

SEMESTER V

PAPER 11 - INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM

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Critical Works – Criticism on Poetry – On Criticism

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Classicism – True Criticism – Impersonality of Poetry – Other Concepts

Prescribed Book:

B. Prasad. An Introduction to English Criticism. Macmillan. (Trinity:Laxmi
Publications).2014

Books for study and Reference

S.Ramaswami V.S.Sethuraman .The English Critical Tradition. An Anthology of
English Literary Criticism (Volume I&II)

Introduction to Literary Criticism

Semester V (BEN 53)

Unit I

What is Criticism?

- Analysis / Evaluation of the literary works.
- Opinions supported by evidence relating to theme, style, setting or any context of the literary works.
- Enjoyed in two ways: 1. As a lay man enjoys it
2. As a trained man enjoys it methodically.
- Latter mode of enjoying a literary work is criticism.

Who is a Critic?

- An ideal reader.
- No work is good/ bad, enjoyable/ unenjoyable and meaningful/ meaningless
- Thorough examination of works.

Beginning of Criticism:

- Art of criticism began in Ancient Greece.
- Attracted positive attention in fifth century B.C.
- First one to apply critically considered mind – Aristophanes.
- Other important persons: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Socrates.

PLATO

His Age and Works:

- Born in 427 B.C. and died in 348 B.C.
- Disciple of Socrates.
- Important people during his period:
 1. Artists: Phidias and Polygnotus
 2. Writers: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes
 3. Philosophers: Parmenides, Empedocles and Socrates.
 4. Orators: Gorgias, Antiphon and Lysias

- Fourth century B.C- an age of critical inquiry and analysis.
- Plato's interest: philosophical investigation Eg. His work "Dialogues".
- Dialogues- written in the question and answer format by many interlocutors and one among them is Socrates.
- Socrates was made a chief speaker as Plato wanted to regard his master's teaching. • Important parts of *Dialogues*: Ion, Cratylus, Protagoras, Gorgias, Symposium, Republic etc.

His View of Art:

- Art: Theory of Ideas
- In *Republic*, he says – Ideas are the ultimate reality.
- Things are conceived as ideas before they take practical shapes or being made into an art form.
- Idea- original
 Thing made out of that idea- copy of the original. So, it is once removed from reality.
- Now the thing made out of idea changes into art form like literature, painting etc. copies a copy. So, art is twice removed from reality.
- According to Plato, Arts take men away from reality rather than towards it.
- work of art- neither helps to mould the character nor to promote the well being of the state. So, it is dangerous to individual and society.
- At the same time, if it is rightly pursued, it will inculcate a love for beauty.

His Attack on Poetry:

- Plato's views on poetry were based on two concerns: i) concern for the good of the individual.
 ii) concern for the state.
- He condemns poetry for three reasons.
 - i) Poetic Inspiration ii) Emotional Appeal of Poetry
 - iii) Its Non-Moral Character

1. Poetic Inspiration:

- Plato says that the poet does not write the poem with thought of the subject for a long time, but he writes it just because he is 'inspired'.
- That sudden muse fills him and makes him to write a poetry.
- So, Plato questions this by stating that how can a sudden impulse give truth-based reason to the readers.
- He says that the poet's works often have truth but it hardly has any reason.
- So, he states that **Poetry cannot take the place of Philosophy.**
- Philosophy- guided mainly by the cool deliberation.
- Poetry- i) guided by the impulse of the moment.

ii) Poetry cannot make the individual a better citizen and it cannot make the state as a better organization.

- So, he says that there is no poet in the ideal commonwealth.

2. Emotional Appeal of Poetry:

- Plato points out that **Poetry affects the emotions rather than reason** as it is a product of inspiration.
- It pictures the scenes, situations and life of the characters in a way in which it **overpower the emotions** and **hold the reason.**
- Emotion- not a safe guide like reason Reason – considers everything in a cool way before moving in any direction.
- Plato gives an illustration of *tragic poetry* of his age. (Weeping and wailing to move the hearts of the audience)
- He finds it wrong because, we cannot restrain the grief of our own sufferings if we let our pity feed the grief of others.

3. Its Non- Moral Character:

- Poetry- has no concern with morality.
- Treats both virtue and vice in the same way without moral consideration.

- It pained Plato to see virtue often undergoing grief.
- Eg. The Epics of Homer, the Narrative of Hesiod, the Odes of Pindar and the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.
- In *Republic*, he says that poetry shows- many evil lives are happy and righteous men are unhappy.
- Portrait of gods and heroes are objectionable as gods were shown as unjust and revengeful.
- Heroes- having uncontrollable passions like pride, anger, grief etc.
- Such literature corrupts the citizen and state.

The Function of Poetry:

- Plato says that pleasure alone cannot be the object of poetry.
- He suggests that truth is the test of poetry as it makes the knowledge of virtue. So, he says that only if it has truth, it could mould the character and promote the welfare of the state.
- Good poet- if he is a good teacher.
- Poetic truth must be the higher truth as it gives ideal forms of justice, goodness, beauty etc.

His Comments on Drama:

According to Plato, the following are the important features of drama which deserve a separate notice.

- i) Its Appeal to Baser Instincts
- ii) Effects of Impersonation
- iii) Tragic and Comic Pleasure

1.Its Appeal to Baser Instincts:

- Unlike poetry, drama is meant to be staged and its approval depends on different sectors of audience.
- Drama introduces what audience like such as
 - i) quarrels and lamentations in tragedy
 - ii) imitation of thunder and cries of beasts in comedy.
- Plato says that, all these arises the baser instinct of audience of which they will be ashamed in normal life.

- These kind of plays leads to bad taste and laxity in discipline.
- So, Plato says that, these kind of plays should be censored.

2.Effects of Impersonation:

- By impersonation, Plato means to say that drama becomes unfavourable on the actors themselves.
- Eg. Impersonating evil characters like cowards, knaves and criminals, the actors let these qualities into their own nature.
- At the same time, the actors who impersonate the cream of humanity such as men of courage, wisdom or virtue, it is a gain for them.
- So, Plato argues that tragedies that represent the best and noblest in life gives positive benefit to the people and it has to be encouraged.

3.Tragic and Comic Pleasure:

- Plato talks about the pleasure aroused by tragedy and comedy.
- What is it in a painful scene that causes pleasure? The answer to this question is given by Plato.
- He says that human nature is a mixture of different kinds of feelings like anger, envy, fear, grief etc. Which are painful but give pleasure when indulged in excess.
- These feelings please a man to lose his temper or to weep and that's why he chooses to explore these feelings.
- Comedy- the pleasure takes the form of laughter at what we see on stage when
 - i) A coward behaves as a brave man
 - ii) A fool as a wise man
 - iii) A cheat as an honest man
- The pleasure becomes malicious if it arises from the weakness of a fellow man who should rather be an object of pity.
- Finally, Plato talks about the profound truth by saying that “no character can be comic unless he is lovable”.
- Plato warns against the frequent indulgence in laughter as it affects the seriousness of the conduct.

His Observations on Style:

- As Plato lived in an age of oratory, he lays down a few principles of good speech in *Phaedrus*, it is also applicable for good writing. The principles are:
 - i) - He says that the first essential of a good speech is a thorough knowledge of the subject that one is to speak or write about.
 - He must be sure of what he has to say.
 - This alone is not enough as a speech has to impress the audience and written work has to impress the readers.
 - ii) - we should know the art of speaking.
 - One should know the knowledge of its rules and make a constant practice.
 - iii) - The thought on the subject must follow a natural sequence. ie. The first things first, the middle ones in the middle and the last ones last.
 - Then it forms as an organic whole with the perfect beginning, middle and the end.
 - Through this one can communicate themselves best to the readers.
 - iii) As each and every audience and reader have their own prejudices, a speaker / writer should have a knowledge on human psychology to get into the heart and soul of readers/ audience.

ARISTOTLE

His Critical Works and their Nature:

- Aristotle lived from 384 B.C. to 322 B.C. and one of the distinguished disciples of Plato.
- Tutor of Alexander the Great.
- Believed to have written nearly 6 critical treatises of which only two are survived.
 - i) Poetics – # deals with art of Poetry.
 - # deals with many problems of literature than rhetoric and has greater attention than rhetoric.
 - ii) Rhetoric – deals with the art of Speaking.
- His views about Poetic art are strongly rooted in the Greek literature. He wrote *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* in order to sort out the principles for a good poet and a good orator.

The Plan of Poetics:

- Poetics – treatise of about 50 pages, containing 26 small chapters.
- Like the summary of his lectures to his pupils written either by them or by himself.
 - *First four chapters (1,2,3,4) and 25th chapter – devoted to **Poetry**.
 - *5th chapter (5) – **comedy, epic and tragedy**.
 - *The next 14 chapters (6 to 19) – exclusively to **tragedy**.
 - *The next three chapters (20,21,22) – **Poetic diction**
 - *The next two chapters (23, 24) – **epic poetry**
 - *The last chapter (26) – **comparison of epic poetry and tragedy**.
- Aristotle mainly focused on tragedy as it was considered as the developed form of poetry.
- Poetry, Comedy and epic are considered only because discussing about tragedy would be incomplete without mentioning the other forms.
- The lyric is mentioned only because it is a part of tragedy.

His Observations on Poetry:

1.Its Nature:

- Following Plato, Aristotle calls the poet as an *imitator*. ie. the one who imitates one of the three objects.
 - i) Things as they were or are – things in past or present.
 - ii) Things as they are said or thought to be – what is commonly believed about the thing.
 - iii) Things as they ought to be – what is ideal or how a thing should be.
- Like Plato, he believes in natural pleasure in imitation. Example of child getting pleasure by imitating others around him.
- So, Aristotle says that poet is a grown- up child indulging in imitation for the pleasure it gives.
- Another natural instinct which makes him as a poet- instinct for harmony and rhythm in metrical composition.
- He differs here from Plato's view by saying that, the poet's imitations are not unreal (ie.) twice removed from reality.
- They reveal truths of permanent or universal kind. To prove this, he **compares poetry and history**.
- He says that it is not the role of poet to relate what has happened but he can relate what may happen.
- Poetry: i) relates what may happen.
 - ii)more philosophical and higher thing than history.
 - iii)It expresses the universal.
 - Iv)it infuses a universal appeal to the persons, things etc by explaining what they have in common.

History: i) relates what has happened.

ii) it expresses the particular.

iii) it records particular places, persons and things.

2. Its Function:

- He says that the function of poetry is to please the poet as well as the readers.
- He differs from Plato by saying that it should please and it should also teach.
- So, when it pleases and teaches, then the poetry serves the dual purpose- itself and civic morality.
- The pleasure which the poetry gives is an enduring one and it becomes an aesthetic enjoyment when it's not separated from civic ends.

Its Emotional Appeal:

- Like Plato, Aristotle also feels that Poetry has deeper appeal to emotions. He takes *tragedy* as the *highest form of poetry* and denotes that it arouses emotions like *pity and fear*.
 - i) pity – undeserved sufferings of the hero
 - ii) fear – worst may befall him.
- Aristotle has no fear like Plato and he justifies it by saying that these emotions arise with a view to *purgation or catharsis* (Purification or removal of painful or disturbing elements from us)
- When we see the sufferings, these emotions find a full and free outlet and relieve the pain. As a result of it, we become nobler than before.
- So, Aristotle says that the emotional appeal is not harmful but health- giving and it satisfies artistically.

Observations on Tragedy:

1. Its Origin:

- Poetry – imitative art – imitates two kinds of actions. i) the noble actions of good men -epic was formed
 - ii) the mean actions of bad men – satire was formed. Trivial sorts imitated the actions of meaner persons.
- From these tragedy and comedy were formed.
- Tragedy – as same as epic
Comedy – as same as satire
- Epic and tragedy are superior to satire and comedy. According to Aristotle, tragedy is superior to the epic.

Reasons: i) Tragedy has music and spectacular effects in a short time.

ii) more compact in design.

That's why a big space is devoted to tragedy in his *Poetics*.

2. Its Characteristics:

- Tragedy – imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude.

Language – several kinds of artistic ornaments found in separate parts of the play in the form of i) action ii) pity and iii) fear.

Action – # tale of suffering which arouses Pity and fear.

it comprises all human activities like deeds, thoughts and feelings.

it should be complete with a beginning, middle and end.

Beginning – audience/ reader need not to be told anything to understand the story.

If something is required to understand the story after the beginning, then the beginning is unsatisfactory.

Middle – they follow events happen after the beginning.

End – those events in the middle lead to other events and after this there won't be any events. They form the end.

- If any play has i) beginning in middle / end
 - ii) Middle in the beginning / end and
 - iii) end in the beginning / middle

Then the action or plot is not complete or it is not well knit.

- Completeness of action – organic unity / natural sequence of events which are undisturbed.
- Such **plot** – should have reasonable length (a mind may understand fully in one view / within the required time). It is the essential condition of beauty.
- Plot (too short) – mind will miss many things and couldn't comprehend fully.
- Plot (too long) – mind cannot take all the events of the story.
- Aristotle's own words: 'it should be of a length which can be easily embraced by the memory.'
- But it should have length enough to unfold beginning, middle and the end fully.
- **Artistic ornament**: i) means rhythm, harmony and song applied not all together but used when needed. Each of these will develop the parts of the play.
 - ii) used to enrich the language of the play to make it more effective.
- **The form of Action**: i) it distinguishes tragedy from epic.
 - ii) Epic – # the narrator of the story is poet.
 - # poet is free to speak in his own person or can speak what others like.
 - # meant only to be read.
 - Tragedy – # tale is told with the help of living and moving characters.
 - # dramatist is nowhere seen and everything is done by his character.
 - # literature intended to be acted as well as read.

3.Its Constituent Parts:

- Aristotle finds 6 constituent parts in tragedy:
 - i) Plot

- ii) Character
- iii) Thought
- iv) Diction
- v) Song
- vi) Spectacle

- Plot, character and thought – objects it imitates/ represents.
- Diction and song – medium it employs to imitate.
- Spectacle – manner of imitating.
- Order of their importance as shown above.
- Plot – *also known as arrangement of the incidents. It is the chief part of tragedy. It imitates action.

*Whether plot makes a tragedy or character makes tragedy? Aristotle replies that, “without character there may be a tragedy but without plot there cannot be a tragedy.”

- Character - * determines men's

Qualities. Deeds issue from character. So, character is next only in importance to plot.

- Thought - * what character thinks or feels in the play. Revealed through the speech.

* plot – imitates action

Character – imitates men

Thought – imitates men's mental and emotional reactions to the situations.

- Diction – To accomplish the first three, *diction* is employed as a medium.
- Song – Diction / words used in tragedy with each kind of artistic ornament. One of the artistic ornaments is song.
- Through diction and song, the thought of the characters and meaning of the play is expressed.
- Spectacle – means stage presentation and constitutes the manner in which tragedy is presented to public.

4.The Structure of the Plot:

- I) Aristotle says that the plot should have the *unity of action* which are closely connected to one another which make it as a whole.
- If any one of the actions is displaced or removed, the whole play will be disjointed and disturbed.
- The events which form the plot should concern only one man and not more. If they concern more than one man, there will be no connections between the actions.
- Their introduction in the same story will disturb the unity of action. So, he says that even episodic plots are the worst as they have no connection with each action.

- ii)Then he talks about *unity of time*
- He says that - tragedy should confine itself to a single revolution of the sun (within a day).
-Epic has no limits of time.
- Tragedy – events that happened within 24 hours of a day. He just states this but never insists that it is compulsory.
- iii)Then he talks about *the unity of place*. But he never explains about this briefly as he combined it with the unit of time.

A Good Tragic Plot:

- He says that, a good tragic plot should arouse the pity and fear in spectator/ reader.
- The change of fortune should not be from bad to good. But it should be from *good to bad*.
- Unhappy ending is the right ending to attain tragic effect because a happy ending may please us and it will not give true tragic pleasure.
- The emotions can be aroused in two ways:
 - i)by spectacular means/ theatrical effect – physical torture, lamentation, beggarly appearance etc.
 - ii)by the inner structure of the plot – brother unknowingly killing his brother and discovering it later, intending good and doing evil etc.
- The second way of arousal of emotions indicates a superior poet.
- Plot – divisible into 2 parts –
 - i)**Complication** (Rising action) – ties the events into a tangled knot. It includes the action from the beginning to the point where it takes a turn for good/ bad.
 - ii)**Denouement** (Falling action)– also known as “unravelling”. It unties the knot put by complication. It extends from the turning point to end.

5.Simple and Complex plot:

- Plot may be simple or complex. Simple plot has no puzzling situations which enters into complex plot.
- Complex plot has two parts:
 - i)**Peripeteia** – * reversal of situation
* it means the reversal of our intention. Eg. A move to kill enemy recoiling one’s own head, effort to save turns just opposite to it, killing an enemy who is a good man.
 - ii)**Anagnorisis** – * recognition or discovery.
*The discovery of the false moves taken in ignorance. It is a change from ignorance to knowledge.
- Both of these complex plots will please the audience as they have the element of surprise in them. So a perfect tragedy should be arranged on a complex plan.

6.Tragic Hero:

- The choice of a tragic hero- the one whose actions must produce the tragic effect in spectators.
- Neither can he be a good man completely nor can he be a bad man nor can he be a villain.
- He has to be a man 'who is not completely good or just but whose misfortune is brought not by vice but by some error.

Unit – 2

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

The Writer and his Work:

- Sir Philip Sidney was the model of an Elizabethan courtier.
- An exert from his life: when he was thirsty and wounded at the battle of Zutphen , he passed the bottle of water which was provided to him to a soldier who was in the same pain of thirst and death by saying “ Thy need is greater than mine”.
- When Stephen Gosson dedicated his *School of Abuse* to Sidney, he defended himself by his reply in *Apology for Poetry* without even mentioning Gosson’s name anywhere.
- Gosson had indicted poetry on four points. They were:
 - i) a man could employ his time more usefully than in poetry.
 - ii) Poetry is the mother of lies.
 - iii) poetry is the nurse of abuse.
 - iv) Plato had banished poets from his ideal commonwealth.
- For this, Sidney replies to all the charges by drawing examples from the ancient classics and the Italian writers of renaissance.
- He included:
 - i) Homer, Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch among Greeks.
 - ii) Cicero, Virgil, Horace and Ovid among Romans.
 - iii) Minturno, Scaliger and Castelvetro among Italians.
- When Sidney was replying against Gosson's charges, there was no criticism as well as great poetry in England except chaucer.

The Argument of his Book:

- Sidney’s *Apology* is not only a reply to Gosson but it is a defence of poetry against all the charges that had been laid since Plato.
- Sidney followed the method of a logician.
 - *He examines it in whole and in parts.
 - *He considers the point in favour and the point against.
 - *Then finally he gives his opinion.
- He says that poetry is the oldest of all the branches of learning.
- Poetry is superior to philosophy – charm
- Superior to history – universality
- Superior to science – moral end
- Superior to law – encouragement of human rather than civic goodness.
- Then he talks about different kinds of poetry.
 - i) Pastoral – pleases by helpful comments on contemporary life and events.
 - ii) Elegy – pleases by its kindly pity for the weakness of mankind and wretchedness of the world.

- iii) Satire – pleases by pleasantly making fun of folly.
- iv) Comedy – pleases by ridiculous imitation of common errors in life.
- v) Tragedy – pleases by demonstrating the uncertainty of the world.
- vi) Lyric – pleases by its sweet praise of everything which are praiseworthy.
- vii) Epic – pleases by representing highest truth in an ideal manner.
- After this, Sidney turns to the 4 charges levelled against poetry by Gosson.

1. A man might better spend his time than in poetry:

To this Sidney replies that no learning is good if it doesn't teach and move the readers towards virtue. Only poetry can teach and move and nothing else can do it.

2. Poetry is the mother of lies:

Sidney replies that, if we say that poet is a liar, then it means we misunderstood his very purpose. He states that the question of accuracy and falsehood arises only when a person tells about facts, past or present.

According to Sidney, a poet has no concern towards all these things like past, present and facts. He just uses these things to arrive at a higher truth. So Sidney says that a poet cannot be a liar and poetry is not the mother of lies.

3. Poetry is the nurse of abuse:

The statement 'Poetry abuses men's wit' is only applicable to comedy and sometimes to lyric, elegy and the epic only when love element enters into all of them.

So, Sidney argues that it is not poetry that abuses man's wit but man abuses the poetry. Because there can be poetry without sinful love.

Sidney points out that the nature of anything is not determined by its misuse but by its right use.

4. Plato condemned poets from his ideal commonwealth:

To this charge, Sidney replies that Plato doesn't find fault with poetry which he considered as divinely inspired, but with poets of his time who abused it to misrepresent gods and so on.

So, Sidney clarifies that Plato banishes the abuse and not the things and he gave due honour to it.

His Classicism:

Respect for Rules:

- * Sidney's *Apology* is the first serious attempt to apply the "classical rules" to English poetry. He wanted Poetry to be revered in England as it did in Greece and Rome.
- * Greece – poet was revered as a 'maker' who is comparable to Heavenly Maker.
- Rome – poet was revered as 'prophet' or the one who is gifted with foreknowledge of things.

- *He found that the great Italian Renaissance writers like Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch treated poetry as a worthy thing.
- * Sidney follows Plato in his repeated stress on the teaching function of poetry.
He follows both Aristotle and Horace in his definition of Poetry.
He mentioned Aristotle as his chief guide as interpreted in Castelvetro's edition of *Poetics*, published in 1570.
- *Aristotle has stressed only the unity of action as an important condition for a perfect plot. But the Renaissance interpreters of Aristotle like Castelvetro argued that other than action, it is equally important to confine a story to a 'single revolution of the sun' or 'twenty - four hours'.
- * Following Castelvetro, Sidney also insists that unity of time and place have to be given importance other than unity of action in English drama.
- * He praises *Gorboduc* for its Senecan technique but at the same time he says that it cannot be called as a model of all tragedies as it is faulty both in place and time.
- * He says i) Stage should always represent one place.
ii)the time is supposed to be one day
- *Only for these reasons, Sidney has no patience with the newly developed tragi-comedy even though it is approved by Scaliger and Castelvetro.
- * Sidney's critical outlook in these two matters such as unities and tragi-comedy was affected by the absence of good English plays till his time. If he had seen the romantic drama instead of rude and chaotic drama, then he would have readjusted his theories.
- *Even though Sidney adored classics he was still an Elizabethan at heart who was more involved in lyrics and sonnets.

BEN JONSON

The Critic and his Work:

- Ben Jonson is a better poet and dramatist than a critic. But still, he has a reputed place in the history of literary criticism.
- He never wrote critical works but in all his works, criticism was there in his poems and plays such as i) *The Poetaster*
ii) Conversations with Drummond
iii)Timber or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter (Discoveries)
- He advocated "order and discipline "in writing. He wanted writers to write well not by chance but knowingly.

- Jonson follows this in his own practice.
- All his plays – modelled on Latin drama
 - i) Seneca in Tragedy ii) Plautus and Terence in Comedy
- He took *Aristotle
 - *Horace
 - *Latin writers of the Silver Age – Seneca the Elder (father of tragedian), Quintilian, Pliny the Younger (nephew of the naturalist) and Petronius as his models for his plays.
- His favourite among them – Quintilian as he applies Quintilian’s observations on the art of rhetoric to the art of poetry and drama. This makes him one of the notable ‘*neo classical critics*’ in English.
- Neo classic – a critic who endeavours to develop his theory and practice based on the
 - i) achievement of the Greek and Latin writers ii) those who tries to systematized classical practice and classical critical ideas into a set of rules to guide the modern writers.
- “Discoveries”- *most valuable among his critical works.
 - *Published four years after his death in 1641.
 - * Just a collection of notes which Jonson made from time to time and each of them has a Latin heading and varying in length from mere sentence to miniature essay.
 - *Neither numbered not classified. Deals with whatever interested Jonson without indiscrimination. Eg. Morality, politics and literature.
 - *Some break off suddenly as if the author intended to develop them later. Some are complete wholes and some others are combined to make as a whole one.
 - *Few – his own
 - All the rest – translations or adaptations from the classical writers.

His Classicism:

- As a neo-classic, Ben Jonson loved English more like other Elizabethans. He wanted to cure the illness that attack English literature.
- The one thing which attacked English literature was “excess”: excess of passion, excess of imagination, excess of expression.

Even the great Shakespeare- not free from them.

- This excess in everything comes as a result of ungoverned impulse which needs well-trying law to control it.
- Jonson says that only Aristotle knows the way to control it which he has described in *Poetics*.
- Jonson has noted those points in his work *Discoveries*.

*One among them is about the unity of action. And with that he adds unity of time which Aristotle has not mentioned.

* He considers about fable or plot, its dimension and its wholeness

*Fable – i) called as imitation of one entire and perfect action.

ii) its parts are joined and knit together as nothing can be changed or taken away.

iii) we call it as whole and it becomes perfect when it has a *beginning*, *midst* (middle) and the *end*.

*Dimensions of a fable:

- i) According to Jonson, every action requires the greatness which is neither too vast nor too small.
- ii) If the Action is too great, we can never comprehend everything in our imagination. If it is too little, we can't get pleasure out of it.
- iii) So, a tragedy or comedy will be good only if they have a boundary/ limit.

*Wholeness:

- i) According to Jonson, a work should be entire and one. It may have only separate story or it may be composed of many parts (begins to be one, grows step by step and put together as one).
- ii) He says that, whole action consists of many parts. And the whole cannot be produced without those parts. So, the action made of those parts become a fable Epic at the end.

The Qualifications of the Poet:

* To explain this, Jonson follows Philip Sidney by calling a poet as a 'maker' or 'feigner' (the one who device something) but ultimately, he follows Aristotle.

* Jonson calls poetry as 'fiction' or 'the art of feigning'. He says that "Poetry is the Queen of Arts" which was originated from heaven, received from

Hebrews and got popular with Greeks, transmitted to Latins and all other nations that supported civility.

* Jonson lays down 5 requirements for a good poet. What he should be by

1. Nature
2. Exercise
3. Imitation
4. Study and
5. Art

1. Nature: i) Jonson says that Art need nothing but nature which is beneficial and aiding.
ii) So, the first requirement of a poet is to have a good natural wit. All the arts consist of doctrines and precepts but must need nature and instinct to pour out the treasure of his mind.
2. Exercise: i) If a poet's wit will not arrive at the greatest like the ancients, he should not quarrel or get angry but he should try again to get better cogitation (deep thinking).
ii) Things written with labor deserve to be read more and will last till their age.
3. Imitation: i) The poet should be able to convert the substance of another poet to his own use through imitation.
ii) The choice of one excellent man will make the poet grow. But a poet should not take the vices as virtue in imitation but a poet should draw forth the best and choicest one as bee chooses the best flower and turn all into honey.
iii) A poet should make imitation sweet and observe how the best writers have imitated and follow them.
4. Study: i) A poet needs "exactness of study" and "multiplicity of reading" which makes a full man.
ii) it not only enables a poet to know history and argument of a poem but also to master the matter and style which shows a poet knows to handle, place or dispose anything with elegance.
5. Art: i) Finally, the art only leads a poet to perfection and leave him in the possession as a poet.
ii) Jonson believes that natural endowment is indirectly hinted in Aristotle. But he believes Homer's merit is the result of art or natural genius directly.

His Observations on Style:

- In this, Jonson talks about the extravagance of expression in Elizabethan and Jacobean writing. But he has no use for words for their own sake like his contemporaries.

- To him, the life of a language is in thought. Language is lifeless without thought.
- The style will be more effective if the writer knows fully what he has to say, chooses apt words and arranges them aptly while composing the poem.
- To do this, 3 things are required:

1. *Read the best authors*: i) when a poet reads the best authors, he fulfils the remark on imitation that is qualification of a poet.

ii) Imitation is fit for grown and able writers to believe themselves and work with their own strength. So it is fit for the beginner and learner to study the others which is the best.

iii) Because our mind and memory sharply understand other's things than our own.

2. *Observe the best speakers*

3. *Exercise his own style*: i) Jonson says that a writer should never be content with the first wording arrangement or composition.

ii) They need to be revised repeatedly to arrive at the best. Writers in the beginning obtained first to write well and then made it easy and as a habit.

iii) Ready writing makes not good writing: but good writing brings on ready writing.

- Then he talks about custom like Aristotle, Horace and Quintilian. He says that custom is the mistress of language. By custom he means not the usage of vulgar but the "consent of the learned". In Quintilian's words: the agreed practice of educated men.
- Custom decides which words have to be chosen and which not.
- Ancient words have to be used with due regard to their intelligibility.
- All this discipline is calculated to induce the choice of phrase, clear composition of sentence, illustration of figures, weightage of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention and depth of judgement in a would be writer.

Unit – 3

JOHN DRYDEN

His Critical works:

- He has not written any formal critical treatises except *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. But he conveyed all his critical views which is told in *Dramatic Poesy* in his own poetical works.
- He has learnt this manner of writing from French writers like Montaigne and Corneille and this style suited him well.
- The subject didn't become exhausted in this style. It gave him liberty to discuss more than one subject at a time.
- This style also gave opportunities for explanations for the attacks on his works.
- Some disadvantages of this style: it made his criticism unsystematic and sometimes inconsistent and repetitive.
- Two works were written by him before the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. They were:
 - i) the *Epistle Dedicatory of the Rival Ladies* – it advocates the use of heroic couplet for dramatic purposes.
 - ii) *Dedication to Annus Mirabilis* – It prefers the 4 lines stanza with alternative rhyme to heroic couplet for heroic verse.
- Works that followed *Dramatic Poesy*:
 - i) *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy* -defends the use of rhymed couplet in tragedy against Sir Robert Howard's objection to it in his work – prefixed to *The Indian Emperor*.
 - ii) *The Apology for Heroic Poetry* – prefixed to *The State of Innocence* (adaptation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*)
 - iii) *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* – *Troilus and Cressida*
 - iv) *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* – prefixed to the translation of *The Satires of Juvenal*.
- Like this Dryden's criticism is scattered. He had a thought of nature and function of poetry, its form, business of criticism and of masters who interested him.
- He gives a new turn altogether to English Criticism which combines the merits of both the native and classical ones.

The Nature of Poetry:

- Dryden supports Aristotle's definition of poetry as a process of imitation. (imitates what is present and past, popular beliefs and things and things in their ideal form).
- Among these three Dryden emphasises the last two forms of criticism in his *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*.
 - i) Things as they are said or thought be: * In this Dryden adverts the liberty of a poet to imitate the things as they are said or thought to be.

*He defends Shakespeare's use of supernatural founded on popular beliefs. Even it is of other man's fancy, it is still an imitation.

ii) Things as they are ought to be: For this, Dryden gives his own explanation of why imitation pleases.

*He says that "truth is the end of all speculations, so the discovery of truth is the pleasure of them."

* Since a true knowledge of nature gives us pleasure, lively imitation of this true knowledge of nature in poetry or painting will produce much greater things.

* We have the pleasure to see the scattered beauties of nature united by a happy chemistry without any faults.

* So, Dryden supports the view that poetry imitates not only things but it imitates the ideal pattern itself.

The Function of Poetry:

- According to Dryden, the final end of poetry was delight rather than instruction.
- He says that it did not merely imitate life but offered the own version of it (a beautiful resemblance of the whole).
- According to him, a poet is neither a teacher nor a bare imitator but a creator.
- Poet - a creator with life or nature as a raw material, produces a new thing altogether resembling the original but different in its superstructure.
- Then he talks about fancy which is defined by Coleridge as 'the shaping spirit of imagination').
- Dryden says that 'it is fancy that gives the life touches. (fancy breathes life into shapeless material from life or nature.)

Dramatic Poetry:

- Drama claimed most of the attention of Dryden than any other forms of poetry.
- He talks about the classical and French drama and their significance and compares them to the English drama.
French – i) used classical rules magnificently.
ii)Unities were carefully observed.
iii)Mixture of tragedy and comedy was avoided.
iv)Scenes that are distasteful/ unacceptable and scenes that put heavy strain on spectator's belief were reported and not acted.
- English stage appeared inferior to them and even the great Elizabethans appeared small of their greatness.
- In Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* the contribution of ancient Greece and Rome and modern France to the dramatic form was fully acknowledged.
- One of the interlocutors in the *Essay*, who defined a play as lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours. It delights and instruct the mankind.
- Dryden says that this purpose is as well as served by English drama as done by classical and French even though it mixes tragic with comic.

- English drama introduces scenes that are reported in French and classical plays.
- It does not generally observe the unities.
- At the same time, he talks about the honour of his nation by saying that ‘we have invented, increased and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage than was ever known to ancients or moderns of any nation which is tragedy–comedy.
- Dryden seems to say that much might be said on both sides. But his later views suggests that he is more with the classicals and the French than with his own countrymen.
- Then he talks about introduction of unpalatable (unpleasant) and incredible scenes like battles and deaths on stage. French and classical plays avoided it.
- He says that he too would avoid death on the stage but he sees nothing wrong in introducing other physical actions like battle and duels on stage.
- Each nation has its own likes and dislikes. Nations that are too sensitive to see the unpleasant scenes prefer them to happen behind the scenes.
- **Interpretation of Unities:**

i) Dryden doesn’t support the accepted notion of the unities – plot should be single, time of action (24 hrs) and same place through out the play.

ii) He says that the unity of place is nowhere mentioned by Aristotle. It was the French who made them ‘a precept of stage’. He agrees with the logic in the unity of action which requires a plot be a coordinated whole.

iii) But this whole will not suffer if a sub plot is woven into the main plot. It will not be difficult to imagine how the under plot is included because it is only different but not contrary.

iv) Such a variety, if well ordered, will give a greater pleasure to audience.

v) Only without those plots French plays suffer from barrenness of plot.

vi) If the unities of time and place are strictly followed, it will lead to dearth of plot and narrowness of imagination.

- vii) In his *A Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, he questions that if an action of 24 hours can be represented in 3 acts, why can’t the plot time not be increased a little more to allow for greater maturity of the plot.
- viii) If the audience believes the stage time of 3 hours to be 24 hours, then they can also believe the plot can happen for few days or even a longer period of time. Only for this reason, the scene of the play need not be confined to one place. If the time is longer, then the scenes can be wide apart.
- ix) Though a play is fiction, the fiction is based on reason. Fancy and Reason go hand in hand and fancy is withheld by reason.

- x) So, Dryden says that he would be content if the time be 24 hours to 30 hours in a Comedy (with places to match) and he needs much longer time for tragedy.
- xi) The argument for the extension of plot-time is fully stated in his *Dedication of the Aeneis*.

ALEXANDER POPE

His Critical Work:

- Alexander Pope lived from 1688 to 1744.
- As a critic, his major work was *Essay on Criticism* and his other works are:
 1. *Preface to the Works of Shakespeare*
 2. *The Art of Sinking*
 3. *The Imitation of the Epistle of Horace to Augustus*
 4. *Preface to the Translation of the Iliad*.
- His *Essay on Criticism* is modelled on Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Vida's *De Arte Poetica* and Boileau's *L'Art Poétique*.
- Subject: Literary theory
Critical tradition: Classical
-Treatise in verse and divided into parts. - Precedent works like
 1. *Essay on Satire, Essay on Poetry* by Sheffield.
 2. *Essay on Translated Verse* by Roscommon
 3. *Essay upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry* by Granville are meant for poetry.
- So, Pope called his works as *An Essay On Criticism*.
- It is an epitome of the chief principles of all the poets by drawing examples from Greek, Latin and French masters like Aristotle, Quintilian, Longinus, Bossu, Rapin and so on.
- *An Essay on Criticism* – divided into **three** parts.
- 1. First part: * Lines 1 – 200
*General observations on the art of criticism. Eg: i) it depends on natural endowment
ii) training in the craft

- iii) study of rules and great works of antiquity.
- 2. Second part: * Lines 201 -559
 - * Talks about the causes of wrong criticism.
 - *Moral, psychological and literary effects of criticism.

Literary (given more importance).
- 3. Third part: *Lines 560 – 744
 - *Lays down the rules for a critic by

giving examples like Aristotle and others whom Pope considered great in his own country.

His Classicism:

- Pope follows the classical tradition in his criticism as he does for poetry.
- *Essay on Criticism* – He just sums up the tenets of neoclassical school of poetry began with Waller and Denham.
 - _ Gained ground with Dryden and Addison.
- He defines criticism as 'true taste', which is a gift of nature guided by 'those rules of old' which 'learned Greece' discovered in human nature.
- Pope's critical theory is basically formed by two requirements – i) study of the ancient models
 - ii) Knowledge of their technique
- These two requirements is not only for a good critic but also for a great writer.
- Only in ancient models, we can find everything natural in the art of writing such as fable, character, thought and expression.
- They deserve a place of honor in the art of criticism and writing.
- He says that some deviations are necessary to attain effective writing. Eg. Even the ancients were free to violate their own rules to snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.
- A critic has to imitate the masters of criticism such as:
 - i)Ancients: Aristotle, Quintilian, Horace, Dionysius, Petronius and Longinus
 - ii)Moderns: Vida, Boileau, Sheffield, Roscommon and Walsh.

On the Function of Criticism:

- According to Pope, Criticism is an art of judging aright.
- Critic- born to judge, poet- born to write
- A critic has to be naturally gifted, properly trained and well versed in the rules of ancients.

- No one can do these unless a critic is also an author. Even Ben Jonson and Dryden have the same view.
- This condition of Pope is not only difficult to fulfil but also opposed to facts since Aristotle from whom the school of criticism derived its rules on critic without ever being a poet.
- Only function of critic: judgement by rules.
- A Critic: i) to be learned ii) disinterested and free from all the ills such as pride, envy, caprice etc. that beset the right judgement.
- He condemns the judgements by parts (number of striking thoughts in a work, language, smooth flow of verses) rather than the whole.

Remarks on Literature:

- *Essay on Criticism* – makes a few observations on the art of writing. He talks mainly about wit, diction and verse.
- Pope's own words on wit:
 "True wit is nature to advantage dress'd
 What oft was thought, but ne'er so well Express'd"
- He also says that it is a natural image decked out with all the beauty of art.
- Diction: *Pope's observations on diction are taken from Horace and Quintilian.
 *According to Pope diction should be neither too new nor too old. Because neither can be easily understood.
 *So, Pope repeats what Quintilian had said:
 "Be not the first by whom the new are try'd,
 Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."
 *The expression should not be mere 'verbiage' but be the 'dress of thought' suitable to the work.
 *So, Pope says that, true expression is one that illuminates its idea as the sun illuminates the earth.
- Versification: *Pope condemns cheap musical devices such as equal syllables, open vowels, expletives, excessive use of monosyllables and the needless use of Alexandrine.
 *Right versification – not all of the piece in the same poem but varies according to the requirements of the thought.

Unit – 4

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1.The Occasion and Limitations of his Critical Work:

- William Wordsworth lived between 1770 – 1850.
- He qualified to be a critic not by the temperament or by training. He was dragged into criticism not even for his use of nature.
- When the *Lyrical Ballads* was published by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798, it has been violently attacked by the neo-classical critics of *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*.
- Only because of those attacks, he started writing criticism. He took this field for self defence.
- Chief critical paper: **Preface* to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800.
 - *This was revised and enlarged in the editions of 1802 and 1815.
 - *Revision and enlargement included: i) *Appendix* in 1802 edition
ii) *Essay Supplementary* in 1815 edition.
- In all of them, Wordsworth's subject is poetic diction and his view of poetry has undergone several modifications in later editions.

2.Wordsworth's Concept of Poetic Diction:

- In the *Advertisement of Lyrical Ballads*, he says that he adopted simpler diction for his poems in order to make sure about how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society was adapted to the purpose of Poetic pleasure.
- But still this concept was attacked mercilessly by conservative opinion. So his experiment turned into a definite concept.
- Wordsworth explained it in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800.
- He says that his principal aim in these poems is “i) to choose incidents and situations from common life, ii) to relate and describe them in the language really used by ordinary men and iii) at the same time, to throw a colouring of imagination through which ordinary things should be presented in an unusual aspect.”

He explains why he has chosen the language of low and rustic life. He says that in that condition, men speak from their own personal experience and convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions.

- Such kind of language is permanent and far more philosophical than the language used by poets.

Attack of the diction of the day:

- He says that readers will just rarely find the personifications of the abstract in the volumes of *Lyrical Ballads*.
- They are not used to elevate the style and raise it above prose.
- His main purpose was to imitate and to adopt the very language of men. Such personifications do not make the natural part of language.
- Then he also states that he never used the so called poetic diction in this work.
- He argues that the poetic devices such as periphrasis, inversion, antithesis and other devices are proper and beautiful but when they are used so frequently by bad poets, they begin to arouse disgust rather than pleasure.
- Wordsworth says that in his concept of Poetic style, the language of poetry cannot differ from that of prose.
- He concludes by saying that there cannot be any difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.
- The difference comes only when the meter is used in poetry. But he clarifies that the distinction lies not only in meter but also in the choice of words and phrases in case if the poetry is made with true taste and feeling.
- Wordsworth admits that if the poet's subject is judiciously chosen, it will naturally lead him to passions and if the language is selected truly and judiciously, it must be dignified and it becomes alive with metaphors and figures.
- By this statement, the question arises that whether his opinions are different from that against which he protested.

That's why Rene Wellek says that
'Wordsworth ends in good neo-classicism.'

- His great poems: i) *Tintern Abbey* ii) *The Immortality Ode* iii) *The Solitary Reaper*
are not written in a selection of language really used by men.

- But we cannot deny that a good part of Wordsworth's poetry which has 'incidents and situations taken from common life' was successful.

3. Concept of Poetry:

- Wordsworth defines poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions recollected in tranquility.'
- He divides it by saying that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.
- But these two things 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' and 'emotions recollected in tranquility' are the very opposite of each other.

I) Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings- sudden outpouring.

II) Emotions recollected in tranquility- deliberately recalling the memory.

- These two statements can be reconciled by only one point. That is 'poetry is the final product of the unforced overflow of powerful feelings.
- His second statement is more considered because most of his poems were composed in this way. Eg. The Solitary Reaper, The Daffodils etc.
- In this process, the emotion aroused by sight is recreated in contemplation. This is how poetry originates in emotions recollected in tranquility and finally it is the product of original free flow of that emotion.
- If there is no emotion aroused in the beginning, then there would have been no recollection of it in tranquility and expressed in poetry.
- He gives importance to spontaneity in poetry but never rejects the workmanship.

Function of Poetry: i) * It is not only a sheer self-expression but it stands by the effects on readers.

*Poet – man speaking to men.

Poet's song – voice

*The overall object is to give pleasure in which the moral gain outweighs the aesthetics.

*Moral gain – arises from poet's way of saying things, usage of rhyme or metre.

*The moral contains i) partly in refinement of feelings.

ii) partly in the knowledge of 'man, nature and human life' which it conveys.

iii) partly in the emphasis of truth, grandeur, beauty, love and hope.

- Poet has greater power to feel and to express his feeling than other men. He has ready access to reader's heart.

- Because poet's feelings are saner, purer and more permanent than other men.
- Poetry is the pursuit of truth. It portrays truth about man's knowledge of himself and the world around him.
He compares science with poetry: Science – it discovers truth but that truth will benefit us only materially.
Truths of Poetry – concerns about man's relation to man and his relation to the external world of nature and concerns about the incidents and situations from common life.
- Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge.
- Finally, Poetry is the great source for good. *Wordsworth's own objective in writing poetry was to console the afflicted
 - to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier.
 - to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, think, and feel and to be become more actively and securely virtuous.
 *He derives a conclusion by saying that 'every great poet is a teacher'. He also adds that 'poetry will cooperate with benign tendencies of human nature and society and will make men wiser, better and happier.'

S.T. COLERIDGE

1. The Nature of his Critical Work:

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge was one of the great Romantic poets and he lived between 1772 and 1834.
- He was the first English critic to base his literary criticism on philosophical principles.
- Critics before him – interested to turn a poem inside out and to explain its excellence and defects.
Coleridge – he busied himself with a question of how it came to be there at all.
- He was more interested in the creative process that made it than in the finished product.
- He wanted to 'establish the principles of writing rather than to furnish rules and how to pass judgement of what has been written by others.'
- But his critical works had a lack of system.
 - i) *Biographia Literaria* – is well-planned and incomplete.
 - ii) *Lectures on Shakespeare* – are disjointed and ill-reported.
 - iii) His other prose writings like *The Friend*, *The Table Talk* etc. – contains criticism but only fragments of criticism.
- Rene Wellek says that Coleridge borrowed freely from the German Philosophers like Lessing, Kant, Schelling, Schiller, the Schlegels and others.

- But his principal theses has his own critical stamp.

2.His Theory of Imagination:

- According to Coleridge, Poetry and other creative activity are an act of imagination.
- In the 18th century, it was often confused with fancy.
- But later the poets manifested itself in two different ways.
- Imagination – when the imitation faithfully imaged the original, then it is a work of imagination.

Fancy – when the imitation is substituted by something of poet's own invention which has a distant likeness to original, it was called as a work of fancy.

- Wordsworth says both are creative and reproductive faculties with one difference.
Imagination – *fuses all things into one and makes them 'take one colour and serve to one effect.'

*Creation of imagination is sublime.

Fancy – *reshapes them more or less willfully.

*Creation of fancy is only beautiful.

- Then Coleridge talks about the relationship with Wordsworth by saying that he personally met Wordsworth when he was just 24 years old.
- When Coleridge read an unpublished manuscript poem of Wordsworth, it produced a great effect in him.
- He says that the poem he read was the union of deep feeling and profound thought. There is a fine balance of truth in observing along with imaginative faculty to modify the objects observed.
- This repeated meditation made Coleridge to suspect that fancy and imagination were two different faculties instead of the general belief that they are two names with one meaning.
- Before Wordsworth: *poets only gave 'what often was thought' and not 'what equally felt.'

*Only Wordsworth bridged the gulf between these two. His feelings issued as thoughts and his thoughts as feelings.

- So, Coleridge says that in this state the forms, incidents and situations originally observed in nature take the colour of the poet's feelings and thoughts and appear in a new light.
- Then the common eye now sees in them what from long familiarity it had failed to see before. This is the work of imagination.

Coleridge's Study of Imagination:

- When Coleridge got the effect of imagination learnt from Wordsworth, he wanted to examine the nature and genesis of imagination. (ie.) What it is and how it is set.
- He finds two forms of imagination.
 - i) Primary Imagination: *It is simply the power of perceiving the objects of sense like persons, places and things.
*It helps the mind to form a clear picture of the object which was perceived by the senses.

*It is an involuntary act of the mind when confronted with mingled mass of matter.

*Unconsciously it reduces it to shape and size.

ii) Secondary Imagination: *conscious use of this power. It is a composite faculty of the soul which has all other faculties, perception, intellect, will and emotions.

- Primary imagination uses only perception but secondary imagination uses everything.
- So secondary imagination is a more active agent than primary imagination. They are not what they are in the external world of nature but as the mind conceives them to be.
- In this process, mind and nature react on each other. The mind colouring nature becomes one with nature and nature coloured by mind becomes one with mind.
- So imagination is a unifying or esemplastic power which unifies the faculties of soul as well as identifies the mind with nature and vice versa.
- Imagination is the product of what nature presents to the mind and what mind imparts to nature.
- Difference between Wordsworth and Coleridge's view of fancy and imagination –
*there is not much difference. It has same modifying and unifying power.
- *Wordsworth just considered the influence of fancy and imagination which has different effects. But Coleridge wanted to discover the principal that led to different effects.
- * Coleridge was interested in the theory of these concepts but Wordsworth was interested in the practice of them.

Coleridge's Interpretation of Fancy:

- Here also there is not much difference between him and Wordsworth.
- Coleridge did not regard fancy as the creative power at all. According to him, it only combines things which it sees and turn them into pleasing shapes instead of fusing them to give them shape of its own like imagination.
- He says that the original material remains the same and only thing is that it is offered in new combination.
- Fancy – parts of different things are joined to form new things with the component parts undergoing no change at all.
- Example of fancy given by Wordsworth: a couplet from Chesterfield -

“The dews of the evening most carefully shun,
They are the tears of the sky for the loss of the sun.”

- In these lines, the image presented is, the poet combines four things- sky, evening, dew, tears without any colouring or modification from his own mind.
- It's like putting four separate pictures together and form a new picture.
- So fancy is the 'arbitrary bringing together of thing and forming them into a unity.'
- Fancy - similar to talent which is acquired.
- Imagination – similar to genius which is inborn.

So, the real difference between them is fancy – combinatory and imagination – unifying power.

- Fancy and Imagination are compared to mixture and compound in science.
- Mixture- (in the productions of fancy) the ingredients held together retain their original properties.

Compound – (in the productions of imagination) Ingredients are dissolved, diffused and dissipated into a new substance altogether.

- Examples: *poetry of Shakespeare and Milton – imagination as a quality.
*Poets from Donne to Cowley – fancy as a quality.
*Spencer – fancy under conditions of imagination. He has imaginative fancy but he has not imagination.

Unit 5 MATHEW ARNOLD

1. His Critical Works:

- Mathew Arnold was a great Victorian poet and critic who lived between 1822 —1888.
- Arnold wrote some poetry before he turned to criticism.
- His criticism: it is a criticism of man who had a personal experience of what he was writing about.
- His first critical work: *Preface to the Poems which was published in 1853.
 - *In this work, he follows Dryden's method of throwing light on his own performance and making critical observations suitable to the occasion.
- After four years, when he was appointed as the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, he used that opportunity to develop his critical powers
- The lectures he delivered there proved his worth as a critic.
- The more important lectures are published in book form in two volumes. They are
 - i) On Translating Homer
 - ii) The Study of Celtic Literature
- He also wrote for literary journals and they were 'profitable and convenient intermediate stage between the lecture and the book.' Eg. Selections from the English Poets.
- Apart from his lectures delivered at Oxford and miscellaneous writings, he published "Essays in Criticism" in two series.
- These four books and the Preface of 1853 – chief critical works of Arnold.
- His criticism may fall into two divisions.
 - i) On the Art of Poetry – it was done when the writing of poetry engaged his attention than the question of teaching others how to judge it.
 - ii) Art of criticism – when the critic was free to apply his mind to the problems of craft.

2. His Criticism on Poetry:

i) His Classicism:

- There was group of poets in Victorian Age who were called as Spasmodics.
- Important person among them: P.J. Bailey, Sydney Dobell and Alexander Smith.
- They wrote both in verses and they held poetry to be the 'expression of one's own mind' in striking language.
- This led to: i) extravagance of thought and emotions.

ii)provoking excess of metaphor.

- They were successful in expressing the doubts , disputes, distractions and fears of their age in a language which is bombast.
- Tennyson was so afraid of this ungoverned passion and so careful as an artist but followed them in Maud.
- Arnold who led the revolt against them also unwittingly followed them in Empedocles on Aetna.
- When he was fighting with spasmodic tendency, he himself had fallen as a victim . Because of this, he wrote the Preface to the Poems of 1853.
- He omitted Empedocles on Aetna as he followed spasmodic tendency.
- In that poem, the hero ends his life by jumping into the volcano Aetna and he does nothing but suffer.
- That suffering has no use and it is not a fit subject for poetry.
- Arnold quotes Schiller by saying that, ‘ All art is dedicated to Joy.’ Even tragedy is not an exemption.
- Tragedy – the suffering from which men can derive enjoyment.
- Even then meaning of spasmodic – unnecessary preoccupation with thoughts and neglect of action.

What are the subjects that make for great Poetry to impart highest joy?

- The Spasmodics believed that the ancient subjects had had their day and it was the role of modern poet to choose modern subjects.
- But Arnold had a different thought because of the bad effects of science and industrial revolution in his own age.
- So he says that ‘ the business of the poets is not to praise their age but to afford the highest pleasure to the men who live in that age who are capable of feeling.’
- Everyone say that the Victorian Age is an era of progress, an age to carry out great ideas of industrial development and social betterment.
- But the reply is that: With all this , they can do nothing.
- To exercise the art we need great actions which are calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul.
- Greeks considered tragedy as the highest form of poetry and for a tragedy, they chose actions that always pleases all.
- So actions of this nature which powerfully appeal the elementary feelings which are independent of time are the fittest subject for poetry.
- Arnold says that his own age needs a ‘moral grandeur.’
- The Spasmodics believed that they could make up the inferiority of their subjects by the superior treatment of emotions.
- But Arnold says that ‘ no amount of make up can hide the ugliness of the substance beneath.’

Difference between Greeks and the English :

Greeks: * they first considered the poetical character of the action.

*They regarded the whole.

* Their action predominated the expression of it. It doesn't mean that they failed or inattentive in expression but they are the highest model of expression.

*Their expression - so excellent because it is kept in right degree of prominence and it is so simple and well subordinated.

English: * Attention was mainly fixed on value of thoughts and images to treat an action.

*They regarded the parts.

* The expression predominates the action.

Models to write poetry:

- So Arnold dissatisfied with the poetry of his age and he directs his attention towards the models . One of the models whom Arnold views is Shakespeare because 'he chooses excellent subjects , he had no theory of choosing subjects of present imports, finds his best in past times and he knew what constituted a poetical action.'
- But Arnold says that Shakespeare is unable to say a thing plainly even the action demands the very direct language.
- So Arnold did not consider him as a 'safe model' for the Victorian Poet.
- To undo the mischief, the only way was to turn towards the ancients. From them, the modern poets will learn that how a moral impression is superior which is produced by the happiest image and striking thought.

Arnold's Criterion for poetry:

- It gives joy even when the situation is painful .
- It treats action rather than thought.
- It pleases as a whole.
- Its highest models are classics.

ii)Grand Style:

- In the preface of 1853, Mathew Arnold had alluded to the superiority of the grand style of the Greeks over the colourful style of the English.
- Arnold says that Homer was the grand master of the grand style.
- Arnold experienced certain things while reading Homer: * enlargement of stature in which the little things of the world pale into insignificance.
- This is the effect of grand style. It ennobles poetry and it ennobles life.
- Arnold says that the grand style is the result of:
 - *rapidity of movement
 - *plainness and directness of language

- *nobility of nature
- *simple lucidity (clarity) of mind.
- The grand style arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted , treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject.

Prominent features of Sublime in Poetry:

- There can be no sublimity of utterance without sublimity of the soul. Great words issue from great minds.
 - The subject that is expressed should be serious enough to attain such treatment.
 - It should either manifest itself in simple language as in Homer or it should be written in a gorgeous tone (gorgeousness severely restrained) as in Milton.
 - It needs a poetically gifted to handle it successfully.
- Arnold finds only three masters of the grand style: Homer, Milton and Dante.

iii) Criticism of Life:

- Arnold did not conceive poetry as something apart from life.
- According to him, poetry is a serious preoccupation with the art of living itself.
- He says that, in English poetry, it is reversed. Because it was more shape than substance and more style than matter.
- He says that “Modern Poetry can only subsist by its content. By becoming a complete magister vitae (director of life), as ancients did by including religion with poetry instead of existing as poetry only and leaving religious wants.”
- Mathew Arnold’s definition of Poetry: *‘Poetry is a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of Poetic truth and poetic beauty.’
 - *criticism of life – noble and profound application of ideas to life.
 - *Laws of Poetic truth and poetic beauty- #truth and seriousness of substance and matter. #felicity and perfection of diction and manner.
- Arnold believes that the function of poetry is not to present life as it is but it would be an idle rivalry with nature.
- The poet has to add something of his own to indicate what he thinks about it. This addition makes all the differences between life and poetry.
- Poetry exists to make the life richer and fuller by applying itself to the question ‘How to live?’
- Poetry has the power of forming, sustaining and delighting us , as nothing else can.
- It is essentially moral as it gives the highest ideals of truth, goodness and beauty.

3. On Criticism:

i) Creative and Critical Faculties:

- Arnold admits that critical faculty is lower than creative one.
- Exercising the creative power in literature or in the other fields of life is the highest function of man.
- Arnold believes that ‘for the creation of a master-work of literature, two powers must be needed: i) power of man ii) power of the moment
- Happy coincidence of creative power and creative epoch produces great works of literature.
- Arnold says that ‘if an epoch is not creative, then it must wait till they are ready.’ To make this possible, the work of criticism is needed.
- Criticism is not a mere ‘judgement in literature’ but ‘a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world and to establish the fresh and true ideas.’

Criticism is a threefold activity:

i) Personal culture: to learn the best that is known and thought in the world.

ii) Service to society: to propagate the same

iii) Service to literature: to establish fresh and true ideas.

- To discharge the first two functions, a critic must be more concerned about knowledge and ever fresh knowledge. A critic should try and possess one great literature besides his own. He should aspire for more knowledge of Greek, Roman and Eastern antiquity.
- The third function of criticism: to bring philosophy out of closets and libraries and to dwell everywhere.
- Through this way, new ideas reach society and there is a stir and growth everywhere. Due to the stir and growth, the creative epochs of literature will come.
- According to Arnold, ‘Criticism is the handmaid for personal, social and literary culture.’

ii) The Touchstone Method:

- Arnold considers the question of the judgement of literature which is a time-honoured function of criticism.
- In spite of his classical leanings, he lays down no hard and fast rules. He ultimately borrowed from Longinus which was first suggested in England by Addison.
- Addison says that if a man would know whether he is possessed of this faculty, he should read over the celebrated works of antiquity of many different ages and countries or the works among moderns which have a polite part of our contemporaries.
- Arnold adopts the modified form of this test to determine the worth of a work of literature.

- He says that, there can be no more useful help to discover the truly excellent poetry and to discover the poetry that do us most good is to have the lines and expressions of the great masters in our mind and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry.
- It can be used to detect the presence of high Poetic quality and the degree of this quality.
- Arnold concludes that critics give themselves a great labour to draw out the characteristics of high quality of poetry.
- According to Arnold, the high quality of poetry can be found in
 - *the matter and substance of the poetry – they possess truth and seriousness in an eminent degree.
 - *the manner and style of poetry – they derive their force from matter and substance.

iii) False Standards of Judgement:

- The two test for which Arnold considers to be wrongly understood are : i) Personal Estimate and ii) Historic Estimate.
- Personal Estimate: * it means an intrusion of the critic's own likes and dislikes in his judgement of literature.
 - *He says that our personal affinities, likings and circumstances have great power to affect the worth of poet's work and to make us more attached and to give importance to it than the poetry itself.
 - *A real estimate of poetry rises above personal preference and prejudices.
- Historic Estimate: *It gives more importance on the circumstances in which the author wrote.
 - *Example: the state of life and literature in his day, his opportunities and limitations, the labour needed by the work and so on other than the work itself.
 - * Due to this, the critic may overrate it in proportion to the pains he has taken to collect all the information.
 - * This time should be given to the author to enjoy the best in him but it is spent of what is less important.
 - *So the historic estimate is also misleading.
- Arnold had no such fear for the life of an author as a factor in his work. He constantly presses it in the service of his own criticism.

T.S. ELIOT

1. His Classicism:

- T.S. Eliot lived from 1888 to 1965.
- His critical works mostly consist of essays and lectures which were written or delivered from time to time and collected together in book form.
- Important books: i) The Sacred Wood
 - ii) Homage to John Dryden
 - iii) For Lancelot Andrewes
 - iv) Selected Essays
 - v) The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism
 - vi) Elizabethan Essays
 - vii) Essays Ancient and Modern
- Eliot stands for orderliness both in art and in criticism.
- Art seeks order in life and criticism seeks order in art.
- There are two divisions to pursue right judgement . i) Classicism – follows the principle of commitment to outside authority.
 - ii) Romanticism – follows the individual liberty.

What is right among Classicism and Romanticism?

- Eliot answers that the right approach to criticism is the classical.
- He says that ‘ men cannot get on without giving commitment to something outside themselves . (like the citizen has to give it to his government and the believer to his church)
- So the critic has to give it to some common criterion of rightness.
- Those who stand for individual liberty in art listen to their inner voice only. They don’t have any other guide than it to interpret an author or his work.
- The criticism is best when the critic has something outside himself to guide him. The guidance based upon ‘ tradition and the wisdom of time.’

What is the objective of a critic?

i) A critic must have ‘ a highly developed sense of fact’ to be able to judge a work in a right manner.

ii) A critic should have ‘ comparison and analysis’ as his tools .
Comparison – to see how the work modifies the past tradition and is itself modified by it among other things. Analysis – to see as it really is.

2. True Criticism:

- According to T.S. Eliot , true criticism is the institution of a scientific enquiry into a work of art to see it as it really is.
- It is the disinterested exercise of intelligence.

- The attention of a modern critic has to be fixed solely and steadfastly on the work before him. He has to dig deep into it for complete analysis.
- Example of botanist or zoologist: while dissecting a specimen, he looks not for what is interesting in it. But he looks for the principle that makes it what it is.
- So criticism is a new work of art and it is not an elucidation of an old one.
- The criticism employed by a trained writer and skilled writer on his own work is the most vital and the highest kind of criticism.
- So there can be no better critic of a work than the author himself.

3.Impersonality of Poetry:

- Eliot's most remarkable contribution on poetry is 'the impersonal theory of poetry.'
- He says that the poet and the poem are two separate things. The emotion or feeling, vision resulting from the poem is different from the feeling, emotion and vision in the mind of the poet.
- He explains this by examining
 - i)the relation of the poet to the past.
 - ii)the relation of the poem to its author.
- I) *the past is never dead . It lives in the present.
 - *Neither a poet nor an artist has his complete meaning alone.
 - *His significance and appreciation comes with the relation to the dead poets and artists.
 - *So we cannot value the poet alone. We must set him for comparison and contrast among the dead poets of his language.
 - * The past and present fuse it into a new compound.
 - *He explains this with an analogy of chemical reaction. When oxygen and Sulphur dioxide are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. Here platinum is the catalyst that helps to process the chemical reaction but it is unaffected.
 - *in the same way, the mind of the poet is like the shred of platinum. Its presence may be necessary to form a new piece of poetry but it need not change itself.
- From this it becomes clear that there is no connection between the poet's personality and the poem.
- A poet is great only because of his mind and those feelings in the poem need not be his own.
- The emotion of art is impersonal. It has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet.
- So honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is not based upon the poet but upon the poetry.

4. Other Concepts:

Two main phrases of Eliot on the concept of poetry are: i) Objective Correlative and ii) Dissociation of Sensibility.

Objective Correlative :

- This concept occurs in the Essay on Hamlet and his other problems in The Sacred Wood.
- Objective Correlative is used by Eliot to explain how emotion is best expressed in poetry.
- It cannot be simply transmitted from the mind of the poet to the mind of the reader. It has to turn itself into something strong like a picture of a person, place in order to evoke the same emotion in the reader.
- He says that the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is 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.
- Instead of communicating the emotions directly to the reader, he embodies them in the set of objects , events and situations which excommunicate them to the reader.
- Example: in the last act of Macbeth, Shakespeare conveys the mental problem of Lady Macbeth by making her do again what she has done before.

Dissociation of Sensibility:

- This term was first used in ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ in Selected Essays .
- This term points to a characteristic fault of the poetry of the late 17th century.
- When the poet’s thought is unable to be converted into feeling, then the result is dissociation of sensibility – a split between thought and feeling . So it becomes a bad poetry.
- A poet may have best ideas to convey but they serve no purpose unless they issue forth as feelings.
- So the poet’s function is not to explain his ideas but to transmute the ideas into sensations.

Source:

B. Prasad. *An Introduction to English Criticism*. Macmillan. (Trinity: Laxmi Publications). 2014

