

## THE WORLD AS I SEE IT



How strange is the lot of us mortals! Each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he sometimes thinks he senses it. But without deeper reflection one knows from daily life that one exists for other people first of all for those upon whose smiles and well-being our own happiness is wholly dependent, and then for the many, unknown to us, to whose destinies we are bound by the ties of sympathy. A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving. I am strongly drawn to a frugal life and am often oppressively aware that I am engrossing an undue amount of the labour of my fellow-men. I regard class distinctions as unjustified and, in the last resort, based on force. I also believe that a simple and unassuming life is good for everybody, physically and mentally.

I do not at all believe in human freedom in the philosophical sense. Everybody acts not only under external compulsion but also in accordance with inner necessity. Schopenhauer's saying, 'A man can do what he wants, but not want what he wants/ has been a very real inspiration to me since my youth; it has been a continual consolation in the face of life's hardships, my own and others' and an unfailing well-spring of tolerance. This realization mercifully mitigates the easily paralyzing sense of responsibility and prevents us from taking ourselves and other people all too seriously; it is conducive to a view of life which in particular, gives humour its due.

To inquire after the meaning or object of one's own existence or that of all creatures has always seemed to me absurd from an objective point of view. And yet everybody has certain ideals which determine the direction of his endeavour and his judgments. In this sense I have never looked upon ease and happiness as ends in themselves—this ethical basis I call the ideal of a pigsty. The ideals which have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth. Without the sense of kinship with men of like mind, without the occupation with the objective world, the eternally unattainable in the field of art and scientific endeavours, life would have seemed to me empty. The trite objects of human efforts, possessions, outward success, luxury—have always seemed to be contemptible.

My passionate sense of social justice and social responsibility has always contrasted oddly with my pronounced lack of need for direct contact with other human beings and human communities. I am truly a lone traveller and have never

belonged to my country, my home, my friends, or even my immediate family, with my whole heart; in the face of all these ties, I have never lost a sense for distance and a need for solitude feelings which increase with the years. One becomes sharply aware, but without regret, of the limits of mutual understanding and consonance with other people. No doubt, such a person loses some of his innocence and unconcern; on the other hand, he is largely independent of the opinions, habits, and judgments of his fellows and avoids the temptation to build his inner equilibrium upon such insecure foundations.

My political ideal is democracy. Let every man be respected as an individual and no man idolized. It is an irony of fate that I myself have been the recipient of excessive admiration and reverence from my fellow -beings, through no fault, and no merit, of my own. The cause of this may well be the desire, unattainable for many, to understand the few ideas to which I have with my feeble powers attained through ceaseless struggle. I am quite aware that it is necessary for the achievement of the objective of an organization that one man should do the thinking and directing and generally bear the responsibility. But the led must not be coerced, they must be able to choose their leader. An autocratic system of coercion, in my opinion, soon degenerates. For force always attracts men of low morality, and I believe it to be an invariable rule that tyrants of genius are succeeded by scoundrels. For this reason I have always been passionately opposed to systems such as we see in Italy and Russia today. The thing that has brought discredit upon the form of democracy as it exists in Europe today is not to be laid to the door of the democratic principle as such, but to the lack of stability of governments and to the impersonal character of the electoral system. I believe that in this respect the United States of America have found the right way. They have a President who is elected for a sufficiently long period and has sufficient powers really to exercise his responsibility. What I value, on the other hand, in the German political system is the more extensive provision that it makes for the individual in case of illness or need. The really valuable thing in the pageant of human life seems to me not the political state, but the creative, sentient individual, the personality; it alone creates the noble and the sublime, while the herd as such remains dull in thought and dull in feeling.

The topic brings me to that worst outcrop of herd life, this military system, which I abhor. That a man can take pleasure in marching in fours to the strains of a band is enough to make me despise him. He has only been given his big brain by mistake; unprotected spinal marrow was all he needed. This plague-spot of civilization ought to be abolished with all possible speed. How vile and despicable seems war to me! I would rather be hacked in pieces than take part in such an abominable business. My opinion of the human race is high enough that I believe this bogey would have disappeared long ago, had the sound sense of the

peoples not been systematically corrupted by commercial and political interests acting through the schools and the Press.

The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery—even if mixed with fear—that engendered religion. A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, our perceptions of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our minds—it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity; in this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man. I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves. Neither can I, nor would I want to conceive of an individual that survives his physical death; let feeble souls, from tear or absurd egoism, cherish such thoughts. I am satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and with the awareness and a glimpse of the marvellous structure of the existing world, together with the devoted striving to comprehend a portion, be it ever so tiny, of the Reason that manifests itself in nature.

- **Albert Einstein**

### **About the Essay**

The essay, 'The World As I See It' first appeared in the journal *Forum and Century*. It begins with the idea of 'ties of sympathy' between human beings. The philosophical idea driven home is the need to remind oneself of how one's inner and outer life is based on the hard work of other individuals.

Einstein denounces class distinctions as 'unjustified and based on force'. He did not believe in the possibility of free will. The German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer's observation that man can attain what he wants but cannot will what he wants, remained a source of inspiration for Einstein all his life. He found these words a great source of consolation in the face of complications of life. He assumed that such a belief can eventually enable one to take life less seriously.

To strive hard to understand the essential meaning of life is absurd. However, the direction of one's life is determined by one's principles. Kindness, beauty and truth are the ideals that have power to light up one's life. To go all out for ease and happiness alone, according to Einstein, corresponds to filth. He strongly condemns the tendency to make efforts for materialistic gains and calls himself a 'lone traveller', whose need for solitude is greater than his need for human contact.

The essay brings to the fore Einstein's strong preference for democracy as opposed to an autocratic regime. Being a pacifist, he never advocated war and militarism. The essay concludes with an affirmation of the mystery of eternity of human life, which reflects itself in myriad ways; one of these is manifestation of Reason in nature.

The Essay 'The World As I See It' is written by Albert Einstein, an eminent scientist. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921.

## **GLOSSARY**

sojourn	: temporary stay
frugal	: simple and plain
unassuming	: modest, not drawing attention to one's abilities
Schopenhauer	: German philosopher (1788-1860)
well-spring	: fountain head, source
mitigate	: to tone down, make less severe
conducive	: favourable
absurd	: senseless

## **Activity 1: COMPREHENSION**

### **A. Tick the correct alternative:**

- 1) Einstein \_\_\_\_\_ class distinctions in the essay 'The Civilization of Today'.
  - a) approves
  - b) denounces
  - c) both approves and disapproves
  - d) appreciates
  
- 2) The direction of one's life, according to Einstein, is determined by:-
  - a) one's principles
  - b) one's vision
  - c) one's deeds
  - d) one's profession
  
- 3) In 'The Civilization of Today' Einstein advocates-
  - a) democracy

- b) war and militarism
- c) dictatorship
- d) monarchy

**Activity 2: VOCABULARY**

**A. Match the words given in Column ‘A’ with their synonyms given in Column ‘B’**

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
freedom	hate
hardships	independence
abhor	difficulties
cradle	wonder
marvel	origin
abolished	show
pageant	eliminated

**B. Write the antonyms of the words enlisted below by adding appropriate affix:-**

Justify	_____
Human	_____
Experience	_____
Expert	_____
Literate	_____

**Activity 3: GRAMMAR**

**Modals**

**Read the following sentences**

- A man can do what he wants
- They must be able to choose their leaders.
- I would rather be hacked in pieces.

The underlined words in the above sentences as you know are called Modals. All auxiliary verbs except be, do and have are called Modals. Unlike other auxiliary verbs, modals can only exist in their helping form (except need, dare and used to). They can never act as the main verb. The most common Modals in English are:

Can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, ought to, will, would, used to

Now study the following sentences-

- X He cans do it.
- X He mayed do it.

X He is maying.

All the above three sentences are ungrammatical because unlike ordinary words Modals do not have forms ending in –s,-ing,ed

### Can and Could

Can and Could are used to make requests,offers or suggestions.They can also be used to give/deny/permission.Can is also used in the following way-

He can play tennis very well. (to express ability)

Can you hear me. (used with verbs of perception)

Could is the past tense of Can. Some other uses of Could are as follows:

Till last year I could read without glasses.(ability that existed in the past)

You could do it if you tried hard.(possibility or uncertainty)

Could I have a word with you?(polite question)

### May and Might

May is used in the following cases:

May I go home now.(to seek permission)

He may be elected the president.(possibility)

May God bless you! (wish/blessing)

Use fertilizers so that you may have a good harvest. (purpose)

Might is the past tense of May. Some uses of might are as follows:

I might pass the exam.(a doubtful possibility)

Mahesh, you might have told me before. (to express gentle reproach)

If I might make a suggestion,couldn't we take another route?(extreme politeness)

### Will and Shall

Both Will and Shall are used to indicate future time. Shall is used with I person and Will with the II person. However, where the meaning involves command, obligation or determination, the positions are reversed. Now a days Shall has come to be largely neglected in favour of Will,which is now the commonest form of future in all three persons.

Shall is used in the following cases:

I shall go tomorrow.

Shall I close the door.  
Shall I tell him or shan't I?  
It shall be done?  
You shall go if I say you must.

Will is used in the following cases:

We will not surrender.(determination)  
I will try to get you a job in my office.(promise)  
I will teach him a lesson.(threat)  
The train will leave at 10:30 p.m(certainty)

Would or Should

Would or Should are past tense forms of Will and Shall. Would and Should are also used in conditional clauses where the focus is on the consequences of an imagined act or to indicate something that will certainly happen in future:

If I continued smoking, I would die.  
Should it rain,there will be no picnic today.

Should is used to express duty or obligation:

We should have given him a helping hand.

Would is also used to express willingness/determination/customary action in the past:

She would have her own way.  
The sparrows would come and pick up crumbs from my hand.

Must

Must remains unchanged in form whatever be its tense or the number and person of the subject.

Must is used in the following cases:

He must apologize for his mistake. (Compulsion/Duty)  
We must get up early and start our own way.(Necessity)  
He must be mad to do this.(probability or likelihood)  
You must insist on the latter choice.(strong determination)

You will read about Ought(to), Used(to), Dare and Need in the following lesson.

***Activity 4: SPEECH ACTIVITY***

Everybody has a philosophy of life. What is yours? Do you follow it in your day to day life? Organize an interactive session and acquaint others with your philosophy of life.

***Activity 5: COMPOSITION***

Write an essay on Einstein's ideas of War and Peace and compare them with that of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.