

B.A. First Year

On Shaking Hands - A.G. Gardiner

Summary

A.G. Gardiner, a distinguished essayist of the 20th century is the author of On Shaking Hands. A.G. Gardiner is known for his delightful and humorous narrative style. His writings are thought provoking too. The narrative skill of the author throughout his writings is intelligent and amusing.

In the present essay the author talks about the western practice of shaking hands. To him shaking hands is an age old practice in the west. But of late this facing criticism on hygienic grounds. He compares this with other types of greetings and customs prevalent in different countries. Subtle humour pervades the entire narration. The oriental salam or salutation or the act of bowing by the Japanese are not as comradely as shaking hands.

The author says that people have got used to the custom of shaking hands so much that it happens more as a reflex action when two friends meet or part. A lot can be learnt about a person by the way he holds and shakes the others' hands. The hand shake should be firm yet friendly. It has to be free and cozy. Shaking hands comes so naturally and instinctively to the English men that trying to indict this custom would be impossible, concludes the author.

What is Gardiner's view on charge being brought against the custom of shaking hands?

On Shaking Hands is written by A.G. Gardiner, a well essayist of 20th century. His essays are delightful, humorous and thought provoking. In this essay, On Shaking Hands A.G. Gardiner gives his observations about the common western practice of shaking hands. A.G. Gardiner writes about the practice of shaking hands with a humorous yet true and serious touch.

Western people are very much acclimatized to shaking hands. It is supposed to be a decent and enviable practice. A.G. Gardiner in this essay tells us that this practice is charged as being an unhygienic custom, so as such we are advised to adopt a healthier mode of expressing our mutual emotion. The writer gives his unbiased views on this deep rooted habit. He goes on to say that the custom of shaking hands between two people when they meet or part has become so habitual that it is not at all easy to prevent it. Only a very tough parliamentary act or a heavy penalty can forbade people from shaking hands. There are other types of customary greetings around different parts of the world but A.G. Gardiner in his concluding part asserts that shaking hands is the 'happy mean'

between the oriental formal salaam and the Russian enormous hug. Shaking hands has warmth and the spirit of human comradeship.

What are the ways in which the hands speak?

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Western people are very much acclimatized to shaking hands. It is supposed to be a decent and enviable practice. A.G. Gardiner talks about various other ways of greeting people present all around the world that have their own strengths and weaknesses. As regards the customs of shaking hands A.G. Gardiner dwells upon the various impressions created by the way in which people shake hand with people. Several aspects and moods of the person advancing to shake hand can be felt by the way in which the person is shaking hand. A greeting without any grip or warmth in it is repulsive. The author compares this kind of a shaking hand with a 'step mother's cold breath'. The indifference of the person can be clearly perceived. Similarly no one likes to shake hand with people having flaccid, bony and energetic hands or with those having cold, dank hands. It causes a creepy feeling in us. A.G. Gardiner quotes here the repulsive character Uriah of Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* whose mere touch of the hand haunts people with a creepy and obscene feeling. The writer goes on to say that by shaking hands with some people we can sense their dishonesty and even their health condition. With some personalities the hand shake is so eloquent that everything about him can be discovered. A.G. Gardiner compares some people's unresponsive handshake with the touch of a jelly fish. By quoting all these examples of various types of shaking hands A.G. Gardiner drives home the point that hands do speak in the customary process of shaking hands.

Dr Rajdhan
Assistant Professor-English