



SRINIVASAN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE
(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Trichy)
PERAMBALUR - 621 212.



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

I-M.A., ENGLISH - II SEMESTER (EVEN)

A COURSE MATERIAL ON:
LITERARY CRITICISM
P16EN24

Prepared By:

M.KRISHNAKUMAR, M.A., M.Phil., B.Ed.,
Assistant Professor in English,

MARCH - 2020

Core Course – VIII Literary Criticism

Objectives:

- To help learners develop literary sensibility and critical thinking
- To make learners understand a wide range of literary texts, literary history and literary criticism
- To introduce learners to a variety of critical approaches to perceive the paradigm shift through the critical texts from Plato to T.S. Eliot

Unit I

Plato	: <i>The Ion</i> (679-681) <i>The Republic</i> (681-685)
Aristotle	: <i>On Poetics</i> (686-696)
Horace	: <i>The Art of Poetry</i> (696-700)
Longinus	: <i>On the Sublime</i> (706-708) (Extracts from <i>The English Critical Tradition</i> Vol.2 by S. Ramaswami and V. S. Sethuraman)

Unit II

Philip Sidney	: <i>Apology for Poetry</i>
---------------	-----------------------------

Unit III

John Dryden	: <i>An Essay on Dramatic Poesie</i>
Dr. Johnson	: <i>Preface to Shakespeare</i>

Unit IV

William Wordsworth	: <i>Preface to the Lyrical Ballads</i>
S. T. Coleridge	: <i>Biographia Literaria</i> Chapter XIV

Unit V

Matthew Arnold	: <i>The Study of Poetry</i>
T. S. Eliot	: <i>Tradition and the Individual Talent</i>

Books for Reference:

- David Daiches: *Critical Approaches to Literature*, 2nd ed., Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001.
- Enright, D J, and Chickera E. De. *English Critical Texts: 16th Century to 20th Century*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1983.
- Harry Blamires: *A History of Literary Criticism*, Delhi: Macmillan, 2001.
- M.A.R. Habib: *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Patricia Waugh: *Literary Theory & Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, Delhi: OUP, 2006.

CONTENTS

S. No	Title	Page No
1.	Plato : <i>The Ion</i> (679-681) : <i>The Republic</i> (681-685)	04
2.	Aristotle : <i>On Poetics</i> (686-696)	11
3.	Horace : <i>The Art of Poetry</i> (696-700)	26
4.	Longinus : <i>On the Sublime</i> (706-708)	32
5.	Philip Sidney : <i>Apology for Poetry</i>	40
6.	John Dryden : <i>An Essay on Dramatic Poesie</i>	48
7.	Dr. Johnson : <i>Preface to Shakespeare</i>	65
8.	William Wordsworth : <i>Preface to the Lyrical Ballads</i>	77
9.	S. T. Coleridge : <i>Biographia Literaria</i> (Cha-XIV)	88
10.	Matthew Arnold : <i>The Study of Poetry</i>	96
11.	T. S. Eliot : <i>Tradition and the Individual Talent</i>	114

UNIT – I.1 & 2

PLATO (427-347 BC)

Plato was an immensely influential ancient Greek philosopher, a student of Socrates, writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of the Academy in Athens where Aristotle studied. Plato lectured extensively at the Academy, and wrote on many philosophical issues, dealing especially in politics, ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology. Homer was a major influence on Plato. The most important writings of Plato are his Dialogues, although some Epistles (Letters) have come down to us under his name. The Dialogues include *Ion*, *Lysis*, *Gorgias*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus* and *Republic*. Plato's theory of art and literature are mostly contained in *Ion* and *Republic*.

Historical Context

1. Plato lived in a time of political decline and dissolution. Education was in a sorry state. The epics of Homer were venerated by the Greeks at this time. However, philosophers criticized those passages in Homer which showed the gods in an unfavourable light.
2. Courage, heroism, magnificence etc. were virtues prized highly by the Greeks.
3. The wonderful flowering time of Greek art and literature was over. Literature had become immoral, corrupt and degenerate, and was the object of much hostile criticism.
4. Philosophers and orators were regarded as leading spirits, superior to poets and artists.

Basic Critical Precepts

1. Poetic Inspiration

The poet is divinely inspired, like the prophets. Poetry is not a craft that can be learned

and practiced at will; it is the result of divine inspiration.

The implication here, which is later taken up by Plato, is that poetry is not rational, and that the poets themselves do not often understand what they write in a moment of frenzy. Therefore, poetry cannot be relied upon as it is not the result of conscious, considered judgment. Further, poets may express divine truths, but such truths remain beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals.

2. Imitation (Mimesis)

Plato believed that Ideas or heavenly archetypes alone are true and real. All earthly things are mere copies of them. In other words, beauty, goodness, justice etc. are mere copies of the ideal beauty, goodness, etc. which exist in a heavenly realm. Plato regards **mimesis** (Imitation) as mere **representation**, not expression, which is creative.

If ultimate reality consists of the “ideas” of things, of which individual objects are but reflections or imitations, then the painter or poet who imitates those individual objects is imitating an imitation, and so producing something which is still further removed from ultimate reality. For example, a chair exists firstly as idea, secondly as object of craftsmanship, and thirdly as object of representation in art. Thus, mimesis is **thrice removed from reality** in the Platonic conception of the world. Just as the painter only imitates what he sees and does not know how to make or to use what he sees (he could paint a bed, but not make one), so the poet imitates reality without necessarily understanding it.

Cave Image

Here the physical world is in the form of a cave, in which the humans are trapped from the beginning of life, where we are stationary and cannot move our heads, so we perceive

only shadows and sounds. Without reason, one of us is released and is encouraged to travel upward to the entrance of the cave. Then he is pulled to the entrance of the cave, where the light is hurting his eyes that are accustomed to the dark. The world of daylight represents the realm of Ideas. His eyes grow accustomed to the light and he can look up to the sun, and understand what the ultimate source of light and life is. This gradual process is a metaphor of education, and enlightenment. The enlightened person now has a moral responsibility to the unfortunate people, still in the cave, to rescue them and bring them into the light.

Plato's Attack on Poetry

Plato attacks poetry on 4 grounds: Moral, Intellectual, Emotional and Utilitarian. The attack must be judged with reference to the socio-political context, and with Plato's dedication to restoring health in both the individual and the state.

1. Moral

- (i) Poetry is not conducive to social morality because poets cater to the popular taste and narrate tales of man's vices.
- (ii) Poets lie about gods and represent them as corrupt, immoral, dishonest and subject to the vices of humanity.
- (iii) Drama is even more harmful because judgement in dramatic matters is left to the many, and the result is lawlessness and licence.

2. Intellectual

- (i) Poets have no knowledge of truth. Poets, like painters, imitate appearances and not the truth of things, illusions and not reality. Poetry is thrice removed from reality.

3. Emotional

- (i) The poet's inspiration is of a mysterious, irrational kind. Hence his utterances are unreliable. Poetic truths, which are full of obscurities and contradictions, and which lack moral restraint, can be no substitute for knowledge based on reason.
- (ii) Except lyric poetry (which is narrative), all other kinds of poetry—epic, tragedy and comedy—are imitative, which has pernicious effects. In imitative poetry, the poet and the reader identify themselves with the fictitious characters, which leads to the unhealthy weakening of character. It enfeebles the individual.
- (iii) Imitative poetry abounds in the vulgar, sensational and corrupt because it is easier to imitate the baser part of the soul. [According to Plato, the soul has three parts: (a) rational, (b) spirited, and (c) desirous]
- (iv) Tragedy gives unrestrained expression to the emotions of pity and grief, thus urging the audience to keep reason at abeyance and play a woman's part.

4. Utilitarian

- (i) Poetry serves no useful purpose because the poet merely imitates the surface of things without knowing how to use or make them. [According to Plato, there are three arts concerned with all things: **Use**, the most noble; **make**, and then **imitate**, the basest.]

Plato's Theory in a Nutshell

Art is potentially dangerous for several reasons:

1. Art is essentially **deceptive**.
2. Art is mainly **concerned with sensual pleasure**.
3. Art is **psychologically de-stabilizing** (for the individual).
4. **Art leads to immorality**.

5. Art is **politically** dangerous (threat to the common good).

Plato's Achievement

1. Plato introduces the concept of mimesis as an essential characteristic of all art. He also divides arts into two: fine arts and useful arts (medicine, agriculture etc.)
2. Though Plato generally deals with poetry as servile copy of superficial appearances, he was aware of the imitation of ideal forms of an unseen world beyond the senses. He associated this imitation with poetry of the highest kind. Thus he hints of poetry being a creative process.
3. Plato advances considerably in his theory of poetic inspiration, and treats it as an ecstatic power which liberates the soul from the bondage of convention and carries man nearer to truth.
4. Poetry is inspiration, but also an art and Plato breaks new ground in laying down the basic principles for its practice as an art. The poet must take thought (select and organize his material), follow the laws of order and restraint, and conduct study and exercise.
5. Plato emphasized for the first time that organic unity is essential for success in all arts. He compares a work of art to a living organism, whose various organs work harmoniously together.
6. Plato's classification of poetry into lyric, epic and dramatic originated the classification of poetry based on forms and styles.
7. He accepts pity and fear as emotions proper to tragedy and thus lays the foundations for catharsis.
8. Regarding the function of poetry, he is of the view that it is not merely the giving of pleasure but the moulding of human character.

9. Plato was the first to enunciate the classical ideals of artistic beauty in his description of the poetic ideals of austerity, order and restraint.
10. Plato was also the first to emphasize the value of decorum in art.

TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Questions

1. To what two things do the number of spheres correspond?
2. Why might a just man suffer?
3. Why is the creation of an artisan closer to truth than the creation of an artist?
4. How does poetry weaken the mind?
5. In what way are the goals of the dramatist and the rhetor–itician similar?
6. Who are Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos?
7. Why is Odysseus' choice wise?
8. In what two things does Socrates find proof of the soul's immortality?
9. To which section of the line do artists' works correspond?

Answers

1. The number of spheres corresponds, first, to the heavenly bodies visible to the Greeks and, second, to the notes of a scale.
2. A just man might suffer for the sins of his past life. His suffering will always be with an eye on his future benefit, in this life or the next.
3. An artisan looks to expert opinion when making his objects, while the artist only looks to public opinion.
4. Poetry weakens the mind because it deliberately appeals to the lower elements, and people choose to let themselves be swayed by its appeal.

5. They both aim to please the public.
6. They are the three Fates.
7. Odysseus' choice is wise because he was cured of ambition and chose a life that, while dull, would give him happiness.
8. Socrates finds proof of the soul's immortality in the absence of an agent that can destroy it and in the soul's love of wisdom.
9. Artists' works correspond to the lowest section of the line, the one that corresponds to the mental condition of ignorance.

UNIT – I. 3

ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC)

Aristotle was born in 384 BC at Stagirus. His father Nichomachus was court physician to the Macedonian king and from this began Aristotle's long association with the Macedonian court, which considerably influenced his life. At the age of 17 he was sent to Athens, the intellectual centre of the world, to complete his education. He joined the Academy and studied under Plato, attending his lectures for a period of twenty years. In the later years of his association with Plato and the Academy he began to lecture on his own account, especially on the subject of rhetoric. At the death of Plato in 347, the pre-eminent ability of Aristotle would seem to have designated him to succeed to the leadership of the Academy. But his divergence from Plato's teaching was too great to make this possible, and Plato's nephew was chosen instead. Later, he became the tutor of 13 year old Alexander (later world conqueror).

When Alexander succeeded to the kingship Aristotle returned to Athens, which he had not visited since the death of Plato. He found the Platonic school flourishing under Xenocrates, and Platonism the dominant philosophy of Athens. He thus set up his own school at a place called the Lyceum. When teaching at the Lyceum, Aristotle had a habit of walking about as he discoursed. It was in connection with this that his followers became known in later years as the *peripatetics*, meaning "to walk about." He is said to have given two kinds of lectures: the more detailed discussions in the morning for an inner circle of advanced students, and the popular discourses in the evening for the general body of lovers of knowledge. At the sudden death of Alexander in 323 BC, the pro-Macedonian government in Athens was overthrown, and a general reaction occurred against anything Macedonian. To escape prosecution Aristotle fled to another city, Chalcis, so that, as Aristotle himself said, "The Athenians might not have another

opportunity of sinning against philosophy as they had already done in the person of Socrates.” In the first year of his residence at Chalcis, in 322 BC, he died of a stomach illness.

The Poetics

Aristotle is the first scientific critic and his literary criticism is largely embodied in *The Poetics*. *The Poetics* is a short treatise of 26 chapters, neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. *The Poetics* falls into six parts:

- (1) Chapters 1-5—introductory remarks on poetry, classification of poetry into different kinds.
- (2) Chapters 6-19—discussion of Tragedy
- (3) Chapters 20-22—discussion of poetic diction, style, vocabulary, etc.
- (4) Chapter 23—discussion of Narrative Poetry and Tragedy
- (5) Chapters 24 & 26—discussion of Epic and comparison with Tragedy
- (6) Chapter 25—objections of critics against poetry and Aristotle’s reply.

Defects of *The Poetics*

The Poetics is not a coherent treatise of the subject and has some defects.

- (i) Disproportionate handling of the subject.
- (ii) Lyric poetry has been ignored.
- (iii) Descriptive poetry is not dealt with.
- (iv) Comedy and Epic are not elaborated in detail.
- (v) All aspects of Tragedy are not touched upon.
- (vi) Telegraphic and highly concentrated style.

Greatness of *The Poetics*

Despite the defects, *The Poetics* is an epoch-making work with continuous and universal significance.

1. Aristotle **discards the earlier oracular method** (according to which, critical pronouncements were supposed to be the result of prophetic insight), as well as **Plato's dialectic method** (use of dialogue / discussion).
2. He starts from concrete facts (existing Greek poetry) and undertakes a genuine exploration in search of Truth.
3. He studies poetry in relation to Man. Thus his method is psychological.
4. Aristotle originated the historical method of inquiry and describes the various phases in the history of Greek poetry.

Aristotle's View of Mimesis

Plato was the first to use the term “mimesis” in connection with poetry, but Aristotle gave it new and definite meaning. In Aristotelian theory, poetic imitation is not mere mimicry or an act of servile copying, but an act of imaginative recreation, whereby the poet, drawing his material from the phenomenal world, makes something new out of it.

In Aristotle's view, imitation is the common basis of all fine arts. While Plato equated poetry with painting, Aristotle equated it with music—not a servile representation of the surface, but a reproduction of the higher reality within—of the passions of emotions of men. The painter imitates through form and colour, while the poet through language, rhythm and harmony. The musician also imitates through rhythm and harmony. Hence, poetry is closer to music than painting. He also pointed out that different kinds of poetry differ from one another in their manner of imitation.

Aristotle said that the objects of poetic imitation are men in action (external or internal action), men as they are and as they ought to be. That is, the poet recreates reality creatively and brings order out of chaos. Poetry in this sense is superior over history. History tells us what has happened, while poetry tells us what may / ought to happen. While history represents the particular, poetry represents the universal. Hence poetry has a permanent appeal. Poetry in this light can be equated with philosophy.

Aristotle's Defense of Art

Crucial to Aristotle's defense of art is his

- **Rejection of Plato's Dualism:** Man is not an 'embodied' intellect, longing for the spiritual release of death, but rather an animal with, among all faculties, the ability to use reason and to create.
- **Rejection of Plato's Rationalism:** We must study humans as we would study other animals to discover what is their "nature." Look among the species; see who are the thriving and successful and in what activities do they engage? For Aristotle, this is how to determine what is and is not appropriate for a human and human societies.
- **Rejection that Mimesis is mere mirroring of Nature**

Aristotle's vindication of poetry includes the following arguments:

1. Aristotle established that Art is not useless, it is natural. The reasons he provided are:
 - It is natural for human beings to imitate.
 - Any human society which is healthy will be a society where there is imitative art.
 - Nothing is more natural than for children to pretend.
2. Art production and training is a necessary part of any education since it uses and encourages the imaginative manipulation of ideas
 - Nothing is more natural than for human beings to create using their imagination.

- Since art is imitation, it is an imaginative use of concepts; at its heart, art is “conceptual,” “intellectual.”
3. Aristotle also emphasized that good Art is not dangerous or deceptive because
- Artists must accurately portray reality to be successful. For example, Drama must accurately portray psychological reality in order for characters to be believable and their actions understandable.
 - Art teaches effectively and it teaches the truth. Convincing and powerful drama is convincing and powerful because it reveals some truth of human nature.
 - Aristotle argued that sensuous art is not a bad thing.
 - i. Aristotle did not believe that the mind was one thing and the body was something else and therefore Aristotle did not have the bias against physical pleasures that Plato did.
 - ii. The only way of acquiring knowledge at all, according to Aristotle, was through the senses and so developing, exercising and sharpening those senses through art was healthy.
 - iii. Art was not solely concerned with the sensual pleasures, but rather was/should be an intellectual, conceptual affair.
4. Aristotle affirmed that good Art is tied to Morality and Truth
- Successful Tragic Drama always teaches morality. When trying to understand how tragedies achieve their peculiar effect (Pathos), he notes the psychology and morality on which they must be based.
5. Aristotle agreed that art did stir up negative emotions but, he claims it then purged these in a harmless, healthy way. [Doctrine of “Catharsis”]
- Art is neither psychologically de-stabilizing nor politically destructive.
 - Art is a therapeutic part of the healthy life of not only the individual, but of the nation.

Aristotle's View of Tragedy

Definition

The Poetics is concerned chiefly with Tragedy, which is regarded as the highest poetic form. Aristotle defines Tragedy as “the imitation of an action, serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play, in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.”

The definition falls into two parts:

- (i) The first part, from “The imitation of an action” to “and not narration” is concerned with the nature of Tragedy—its objects (serious and complete action of a certain magnitude, not trivial as in Comedy), medium (language embellished and not simple language as in Lyric), and manner (action, not narration as in Epic).
- (ii) The second part is concerned with the function and emotional effects of Tragedy (Catharsis).

Six constituent elements of Tragedy

Aristotle enumerates six formative elements of a Tragedy, which in the order of their importance, are: **Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song, Spectacle**. **Plot** (arrangement of incidents) is the action that tragedy imitates. Action ensues from **Character**. Character is moulded by **Thought**, which reveals itself in Dialogue or **Diction** (language embellished with ornaments such as **Song**). **Spectacle** (stage presentation), least connected with Poetry, adds to power of Tragedy.

Plot, according to Aristotle, is the “soul of Tragedy,” and consists of a logical and inevitable sequence of events, which have a beginning, middle and end. Aristotle likens

the plot of a tragedy to a living organism, and says that it should be a complete whole as well of a certain magnitude, like a living organism. In a successful plot, the various incidents are causally connected to one another, and it is impossible to remove a single incident without causing injury to the whole action. The artist must properly select and order his material and thus impart artistic unity to it. The **episodic plot**, where incidents are not wholly integrated with the main action, is the worst of all plots. The best tragic plot shows a good man, but not a perfectly good one, suffering as a consequence of some error of judgement (Hamartia) on his part.

Simple and Complex Plots: According to Aristotle, plots may be of three kinds—Simple, Complex, and plots based on the depiction of suffering for their effect. Simple Plots are those which do not have Peripety (reversal of intention) or Anagnorisis (discovery of truth). Complex plots employ Peripety and Anagnorisis. Tragedy arises out of human error and Peripety and Anagnorisis—ignorance of truth and realization of truth—are the essential consequences of human error.

The Unities: There are three unities established in dramatic criticism: (i) **Unity of Action**, (ii) **Unity of Time** and (iii) **Unity of Place**.

- (i) Aristotle stressed that a plot should have Unity of Action. The plot should incorporate into itself only those actions intimately connected with one another and which appear as one whole; usually actions concerning one man. Digressions can be introduced, but they should be integral to the plot; it should not be possible even to shift them from one place to another (transpose them). Aristotle rules out plurality of Action and is against sub-plots and tragi-comedy.
- (ii) Unity of Time is mentioned casually, only once, in *The Poetics*. This unity implies that the conformity between the time taken by the actual events of the play and the

time taken for their representation on stage should be a “single revolution of the sun,” as against epic action, which has no time limit. It was believed that spectators would not believe in tragedy and that tragedy would not have the desired effect if several days or several years (as in Shakespearean tragedy) are crammed into a three-hour play.

(iii) Unity of Place is not mentioned by Aristotle even once. Aristotle merely says that the epic may narrate several actions taking place simultaneously at different places, but this is not possible in tragedy which does not narrate, but represents through action. It was the Renaissance and Neo- classical critics who attributed the Unity of Place to Aristotle. Unity of Place refers to the conformity between the scenes of the tragic events; the theory that there should be no change of place in tragedy, and even if the scene changes, it must not be to too great a distance.

Character, according to Aristotle, has four essential elements:

- (i) *The characters must be good.* Some amount of wickedness may be introduced only when required by the necessities of the plot. Goodness of character, a concept critically debated for many years, might mean grandeur, courage, uprightness, determination etc.
- (ii) *The characters must be appropriate.* They must be true to type and status, i.e., they must have characteristics peculiar to their age, profession, sex, social rank and status.
- (iii) *The characters must have likeness.* They must have the joys and sorrows, virtues and weaknesses, loves and hatreds, of average humanity.
- (iv) *The characters must be consistent.* There should be no sudden change in character. The actions of a character must be the necessary and probable outcome of his nature.

Tragic Hero: Aristotle’s enumeration of the qualities of the tragic hero can be summarized as follows:

- (i) The tragic hero is a character of noble stature and greatness. The character must occupy a noble position in society, but must also have nobility of character.
- (ii) Though the tragic hero is pre-eminently great, he is not perfect. Otherwise, the rest of us—mere mortals—would be unable to identify with the tragic hero. We should see in him someone who is essentially like us, although perhaps elevated to a higher position in society.
- (iii) The hero’s downfall, therefore, is partially his own fault, the result of free choice, not of accident or villainy or some overriding, malignant fate. In fact, the tragedy is usually triggered by some error of judgment or some character flaw that contributes to the hero’s lack of perfection noted above. This error of judgment or character flaw is known as *hamartia* and is usually translated as “tragic flaw”. Often the character’s *hamartia* involves *hubris* (pride, as in the Marlovian hero).
- (iv) The hero’s misfortune is not wholly deserved. The punishment exceeds the crime.
- (v) The fall is not pure loss. There is some increase in awareness, some gain in self-knowledge, some discovery on the part of the tragic hero.
- (vi) Though it arouses solemn emotion, tragedy does not leave its audience in a state of depression. Aristotle argues that one function of tragedy is to arouse the “unhealthy” emotions of pity and fear and through a *catharsis* (which comes from watching the tragic hero’s terrible fate) cleanse us of those emotions. [Greek drama was not considered merely as “entertainment;” it had a communal function—to contribute to the good health of the community. This is why dramatic performances were a part of religious festivals and community celebrations.]

Catharsis: The word Catharsis, meaning “purification” in Greek, is a term borrowed from medical terminology by Aristotle to explain the function of Tragedy. Aristotle states that the purpose of Tragedy is to arouse “pity and fear” and thereby effect the catharsis of these emotions. The interpretation generally accepted is that through experiencing fear vicariously in a controlled situation, the spectator’s own anxieties are directed outward, and, through sympathetic identification with the tragic hero, his insight and outlook are enlarged. Tragedy then has a healthful and humanizing effect on the spectator or reader.

Hamartia

Aristotle saw Hamartia as the lynch-pin of tragedy. Its hero typically is a man largely good (but not wholly good) of high moral worth. He is propelled into tragedy by his hamartia. What exactly this hamartia is has been the dispute of centuries. Whether it is hamartia itself is open to question (George Saintsbury claims that it is not hamartia but amartia.) The word Hamartia can be translated as “error of judgement,” “mistake,” “frailty,” “weakness,” “tragic flaw” etc. It is this which hurls the otherwise near-perfect hero into the maelstrom of tragedy. A very common form of Hamartia in Greek tragedy is hubris, poorly translated as pride or over-confidence. Hubris makes the hero to disregard divine warnings and violate moral codes. A.C. Bradley has attempted to identify the Hamartia of Shakespearian heroes in the course of his efforts at applying the concepts of Aristotlean dramatology in Shakespearian Tragedy. It could be argued that the Hamartia is procrastination in the case of Hamlet, jealousy in the case of Othello, a surrender to the physical self in the case of Antony. Aristotle sees Hamartia not as a moral sin but as an error that, despite its terrible consequences, only succeeds in making the hero more human. It may be an avoidable fault, but it is also more or less excusable. It not deliberate, but born of ignorance or passion. Oedipus exemplifies the former and Othello and Antony

the latter.

Sources of Tragic Pleasure

According to Aristotle, the function of poetry is to give a certain refined pleasure, and in this he counters the view that the poet is primarily an ethical teacher. Pleasure is essential and moral function is only incidental. According to Aristotle, tragic pleasure is derived from:

1. Our natural sense of harmony and rhythm.
2. The instinct of imitation.
3. Imitation of the unfamiliar.
4. Catharsis.
5. Involvement of the spectator.
6. Inner illumination.
7. Unity of plot, diction, spectacle, etc.

Plato & Aristotle: A Comparison

Social reformer / Scientist

Idealist/ Realist

Art for moral purpose / Art for aesthetic purpose

Emphasis on Ultimate Reality / Emphasis on Empirical Reality

Mimesis as Imitation / Mimesis as Re-creation

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is function of plot in tragedy?

Plot indicates an imitation of actions of life.

2. How do you say that poetry is higher than history?

As poetry expressed the universal, not the particular fact as history, poetry can be more philosophical and higher.

3. What are two natural causes of actions?

Character and thought.

4. How did Aristotle divide six elements of tragedy in three parts?

According to Aristotle Spectacle is the manner, and Plot, character, thought are the objects, Language, and melody is the media.

5. Which type of plot did Aristotle refer to as bad and why?

Simple plot consists of episodic form, is the worst because it does not have inevitable sequence.

6. Which emotions should the audiences feel through characters in well-organized tragedy?

Pity, fear, and sympathy

7. What are the 6 elements of tragedy?

Plot, character, thought, diction, music, spectacle

8. Which element of tragedy is most important?

Plot.

9. What is Catharsis?

Catharsis is the purification and purgation of emotions.

10. What is reversal in tragedy?

Reversal”the turning point in a drama after which the plot moves steadily to its denouement.

11. What is recognition in tragedy?

A anagnorisis or recognition " it is a change from ignorance to knowledge"

12. What was Aristotle's most beloved tragedy?

Oedipus the king.

13. In what three ways does Aristotle differentiate various art forms from one another?

By the medium, objects, and manner of imitation.

14. Aristotle explains that the medium specific to poetry is one that uses what?

Language alone.

15. How does Aristotle differentiate poetry from prose?

Poetry uses rhythm in the form of meter.

16. The object poetry portrays is what, according to Aristotle?

Men in action.

17. What is the feature of language in tragedy?

in tragedy Has rhythm and melody, not narrating the situation too much.

18. Which is required quality of characters in tragedy?

Characters do not experience situations by extreme personality, neither being pre-eminent in virtue and justice, nor falling into misfortune through vice or depravity.

19. What does Aristotle consider art to be?

Aristotle considers art to be an imitation of life.

20. What is poetic unity?

All plot events of a poem connect and revolve around a central idea.

21. What are Aristotle's traits of a tragic hero?

Here we have basic characteristics of a tragic hero, as explained by Aristotle:

Hamartia :a tragic flaw that causes the downfall of a hero.

Hubris :it means disrespect for the natural order of things.

Peripeteia :It means ,The reversal of fate that the hero experiences.

22. How does Aristotle define a tragic hero?

Aristotle says that a hero of a tragedy must evoke in the audience a sense of pity or fear. He should be from noble family.

23. How many types of poetry according to poetic?

There were three: tragedy, epic, and comedy.

24. Define Manner of Poetic imitation?

According to Aristotle Poetry is the medium of imitation, it means a form of art that represent life. Poetry imitates by representing character, emotion, action.

25. What is Aristotelian criticism?

A critical theory, doctrine, or approach based upon the method used by Aristotle in the Poetics, implying a formal, logical approach to literary analysis that is centered on the work itself.

26. Define Literary criticism?

The art or practice of judging and commenting on the qualities and character of literary works.

27. Define the term 'mock epic.'

Mock-epic, it is also known as a mock-heroic poetry it presents satire, which means that it uses irony, exaggeration.

28. What difference does Aristotle find between history and poetry?

Basically Aristotle felt there was more philosophical substance to poetry than in history. He felt that man could express and learn from poetry in a way that he cannot from history. Poetry reaches the higher senses of man's capabilities. Poetry infuses the abstract and the essence of enlightenment: history merely conveys information.

29. What is the climax of a drama?

It is a Greek word which means ladder turning point of a drama .

30. What is the importance of plot in tragedy?

Aristotle argues that, among the six formative elements, the plot is the most important element. He writes in *The Poetics*. By plot Aristotle means the arrangement of incidents. By Incidents it means an action.

UNIT- I.4

HORACE (65-8 BC)

Introduction to Roman Criticism

Around the first century BC, the centre of literary and cultural activity shifted from Alexandria (in Greece) to Rome, the capital of the Roman empire. With the age of Augustus Caesar (31 BC-AD 14), there dawned a golden age of poetry and criticism, dominated by the figures of Virgil, Ovid and Horace. Several factors contributed to this flowering of the arts and letters:

1. Augustus Caesar and his courtiers patronized art.
2. It was an age of peace, not war. So men turned to literature to achieve distinction.
3. There was an upsurge of nationalism in Rome and a need was felt to equal / excel the Greek masters. So there was a revival of Greek classicism in Rome. Both Virgil and Horace pleaded for the study of Greek classics.
4. A number of poetasters (inferior poets) were turning inferior verse, corrupting and degrading public taste. There was increased critical activity against this.

Ars Poetica

Horace began a new tradition in literary criticism and stands out as the most influential of Roman critics. Throughout his poetry runs a criticism of contemporary manners, morals, politics and thought. The main body of his critical theory is contained in *Ars Poetica* (The Art of Poetry), a work which equaled Aristotle's *Poetics* in its influence during the Renaissance.

Ars Poetica seems formless and unsystematic but a closer examination reveals a well-marked scheme of treatment. The subject matter falls into three divisions:

- i. POESIS, or the treatment of the subject-matter of poetry.

- ii. POEMA, or form.
- iii. POETA, or the poet.

I. POESIS

Poetry, according to Horace, is not mere imitation; it is a creative adaptation. *Ars Poetica* opens with the assertion that a poem must have an **organic unity**. The poet is free to indulge his fancy, but he must not create monsters or impossible figures. Introduced the term “**purple patch**”—a brilliant or ornate passage in a literary composition, usually in the midst of mediocrity. The subject, chosen wisely, should be simple and consistent.

The language of poetry is different from—finer and higher than—the language of the common man. A wise discretion / **moderation** must be exercised in the **choice of words**. Horace recognized that language is in a constant process of change. Language is like a tree and words are leaves which wither every year and are succeeded by new ones. A poet can coin new words and revive old ones but this should be done with discretion, only when absolutely necessary.

A particular genre should stick to the metre allotted to it by the ancient Greeks. For epic poetry, iambic pentameter should be used; for poems of complaint, elegiac verse; for tragedy or comedy, iambic verse, and so on.

II. POEMA

This is the most thoroughly handled of the three divisions and drama as a form of poetry is treated at length to the exclusion of the lyric and the epic.

The **plot** should be based on old familiar stories and novelty may be imparted by skilful treatment. New themes may be invented, but for the successful treatment, the poet requires great skill. A plot construction should plunge straight into the “middle of things”

("in medias res") as in Homer. Comic themes should not be treated in the lofty vein of tragedy or tragic themes in the low vein of comedy. All the incidents of the plot should have a logical connection.

In **characterization**, the poet must be true to life. Characters must be consistent; those drawn from tradition must preserve their traditional traits. The quality of characters must fit their respective ages. Children should be shown quick to anger and quick to cool; boys fond of sport, reckless, fickle, high-spirited, etc.

The dramatist must know **what to represent on the stage** and what to report to the audience. Ugly and horrible incidents should happen off-stage.

A play should not have more or less than **five acts**. There must be more than **three characters in any one scene**. The gods should not intervene in the action unless when absolutely essential. The denouement should be the natural outcome of the incidents and not a matter of chance. The **chorus** should form an integral part of the play.

The **Greek models** should be strictly followed. The poet who wants to achieve excellence must "Read them by day and meditate by night."

III. POETA

The art of poetry is the outcome of **incessant toil**. A poem should be revised, blotted and pruned several times until it attains artistic excellence. The poet must not be in a hurry to publish his works and should "let it stand for over a decade."

A poet must be a **keen observer of men and manners**. Nobility and dignity of soul are also necessary.

Regarding the function of poetry, Horace follows the general classical view that **poetry should both teach and delight, with greater stress on teaching**. A poet should instruct or please, or he may combine both these functions. But for the sake of pleasing,

he should not indulge in romantic extravagances. He should aim at mixing pleasure with profit. He should be brief, for only then would the people give heed to his instruction.

Minor faults in poetry may be forgiven, because “Even good Homer nods.” A poet should, however, try to avoid faults as much as he can.

Great poets have been great prophets. So a poet should not feel ashamed of his art; he must be proud of it. “As is painting so is poetry,”—poetry (in its widest sense, “imaginative texts”) merited the same careful interpretation that was, in Horace’s day, reserved for painting.

The idea of poetic madness or inspiration is absurd. Excess must be kept under restraint. The treatise ends with a satiric portrait of a mad poet.

Evaluation of Horace

Limitations

Horace’s criticism contains much that is borrowed and lacks in originality. His theories are not derived from actual literature, but are based on the theories of Aristotle and their later interpretations.

Achievements

1. Horace asserts the supremacy of classical Greek art and thus inaugurates a new phase in the history of literary criticism.
2. Regarding the imitation of the ancients, he does not advocate slavish copying but a process of re-creation, adaptation, an evolution of something new out of the old.
3. His pronouncement on diction, form, unity, brevity, etc are of lasting value.

TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

- 1. The views of Horace expressed in The Art of Poetry are applicable to what type of poem?**

The Art of Poetry is an *ars poetica*, in which a writer outlines his or her theories of poetry. The ancient writer Horace first wrote this version of an *ars poetica* as a letter to his friend and...

- 2. Who influenced Horace?**

Horace's most famous poems, the Odes, were strongly influenced by the ancient Greeks. Here as elsewhere, a Roman artist appropriated Greek forms and adapted them for a domestic audience. The Odes...

- 3. What is the relationship of Horace's treatment of imitation in the *Ars Poetica* to that found in Plato and Aristotle? What is the meaning of imitation in relation to Plato and Aristotle in Horace's *Art of Poetry*?**

The first issue is one of influence. Aristotle's *Poetics* was not known to Horace, and thus there was no direct influence. Plato's theories of mimesis were discussed in middle Platonic metaphysics,...

- 4. What is central to Horace's approach to criticism and to decorum in his *Art of Poetry*?**

The Roman poet Horace, in his poetic treatise called the *Ars Poetica* ("The Art of Poetry"), is often associated with an approach to writing that emphasizes the need to appeal to and satisfy an...

- 5. What is the importance of oratory in relation to poetry in Horace's *Art of Poetry*?**

For Horace, oratory and poetry served different but complementary functions and the training and techniques of each had some benefit for the other although not when used to excess. In Horace's...

UNIT-I.5

LONGINUS (c. 1st century AD)

Longinus is the name bestowed by a scribe's error on the author of the Greek critical treatise *On the Sublime* written probably in the 1st century AD. It locates the source of poetic excellence in the profundity of the writer's emotions and seriousness of his thoughts. The first English translation by John Hall appeared in 1652. It was only with the appearance of Boileau's French version (1674) and its influence on Dryden that the concept of creative fire became popular. Longinus had considerable influence on 18th century critics. Pope was influenced by him. The cult of the sublime did much to prepare the way for Romanticism. The sublime, an idea associated with religious awe, vastness, natural magnificence and strong emotion fascinated 18th century literary critics and aestheticians. Its development marks the movement away from the clarity of Neo-classicism towards Romanticism which emphasises feelings and imagination.

The authorship, date of composition and title have been matters of dispute. Authorship: Dionysius Longinus, 1st century AD. Cassius Longinus, a philosopher of 3rd century AD. One Caessilus of 1st century wrote a treatise *On the Sublime*. *On the Sublime* by Cassius Longinus of 3rd century AD was an attempt to make up the deficiencies and insufficiencies of the 1st century work. Moreover one third of the original was lost. As it has come down it is incomplete. Alternate titles have been suggested—Height of eloquence, On Literary excellence. The work has been addressed to one Perentianus, presumably a pupil or friend of the author.

On the Sublime

Longinus defines sublimity as “a certain distinction and excellence in expression”. He observes, “Sublimity flashes forth at the right moment, scatters everything like a thunderbolt and at once displays the power of orator in all its plenitude”.

Longinus warns against certain faults that may spoil sublimity:

- Pedantry or bombast.
- Puerility (Silliness, childishness)
- Empty passions—ill-timed pathos.
- Frigidity (lack of passions)

These faults originate in the craze for novelty. The true sublime arises from lofty ideas clothed in lofty language. It pleases all and pleases always.

Five Sources of Sublimity

1. **Grandeur of Thought:** This results from the faculty of conceiving great thoughts. Sublimity is the echo of a great soul. [cf. Milton: “The poet ought to be himself a great poem”]. The earlier masterpieces illuminate the poet’s mind guiding it, in some mysterious way to the lofty standards of the ideal.

2. **Passion:** vehement and inspired passion—Pathos.

3. **Schemata:** the proper use of figures of speech and thought. The importance of this is evident; for Longinus devotes about one third of his work elaborating this factor. A figure is used most effectively when the fact that it is a figure is concealed by splendour of style.

4. **Phrasis:** noble language and diction. It insists that language and diction must be appropriate to the grandeur of thought.

5. **Composition:** It is harmony in composition that gives definite shape to art.

Of the five, the first two are innate and the rest are rhetorical features. The poet has

two aspects— genius and acquired art. And the poem has two sides—sublimity and technique.

Longinus is emphatic about one thing—that pleasure is the immediate end of art. Scott James calls Longinus the first romantic critic, romantic in his enthusiasm and exuberance and in his emphasis on imagination, emotion and transport of ecstasy. But according to Atkins, Longinus is an exponent of true classical spirit—the principles are deducted from the practices of the past. But he goes on to say, “But while this is true, Longinus anticipates much that is modern in critical work”.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write about frigidity in On the Sublime.

Frigidity is a characteristic that Longinus sees as an enemy of sublime literature. Writers achieve frigidity when, while they "aim at the uncommon and elaborate and most of all at the attractive,...

2. What are the sources of sublimity in On the Sublime?

According to Longinus, author of the treatise On the Sublime (Περὶ ὕψους) who lived in the 1st or 3rd century AD, there are two different sources of sublimity: inborn sources and acquirable...

3. What is false sublimity? Explain with reference to On the Sublime by Longinus.

False sublimity is any writing that has the outward appearance of sublimity whilst not succeeding in transporting the reader through real, genuine elevated language. For Longinus, any writing that...

4. Write a short note on factors which destroy sublime effects in On the Sublime.

If this treatise is about sublimity and how to achieve it, Longinus arguably spends at least as much time talking about the various pitfalls that there are for the writer who strives to achieve...

5. How might the ideas of Longinus, as expressed in his treatise titled "On the Sublime," be relevant to Kate Chopin's tale "The Story of an Hour"?

Longinus, in his essay "On the Sublime," advocated a theory of speech and writing that emphasized the goal of sublimity – that is, loftiness, elevation, inspiration. Longinus believed that great...

6. "The effect of elevated language upon the audience is not persuasion but transport." Discuss with reference to On the Sublime by Longinus.

This is an intriguing question to consider because Longinus in his treatise opens up the debate about whether achieving excellence in literature (which he defines as sublimity) is a result of...

7. What according to Longinus in On the Sublime is the test of excellence in literature?

Longinus argues that the test of excellence in literature is whether it achieves the status of being sublime. He further goes on to describe what he means by this word by saying that sublime...

8. "On the Sublime is a wonderful piece of comparative and practical criticism." Elucidate.

One of the hallmarks of good criticism is the use of a number of different examples to prove the points of the author. This is something that is clearly evident in this treatise,

as Longinus refers...

9. Comment on the aesthetic importance of "sublimity" as viewed by Longinus in On the Sublime.

The aesthetic importance of sublimity is discussed by Longinus in Section IX of his treatise. In this section Longinus discusses the first essential source of elevated language, which, in his...

10. What is false sublime? Explain with reference to Longinus's On the Sublime.

Longinus, in his treatise On the Sublime defines the main topic of its writing as a certain distinction and excellence in expression. Longinus explains that, for something to be categorized as...

11. How is Longinus' On the Sublime an excellent example of practical and comparative criticism?

Longinus' On the Sublime resembles many ancient works of rhetorical theory and differs from modern literary criticism in that it is addressed to an audience of practitioners rather than passive...

12. What is an example of any poem that can be considered sublime according to Longinus, and why is it considered sublime?

One example of the sublime in poetry is Epithalamion by Edmund Spenser. Since this is a long and immensely complex poem, the poems in his sonnet cycle will serve equally well as examples of the...

13. What are the sources of the "sublime" in On The Sublime by Longinus?

In his work On The Sublime (Peri Hypsous), Longinus (or often called as pseudo-Longinus because of doubts of authorship) gives 5 sources of sublimity. These five

sources are warranted for a work to...

14. What does Longinus discuss in On The Sublime?

The focus of this work, supposedly written by Longinus, although the majority of critics believe that it would have been another author who penned this work of early criticism, is the...

15. In On the Sublime by Longinus, what is the difference between amplification and sublimity?

In "On the Sublime" by Longinus, sublimity is the eventual effect towards which writers strive, and is defined primarily in terms of the reader's response to the work as a combination of emotional...

16. Define Longinus' concept of sublimity as stated in On the Sublime.

Longinus equates sublimity with elevation of the soul and attributes the presence of elevation to five sources, further asserting that the sublime elevates the audience's souls and originates in...

17. Please give a short summary of On the Sublime.

This is a piece of early literary criticism which deals in particular with the very vexing question of whether a writer is able to learn their trade through application and hard work, or whether...

18. What is some information on Longinus as a Classic or Romantic critic?

Longinus wrote in the Classic Greek period. Longinus cannot be properly identified. It is thought he was actually a Greek master of rhetoric, though, for simplicity, the writer is consistently...

19. How is the idea of dignity of composition a source of Sublimity in On the Sublime by Longinus?

When we know that the sounds of a harp, ... in symphony, often lay a wonderful spell on an audience ... can we doubt that composition (being a kind of harmony of that language which nature has...

20. In On the Sublime, how is it determined if a work is sublime or not?

What Longinus does in this early work of ancient criticism is to define the sublime as an ideal that all authors should aspire to reach through their skill. What he outlines are the five sources...

21. How is nobility of diction a source of the sublime as discussed by Longinus in On the Sublime?

Not every work is extraordinary. Longinus, in On the Sublime, has given detailed account of the sources that make any work of art sublime. Sublimity refers to greatness and excellence. One of the...

22. In On the Sublime, the approach can be described as psychological as well. How far do you agree?

This is an interesting statement to consider, because psychology as a discipline and an approach was something that had not been conceived of at all at the time of writing of this text, and it...

23. Write a short note on Passion as a source of the sublime in On the Sublime.

Longinus turns his attention to passion in Section XIII of this treatise. He takes the view that passion is definitely not synonymous with sublime literature. He argues that some passions can be...

24. What are the things that are discussed in Longinus On the Sublime?

On the Sublime, a work that recent (post-2000) scholarship has argued should indeed be attributed to the leading ancient philologist, Longinus, is essentially a rhetorical treatise, giving writers...

25. In "On the Sublime," why does Longinus shed light on the production itself rather than on the poet?

The reason why the author of On the Sublime (who more than likely is not Longinus, according to historians) sheds a light on the production itself rather than the poet is because of a term that the...

26. How does figurative language enhance "sublimity" in On the Sublime?

Longinus, in Section XV of his treatise, argues that figurative language, done well, can play a vital part in the creation of sublimity. This is a very interesting example of how Longinus argues...

UNIT-II.1

PHILIP SIDNEY (1554-1586)

In the sixteenth century the need for a proper understanding of the nature and function of poetry was widely felt. Various causes contributed to this: (1) Much confusion prevailed regarding the true nature of poetry. (2) The courtiers of Queen Elizabeth had a high sense of the value of poetry. (3) With the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Italy there was much critical discussion on poetry. (4) The hostility of the puritans posed a challenge to the status and value of poetry and the result was replies and counter-replies. Finally the best of the puritan attacks is represented by Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* and the best of the replies is Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie*.

An Apologie for Poetrie

It is a critical treatise by Sir Philip Sidney, published in 1595 in two separate editions, one bearing the title *The Defence of Poesy*. The work achieves the principal aim of the verbal act – persuasion – by painstakingly observing the compositional rules of classical oratory.

Stephen Gosson published *The School of Abuse* in 1578 dedicating it to Sidney apparently without permission. However, it is not clear whether, Sidney was replying to the writer, his manner of writing or the argument. Gosson felt that the whole of ancient poetry is infected with the blasphemy and immorality of paganism. He attacked the lies and the license of poets and players.

An Apology is an assessment of the poetic concepts, notions and standards then available to the Elizabethan scholars. With an ease of manner and elegance of style, Sidney answers the puritan objections to imaginative literature in a series of arguments drawn largely from the Italian humanist critics. The *Apology* epitomizes Sidney's

sensitivity to contemporary intellectual milieu and its critical inheritance.

Division of the essay

Exodium: an indirect beginning by narrating a personal experience. He justifies his own praise of poetry by citing the example of Pungliano.

Narration: Here Sidney gives the merit of the subject matter dealing with the superiority of poetry.

Preposition: This is the central document or idea of the essay.

Division: Here Sidney analyses the main idea and fortifies it.

Conformation: gives the summary of the arguments till that point, also the objectives of humanity, and the end of education. It raises claims of history, philosophy and how poetry fulfils the ends of humanistic education which is not adequately satisfied by philosophy or history.

Major Critical Precepts

1. About the universality and antiquity of poetry

Poetry in all nations has preceded other branches of learning. Poets are “the fathers of learning” and so they must be respected of their antiquity. Philosophers and historians have, in the beginning appeared under the mask of poets. Poetry is universal in the sense that it has flourished in all ages and countries. Even the uncivilized, like the Tusks and Tartars, love poetry which softens their hard hearts. Poetry is long lasting and continuous. It begins early in the history of a nation and lasts the longest.

The Greeks and Romans honoured poets. The poet is truly a maker, for while all other arts are tied to Nature, the poet is not a slave to Nature. He is truly creative. The

poet alone can fashion a perfect lover, a perfect friend, and a perfectly valiant man even though they are not found in Nature. Nature's "world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden". The poet is a prophet too. The oracles of Delphos and the prophecies of Sibylla were delivered in verse. The psalms in the Bible are nothing but songs.

As a definition, Sidney says that poetry is an **art of imitation**. It is representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth. Poetry is a "speaking picture" and its **end is to teach and delight**.

Sidney divides poetry into **three broad divisions** – religious, philosophical (informative) and the right or true kind of poetry. Religious poetry praises God and philosophical poetry imparts knowledge of philosophy, history, astronomy etc. The third kind or the true poetry may be further sub-divided into heroic, elegiac, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, pastoral etc.

Poetry is **superior both to history and philosophy**. Philosophy presents merely abstract precepts which cannot be understood by the young. History deals with concrete facts or examples of virtue, but from these facts, the readers must themselves derive universal truths. But poetry combines both these advantages. It presents universal truths like philosophy but it does it through concrete examples, like history. It teaches us virtue in a way intelligible even to the ordinary man. Poetry does not merely show the way, but also gives it so sweet a prospect as will entice any man to follow it. Poetry promotes virtuous action.

It has been said that poetry is mere "rhyming and versifying". Sidney points out that **rhyme is not the essence of poetry** but it is desirable to use it for the following reasons:

1. it is a polish to speech.
2. Scaliger had defended its use.
3. it regulates verbal harmony.

4. it adds to words the sensuousness and emotional quality of music.
5. it is an aid to memory.

There are several **charges against poetry** and Sidney gives appropriate answers to these criticisms:

- 1) **Poetry is useless and is a waste of time.** Sidney replies that poetry is conducive to virtuous action.
- 2) **Poetry is “the mother of lies”.** To this Sidney replies that the poet “nothing affirms and, therefore, he never lieth” for to lie is to affirm what is not true.
- 3) **Poetry has a wanton or corrupting influence.** It is infected with the theme of love and so fills the mind of men with “pestilent desires”. Sidney concedes that in much of modern poetry there was a “vicious treatment of love”, but love itself is not bad, for it shows an appreciation of Beauty. The fault lies not with poetry, but with the contemporary abuse of poetry. The abuse of poetry should not lead to a condemnation of poetry itself.

As regards its debilitating influence, that it fosters in men a desire to indulge in fancy and day-dreaming, that it weakens the moral fibre, Sidney replies that poets “have been companions to camps” since time immemorial; and martial men have always admired them. Moreover, if this is a fault, it is a fault common to learning and not to poetry alone. Poetry has always been used to move men to heroic action. Hence poetry is freer from this fault.

As regards the charge that Plato had banished poets from his ideal commonwealth, Sidney replies that Plato was not against poetry but the abuse of it. He points out that Plato held poets in high esteem and regarded them as, “a light and winged and scared thing”. Moreover, Plato himself was a born poet.

Sidney held that contemporary English poetry & drama are on the decline. The reasons are:

- (a) peaceful years have bred a tame and sluggish generation devoid of the ardent spirits necessary for poetic creation.
- (b) Poets are base people and servile wits. Poetry requires genius, but it was lacking in the age.
- (c) There is widespread ignorance of poetic art.
- (d) Sidney's conception of tragedy is a mixture of medieval tradition and the concept of Aristotle. He believed that tragedy should show the fall of tyrants. He condemns modern tragedy for the incongruous mingling of the comic and tragic and the gross violation of the unities.
- (e) As regards the mingling of the tragic and the comic, he allows it in certain rare circumstances when it is not incongruous.
- (f) He condemns contemporary farcical comedy and is in favour of a comedy of a more intellectual kind. He distinguishes between laughter and delight and confutes the current notion that there could be no delight without laughter. Delight is permanent; laughter is mere scornful tickling. Contemporary love poetry is equally degenerate. It is cold and unmoving, and the style is unsuitable for the expression of passion.

As regards versification, Sidney is of the view that English language is superior to other continental languages, that it is fit both for the classical system of quantitative versification and for the contemporary system of qualitative versification based on accent and rhyme. Similarly they also have the caesura or the breathing space.

English is capable of all the three kinds of rhyme – the male, the female and the Sdeucuola. In this respect it is superior to other European languages.

The Apology is not epoch-making but it is epoch marking. For Sidney was unaware of what the vernacular English poets were to achieve in the following generation. But the larger implications of the essay are that of the potential, the character and the wholesome pursuit of the English poets; in short a hope that poetry would be revitalized in the future and in so far as that expectation was fulfilled the essay in epoch marking.

TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What are the changes made by Stephen Gosson against poetry?

- Poetry is a misuse of time.
- Poetry has all the Lies in fact it is the mother of lies.
- Plato did the right thing to banished all the Poets from his ideal world.
- Poetry is the way of treat badly

2. What was the answer of Sydney on this statement'' Poetry is a misuse of time''?

Poetry is the way of gaining knowledge. it gives awareness.it teaches awareness and it is the only way to education.

3. What was Sydney explanation on this statement 'Poetry has all the Lies'?

He says poets do not lie because they never declare that their fiction is true and says poetic truths are always universal.

4. How Sydney explain this 'poetry is the way of treat badly '?

He says poetry is not the way of treat badly but it is the people who abuse poetry and treat badly

5. How Sidney defends Plato statement about banishing the poets from the Republic?

He defends by saying that "Plato banishes the abuse of poetry not the poets in his Republic. Plato had also wanted to banish those poets who were not able to instruct the children.

6. What is the purpose of Art according to Sidney?

According to him, the purpose of art should be teaching and it should give pleasure to his readers.

7. Why Sydney favors poetic justice?

He favors poetic justice because in this type of justice good people are rewarded and bad People are punished.

8. When was an apology for poetry written?

An apology for Poetry was written in the Elizabethan era in 1585. it is considered the first critical text in the English literary criticism.

9. Why Sydney wrote an apology for poetry?

He wrote this to answer Stephen Gosson allegations against poetry. He defended the sacred values of poetry.

10. What word used for the 'poet' in Greek?

The word poet came from the Greek word 'Poiein' which mean 'to make' therefore a poet is a maker.

11. What according to Sidney Vates stands for?

It came from the Romans and it means a diviner or a Prophet.

12. Describe the kinds of poetry according to Sidney?

- Religious Poetry
- Philosophical Poetry

- Imitative poetry

13. What according to Sidney poetry is?

According to him, poetry is a book of life, a speaking picture of society. it teaches ethics, manners, respect, and love for the natural world.

14. What are the views of Sydney about philosophy?

Sydney says against philosophy, that it is for well-educated people .it is not easy for a common man to understand poetry. Poetry teaches the same ideas of philosophy which are in simple language and for a common man.

15. What Sydney says about History?

He says history is bond for the past events.it is not imaginative. while poetry is an open book. it has Universal appeal.

UNIT-III.1

JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700)

John Dryden was a versatile and voluminous writer who left no branch of literature untouched and produced works of outstanding merit in each field. Dr. Johnson called him, “the father of English criticism.” The only formal work of criticism that he has left behind him is his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.

With the exception of the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden’s criticism is embodied in the innumerable prefaces, epilogues and letters of dedication which he prefixed to his poetic and dramatic works all through his long literary career. They are valuable pieces of practical criticism, for they contain extended analyses of the works which they introduce.

Essay on Dramatic Poesy (1668)

Dryden’s manifold critical gifts are fully brought out only by his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*. In his address, “To the Reader” prefixed to the *Essay*, Dryden says that his aim was, “to vindicate the honour of our English writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them.” However, the real aims of Dryden are much wider. The essay is also an attempt to evolve the principles which ought to guide us in judging a play, as well as an effort to discover the rules which could help a dramatist in writing a good play. The play is also a contribution to two current controversies: (1) regarding the comparative superiority of the ancient and the moderns. Dryden demonstrates the superiority of the moderns over the ancients, as also the superiority of Restoration English dramatists over the dramatists of the previous generation, i.e. the Elizabethans, and (2) the comparative merits and demerits of blank verse and rhyme for dramatic purposes. Dryden upholds the superiority of rhymed verse.

Its Plan

In the main, five critical questions are handled in *The Essay*:

1. The relative merits of ancient and modern poets.
2. Whether the existing French school of drama is superior or inferior to the English.
3. Whether the Elizabethan dramatists were in all points superior to those of Dryden's own time.
4. Whether plays are more perfect in proportion as they conform to the ancient dramatic rules.
5. Whether the substitution of rhyme for blank verse in serious plays is an improvement.

Occasion

The immediate occasion for the essay was provided by contemporary events. In the year 1663 a Frenchman named Samuel Sorbiere visited England on some diplomatic mission and on returning to France did the undiplomatic thing of publishing an account of his Voyage in which he made some unfavourable remarks about English science and English stage. Sorbiere succeeded in provoking one reply, both on scientific and literary grounds, from the historian of the *English Royal Society*, Thomas Sprat. Not long after the incident John Dryden, courtly poet and dramatist wrote the present *Essay*.

The Setting: Its Dramatic Nature

There are four speakers or interlocutors and the setting is dramatic. Taking advantage of one of the most notable international relations of the day, the naval battle fought in the Channel between the British and the Dutch on June 3, 1665, Dryden imagines the four gentlemanly and witty interlocutors of his dialogue as drifting in a barge softly down the

Thames. The literary discussion in which they are soon involved comes up through some chance remarks about certain extravagant poems which have recently appeared in celebration of public events.

The Four Characters: Their Views; Their Symbolic Significance

The speaker who first develops his view at length, Crites (standing perhaps for Dryden's brother-in-law Sir Robert Howard), expounds the extreme classical view, that the Greeks and Romans fully discovered and illustrated those reasonable and perennial rules to which the modern drama must conform. In the really minor issue between the "last age" and "the present" in England, he maintains the superiority of the "last age" in making plays. The second person to speak at length, Eugenius (perhaps Dryden's friend Charles Sackville, Lord Buckburst), takes the negative position that the ancient poets failed badly in their illustration of the rules prescribed by their critics. The implication is that the moderns have actually best illustrated the rules. Then thirdly, Lisideius (or Sir Charles Sedley, a younger wit of the day), accepting the same premises as Crites and Eugenius, that the classical rules for the imitation of nature are indeed the fundamentals of correct dramatic creation, advances the argument that perfect realization of the rules is not to be found in the contemporary English drama, but in the French. Thus Dryden gives expression to three leading kinds of classicism through these characters, letting them talk themselves out, and it is not until this late point in the Essay that the main pivot of the argument occurs—with the entrance of Neander (the new man, Dryden himself). He upholds the superiority of the English drama over the French, and of rhyme over blank verse. The four speakers hardly agree to anything, and having reached their destination part with mutual courtesy. The readers are left to draw their own conclusions.

Crites Speaks for the Ancients

1. Among the ancients poetry was held in high esteem, poets were highly honoured and suitably rewarded. There was a healthy competition among them to excel each other. Today, the poets do not take pains, as they have no such encouragement.
2. The ancients were faithful imitators of nature, which is distorted and disfigured in the drama of the day.
3. We owe all the rules of dramatic composition to the classics. We have added nothing of our own to the rules of Aristotle and Horace.
4. The ancients observed the three unities well. (a) The Unity of Time means that the action should not take more than 24 hours, and it should be equally divided between the Acts. The English do not follow the unity of time and therefore ill-represent nature. (b) The Unity of Place means that the same scene should be continued throughout, for the stage being one place it cannot be represented as many. The French observe this unity, but not the English. (c) The Unity of Action means that there should be only one great and complete action. There may be a number of actions subservient to the main action, as in the plays of Ben Jonson but they must all be conducive to the main design, and be subordinated to it.
5. There is gross violation of these unities in the English drama which makes it unnatural and improbable, thus making the superiority of the ancients unquestionable.

Eugenius Takes Up the Case for the Moderns

1. The modern plays are superior to the ancients, because the moderns have the advantage of the experience and the rules of the ancients as well as the life and nature before them which they imitate. Just as in the arts and the sciences, the

moderns have discovered much in drama. For example plays of the ancients were divided by Entrances and not by Acts. Horace introduced the division of it into Acts.

So the Greeks cannot be said to have perfected the art of poesy.

2. Their plots were traditional, already known to the people, and so lacked in novelty and pleasure. So the main aim of poesy, to cause delight, was gone.
3. They used stock, hackneyed plots and characters in their comedies.
4. Though the ancients devised the unities, they did not observe it perfectly. The French, not by Aristotle or Horace, made the unity of place into a rule. They neglected the unity of time. When they observed it, it often led them into absurdities as in Euripides and Terence.
5. Their Acts are shorter than even the well-wrought scenes in the Modern English plays as their plots are narrow and persons few.
6. There is too much of specifying at the cost of action and hence monotony and boredom.
7. Their plays neither delight nor instruct, as there is no poetic justice; they often show a prosperous wickedness and an unhappy piety.
8. Even though separate persons wrote comedies and tragedies, they failed to achieve perfection in the chosen branch. Hence there is no justification for their shortcomings.
9. Often they are guilty of faulty diction, coinages and metaphors.
10. Their tragedies lack love-scenes. They raise horror by their scenes of lust, cruelty and bloodshed. Love, the most frequent of all the passions, alone can temper the horror of such scenes. Because of the absence of the moderating influence of love, their tragedies arouse only "horror and not compassion."

Lisideius Demonstrates the Superiority of the French over the English

1. The French observe the unities to perfection. They interpret “single revolution of the sun” (Unity of Time) to mean 12 hours and not 24 and try to reduce all plays to this compass. The entire action is being limited to the spot where it began. They do not burden their plots with under-plots. They have nothing so absurd as the English tragic-comedy. They afford variety in a more reasonable manner.
2. Even though the plots of their tragedies are based upon some known history, they mix fact with fiction so well that they are able to arouse concernment. In this respect they have excelled the ancients. They are never guilty of the absurdities of Shakespeare who cramps the business of thirty years into two or three hours. Unlike the English they are true to nature.
3. There is no multiplicity of action and incident in their plays, and so there is enough time to represent one passion well and fully, instead of hurrying from one to another as in the English plays.
4. In their plays one character is exalted above the rest, but due attention is paid to other characters, and every one of them is given a suitable role to play.
5. The French manage their narrations or relations much more skillfully than the English. The suitable management of the plot generally avoids the narration of events antecedent to the play. Through the relations of events that have happened off the stage, they avoid the tumult and violence of the English stage. Narration is also necessary to reduce the plot to a more reasonable compass of time.
6. There are no sudden changes or conversion in their plays as in the English.
7. They use rhyme which is to be preferred to the English blank verse. The use of rhyme beautifies a play.

Neander demonstrates the Superiority of the English over the French, and of Moderns over Ancients

1. There is no doubt that the French plays are more regular and the laws are better followed. It is also true that English plays have many irregularities. But “neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us.”
2. They lack the rich variety of humour in the English plays.
3. Moliere and some other French dramatists have started mingling tragedy and comedy, serious and gay in the manner of the English.
4. They lack variety.
5. Dryden justifies tragic-comedy on the following grounds: (a) contraries set off each other, (b) a scene of mirth introduced in a tragedy refreshes and provides relief, (c) compassion and mirth do not destroy each other, they are found together in nature also, (d) tragic-comedy is a pleasant way of writing not known to the ancients or to moderns of other nations.
6. The English plots are copious and varied, the French barren and narrow. They have only a single action, we have underplots which move with the main action.
7. Their pre-occupation with a single theme does not give them any advantage in the expression of passion. Their verses are cold and the long speeches are tiresome. Long speeches may suit the genius of the French, not the English who are more sullen and come to the stage for refreshment.
8. Short speeches and replies are more likely to move the passions, and wit and repartee are the chief graces of Comedy. The English are superior to the French in the “chase of wit.”
9. The more the characters in a play, the greater will be the variety. Only this variety should be so managed that there is no confusion. The great English dramatists like

Ben Jonson have attained this skill.

10. About showing violent action on the stage differences of temperament should be taken into account. The English are fierce by nature and prefer action on the stage. As regards incredibility, if the audience can imagine an actor to be a king, they can also imagine three soldiers to be an army. Death should not be shown on stage. If the English have too much action, the French have too little. A middle path should be followed. The incredible or indecent should not be shown, but what is beautiful must be acted on the stage.
11. The French dramatist Corneille admitted that the unities have a cramping effect. Strict adherence to the unities often results in absurdities. The English may violate the unities, but their plots have greater variety and are more copious.
12. Many English plays are as regular as the French and have greater variety of plot and character. In the irregular plays of Shakespeare and Fletcher there is greater spirit and more masculine fancy than in any of the French. Ben Jonson's plays are as 'correct' as those of the French.
13. Then follow the critical estimates of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Jonson. He says, "I admire him (Jonson) but I love Shakespeare."
14. Then follows the detailed *examen* of Ben Jonson's *Silent Woman*, a play which has the three unities and the continuity of scenes. It is faultlessly constructed, strictly according to the rules of the ancients. There is also variety of characters and humours.

Then the discussion turns on rhyme and blank verse.

Crites Attacks Rhyme Violently

1. Rhyme is not to be allowed in serious plays though it may be allowed in comedies.

2. Rhyme is unnatural in a play, for a play is in dialogues; and no man without pre-meditation speaks in rhyme.
3. Blank verse is also unnatural, for no man speaks in verse either, but it is nearer to prose and Aristotle had laid down that tragedy should be written in a verse form which is nearest to prose.
4. Drama is a just representation of nature, and rhyme is unnatural, for nobody in nature expresses himself in rhyme. It is artificial, and the art is too apparent, while true art consists in hiding art.
5. It is said that rhyme helps the poet to control his fancy. But one who has not the judgment to control his fancy in blank verse will not be able to control it in rhyme either. Artistic control is a matter of judgment and not of rhyme or verse.

Neander Replies to Crites and Speaks in Defence of Rhyme

1. Natural words in a natural order make the language natural, whether it is verse or rhymes that is used.
2. Rhyme may be made natural by the use of pun on lines and variety resulting from the use of hemistich, manipulation of pauses and stress, and the change of metre.
3. Blank verse if poetic prose fit only for comedies. Rhymed verse alone is suitable for tragedy.
4. Rhyme is justified by its universal use among all the civilized nations of the world. The Elizabethans achieved perfection in the use of blank verse and the moderns cannot excel them.
5. The nobility whose judgment alone counts likes it.
6. Rhyme, the noblest kind of verse, is suitable to tragedy representing nature exalted to its highest pitch.

7. Rhyme is an aid to judgment and makes it easier for poets to control the free flight of fancy.

Dryden's Liberal Classicism

Dryden stands out prominently as a champion of liberal classicism in an age steeped in the grammar of criticism, derived from Boileau and other French critics. In an age of 'finicky criticism,' with its precise rules and definitions, Dryden had the boldness to defend the claims of genius to write according to its own convictions, without regard for the prescriptions and rules which had been laid down for good writing. He cleared the ground for himself by brushing away all the arbitrary bans upon freedom of composition and freedom of judgment. He refused to be cowed down by the French playwrights and critics. He refused to pay servile homage even to Aristotle.

Violation of the Unities: Dryden's Justification

Dryden's liberalism, his free critical disposition, is best seen in his justification of the violation of the three unities of Time, Place and Action on the part of the English dramatists, and in his defence of the English tragic-comedy. As regards the unities, his view is that (a) the English violation of the unities lends greater copiousness and variety to the English plays. The Unities have a narrowing and cramping effect on the French plays, and they are often betrayed into absurdities from which the English plays are free, (b) The English disregard of unities enables them to present a more 'just' and 'lively' picture of human nature. The French plays may be more regular, but they are not so 'lively.', (c) Shakespeare's plays are more true to nature, and more delightful than any French play, even though he has not observed the unities, (d) The English when they do observe the rules, as Ben Jonson has done in *The Silent Woman*, show greater skill and art

than the French, (e) There is no harm in introducing ‘by-concernments’ or ‘sub-plots,’ for they impart variety, richness and copiousness to the play., and (f) To the view that the observance of the unities is justified on the ground, that their violation results in improbability, that it places too great a strain on the imagination of the spectators, and that credibility is stretched too far, he replies that it is all a question of “dramatic illusion.”

In short, Dryden’s view of the unities amounts to this: the rules of Aristotle are not absolute; there is always an appeal open from rules to nature. If the ends of drama are better fulfilled by a violation of the unities, then there is no harm in violating them. Shakespeare has produced more just and lively plays, even though he has utterly disregarded the unities.

Justification of Tragi-Comedy

The liberalism, openness of outlook, and freedom from slavery to the rules is displayed in Dryden’s defence of the English tragic-comedy. He defends tragic-comedy on the following grounds: (a) the contraries when placed near, set off each other, (b) continued gravity depresses the spirit; a scene of mirth thrown in-between refreshes, (c) mirth does not destroy compassion, (d) just as the eye can pass from an unpleasant object to a pleasant one, so also the soul can move from the tragic to the comic, and much more swiftly, (e) The English have perfected a new way of writing not known to the ancients, and

(f) It is all a question of progress, of a change of tastes. The ancients cannot be a model for all times and countries. The real test of excellence is not strict adherence to rules or conventions, but whether the aims of drama have been achieved.

Dryden as the Father of English Criticism

It was Dr. Johnson who first called Dryden, “the father of English criticism.” Not that there was no criticism in England before Dryden. There had been critics like Sir Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson. But they were critics merely by chance; their critical works are merely occasional utterances on the critical art. It is for the first time in Dryden that criticism becomes self-conscious, becomes aware of itself, analyses its objects with sympathy and knowledge, and knowing what kind of thing it is looking for. Despite the scattered nature of his criticism—the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* being the only formal work of criticism he ever wrote—his critical pronouncements cover every field of literary problem, and every aspect of literature. Drama, epic, tragedy, comedy, tragic-comedy, nature and function of poetry, all receive attention from him.

Moreover, the earlier criticism was ‘magisterial’ or dogmatic. They claim to lay down rules for the guidance of poets and writers, rules which were dogmatically asserted. Most of the critical works— Sidney’s *Apology* is an exception—were addressed to poets and writers, rather than to the readers. Critics considered that they alone were in the right, while all others were in the wrong. Dryden, on the other hand, is never magisterial or ‘pontific;’ he is ‘skeptical,’ he does not lay down the rules, he rather sets out to discover the rules for his guidance in writing plays, as well as in judging of those written by others. He rather derides those who are dogmatic or too sure in knowing the correct thing. The ‘skeptical’ tone of his criticism is but a reflection of his personality—gentle, modest, unassuming, intelligent, and free from dogmatism and vanity of any kind.

Earlier English criticism was either theoretical or legislative. The critics were merely content to lay down rules. Dryden inaugurated the era of descriptive criticism. He was qualified for the function by his wide learning. He had not only read and digested Sophocles, Euripides, Theocritus and Virgil, but also Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Fletcher

and a host of others, both ancient and modern. It is in his criticism that literary analysis, the dominant concern of the modern critic, emerges for the first time.

Dryden is also a pioneer in the field of 'historical criticism.' Critics upto the time had a very rudimentary sense of literary history. Dryden on the other hand shows a well-developed historical sense. He recognizes that the genius and temperament differ from age to age, and hence literature in different periods of history is bound to be different. He traces the decay of literature in the Pre-Restoration era to historical causes and its revival, "to the restoration of our happiness." Thus he recognizes that Elizabethan Drama and the Restoration Drama are governed by different literary conventions, "and that Aristotle himself might have revised his rules and written differently had he lived in the modern era." A similar sense of history is shown in his remarks on Chaucer, who wrote, "in the infancy of our poetry," and so perfection should not be expected of him." Thus Dryden recognizes the truth that literature is not static, but a dynamic process, it is ever growing and changing, and the 'rules' and literary judgments also must, as a consequence, change accordingly.

Similarly, he recognizes that the temperaments of the French and the English differ and hence the literatures of the two countries are bound to be different. Indeed, he is the father of 'Comparative Criticism' in England. In the *Essay* there is constantly weighing and balancing of the qualities of the English drama as against those of the French.

Dryden is also the pioneer of liberal classicism. He has great respect for classical rules. He has read Aristotle, Horace, the Italian and French critics and has great respect for them, and has profited much from his study of both the ancient and modern critics. But—and in this respect he resembles Longinus more than any one else—"he never can help considering the individual works of literature almost without regard to those rules and principles, and simply on the broad, the sound, and the unshakable ground of the

impression they make upon him.”

He recognizes that the blind adherence to the unities often has a cramping effect, and often results in absurdities; their violation often results in greater variety and copiousness of plot. It is for this reason that he prefers the irregular English plays to the more regular French ones. Similarly, his liberal classicism is also seen in his defence of tragic-comedy. Again, he holds that the aim of poetry is primarily to delight, it must move the readers to aesthetic pleasure, and instruction is only a secondary function. In this, he differs from all earlier critics. Sidney also had expressed the view that poetry must move, but he meant that it must move to virtuous action. But according to Dryden, poetry must delight, it must move to an appreciation of Beauty. The delight proper to poetry is aesthetic delight, and poetry instructs only as it delights. Dryden goes against Aristotle when he prefers Epic to tragedy. He is most shrewd, racy and original, and most delightful, when he breaks free from the ‘rules’ and trusts to his own judgment.

TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What makes John Dryden’s work "Neo-Classical"?

There are several elements that make John Dryden's work "Neo-Classical." The first thing that comes to mind is the structure of his poetry and the use of vocabulary. Neo-classical poetry aims to...

2. What is the critical analysis of "Epigram on Milton" by John Dryden?

Epigram on Milton Three Poets, in three distant Ages born, Greece, Italy, and England did adorn. The First in loftiness of thought surpassed; The Next in Majesty;

in both the Last. The force of...

3. Evaluate Dryden's treatment of Chaucer in the Preface of Fables Ancient and Modern.

Dryden in the Preface of this work gives his own critical evaluation of the works of Chaucer and his importance in English literature. It is clear that Dryden holds Chaucer in great esteem, calling...

4. Discuss Dryden's techniques as a comparative critic with special reference to Ovid and Chaucer in his Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern.

In this Preface Dryden is very clear to draw the points of comparison between Ovid and Chaucer before then going on to state the reasons for his preference for Chaucer. Note, for example, what he...

5. Why did satire become popular in the age of John Dryden and Alexander Pope?

One theory of the development and rise of satire in the early 17th century is the advent of the Age of Enlightenment. This era brought with it amazing progress in intellectual development which...

6. Why did Dr. Johnson consider John Dryden as "the father of English Criticism"?

Dryden was considered to be the "father of English criticism" by Samuel Johnson precisely because he contributed so much to the oeuvre of literary criticism in the canon of English literature....

7. Give a general estimate of John Dryden as a critic.

Dryden is distinguished as not only an excellent poet, dramatist and author in his own right, but also as somebody whose great intellect and sound powers of argument

enabled him to write excellent...

8. Discuss Dryden's place as a critic in the history of English literary criticism with special reference to his Preface to Fables Ancient and Modern.

What distinguish the work of Dryden from others is his keen intelligence and his comprehensive knowledge of contemporary literature and literature from the past, both English literature but also...

9. "Dryden was a versatile genius." Elaborate on this statement in the light of his representative works. What is meant by "versatile genius," in terms of his works?

John Dryden was a genius because he wrote with lucidity, poetry and precision. His subjects include religion, love, politics and the literary tradition. He tended to insist upon a moral effect in...

10. What are critical views of John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson?

John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson are all described as "Augustan" writers, meaning that although they were British eighteenth-century writers, their work was heavily influenced by...

11. Why did satire became popular in the age of Dryden & Pope?

The satire originated, in literature, during the very earliest literary periods (periods of Horace and Juvenal). Later, poets such as Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, wishing to return to the classical...

12. Who are the neo classical poets? Why are they called that?

Neoclassicism is a term used to describe poets and writers of the late 17th century and 18th century. They are called neo-classical because they tried to imitate the classical

Greek and Roman poets....

13. Dryden is highly indebted to *On the Sublime* by Longinus. Discuss in the light of his views as enunciated in the Preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern*.

The treatise of Longinus is widely regarded as being the first ever piece of literary criticism, and, as such, is therefore to be recognized as a key influence to other later critics such as Sir...

14. Define the term "poet laureate."

The term "poet laureate" is an honorary yet official designation for a literary figure chosen to represent his/her country (or state or other organization) as the highest ranking poet of the...

UNIT-III.2

SAMUEL JOHNSON

The Age of Johnson

The literature of the 18th century reflects the conflict between the two main factors in artistic creation, reason on the one side, emotion and imagination on the other. Reason had been the dominating force ever since the middle of the seventeenth century and under its powerful sway, emotional and imaginative elements had been repressed and the artistic expression of the deep personal feelings had come to be looked upon with distrust. But the old romantic spirit, which had never become extinct, began to assert itself so that the last decades of the eighteenth century saw the dawn of a new era, free from the restraints of commonsense. The age of Johnson witnessed the co-existence of two main types of criticism one representing the old, and the other illustrative of the new outlook. Like every period of transition, the time of Johnson is characterized by a good deal of compromise; the two prevalent influences often overlap and interpenetrate.

Johnson's Criticism

Johnson eminently represents the persistence of classical dogma. He belongs to the older traditional school of criticism and as its authority is being undermined by the rising romantic school, a need is felt to assert its principles and to justify it. Dr. Johnson is the spokesman of the classical school, he asserts effectively its doctrines and hence his classicism has been called "Doctrinal classicism." A respect for tradition is innate in him and he throws all the force of his vigorous and towering personality in the defence of tradition, order, discipline and authority. He was the literary dictator of his Age and his influence did much to determine and shape critical theory in the age.

Works

Dr. Johnson was a voluminous writer, and critical remarks are scattered all over his works. But his claim as a literary critic chiefly rests upon *Preface to the Dictionary of the English Language*, *Preface to Shakespeare*, *Lives of the Poets*, and *Essays and Articles* contributed from time to time to the *Rambler*, a periodical founded and edited by Johnson himself.

Lives of the Poets

Dr. Johnson is a pioneer in the field of biographical criticism i.e. criticism which seeks to evaluate the work of a writer in the light of the facts of his life. His fame as a biographer rests on his *Lives of the Poets*. He considered truth, uncompromising truth, to be the aim of biography. He is, therefore, despite his many prejudices, always painfully and consciously striving, to give the truth, and nothing but the truth, as he sees it. He neither lauds, nor condemns, but displays the minutest details of the everyday life of his subject, so that his readers may see the whole of him, and know the full truth about him, and thus appreciate his works better.

By the intimacy of his knowledge, by his shrewdness and massive commonsense, by his genius for details, by his innate love of truth and by his easy, graceful, and conversational style, he was eminently fitted for the task of a biographer. All these qualifications and many more, combine to make the *Lives of the Poets*, a great monument and landmark in the history of English literature. In its three volumes Johnson gives us biographical and critical studies of fifty-two poets. Of these only six are now considered of first-rate importance.

Johnson's criticism of poetry is often marred by his prejudices and personal dogmatism. Music and imagination are the most essential qualities of poetry, and Johnson

had no ear, and he had no imagination. His opinion of *Lycidas* is well known: he found it “easy, vulgar, and therefore, disgusting.” Of the songs in *Comus*, he remarks: “they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.” He remains blind to the passionate intensity of Donne and the elevation of Gray. While Johnson’s criticism of the other poems of Milton is vitiated by his many prejudices, his remarks on *Paradise Lost* are singularly free from any such pre-conceptions. First of all, the critic discusses the characters, the plan and the sentiments of the epic, which he regards as the best and the maturest proof of Milton’s genius. The poet’s first task is to find moral and praises Milton in this respect and finds that Moral is an essential part of his poem. Moreover, this moral has been conveyed in an “attractive and surprising narrative.” Having praised, *Paradise Lost* on all these counts, the doctor analyses the faults of the epic.

A study of the *Lives* gives us the clue to his main critical position and aims. His aim was to re- introduce sincerity into literature, to make it actual and moving, and to rid it of artificial ornaments, conventions and far-fetched themes. The poetry of the 18th century was encrusted with a dead mythology which Johnson opposed. He wanted to wed poetry to life and to use it for moral teaching. The *Lives* explains why he disliked blank verse and advocated the use of the rhymed couplet. He was a ‘classic’ in his critical doctrines; but he never followed rules slavishly. Instances are numerous where he boldly supported the freer and more spontaneous usages of English poetry. He might have lacked imagination and aesthetic sensibility, but in his *Lives*, by reminding us again and again that poetry is as much craft as inspiration, he focuses attention on the linguistic achievements of poets like Dryden and Pope.

Major Critical Ideas

Definition and Nature of Poetry

In his *Life of Milton*, the doctor defines poetry as, “the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason.” The poet is a creator by virtue of his inventive and imaginative powers, and the evidence of that creative ability is to be found in the poem’s imagery. Poetry must give pleasure, but it must also have truth. In other words, it must serve the purposes of life.

Rejection of Blank Verse and Defence of Rhyme

Johnson’s passion for sincerity and reality explains his dislike for blank verse which he regarded as verse, “only to the eye.” Poetry, he believed, should express natural sentiments in a language, dignified, indeed, but not too remote from the speech of daily life. The use of too many new words destroys the intimacy and confidence of the relation between writer and reader. But, if verse is to be easy, natural, probable and familiar, why not use prose which is the natural medium of expression for man. Poetry was to be preferred to prose only for the addition of pleasure which come from verse—the pleasure of melody and pattern. Johnson held ‘rhyme’ to be essential for poetry, for it not only gives pleasure but also imparts emphasis. Johnson permits the use of blank verse to poets, “who would describe wild landscapes, or indulge in unfettered imagination, or express conceptions of superhuman majesty in unusual; and gorgeous language. “Milton, Thomson and Young may use it but not other lesser poets, for it is likely to betray them into such self-indulgence. In other words blank verse is to be avoided, for it may betray feeble minds into all sorts of excess.

His Classicism—Liberal Elements

He, no doubt, judged by rules, but he derived his principles of judgment not from books, like his predecessors, but from reason, from his experience of life. When at his best he could rise above all narrowness and display a remarkable breadth of vision and imagination. In his appreciation of Shakespeare's mingling of the tragic and the comic, and his violation of the unities, he ceases to be a classic and goes over to the other camp. Proximity with the great epic of Milton inspires him, and the passage on *Paradise Lost* remains upto date one of the finest pieces of criticism in English literature. It reveals that he was capable of highest poetic sensibility.

Preface to Shakespeare

A. Truth to Nature—Realism—Practical Wisdom—Psychology—Characterisation

Shakespeare is great because in his work there is a just representation of general human nature. His characters are the faithful representations of humanity. His characters are universal but they are individual also. They are also true to the age, sex or profession to which they belong. They are also true to type.

His works are a storehouse of practical axioms and domestic wisdom. From them can be formulated a philosophy of life of great practical value in real life.

That his plays are a just representation of human nature is also seen in the fact the love is not all. Love is only one of the many passions and as his plays mirror life, they represent other passions as well. Undue importance is not attached to any one passion.

His characters are not exaggerated. He has no heroes, but only human beings. Thus his plays increase our knowledge of human nature.

B. Tragi-Comedy—Johnson’s Defence of It

Shakespeare has been criticized for mixing comedy and tragedy. But Johnson defends him as follows: In the use of tragic-comedy, Shakespeare is true to nature. In real life also there is a mingling of the good and evil, joys and sorrows, tears and smiles and so in mixing tragedy and comedy Shakespeare merely holds a mirror to nature.

Tragi-comedy is nearer to life than either tragedy or comedy, and so it combines within itself the pleasure as well as the instruction of both.

The interchange of the serious and the gay, of the comic and tragic, does not interrupt the progress of the passions, i.e. it does not result in any weakening of effect.

Moreover, it should be remembered that all pleasure consists in variety. Tragi-comedy can satisfy a greater variety of tastes.

C. Shakespeare’s Comic Genius—Faults of His Tragedies

Comedy came natural to him, and not tragedy. In tragedy he writes with great appearance of toil and study what is written at last with little felicity; but in comic scenes he seems to produce without labour what no labour can improve. His comic scenes are natural and, therefore, durable. The language of his comic scenes is the language of real life.

D. Faults of Shakespeare

Shakespeare has serious faults, serious enough to obscure his many excellences:

1. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct.
2. His plots are loosely formed.

3. There are many faults of chronology and many anachronisms in his plays.
4. Often his jokes are gross and licentious.
5. In his narration there is much pomp of diction and circumlocution.
6. What he does best, he soon ceases to do.
7. He is too fond of puns and quibbles. For a pun he sacrifices reason, propriety and truth.

E. The Unities: Johnson's Defence

His histories being neither comedies nor tragedies are not subject to the 'classic' rules of criticism which were devised for tragedies and comedies. The only Unity they need is consistency and naturalness in character, and this Shakespeare has imparted to them.

In his other works, he has well maintained the Unity of Action. He is the poet of nature, and his plots have the complexity and variety of nature. But his plots have a beginning, a middle, and an end, one event is logically connected with another.

He shows no regard for the Unities of Time and Place, and in the opinion of Johnson, these Unities have given more trouble to the poet than pleasure to the auditor. When a spectator can imagine the stage to be Alexandria and the actors to be Antony and Cleopatra, he can surely imagine much more. Drama is a delusion and delusion has no limits. The spectators know the stage is a stage, and the actors are actors. There is no absurdity in showing different actions at different places.

The Unity of Time also has no validity. A drama imitates successive actions, and just as they may be represented at successive places, so also they may be represented at

different period, separated by several years. The only condition is that the events so represented should be connected with each other with nothing but time intervening between them.

In short the unities are not essential to drama. Their violation often results in variety and instruction. The rules may be against Johnson but he justifies Shakespeare on grounds of nearness to life and nature.

Merits of Johnson's Criticism

1. Sane and Liberal Classicism: No doubt he is 'classic' and rational, but his outlook is not narrow. He broadens the classic point of view and constantly appeals to reality and experience. Rules he followed, and by rules he judged, but the authority for those rules was derived, not from Aristotle, but from the deepest knowledge of the human heart. He was not interested in external nature, but in human nature, in human, "life and manners," and what takes place in the minds and hearts of man was to him of paramount interest.

2. His Sound Scholarship: No doubt he was not so well read in the classics, but he had dived deep into English literature. He had a store of sound scholarship which guided him and determined his judgment. We may not agree with many of his opinions, but there is no denying the fact that they are based on sound and accurate knowledge of the subject.

3. His Independence: Indeed, no critic was ever more independent, or more free from slavery to traditional rules than Dr. Johnson. His measure of literary merit is impartial; the claims of birth or authority fail to sway him.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. **What are the dramatic unities that Johnson addresses in "Preface to Shakespeare"?**

The Preface to The Plays of William Shakespeare—often referred to as "Preface to Shakespeare" in its stand-alone version—appears in the first volume of the eight-volume edition of Shakespeare's...

2. **What are some of the problems with editing Shakespeare's writing?**

One issue with editing Shakespeare's writing is that in some cases, there may be many editions of the same play. There are three distinct versions, for example, of Hamlet. Each version has unique...

3. **According to Samuel Johnson, why is comedy valued over tragedy in "Preface to Shakespeare"?**

Samuel Johnson contends that writing comedies has been more agreeable to Shakespeare's intrinsic nature and proclivities. In tragedy he [Shakespeare] is always struggling after some occasion to be...

4. **What are some quotes from Preface to Shakespeare by Samuel Johnson?**

Shakespeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind, but in one composition. One of the strengths of Shakespeare's plays for Johnson was their lack of heroes,...

5. **Who are the characters in Preface to Shakespeare by Samuel Johnson?**

Because Johnson's Preface is not a work of fiction or even a non-fiction narrative, there are not "characters" in the ordinary sense, but just the "people"—authors and other participants in...

6. What are the themes in Preface to Shakespeare by Samuel Johnson?

The Definition of a Classic Johnson begins his essay by describing what exactly a work must have to be a classic—and right away, he tells the reader that simply being old does not make a work of...

7. Write an in-depth summary of Preface to Shakespeare by Samuel Johnson.

Introduction Apart from the Preface serving as the introduction to Johnson's own edition of Shakespeare, readers must view it as a major critical statement regarding not only Shakespeare, but...

8. Dr. Johnson is a biased critic of Shakespeare. Do you agree? Give a reference from Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare."

Johnson is biased in the sense that he generally favours the neo-classical standards of criticism of his day, that is to say, standards deriving from the ideas of ancient classical writers. This...

9. Why is Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare" a landmark in Shakespearian criticism?

Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare" is a landmark in Shakespearean criticism for a number of reasons. First, it is a balanced critique of Shakespeare, giving him credit for his powerful and lyrical...

10. What is the importance of Samuel Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare?

Samuel Johnson wrote his Preface to Shakespeare for his annotated edition of The Works of William Shakespeare, which Johnson published in 1765. Since then, Johnson's preface has been celebrated as...

11. Discuss the following ideas with reference to Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare:

"The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the modern and the beauty of the ancients."

Johnson's quote reflects much about the notion of literary criticism as well as the basic ideas that Johnson holds towards Shakespeare. Johnson's quote, on its own merit, suggests...

12. What is the theory of three unities? How does Shakespeare violate the three unities and how does Johnson defend him?

Aristotle's theory of the three unities states that a play should embrace unities of action, time and place. Unity of action means that a play should follow one plot, without meandering off into...

13. Discuss the merits and defects of Shakespeare as given in Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare."

As far as defects, Johnson finds that Shakespeare offers little in the way of moral instruction in his plays, seeming to write, according to Johnson, "without any moral purpose." Johnson believed...

14. How does Johnson evaluate Shakespeare as an artist in his A Preface to Shakespeare?

Part of where Johnson lies in his assessment of Shakespeare as an artist is in his ability to connect with both the audiences of his time period and those that followed. For...

15. How does Johnson defend Shakespeare's Violation of the three unities in "Preface to Shakespeare" and what are the major points in the "Preface to Shakespeare?"

Johnson claims that with Shakespeare's histories, the unities of time, place, and action are largely irrelevant since, in his plays, "the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that..."

16. How might one analyse Dr.Samuel Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare?

Perhaps one of the best ways to analyze Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare (1765) is to trace Johnson's arguments that Shakespeare's plays stand "the test of time." Johnson, who was an Aristotelian...

UNIT-IV.1

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is one of the greatest poets of England, one to whom Matthew Arnold assigns a place next only to Shakespeare and Milton. He was primarily a poet, and not a critic. He has left behind him no comprehensive and systematic treatise on literary criticism. His criticism consists of *Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads* (1798), *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800), *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1802), with an Appendix on *Poetic Diction*.

Preface to the Lyrical Ballads

Wordsworth's Aim

Wordsworth himself tells us that his aim in writing the *Preface* was not to give an elaborate account of his theory of poetry or to make a systematic defence of his point of view. He added the *Preface* because he felt that his poems were of a new kind, both in theme and style, and, therefore, he should not hurl them at the head of the people without a word of introduction. He seeks to bring about drastic revaluations of earlier poetry so that his own poetry may be properly appreciated.

Synopsis of Wordsworth's *Preface* 1802

1. The first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* was published without any *Preface*. It had only a brief *Advertisement*.
2. His *Preface* is in the nature of a defence of his theory that poetry must be written in a selection of the real language of men when in a state of emotional excitement.
3. His poems were a revolt against the artificial poetic diction popular in the age.

4. His *Preface* is in the nature of an introduction, rather than a systematic defence of his theory of poetry.
5. His purpose in the *Preface* is to warn his readers that the poems in the collection are of a new kind, radically different from the conventional poetry to which they are used. They should not expect conventional pleasure from his poems.

Preference for Humble and Rustic Life

6. The poet's aim has been to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate them in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time to throw over them a colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things would be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.
7. He has chosen the various aspects of humble and rustic life for a number of reasons. These reasons are (a) in humble and rustic life feelings are freely and frankly expressed, (b) in rustic life feelings are more simple, and so are expressed more accurately and forcefully, (c) the manners of the rustics are not sophisticated. They are simple and so more conducive to an understanding of human nature, and (d) in rustic life, human passions are connected with the grand and noble objects of nature, and so they are more noble and permanent.

Choice of Rustic Language

8. He has used the language of rustics because such men hourly communicate with the best objects of nature from which the best part of language is derived, and because they convey their feelings and emotions in a simple, unelaborated and more philosophical language.

Stress on Emotion

9. Every poem in the collection differs from contemporary poetry because there is nothing mean and trivial about it. Every one of his poems has a worthy purpose, that of enlightening the readers and purifying their emotions.
10. They are the spontaneous overflow of passion, but passion has been modified by thought.
11. In his poems feelings are more important than action and situation and in this way he has tried to correct the contemporary craving for the unusual in situation and incident.

Poetic Diction

12. The theme of his poems is different, and equally different is his language. He has avoided the various hackneyed devices of poetic diction used by contemporary poets.
13. He has selected natural themes, and he has used a natural language. He has looked steadily at his subject, and so his rendering of it is true to nature. He has also varied his language according to the needs of character and sentiment.
14. Wordsworth concludes that there is neither is, nor can there ever be, any essential difference between the language of prose and verse. The only difference is that the poets use metre.
15. According to Wordsworth, metre is not essential to poetry. But it is an additional source of pleasure, so its use is desirable.
16. A poet may speak either through his characters or in his own person. In either case, the use of artificial poetic devices is not useless but actually harmful.
17. A simpler diction should be used for the less elevated emotions. This would impart variety to the style, and heighten by contrast the charm of the nobler diction used

for the more elevated emotions.

18. Wordsworth's purpose in writing the *Preface* was to bring about a revolution in poetic taste. It would also result in a better appreciation of earlier English poets.

The Poet

19. Wordsworth emphasises the social function of poetry. A poet writes not for his pleasure alone, but for the pleasure of his readers.
20. A poet differs from an ordinary individual not in nature, but in degree. He is a man who has (a) greater and more lively sensibility, (b) greater power of imagination, (c) greater knowledge of human nature, (d) a more comprehensive soul, so that he can sympathise and feel for others, (e) greater zest for life, and (f) greater powers of communication.
21. The poet communicates not only personally felt emotions, but also emotions which he has not directly experienced. He should try to achieve identification with his characters to make his language more lively and forceful.

Poetic Pleasure and Poetic Truth

22. The purpose of poetry is to give pleasure and with this end in view, the poet should use a language purified of all that is disgusting and painful.
23. Poetic pleasure is not a mere idle amusement. It is much higher and nobler.
24. Poetic truth is much higher than the truth of philosophy or history. Poetry is the most philosophical of all writing.
25. Poetry gives pleasure because (a) it imitates nature well, (b) it increases our knowledge and understanding of the primary nature of man, (c) it arouses our sympathy, and (d) it makes us perceive the essential identity of man and nature.

Views on Nature

26. Wordsworth justifies the use of metre and condemns once again the use of Poetic Diction. Metre is something regular and uniform, while poetic diction is arbitrary.
27. The poet himself has used metre for a number of reasons: (a) Metre is an additional source of pleasure, (b) In using metre he has simply followed tradition, (c) Metre can give pleasure even without the use of poetic diction, even when the language is simple and naked, (d) Metre has a restraining and tempering effect on the flow of emotion and passion, (e) It tempers and softens the painful and the pathetic, (f) It imparts passions to the words, and so increases emotional intensity, and (g) The use of metre provides the element of contrast, and the perception of similarity in dissimilarity always gives pleasure.

The Poetic Process

28. There are four stages through which poetic composition takes place: (a) observation, (b) recollection, (c) contemplation, (d) imaginative excitement of the emotions which were experienced earlier.

Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry

Wordsworth's theory of poetry, if there is one—has to be extracted from three documents: 1) the Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* 2) the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and 3) the Appendix on poetic diction. Wordsworth was not much of a deliberate theorist. He was wretchedly ill-read on literary criticism as on all other subjects. He was incapable of sustained cogitation. He was blind to logical flaws and contradictions.

Wordsworth holds that by the very act of writing a poet undertakes 1) to fulfill the expectations of his readers. These expectations vary from age to age. At times, as a result

of conscious effort, it is possible for the poet to alter them. This precisely is what he and Coleridge have attempted to do in *Lyrical Ballads*.

Lyrical Ballads attempts to bring about a revolution in the areas of both content and form. The content of the poems is rooted in the everyday life of ordinary people. The form is a selection of the language of common social intercourse. Wordsworth holds, and this conviction lies at the core of Wordsworthian poetic theory, that this is how it should be in the case of all true poetry.

But by just fulfilling these two conditions a piece of verse cannot become good poetry. The Poet has to ensure that strong emotions are associated with the subjects of his poems and he can do that only through long habits of meditation. At the same time the piece should not be artificially composed, it should be an inspired creation. Thus poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings that take its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility. It evokes in the reader the original emotions of the poet.

The use of metre distinguishes poetry from prose. But beyond that Wordsworth is unable to identify any basic difference. The objectives of verse and prose are identical; they use the very same medium; emotion and passion are the life-blood of both.

A poet, according to Wordsworth, is a man speaking to men. He is very much a common man who thinks and feels like all other common men. But he is endowed with a more than common power of imagination and articulation. He speaks to other men and also for other men. The language and situation of his poetry should go together. The aim of poetry is universal truth. It should represent nature and man with the conviction of truth. The poet must endeavour to give immediate pleasure to the reader by appealing to the humanity within him. The poet's obligation to give pleasure is an affirmation of the value and validity of human life Wordsworth declares that genuine passion is always the ultimate source of true poetry. In all cultures and languages classical poets worked under

the influence of genuine passion generated by real life events. Being stimulated by genuine passion their language was highly metaphorical and daringly innovative. In succeeding ages even, when not genuinely moved, the same figurative language came to be employed. Thus a poetic diction was produced which took the language of poetry away from the real language of men turning the poetry into life less verbiage. At such points in history a special, conscious effort is required to take the language of poetry back to the people. This is what *Lyrical Ballads* has attempted to do.

However, as Coleridge points out in *Biographia Literaria*, some of Wordsworth's pieces are those which speak of uncommon experiences in a language far more subtle and sophisticated than that used by common men. A good example is "Tintern Abbey" generally accepted as one of Wordsworth's masterpieces. Neither its mystic philosophy nor its highly inspired language is commonplace.

Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction

The *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1798 with a small notice in the form of Advertisement. In the second edition (published in 1800) Wordsworth added a Preface and in the 1802 edition the Preface was enlarged and revised. No change was made in 1805, but in the 1815 volume an entirely new Preface appeared and the old one was placed at the end as Appendix.

Of the original 23 poems (anonymous) only 4 were by Coleridge. [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The Nightingale, The Foster Mothers Tale and The Dungeon]. The Advertisement characterises these works as experiments. The *Lyrical Ballads* decisively marks a challenge to and reaction against the artificiality and inanity of the neo-classical school. It pioneered a new Romantic Movement.

The Preface explains the aims and objectives of Romanticism and gives a definite direction and significance to the Romantic Movement. It records Wordsworth's views on poetry, poetic diction and theme. Though it raised a great controversy, no poet of the Romantic generation could escape the force of its call for a poetic re-interpretation of the world. Wordsworth declares, "The principal object in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, to relate or describe them in a selection of language really used by men and to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination so that ordinary things are presented in an unusual aspect." He also claims that humble and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil. The Preface asserts that all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility. [T.S. Eliot in *Tradition and the Individual Talent* fiercely objects to this: "It is neither emotion nor recollection nor tranquility"]. Wordsworth speaks about the process of poetic creation. According to him a poet is a person endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul. He has, therefore, a keener, subtler perception of objects, incidents or characters which radiates powerful emotions in his mind. He has a greater capacity to capture sense impressions. This is followed by a period of gestation as it were—a period of contemplation or recollection in tranquility. This is followed by poetic composition. The real function of poetry is to give pleasure, but the real end of poetry is noble and exalted. "It is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression in the countenance of all science." Poetry devoid of morality is worthless.

The most controversial part of the Preface is probably that which deals with poetic diction. It invited fierce criticism from many especially from Coleridge. Wordsworth claims that his characters and incidents are chosen from humble and rustic life; for the

essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity. They speak a plainer and more emphatic language. Again in that Condition our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity and the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. Then Wordsworth follows this up with an absurdly idealistic concept of poetic language: “Because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived.” The feelings and notions of these people are simple and unsophisticated. Therefore he has deliberately avoided what used to be called Poetic Diction. He has consciously disinherited a large portion of traditional poetic vocabulary.

Wordsworth goes on to affirm that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. “Poetry sheds no tears such as angels weep, but natural and human tears.” The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions and he does not write for poets alone. The poet must descend from the supposed height. For, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. This brings the language of poetry very close to that of prose. At the same time it is admitted that metrical form adds charm to a work of art if it is proper and relevant.

Coleridge points out many apparently illogical, self-contradictory and irrational statements in the Preface. He also asserts that Wordsworth himself has violated in practice the principles of poetic composition that he advocates. T.S. Eliot objects to Wordsworth’s view on poetic creation. [Spontaneous overflow—emotions recollected in tranquility, etc.] According to the critic Garrod, “the Preface suffers from the sin of exaggeration and over-emphasis”—Wordsworth often goes to extremes. Elton, another important critic tends to excuse the exaggerations as expressions of Wordsworth’s extreme dislike of “the glossy and unfeeling diction” of the neo-classical poets. No one can deny the significance of the

Preface in the history of English Literary Criticism as it raised a wall between the 18th and 19th centuries.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What are the four parts of preface to Lyrical Ballads?

Following are the four parts of preface to Lyrical Ballads;

Content, Language, The Poet and The Poetry.

2. Describe the character of Wordsworth?

He was a romantic poet. He has played a great role in the romantic moment. He taught the beauty of nature.

3. Why did the poet telling his friend to close his books and learn from nature?

According to the poet, nature can teach a man about his environment and surroundings and can be a bigger part of something than the dry page of books.

Like he said;

"Come forth into the light of things

Let Nature be your teacher"

4. Define the term Pantheism?

It means the worship of several gods.

5. What is Lyric?

It is some kind of song. Poets express their personal emotions and feelings through lyrics.

6. Define Ballad?

A Ballad can be a poem or song which describe a story.

7. When did preface to Lyrical Ballads publish?

1798.

8. What is the motto of preface to Lyrical Ballads?

Their motto was "back to nature". They worship nature and its beauty. They turned to village life and explained the beauty of nature in simple language.

9. What language Wordsworth prefer in poetry?

According to him, poetry must be written in common language. Original language should be used which would be easy for common readers to understand the language. He says that purpose of poetry should evoke emotional feelings.

10. What is the chief aim of preface to Lyrical Ballads?

The chief aim of preface to Lyrical Ballads is to teach, that common and real language should be used. Poets should admire nature and its beauty. Situations and circumstances of every kind should be chosen from common places.

11. What kind of themes Wordsworth wants the poet should add in their Poetry?

He says that the themes of poetry should be selected from the real-life events and these events should be explained in common language. So that common people can understand better. Discuss the concept of poetic diction' as explained by Wordsworth in preface to Lyrical Ballads. Wordsworth says that the poetry should not be written in difficult wording because it will not be easy for common readers to understand. The diction of poetry should be simple so that everyone can comprehend.

UNIT-IV.2

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the greatest of poet-critics that England has ever produced. He was a genius, and when he was inspired, he could create works of the highest order, but he was incapable of sustained and persistent labour. Coleridge was a man of wide and comprehensive reading and a writer's views and attitudes are consciously or unconsciously moulded and formed by all that he reads. However, the influences which were most potent in shaping the views and theories of Coleridge are three (a) Wordsworth, (b) Hartley and his Associationist psychology and (c) German transcendental and idealistic philosophy of Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Shelling, Schiller, etc. The bulk of his literary criticism is contained in his *Biographia Literaria* and *Lectures on Shakespeare and Other Poets*.

Biographia Literaria

While *Lectures on Shakespeare* are predominantly devoted to practical criticism, *The Biographia Literaria*, 1817, is a work on literary aesthetics or literary theory. Coleridge does analyse particular works now and then, but such analyses is meant to illustrate some particular critical viewpoint of the poet. *Biographia Literaria* is a work of great value, but it too suffers from the usual faults of Coleridge. As its name signifies, it pretends to be a record of the poet's literary upbringing, but there is little consecutive narrative, there is too much of philosophizing and too many side issues and digressions.

The Definition, Nature and Function of Poetry

Coleridge emphasizes the difference between prose and poetry. The difference between a poem and a prose composition cannot lie in the medium, for each employs the

same medium, words. It must, therefore, “consist in a different combination of them.” A poem must have an organic unity in the sense that, our pleasure in the whole develops cumulatively out of the appreciation of parts. In a poem which is poetry in the true sense of the word, there is perfect unity of form and content. The notion of such organic unity runs through all Coleridge’s pronouncements on poetry. Rhyme and Metre are not pleasure super-added. Nothing that is, “superadded,” merely stuck on for ornament or decoration, can really please in a poem; every one of its characteristics must grow out of its whole nature and be an integral part of it. Rhyme and metre are integral to the poem, an essential part of it, because the pleasure of poetry is a special kind of pleasure, pleasure which results from the parts and the whole.

Criticism of Wordsworth’s Theory of Poetic Diction

Wordsworth and Coleridge came together early in life and out of their mutual discussion arose the various theories which Wordsworth embodied in his *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, and which he tried to put into practice in his poems. Coleridge claimed credit for these theories and said they were, “half the child of his brain.” But later on, his views underwent a change, he no longer agreed with Wordsworth’s theories and so criticised them in *Biographia Literaria*.

Wordsworth’s Views: In his *Preface*, Wordsworth made three important statements all of which have been objects of Coleridge’s censure. First of all Wordsworth writes, ‘that he chose low and rustic life.’ Secondly, that rustic language too is adopted. Thirdly, that the language and diction of poetry is “a selection or the real language of men;” “the language of these men should be imitated and that “between the language of prose and that of metrical composition there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference.”

Coleridge's Criticism: As regards the first statement, i.e. the choice of rustic characters and life, Coleridge points out, first, that not all Wordsworth's characters are chosen from low or rustic life. Characters in poems like "Ruth" and "Michael" are not low and rustic in the usual acceptance of these words. Secondly, their language and sentiments do not necessarily arise from their abode or occupation. In the opinion of Coleridge, a man will not be benefited from a life in rural solitudes, unless he has (a) natural sensibility, and (b) suitable education. In the absence of these advantages, in rural conditions the mind hardens and a man grows, "selfish, sensual, gross, and hard-hearted."

As regards the second statement of Wordsworth, Coleridge objects to the view that the best part of language is derived from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates. First, communication with an object implies reflection on it, and the richness of vocabulary arises from such reflection. Now the rural conditions of life do not require any reflection, hence the vocabulary of the rustics is poor. They can express only the barest facts of nature, and not the ideas and thoughts—universal laws—which result from reflection on such facts. Secondly, the best part of a man's language does not result merely from communication with nature, but from education, from the mind's dwelling on noble thoughts and ideals of the master minds of humanity.

Coming then to a detailed consideration of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction he takes up his statements, one by one, and demonstrates that his views are not justified. Coleridge points out that every man's language varies according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every man's language has, first, its individual peculiarities; secondly, the properties common to the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use. No two men of the same class or of different classes speak alike, although both use words and phrases common to them all.

Coleridge said that there is, and there ought to be an essential difference between the language of prose and that of poetry. The language of poetry differs from that of prose in the same way in which the language of prose differs and ought to differ from the language of conversation. Coleridge gives a number of reasons in support of his view. First, language is both a matter of words, and the arrangement of those words. Now, words both in prose and poetry may be the same, but their arrangement is different. Metre is not a mere superficial decoration, but an essential organic part of a poem. Hence there is bound to be an essential difference between the language i.e. the arrangement of words, of poetry and prose. There may be certain lines or even passages which can be used both in prose and poetry, but not all. There are passages which will suit the one and not the other. Thus Coleridge refuted Wordsworth's views on the themes and language of poetry.

Willing Suspension of Disbelief

Coleridge's phrase, 'willing suspension of disbelief,' is used to indicate the nature of poetic dramatic illusion. All through the Neo-classic era the question of dramatic illusion and credibility had exercised the mind of critics, and the observance of the unities was considered essential for, it was said, their violation puts too severe a strain on the credibility of the audience, and thus dramatic illusion is violated. It was Coleridge who said the last word on the subject, and finally put the controversy at rest. Coleridge uses the phrase in connection with his account of the origin and genesis of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge treat of characters supernatural, which are incredible and improbable and which under normal circumstances we would not believe in, but the treatment was to be such that as long as we were reading his poems, there would be, 'a willing suspension of disbelief,' and we would believe for the moment in what is essentially incredible and improbable. In other words, the treatment should be such as would send the judgment of

readers to sleep, so to say, so that they would peruse the poem with delight. Distancing in time and place, humanizing of the marvellous and the supernatural, etc. are some of the devices used to procure such willing suspension of disbelief.

Coleridge on Imagination and Fancy

According to Coleridge, Imagination has two forms primary and secondary. Primary imagination is merely the power of receiving impressions of the external world through the senses. It is an involuntary act of the mind: the human mind receives impressions and sensations from the outside world, Unconsciously and involuntarily. The primary imagination is the living power and prime agent of all human perception, a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am. The primary imagination is universal, it is possessed by all. The secondary imagination, on the other hand is the peculiar and distinctive attribute of the artist. It is the secondary imagination which makes artistic creation possible. Secondary imagination is more active and conscious in its working. It works upon what is perceived by the primary imagination, its raw material is the sensations and impressions supplied to it by the primary imagination. By an effort of the will and the intellect, the secondary imagination selects and orders the raw material, and re-shapes and re-models it into objects of beauty. It is 'esemplastic, i.e. "a shaping and modifying power," which by its 'plastic stress' re-shapes objects of the external world and steeps them with a glory and dream that never was on sea and land. It is an active agent which dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to create.

Imagination and Fancy are activities of two different kinds. Fancy is not a creative power at all. It deals with fixities and definites and only combines what it perceives into beautiful shapes, but like the imagination it does not fuse and unify. The difference between the two is the same as the difference between a mechanical mixture and a

chemical compound. In a mechanical mixture a number of ingredients are brought together. They are mixed up, but they do not lose their individual properties. They still exist as separate identities. In a chemical compound, on the other hand, the different ingredients combine to form something new. The different ingredients no longer exist as separate identities. They lose their respective properties and fuse together to create something new and entirely different. A compound is an act of creation; while a mixture is merely a bringing together of a number of separate elements. For Coleridge, Fancy is the drapery of poetic genius, but Imagination is its very soul, which forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. How might one summarize the main ideas of Chapter 17 of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*?

In Chapter 17 of his work titled *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge makes a number of major points, including the following: He agrees with William Wordsworth that poetic language...

2. What is a summary of chapter 14 of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*?

Chapter 14 of the *Biographia Literaria* begins with Coleridge describing the origins of the *Lyrical Ballads*. He says that he and Wordsworth agreed to compose a volume of poems in which Wordsworth...

3. How does Coleridge define the nature and function of poetry?

In chapter 14 of the *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge provides criteria for the definition of a poem and of poetry. He comments on the qualities contained in

a poem, such as rhyme or...

- 4. Examine Coleridge's idea on the organic unity of poetry as discussed in chapter 14 of the *Biographia Literaria*.**

In evaluating a poem, Coleridge looks at it in holistic terms as a unity in which all the parts are joined together to form a satisfying whole. Every single line, every last word, should serve the...

- 5. In Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, about fancy and imagination he writes "the difference between the two is the same as the difference between a mechanical mixture and a chemical compound." Elaborate.**

Coleridge, in this famous work of criticism, argues that fancy and imagination are actually two separate entities, rather than being either synonymous or words used to describe differing...

- 6. The *Biographia Literaria* touches a new high watermark in literary criticism. Discuss.**

Certainly this work marks Coleridge as a critic of similar powers and analysis to his predecessors in English literature, such as Sidney, Dryden and...

- 7. Comment on Coleridge as a critic based on his *Biographia Literaria*.**

One of the reasons why Coleridge's text on criticism is so famous is because he is able to show a shrewd understanding of the relative merits of various poets as he reflects on his own education...

- 8. Discuss the relative merits and weaknesses of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.**

This important work of criticism has been singled out in terms of its importance in marking the Romantic literary age. In it, Coleridge seeks to explore how the concept

of literature has changed...

9. What are the differences between Wordsworth and Coleridge according to *Biographia Literaria*, and what are their clashes?

Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, differs with his friend Wordsworth chiefly about the appropriate kind of language to use when writing poetry. In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth...

10. In *Biographia Literaria*, to what extent can Coleridge's view about what distinguishes a poem from poetry be supported?

Critics generally agree that this section of his critical work is one of Coleridge's more abstruse sections that is rather unclear on the difference between poetry and poem, although this is...

11. Examine how Coleridge sees poetry is a mode of knowledge.

Coleridge does view poetry as a source of knowledge. One of Coleridge's primary points is the idea that poetic analysis and poetic expression can represent a way in which one knows...

12. What is the significance of the letter in chapter 13?

The letter in Chapter 13 of the *Biographia Literaria* is significant, because it is here that Coleridge sets out his famous distinction between primary and secondary imagination.

UNIT-V.1

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Introduction

Matthew Arnold, the Victorian poet and critic, was the first modern critic [1], and could be called the critics critic, being a champion not only of great poetry, but of literary criticism itself. The purpose of literary criticism, in his view, was to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas, and he has influenced a whole school of critics including new critics such as T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Allen Tate. He was the founder of the sociological school of criticism, and through his touchstone method introduced scientific objectivity to critical evaluation by providing comparison and analysis as the two primary tools of criticism. Arnold's evaluations of the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats are landmarks in descriptive criticism, and as a poet-critic he occupies an eminent position in the rich galaxy of poet-critics of English literature.

T. S. Eliot praised Arnold's objective approach to critical evaluation, particularly his tools of comparison and analysis, and Allen Tate in his essay *Tension in Poetry* imitates Arnold's touchstone method to discover tension, or the proper balance between connotation and denotation, in poetry. These new critics have come a long way from the Romantic approach to poetry, and this change in attitude could be attributed to Arnold, who comes midway between the two schools.

The social role of poetry and criticism

To Arnold a critic is a social benefactor. In his view the creative artist, no matter how much of a genius, would cut a sorry figure without the critic to come to his aid. Before Arnold a literary critic cared only for the beauties and defects of works of art, but Arnold

the critic chose to be the educator and guardian of public opinion and propagator of the best ideas.

Cultural and critical values seem to be synonymous for Arnold. Scott James, comparing him to Aristotle, says that where Aristotle analyses the work of art, Arnold analyses the role of the critic. The one gives us the principles which govern the making of a poem, the other the principles by which the best poems should be selected and made known. Aristotle's critic owes allegiance to the artist, but Arnold's critic has a duty to society.

To Arnold poetry itself was the criticism of life: The criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, and in his seminal essay *The Study of Poetry* (1888) he says that poetry alone can be our sustenance and stay in an era where religious beliefs are fast losing their hold. He claims that poetry is superior to philosophy, science, and religion. Religion attaches its emotion to supposed facts, and the supposed facts are failing it, but poetry attaches its emotion to ideas and ideas are infallible. And science, in his view is incomplete without poetry. He endorses Wordsworth's view that poetry is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science, adding What is a countenance without its expression? and calls poetry the breath and finer spirit of knowledge.

A moralist

As a critic Arnold is essentially a moralist, and has very definite ideas about what poetry should and should not be. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas, he says, is a poetry of revolt against life, and a poetry of indifference to moral ideas is a poetry of indifference to life.

Arnold even censored his own collection on moral grounds. He omitted the poem

Empedocles on Etna from his volume of 1853, whereas he had included it in his collection of 1852. The reason he advances is not that the poem is too subjective, with its Hamlet-like introspection, or that it was a deviation from his classical ideals, but that the poem is too depressing in its subject matter, and would leave the reader hopeless and crushed. There is nothing in it in the way of hope or optimism, and such a poem could prove to be neither instructive nor of any delight to the reader.

Aristotle says that Poetry is superior to History since it bears the stamp of high seriousness and truth. If truth and seriousness are wanting in the subject matter of a poem, so will the true poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting in its style and manner. Hence the two, the nobility of subject matter, and the superiority of style and manner, are proportional and cannot occur independently.

Arnold took up Aristotle's view, asserting that true greatness in poetry is given by the truth and seriousness of its subject matter, and by the high diction and movement in its style and manner, and although indebted to Joshua Reynolds for the expression grand style, Arnold gave it a new meaning when he used it in his lecture *On Translating Homer* (1861):

I think it will be found that that the grand style arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with a severity a serious subject.

According to Arnold, Homer is the best model of a simple grand style, while Milton is the best model of severe grand style. Dante, however, is an example of both.

Even Chaucer, in Arnold's view, in spite of his virtues such as benignity, largeness, and spontaneity, lacks seriousness. Burns too lacks sufficient seriousness, because he was hypocritical in that while he adopted a moral stance in some of his poems, in his private life he flouted morality.

Return to Classical values

Arnold believed that a modern writer should be aware that contemporary literature is built on the foundations of the past, and should contribute to the future by continuing a firm tradition. Quoting Goethe and Niebuhr in support of his view, he asserts that his age suffers from spiritual weakness because it thrives on self-interest and scientific materialism, and therefore cannot provide noble characters such as those found in Classical literature.

He urged modern poets to look to the ancients and their great characters and themes for guidance and inspiration. Classical literature, in his view, possess pathos, moral profundity and noble simplicity, while modern themes, arising from an age of spiritual weakness, are suitable for only comic and lighter kinds of poetry, and dont possess the loftiness to support epic or heroic poetry.

Arnold turns his back on the prevailing Romantic view of poetry and seeks to revive the Classical values of objectivity, urbanity, and architectonics. He denounces the Romantics for ignoring the Classical writers for the sake of novelty, and for their allusive (Arnold uses the word suggestive) writing which defies easy comprehension.

Preface to *Poems* of 1853

In the preface to his *Poems* (1853) Arnold asserts the importance of architectonics; (that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes) in poetry - the necessity of achieving unity by subordinating the parts to the whole, and the expression of ideas to the depiction of human action, and condemns poems which exist for the sake of single lines or passages, stray metaphors, images, and fancy expressions. Scattered images and happy turns of phrase, in his view, can only provide partial effects, and not contribute to

unity. He also, continuing his anti-Romantic theme, urges, modern poets to shun allusiveness and not fall into the temptation of subjectivity.

He says that even the imitation of Shakespeare is risky for a young writer, who should imitate only his excellences, and avoid his attractive accessories, tricks of style, such as quibble, conceit, circumlocution and allusiveness, which will lead him astray.

Arnold commends Shakespeare's use of great plots from the past. He had what Goethe called the architectonic quality, that is his expression was matched to the action (or the subject). But at the same time Arnold quotes Hallam to show that Shakespeare's style was complex even where the press of action demanded simplicity and directness, and hence his style could not be taken as a model by young writers. Elsewhere he says that Shakespeare's expression tends to become a little sensuous and simple, too much intellectualized.

Shakespeare's excellences are 1) The architectonic quality of his style; the harmony between action and expression. 2) His reliance on the ancients for his themes. 3) Accurate construction of action. 4) His strong conception of action and accurate portrayal of his subject matter. 5) His intense feeling for the subjects he dramatises.

His attractive accessories (or tricks of style) which a young writer should handle carefully are 1) His fondness for quibble, fancy, conceit. 2) His excessive use of imagery. 3) Circumlocution, even where the press of action demands directness. 4) His lack of simplicity (according to Hallam and Guizot). 5) His allusiveness.

As an example of the danger of imitating Shakespeare he gives Keats's imitation of Shakespeare in his *Isabella or the Pot of Basil*. Keats uses felicitous phrases and single happy turns of phrase, yet the action is handled vaguely and so the poem does not have unity. By way of contrast, he says the Italian writer Boccaccio handled the same theme successfully in his *Decameron*, because he rightly subordinated expression to action.

Hence Boccaccio's poem is a poetic success where Keats's is a failure.

Arnold also wants the modern writer to take models from the past because they depict human actions which touch on the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. Characters such as Agamemnon, Dido, Aeneas, Orestes, Merope, Alcmeon, and Clytemnestra, leave a permanent impression on our minds. Compare *The Iliad* or *The Aeneid* with *The Childe Harold* or *The Excursion* and you see the difference.

A modern writer might complain that ancient subjects pose problems with regard to ancient culture, customs, manners, dress and so on which are not familiar to contemporary readers. But Arnold is of the view that a writer should not concern himself with the externals, but with the inward man. The inward man is the same irrespective of clime or time.

The Function of Criticism

It is in his *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1864) that Arnold says that criticism should be a dissemination of ideas, a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world. He says that when evaluating a work the aim is to see the object as in itself it really is. Psychological, historical and sociological background are irrelevant, and to dwell on such aspects is mere dilettantism. This stance was very influential with later critics.

Arnold also believed that in his quest for the best a critic should not confine himself to the literature of his own country, but should draw substantially on foreign literature and ideas, because the propagation of ideas should be an objective endeavour.

The Study of Poetry

In *The Study of Poetry* (1888), in support of his plea for nobility in poetry, Arnold recalls Sainte-Beuve's reply to Napoleon, when the latter said that charlatanism is found in everything. Sainte-Beuve replied that charlatanism might be found everywhere else, but not in the field of poetry, because in poetry the distinction between sound and unsound, or only half-sound, truth and untruth, or only half-truth, between the excellent and the inferior, is of paramount importance.

For Arnold there is no place for charlatanism in poetry. To him poetry is the criticism of life, governed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. It is in the criticism of life that the spirit of our race will find its stay and consolation. The extent to which the spirit of mankind finds its stay and consolation is proportional to the power of a poem's criticism of life, and the power of the criticism of life is in direct proportion to the extent to which the poem is genuine and free from charlatanism.

In *The Study of Poetry* he also cautions the critic that in forming a genuine and disinterested estimate of the poet under consideration he should not be influenced by historical or personal judgements, historical judgements being fallacious because we regard ancient poets with excessive veneration, and personal judgements being fallacious when we are biased towards a contemporary poet. If a poet is a dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best . . . enjoy his work.

As examples of erroneous judgements he says that the 17th century court tragedies of the French were spoken of with exaggerated praise, until Pellisson reproached them for want of the true poetic stamp, and another critic, Charles d'Héricault, said that 17th century French poetry had received undue and undeserving veneration. Arnold says the critics seem to substitute a halo for physiognomy and a statue in the place where there

was once a man. They give us a human personage no larger than God seated amidst his perfect work, like Jupiter on Olympus.

He also condemns the French critic Vitet, who had eloquent words of praise for the epic poem *Chanson de Roland* by Turolodus, (which was sung by a jester, Taillefer, in William the Conquerors army), saying that it was superior to Homers *Iliad*. Arnold's view is that this poem can never be compared to Homers work, and that we only have to compare the description of dying Roland to Helens words about her wounded brothers Pollux and Castor and its inferiority will be clearly revealed.

The Study of Poetry: the touchstone method

Arnold's criticism of Vitet illustrates his touchstone method; his theory that in order to judge a poet's work properly, a critic should compare it to passages taken from works of great masters of poetry, and that these passages should be applied as touchstones to other poetry. Even a single line or selected quotation will serve the purpose. From this we see that he has shifted his position from that expressed in the preface to his *Poems* of 1853. In *The Study of Poetry* he no longer uses the acid test of action and architectonics. He became an advocate of touchstones.

Some of Arnold's touchstone passages are: Helens words about her wounded brother, Zeus addressing the horses of Peleus, suppliant Achilles words to Priam, and from Dante; Ugolino's brave words, and Beatrice's loving words to Virgil. From non-Classical writers he selects from *Henry IV Part II* (III, i), Henry's expostulation with sleep - Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast From *Hamlet* (V, ii) Absent thee from felicity awhile From Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book 1, Care sat on his faded cheek . . ., and What is else not to be overcome.

The Study of Poetry: on Chaucer

The French Romance poetry of the 13th century *langue d'oc* and *langue d'oïl* was extremely popular in Europe and Italy, but soon lost its popularity and now it is important only in terms of historical study. But Chaucer, who was nourished by the romance poetry of the French, and influenced by the Italian Royal rhyme stanza, still holds enduring fascination. There is an excellence of style and subject in his poetry, which is the quality the French poetry lacks. Dryden says of Chaucer's *Prologue* Here is Gods plenty! and that he is a perpetual fountain of good sense. There is largeness, benignity, freedom and spontaneity in Chaucer's writings. He is the well of English undefiled. He has divine fluidity of movement, divine liquidness of diction. He has created an epoch and founded a tradition.

Some say that the fluidity of Chaucer's verse is due to licence in the use of the language, a liberty which Burns enjoyed much later. But Arnold says that the excellence of Chaucer's poetry is due to his sheer poetic talent. This liberty in the use of language was enjoyed by many poets, but we do not find the same kind of fluidity in others. Only in Shakespeare and Keats do we find the same kind of fluidity, though they wrote without the same liberty in the use of language.

Arnold praises Chaucer's excellent style and manner, but says that Chaucer cannot be called a classic since, unlike Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare, his poetry does not have the high poetic seriousness which Aristotle regards as a mark of its superiority over the other arts.

The Study of Poetry: on the age of Dryden and Pope

The age of Dryden is regarded as superior to that of the others for sweetness of poetry. Arnold asks whether Dryden and Pope, poets of great merit, are truly the poetical

classics of the 18th century. He says Dryden's post-script to the readers in his translation of *The Aeneid* reveals the fact that in prose writing he is even better than Milton and Chapman.

Just as the laxity in religious matters during the Restoration period was a direct outcome of the strict discipline of the Puritans, in the same way in order to control the dangerous sway of imagination found in the poetry of the Metaphysicals, to counteract the dangerous prevalence of imagination, the poets of the 18th century introduced certain regulations. The restrictions that were imposed on the poets were uniformity, regularity, precision, and balance. These restrictions curbed the growth of poetry, and encouraged the growth of prose.

Hence we can regard Dryden as the glorious founder, and Pope as the splendid high priest, of the age of prose and reason, our indispensable 18th century. Their poetry was that of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Arnold says that Pope and Dryden are not poet classics, but the prose classics of the 18th century.

As for poetry, he considers Gray to be the only classic of the 18th century. Gray constantly studied and enjoyed Greek poetry and thus inherited their poetic point of view and their application of poetry to life. But he is the scantiest, frailest classic since his output was small.

The Study of Poetry: on Burns

Although Burns lived close to the 19th century his poetry breathes the spirit of 18th century life. Burns is most at home in his native language. His poems deal with Scottish dress, Scottish manner, and Scottish religion. This Scottish world is not a beautiful one, and it is an advantage if a poet deals with a beautiful world. But Burns shines whenever he triumphs over his sordid, repulsive and dull world with his poetry.

Perhaps we find the true Burns only in his bacchanalian poetry, though occasionally his bacchanalian attitude was affected. For example in his *Holy Fair*, the lines Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair/ Than either school or college, may represent the bacchanalian attitude, but they are not truly bacchanalian in spirit. There is something insincere about it, smacking of bravado.

When Burns moralises in some of his poems it also sounds insincere, coming from a man who disregarded morality in actual life. And sometimes his pathos is intolerable, as in *Auld Lang Syne*.

We see the real Burns (wherein he is unsurpassable) in lines such as, To make a happy fire-side clime/ to weans and wife/ Thats the true pathos and sublime/ Of human life (*Ae Fond Kiss*). Here we see the genius of Burns.

But, like Chaucer, Burns lacks high poetic seriousness, though his poems have poetic truth in diction and movement. Sometimes his poems are profound and heart-rending, such as in the lines, Had we never loved sae kindly/ had we never loved sae blindly/ never met or never parted/ we had neer been broken- hearted.

Also like Chaucer, Burns possesses largeness, benignity, freedom and spontaneity. But instead of Chaucer's fluidity, we find in Burns a springing bounding energy. Chaucer's benignity deepens in Burns into a sense of sympathy for both human as well as non-human things, but Chaucer's world is richer and fairer than that of Burns.

Sometimes Burns's poetic genius is unmatched by anyone. He is even better than Goethe at times and he is unrivalled by anyone except Shakespeare. He has written excellent poems such as *Tam OShanter*, *Whistle and Ill come to you my Lad*, and *Auld Lang Syne*.

When we compare Shelley's Pinnacled dim in the of intense inane (*Prometheus Unbound* III, iv) with Burns's, They flatter, she says, to deceive me (*Tam Glen*), the latter

is salutary.

Arnold on Shakespeare

Praising Shakespeare, Arnold says In England there needs a miracle of genius like Shakespeare's to produce a balance of mind. This is not bardolatory, but praise tempered by a critical sense. In a letter he writes. I keep saying Shakespeare, you are as obscure as life is. In his sonnet *On Shakespeare* he says: Others abide our question. Thou are free./ We ask and ask - Thou smilest and art still,/ Out-topping knowledge.

Arnold's limitations

For all his championing of disinterestedness, Arnold was unable to practise disinterestedness in all his essays. In his essay on Shelley particularly he displayed a lamentable lack of disinterestedness. Shelley's moral views were too much for the Victorian Arnold. In his essay on Keats too Arnold failed to be disinterested. The sentimental letters of Keats to Fanny Brawne were too much for him.

Arnold sometimes became a satirist, and as a satirical critic saw things too quickly, too summarily. In spite of their charm, the essays are characterised by egotism and, as Tilotson says, the attention is directed, not on his object but on himself and his objects together.

Arnold makes clear his disapproval of the vagaries of some of the Romantic poets. Perhaps he would have agreed with Goethe, who saw Romanticism as disease and Classicism as health. But Arnold occasionally looked at things with jaundiced eyes, and he overlooked the positive features of Romanticism which posterity will not willingly let die, such as its humanitarianism, love of nature, love of childhood, a sense of mysticism, faith in man with all his imperfections, and faith in mans unconquerable mind.

Arnold's inordinate love of classicism made him blind to the beauty of lyricism. He ignored the importance of lyrical poems, which are subjective and which express the sentiments and the personality of the poet. Judged by Arnold's standards, a large number of poets both ancient and modern are dismissed because they sang with Profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

It was also unfair of Arnold to compare the classical works in which figure the classical quartet, namely Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra and Dido with Heamann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, and The Excursion. Even the strongest advocates of Arnold would agree that it is not always profitable for poets to draw upon the past. Literature expresses the zeitgeist, the spirit of the contemporary age. Writers must choose subjects from the world of their own experience. What is ancient Greece to many of us? Historians and archaeologists are familiar with it, but the common readers delight justifiably in modern themes. An excessive fondness for Greek and Latin classics produces a literary diet without variety, while modern poetry and drama have branched out in innumerable directions.

As we have seen, as a classicist Arnold upheld the supreme importance of the architectonic faculty, then later shifted his ground. In the lectures *On Translating Homer*, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, and *The Study of Poetry*, he himself tested the greatness of poetry by single lines. Arnold the classicist presumably realised towards the end of his life that classicism was not the last word in literature.

Arnold's lack of historic sense was another major failing. While he spoke authoritatively on his own century, he was sometimes groping in the dark in his assessment of earlier centuries. He used to speak at times as if ex cathedra, and this pontifical solemnity vitiated his criticism.

As we have seen, later critics praise Arnold, but it is only a qualified praise. Oliver

Elton calls him a bad great critic. T. S. Eliot said that Arnold is a Propagandist and not a creator of ideas. According to Walter Raleigh, Arnold's method is like that of a man who took a brick to the market to give the buyers an impression of the building.

Arnold's legacy

In spite of his faults, Arnold's position as an eminent critic is secure. Douglas Bush says that the breadth and depth of Arnold's influence cannot be measured or even guessed at because, from his own time onward, so much of his thought and outlook became part of the general educated consciousness. He was one of those critics who, as Eliot said, arrive from time to time to set the literary house in order. Eliot named Dryden, Johnson and Arnold as some of the greatest critics of the English language.

Arnold united active independent insight with the authority of the humanistic tradition. He carried on, in his more sophisticated way, the Renaissance humanistic faith in good letters as the teachers of wisdom, and in the virtue of great literature, and above all, great poetry. He saw poetry as a supremely illuminating, animating, and fortifying aid in the difficult endeavour to become or remain fully human.

Arnold's method of criticism is comparative. Steeped in classical poetry, and thoroughly acquainted with continental literature, he compares English literature to French and German literature, adopting the disinterested approach he had learned from Sainte-Beuve.

Arnold's objective approach to criticism and his view that historical and biographical study are unnecessary was very influential on the new criticism. His emphasis on the importance of tradition also influenced F. R. Leavis, and T. S. Eliot.

Eliot is also indebted to Arnold for his classicism, and for his objective approach which paved the way for Eliot to say that poetry is not an expression of personality but an

escape from personality, because it is not an expression of emotions but an escape from emotions.

Although Arnold disapproved of the Romantics approach to poetry, their propensity for allusiveness and symbolism, he also shows his appreciation the Romantics in his *Essays in Criticism*. He praises Wordsworth thus: Nature herself took the pen out of his hand and wrote with a bare, sheer penetrating power. Arnold also valued poetry for its strong ideas, which he found to be the chief merit of Wordsworth's poetry. About Shelley he says that Shelley is A beautiful but ineffectual angel beating in a void his luminous wings in vain.

In an age when cheap literature caters to the taste of the common man, one might fear that the classics will fade into insignificance. But Arnold is sure that the currency and the supremacy of the classics will be preserved in the modern age, not because of conscious effort on the part of the readers, but because of the human instinct of self-preservation.

In the present day with the literary tradition over-burdened with imagery, myth, symbol and abstract jargon, it is refreshing to come back to Arnold and his like to encounter central questions about literature and life as they are perceived by a mature and civilised mind.

TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. **With reference to his poem "Dover Beach," "The Scholar Gypsy," and/or the essay "Culture and Anarchy," is Mathew Arnold a social critic of his age?**

The most famous poems of Matthew Arnold are elegies, though not conventional,

personal elegies mourning the death of a friend. The subject of "The Scholar-Gypsy" is a semi-legendary figure about...

2. Justify Mathew Arnold as a Victorian poet.

Matthew Arnold as a Victorian poet," requires a basic understanding of some of the general characteristics of the Victorian Age (1837–1900). This was a time of supreme...

3. How is Matthew Arnold's poem "The Scholar Gipsy" a criticism of Victorian England?

Victorian England was too centered on technology and "progress" to the point that progress became an end in and of itself. This is the same problem that Dickens describes in *Hard Times*. There was...

4. Mathew Arnold's poetry as a glory of the vanished past?

Arnold's, "Dover Beach." Arnold faced the same issue many Victorians faced--the loss of faith. Negative effects of the Industrial Revolution and the...

5. Who is the speaker of "Dover Beach"? Is it Matthew Arnold or a character he created? What type of person do you think the speaker is?

While the speaker and his companion could be any two English lovers, it is supposed by many that the speaker of "Dover Beach" is the poet himself, Matthew Arnold, who, with his new wife, spent...

6. What, according to Matthew Arnold, are the functions and qualifications of critic?

First, it should be noted that critics normally use "Dr. Arnold" to refer to Dr. Thomas Arnold, a theologian and headmaster of Rugby. Thomas Arnold was the father of Matthew Arnold, author of...

7. How does Matthew Arnold use Nature in his poems?

Arnold, in the cusp between the late Romantic and early Victorian periods (1822-1888) acknowledges Nature, but laments the distance from it that Mankind is experiencing as it moves away from the...

- 8. In what ways does "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" by Matthew Arnold represent Victorian literary criticism and the Victorian era? And what does the article deal with in detail?**

In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Matthew Arnold argues it is criticism that has most significantly influenced French and German literature, and that criticism is applied using...

- 9. In Matthew Arnold's "Memorial Verses" for Wordsworth, he talks about Wordsworth and poetry in general. What are the main points he concentrates on in his poem?**

"Memorial Verses" is an elegy of praise and lament to Wordsworth. It praises his ability to sympathize with nature and to evoke feeling through his poetry and it laments his death. Arnold compares...

- 10. From the poem "Shakespeare" by Matthew Arnold, who are the "others" mentioned in the first line, and how does this create contrast?**

Matthew Arnold wrote his poem Shakespeare as a tribute to William Shakespeare who, in his estimation was a poet in a class of his own. In his opening line "Others abide our question. Thou art free"...

- 11. Describe "The Scholar Gypsy" as a pastoral elegy.**

An elegy is a poem reflecting on an important, often somber theme, usually someone's death. In relation to poetry a pastoral is a piece evoking the blissful joys of a heavily romanticized rural...

- 12. Describe Arnold's idea that "poetry is the criticism of life."**

Arnold, who himself had suffered a loss of religious faith, believed that religion could no longer sustain people. He wrote the following in "The Study of Poetry" in 1880:
"There is not a creed..."

13. Describe Arnold's view of criticism of life

Matthew Arnold was an accomplished poet and literary critic. His main influence was on establishing universal aesthetic standards in criticism of art. He said the role of critic is: a...

14. Discuss Matthew Arnold's concept of culture.

During the late 1860s, Matthew Arnold recognized the fading out of feudalism and the inception of the modern era. He saw the increase in personal freedom as a logical step in modernization but he...

15. What were Matthew Arnold's views on education and democracy?

Matthew Arnold's view on education and democracy are very complex. They are representative of a world in flux. Arnold recognized that there was a fundamental shift in cultural...

UNIT-V.2

T. S. ELIOT

T. S. Eliot stands in the long line of poet-critics beginning with Ben Jonson and including such names as Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge and Matthew Arnold. Eliot's critical essays such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent," "Poetry and Drama," "The Function of Criticism," "The Metaphysical Poets," "Hamlet and His Problems," "The Frontiers of Criticism" etc. are of lasting importance to critical studies.

The value of Eliot's criticism is in the fact that he speaks with authority and conviction, and his prose style is precise and original. His rare gift of crystallizing his thought in striking phrases such as *objective correlative*, *dissociation of sensibility*, etc. have gained him popularity.

Major Critical Concepts

i) Objective Correlative

The American Painter Washington Allston first used the term "objective correlative" about 1840, but

T. S. Eliot made it famous and revived it in an influential essay on Hamlet in the year 1919. Eliot writes: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."

If writers or poets or playwrights want to create an emotional reaction in the audience, they must find a combination of images, objects, or description evoking the appropriate emotion. The source of the emotional reaction isn't in one particular object, one particular image, or one particular word. Instead, the emotion originates in the combination of these

phenomena when they appear together.

For an example, consider the following scene in a hypothetical film. As the audience watches the movie, the scene shows a dozen different people all dressed in black, holding umbrellas. The setting is a cemetery filled with cracked gray headstones. The sky is darkening, and droplets of rain slide off the faces of stone angels like teardrops. A lone widow raises her veil and as she takes off her wedding ring and sets it on the gravestone. Faint sobbing is audible somewhere behind her in the crowd of mourners. As the widow starts to turn away, a break appears in the clouds.

From this gap in the gray sky, a single shaft of sunlight descends and falls down on a green spot near the grave, where a single yellow marigold is blossoming. The rain droplets glitter like gold on the petals of the flower. Then the scene ends, and the actor's names begin to scroll across the screen at the end of the movie.

Suppose I asked the viewers, "What was your emotional reaction after watching this scene?" Most (perhaps all) of the watchers would say, "At first, the scene starts out really sad, but I felt new hope for the widow in spite of her grief." Why do we all react the same way emotionally? The director provided no voiceover explaining that there's still hope for the woman. No character actually states this. The scene never even directly states the widow herself was sad at the beginning. So what specifically evoked the emotional reaction? If we look at the passage, we can't identify any single object or word or thing that by itself would necessarily evoke hope. Sunlight could evoke pretty much any positive emotion. A marigold by itself is pretty, but when we see one, we don't normally feel surges of optimism. In the scene described above, our emotional reaction seems to originate not in one word or image or phrase, but in the combination of all these things together, like a sort of emotional algebra. The objective correlative is that formula for creating a specific emotional reaction merely by the presence of certain words, objects, or items juxtaposed with each

other.

The sum is greater than the parts, so to speak. In this case, “black clothes + umbrellas + cracked gray headstones + darkening sky + rain droplets + faces of stone angels + veil + wedding ring + faint sobbing + turning away” is an artistic formula that equates with a complex sense of sadness. When that complex sense of sadness is combined with “turning away + break in clouds + single yellow marigold blossoming + shaft of sunlight + green spot of grass + glittering raindrops + petals,” the new ingredients now create a new emotional flavor: hope. Good artists intuitively sense this symbolic or rhetorical potential.

T. S. Eliot suggests that, if a play or poem or narrative succeeds and inspires the right emotion, the creator has found just the objective correlative. If a particular scene seems heavy-handed, or it leaves the audience without an emotional reaction, or it invokes the wrong emotion from the one appropriate for the scene, that particular objective correlative doesn't work.

ii) Dissociation of Sensibility / Unification of Sensibility

Eliot's essay 'The Metaphysical Poets' was first published as a review of J.G. Grierson's edition of *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the 17th Century*. But the essay is much more than a mere review; it is a critical document of much value and significance. It has brought about a revaluation and reassessment of interest in these poets who had been neglected for a considerable time. Eliot has thrown new light on the metaphysical poets, and shown that they are neither quaint nor fantastic, but great and mature poets. They do not represent a digression from the mainstream of English poetry, but rather a continuation of it. It is in this essay that Eliot has used, for the first time, the phrases 'Dissociation of Sensibility' and 'Unification of Sensibility', phrases which have acquired world-wide currency and which, ever since, have had a far reaching impact on literary criticism.

Eliot examines one by one with suitable illustrations the characteristics which are generally considered 'metaphysical'. First, there is the elaboration of a simile to the farthest possible extent, to be met with frequently in the poetry of Donne and Cowley. Secondly, there is the device of the development of an image by rapid association of thought requiring considerable agility on the part of the reader that is a technique of compression. Thirdly, the Metaphysicals produce their effects by sudden contrasts. Thus in the line, "A bracelet of bright hair about the bone", the most powerful effect is produced by sudden contrast of the associations of 'bright hair' and 'bone'. But such telescoping of images and contrasts of associations are not a characteristic of the poetry of Donne one. It also characterizes Elizabethan dramatists like Shakespeare, Webster, Tourneour and Middleton. This suggests that Donne, Cowley and others belong to the Elizabethan tradition and not to any school. The dominant characteristics of Donne's poetry are also the characteristics of the great Elizabethans.

Eliot then takes up Dr. Johnson's famous definition of Metaphysical Poetry, in which the great doctor has tried to define this poetry by its faults. Dr. Johnson in his Life of Cowley points that in Metaphysical Poetry "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together." But Eliot says that to bring together heterogeneous ideas and compelling them into unity by the operation of the poet's mind is universal in poetry. Such unity is present even in the poetry of Johnson himself, The Vanity of Humane Wishes. The force of Dr. Johnson's remark lies in the fact that in his view the Metaphysical poets could only 'yoke' by violence dissimilar ideas. They could not unite them or fuse them into a single whole, however this is not a fact. A number of poets of this school have eminently succeeded in uniting heterogeneous ideas. Eliot quotes from Herbert, Cowley, Bishop King and other poets in support of his contention. Therefore, he concludes that Metaphysical poetry cannot be differentiated from other poetry by Dr.

Johnson's definition. The fault, which Dr. Johnson points out, is not there, and the unity of heterogeneous ideas is common to all poetry.

Eliot shows that Donne and the other poets of the 17th century, "were the direct and normal development of the precedent age", and that their characteristic virtue was something valuable which subsequently disappeared. Dr. Johnson has rightly pointed out that these poets were 'analytic'; they were devoted to too much analysis and dissection of particular emotional situations. But Dr. Johnson has failed to see that they could also unite into new wholes the concepts they had analyzed. Eliot shows that their special virtue was the fusion of heterogeneous material into a new unity after dissociation. In other words, metaphysical poetry is distinguished from other poetry by unification of sensibility, and subsequently, 'dissociation of sensibility' overtook English poetry, and this was unfortunate.

The great Elizabethans and early Jacobean had a developed unified sensibility which is expressed in their poetry. By 'sensibility' Eliot does not merely mean feeling or the capacity to receive sense impressions. He means much more than that. By 'sensibility' he means a synthetic faculty, a faculty which can amalgamate and unite thought and feeling, which can fuse into a single whole the varied and disparate, often opposite and contradictory, experiences. The Elizabethans had such a sensibility. They were widely read, they thought on what they read, and their thinking and learning modified their mode of feeling. Eliot gives concrete illustration to show that such unification of sensibility, such fusion of thought and feeling, is to be found in the poetry of Donne and other Metaphysical poets, but it is lacking in the poetry of Tennyson, Browning and the Romantic Poets.

After Donne and Herbert, a change came over English poetry. The poets lost the capacity of uniting thought and feeling. The 'unification of sensibility' was lost, and

'dissociation of sensibility' set in. After that the poets can either think or they can feel; there are either intellectual poets who can only think, or there are poets who can only feel. The poets of the 18th century were intellectuals, they thought but did not feel; the romantics of the 19th century felt but did not think. Tennyson and Browning can merely reflect or ruminate, i.e. meditate poetically on their experience, but cannot express it poetically. Eliot says, "Tennyson and Browning are poets and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, and fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes." In other words, the metaphysical poets had a unified sensibility which enabled them to assimilate and fuse into a new wholes most disparate and heterogeneous experiences. They could feel their thoughts as intensely as the odour of a rose, that is to say they could express their thoughts through sensuous imagery. In his poems, Donne expresses his thoughts and ideas by embodying them in sensuous imagery and it is mainly through the imagery that the unification of sensibility finds its appropriate expression.

Eliot then proceeds to examine the close similarity between the age of Donne and the modern age, and the consequent similarity between the sensibility of the Metaphysicals and the modern poets. The Metaphysicals are difficult and the poet in the modern age is also bound to be difficult. Hence the modern poet also uses conceits and methods very much similar to those of the Metaphysicals who also lived in complex and rapidly changing times. Like them the modern poet also transmutes ideas into sensations, and transforms feelings into thought or states of mind. Eliot's comments apply not only to

Baudelaire and Laforgue, but to his own poetry.

In other words, Donne and the other Metaphysicals are in the direct current of English poetry, and the modern poets are their direct descendants. This current flows direct from the Elizabethan age rightly up to the modern age. Only, and unfortunately, this continuity was broken for some time under the influence of Milton and Dryden who are great masters of language, but not of the soul. The poet has different faculties and sensibilities, he must achieve a unification of his sensibilities, and must express this unified sensibility in his poetry. Only such a poetry would be complete; but it would be complex and difficult. The Metaphysicals, as well as the moderns, have this complexity, and also this completeness and maturity.

iii) **Tradition and the Individual Talent**

In *Dry Salvages* Eliot says, “It seems, as one becomes older, that the past has another pattern and ceases to be a mere sequence.” He was fifty-four years old then. However, this insight is not one that he gained upon reaching maturity. His poetics was built upon this founding stone. As far back as 1919, through that seminal essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* Eliot issued his unofficial critical manifesto. George Watson considers it an account of the principles the young critic planned to bring to bear upon English poetry. The notion of a systematic order, an organic unity of literature underlying *Tradition and the Individual Talent* is now identified as a dominant aspect of Modernism. It finds equivalent formulations in Pound and Joyce—for instance, Joycean idea of retrospective rearrangement. The concept of tradition is germane to both literary creation and literary criticism. Eliot violently refuted the view that the greatness of a poet lies in his originality, individuality or his difference from other poets. He says that it is often seen that not only the best but the most individual parts of a work may be those in which

the dead poets, the ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. Tradition is thus indispensable. In a letter describing the original impetus behind the writing of this essay he explains his position to Mary Hutchinson. He asserts that tradition does not mean stopping in the same place. It is not blind adherence to the past nor is it something that can be inherited. One has to acquire it with great labour. It demands the historical sense which is not simply knowledge of history. It involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past but of its presence; a sense of balance which trains one to discriminate ones passion from objective criterion. In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, Eliot says, "Poetry begins with the savage beating a drum in the jungle". The notion of a young man walking with a heap of broken images circling round in his mind is what Eliot means by a tradition. In *Poetry and Poets* he says that an old idea may be so perfectly assimilated as to be original. Again in *Criterion* while discussing the function of criticism he reiterates that he conceived of literary works as a system in relation to which, and only in relation to which, individual works of literary art and the works of individual artists have their significance. This is the same as what he said in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*—no poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. This should not be mistaken for mere historical criticism. The organic or systematic view of literature considers this relation to be reciprocal and mutual. What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. A reading of Joyces *Ulysses* ineluctably influences our perception of Homers *Odyssey*. In this context has another signification. It may be equated with the effect of "serial re-reading". The holistic concept of literature or art is that it is an unending continuity which at any given moment is complete. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new, the really new, work of art

among them. The relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted. And this is the conformity between the old and the new. A poet who is aware of this “retrospective re-arrangement” will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities. It makes him aware of his own place in time—his own contemporaneity. In other words the English writer should know that he is a part of the English literary culture, which in turn is a part of European culture—a kind of double citizenship? He must appreciate the collective mind of Europe and remember that it is a mind that changes and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route. It does not jettison Dante or superannuate Shakespeare. Then he would realise that the collective mind—the repository of tradition is more important than his own private mind. This thought will chasten him and put him through the process of continual self-surrender. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. It is in this depersonalisation that art approaches the condition of science.

iv) **Theory of Impersonality**

The theory of impersonality of poetry is a natural corollary to Eliot’s concept of tradition. Eliot is conscious of the possible objections to his theory. It would appear that Eliot suggests deep scholarship as a pre-requisite for a poet. It is pointed out that much scholarship would inhibit creativity. Eliot clarifies that what he means is that the poet must have the capacity to assimilate the essential elements of tradition. Shakespeare picked up much more of essential history from Plutarch than most scholars do from the British Museum. In the first section of Tradition and the Individual Talent Eliot discusses the relation between the poet and the past. In the second section he examines the relation between the poet and his poetry. The mind of the poet is likened to a catalyst. The catalyst accelerates a chemical reaction but it remains inert, neutral and unchanged. The more

perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates. The elements which enter into the mind are of two kinds; emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art on one who enjoys it is exclusively an art-experience. The emotion in a poem is not the poet's emotion; it is art emotion. The mind of the poet is a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images. They remain there till all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together. It is not the greatness or intensity of the components but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure under which the fusion takes place that counts. The poet has no personality to express but a medium, which is only a medium and not a personality. It is in this context that Eliot finds fault with Wordsworth's theory of emotions recollected in tranquility. Nor is it a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings according to him. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotions but an escape from emotion; it is not an expression of personality but an escape from personality.

Eliot's theory of impersonality suffers from vagueness and inconsistency. He was a vehement critic of aesthetic mysticism. Even Eliot's ardent admirer Kristian Smidst admits that impersonality theory comes close to aesthetic mysticism. If the mind of the poet is only a passive, inert medium how could Eliot speak of the transforming catalyst? The problem can be resolved in two ways. One is to take personality and impersonality to mean particularity and universality. Secondly, if the essay is to be considered a piece of "workshop criticism" it is only reasonable that motifs predominant in criticism should find their substantiation in creative work. Thus Tradition and the Individual Talent explains the style *Prufrock* and *The Wasteland*. Later Eliot himself revised some of the views expressed in this essay.

TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What view of literary merit does Eliot seem to be arguing against? What does he propose as an alternative? (1093)
2. What does he mean by "tradition"? How can we tell what is traditional? What relationship should the writer have to the writings of the past?
3. Does he believe that art is progressive? If not, how does it change? (1094) What limitations should the writer avoid in his use of the past?
4. What kind of art does Eliot seem to admire? What may be inferred from the fact that all the examples chosen are poetry?
5. Do you think Eliot believes in a "canon" of great books? Would he have agreed with Arnold that critics should seek to promulgate "the best that has been thought and known in the world"?
6. Does he give help in defining what great art should be?
7. What does it mean to say that the author should not be personal, and that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates"? What should take the place of these personal or autobiographical emotions?
8. Would Aristotle have agreed with this view? Do you?
9. What does he find to disagree with in Kantian and other notions of "sublimity"? (1096)
10. Why might poets wish to escape from personality? What does it mean to say, "only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things"? (1097)

11. What kinds of literature does Eliot seem to admire? If you have read any of his poems or plays, do these seem to exemplify his criteria? Would his pronouncements seem to fit some of the well-known writers of his period, such as Yeats and Woolf?
12. What are qualities of Eliot's style? What may be some reasons for the longstanding influence of his essays?
13. What context may be suggested for Eliot's views by the fact that he was an American expatriate in England who published this essay in 1919?
14. Are there any implications to Eliot's repeated use of "he" to describe the poet, or is this just common practice? What effect might gender bias have on a critic dealing with topics of tradition and impersonality?
15. Which aspects of Eliot's views may have influenced the generations of critics which followed him?

THANK YOU!!