

Lesson-3

Third Thoughts

This story was told to me by a friend.

It is my destiny (said he) to buy in the dearest markets and to sell- if I succeed in selling at all - in the cheapest. Usually, indeed, having tired of a picture or decorative article, I have positively to give it away; almost to make its acceptance by another a personal favour to me. But the other day was marked by an exception to this rule so striking that I have been wondering if perhaps the luck has not changed and I am, after all, destined to be that most enviable thing, a successful dealer.

It happened thus. In drifting about the old curiosity shops of a cathedral city I came upon a portfolio of water-colour drawings, among which was one that to my eye would have been a possible Turner, even if an earlier owner had not shared that opinion or hope and set the magic name with all its initials (so often placed in the wrong order) beneath it.

"How much is this?" I asked scornfully.

"Well," said the dealer, "if it were a genuine Turner it would be worth anything. But let's say ten shillings. You can have it for that; but I don't mind if you don't because I'm going to London next week and should take it with me to get an opinion."

I pondered.

"Mind you, I don't guarantee it." He added.

I gave him the ten shillings.

By what incredible means I found a purchaser for the drawing at fifty pounds there is no need to tell, for the point of this narrative resides not in bargaining with collectors, but in bargaining with my own soul. The astonishing fact remains that I achieved a profit of forty-nine pounds ten and was duly elated. I then began to think.

The dealer (so my thoughts ran) in that little street by the cathedral west door, he ought to participate in this. He behaved very well to me and I ought to behave well to him. It would be only fair to give him half.

Thereupon I sat down and wrote a little note saying that the potential Turner drawing, which no doubt he recollected, had turned out to be authentic, and I had great pleasure in enclosing him half of the proceeds, as I considered that the only just

and decent course.

Having no stamps and the hour being late I did not post this, and went to bed.

At about 3.30 a.m. I woke widely up and, according to custom, began to review my life's errors, which are in no danger of ever suffering from loneliness. From these I reached, by way of mitigation, my recent successful piece of chaffering, and put the letter to the dealer under both examination and cross-examination. Why (so my thoughts ran) give him half? Why be Quixotic? This is no world for Quixotry. It was my eye that detected the probability of the drawing, not his. He had indeed failed; did not know his own business. Why put a premium on ineptitude? No, a present of, say, ten pounds at the most would more than adequately meet the case.

Sleep still refusing to oblige me, I took a book of short stories and read one. Then I closed my eyes again, and again began to think about the dealer. Why (so my thoughts ran) send him ten pounds? It will only give him a wrong idea of his customers, none other of whom would be so fair, so sporting, as I. He will expect similar letters every day and be disappointed, and then he will become embittered and go down the vale of tears a miserable creature. He looked a nice old man too; a pity nay a crime, to injure such a nature, No, ten pounds is absurd. Five would be plenty. Ten would put him above himself.

While I was dressing the next morning I thought about the dealer again. Why should I (so my thoughts ran) directly I had for the first time in my life brought off a financial coup, spoil it by giving a large part of the profit away? Was not that flying in the face of the Goddess of Business, whoever she may be? Was it not asking her to disregard me-only a day or so after we had at last got on terms. There is no fury like a woman scorned; it would probably be the end of me. City magnates are successful probably just because they don't do these foolish impulsive things. Impulse is the negation of magnetism. If I am to make any kind of figure in this new role of fine-art-speculator (so my thoughts continued) I must control my feelings. No, five pounds is absurd. A douceur of one pound will meet the case. It will be nothing to me-or, at any rate, nothing serious-but a gift of quail and manna from a clear sky to the dealer, without, however, doing him any harm. A pound will be ample, accompanied by a brief note.

The note was to the effect that I had sold the drawing at a profit which enabled me to make him a present, because it was an old, and perhaps odd, belief of mine that one should do this kind of thing; good luck should be shared.

I had the envelope in my pocket, containing the note and the cheque when I reached the club for lunch; and that afternoon I played bridge so disastrously that I was glad I had not posted it.

After all (so my thoughts ran, as I destroyed the envelope and contents) such bargains are all part of the game. Buying and selling are a perfectly straight forward matter between dealer and customer. The dealer asks as much as he thinks he can extort and the customer, having paid it, is under no obligation whatever to the dealer. The incident is closed.

-E.V. Lucas

About the Lesson:

E.V. Lucas was born at Eltham in 1868 and studied at University College, London. He was a journalist and an essayist who also wrote novels, travelogues and children's books. He is better known as an essayist than as a journalist.

The essay 'Third Thoughts' has been taken from a collection called 'The Phantom Journal and Other Essays and Diversions' brought out in the year 1919. The title 'Third Thoughts' is a humorous coinage inspired by the idiom second thoughts which means an opinion or resolution reached after reconsideration. The narrative is a satire on human weakness for money and exposes how where money is involved man's noble sentiments and morally admirable ideals soon fade away. Man is basically selfish and materialistic and for the sake of money he can consider, reconsider and even change his noble and ideal thoughts in his every day social behavior. The essay also gives us a deep insight into the business psychology and philosophy of the world of Trade and Commerce where "Impulse is negation of Magnetism" and "buying and selling are a perfectly straight forward matter between dealer and customer. The dealer asks as much as he thinks he can extort and the customer having paid it, is under no obligation, whatever to the dealer." The narrative is a perfect blend of fancy, humour and satire.

GLOSSARY:

striking(adj)	-	impressive, attracting attention; arousing great interest
destined(adj)	-	fated; lucky enough; preordained
enviable(adj)	-	likely to excite envy; a source of jealousy
drifting(v)	-	walking casually (with no definite aim)
curiosity shops(np)	-	shops selling rare and interesting articles
cathedral(n)	-	large and important church which has a bishop as incharge of it
came upon(v)	-	happened to see unexpectedly or by chance
scornfully(adv)	-	treating with disdain, contemptuously

portfolio(n)	- a folder for keeping drawings, documents, etc.
turner(n)	- (1775-1851) a great English landscape painter
pondered(v)	- thought; considered; contemplated
incredible(adj)	- amazing, that cannot be believed
collectors(n)	- here, those who collect curious and rare objects
astonishing(adj)	- amazing; surprising
elated(adj)	- felt delighted or proud
potential(adj)	- having strong possibility
proceeds(n)	- profits from sale etc
mitigation(n)	- relaxing the stress; comforting himself
chaffering(n)	- bargain; here, the drawing which earned him a profit
Quixotry(n)	- (here) generosity, idealistic thinking
ineptitude(n)	- illogical act or behavior
embittered(adj)	- disturbed with bitter feelings
a financial coup(n)	- a big profit as if earned in a victory against fate.
fly in the face of (idiom)	- to insult or humiliate
magnate(n)	- term for a wealthy person or successful businessman
impulsive(adj)	- emotional; sentimental
fine art speculator(n)	- one who has a thorough knowledge about fine arts and can point out their good and bad aspects; an appreciator of art
douceur(n)	- (French) a present given as a token of goodwill
a gift of quail and manna from a clear sky (idiom)	- quail is a small bird belonging to the family of partridge; manna is the heavenly food like 'amrit'; the phrase here means, an unexpected gift or reward
disastrously(adv)	- terribly; here, getting lost in the event and forgetting everything
extort(v)	- take out (money etc.) cunningly or obtain by coercion

ACTIVITY 1 : COMPREHENSION:

A. State whether the following statements are True or False. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false.

- (1) The narrator had always been lucky in buying and selling pictures and decorative articles at desired price.
- (2) The dealer was ready to guarantee that it was a genuine drawing by Turner.
- (3) The narrator sold the painting on profit.
- (4) The story teller never thought of sharing his profit with the dealer.

- (5) According to the author big business magnates are successful because they are not sentimental.
- (6) 'Third Thoughts' is a psychological drama of bargaining with the narrator's own soul.

(B) Answer the following questions in about 25-30 words each:

- (1) Who tells the story to the author?
- (2) When does the narrator give away his artistic articles?
- (3) Did the narrator go to the market with the intention of buying the painting? How did he happen to buy it?
- (4) What price did the narrator get from the buyer for the drawing?
- (5) Why did the dealer sell the drawing so cheaply to the narrator?
- (6) Why did the narrator feel so delighted and proud after selling the painting?
- (7) Why does the narrator think that the dealer should get a part of the profit he had earned?
- (8) In his mood of elation what did the narrator write in the first note to the dealer?
- (9) Which habit of the story teller leads him to examine and re-examine his idea of sending a part of the profit to the dealer?
- (10) What did the narrator do when sleep did not come to him?
- (11) Why does the narrator term the bargaining as a straight forward matter between dealer and customer?

(C) Answer the following questions in about 60-80 words each.

- (1) Justify the title 'Third Thoughts'.
- (2) Mention the reasons given by the narrator for changing his resolution with each reconsideration.
- (3) 'the point of the narrative resides not in bargaining with the collectors, but in bargaining with my own soul'. How far does the statement embody the true spirit of 'Third Thoughts'?
- (4) Why are city magnates successful according to the narrator?
- (5) How did the intended note to the dealer read and did it ever reach him?
- (6) 'there is no fury like a woman scorned.' Who is the 'woman' referred to here and why does the narrator fear her fury?

ACTIVITY-2: VOCABULARY:

1. (a) **Convert the following nouns into verbs and use them in sentences of your own:**

Ex. - guarantor → guarantee

collector, purchaser, drawing, narrative, pleasure, thought, mitigation, speculator, effect, belief, obligation, proceeds, dealer

(b) Convert the following nouns into adjectives and use them in sentences of your own:

Ex. - favour → favourable

picture, acceptance, exception, luck, hope, magic, worth, sleep, loneliness, pity, nature, profit, fury, obligation

2. (a) Use each of these expressions in sentences of your own:

come upon, turn out to be, meet the case, to be worth anything, give away, go down the vale of tears, put a premium, get on terms, put under examination and cross-examination, put one above oneself

(b) Give synonyms for the following words:

destiny, article, acceptance, favour, owner, scornfully, opinion, recollect, custom, loneliness, defect, present, disregard, absurd, coup, control, profit, contents, bargains, incident

(c) Give antonyms for the following words:

dearest, selling, positive, dealer, personal, possible, wrong, genuine, found, fair, pleasure, decent, probability, refuse, similar, plenty, harm, brief, glad

ACTIVITY 3 : SPEECH ACTIVITY :

As cultural secretary of your school prepare a speech to be delivered for the welcome of the guests at the inaugural function of the cultural festival of your school.

ACTIVITY 4: COMPOSITION:

- (1) Prepare a report to be published in the Tribune on the Distt. Athletics Tournament held in your school.
- (2) Write an application with bio-data, addressed to the Manager Personnel, HDFC Bank, Udaipur for the post of a cashier.
- (3) Write an article to be published in The Amrit Bazar Patrika on Demonetization and its impact.