

**UNIT 6 PROSE**

**On the Rule of the Road - A.G. Gardiner**

**Synonyms**

confusion – mess  
interfere – hinder  
peril – risk  
contract – commitment  
pedestrians – persons who walk on the streets  
indifferent – unconcerned  
chaos – confusion  
fancy – desire  
anarchy – lawlessness/ rebellion  
shandy – lemonade  
preserved – maintained  
ridiculous – comical  
curtailed - reduced  
conventional - normal  
tyranny - autocracy  
accommodate - fit in with  
insolence - rudeness  
consideration – scrutiny  
liberty – freedom  
fancy – decorative  
entitled – eligible  
qualified – competent  
remind – make one remember  
trombone – musical instrument  
outraged – annoyed  
quiet – calm  
interfere – obstruct  
liable – responsible

**Antonyms**

liberty × slavery  
reasonable × unreasonable  
confusion × clarity  
reality × unreality  
peril × safety  
indifferent × interested  
preserved × destroyed  
harsh × kind  
curtail × lengthen  
ridiculous × appreciable  
anarchy × order  
conventional × unconventional  
tyranny × democracy

**Answer the following questions in one or two sentences each.**

- a) Why did the lady think she was entitled to walk down the middle of the road?  
The lady thought that she had liberty to walk wherever she liked.
- b) What would be the consequence of the old lady's action?  
The old lady's action would lead to a great confusion of the traffic. There was every possibility of risk to her life.
- c) What does the 'rule of the road' mean?  
The 'rule of the road' means that in order to preserve the liberties of all, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed.
- d) Why should individual liberty be curtailed?  
Individual liberty should be curtailed for a social order.
- e) How would a reasonable person react when his actions affect other person's liberty?  
A reasonable person would reflect that if the policeman did not interfere with him he would interfere with no one and the result would be utter chaos.
- f) Define 'liberty' as perceived by the author.  
The author defines liberty as a social contract. It is an accommodation of interests.
- g) According to the author, what are we more conscious of?  
We are more conscious of the imperfections of others in the case of accommodating individual liberty to the liberty of others.
- h) What is the foundation of social conduct?  
A reasonable consideration of the rights or feelings of others is the foundation of social contract.
- i) How can we sweeten our life's journey?  
The little habits of common intercourse sweeten our life's journey.
- j) What does the traffic policeman symbolize?  
The traffic policeman symbolizes liberty and not tyranny.

**Answer the following questions in three or four sentences each.**

- a) What is 'liberty' according to the old lady?  
According to the old lady, walking where she likes is her personal liberty. She thinks that people have got liberty now. She gives importance to individual liberty.
- b) How would 'liberty' cause universal chaos?  
If an individual asserts his liberty and ignores the liberty of others, it would cause universal chaos. If everybody gets in everybody's way nobody would reach anywhere.
- c) Why is there a danger of the world getting 'liberty drunk'?  
Everyone asserts his liberty and does what he likes to do. Everyone gets in everybody's way. Individual liberty is given priority. So there is a danger of the world getting 'liberty drunk'.
- d) 'Curtailmnt of private liberty is done to establish social order' – Do you agree?  
Yes, I agree to the point of view that curtailment of private liberty is done to establish social order. Liberty is a social contract. If everyone has his own way of asserting individual liberty, nobody would get anywhere. There will be utter chaos and confusion everywhere.
- e) What did the old lady fail to understand?  
The old lady failed to understand that if liberty entitled the pedestrian to walk down the middle of the road, it would create universal chaos.

f) Mention one or two examples to show that you are as free as you like.  
I can go down the road in a dressing gown.  
I can dye my hair or wax my moustache as I like.

g) What happens when we step out of 'our kingdom'? When we step out of our kingdom, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty.

h) What does the author mean by 'insolence of office'? Do you think the policeman really shows insolence of his office?

'Insolence of office' refers to rudeness of power. The police man does not abuse his power in the process of controlling the traffic. If he does not interfere to control the traffic, there would be maelstrom and no one could cross the road.

i) Do you agree that our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty? How? In some matters we please ourselves and we need not get anyone's permission. But in public, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty. One's liberty to blow the trombone must not interfere with the liberty of one's neighbours to sleep in quiet.

j) According to the author, what makes us civilized or uncivilized?

A reasonable consideration for the rights or feelings of others is the foundation of social contract. It is in the small matters of conduct, in the observance of the rules of the road that we pass judgement upon ourselves. This makes us civilized or uncivilized.

**Answer each of the following in a paragraph of 100–150 words.**

a) What do you infer from Gardiner's essay 'On the rule of the Road'?

**"There is a danger of the world getting liberty-drunk in these days."**

In the lesson 'On the Rule of the Road', Gardiner emphasises that liberty is not a personal matter but a social contract. According to him, the rule of the road means that the liberties of everybody must be curtailed for the liberties of all to be preserved. If everybody gets in everybody else's way, nobody will get anywhere. Individual liberty would become social anarchy. In matters which do not touch others' liberty we can be as free as we like. We can choose to go down the road in a dressing gown. We can go to bed late or get up early. We need nobody's permission in these matters. It is personal liberty. We can practise our trombone in our house without disturbing our neighbours. But if we do it in the street, the neighbours will raise objections. They will argue that our liberty to blow trombone must not interfere with their liberty to sleep in quiet. So we must accommodate our liberty to the liberties of others.

**"They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."**

b) Explain in your own words, "what freedom means?"

**"When we step out of that kingdom, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty."**

Freedom means doing what is pleasing to us without interfering in freedom of others. Our freedom is restricted for the cause of social order. Freedom is not a personal matter. It involves the people around us or the people whom we come into contact with. We may have the freedom to dress anyway we like. We have the freedom to choose any religion to practice. In matters that do not infringe on others' freedom, we are absolutely free. We can listen to any song or watch any TV serial

but when we tune at high volume, we offend our family as well as our neighbours whose freedom to be in quiet is breached by us. To maintain the freedom of all, the freedom of everybody must be curtailed or restricted. So freedom is a social contract.

**"Freedom is not a gift bestowed upon us by other men but a right that belongs to us by the laws of God and nature."**

c) "My right to swing my fist ends, where your nose begins." Elucidate with reference to, 'On the Rule of the Road'.

**"When we step out of that kingdom, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty."**

Liberty is doing what we desire. We can dye our hair or wax our moustache. We can put on an overcoat and sandals. We can go to bed late or get up early. In these personal matters, we follow our fancy and need not expect anybody's permission. But when we come into contact with other people we cannot do everything we like. What we should do will be qualified by other's liberty. We may swing our fist in any way but our liberty to swing ends where someone's nose begins. We are supposed not to hit or hurt the person coming opposite. We should not disregard his liberty or his feelings. One can blow the trombone in the street but the liberty of his neighbours to sleep calmly should not be breached. So we must accommodate others' liberties to our liberty. This is the foundation of social contract.

**"Liberty is maintained by responsible freedom."**

d) Civilization can only exist when the public collectively accepts constraints on its freedom of action – Explain.

**"In order that the liberties of all may be preserved, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed."**

Civilization can only exist when liberty of the public is restricted. The liberties of everybody must be curtailed for the liberties of all to be preserved. One may choose to go down the street in a dressing gown. One may have a fancy for dyeing his hair or waxing his moustache. But in the presence of people liberties are restricted for the social order. We may blow the trombone provided nobody is disturbed. But if the neighbours argue that our freedom to play on the musical instrument interferes with their liberty to sleep calmly, they are justified. Unless all the people follow the traffic rule without asserting their liberty to choose to go any way they like, there will be utter chaos. None can reach anywhere. So the public must collectively accept constraints on its freedom so that the life journey will be sweet.

**"The love of liberty is the love of others; the love of power is the love of ourselves."**

e) Where is the border between personal liberty and public liberty? Illustrate from the text.

**"We have a whole kingdom in which we rule alone, can do what we choose, be wise or ridiculous, harsh or easy, conventional or odd."**

In matters which do not breach the public liberty, we may be as free as we like. We need not seek anybody's permission when the choice of our liberty does not disturb or offend others. We must remember that 'my right to swing my fist ends, where your nose begins'. We might like to practise on the trombone from midnight till three in the morning. If I do it in my bed room my family will raise objections. If I play in the street my neighbour has every right to object to my liberty. So we must consider the feelings of those around us. Our personal liberty is restricted where the public liberty is regarded. So we have to accommodate our personal liberty to the liberties of others.

**"Liberty is a social contract."**

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