*The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there are no law to remedy*" (CSS Forum Editors. "Francis Bacon: A Moralist". [cssforum.com.pk](http://cssforum.com.pk). web. April 13, 2013).

Witty and highly rhetorical approach: Simple but not too simple, witty, sometimes highly rhetorical- that is how we can depict the style of Francis Bacon. Some examples of such speeches are depicted below:

- *“The rising unto place is laborious; and by pains men come to greater pains; and it is sometimes base and by indignities men come to dignities” (of Great Place)*
- *“Wives are young men’s mistress; companions for middle age; and old men’s nurses.” (of Marriage and Single Life)*
- *“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.” (of Studies)*

Antithetical Sentences Shows Intense Morality: When Bacon makes any particular statements he counter balances it, to avoid any possible exaggeration, by giving the other side of the picture as well. He makes antithetical comment to impose an influence upon the people. We can have an example from *of Revenge*, *“Revenge is a kind of wild justice. He who requites violence for violence, sins against the law but not against the man.”* Bacon shows the counter balance also: *“He that did the first wrong made a beginning of mischief; he that returneth it makes no end. The more natural revenge is the more need to restrain it.”* In *of Parents and Children* Bacon says that children sweeten labor and they make misfortune bitterer as well. They increase the care of life but they mitigate the remembrance of death. This sort of weighing and balancing makes his style antithetical. According to Bacon’s Language: *“Children sweeten labour, but they make misfortune bitter.”*

Intellectual and Pithy: Bacon is a master of intellectual and pithy sentences in his essays. Indeed, the secret of Bacon’s strength lies in his conciseness. We ignore the unnecessary conceits and over crowded imagery of the enthusiast; but he knew, how to high up his thought with well-placed figures and give to it an imaginative glow and charm when required. Bacon set up a new method of prose writing, which was at once easy, simple, graceful, rhetorical, musical and condensed.

- *“Those that want friends to open themselves unto are cannibals of their own hearts” (of Friendship)*
- *“The ways to enrich are many, and most of them foul” (of Riches)*
- *“Money is like muck, not good except it be spread” (of Seditions and Troubles)*

Disadvantage of Taking Revenge: Revenge breaks social justice balance. Guilty persons suffer only the pressure of revenge but avengers suffer in two ways- once from the wrong and secondly from the punishment imposed by law for his revenge. Bacon says, *“it is two for one.”* The man who always thinks to take revenge can not be free from bitter memory of wrong done to him. He is always under mental torment. He can not forgive his enemy thus becomes unwise, hostile. According to Bacon: *“This is certain that a man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well.”*

Worldly Wisdom and Practicality: Bacon is much frank in exposing his view towards truth in the essay *Of Truth*. Truth, according to Bacon, lacks the charm of variety which, falsehood has. Truth gives more pleasure only when a lie is added to it. He believes that, falsehood is a source of temporary enjoyment as it gives the people a strange kind of pleasure. So the essayist says: *“...a mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure”*. To Bacon, a liar is towards god but cowards towards men. A liar is not brave enough to tell the truth before people but he shows courage to tell a lie disobeying god as the Bacon comments: *“For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man.”* Such sentences show that how Bacon brings practical wisdom for the people. This is indeed a paradox. It means that a man does not fear God when he tells a lie. Bacon suggests that the books should be read according to their importance. There are some books which are read only for pleasure, a number of books are to be memorized but a few books are to be read deeply with hard work and concentration. The author says: *“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.”* Bacon is very practical in treating love. He considers it just one of many passions of human mind. He does not pay extra favor to it emotionally; rather he sees love as a "child of folly" in his essay *Of Love*. As he comments: *“Nuptial love maketh man kind; friendly love perfecteth it, but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it.”* He shows in *of Revenge* a certain high morality by saying that *“Revenge is a kind of wild justice”*. In *of Parents and*

*Children*, he shows both the utility and the futility of having children. As he says: "*Children sweeten labour, but they make misfortune more bitter.*" In this essay he tells the readers the practical benefit of wives. In his own words: "*Wives are young men's mistress; companions for middle age, and old men's nurses.*"

Subversive Attitude to Marriage: Bacon believes that a married man can not have an adventurous life for the responsibilities of his wife and children. He must give the assurance of their security in a responsive manner. Thus a married man is always busy for the betterment of his family. He can not even take any risk to change his fate for future. So Bacon states in his essay *of Marriage and Single Life*: "*He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to Fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief.*" Bacon would like to argue that a priest should not be a married man. An unmarried priest helps his poor and needy parishioners up to his level best. But a married priest can not do these because of giving first priority to satisfy his family. Bacon gets the difference between a married and single priest in this line: "*A single life doth well with churchmen for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool.*" There is another point comes from the maintenance of a wife and children. It is a matter of liability for a miserly husband to bear: "*There are some others that account wife and children but as bills of charges.*" Moreover in Bacon's view, the wives and the children are the hindrance in the way of the success. As he says in *of Marriage and Single Life*: "*He that hath wife and children hath given hostage of fortune*".

Subject Matter is reflected in Utilitarianism: The adaptability to the subject matter was a characteristic quality of Bacon's writings. His lines reflect the utilitarianism of the topic very vividly. For example:

- "*Travel in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience*" (*of Travel*)
- "*Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability*" (*of Studies*)
- "*Ambition is like cholera; which is a humor that maketh men active, earnest, full of alacrity, and stirring, if it be not stopped*" (*of Ambition*)
- "*Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark*" (*of Death*)

## CONCLUSION

Bacon is the author of the entire world and his compositions reflect human minds which look for the perfection in real life and the life after death. For this, he often uses his own themes and motifs as his individual styles. This feature makes him incomparable in the prominence of day-to-day topics in his presentation which is the main aim to find out in this research study. Bacon is above all writers, at least above all modern essayists, the man of human nature, the author that holds up to the multitude the mirror of manners and of life. He was the torchbearer of using didactics in the essays. His aesthetic and moral values are completely praiseworthy that have enough influence upon the modern people. His emphasis on the human nature makes him an author of all ages. Last of all, we can say that, Bacon is very exact to his views and thoughts. His essays are the hand-book of practical wisdom full of morality and practicality as well as enriched with maxims. Bacon's prose was permeated with practical wisdom.

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