

## **DJE3A - INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM**

### **UNIT I**

- a. Aristotle
- b. Sir Philip Sidney

### **UNIT II**

- a. John Dryden
- b. Alexander Pope

### **UNIT III**

- a. Joseph Addison
- b. Dr. Johnson

### **UNIT IV**

- a. William Wordsworth
- b. S.T. Coleridge

### **UNIT V**

- a. Matthew Arnold
- b. T.S. Eliot

## UNIT - I

### ARISTOTLE

Aristotle was the most important disciple of Plato. His critical works are: "Poetics and Rhetoric". Poetics deals with the art of poetry and "Rhetoric" deals with the art of speaking. Aristotle deduces conclusions from Greek literature. His purpose in writing these works was to sort out those principles from established practice.

Poetics is a treatise of about 50 pages containing 26 small chapters. It is a summary of his lecture to his students. Aristotle's main concern is tragedy which appears to be the most developed form of the poetry. Poetry, Comedy and epos come in for discussion.

Aristotle calls the poet an imitator like Plato. He believes that there is a natural pleasure in imitation. Man has natural instinct for harmony and rhythm. Poetry reveals truths of a permanent or universal kind. According to Aristotle the poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The true difference is that history relates what has happened, the poetry relates what may happen. Therefore poetry is more philosophical and a higher thing than history. Poetry expresses the universal, history the particular.

According to Aristotle, pleasure is the end of poetry. The two instincts of imitation and of harmony and rhythm are meant for pleasure. Aristotle sees that poetry makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. Tragedy arouses pity and fear in audience. These emotions are aroused with a view to purgation or catharsis. In tragedy the sufferings we witness are not our own. These emotions find a free outlet, relieving the soul of their excess. We are lifted out of ourselves and emerge nobler than before. Thus tragedy is an art that transmutes these disturbing emotions into calm of mind. The emotional appeal of poetry gives health.

Poetry, being an imitative art, can imitate two kinds of actions – the nobler actions of good men or the mean actions of bad man. From the former was born epic and the from the later, the satire. The epic and tragedy are superior to satire and comedy. Tragedy is superior to the epic.

According to Aristotle, tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitudes. By serious action, Aristotle means a tale of suffering exciting pity and fear. It should be complete with the beginning, a middle or an end. It must have organic unity. Its plot should have a certain magnitude or a reasonable length.

According to Aristotle, a tragedy should have constituent parts. They are: Plot, Character, and thought, diction, song and spectacle. The Plot is the chief part of tragedy. Tragedy is an imitation not of men, but of an action and of life and life consists in action.

The poet is the soul of tragedy. It should have unity of action. The events comprising the plot will concern only one man and not more unity of place is not mentioned by Aristotle. According to Aristotle a tragic hero must be good, but not too good.

The roots of comedy lie deep in satirical verse. Epic imitates life by narration, not by dramatic action and speech. But in epic, many events can be presented and these add mass and dignity to the poem.

Aristotle employs scientific approach to literature. "The standard of correctness", he says. Is not the same in poetry and politics and more than in poetry and any other art. While politics is to be judged by the contribution it makes to social well being, poetry is to be judged by its proper function – pleasure. To give pleasure, poetry has to appeal to the emotions, which is cathartic. Aristotle judges literature by its own standards – the aesthete.

Aristotle's interpretation of 'imitation' is his own. It is by no means an illusory copy of life or twice removed from reality but an imaginative version of it. It finds the universal in the particular. Its truths are of a higher order than the truths of history. Aristotle states its philosophical value to man to mankind – its capacity to see the permanent features of life in the ephemeral. He stresses the psychological element in literature. Tragedy, comedy and epic are considered with reference to their effect on the minds and hearts of their readers.

Aristotle assigns a higher rank to tragedy than it deserves. In doing so, he forgets his own scientific approach and follows the established tradition. The epic is assigned only the second rank. The succeeding ages were quick to see that unity of action is more difficult of attainment in the sprawling length of an epic than in the shorter compass of tragedy. So he who can succeed in writing the tragedy should be the greater artist. Aristotle himself bestows more praise on Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' for their artistry in plot, character, thought and diction than in the same things in his tragedian Sophocles. Perhaps 'poetics' was not intended to be a comprehensive review of all the problems of poetry.

## **SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554 – 1586)**

### **Introduction:-**

“Apology for poetry” is Sidney’s spirited defence of poetry against all the charges of Gousson. Sidney logically examines it in whole and in parts. He considers the points in favour of poetry and the points against poetry. At last he gives his main idea. Poetry is the oldest of all branches of learning. It is superior to philosophy by its charm. The pastoral poetry pleases by its comments on contemporary events. The satire poetry is popular for its pleasant ridicule of folly. The epic appeals by its representation of lofty truths.

Gousson had observed that a man might better spend his time than in poetry. Sidney answers the charge by saying that poetry teaches virtues and moves one to virtue more effectively than any other medium. The second charge was that poet is a liar. Sidney answers him that the poet merely uses the past events to arrive at the higher truth. As a poet, he cannot be a liar. The third charge was that poetry abuses man’s wit, leads man to vices. Sidney answers him that it is not poetry that abuses man’s wit, but it is man’s wit that abuses poetry. The nature of a thing is determined by its right use, not by its misuse. The fourth charge was that Plato, the great Scholar had banned poets from his ideal republic. Sidney’s answer to this charge was that Plato condemned poets of his time who abused it, and not poetry, which is “divinely inspired

### **His Classicism**

#### **1) Respect for Rules:**

Sidney’s Apology is the first serious attempt to apply the classical rules to English poetry. He wanted poetry to be to England what it was to ancient Greece and Rome. All his pronouncements have for their basis either Plato or Aristotle or Horace. In his repeated stress on the teaching function of poetry he follows Plato. In his definition of poetry he follows both Aristotle and Horace. ‘Poesy’ he says ‘is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth’ it in his word *Mimesis*... with this end, to teach and delight.

Aristotle had stressed only the unity of action as an important condition of a well-knit plot. Following Castelvetro, Sidney also insists on the observance of the unities of time and place, along with that of action, in English drama, Gorboduc. Sidney has no patience with the newly developed tragi-comedy, even though it had the approval of Scaliger and Castelvetro. It needs to be pointed out here that Sidney’s whole critical outlook in these

two matters of the unities and the tragi-comedy was affected by the absence of really good English plays till his time.

## 2) **His advocacy of classical Meters:-**

It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet. Poetry, according to him, is the art of inventing new things, better than this world has to offer, and even prose that does so is poetry. He concedes that verse is a superior form of expression to ordinary prose. It is positively defended for its sweetness and orderliness, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it. By these steps Sidney's love of the classics it ultimately reconciled to his love of the native tradition.

### **The value of his Criticism.**

Though Sidney professes to follow Aristotle, his conception of poetry is difference from Aristotle's. To Aristotle poetry was an art of imitation for the natural pleasure imitation affords. To Sidney it is an art of imitation for aspecific purpose; it imitated ' to teach and delight'. Sidney also unconsciously differs with Aristotle in the meaning he gives to imitation. While imitating Nature and Poet, ' lifted up with the vigour of his own invention', not only makes things better than they are in Nature but often quiet new, ' forms such as never were in Nature'. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden' – true lovers, more constant friends, branch warriors, more just rulers, more excellent men. So poetry is not so much an art of imitation as of invention orcreation. It creates a new world altogether for the edification of delight of the reader.

In creating his golden world therefore the poet reproduces its 'fore-conceit' or original Idea and not its imperfect copy that he sees in Nature. Sidney echoes Plato again when he says that the final end of poetry, ' is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of'. In this way Sidney makes poetry what Plato wished it to be.

## UNIT - II

### JOHN DRYDEN

Dryden has written "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy". It is a formal treatise on criticism. Apart from that, he has written criticism in the prefaces to his poetical works. In his criticism, we can trace the influence of French critics like Montaigne and Corneille. But he discussed more than one subject at a time. So his criticism was unsystematic and inconsistent.

#### **Dryden's Critical Works**

In his preface to "Epistle Dedicatory of the Rival Ladies", he advocates the use of the heroic couplet in drama, "A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy" was prefixed to "The Indian Emperor" in which Dryden defends the use of the rhymed couplet in tragedy. "The grounds of criticism in Tragedy" prefixed to "Troilus and Cressida" contains an exposition of Aristotle's theory of tragedy. He examines the achievements of Shakespeare and Fletcher. In the preface to the translation of "The Satires of Juvenal", Dryden discusses the epic poetry. In all these criticisms, Dryden gives a new turn to English criticism which combines the merits of both the native tradition and the classical.

#### **His theory of Imitation**

Dryden follows Aristotle's definition of poetry as a process of imitation. It imitates things in their ideal form. The accepted view of poetry in his day was that it kept close to facts past or present.

Dryden talks about the freedom allowed to a poet to imitate things as they are said or thought to be. Dryden defends Shakespeare's use of the supernatural for it is still an imitation though of other men's fancies. Dryden says, "as truth is the end of all thoughts, so the discovery of it is the pleasure of them". Since a true knowledge of Nature gives us pleasure, a lively imitation of it in poetry or painting must produce a much greater pleasure. These arts are imitations of the best Nature. They present us with images more perfect than the life in any individual. We are happy to see all the beauties of Nature united by a happy chemistry without any faults. Thus poetry imitates not only things but the ideal pattern itself.

### **His theory of Poetry.**

According to Dryden, the true end of poetry is delight and transport rather than instruction. It did not merely imitate life but offered its own version of it. The poet is neither a teacher nor a bare imitator but a creator. A poet produces a new thing. A work of art may resemble the original in its basis, but differ from it in the superstructure. It is a work of art, not a copy. It is in this part of the poet's work that Dryden feels the necessity of fancy. Dryden says that it is fancy that breathes life into shapeless material from life or Nature.

During the period of Dryden, the English stage appeared inferior to French stage. It was to clear this mist that Dryden wrote "the Essay of Dramatic poesy". In this work, he acknowledges the contribution of ancient Greece, Rome and France to the dramatic form. In the person of Neander, Dryden subjects the classical rules of drama to a close scrutiny.

### **His deviation from Aristotle**

In the Essay, Dryden defined the play as a lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours. What is natural cannot be inartistic, since art imitates Nature. He justifies the English tragi-comedy as in nature Joy and pain lie in close proximity with each other. Dryden does not subscribe to the three unities. In the first place, the unity of place is nowhere mentioned by Aristotle. There is a logic behind the unity of action. He does not disapprove of the use of sub plots in dramas as such a variety will afford a greater pleasure to the audience. The unity of time and place had to do with the narrowness of imagination. He observes that the plot time can be increased to allow for greater maturity of the plot. Therefore Dryden considered the unity of time and place too rigorous. They gave no scope for development of plot and character.

### **Views on Tragedy**

Dryden's remarks on tragedy contained in "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy". According to him, tragedy is an imitation of one great action, not told but represented. It moves us into fear and pity. Thus it purges of emotions in our minds. He follows French critic Rapiss, not Aristotle. Fear cures pride, and pity cures hardness of heart. Dryden has no use for the chorus in the Greek.

### **His views on Comedy**

Following Aristotle, Dryden calls comedy " a representation of human life in inferior persons and low subjects" to laugh people into good behaviour. Fance was a popular form

of comic in Dryden's time. Dryden is with the French writers in considering the epic superior to tragedy. The effects of tragedy are too violent to be lasting. Dryden concludes that an epic is the greatest work of human nature. Its action is greater, its characters are more dequified and its episodes are more varied. Only a gifted poet can write an epic.

Dryden considers satire a kind of heroic poetry. It should have unity of design confining itself to one subject. It should choose one vice for his target.

### **Conclusion**

Dr. Johnson considered Dryden as the father of English criticism. He showed to his countrymen what makes for greatness in literature. His criticism is partly a restatement of Aristotle and partly a plea for French neo-classicism.

### **ALEXANDER POPE (1688 -1744)**

#### **His Critical work**

Pope as a critic is popular for his Essay on Criticism than for his other critical writings, which include the preface to the Works of Shakespeare, the Art of sinking, the Imitation of the Epistle of Horace to Augustus, and the Preface to the Translation of the Iliad. It is the Essay on Criticism that contains his most considered canons of literary.

It is modelled on Horace's ArsPoetica, Vida's De Arte Poetica, and Boileau'sL'ArtPretique . Its subject is literary theory; it is in the same critical tradition – the classical. Pope's chief concern in An Essay on Criticism is not so much the art of poetry as the art of criticism. Pope followed Aristotle, Quintilian, Longinus, Bossu, Rapin and others. There is hardly any observation in it that may be called Pope's own.

It is divided into three parts. The first (lines 1-200) makes general observations on the art of criticism. The second part (lines 201-559) enumerates the causes of wrong criticism, moral, psychological and literary, of which the last named form the backbone of the whole discussion. The last part lays down rules for the critic, mentioning for that purpose the best ones of their class from Aristotle to those whom Pope considered great in his own country.

#### **His Classicism:-**

In his criticism, as in his poetry, Pope followed the classical tradition. In the Essay, he does little more than sum up the critical tenets of the neo-classical school of poetry. Since

they were immediately deduced from the practice of the ancient masters, a study of their works was equally essential to the formation of this true taste:

Be Homer's works your study and delight, Read them by day, and meditate by night.

### **On the Function of Criticism:-**

To Pope Criticism is no more than the art of judging aright. A critic is born to judge, as a poet is born to write. To be able to discharge this duty he has to be naturally gifted, properly trained, and well versed in the rules of the ancients. It is in the application of these last to the work of an author that his skill lies.

### **Remarks on Literature:-**

The Essay makes a few observations on the art of writing too, which recall the utterances of the earlier critics. The best of these are those on wit, diction, and verse. He conceived of wit as a familiar idea, aptly expressed – a natural image decked out with all the beauty of art. It was all that a poet in Pope's day was expected to do and which Pope's own poetry does. The observations on diction are all culled from Horace and Quintilian. Pope is all for the customary in the choice of words: they should be neither too new nor too old, as neither of the two can be easily understood.

In the matter of expression too he follows the beaten track. It should not be more verbiage, for

Words are like leaves; and Where they most- abound,  
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

It should, on the contrary, be 'the dress of thought', suited to it in every respect. Pompous words, thus, are no more suitable to a vile conceit than regal purple to a clown:

For difference styles with difference subjects sort, As several garbs with country, town, and court. True expression, finally, is one that illumines its idea as the sun illumines the earth: It gilds all object but it alters none. Once again, its purpose is to show 'Nature to advantage dress'd'.

In versification Pope condemns cheap musical devices, such as equal syllables, open vowels, expletives, excessive use of monosyllables, stale rhymes, and the needless resort to the Alexandrine. In the next place, he points out what right versification is. It is not all of a piece even in the same poem, but varies according to the requirements of the thought.

### **His deviations from Classicism:-**

At a few places in the Essay on Criticism Pope shows his awareness of the limitations of the neo-classical system to provide for all the beauties of the literary art. A blind imitation of the rules of the classics, he says, does not necessarily make for greatness in literature.

Pope has to admit the superiority of inspiration over art, although he calls it 'lucky licence' – a deviation from rules, no doubt, but to the same end: to gain the heart of the reader.

Pope is, however, prepared to treat it as a rule of the art albeit an unwritten one. And thus, unconsciously, he throws overboard his whole code of criticism, where under his critic 'proceeds without remorse----- and puts his laws in force'. But Pope has a classical precedent in Quintilian to justify his stand. It was he who first drew the attention of students for rules to graces 'that lie beyond the reach of art' – words which Pope himself employs.

### **The Value of his Criticism**

It has already been said that there is little original in Pope's Essay. Its only merit lies in felicitously collecting together the most important of those percept's that make up the neo-classical system. It served his age in the same way as ArsPoetica, De Arte Poetica, and L'ArtPoetique did theirs. Here was the genius of the age of Pope epitomised: 'what oft was thought (and even acted upon), but ne'er so well expressed'.

It also acted as a healthy check on the wayward tendencies then growing in English poetry. But it neither raises nor answers any important question on poetry or the art of writing: on its nature, function, or value.

## UNIT - III

### JOSEPH ADDISON (1672 – 1719)

#### **His Critical works:**

Addison's critical papers mostly appeared in the Spectator. In that periodical he brings 'philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses'. They were intended, not for the learned.

This gave a new turn to English criticism. While the critics before Addison had all expressed their concern for the writer what he should or should not do to attain perfection in his art -, Addison's concern is for the reader—' what books he should like, and how he should like them'. The choice of the subject was determined either by some popular misconception about it or by the need to explain it.

#### **True and False Wit**

Addison has on addition to make to wit: ' that every resemblance of ideas is not that which we call Wit, unless it be such an one that gives Delight and Surprise to the reader. These two properties seem essential to Wit, more particularly the last of them. True Wit therefore may be defined as the resemblance and congruity of ideas that produce delight and surprise in the reader.

#### **The pleasures of Imagination**

Addison explains how art and literature make a powerful appeals to the imagination. The pleasures of the imagination therefore are of tow kinds: primary or those 'which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes'; and secondary or those, 'which flow from the ideas of visible objects when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or factitious'. It is only the secondary pleasures of imagination that are aroused by works of art and literature.

To Addison therefore imagination is no more than that faculty of the mind which enjoys works of art for the ideas they recall of what it has seen in life; and it is pleased more by what is great, strange, or beautiful – huge mountains, oddities of Nature, or her lovely sights – than by what is merely common. His recognition of it, however, pointed the way to an aesthetic approach to literature – to its enjoyment by its appeal to the imagination rather

than by its promotion of a moral or social end, or observance of formal rules – both considered important then.

### **On tragedy:-**

Addison has hardly anything of his own to say on tragedy. All is gathered from Aristotle, Horace, and the French neo-classicists. Thus, as Aristotle said, tragedy is ‘ the noblest product of mankind, since it softens pride and soothes affliction. The tragic hero, similarly, is ‘ a virtuous man struggling with misfortune”. There should also be no mixture of the tragic and the comic: ‘ the tragi-comedy, which is the product of the English theatre, is one of the most monstrous inventions that ever entered into a poet’s thoughts’.

A double plot in a tragedy is of the same incongruous nature, ‘for though the grief of the audience is such performances, be not changed into another passion, as in tragi-comedies, it is diverted upon another object, which weakens their concern for the principal action. But Addison has no objection to an underplot if it is made to ‘bear such a near relation to the principal design as to contribute towards the completion of it.’ He did not also favour pity and fear being raised by violent deaths on the stage, which were simply barbarous. Such scenes were better reported than acted. Finally, he considered blank verse as a more suitable medium for tragedy than rhyme.

### **On Paradise Lost:**

In his criticism of Paradise Lost also Addison does not advance much beyond the neo-classical stand. His very purpose in undertaking this work was to vindicate Milton’s greatness in the light of the ancient theory and practice. Of the eighteen papers he wrote on this subject, four were devoted to an examination of the poem under fable, character, thought, and expression – the four component parts of an epic mentioned by Aristotle; two to ‘Censure’ or faults under each head; and twelve to a book-by-book analysis of the poem. He finds the fable or plot to be completely in accord with Aristotle’s requirement that it should be single, complete, and great. It is single because it has but one action to relate – the fall of man; complete because it has a regular beginning, middle, and end – the conspiracy in hell, its execution upon earth, and its punishment by heaven; and great because it involves the fate, not of a single person or nation, but of all mankind. There is nothing, similarly, wanting to character or to the thoughts and sentiments assigned to each – to satan, for instance, in his many -sided mischief, or to Adam and Eve in their state of

innocence -; and the expression is sublime, comparable to Homer's, with the long similes serving as 'resting - places to ease the attention'.

### **On Criticism**

Addison knew that the literary Craft was not a mere matter of rules and that therefore something more was required in criticism than a slavish application of the rules of the classics to all kinds of writing. 'I could wish,' he says, 'there were authors who, besides the mechanical rules, which a man of very little may discourse upon, would enter into the very spirit and soul of fine writing, and show us the several source of that pleasure which rises in the mind upon the perusal of a noble work'. He realised, too, that sometimes rules even hampered fine writing, that 'there is sometimes a greater judgement shown in deviation from the rules of art than in adhering to them'. Often, too, he discovered 'more beauty in the works of a great genius who is ignorant of all rules of art than in the works of a little genius who not only knows but scrupulously observes them'.

### **The Value of Criticism**

Addison's criticism shows a dual tendency. It is partly neo-classical, as in his examination of tragedy and Paradise Lost, and partly aesthetic, as in the theory of imagination and his utterances on the Critical art. While on the one hand, he values classical rules, he is, on the other, aware that there are many literary graces that lie beyond the reach of rules. He, therefore, advocated judgement as much by taste as by principles - more, perhaps, by the former than by the latter. For he was ever distrustful of the critic who 'without entering into the sense and soul of an author, has a few general principles which, like mechanical instruments, he applies to the works of every writer'.

Addison's aim was to disseminate critical ideas among those who had no knowledge of them and had therefore to be taught from the beginning. 'Had he presented Paradise Lost to the public', says Dr. Johnson, 'with all the pomp of system and severity of science, the criticism would perhaps have been admired, and the poem still have been neglected; but by the blandishments of gentleness and facility, he has made Milton an universal favourite, with whom readers of every class think it necessary to be pleased'. To bring the existing ones or those that he considered valuable within the reach of the common reader to enable him truly to enjoy what he read.

## **DR. JOHNSON (1709 – 1784)**

Dr. Johnson did not write critical treatise but he had greater influence on his age than any English critic had done in the past. His critical work consists of the papers in the Rambler, the remarks poetry in Rasselas, the preface to the plays of Shakespeare and the lives of poets. He was the last critic of the new-classical school. In the age of rules and judgement, he applied his true functions. He sought to discover that which pleases us we know not why. Dr. Johnson mentions two categories of authors or genius as fundamental and indispensable (based on nature and reason) and those useful and convenient (deriving force from earlier practices) No writer could bypass the former, rather free in the interest of his art meaning the accidental prescription of authority. Dr. Johnson wants the writer to distinguish nature from custom. He tests the writer with 'the length of duration and continuance of esteem. For nothing can please many and please long but the representation on general Nature (preface to Shakespeare). Dr. Johnson is more a liberal critic than the neo-classical critic.

### **HISTORICAL APPROACH**

Dr. Johnson defines literature that it is not written to a fixed pattern but it is conditioned by the writer's age and environment. To judge the author, Dr. Johnson expects that we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his meant of supplying them. Dr. Johnson feels that the historical estimate is an important factor in the real estimate of an author. The violence in Shakespeare's plays, he says, is accounted for by primitive tastes of the uncultured audience. Milton's '*Paradise Lost*' is also similarly judged with full knowledge of the handicaps he labored under. He applies the same yardstick with Dryden, Addison and the rest. Dr. Johnson is for sure historical critic and the father of historical English criticism.

### **ON POETRY**

In '*the life of Milton*' Dr. Johnson points out as; the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by called imagination to the help of reason. By this he states the nature of a poetic art as it imitates truth of life and its function affording pleasure. Imitation of truth is meant as guided by reason and affording pleasure by imagination. By truth, he means, pleasure giving. The capacity to please is the stress of Dr. Johnson. The end of writing is to instruct (preface to Shakespeare) and the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. His view largely fall under Horace and the French new-classicists. Dr. Johnson writes in '*The preface to*

Shakespeare's; Poetry is an imitation of life which represents not merely the particular, with which it deals, but, through it, the universal. Poetic imitation of Dr. Johnson is, a representation not of what just a few people think, speak, or do but of what most people in most ages think, speak, or do: of, in a word, 'general nature'. The truth of poetry of universal truth. The writer's duty is to make world better.

### **ON VERSIFICATION AND POETIC DICTION**

Dr. Johnson's remarks on kinds of poetry grab attention. He considers epic as superior to all other forms of verse (French neo-classicists' thought). He says, 'the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem. Epic poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts'. He condemns Milton's 'Lycidas' as there is no nature, no truth, no art, therefore nothing new, but Shelly's 'Adonais and Arnold's Thyrsis'

Dr. Johnson states logically as; the great pleasure of verse arises from the known measure of lines and uniform structure of the stanza (in 'Life of Cowley'). Dr. Johnson wants regular metres. He craves rhymes next, metre or rhythm is insufficient to make musical. He thrives each line to stand along, as logically it should, and to rhyme with the next. Blank verse, he says, seems to be verse only to the eye; it has either the easiness of prose, no, the melody of numbers. The language of poetry, Dr. Johnson states; 'words too familiar or too remote defeat the purpose of a poet'. On diction of poetry, he says that a system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular art. (in 'Life of Dredon')

Poetry is to speak a universal language. A simile is said to be a short episode. (complete, exhibit and independently of its references)

### **ON DRAMA**

#### **The nature:-**

It should present human sentiments in human language ( in preface to Shakespeare). A great play is not a story of a few men in one particular age but, through them, of all men in all ages: the actions, thoughts and passions, it depicts in widest commonalty spread. Drama is just representation of human nature. Both in its working in individuals and in humanity at large.

### **The Unities:-**

Among all the unities, Dr. Johnson found the unity of action justified by reason. There would be utter chaos if event did not naturally lead to event to the desired end. He said, 'the necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from supposed necessity of making the drama credible.'

### **Dramatic Pleasure:-**

The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they could please no more. Imitation produces pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities but because they bring realities to mind. Johnson accounts for the pleasure in drama as the natural human pleasure in imitation. Johnson as a poet taught men should think naturally and express forcibly and as critic, to determine upon principles the merit of composition.

### **CRITICISM:-**

He has the code of conduct for the writer and critic. He did not like poets to please by chance. Other than the kind of rules to be followed, there is nothing new in Johnson's criticism. Johnson has freed the genius from bondage. Johnson stresses the end the neo-classicism stresses the means. His words, Criticism – the daughter of labour and truth-respect time as the best critic.

### **ROMANTIC CRITIC:-**

Neo Classism stood with three things;

\_\_\_ poetry imitated nature to delight and to instruct.

\_\_\_ poets must follow the rules of the ancients.

\_\_\_ Dryden, Addison and Dr. Johnson questioned all rules that did not stand the test of experience.

Ben Jonson cautioned, 'nothing is more ridiculous than to make an author a dictator, as the schools have done Aristotle.'

Romanticism judges a work of art by its end rather than its means.

\_\_\_ Critics are apt to forget, said Coleridge

\_\_\_ French revolution gave the slogan of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

**UNIT - IV**  
**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

**Introduction**

William Wordsworth was dragged into criticism as he was not qualified to be a critic by the temperament. His "Lyrical Ballads" was violently attacked by the neo-classical critics of the 'Edinburg' and the "Quarterly Reviews". So in order to vindicate his stand, Wordsworth was forced to write criticism. The chief of his critical papers is the "Preface to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads" in 1800. Wordsworth's subject is poetic diction and his view of poetry.

**Wordsworth's idea of diction:-**

Wordsworth writes in his "Preface" about the language of poetry. Spenser and Milton had preferred uncommon word or phrases in their works. Cicero had divided style into three categories. The low used to prove, the middle used to please and high used to move. The 18<sup>th</sup> century writers rejected low words as unfit for poetic use. According to the neo-classical writers, poetry was a "system of words refined from the grossness of domestic use".

**Ordinary Life:-**

Wordsworth stated that his object is using simple diction for his poems was to verify how far the language used by low classes of society was adapted to the purpose of poetic pleasure. His main aim in these poems was to choose incidents. From ordinary life and describe them in language really used by men. At the same time, he wanted to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination. The language used by rustics was free from all outside influences. They speak from their own personal experience and convey their feelings in simple expressions. Such a language is more permanent and philosophical.

**Against Neo-classical Poetry:-**

Wordsworth attacks the neo-classical personification of abstract ideas. Wordsworth points out that the language of poetry cannot differ materially from that of prose. Wordsworth recommends a selection of language really spoken by men. The selection is made with true taste and feeling. It separates the composition from the vulgarity of ordinary life.

### **Definition of Poetry:-**

Wordsworth defines poetry as “ the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”. It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity. A moving sight was seen during a walk, stored in the memory, and recalled in moments of calm contemplation. By spontaneity in poetry, Wordsworth does not reject workmen ship. But he composed his poems with greatest care.

### **Arm in writing poetry and role of poet:-**

According to Wordsworth, the poet is a man speaking to men. His object in writing poetry is to give pleasure. He believes that the poet possesses greater power to feel and to express his feelings. Wordsworth’s object in writing poetry is to console the afflicted to add sunshine to day light and to teach the young. In this process, he makes everyone virtuous.

Wordsworth opposed the neo-classical practice of judging a work of art by the application of tests based on ancient models. Structure, meter, and diction do not make a poem. How the poem moves the reader is more important?. Thus Wordsworth marks the beginning of a new school that is Romanticism.

### **S.T.COLERIDGE**

#### **Consider S.T.Coreridge as a romantic critic.**

Coleridge is the first English critic to form his literary criticism on philosophical principles. While the previous critics pointed out a poem’s defects and merits, Coleridge concentrated upon the basic question of how a poem is written. He was more interested in creative process which makes a poem a finished product. He tried to establish the principles of writing rather than to frame rules for criticism. He tried to discover the faculty of the human soul that gave birth to poem. His criticism in “BiographiaLiteraria” is ill-planned and incomplete. His “ Lectures on Shakespeare” are disjointed. His other prose writings are: “The Friend”, “ The Table Talk”, and “Letters”. They are fragments of criticism. Even so, there is enough in him to mark him out as one of the greatest critics of the world. His philosophical ideas are taken from German philosophers like Lessing, Kant, and Schiller. But they ultimately bear the stamp of Coleridge. They flow his own experience as a poet.

According to Coleridge, all poetry is an act of the imagination. He draws a distinction between fancy and Imagination. Imitation faithfully imaged the original. It was held to be a work of imagination. In the case of Fancy, the poet adds up his own invention which was not much similar to original.

Coleridge finds two forms of imagination which he calls the primary and the secondary. The Primary imagination is simply the power of perceiving the objects of sense, places and things. It enables the mind to form a clear picture of the object perceived by the senses. The mind reduces it to shape and size. The Secondary imagination is the conscious use of the power. It is a composite faculty of the soul. It consists of perception, intellect and emotions. It is more active agent than the primary imagination. It is a shaping and modifying power. In this process, the mind and nature act and react on each other.

Coleridge's theory of imagination modifies the traditions view of art as a mere imitation. Art is the union of the soul with the external world or nature. According to Coleridge, a poem uses the same words as a prose composition. The difference between prose and poem is in their different use of words. Genius is in born and talent acquired. A poet is a man of genius, born, not made. Genius manifests itself in four ways.

1. Sense of Musical Delight : It consists in the perfect sweetness of versification. It is the outward manifestation of the music in the poet's soul.
2. Objectivity: It shows itself in the choice of subjects very distant from private interests.
3. The shaping and modifying power of imagination: A Poet's pictures of life are not faithful copies. They become poetic as they are modified by a predominant passion.
4. Depth and Energy of thought: A poet is a man who is more endowed with organic sensibility. He had thought long and deeply. According to Coleridge, a poem is the union of deep feeling with profound thought.

Coleridge elaborates the phrase 'willing suspension of disbelief' in "Biographia". The poet does not need us to be awake and believe. He requests us to yield ourselves to a dream.

Coleridge differs from other English critics by psychological approach to literary problems. He had good knowledge of Philosophy and metaphysics. The study of poetry led him to probe the imaginative process that gave birth to the poem. It is the philosopher's approach rather than the critic's. Coleridge's theory of imagination is heavily in favour of the romantic poetry. His criticism justifies the ways of the romantics to the world.

**UNIT - V**  
**MATHEW ARNOLD**

**Mathew Arnold as a Critic**

Arnold is both a poet and critic. His criticism is the criticism of a poet who had personal experience of what he was writing about. He made his debut as a critic in the "Preface to the poems of 1853". When he was appointed as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, he had opportunity to develop his critical powers. His important lectures are collected in two volumes. They are "On translating Homer" and "The study of Celtic Literature". He also wrote for the literary journals which served as 'profitable and convenient intermediate stage between the lecture and the books. Then he published "Essays in Criticism" in two series. His criticism falls under two divisions. They are: one on the art of poetry and another on the art of criticism.

A group of poets in the Victorian age are called the "Spasmodic". They held poetry to be expression of "the state of one's mind". This led to extravagance of thought and emotion. In order to attack this group Arnold wrote "Preface to the Poems of 1853". Spasmodic were much preoccupied with thought and neglected action. To Arnold, the joy that poetry gives is dependent on its subject. According to Arnold, the business of poets is to give to the men the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. Arnold pays respect for ancient writers like Shakespeare who chose excellent subjects. They gave much importance to action than expression of it. They are the masters of grand style.

Arnold stresses the superiority of grand style of the Greeks over the style of English writers. In "On Translating Homer", he offers it as a cure for evil as the English life and poetry. Their life is deprived of nobility. So their literature also falls down in grand style. According to Arnold, Homer is the master of the grand style. Great words come only from great minds. The subject chosen for treatment should admit such grand style. The grand style occurs only when a gifted poet treats a serious thought.

According to Arnold, poetry is much connected to life. He cannot approve of the theory of "art for art's sake". He defines poetry as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism. Poetry teaches us how to live fully and richly. It has the power of forming and delighting us.

Arnold admits that creative faculty is superior than critical faculty. A writer should use best ideas in the best style.

### **Mathew Arnold's Touchstone method**

Arnold as a critic suggests the touchstone method to judge a literature. He lays down no hard and fast rule. This method was originally the invention of Longinus and suggested in England by Addison. Addison explains how a literary taste can be cultivated. According to Arnold, this test determine the worth of literature. In fact there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the excellent class. He suggests critics to keep in one's mind likes and expressions of great masters and apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. When one keeps them well in our minds as touchstone we can detect the presence and absence of high poetic quality. Then he cites a few passages from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. He points out how they impress by their poetical quality. They all belong to the class of the excellent. It is better to have recourse to concrete examples, to take specimens of high poetry and to say. Arnold is unable to suggest any concrete criterion by which a high quality of poetry may be decided. He considers 'tact' or taste as a sure guide. He feels that they can be found in the matter and substance of poetry. In poetry of excellence, truth and seriousness are found. The critic gives criticism of his own, born of absolute sincerity.

### **T.S.ELIOT (1888 – 1965)**

#### **His classicism :-**

T.S.Eliot's critical work consists mostly of essays and lectures, written or delivered from time to time and collected together in book form subsequently. The more important of these books are : The Sacred Wood, Homage to John Dryden, For Lancelot Andrews, Selected Essays, The use of Poetry and the use of Criticism, Elizabethan Essays, and Essays Ancient and Modern.

Eliot stands for orderliness both in art and in criticism. Each is a striving for order: art seeks it in life and Criticism in art. Each therefore must be orderly itself. English Criticism has ever been divided between the contending claims of classicism and romanticism. The former is said to follow the principle of allegiance to an outside authority and the latter that of individual liberty.

According to T.S.Eliot the right approach to Criticism is the Classical. 'Men' he says, 'cannot get on without giving allegiance to something outside themselves. As the citizen

has to give it to this government and the believer to his church, so the critic has to give it to some common criterion of rightness. But those who stand for individual liberty in art listen to their Inner Voice only.

The Critic's approach has also to be similarly objective. He must have first, a 'highly developed sense of fact', such as will preclude the imposition of his own opinion on it. Secondly, he should have as his tools 'Comparison and analysis', the former to see, among other things, how the work modifies past tradition and is itself modified by it, and the latter to see it as it really is. And any book, any essay, any note which produces a fact even of the lowest order about a work of art is a better piece of work.

### **True Criticism:-**

True criticism therefore 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 modern critic has to do the same. With his attention fixed solely and steadfastly on the work before him, he has to dig deep into it for the law that can account for it fully. This is what a botanist or Zoologist does too while dissecting a specimen: he looks not for what is interesting in it, but for the principle that makes it what it is.

### **Impersonality of Poetry:-**

On poetry Eliot's most remarkable contribution is what he himself calls the 'impersonal theory of poetry'. He holds that the poet and the poem are two separate things and that the feeling, or emotion, or vision, resulting from the poem is something different from the feeling or emotion or vision in the mind of the poet.

The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. A poet is great not because he puts his personality into his work, not because he is more interesting to say, but because he has a mind.

### **Other Concepts:-**

Two phrases of Eliot, have aroused unusual interest: 'objective correlative' and 'dissociation of sensibility'. '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 concrete – a picture of a person, place, or thing suggestive of it – to evoke the same emotion in the reader. The object in which emotion is thus bodied forth is its external equivalent or objective correlative. In Eliot's own words, 'the only ways 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 ..... are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

Instead of communicating his emotions direct to the reader, he embodies them in ‘a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events’, which re communicate them to the reader. The second phrase ‘dissociation of sensibility’ points to a characteristic fault of the poetry of the later seventeenth century. Its opposite is ‘unification of sensibility’, which also Eliot uses to distinguish good poetry from bad. By this latter phrase Eliot means, ‘a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feelings’. Though it transformed into feelings to steal its way into the reader’s heart. It is this union of the two that constitutes poetic sensibility.

### **The Value of his Criticism:-**

Eliot first applied the Aristotelian method of comparison and analysis to the elucidation of works of literature, and from whom perhaps Eliot borrows his famous phrase ‘dissociation of sensibility’. He calls himself ‘a classicist in literature “, but there is nothing in common between him and the neo-classical critics of the eighteenth century except the desire for some well-defined system of criticism. In art, as in life, the past and the present act and react on each other; so,’ the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. Following Aristotle, he considers poetry an amusement, ‘a superior amusement’.

Eliot concludes that ‘apart from the variety of ways in which poets have used their art, with greater or less success, with designs of instruction or persuasion, there is no doubt that a poet wishes to give pleasure, to entertain or divert people; and he should normally be glad to be able to feel that the entertainment or diversion is enjoyed by as large and various a number of people as possible.’ As a classicist, therefore, Eliot is rather in the line of Aristotle than of his followers. In other words he applies the method the science to the study of literature to be able to see it as it really is. This is what he has to offer to present-day criticism.