



INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
IDE
Rajiv Gandhi University



MAENG-501

Literary Criticism and Theory-I

MA ENGLISH
3rd Semester

Rajiv Gandhi University

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Literary Criticism and Theory I

MAENG501
III SEMESTER



RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

About IDE

The formal system of higher education in our country is facing the problems of access, limitation of seats, lack of facilities and infrastructure. Academicians from various disciplines opine that it is learning which is more important and not the channel of education. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. This will meet the demand for qualitative higher education of millions of people who cannot get admission in the regular system and wish to pursue their education. It also helps interested employed and unemployed men and women to continue with their higher education. Distance education is a distinct approach to impart education to learners who remained away in the space and/or time from the teachers and teaching institutions on account of economic, social and other considerations. Our main aim is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. In 2008, the Centre for Distance Education has been renamed as "Institute of Distance Education (IDE)."

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14.

The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:

(i) At Par with Regular Mode

Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

The students are provided SISM prepared by the Institute and approved by Distance Education Council (DEC), New Delhi. This will be provided at the time of admission at the IDE or its Study Centres. SISM is provided only in English except Hindi subject.

(iii) Contact and Counselling Programme (CCP)

The course curriculum of every programme involves counselling in the form of personal contact programme of duration of approximately 7-15 days. The CCP shall not be compulsory for BA. However for professional courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.

(iv) Field Training and Project

For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

The medium of instruction and examination will be English for all the subjects except for those subjects where the learners will need to write in the respective languages.

(vi) Subject/Counselling Coordinators

For developing study material, the IDE appoints subject coordinators from within and outside the University. In order to run the PCCP effectively Counselling Coordinators are engaged from the

Departments of the University, The Counselling-Coordinators do necessary coordination for involving resource persons in contact and counselling programme and assignment evaluation. The learners can also contact them for clarifying their difficulties in then respective subjects.

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Syllabi

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A Brief History of English Criticism from Aristotle to Coleridge

UNIT II: Aristotle

Poetics

UNIT III: John Dryden

An Essay on Dramatic Poesy

UNIT IV: S. T. Coleridge

Biographia Literaria

UNIT V: William Wordsworth

Preface to Lyrical Ballads

UNIT1 ARISTOTLE TO S. T. Coleridge: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Structure

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- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Critics From Aristotle to Derrida
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 - 1.2.2 Longinus
 - 1.2.3 Horace, Dante Alighieri and Julius Caesar
 - 1.2.4 Sir Philip Sidney
 - 1.2.5 Ben Jonson
 - 1.2.6 John Dryden
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 - 1.2.12 Shelley, Lamb and Hazlitt
 - 1.2.13 Matthew Arnold
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 - 1.2.16 Thomas Stearns Eliot (T.S. Eliot)
 - 1.2.17 Jacques Derrida
- 1.3 Summary
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- 1.6 Questions and Exercises
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will trace the history of the literatures of the world in which criticism will emerge as a vast panorama of debates and discussions. In England, this literary genre was revived during the Renaissance when the writers and poets looked back to the revival of old classics and came to imbibe their style as well as emancipated the world by their learning and translations of the Greek and Roman classics. Every age and century paved the way for improvisations and gave birth to new ideas. Aristotle remained the sole controller of the golden age, which still continues to impress the modern theorists. There is a long trail of great voices till we reach the period of the post-modernist literary theorists where we conclude that criticism is more of a science than literature.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the importance of literary criticism
- Critically analyse the theories from Aristotle to Derrida

1.2 CRITICS FROM ARISTOTLE TO DERRIDA

In this section, you will be introduced to the history of criticism starting from Aristotle to Derrida.

1.2.1 Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BC) was a great Greek philosopher. Born at Stagira, he received his education under the tutelage of the greatest logician Plato at Athens. He stayed with his master until his solemn demise in 347 BC and then travelled to Asia Minor where he joined a school founded by a group of followers of his master. For two years, he studied marine biology; taught Alexander of Macedon in 342 BC; and then founded his own academy, Peripatetic school. Here, he remained until 323 BC delivering discourses on various subjects. This eminent philosopher and preceptor died in 322 BC.

Aristotle was an eminent with rhetorician a wide range of knowledge of subjects like physics, poetry, logic, music, drama, metaphysics, politics, governance, biology, zoology, linguistics, ethics and many more. His contribution to the realm of philosophy has been enormous like his teacher Plato, thereby creating a platform for subjects like politics, literature, aesthetics, science, ethics and logic to flourish. He was a mainstay in the orbit of western philosophy whose learned and accurate ideas shaped most of the critical theories of art and aesthetics, which enlightened forthcoming generations of critics. He had a rather quiet political milieu compared to that of his master Plato which helped him in analyzing and finding out solutions to the questions that his master had raised. Aristotle's analysis of literature was sincere and scientific. He speaks against those who lay down precepts in writing. This prodigious philosopher was considered a great master in the days of Greek and Roman civilization. It was during the Renaissance that his true genius as a literary critic and a law-giver in the realm of poetry was explored by the modern thinkers.

Plato was an undefeated master, nevertheless, his pupil Aristotle was the first man to defend all the doubts that his master had raised against poetry. In *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses his views on poetry and drama, based on the concepts of Greek art; wherein he analyses subjects such as 'the spirit of literature, poetic truth, difference between art and morality, and the study of the end of art.' However, his approach in his masterpiece was as though he was trying to defend and logify what his master Plato had said against poets and poetry; his work has come out as an outstanding source of critical theory in the modern light of thoughts as it enlightened his age. In *Poetics*, Aristotle presents art as an imitation and posited this as a means for all art forms such as poetry, music, dance, painting and sculpture. He distinguishes between the objects and the manner of imitation, according to their mediums. Also, he had a gravity to differentiate between the types of arts: he judged tragedy as a higher form of art rather than comedy. In his view, poetry could have extensive forms ranging from epic to pure drama.

In *Poetics*, he studies the origin and development of poetry, that of imitation, 'harmony' and rhythm. According to ancient Greek poetry, two divergent trends came down to be known as tragedy and comedy. He has given a short account of comedy, defining ludicrous as its essential element; thereafter, he makes a comparison between epic poetry and tragedy. Then he focuses on tragedy where he defines what tragedy is, its functions, the role of a tragic hero, the guidelines and precepts, a poet writing tragedy should follow, and the sublimity or intellectual parts in a tragedy. He not only discusses its essence and soul, but also analyses the practical ways of its structure or form. Thus, he pays equal attention, delineating the components of form like diction and language. Aristotle believed that poetry with elevated language and lucidity may affix grandeur to its theme and soul. At the end, he describes the nature and elements of epic poetry; also, he differentiates between epic poetry and tragedy. He reminds poets to keep three things in mind in the art of versification 'the length of the poem, the metre, and the art of imparting a plausible air to incredible fiction.'

Unlike Plato, he stressed on aesthetic beauty in art rather than its moral value. According to his *Metaphysics*, 'At first he who invented any art that went beyond the common perceptions of man was naturally admired by man, not only because there was something useful in the inventions, but because he was thought wise and superior to the rest. But as more arts were invented and some were directed to the necessities of life, others to its recreation, the inventors of the latter were naturally always regarded as wiser than the inventors of the former, because their branches of knowledge did not aim at utility.' He strongly believed that all art imitate nature: 'it is the creative force, the productive principle of the universe.'

His theory of mimesis has a wide range of perspectives like an image of life which is a creative act capturing— 'its mental processes, its spiritual movements, its outward acts issuing from deeper sources; in a word all that constitutes the inward and essential activity of the soul.' The agents, such as the external world play the role of 'a background of human action, and enters as an emotional element into man's life and heightens the human interest.' He considers poetry as the most elevated and highest form of creative art which is superior to history; it gives vent to human imagination rather than fastening man to facts; and it has the capacity to encounter facts to surpass them: 'It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen,—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a specie of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen.' One subjects itself to the particular whereas the other to what is universal. A great poet may make the unreal real by his artistic imagination. For him, drama is a high form of art which depicts life and human actions; it might portray human actions to the extent of delineating even weaknesses or infirmities of human character, but it should not be an inferior action.

He believed that art should not seek the purpose of utility-or him, the true end of art, therefore, was to produce 'certain pleasurable impression produced upon the mind of the hearer or the spectator.' His views about poetry and poets thus differ from those of Plato and Homer. He held poetry as 'an emotional delight, its end is to give pleasure.' In *Poetics*,

Aristotle studied the 'origin, development and the impact of poetry.' Tragedy, he believed, 'is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete

and of a certain magnitude 'By 'language embellished, he means language into

which rhythm, harmony, and song enter. By 'the several kinds in several parts, 'Aristotle

implies that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song.'

Furthermore, as tragic imitation implies persons acting, it necessarily implies that in the first place, the spectacular equipment will be a part of tragedy. Next in line was song and diction, for these are the mediums of imitation. By diction, Aristotle meant the mere metrical arrangement of the words: as for song, it is a term whose sense, everyone understands. Again, tragedy is an imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these are: thought and character. These form the two natural causes from which actions spring, and the success and failure depends on actions. Hence, the plot is the imitation of the action. The meaning of plot can be understood as an arrangement of incidents. By character, a sense of a virtue of certain qualities is implied. Thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or it may be a general truth enunciated. Every tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which determine its quality namely: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song. These elements have been employed, we may say, by the poets to a man; in fact, every play contains a spectacular element as well as character, plot, diction, song, and thought. For Aristotle the dramatic plot must have a beginning, middle and an end; it should have a flow of communication between the incidents from one to the other where, the hero must possess virtues as well as sordidness. He does not immortalize a tragic hero as God, and therefore, his fall must arouse pity and fear into the spectators: he would be 'a man of noble nature, like ourselves in elemental feelings and emotions; idealized, indeed, but with so large a share of our common humanity as to enlist our eager interest and sympathy. He falls from a position of lofty eminence; and the disaster that wrecks his life may be traced not to deliberate wickedness, but to some great error or frailty.' This tragic flaw, which he calls *hamartia*, the Aristotelian hero must incapacitate some characteristic fault which finally leads to his fall. He gave the theory of *Katharsis* which boldly repudiates the doubts raised against the poets and poetry by Plato stating that it is the 'purification of passions.' The suffering of the hero should arouse pity and fear and we must sympathize with him. He also stresses on the three dramatic unities: place, time and action where the first two might have a secondary importance, but the action should maintain a basic unity with a logical sequence of happenings related to it.

He felt, epic poetry is longer than a tragedy. In his view, comedy is lighter in its treatment of the subject as it traces human follies and weakness. It does not impact us as greatly as tragedy even though they have certain similarities. Although epic and tragedy have certain points that overlap, Aristotle finds that tragedy is a superior form of art as compared to an epic.

1.2.2 Longinus

Cassius Longinus (213-273 AD) is chiefly known for his philosophical treatise *On the Sublime*. Neither the authorship of this critical text nor the details of the life of Longinus is broadly available. Yet, the manuscript of *On the Sublime* was first published in the 10th century AD by Francis Robertello with the name Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Cassius Longinus on it. It was later that Boileau translated this work when it attained recognition. Cassius Longinus came from Palmyra and he was supposedly the counsellor of the famous queen Zenobia. Longinus has tried to deal with problems raised from the time of Homer to Caecilius. The most recent translation of this essay was attributed to Hall in 1652 followed by Pulteney in 1680. W. Rhys Roberts translated it in 1899 and that is considered as a landmark in the history of criticism.

On the Sublime is a valuable literary piece of rhetorical criticism which is highly important because of its ideas of art. Also, it is an important source as it imparts great information about the Greek and the Roman rhetoricians to the modern age. The work is often viewed as a beautiful combination of classicism and romanticism where the word sublime embodies the authenticity of unfathomable depth: 'it is well to keep it (sublime) with a very careful preliminary explanation that the Longinian sublime is not sublimity in its narrower sense, but all that deserves the highest critical encomium (standard) either in prose or poetry.' This critical text not only incorporates a fresh and wide-ranging approach to literature, but also propounds novel mediums of appreciation. Longinus mentions that Caecilius 'seeks to show the nature of the sublime by countless instances, but the consideration of the means whereby we may succeed in raising our own capacities to a certain pitch of elevation he has, strangely enough, omitted as unnecessary.' By rhetoric and poetry he means: 'the effect of elevated language upon an audience is not persuasion but transport.' The first six chapters of the treatise explain what we may call false sublimity. Citing extracts from Aeschylus, Longinus says that this might be a great work of art but it does not contain the intensity of expression that a literary piece should radiate. Later he gives five main sources of the Sublime: 'grandeur of thought, vehement and inspired passion, figures of speech, noble phrasing of diction and elevation in the arrangement of the words.' This essay emphasizes figures of speech, selection of diction and word-order. Besides Longinus stresses on the fact that literature must connect naturally to feelings and emotions; it should inspire and be imaginative, although there is a limitation to freedom in imagination; yet it should bring in the feeling of ecstasy. The classical precepts and novel approach to the appreciation of literature in the concept of Sublime that Longinus gave, made him a milestone in the history of criticism and a never-fading inspiration for the modern classicists.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What was the basic premise of Aristotle's *Poetics*?
2. What was Aristotle's view on comedy?
3. What was Longinus' view on the sublime?

1.2.3 Horace, Dante Aligheri and Julius Caesar

The absence of Aristotle came to witness a great depression in the field of criticism whereafter his death, mostly, critics were concerned with technicality, grammar and rhetoric. It was a phase of decadence in Greece. It was in this period that learning passed on from Greece to Rome when the text of the great Aristotle moved from Athens to Rome through General Marius in 85 BC. Quintus Horatius Flacus (65-8 BC), educated in Rome and Athens, came to be known as an acclaimed poet and critic. His importance chiefly lay in the fact that he emphasized the historical perspective of criticism and evaluated the art of many renowned poets and critics. His important *text Ars Poetica* or the *Epistle to Pisos* deals with subject-matter that is Poesis; technical aspects of poetry that is Poema; and in the last part, he speaks how a poet should be educated as well as what are his responsibilities, including discussions on creed and spiritual inclinations. However, the critical approach of Horace has been subjected to scrutiny both by the ancients and the moderns. A staunch classicist, Horace, believed sharply in the fact that poetry is meant to instruct and delight. He stresses on common sense and history censuring young flamboyant poets who believed in unrestricted flights of imagination. His great contribution lies therein.

Dante Alighieri

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321 AD) was a known Florentine poet and law-giver in literature whose chief contributions to literature are *Vita Nuova* (autobiography), *Convivio*, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, and *Commedia* among other works. The period between Longinus and Dante is called the Dark Age: the age of Christian ascendancy when the art of poetry was looked down upon. Therefore, this age also lags behind in the advancement of literary criticism. The chief critics of the Dark Age were Horace and Quintilian who believed that literature was meant for the educated class; thus, segregating the common people from the educated elite. Dante serves an irrefutable link between the Dark Age and the Renaissance combining 'the pastness of past and the presentness of present.' He breathed Renaissance prior to its commencement and by the great faculty of verse and criticism, he rescued literature from the dearth of oblivion. Dante wrote his *Commedia* in Florentine idiom because he wished his verse to reach the ordinary mass and this he did, against the will of prevalent scholastic and religious hierarchy.

Championing the cause of the vernacular, Dante proposed a new horizon not only to those who were native speakers, but also to the popularity of poets in common and this trend was followed by almost all writers after him. Besides his contribution in the field of language where he felt that language is 'an instrument of expression' he pleads that language should be proper, illustrious and elevated. Suitable and expressive language, proper subject-matter and appropriate chain of thoughts are required for poetry. For tragedy, the grand and the powerful pertains to its style, but not for the comedy so is needed: 'Words, expression and construction must be stately, lofty and excellent in tragedy.'

In comedy 'middle and lowly vernacular' is to be used, whereas in elegy only the lowly vernacular is to be made use of.' In his second *Tractate of Convivia*, Dante explained the meaning of allegory. According to him, we should appreciate the work of art in four meanings 'literal, allegorical, moral and analogic': to quote him, 'I say that, as is affirmed in the first chapter, it is neat for this exposition to the both literal and allegorical. And to make this

intelligible, it should be known that writings can be understood and ought to be expounded chiefly in four senses. The first is literal, and this is that sense which does not go beyond the strict limits of the letter; the second is called allegorical and this is distinguished under the cloak of such story, and is a truth hidden under a beautiful fiction...the third sense is called moral; and this sense is that for which teacher ought as they go through writings intently to watch for their own profit and that of their hearers.. .the fourth sense is called analogic, that is above the sense, and this occurs when a writing is spiritually expounded which even in the literal sense, by the things signify likewise gives intimation of higher matter belonging to the eternal glory.'

Julius Caesar Scaliger

Julius Caesar Scaliger (1484-1558) is a major figure in the Renaissance literary criticism and a promoter of the neo-classical critical trend. His work *Poetics libri septem* (1561) was published three years after his demise, to establish him permanently as one of the great, scholars and pioneer critics of all times. The text reflects on 'language its origin, uses, end and cultivation.' He studies the importance of human speech. Speech services, 'the arts are cultivated and the claims of wisdom intercede with men for men.' According to Scaliger's views, the foundation of poetry is imitation, but 'the end is the giving of instruction in pleasurable form, for poetry teaches, and does not simply amuse.' Tragedy, he distinguished as a form different from comedy 'in the rank of characters, in the nature of the action* and in the outcome. 'Also there is a sharp difference between the style and treatment of both the genres of drama. His disciple Horace; stressed on the dramatic unities; and mentioned that poetry 'must have four qualities or attributes Prudentia, Varietas, Efficacia and Suavitas or insight, variety, vividness and winsomeness.' In his *Poetics*, Scaliger maintains that style is a very important aspect of poetry which is of three kinds, respectively 'the grand, the humble and the moderate.' But Scaliger's speculations in the realm of literary criticism verges on making poetry a dogma.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. For what reason is the Horatian period considered an important phase in literary criticism?
5. What is the period between Longinus and Dante called? And why?
6. Identify the primary concern of Julius Caesar Scaliger in the sphere of literary criticism.

1.2.4 Sir Philip Sidney

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), an eminent critic of the Renaissance, was a great friend of Edmund Spenser to whom he dedicated his *Shepherd's Calendar*. A known humanitarian, he had a very short but active life. Owing to his goodness of character, he had the popularity of receiving over two hundred elegies after his sad and abrupt demise. Sidney wrote *Apology for Poetry* in defence of Stephan Gosson's anti-Renaissance proclamation *The*

Abuse of Poetry. His *Defence of Poesy* (1595) is the most characteristic representative of Renaissance critical writing. Sidney's modern approach to criticism, his stress on style and his humanitarian outlook have placed him with critics like Jonson, Dryden, Wordsworth, Shelley, Arnold and Eliot. Sidney mentions that England has proved to be 'a hard-step-mother to poets' where poetry is looked down upon as 'the laughing stock of children.' *The Apology* is written in a classical style having seven parts: 'the exordium introduction—the winning hearer attention to what follows; the narration—in which Sidney offers the historical survey of the role of poetry; the proposition—in which Sidney offers his own definition of poetry, drawn largely from the ancient Greek critics; the portitio — in which Sidney divides his arguments into different parts and tries to reply to the charges brought against poetry; the confirmation—in which Sydney finally proves his case; the refutation

— in which Sidney censures his opponents; and, the peroration conclusion — final summing up.' Defending the cause of poetry, he maintained that poetry has been an educator to of mankind, historically. Poetry as a form of art has proved its universality and effect in course of succeeding generations.

Defending poetry, he said: 'Poetry is an imitation of nature but it is not mere imitation but something more. Poets with their faculty of imagination rival the position of gods, and create something beautiful and noble out of this reality. Poetry is not the mother of lies.' Liberally, Sidney encompasses all genres of literature into the arena of poetry and to him even Plato's dialogues come under the periphery of poetry. Sidney's theory is in line with Aristotle for he believes that poetry is an art of imitation. Besides, he also agrees with what Horace believed: poetry should instruct and delight. However, he implies improvisations to all these oft-quoted ideas by his predecessors: for the art of imitation, he mentions—' lifted up by the vigour of his invention, he doth grow in effect into another nature in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as were neighbours in nature.' Man cannot create things as natural as God, but poets do take us into the world of ecstasy where the pleasure that we derive from their piece of art might make them parallel to God, this is what Sidney explains in his treatise. Sidney declares that poetry is superior to philosophy and history: 'nature never set forth the earth in rich tapestry as divers poets have done, neither the pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever may make the too much loved earth more lovely. His world is brazen, the poets only deliver the golden.' Therefore, poetry, he means is more pleasing than reality; and the poets are creators of these pleasurable beauties.

As for functions and effects of poetry are concerned, Sidney believes that the poet should be a moralizer and a teacher: 'the end of all earthly learning is virtuous action.' And every artist, to whichever literary genre he chooses, must stick to morality: would he be a satirist,' sportingly never liveth until he make a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed to laugh at himself.' Similarly, he would say that 'comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our lives, which he representeth in the most ridiculous and scornful sort that may be, so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one.' His views about tragedy are that— 'it openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the Ulcers that are covered with Tissues, that maketh Kings fear to be Tyrants and Tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours;

that with stirring the effects of admiration and *commiseration* teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations golden roofs are builded.'

Here, Sidney has defended the onslaught on poetry by Plato and Gosson; he also remarks on the objections raised by 'contemporary Philistines.' Sidney does not assign a special place to metrical forms as far as the importance of poetical art is concerned. He believes that poetry has been there since the beginning of human speech; it teaches men compassionate actions and virtuosity; and it is never a lie. Imagination in poetry is used to represent truth that appears real. Poetry can never provoke 'pestilent desires' and whether it is science or art, its misuse might invite disharmony. In his essay, Sidney describes the origin and growth of poetry, the duties of a poet and replies to all who have censured and abused poetry simultaneously re-establishing its significance. His work is a harmonious whole of classical, neo-classical theories 'dealing with imagination and psychological processes of the mind' and having satisfied all the negative remarks of his contemporary as well as predecessors he establishes poetry 'above theology, rhetoric, logic, history and philosophy.'

1.2.5 Ben Jonson

Ben Jonson (1573-1637) was one of the most prolific playwrights and critics of the Elizabethan age of English letters. Three different critical trends emerged at that time amongst them, the idealistic trend being the first was represented by Sir Philip Sidney, the second trend evaluating poetry technically encompassed critics like Webbe, Puttenham and Daniel, and the third type of critics were those who capacitated the Renaissance element of humanism. They were realists and classicists with an open mind. Jonson belonged to this group. Much of Jonson's works were burnt in the fire of 1620. The remaining few which inspire his ideas about criticism are *Timber or Discoveries* (*Timber or Discoveries*; made upon men and matter; as they have flowed out of his daily reading; or had their reflux to his particular notion of the times.) and *Conversations with Drummond*. *Timber* focuses on excerpts, translations and summarizing the works of the ancients like Quintilian, Hoarce, Seneca, Vives to name a few. In it, his impressions gain precedence. Jonson has proved himself a classicist but he warns authors not to 'take all upon trust from them.' He believed strongly in studying and imbibing the ancients, but disagreed to follow them blindly. For a write, common sense must be the guide and must pave the way for generations to make their own judgements: 'nothing is more ridiculous than to make an author a dictator as the schools have done Aristotle... for too many things a man should owe but a temporary belief and the suspension of his own judgement, not an absolute resignation of himself or a perpetual captivity. Let Aristotle and others have their dues; but if we can make further discoveries of truth and fitness than they, why are we envied?' He believed that 'No art is at one stroke discovered or perfected.' Thus, it is the practice of many generations of artists, that an art might gain its identity.

His *Discoveries* might be seen in three parts where, in the first part, he gives his estimates of the art of expression, the study of poetry and drama. He castigates those who imbue their verses into excesses of romantic hues and praises the appeal of neat and clear expression. He pleads for natural beauty and expression, rather than the 'powdered or painted.' He

maintained that language is the style of a man's inner soul and it should exhibit naturalness and realism. Diction, he said, should be appropriate to the thought and situation. It should suit the subject-matter: 'in style it is necessary to consider what ought to be written, and after what manner. The writer must first think and excogitate his matter.' Jonson does not simply direct to strip art of all ornamentation: 'some writing need sunshine.' He, therefore, pleads for effective style and good writing incorporating 'order, suitability, perspicuity, liveliness and discretion.' Tracing the beginning and sources of poetry, Jonson states what qualities a good poet must possess. He believed that poetry was the finest of all arts: 'the pen is more noble than the pencil. Like Aristotle, he follows the theory of imitation, but also blends the beauty of imagination into it, which makes poetry the most beautiful of all art forms.

Jonson laid great stress on the classical concepts of poetry or poems including epic, dramatic poetry, lyric, elegy and epigrammatic verse. For him, poetry is the 'queen of arts' which has 'ravishing delight and incredible sweetness.' But he emphasizes the quality of a poet where he believes that a poet must have native genius; he should be intellectually alert and broad-minded. His poetry, which is the outcome of his extensive labour, deserves to be remembered beyond the period in which it was written. Therefore, a poet ought to inculcate conscious industry. He should imitate the worthy ancients and learn art from their examples. This does not mean a poet should blindly follow the writers of the golden age, but read them carefully to chisel and polish his art. The poet should be of a receptive mind and an industrious scholar. He ought to consider Aristotle and Horace as his teachers: 'whatsoever nature... dictated to the most happy or long exercise to the most laborious, that the wisdom of Aristotle had brought into an art because he understood the causes of things. And what other men did by chance or custom, he doth by reason; and not only found out the way not to err, but the short way we should take not to err.' The genius of Aristotle was 'the first accurate critic and truest judge; nay the greatest philosopher the world ever had... he taught us two offices... how we ought to judge rightly of others, and what we ought to imitate specially in ourselves.' But he also acknowledges: 'nothing is more ridiculous than to make an author a dictator, as the schools have done Aristotle... for too many things a man should owe but a temporary belief and a suspension of his own judgement, not in absolute resignation of himself or a perpetual captivity. Let Aristotle have their dues; but if we can make further discoveries of truth and fitness than they, why are we envied.'

Turning to drama, Jonson, the creator of the comedy of humours and an eminent classical playwright, says comedy is a 'social machinery— expressing life in all its variations.' It is a genre founded on satire and not laughter. He laid stress on the plot construction of a comedy, close to the structure of an elegy or tragedy, with specific stay on the unities of time and action. All incidents should pass onto a unified whole. The relevance of Ben Jonson as a modern and rational critic lies in the fact that 'he is never forgetful of the contemporary scene and is endowed with a great practical sense.' Unlike his predecessors or contemporaries in England, he seldom stopped to theorize. Rather, he would choose to abide by common sense and practicality. He would say— 'the office of a true critic or censor was to judge sincerely of an author and his matter.' He would consider that 'to judge of poets is only the faculty of poets, and not of all poets but the best.' He tried to bring this fact to light that the genius of his age was not recognized as they ought to be. He sincerely disliked his contemporaries who wrote verses for

pomp and showed disregard for the subject matter. Next are plagiarists who face criticism from him. And finally, the last category is made up of 'romantic fools' who only believe in spontaneity. In this manner, Jonson segregates the worthy from the unworthy.

Jonson regarded the excellence of Shakespeare with all his sagacity bringing to light his slippages in art and style. He does not admire Spenser either on the basis of his stanza form, subject-matter, obscurity and diction. He considers Donne and Bacon to be fine poets by virtue of his opinion on metaphysical conceits. To sum up, Ben Jonson may be ranked as a true neo-classical critic who set the standards of criticism for the succeeding generations. He created a strong platform for English critics such as Dryden, Johnson, Pope, Arnold and Eliot. This prolific critic is known for his clear-sightedness, realism, approach to the practical side of the problems, his awareness of the past and the present, judiciousness and his unprejudiced classical scholarship.

1.2.6 John Dryden

John Dryden (1631 -1700) established the neo-classical trend of English criticism and remained a pioneer critic, translator, playwright, poet and satirist for the entire Restoration period. He wheeled forward Italian concepts and French neo-classical ideas propounded by Corneille, Racine and Boileau: however, the difference between the Italian and French group of critics lies in the fact where the former sided with liberty and broad outlook, the latter stuck to narrowness and rigidity. The Italian critics valued the ancients very much but did not succumb to mere imitation and remained open to innovations; however, the French chose to be the obedient disciples of the ancients in their outlook, Jonson followed the Italian trend and after his death, it was Dryden who rescued this literary trend from the hands of rigid rule-makers: 'Dryden, a real neo-classicist, never allowed himself to be tried down by the rules set by the ancients: He had a peculiar common sense, a great love for national literature and an understanding of the eternal value of . literature.' He avoids undertaking the task of studying the basics of literature and often it appears that his defence of the heroic couplet or the rhymed metre is but insignificant in the modern context. He may be regarded as the first practical critic whose ideas radiate 'the principles of perspective, perspicuity and delight in literature.' He is the first critic in English letters who fought for the cause of his native language.

His fame rests chiefly on his critical writings—*An Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1667), *Defence of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), *Essay of Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age* (1672), *Apology for Heroic Poetry* (1677), *Preface to Troilus and Cressida* (1679), *Preface to Albion and Albanios* (1685), *Discourse Concerning the Origin and Progress of Satire* (1693), *Preface to Aeneid* (1697) and *Preface to the Fables* (1700). In the former essay, which is regarded as a landmark text of the restoration criticism, he fights for the cause of native speakers against the dominating French critical trends. Dryden took it as his duty to establish his native language as the most important vehicle in the art of versification. He appreciated the native talents such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Jonson and Fletcher. His critical expressions find a better reflection in his *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1667), *Defence of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) and *Preface to the Fables* (1700).

The *Essay* is a dramatic dialogue among four gentlemen who are sitting in a boat in the river Thames having performed their duty in a war where Crites who represents Sir Robert Howard, the brother-in-law of Dryden himself, speaks for the classicists; Eugenius, represented by Lord Buckhurst, favours the moderns; Lisideius, represented by Sir Charles Sidley, a mouthpiece of Charles II, expresses that the French are superior to the English in dramatic art; and the last is Neander, Dryden himself, who fights for the native cause. The *Essay* is an argument among these four. The *Essay* observes classical foundations, as Dryden was a true classicist. Drama, they believe, is 'A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.' Dryden is of the view that the dramatic personae should be a lifelike image; the plot should exhibit clearly the three dramatic unities; and drama should reflect a complete effect. Dryden is liberal enough to take the side of Shakespeare who did not observe the three classical unities of plot in his plays. Later, we see that Dryden uses blank verse following Shakespeare in his heroic play *All for love*: hence, he made the use of rhymed or unrhymed metres according to the need of his dramatic theme.

The attributes of Dryden as a critic lies in the fact that he upholds the cause of practical commonsense, 'proportion, perspicuity and perspective'; he heads way for comparative criticism by comparing Homer with Virgil and Ovid with Chaucer as he has described in his *Preface to the Fables*. And he devotes his-attention to the study of Chaucer in his Preface later: 'in the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer and Romans Virgil. He is perpetual fountain of good sense; learned in all sciences; and therefore speaks properly on all subjects. As he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off; a continence which is practised by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients excepting Virgil and Horace.' He makes abundant use of history and criticism when he talks of Chaucer. As a neo-classicist, Dryden shows faith in delight and instruction; thus his importance might be recapitulated as — 'He is a neo-classicist but he is not fastened by any dogma. The flexibility of his outlook is to be noted in all his practical criticism. Together with Ben Jonson, he helps in the institutions of commonsense in English criticism and lastly he is the first nationalistic critic, who tries to uphold and unfurl the laurels of Shakespeare in an age when the continental theatregoer who was charmed by the French neo-classic dramas of Corneille.'

1.2.7 Alexander Pope

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), a great poet and literary theorist of Britain, is chiefly known for his *The Essay on Criticism* (1711) which is an outstanding specimen of neoclassical theory of criticism. A staunch disciple of the ancient masters, Pope, on the footsteps of Quintilian and Horace, gives estimates 'of nature, wit and his ideas of a good critic.' We might say that Pope was inspired by Vida, Boileau, Rapin, La Bossu, Lord Mulgrave, Lord Roscommon and Dryden. His *Essay* has three parts where in the first, he discusses how he represents nature; the second one deals with his meaning of wit; at last, he talks of the qualities of a good critic. Here, he also mentions how a critic can be endowed with general qualities, what can be particular laws for him and what might be an ideal state for a critic.

For Pope, nature represented humanity and said that one must submit to the forces of nature: 'to subordinate yourself to the commands of the one thing which was the same in all men—the reason... nature had, too, its social implications.' For Pope nature and the classics were the same essentially. Perhaps, he felt and expressed that the ancient masters of literature were true to nature. To describe wit, he would say— 'what oft was thought, but never so well-expressed.' Both Dryden and Pope considered wit to be the 'propriety of thoughts and words'; in other terms, thoughts and words that were elegantly adapted to the subject became good indicators of wit. Pope argues that a critic must know his faults, should understand nature, imbibe the classical essence with clear-sightedness and should be humane, humble in his approach like a student. A critic may hold a work of art as a complete unit and try to seek what the author might have tried to produce. He censures those who are pedants, dishonest and untrue to their objectives, who do not appreciate the writer or the followers of classical precepts; also, the critics who would seek to identify 'the beauty of images, similes and metaphors,, that is the picture drawn in the poem;' and those who pay ultimate attention to diction. He would suggest the critics to inculcate tolerance, discipline and objectivity. To him, a critic should be embellished with'integrity, modesty, tolerance, tactfulness and courage.' Pope has remained true to his own limitations and has added to the repertoire of

criticism by adding - 'Dryden's criticism had licensed outlets for the Romantic temperament; Pope fixed an inescapable limit to it, and one which, though battered, was not effectively done away during the remainder of his century.' Like his predecessors, Pope too, invoked appreciation for Shakespeare— 'if ever any author deserved the name of an original, it was Shakespeare. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from fountains of nature... his characters are so much nature herself, that it is a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of nature.'

Any writer should be assessed by the measures of the old masters and Shakespeare. If a comparison had to be made between the old masters and Shakespeare, it can be said with due consideration that it resembles a neat modern building - one that is elegant and responds to the requirements of the age. As opposed to this, the works of old masters can be compared to structures resembling Gothic architecture which is sturdy, solemn and has endured the test of time. It must be understood that each work (or structure vis-a-vis the comparison) contains enough thought to become several independent works of art. Having said this, it must be remembered that Pope does not agree to the unlicensed free play of imaginative forces and believed that the imagination is the ultimate source and birthplace of any creative endeavour.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. What is the significance of Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry!*
8. Identify the similarity between Ben Jonson's and Aristotle's concept of poetry.

9. What trend did John Dryden establish?
10. What was Pope's view on nature?

1.2.8 Addison and Lessing

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) reigned over the first half of the eighteenth century both as a neo-classical critic and an essayist: the person who was amongst the first to discuss modern psychological criticism. Inspired by Hobbes and Locke, his interpretation of imagination psychologically, paved the way for Hazlitt. Addison, a critic, does not offer his take on poets alone but gives his estimate of a true wit as an adjunct. His approach to criticism is modern. In his morning lectures of Spectator papers, he explains his ideas on literature; but his fame as a critic chiefly rests on 'the pleasures of the imaginations' (411-421) where we find his discussion on the psychology of art which made him the harbinger of the romantic criticism and psychological criticism. Addison says that the pleasure that we derive from sight is conveyed to us through 'image and visible objects': where the primary pleasure arises from our looking at the object directly; the secondary pleasure is caused by memories 'brought into the mind by our image.' He inspires us to study imagination, mind and memories in the following ways:

- Greatness or sublimity —'which frees the mind from the restraint and lifts it to a state of transport.'
- The new or uncommon —' in which surprise or novelty increases interest.'
- Beauty— 'or the harmonious adaptation of parts to the whole. 'Addison's study of imagination' incorporates both: the sublime and novelty besides suggesting 'association of ideas' and revival of 'memories in the minds of the readers.'

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1766), in his critical work *Laocoon*, censures that 'humanistic and romantic attitude of equating all forms of arts' is a wrong notion. Furthermore, 'a gaping cavity is a formal defect in a sculpture and because of the moment of the half-opened mouth, short of the climax is a highly significant and fruitful moment. Visual arts have their own limitations. A man shouting with his face wide open would have been an ugly spectacle in sculpture. The visual arts are limited in what they can convey. Some of what poetry can describe or suggest becomes merely ugly when it is portrayed in painting and sculpture.' Regarding the difference between poetry and painting, he says— 'difference between poetry and painting is a basic difference between a medium of time and medium of space. A medium of space can present the action of such bodies only indirectly and through images of the bodies themselves. Conversely, a medium of time can present action directly and vividly, but can present bodies only indirectly and through actions.' According to him, 'Poetry must try to raise its arbitrary signs to natural signs: that is how it differs from prose and becomes poetry. The means by which this is accomplished are the tone of words, the position of words, measure, figures and tropes and similes. All these make arbitrary signs, more like the natural thing but they do not actually change them into natural signs; consequently all genres of art which use such means must be looked upon as less impressive forms of poetry and the

highest kind of poetry will be that which transforms the arbitrary signs completely into natural signs. That is dramatic poetry.' In his work *Hamburg Dramaturgy* he gives his ideas about play and theatre that most important function of a play would be to stick to the truthfulness and natural rendering of human nature or passions: 'the mimetic use for language or the speech of dramatic persons is more poetically important than the poet's management of language, his rhythms and his figurative imagination.' It is often said that Lessing's views and humanistic approach, being a German, were similar to that of Dr. Johnson in England.

1.2.9 Samuel Johnson

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) is the most prominent of the literary theorists of the eighteenth century England and the greatest neo-classical critic of all times. He was liberal, gifted with appropriate wit and common sense, humanist, realist, classicist, calculative, moralist, scholarly genius, logical and authoritative in his tone. He was strictly against the excesses of romantic exuberance. His approach is natural; his prose logical and lucid. He would castigate those whom he would think fit to deserve censure. Johnson believed that literature should depict 'general nature': a poet should essentially 'divest himself of the prejudices of his agent country.' He invokes praises for 'general nature' in his *Preface to Shakespeare* 'Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representation of general nature. Particular manner can be known to few, and therefore, only a few can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight awhile, by that novelty of which common satiety of life sense us all in quest; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.' He would again say that 'The business of a poet is to examine not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip or describe the difference

shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portrait of nature such prominent and striking features as recalled by the original to every mind, and must

neglect the small discriminations ' It is not only nature that can create a great poet,

for he would argue: 'But the knowledge of nature is only half the task of the poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all modes of life. His character requires him to estimate the happiness and misery of every condition; observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations, and trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude... He must write as the interpreter of nature and legislator of mankind; and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations, as being superior to time and place.' For Johnson, truth and reality are the most important factors that a poet must have: thus Shakespeare's characters are—faithful mirrors of manners and of life.' Shakespeare does not let his characters be ruled 'by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world.' So, his characters 'are the genuine progeny of common humanity such as the world will always supply'. He would not speak in

favour of pastoral poetry as it is artificial— 'an intelligent reader acquainted with the scenes of life sickens at the mention of the crook, the pipe, the sheep and the kids.' And so, in his opinion, pastoral poetry can be relished by 'barbarians in the dawn of literature and children in the dawn of life.'

Regarding the three classical unities observed in the structure of drama, Johnson, with his liberal attitude, being a neo-classicist, remains a propagator of Dryden's ideas. He says that a dramatist ought to create a universe of his theme through a play and the strict adherence to the three classical unities of; time, place and action might prove to be stumbling blocks in the effect that it should produce. He would plead for 'a more open minded and flexible conception of decorum, based directly on nature itself.' He also advocates for tragi-comedies as they are the mixture of all the elements of life. He was deeply concerned with the end of a literature; that is why he supports the cause of tragi-comedies because they give instruction with pleasure. Shakespeare, he found, met the requirements of a good author in this regard: 'Shakespeare's plays are not in the vigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time the reveller is hastening to his wine and the mourner burying his friend, in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.'

In his much acclaimed biographical criticism called *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81), Johnson speaks against the liberty that the metaphysical poets enjoyed, not to forget that it was he who gave them that name. While he did not approve of the free reign that was given to them, he was not opposed to their poetry and defended them on several occasions. Owing to the practical criticism of Johnson, it is observed that he speaks about 'nature, function and value of poetry.' He criticized Milton's *Lycidas* as it compromised 'real passion' for remote allusions and obscure opinions. He frequently used historical, biographical and comparative methods of criticism while

evaluating either an author or his composition. In his *Essay on Dryden*, he expresses what he thinks should be the end of a work of art, 'It is not comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated but by their general effects and ultimate results which is easy to note a weak line and write one more vigorous in his plays, to find a happiness of expression in the original and transplant it by force into the version, but what is given to the parts may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary though the critic may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurements and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That move is good in vain which the reader throws away. He only is the master who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages perused with eagerness and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as a traveller casts upon the departing day.' Johnson never forgets the historical past and he supports this cause while mentioning Shakespeare's genius, 'we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them.' Samuel Johnson's methods of application in literary

criticism met with further development during the nineteenth century. He was a master of comparative and biographical methods of criticism; propagator of humanism as a literary theorist and a perfect combination of classicism and practical commonsense.

1.2.10 William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth was the leading voice among the elder Romantics and a literary theorist of excellence. As a critic he laid stress on imagination, poetic diction and the origin of poetry. His book *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800 onwards) bears the impacts of Romantic criticism which is sharply distinguished from earlier dominant neoclassical traits. It 'raised a wall between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it dated a new era as it served to make forever intelligible the dividing line between two regions in criticism that might otherwise have seemed to flow into one another. We do not often have such dividing walls.' Ever since Spenser or Chaucer, the English poetic diction has been a subject of debate and many words came to be accepted or rejected as per the need of the hour, or the choice of the mind which has been utilizing it.

There was a sharp difference between the classical diction and the romantic use of words, as we hear through Thomas Gray in his letter to Richard West— 'the language of the age is never the language of poetry, except among the French, whose verse, where the thought and image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself, to which almost everyone that has written has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivations: nay, sometimes words of their composition or invention. Shakespeare and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former.' Classical poetic-diction makes use of soft-spoken words and idioms together with scholarly vocabulary; it would be different than the language used by the common mass or conventions; and the romantic poetic-diction would seek for spontaneity, natural expressions, direct words which evoke out human passions.

Wordsworth became the first poet who withstood slavery to neo-classical vogue of diction calling them—'adulterated', 'distorted', 'vicious' and 'glossy'. He praised the simple and realistic language of Cowper and Burns. To him, their poetic-diction— 'the gaudiness and inane phraseology' was far away from the expression or breath of the common people and thus not acceptable. "There neither is nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition' in other words, poetry should be free from constraints as it must flow at its own pace. It should be an emblem of nature — 'I have all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject; consequently, I hope that there is in these poems little falsehood of description, and that my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance.' Thus, Wordsworth's subject-matter and diction were close to what originality can be. He would produce something that could be 'humble and rustic' He objects to neoclassical poetic-diction which incorporates 'neo-classic stylistic devices, against personification, periphrases, Latinisms, inversions, antithesis and grammatical licenses.' Wordsworth felt that the ancient masters used figurative and metaphorical language which made their poetry powerful and natural. Figurative and metaphorical essence in language, therefore, is original. He gives the definition of poet in his *Preface*; he says 'He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and

tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them.'

To him, the poet is most importantly a man communicating to his fellowmen, and poetry 'is the image of man and nature.' He believes that poetry commences with pleasure and destined at wisdom: 'A great poet ought to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feelings, to render their feelings more sane, pure and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things.' The craft of poetry is to instill sympathy in the readers. It should work as a true correspondence of the feelings that the poet has conveyed to his readers. In Wordsworth's definition, the process of creation is scientific and poetry 'is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.' The tranquillity gradually disappears and emotion, related to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. He believes in controlling one's emotions and suggests that a poet ought to revise his compositions which must exhibit his 'observation, sensibility, imagination, fancy and reflection.' He once said, 'my first expression I often find detestable; and it is frequently true of second words as of second thoughts, that they are best.' Wordsworth said that poetry is a difficult art, the

success of which depends on the poet's efforts and capability and composition

of verse is infinitely more of an art than men are prepared to believe; and absolute success in it depends upon innumerable minutiae.' His definition for imagination varies: on the one hand it is a 'faculty of arbitrary recall and willful combination of images;' on the other, it becomes as prolific as nature which 'moulds, endues, abstracts, combines.' Wordsworth differs from Coleridge when he speaks about imagination and fancy. In his *Preface* of 1815, he has given the psychological explanation of both the terms. Fancy is a faculty which deals with 'fixities and definites,' and imagination, with 'plastic, the pliant and the indefinite.'

Coleridge, however, differs from Wordsworth regarding his theory of poetic-diction and its three aspects: first, he objects that the language of prose and metrical compositions cannot be the same; second, he asserts that a particular image can be used either in good or bad manner by many poets; and third, he says that education supports to create a poet because the language of poetry cannot be a rustic's language.

1.2.11 Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) is considered as one of the most eminent poets and literary theorists of the Romantic Age. He is held to be as high as Aristotle or Longinus in his significance. He has been seen as the forerunner of the modern science of semantics. I. A. Richards in his book *Coleridge on Imagination* mentions 'With Coleridge we step across the threshold of a general theoretical study of language capable of opening to us new powers over our minds comparable to those that systematic physical inquiries are giving us over our environment. The step across was of the same type as that which took Galileo into the modern world. It requires the shift from a pre-occupation with the What, 'When and How' of language. The problems of poetry became for Coleridge, sometimes, interesting as problems with a structure of their own. They ceased to be mere voids waiting to be filled. The interest shifted from the answers to the questions and with that a new era of criticism began. Beyond the old tasks of reaffirming ancient conclusions and defending them from foolish interpretations, an illimitable field of work has become accessible.' Coleridge is often held as a brilliant critic dealing with existentialism, German transcendentalism and modern psychological criticism later theorized by Freud. Inspired by the German critics, he studied the forces of imagination and psychology in English literature. His discussions were structured to represent a unique systematic unity. His major critical texts are *Biographia Literaria* (1817), *Lectures on Shakespeare*, *Anima Poetae*, *Table-Talk* and *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. Coleridge's main interest lies in the process of creation which springs from human nature, which is why he studied psychology. He has investigated the origin of poetry and says that a poet 'brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity.'

In *Biographia Literaria*, he theorizes poetry and imagination as significant and complex processes. The first part of the book deals with his metaphysical and philosophical concepts. He gives his views about beauty and in the second part, i.e. the thirteenth and the fourteenth chapters are his major theoretical outpourings. While the thirteenth chapter deals with his ideas about imagination and fancy; the fourteenth chapter comprises of his views on poetry.

Discussing poetry, Coleridge says, 'The office of philosophical disquisition consists in just distinction; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is

the technical process of philosophy. But having done so, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the result of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object being proposed. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly.

So much for the superficial form, the immediate purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in the works of science;

or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may result from the attainment of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end. In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blessed indeed is the state of society in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the Bathyllus, even of an Anacreon, or the Alexis of Virgil, from disgust and aversion!

....The final definition then, so deduced, maybe thus worded. A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species— (having *this* object in common with it) — it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*.

..... The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgement of all countries, in equally denying praises of a just poem, on the one hand, to a series of striking lines or distichs, each of which, absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself, becomes disjoined from its context, and forms a separate whole, instead of a harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself... But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of Plato, and Bishop Taylor, and Burnet's Theory of the Earth, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem... Yet if a harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved in keeping with poetry; and this cannot be otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement, as will partake of one, though not a peculiar property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal attention than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in some of the remarks on the fancy and imagination in the early part of this work. What is poetry? — is so nearly the same question with,

what is a poet? That the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and the emotions of the poet's own mind.

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He fuses one into the other by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of imagination.' Coleridge's quest is aimed towards the nature of poetry; he discusses about the difference between the language of poetry and prose, form and content; also, he talks about the organic unity and its ultimate end. He does not appreciate a poem which is composed of a few prominent lines but fails to impress as a unified whole. A poem is equated with a journey, and the reader should have the effect— 'by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of journey itself.' Coleridge's definition of poetry is a little confusing: 'a poem of any length neither can be nor ought to be, all poetry.' The creative process by a poet brings out the whole soul into action in order to produce a poem. He believes that imagination which is 'secondary' and it reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities as it integrates and synthesizes. The 'esemplastic power' of the imagination produces poetry— it has that unifying, reconciling and synthesizing power' which enables all the faculties to be brought into play simultaneously, each playing its proper part, to produce a complex synthesis of comprehension.'

Coleridge's aesthetic and literary theory of primary and secondary imagination is his most valuable contribution to the realm of criticism. In his *Biographia Literaria* he says he talks of 'repeated meditations' the led him to suspect 'that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power.' According to him, Milton had a highly imaginative mind while Cowley's was fanciful. He believed if he could establish the existence of the two faculties, it would be easy to determine the nomenclature, imagination, it seems, is a quality of the soul; thus, he contents himself with the philosophical basis of Imagination. He says 'I am convinced that a true system of philosophy— the science of life— is best taught in poetry.' He quotes Kant's philosophic effusions. In chapter XII, Coleridge mentions ten theses which are related to consciousness which are— 'i. Truth presupposes a knower and a known; ii. Many truths are derived from others; iii. There must be an ultimate ground, 'self grounded, unconditional, and known by its own light;' iv. It is unique; v. it is neither objective nor subjective, it is a fusion of both; vi. A fusion Coleridge calls the Self or I am; vii. It has a will to act; viii. This is neither finite nor infinite; ix. It occurs in the reconciling and recurring actions of life and at this juncture philosophy merges into religion, x. 'a theism based on the certainty that individual must be a modification of the higher consciousness.' Ultimately, all submerge into one: 'The beautiful, contemplated in its essentials, that is in *kind and* not in degree, is that in which the *many*, still seems as many, becomes one. Take a familiar instance, one of a thousand. The frost on a window pane has by accident crystallized into a striking resemblance of a tree or as a weed. With what pleasure we trace the parts, and their relation to each other, and to the whole!' The artist is supposed to feel for the parts and the whole equally: 'The sense

of beauty subsists in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole; exciting an immediate and absolute complacency, without the intervention of any interest, sensual or intellectual' He says, 'the imagination, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception... Fancy, on the contrary, has no counters to play with, but fixities and definites... Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space from the law of association.' For Coleridge, fancy has a lower potency or capability than imagination. His works *Table Talk*, *Miscellanies*, *Aesthetic and Literary*, *The Anima Poetae* and *The Letters* bear his impact of practical criticism.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

11. State any two ways in which Addison urges us to study the imagination, mind and memories.
12. What was Samuel Johnson's style of writing?
13. Identify the three areas that were important for William Wordsworth.
14. What was the unique quality of Coleridge's concept of poetry?

4 KEY TERMS

- **Criticism:** Analysis of a work of art
- **Emancipate:** Free from social, political, or legal restraints
- **Imitation:** Copy of an original; imitating
- **Imbue:** Fill or inspire with (ideals or principles)
- **Imbibe:** Absorb
- **Contemporaneous:** Happening at the same time
- **Ludicrous:** Ridiculous
- **Mimesis:** To imitate
- **Incapacitate:** To injure
- **Sublime:** Uplifting/awe-inspiring
- **Repertoire:** Range

5 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses his views on poetry and drama, based on the concepts of Greek art; wherein he analyses subjects such as 'the spirit of literature, poetic truth, difference between art and morality, and the study of the end of art.'
2. In Aristotle's view, comedy is lighter in its treatment of the subject as it traces human follies and weakness.
3. *On the Sublime* is a valuable literary piece of rhetorical criticism which is highly important because of its ideas of art. The work is often viewed as a beautiful combination of classicism and romanticism where the word sublime embodies the authenticity of unfathomable depth: 'it is well to keep it (sublime) with a very careful preliminary explanation that the Longinian sublime is not sublimity in its narrower sense, but all that deserves the highest critical encomium (standard) either in prose or poetry.'
4. The absence of Aristotle came to witness a great depression in the field of criticism where after his death, mostly, critics were concerned with technicality, grammar and rhetoric. It was a phase of decadence in Greece. It was in this period that learning passed on from Greece to Rome when the text of the great Aristotle moved from Athens to Rome through General Marius in 85 BC. He believed that poetry is meant to instruct and delight and stressed on common sense.
5. The period between Longinus and Dante is called the Dark Age: the age of Christian ascendancy when the art of poetry was looked down upon.
6. Julius Caesar Scaliger's primary concern in the sphere of literary criticism was the importance of human speech.
7. Sidney wrote *Apology for Poetry* in defence of Stephan Gosson's anti-Renaissance proclamation *The Abuse of Poetry*. His *Defence of Poesy* (1595) is the most characteristic representative of Renaissance critical writing.
8. Ben Jonson believed poetry is the finest of all arts: 'the pen is more noble than the pencil. Like

Aristotle, he follows the theory of imitation, but also blends the beauty of imagination into it which together makes poetry the most beautiful of all art forms.

9. John Dryden (1631 -1700) established the neo-classical trend of English criticism and remained a pioneer critic, translator, playwright, poet and satirist for the entire restoration period.
10. For Pope, nature represented humanity and said that one must submit to the forces of nature.
11. Addison inspires us to study imagination, mind and memories in the following ways:
 - Greatness or sublimity, 'Which frees the mind from the restraint and lifts it to a state of transport.'
 - The new or uncommon,' in which surprise or novelty increases interest.'
- 12 . Dr Samuel Johnson was strictly against the excesses of romantic exuberance. His approach is natural; his prose logical and lucid. He would castigate those whom he would think fit to deserve censure. Johnson believed that literature should depict 'general nature': a poet should essentially 'divest himself of the prejudices of his agent country.'
13. The three areas which were important for William Wordsworth as a critic were imagination, poetic diction and the origin of poetry.
14. The problems of poetry became for Coleridge, sometimes, interesting as problems with a structure of their own. They ceased to be mere voids waiting to be filled. The interest shifted from the answers to the questions and with that a new era of criticism began.
15. PercyByssheShelley's(17924822)criticaltextZ)e/enceq/Poei^(1821)displays the romantic values in the virtues of poetic creation; he speaks against the neoclassical trend in his treatise which was written in reply to Sir Thomas Peacock's *Four Ages of Poetry* (1820).
16. In his poetry, Matthew Arnold laid emphasis on deriving goodness from the classical theorists of literature of ancient Greece and Rome.
17. Walter Pater believed in 'art for art's sake'. This according to him was the appreciation of the innate qualities of works of art, in contrast to the prevailing tendency to evaluate them on the basis of their moral and educational value.'
18. The underlying principle of Marxist criticism was that the mode of production of material life determined the social, political and intellectual processes of life.
19. I.A. Richards (1893-1979) was the pioneer of psychological criticism in English literature which was scientific in nature. He speaks of analyzing poetry scientifically and speculating over the precise meaning of language, words, images and metaphor.
20. T.S. Eliot's three works of criticism were *Theoretical Criticism*, *Descriptive and*

Practical Criticism and Theological Essays.

21. As per Derrida, the substitution of one signifier for the other is called a 'metaphor'. According to him, language possesses metaphorical capacities.

1.6 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Which figure served as the link between the Dark Age and the Renaissance?
2. Comment on Dante's trend of using the native vernacular as the language of poetry and criticism.
3. Identify the style in which the *Apology of Poetry* was written.
4. Write a short note on the contribution of Coleridge to the discussion of poetry.
5. Comment on Arnold as the first modern critic of substance.
6. Explain 'art for art's sake'.
7. Recapitulate the essence of Marxist philosophy.
8. Give a brief argument on the relevance of history in T.S. Eliot's concept of poetry.
9. Explain the theory of deconstruction.
10. Explain the importance of the metaphor in Derrida's conceptualization of language.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the importance of rhetoric in Aristotle critical views.
2. Comment on the intervention of Horace post the Aristotelian era.
3. Write a short note on John Dryden as a literary critic.
4. What is the essence of Pope's theory of literary criticism?
5. Discuss Eliot as the most important critic of the modernist trends during the modern age.

1.7 FURTHER READING

Blanares, H., A History of Literary Criticism, Macmillan, London, 1991.

Hall, Vernon, *A Short History of Literary Criticism, The Merlin Press Ltd., London, 1963.*

UNIT 2 ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Classical Literature
- 2.3 Plato: A Brief Biographical Sketch
- 2.4 Aristotle: A Brief Biographical Sketch
- 2.5 Aristotle's Theory of Imitation
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- 2.7 Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy
- 2.8 The Six Elements of Tragedy
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- 2.9 Catharsis or Pleasure Proper to Tragedy
- 2.10 Aristotelian View of Mimesis
- 2.11 Different Genres: Epic, Tragedy and Comedy
- 2.12 A Review of Aristotle's Poetics
- 2.13 Summary
- 2.14 Key Terms
- 2.15 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.16 Questions and Exercises
- 2.17 Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The difference between modern and ancient literature lies in the fact that the ancients could not store their work of art due to which they had to perform and respond at the same time. Due to these limitations, the ancients emphasized closeness between the reader and the writer. The imaginative creation of the ancient Greeks display some concepts which are different from their modern counterparts. An individual artist, poet or playwright could not do away with the traditions laid down by their predecessors. In this way, novelty or individual style had little scope. Given that new ideas had to become part of the tradition already existing, highly individualistic views and ideas were not welcome in ancient society. The credit of originality of ideas and inspiration was assigned to the muses. The artist was merely an imitator of the muses who followed their lead and produced only that which was good. As such, there was no room for innovation and experimentation. The advocates of 'art for art's sake' would have been shocked in those times. The creative artist, then, was supposed to please by emotional arousal.

Aristotle was considered to be the first person who formulated the study of 'logic' and his teachings had a profound influence on many disciplines such as rhetoric, physics, politics, ethics and notably on the physiological studies and linguistics. Aristotle was the first scientific literary critic and his literary criticism was made available to us in *Poetics*. It is a short treatise of twenty-six chapters and forty-five pages. It is not very coherent and its structure is not clear. It provides Aristotle's views on epic poetry and tragic drama. It provides a lot of information about Greek literature. The *Poetics* is chiefly concerned with tragedy, which is regarded as the highest poetic form. In it, Aristotle has formulated the basic principles of dramatic art, which cannot be overlooked.

In this unit, you will learn about this period of English literature which was represented by a more traditional and rigid outlook towards art. This was a period where new ideas and individualism were not encouraged and artists were seen more as an extension of their muses.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand classical criticism with special reference to Plato and Aristotle, their lives, works and ideas
- Analyse Plato's views towards artistic representation and his theories of imitation and mimesis
- Analyse Aristotle's reason for departing from Plato's basic notion with regard to artistic representation and mimesis
- Appreciate Aristotle's view on tragedy and analyse the six elements of tragedy
- Critically appreciate the way music was used in ancient Greece and study the concept of catharsis

2.2 CLASSICAL LITERATURE

A general perception prevails, that anything which is in accordance with the ancient Greek and Roman literature is classical. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines 'classical' as relating to or influenced by the art and literature of ancient Greece and Rome. Classics are works of literature which has stood the test of time. In the field of literary criticism, the work of Plato and Aristotle in Greece, and Horace and Longinus in Rome formed the basis of classical criticism. Now the question arises as to what is criticism. Common man's perception is that criticism is a kind of judgement. R.A Scot James has written that every artistic creation - whether a poem or a painting - involves the artist's criticism of life. Literary criticism, however, is different from the artist's criticism of life because the poet creates whereas the critic examines and appreciates what has been created.

2.3 PLATO: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Plato expresses his views on art and poetry in Book X of the *The Republic*. His main concern is with constructing an ideal state and the ideal citizen. He was a firm believer in the reality created by God. For him, the true reality was that of abstraction. He is against imitation because the poet and the painter imitate the appearance of the 'Idea' and not the 'idea' itself. In this endeavour, they cannot help in the realization of truth, which according to Plato, is the ultimate aim of the ideal citizen. The poet or the painter tried to imitate the appearance of the 'abstract' or the 'idea' and was, therefore, thrice removed from reality. For him, the 'idea' alone is real and painters are simply images of that 'idea'.

The following lines are taken from *The Republic*, Book X, 605.

Then we can fairly take the poet and set him beside the painter. He resembles him both because his works have a low degree of truth and because he appeals to a low element in the mind. We are therefore quite right to refuse to admit to a properly run state because he stirs up and encourages and strengthens the lower element in the mind

An analysis of Plato's argument enables us to understand that he regarded poetry inferior because it was a hindrance in the making of an ideal State. Further, it was simply an imitation of an imitation.

Poetry has the same effect on us when it represents sex and anger, and the other desires and feelings of pleasure and pain, which normally accompany our actions. It feeds them when they ought to be starved and makes them control us when we ought, in the interest of our own welfare and happiness, to control them. (Republic, Book X, 606).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is classical literature?
2. What is literary criticism?
3. Analyse Plato's views on poetry.

2.4 ARISTOTLE: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aristotle practised the dissociation of art from morality, the first in ancient Greece. He examined the nature of *poiesis* and established that poetry was not a hindrance in the making of an ideal citizen. He formulated aesthetic principles to which poetry must conform and proved that poetry was a true and serious work of art.

Although Aristotle was Plato's pupil, he differed from his master in many ways. His approach was more scientific than Plato's. In his pursuit of an objective analysis of things, he regarded 'mimesis' as a healthy exercise and not as something which was a mere copying of the truth. Instead of assigning an inferior status to poetry, Aristotle suggested that poetry is concerned with a higher truth. Poetry is an imitation of life, and not a mindless replication of

day to day activities. The poet tries to present life with its universal significance. As a result, the poet describes life not as it is but as it should be. Next, the function of the poet is not to enumerate the events that have taken place but to describe what might happen or what is probable. He also distinguishes between poetry and history and assigns greater importance to poetry which deals with the universal truths than history which is concerned with particular facts. Poetry,

therefore, is more philosophical and of greater importance than history. Since poetry deals with the universal, it deals with what is probable. The poet lends a charm and universality even to historical facts and personages. In a theatrical performance, the characters need to be true copies of their historical counterparts. The poet can either give some more attributes or remove some according to the need of the plot. But in this endeavour, he definitely imparts universality to his characters. According to Aristotle, the psychological peculiarities of some characters might not be appropriate for presentation on stage or drama. He believes that the poetry should reveal psychological generalities and not peculiarities. Poetry deals with the universal and not the accidental. To serve this purpose the poet must choose only those aspects of life which are representative of life. The ability to see what is of universal relevance is a prerequisite for being a poet. Anything which is arbitrary or peculiar is not fit for poetic treatment as it loses the element of universality. This is Aristotle's answer to Plato's argument

that all imitation is futile as it is thrice removed from reality and poetry is of low as

it also imitates.

Aristotle also propounded that 'probable impossibilities are to be preferred to improbable possibilities' and that 'a convincing impossibility is preferable to a non-convincing possibility'.

[*Poetics* chap.IX, p 68, chap.25, p 73, trans. T S Dorsch].

Yet another contribution of Aristotle was the unities of time, place and action which were proposed in accordance with the limitations of the audience. Later on, during the neo-classical era, these unities became famous as the three unities. His view on 'Catharsis in tragedy' requires a distinctive emotional response (arousal of fear and pity) in the audience which led to the proper purgation of human emotions.

Aristotle maintains that each genre of poetry has its own characteristics whether it is epic or tragedy and comedy. His attempt is democratic in doing so, although, he ends up considering tragedy superior to epic. In a tragedy, the tragic hero is of immense importance as he is a man of status and his actions should be able to produce the desired emotional effect, i.e. arouse fear and pity in the spectators. His fall is the cause of some error. The desirable hero is a man remarkable for neither virtue nor vice, for neither justice nor depravity, but a man whose fall is due to some error or weakness, some hamartia (Ibid, chap. 13).

Now we know that the two great masters of classicism, Plato and Aristotle: the teacher and the pupil - have propounded contrasting views about the poet and poetry. While Plato's strong reservation against poetry is rooted in his bias for a metaphysical and Utopian society,

Aristotle has left no stone unturned in establishing the dignity and relevance of poetry and tragedy. Moreover, Aristotle's ideas on these topics constitute the beginning of literary criticism in the classical era and he becomes the father of literary criticism.

Aristotle's Poetics

Aristotle bestrode antiquity like an intellectual colossus. According to J. S. Barnes, 'No man before him had contributed as much to learning. No man after him could hope to rival his achievement.' The Homeric poems written by him reveal a society grappling with interpretative problems, and pious Greeks (Socrates, the best among them as seen in Plato's *Apology*), who blindly believed that oracles did not lie. The Sophists of the fifth century further complicated things by probing into epistemological questions. In brief, in the second half of the fifth century, a crisis had been created in the study of philosophy and the public life of Greeks. This state was equally disturbing for literary criticism, in the manner that the traditionally accepted terms of reference— especially moral or evaluative terms—could be extended to cover almost any kind of self-interested behaviour. In this state of dry despair, it was Socrates who made a new beginning with his consistent demand for definition—Plato joined the Socratic circle around the age of twenty. Later, Aristotle, at the age of seventeen joined Plato's Academy and enriched the Greek philosophical and literary critical tradition with his incisive critique of Plato.

In the Academy, Aristotle learnt that '...knowledge must be systematic and unified. Its structure is given by logic, and its unity rests at the bottom of the study that is related to the nature of being and existence. It is essentially explanatory. It pours into deep philosophical problems'. He divided knowledge into three major categories, which are as follows:

1. Productive knowledge, which is concerned with making things such as rhetoric and poetics
2. Practical knowledge/Science, which is focussed on action, such as politics and ethics
3. Theoretical science whose function is to explore truths like philosophy or theology, mathematics and physics

Aristotle's *Poetics* deals primarily with the productive knowledge, as well as that of the theoretical besides dealing with epistemological questions. From the point of view of dramatic theory, it consists of many distinct elements, some of which are mentioned below:

- Mimesis
- Different genres o Epic
 - o Tragedy -Plot
 - Character -Thought
 - Diction
 - Melody -Spectacle
 - o Comedy

- *Catharsis*

The main themes in Aristotle's *Poetics* are:

- Art in general as imitation and how different forms of art differ in means of imitation
- Difference in object of imitation
- Difference in manner of imitation

- Lyrical poetry and tragedy
- Comedy and epic poetry
- Tragedy and its parts
- Plot
 - Beginning, middle and end . ◦ Magnitude
 - Organic wholeness of plot
- Unity of subject
- Poetry is imitation of what ought to be
- Simple and complex plots
- Elements of complex plot ◦ Peripeteia
 - Discovery ◦ Suffering
- Divisions of tragedy
- Protagonist or the tragic hero ◦ Misfortune
 - Change of fortune
- Effects of tragedy
- Character requirement
- Discovery
- Construction of plot and diction
- Complication and denouement
- Diction and thought ◦ Rhetoric
- Diction
 - Parts of speech
- Diction
 - Metaphor
- Qualities of diction
 - Clarity

- o Distinction
- Epic
- Nature of 'Representation of Reality' and 'Evaluation of the Poetic Art'
- Comparison of epic and tragedy

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. What were the contrasting views of poetry given by Aristotle and Plato?
5. What are the three famous unities propagated by Aristotle?

2.5 ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF IMITATION

Epic poetry and tragedy, comedy also and dithyrambic poetry and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects - the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.

(*Poetics* by Aristotle - <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/lyre>)

With the acute power of analysis and reasoning, Aristotle has tried to redefine art and poetry and assigned the highest place to tragedy, among all the genres. Earlier Aristotle's epic poetry was regarded as the most sublime genre. However, Aristotle has given very strong reasons to support the cause of tragedy as superior to epic: 'And superior it is, because it has all the epic elements - it may use the epic meter - with music and spectacular effects as important accessories and they produce the most vivid pleasures.' (*Poetics*: XXVI).

Aristotle begins his *Poetics* with detailed discussions on imitation. He argues that all genres of literature or dithyrambic poetry are 'modes of imitation'. All these forms of literature are distinct from each other because mimesis is achieved differently. In each case either the 'medium' or 'object' or the 'manner or mode' of imitation is different.

Aristotle then goes on to define that in arts imitation is made possible by rhythm, language and harmony. The painter uses colour and form to produce imitation whereas voice is used by the musician for this very purpose.

As we have already seen the concept of mimesis has been mentioned by Plato in *Republic*. But the contempt which he shows for poets undergoes transformation in the hands of his pupil. According to Aristotle the meaning of mimesis is imitation or copying but with a difference. In place of the ever-elusiveness of Plato's idea of permanent reality, Aristotle argues that

the artist's creation incorporates certain universal elements and imparts learning and pleasure. In *Poetics* Aristotle says:

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of the living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. (*Poetics*: IV).

Learning according to Aristotle, has always given a lot of pleasure to men in general.' Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring

(*Poetics*AV).

He thus establishes that imitation is a natural action of human beings and in doing so the artist explores the Truth. Herein we find points of differences between Plato's and Aristotle's views on mimesis. Imitation was a transcendental reality for the former whereas for the latter it was a natural phenomenon. Rather, Aristotle goes beyond this and maintains that Art helps Nature in the attainment of perfection in Art and the artist strives to 'imitate things as they ought to be.' (*Poetics* XXXV). The

phrase 'ought to be' is very significant as it distinguishes between what is and what *ought to be*. Many critics feel that Aristotle's creative artist imitates nature with great care. He picks the permanent and the essential features and discards the near essentials and transitory features. Over the centuries, Aristotle's view of the art and imitating nature has been analyzed and interpreted variously. The Renaissance, the Restoration and the nineteenth century critics have sought inspiration from this theory.

2.6 THE MEDIA OF MIMESIS

Aristotle begins his discussion of mimesis with the fact that epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, flute of lyres are all products of imitation. The difference lies in the mode, manner and object of imitation that results in different forms of poetry. And the three medias which are used in isolation or in varied combinations are rhythm, harmony and language.

For as there are persons, who by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of colour and form, or again by the voice, so in the art above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language or 'harmony' either singly or combined.

(*Poetics*: I).

, After discussing the three mediums through which the imitation is possible, Aristotle talks about the different combinations used by the artists in different art forms:

Thus in the music of the flute and of the lyre, 'harmony' and the 'rhythm' are employed; also in other arts, such as that of the shepherd's pipe, which are essentially similar to these. In dancing the rhythm alone is used without harmony for event dancing imitates character, emotions, and action by rhythmical movement.

(*Poetics*: I).

The painter or the sculptor uses colour and other forms but in the performing arts such as dance, music and theatre rhythm, harmony and language are used. Rhythm and notes are used in flute and lyre whereas only rhythm is used in dance.

Just as music and dance employ harmony and rhythm (either alone or together); the literary artist imitates character, emotion and action through language:

There is another art which imitates by means of language alone and that either in prose or verse - which verse again, either combine different meters or consists of but one kind - but this has hitherto been without a name.

(*Poetics*: I).

Both prose and verse imitation takes place through language only. In verse, the poet is free to combine different meters or use any one. However, all the three means, i.e., rhythm, language and harmony are employed in dithyrambic and elegiac poetry and tragedy and comedy. The only difference between in dithyrambic and nomic poetry is that all the three elements are used in combination whereas in tragedy and comedy, they are used simultaneously. There are again, some arts which employ all the above mentioned means namely rhythm, tune and meter. These are dithyrambic, and nomic poetry as well as tragedy and comedy. The difference between the two is

while dithyrambic poetry uses all available combinations, tragedy and comedy uses only one at a time. The rules formulated for tragedy and comedy can easily be applied to all other forms of drama. The way in which the three elements work in drama does not find mention in *Poetics*.

We can gather some information about the use of language from this discussion of language as one of the six elements of tragedy. We will discuss this at large while discussing Aristotle's theory of tragedy. Here it would suffice to say that lexis or language in theatre can be categorized into two parts: the spoken word and the sung word. Since the spoken word was not commonly used in ancient theatre, lexis meant a studied variation in pitch which could range from intoned speech to a beautiful song. The two aspects of language are: dramatic discourse and its linguistic and phonological aspects. Aristotle was least concerned about the former and talked about the latter at great length. Harmony (*melopoiia*) and rhythm are hardly touched upon in *Poetics*.

To sum up we can say that Aristotle gave a noble idea of mimesis to artistic creation although he thought that it was false imitation of the real world. Aristotle improvised it by saying that it is the most natural way of learning and creating a better world for ourselves.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

6. What is the meaning of dithyrambic poetry?
7. As per Aristotle, what are the two aspects of language in theatre?

2.7 ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF TRAGEDY

Unlike modern theatre, Greek theatre was not secular. In essence, Greek theatre has always been rooted in the fundamental processes of life. Plays were usually performed during festivals to remember gods and ancestors. Theatrical performances and presentation techniques were such that it would suit the spirit of revelry and delight. Greek drama has always treated dance and music as an integral part of theatrical performances. No drama representations could be possible without them and the arousal of the strong aesthetic of emotion was later on realized as Kath-arsis (catharsis). Since modern theatres were not available, theatrical performances took place in temples like Asklepios at Epidaurus.

As we know western aesthetics and criticism has always drawn inspiration and started debates from Aristotle. It is therefore essential to locate the focal points of Aristotle's theories. *Poetics* opens with an introduction to mimesis. Imitation is an instinct which enables artistic creation and results in aesthetic pleasure. Secondly Aristotle suggests that how the various genres of poetry are different from each other. Next, he throws light on the six elements of the tragedy of which plot and character are the most touched upon. The other four elements of tragedy are: thought, language, music and spectacle. Last but not the least is catharsis or proper purgation of human emotions which form the basis of western critical tradition.

Let us begin with Aristotle's definition of tragedy: 'tragedy then is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude. In language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear affecting the proper purgation of these emotions.'

To understand his views on tragedy, we can divide it as a) the imitation of action, b) which is serious, carries magnitude and is complete in itself, c) its language has all the artistic accessories to make it beautiful, however, these ornaments are used alternatively, one at a time, d) the genre is drama and not a narrative, e) the purpose of incidents is to arouse fear and pity, whereby to provide an outlet for these emotions. He tries to explain that 'language embellished' means it should have rhythm, harmony and song. The phrase 'several kinds in separate parts' suggests that verse should be used in some parts and in others songs can be used to produce the desired effect. This definition incorporates the nature of tragedy and

the function of it. The first four points throw light on the nature of tragedy - it is an invitation, an action must be serious, language should be an artistic accomplishment and it should not be in narrative form - whereas the last point indicates arousal of pity or fear, i.e., the function of tragedy. Aristotle accepts the imitative theory of art not in the philosophical sense of the term. He maintains that the artist imitates both the outer reality and an idea and ideal in his mind. The essence of Aristotle's tragedy is 'the artificial reproduction of things in real life - recreation by recreation' (Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's *Poetics* by F L Lucas, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1957). By imitation is meant 'men in action'. The nature of action has to be 'serious'. By 'serious' he means something which does not include comic elements. The mixture of the tragic and comic was known in ancient Greece. A play could either be a tragedy or a comedy. It could not use both the elements.

There comes the phrase 'certain magnitude' which hints at the size and proportion of the tragedy. Any object has to be in the right size and shape to be called beautiful. Beauty is lost if it is too small Or too big. In the absence of modern facilities, plays had to be of such size and effects that they could be seen and understood at once. However, Aristotle does not ascribe any fixed size for the plot. (We will have the detailed discussion of plot while discussing the six elements of tragedy).

By 'complete' Aristotle refers to the proper building of the story, i.e., a suitable beginning; its development with a proper middle and then a gradual completion (end). The beginning should be such that it has something after it, and the end should be such that which has a lot before it but nothing after it. A tragedy has to be dramatic in form. Aristotle feels that it should be distinct from narrative, although today a novel or a story or even an epic is dramatically presented on stage. But when Aristotle says that a tragedy has to be different from a narrative, he means that tragedy has to be in dialogue form as it is to be enacted. The tragic sentiments are pity and fear and function of tragedy is to rouse them. The tragic hero is neither utterly deprived nor pre-eminently virtuous. The tragic hero is basically good and his misfortune is not because of any moral flaw but due to an error of judgement. The feeling of pity and fear are aroused among the audience because his misfortune is undeserved. Then there is a universal appeal in the character of the tragic hero. In other words, the audience should be able to identify with the tragic hero while pitying him for his fate.

2.8 THE SIX ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY

Six elements mentioned earlier in the previous sections work together in the formation of an organic whole - the tragedy. They are intertwined in such a manner that they cannot be separated from each other. The beauty of this lies in their unity. If one of its aspects is missing, the charm and appeal is gone. Again, it is for the sake of convenience that Aristotle defines them as internal or external. Plot, character and thoughts are considered to be internal because they are not as obvious as the other aspects - music, spectacle and diction - of a tragedy. A perfect harmony between the so-called internal and external aspects can only lead to the

making of a perfect tragedy. None of these elements are more important and indispensable than the other. At this point, one can think as to why Aristotle regards myth as 'the soul of tragedy' if every other aspect is equally important. Myth is the only binding force which holds every other element intact. The complete performance of the play can get nullified in the absence of myth. The play as a whole is a very complicated structure where speaking, moving, dancing, gesturing and music have to go one by one in different combinations according to the requirement of the theatrical performance. Even then Aristotle regards story or the plot as the basic foundation of a tragedy upon which many complex structures are raised.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. State Aristotle's notion of tragedy as a 'complete' story.
9. What does internal and external components mean Aristotle's *Poetics*?
10. What was Aristotle's understanding of myth?

2.8.1 Plot (Myth)

Plot or myth, in Greek tragedy simply meant a story, (an informal English translation would be plot) and was described by Aristotle as 'the soul of tragedy' (though Aristotle points out that the other elements are not less essential). The myth is the most significant element of the text as it binds together other elements of the tragedy.

The aim of a tragedy, according to Aristotle, is to present the journey of the protagonist from one state of being to another through a series of episodes focussing on an action. Plot should be an organic whole, having magnitude.

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, middle and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. Middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles.

Thus, without a proper beginning, middle and an end, tragedy would not achieve the desired effect on the audience. Moreover, tragedy should imitate action that has a certain magnitude as it is the magnitude of the action that provides beauty to the artistic

rendition of the action—'a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order.'

Action having magnitude, if presented with wholeness (in the sense of completeness having a beginning, middle and an end) would provide 'Unity of action' to the plot, which according to Aristotle, is a must for a tragedy. Therefore, he thought that a dramatist has the liberty to make changes in the chronology of events as he is not merely chronicling history; neither is he a maker of verses, but a constructor of plot or myth. According to Aristotle, there are two kinds of plots:

- Simple (*aploi*)
- Complex (*peplegmenoi*)

A simple plot is without *peripetia* (reversal of fortune) and *anagnorisis* (recognition of the past act or identity or person) whereas the complex plot would have *both*. *peripetia* and *anagnorisis*.

The structure of the plot must have definite shape or a magnitude like an animal's body:

Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful; for the view of it is confused, the object being seen in an almost imperceptible moment of time. Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one a thousand miles long.

(*Poetics*: VII).

Such should be the length of the plot that it can be held by the memory at a stretch: it should neither be too long nor too short:

As, therefore, in the case of animate bodies and organisms a certain magnitude is necessary, and a magnitude which may be easily embraced in one view, so in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a length which can be easily embraced by the memory

(*Poetics*: VII).

Besides, the length of separate play has to be different according to the nature of the drama:

The limit of length in relation to dramatic competition and sensuous presentation is no part of artistic theory. For had it been the rule for a hundred tragedies to compete together, the performance would have been regulated by the water-clock - as indeed we are told was formerly done. But the limit as fixed by the nature of the drama itself is this: the greater the

length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous.

(Poetics: VII).

Plots are either simple or complex, for the actions in real life, of which the plots are an imitation, obviously show a similar distinction. An action which is one and continuous in the sense above defined, I call simple, when the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the situation and without Recognition.

(Poetics: X).

Thus, according to Aristotle, the essential elements of a tragic plot are as follows:

- **Completeness:** An action should have a proper beginning, middle and an end. An ideal beginning is that which does not follow anything but leads to something that comes after it. Middle is the casual outcome of the beginning and the potential cause of the end. The end, in turn, should be one that rounds up the whole action and gives the impression of completeness. It ties all the threads of action.
- **Magnitude:** Magnitude refers to 'proper size, proportion and symmetry'. The length should be in accordance with the inner demands of the plot.
- **Unity of action:** Unity of action denotes an imitation of a single unified action.
- **Necessity and probability:** Necessity means a strict causal relationship between the incidents of a plot. Probability means that events must have a connection that makes their sequence likely. No tragic writer can sacrifice probability.
- **Peripeteia (reversal of fortune):** Reversal is a change in the course of the action from one state to the opposite, involving the fortunes of the protagonist, from happiness to misery, or from adversity to prosperity.
- **Anagnorsis (discovery or recognition):** It means a character's sudden realization of another's true identity, a knowledge that brings about a reversal in the entire situation.

The importance of plot is unquestionable as it initiates action and life; happiness and misery which again take the form of action. The actors do not perform with the aim of portraying character; rather characters are introduced for the sake of action. Naturally, action is at the end of tragedy.

Now what does Aristotle mean by plot? In ancient times, mythos or myth simply meant story. It is the modern understanding of the term that associates it with plot. However, the term myth is a better choice because it brings to our mind the collective memory of culture and traditions which created and nurtured it. Plot can be viewed as the modern variation of story which can always generate suspense and surprise. Nowadays the plot can range from events of everyday life to the stories of famous personalities or heroes in different fields of

life. Therefore, Aristotle calls myth 'the soul of tragedy' in a dramatic action (praxis). Myth or plot is seen as an organic whole by Aristotle.

According to Aristotle, magnitude is the outer structure of a tragedy which seeks support from the unity of action. The union of the different parts of tragedy is such that the organic whole becomes a disturbed and disjointed structure, if any one of it is removed. Obviously in ancient Greece the stories were mostly those of well known figures in history and cultural tradition but the literary artist enjoyed the freedom to change the sequence of events for the sake of universality and wholeness. The poet can build upon historical facts with required changes in the events. Changes can also be made in traditional legends. We must not, therefore, at all costs keep to the received legends, which are the usual subjects of tragedy. Indeed, it would be absurd to attempt it, for even subjects that are known, are known only to a few, and yet give pleasure to all. It clearly, follows that the poet or 'maker' should be the maker of plots rather than

of verses, since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions. And even if the chances to take a historical subject, he is nonetheless a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker (*Poetics*: DC).

Aristotle talks of the unity of action or it provides magnitude and wholeness to the plot. This unity of action is as important for comedy as it is for tragedy. But he is never found discussing the other two unities of place and time which are commonly known as the three unities.

A complex plot contains both the Reversal of the situation and Recognition:

A complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal, or by Recognition, or by both. These last should arise from the internal structure of the plot, so that what follows be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action. It makes all the difference whether any given event is a case of proper hoc or post hoc.

(*Poetics*: X).

It is to be noticed at this point that Reversal of fortune and Recognition of it are applicable not only to tragedy but also to comedy. However, Reversal of fortune is best used when the action takes an opposite cause according to the law of probability and necessity:

Reversal of the situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity.

(*Poetics*: XI).

Recognition (anagnorisis) has been defined by Aristotle in these terms:

Recognition, as the name indicates is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the situation, as in the Oedipus. There are indeed other forms. Even in animate things of

the most trivial kind may in a sense be objects of recognition. Again we may recognize or discover whether a person has done a thing or not. But the recognition which is most intimately connected with the plot and action is

...The recognition of persons. This recognized, combined with Reversal, will

produce either pity or fear; and actions producing these effects are those which Tragedy represents. Moreover, it is upon such situations that the issues of good or bad fortune will depend. Recognition, then, being between persons, it may happen that one person only is recognized by the other - when the latter is already known - or it may be necessary that the recognition should be on both sides.

(Poetics: XI).

It is important to note that Aristotle was strictly against 'episodic' plots. Such plots cannot have universal appeal as they are made by pressing events one after the other without adhering to the law of probability or necessity:

Of all plots and actions the episodic are the worst. I call a plot 'episodic' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. Bad poets compose such pieces by their own fault, good poets, to please the players; for, as they write show pieces for competition, they stretch the plot beyond its capacity, and are often forced to break the natural continuity.

(Poetics: IX).

According to Aristotle the best plot is that which follows the rule of cause and effect with an element of surprise. Such plots evoke fear and pity naturally in the spectators:

Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear and pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time they follow as cause and effect. The tragic wonder will then be greater than if they happened of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design. We may instance the statue of Mitys at Argos, which fell upon his murderer while he was a spectator at a festival, and veiled him. Such events seem not to be due to mere chance. Plots, therefore, constructed, on these principles are necessarily the best.

(Poetics: DC).

Reversal of the situation and Recognition of it in a plot turn upon surprises. However, Aristotle also adds a third element to it - the scene of suffering *'which is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds, and the like.'*

(Poetics: XI).

Aristotle has not said much about the element of suffering in a plot. However, it is evident that scenes of suffering are required only in those tragedies where the fortune changes from good to bad. Aristotle's views were against the contemporary notion that the final

destruction should be averted in a good tragedy. For Aristotle such tragedies are of second rate:

The best tragedies are founded on the story of a few houses on the Fortunes of Alcmacon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thystes, Telephus and those others who have done or suffered something terrible. A tragedy, then, to be perfect according to the rules of art should be of this construction. Hence they are in error who ensure Euripides just because he follows this principle in his plays, many of which end unhappily. It is ... the right ending. The best proof is that on the stage in dramatic competition, such plays, if well worked out are the most tragic in effect...

(*Poetics*: XIII).

It is, however, important to notice at this point that unity of action; wholeness and magnitude were the features of tragedy to arouse fear and pity. These technicalities are to be implemented in the production of a comic plot as well. In a nutshell, Aristotle suggests that wholeness and magnitude and unity of action are integral parts of all kinds of plot.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

11. What was the importance of myth in a play?
12. What are the two types of plots according to Aristotle?

2.8.2 Character (Ethos)

According to Aristotle, tragedy is meant to imitate people above the level of our world and comedy below it. Tragedy presents action of men having magnitude or greatness, whereas comedy and satire deals with 'mean persons'. To understand the nature of the character or protagonist of a good tragedy, Aristotle, in *Poetics*, mentions the following characteristics of the tragic protagonist or the tragic hero:

- **Goodness:** He is a person who is better than average, but not perfectly virtuous. He could be just one who should be transported in the course of the plot from a state of happiness to that of adversity through his own *Hamartia* or tragic error.

Life-like: The tragic hero should be 'recognizably human' and should not change traits with a character from a myth or legend.

Appropriateness: Appropriateness means truthfulness to or representation of the class or profession to which a character belongs. Characters should be universal rather than individual. This is in the sense that a king should be kingly, a woman womanly, a scholar scholarly so on and so forth.

Consistency: The traits of a character should not be changed within the same play without any rhyme or reason. If a character is shown to be inconsistent, then he should be always shown so.

Heroic: Characters should appear true to life and yet be better than what they are.

Aristotle's perception of character is different from ours. The art of characterization incorporates all that reveals a man's personal and inner self- his intellectual powers being as important as his emotions and feelings. However, Aristotle's idea of a character is not so comprehensive. He ascribes secondary place to character as tragedy imitates action and life instead of men:

But most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not of quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the action.

{*Poetics*: VI}.

Aristotle goes to the extent of saying 'without action there cannot be a tragedy: there may be without character.' (*Poetics*: VI). Let us now focus on the features of a character as laid down by Aristotle: It must be good, true to life, consistent with an air of propriety:

In respect of character there are four things to be aimed at. First, and most important, it must be good. Now any speech or action that manifests moral purpose of any kind will be expressive of character: the character will be good if the purpose is good. This rule is relative to each class. Even a woman may be good, and also a slave, though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless. The second thing to aim at is propriety. There is a type of manly valour: but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness is inappropriate. Thirdly, character must be true to life for this is a distinct thing from goodness and propriety, as here described. The fourth point is consistency: for though the subject of imitation, who suggested the type be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent.

Besides, the poet should make a likeness which is true to life and yet be more beautiful. His attempt should be to preserve the type and also ennoble it. Of all the features of a character, the one that is of prime importance is ethos or the moral purpose. The choices and rejections made by the character should help in fulfilling the moral purpose of the tragedy. The protagonist should show no hesitation in making a moral choice in the course of action. If we take the whole analysis of the tragic hero we see that he should be good but not exceptionally good. By 'good' Aristotle suggests that type of goodness with which the spectators can identify. Since he is supposed to be a king or a prince of a royal figure he should display valour. The protagonist should give reasons for his choice and take quick decisions. The Greek culture did not foster individualism. It believed in sharing with family, friends, and community, as per the circumstances. Therefore, *dianoia* or the art of sharing is

of great importance. This sharing helps the spectator's view how a protagonist behaves in a particular situation and how heroic he is. He can be a hero only if he is brave and quick at making decisions. Hence, we can see a contrast between Aristotle's and Shakespeare's approach in creating tragic heroes. The 'to be or not to be' type would hardly fit Aristotle's theory of a hero.

Adherence to the probable or the necessary is very important as it gives creative art a likeness with reality:

As in the structure of the plot, so too in the portraiture of character, the poet should always aim either at the necessary or the probable. Thus a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way, by the rule either of necessity or probability; just as this event should follow that by necessary or probable sequence.

{*Poetics: XV*}.

Let us now look at how the Aristotelian tragic hero meets his downfall. The fall of a man of high moral reputation (though not a paragon of virtue) from prosperity into misfortune is affected not through any vice or villainy but through an error or tragic flaw or Hamartia. It is this error of the tragic hero which cooperates with the malignity of fate. Consequently, the tragic hero does not deserve such a downfall, but his own mistake reinforces the disaster tragic. Such generalizations about tragic heroes are based on Aristotle's understanding of Greek tragedies like Sophocles's *Oedipus Trilog*y. He regards Oedipus as an example of the kind and perfect tragic hero.

It is good to remember that Aristotle did not belong to an individualistic society unlike the Renaissance, which is more secular and individualistic. This was the disagreement in the relative importance of the tragic hero in the Aristotelian and the post Renaissance period. In Greek tragedy the tragic hero chiefly suffered under the impact of an external fate. As a result, the plot was of prime importance and character was secondary to it. Besides the suffering of the tragic hero should be capable of arousing the twin sentiments of fear and pity.

The serious objections, which modern critics level against Aristotle's theory is based upon the changing trends of tragedies and tragic characters in the modern world. In the post Renaissance era, character occupies the central place in a tragedy whereas plot becomes a subsidiary. It is again debatable whether modern tragedies evoke only the emotions of fear and pity or something more. A close reading of Shakespeare's *Tempest* does not follow Aristotle's doctrine of Hamartia or tragic flaw.

We need to see if fear and pity are the only emotions produced by Shakespearean tragedies. Subordination of plot to character is another area where Shakespearean tragedies do not adhere to Aristotle's theory of tragedy. In the tragedies of Shakespeare we do not come across the operation of an inevitable fate. The inner psychological motivations of an individual bring about the catastrophic end in Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello and King Lear.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

13. What was the importance of character in Aristotle's view?
14. What is the objection levelled against Aristotle's theory of character?

2.8.3 Thought (Dianoia)

As we know Aristotle expected the tragic hero to be able to make quick decisions. Even then the inner questioning continues in the mind of the protagonist. This is 'defined as *Dianoia* as Aristotle puts it:

Third in order is Thought - that is, the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstance. In case of oratory, this is the function of the political art and of the art of rhetoric; and so indeed the older poets make their characters speak the language of civic life; the poets of our time, the language of the rhetoricians. Character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Speeches, therefore, which does not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose to avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character. Thought, on the other hand, is found where something is provided to be or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated. If the moral courage to make a decision is called *ethos*, the thought process, 'to be' or 'not to be' situation, which precedes any choice is known as *dianoia*. The thought process of the mind of the protagonist is unravelled to the audience through his dialogues - here he can tell about the nature of things, his plight and his final choice i.e. the tragic action. The genesis of tragic action lies in the thought process of the tragic hero hence its importance. *Dianoia* also includes debates which has a moral perspective. However, it excludes anything like scheming, plotting, intriguing etc.

According to Aristotle:

Under thought is included every effect which has to be produced by speech, the subdivisions being: proof and refutation; the excitation of the feelings such as pity, fear, anger, and the like; the suggestion of importance or its opposite. Now, it is evident that the dramatic incidents must be treated from the same points of view as the dramatic speeches, when the object is to evoke the sense of pity, fear, importance or probability. The only difference is that the incidents should speak for themselves without verbal exposition; while affects aimed at should be produced by the speaker and as a result of the speech.

(*Poetics: XIX*).

The inner questioning that goes on in the mind of a character and makes him choose one way or the other is called *Dianoia*. The ability to choose the moral fiber or the courage to choose is *ethos*, but the ferment of thoughts that leads to the point of choice is known as *Dianoia*. This thought process often becomes a part of the dialogue when a character bewails his or her plight and speculates on the nature of things. For

this reason, Aristotle insists that *Dianoia* should be regarded as an essential element of tragedy.

Tragic Error or *Hamartia*

Aristotle in *Poetics* uses the word *Hamartia* to mean an 'error' or 'false step'. S.H. Butcher translates the word as 'frailty' while Michael Bywater calls it 'an error of judgment', which the tragic protagonist commits without any evil intention. According to Aristotle, the tragic protagonist must have nobility. He must be better than us, but at the same time he must also have a defect '...the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice or depravity, but by some error of judgment...'. It should be noted that *Hamartia* cannot be a moral flaw. Sir Philip Sidney, the first critic of England, says that tragedy 'openeth the greatest wounds, and showed forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue, that maketh kings fear to be tyrants and the tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours....'

2.8.4 Diction (Lexis)

Language or lexis in theatre is one of the most significant elements in drama, though in *Poetics*, Aristotle does not give a detailed description of this element as it is too obvious, Lexis can be divided into two parts:

1. The spoken word in the form of natural conversational speech
2. The sung word or an elaborate song

Since diction takes relatively less space in *Poetics* one can feel that Aristotle attached very little importance to it. However, the truth is otherwise. It was such an obvious and well known feature of a work of art in Greek tradition that Aristotle seems to have thought that it needed less attention.

Lexis or language can be divided into two parts - the spoken word and the sung word. It is to be noticed that there was no gap between the spoken word and the sung word in ancient times. This gap between the spoken and the sung word was developed later. In the ancient times, the distinction between the linguistic content of the word and its musical content was more important. Language and music were the two ways in which sound produced meaning. The use of language in a theatrical performance was made possible through pitch variation, song and intonation. Aristotle's views of Lexis are as follows:

One branch of the inquiry treats of the Modes of Utterance. But this province of knowledge belongs to the art of Delivery and to the masks of that science. It includes, for instance - what a command, a prayer, a statement, a threat, a question, an answer, and so forth. To know or not to know these things involves

no serious censure upon the poet's art We may, therefore, pass this over as an inquiry that belongs to another art, not to poetry.

(Poetics: XIX).

Now the question is why Aristotle does exclude modes of utterance from inquiry. This was perhaps because he looked upon diction not as a combination of elocution but also as phonology, grammar and figures of speech. Aristotle recommends the poet to strike a balance between clarity and loftiness. He maintains:

The perfection of style is to be clear without being mean. The clearest style is that which uses only current or proper words, That diction, on the other hand is lofty and raised above the common place which employs unusual words. By unusual I mean strange (or rare) words, metaphorical, lengthened - anything, in short, that differs from the normal idiom. Yet a style composed of such words is either a riddle or a jargon; if it consists of strange (or rare) words. For the essence of a riddle is to express true facts under impossible combinations. Now this cannot be done by any arrangement of ordinary words, but by the use of metaphor it can. A certain infusion, therefore, of these elements is necessary to style; for the strange (or rare) word, the metaphorical, the ornamental, and the other kinds above mentioned, will raise it above the common place and mean, while the use of proper words will make it perspicuous. But nothing contributes more to produce a cleanness of diction that is remote from commonness than the lengthening contraction, and alteration of words, for by deviating in exceptional cases from the normal idiom, the language will gain distinction: while, at the same time, the partial conformity with usage will give perspicuity.

(Poetics: XXII).

There are two kinds of nouns: (a) simple, made by insignificant parts like the word 'earth' or (b) double. It is possible also to have triple, quadruple and even larger compounds. Every noun, regardless of its structure, is either (a) the ordinary word for a thing (b) a strange word (c) a metaphor (d) an ornamental word (e) a winged word (f) a word expanded or (g) curtailed or (h) altered in form. The art of giving a thing a name, that belongs to something else is called metaphor. The transference can be from genus to species or species to genus or species to species or on grounds of analogy. When the poet gives a word which is quite unknown among people, it is said to be a coined word. When a word has a short vowel which is made long or an extra syllable is inserted, it is said to be lengthened out. There are rules for masculine and feminine nouns as well. Nouns ending in N, R, or S, or in the two compounds of this last PS and KS are considered to be the masculine form of nouns. Whereas words ending in long vowels like E, O and A are considered to be feminine form of noun.

The strange word, the metaphor and the ornamental word prevent the language from becoming dull and prosaic whereas the usage of ordinary words give it an element of clarity. But the use of lengthened and curtailed words provide language clarity and prevents it from meanness. However, compounds are best suited to dithyrambic poetry. Strange words and metaphors are supposed to be used in iambic poetry. However, all of them are used in heroic poetry.

2.8.5 Melody (Melopoeia)

The Greek chorus and actors were free to use all the prevalent musical forms in drama. This was the ritual even during the early stage when it was performed as part of religious festival. Aristotle argued that the 'chorus should be fully integrated into the play like an actor.' Choral odes should not be 'mere interludes', but should contribute to the unity of the plot.

In all ancient civilizations of the world, variations in musical tones have been associated with different emotional states and seasons. In India, we have a variety of musical notes for different seasons, festivals, rituals, occasions and emotional states. Similarly, in ancient Greece music had an important role to play in different walks of life. Obviously, this association of a particular musical tone with a particular occasion has been a matter of training. The ancient Greek playwrights were not only great writers; they also knew music and dance very well. It is a well known saying about Phrenikos that he knows 'as many dance steps as the waves of the sea'. Sophocles is also believed to have introduced the Phrygian scale into tragedy.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

15. State the importance of thought in a play.
16. What are the two kinds of noun?
17. State the rules for masculine and feminine forms of nouns.
18. What was the significance of music and dance in a Greek play?

2.8.6 Spectacle (*OPSIS*)

The visual element or spectacle or *Opsis* has a lot of importance in the Aristotelian scheme of tragedy. Though Aristotle recognized the emotional attractiveness of a spectacle, he insisted that poets relied on the mythos or the plot of the play. They depend on the plot instead of *Opsis* or the spectacle, to generate sympathy or fear; the dramatists who rely heavily on spectacle 'create a sense, not of the terrible, but only of the monstrous'.

In Aristotle's *Poetics* the least discussed subject is *Opsis*. The term *Opsis* is meant to denote all that is visual in theatre - gestures, movements, dance, chorus, hand signs and body language. The importance of spectacle in a Greek stage cannot be undermined just because Aristotle does not pay much attention to it. Perhaps Aristotle thought it was too well-known an aspect to be discussed in detail. However, in Greek tradition we come across authors like Athenaeus and Lucian who have talked at length about dance and other aspects. The spectacular elements which lend charm and meaning to a play are termed as 'quantitative parts' by Aristotle. The various parts into which a tragedy can be divided are prologue, episode, exode and choric song. The choric song can further be subdivided into a Parode and *Stasimon*. These features are common in all theatrical performances. However, in some plays the playwright can add the songs of actors for the stage and the *Commoi*.

The prologue is spoken by a single actor or at times by two. After this the chorus enters the stage from the right side. All the information that the chorus gives to the spectators

about the plot or characters or destiny of the hero is done by singing and dancing. There were five files (xuga) and three ranks (Stoikhoi) of the tragic chorus. The comic chorus consisted of six files and four ranks. The flute player came with the chorus. The chorus sang and danced till the completion of the parodos. This was followed by episode in which the actors spoke or sang to each other. In the end, the actors would go and the chorus sang the choric ode which was made of strophe, antistrophe and the epode. The chorus presented a dramatic response in continuation of the dramatic action. Again the actors entered and the same cycle was repeated.

After the final episode came *Exodus* which consisted of an ode, that was dialogue and a brief song. The actors recited, sang and spoke but mostly the chorus sang.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

19. Defineopsis.

20. What is a prologue?

2.9 CATHARSIS OR PLEASURE PROPER TO TRAGEDY

In the famous definition of tragedy by Aristotle, catharsis is regarded as the prime objective of a tragic play. Aristotle defines tragedy in the following manner:

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.

In *Poetics*, apart from talking about catharsis, Aristotle also talks about the pleasure that is derived from tragedy. Pleasure, appropriate to tragedy can be derived from the play for three reasons. These three reasons are as follows:

1. Tragedy should derive pleasure that is appropriate to tragedy, as it is a kind of pleasure that cannot be derived from any other form of drama.
2. The pleasure is derived from the completeness and organic wholeness of the action of the plot.
3. Pleasure may also be derived, as a result of the musical and spectacular elements of the play.

Catharsis is a term borrowed by Aristotle from the medical terminology that means the removal or purgation of the afflictions or emotional excesses. Though the term is borrowed from the medical terminology, Aristotle does not use the term in exactly the same fashion as it is used in the field of medicine, as Butcher points out, 'But the word, as taken up by

Aristotle into the terminology of art, has probably a further meaning. It expresses not only a fact of psychology or of pathology, but a principle of art.'

Catharsis may therefore mean the emotional satisfaction that the audience experience when they watch a tragedy. The play achieves this by evoking the feelings of 'pity' and 'fear' as pointed out by Aristotle. These two emotions of pity and fear are evoked while watching a tragedy as the spectators or the audience perceives the tragic protagonist's change of fortune. Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist of James Joyce's *The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* defines pity and fear as 'pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatever is grave and constant in human suffering and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatever is grave and constant in human suffering and unites it with the secret cause'.

At some places in *Poetics*, Aristotle talks about pleasure which is proper to tragedy. At times he talks of *hedone*. However, *hedone* (pleasure) and catharsis are produced by the simultaneous arousal of fear and pity. Many critics take *hedone* (pleasure) and catharsis as one and the same, whereas some critics regard the two as different. Here, we need to refer to the doctrine of imbalance of elements which was later called humours.

Besides this medicinal doctrine, we also come across musical catharsis. According to Butcher music was used as a remedy for curing patients of madness. Patients were made to listen to music and come back to normalcy. However, Aristotle unites fear and pity as one psychological emotion in *Poetics* so that the same purgation can be applied with equal effect to inhomogeneous parts. Aristotle's predecessors seem to have accepted fear and pity as chief emotions. Hence, Aristotle has tried to harmonize them in dramatic art.

Modern criticism views Aristotle's doctrine of catharsis with an element of suspicion. The medicinal or curative function of tragedy is to be examined further. Critics believe that medicines and vaccines may cure but they don't provide 'pleasure' -something which is the essence of Aristotle's theory of tragedy. C.E. Monpague in *A Write on his Trade* feels that tragedy is more sedative or tonic since it enlarges the experience of spectators. In his book *Tragedy* D.M. Dixon observes:

Aristotle would have this medicine restore us to the normal, to health, but surely it is an elixir, not a remedy, and the function of tragic drama is to exalt, not to cure it.

Even Butcher feels so:

But the word, as taken up by Aristotle into his terminology of art, has probably a further meaning. It expresses not only a fact of psychology or pathology, but a principle of art.

He felt that the element of pity and fear 'in real life contains a morbid and disturbing element... As the tragic action progresses the lowest forms of emotions are formed to have been transmuted into more refined forms' (254). Catharsis is also equated with aesthetic pleasure; 'But whatever may have been the indirect effect of the repeated operation of Catharsis, we may confidently say that Aristotle in his definition of tragedy is thinking not only

of any remote result, but of the immediate end of the art, of the aesthetic function it fulfils'. (Butcher 269).

Gerald Else lays emphasis on the spiritual significance of catharsis. Remorse enables the viewers to pity the hero. In this way Catharsis proves his purity:

The filthiness inheres in a conscious intention to kill a person who is a close kin. An unconscious intention to do so, i.e. in intention to do so without being aware of the kinship as Oedipus did not know that he killed his father would therefore be 'pure'. Catharsis. But purity must be proving that the act was pure in that sense. How is such a thing provided? According to Nicomachean Ethics, by the remorse of the doer, which shows that, if he had known the facts, he would not have done the deed. In Oedipus the thing which establishes this to our satisfaction is Oedipus's self-blinding. It, then effects a purification of the tragic deed and so makes Oedipus eligible to our pity (Else 98).

Else in a way suggests that catharsis does not benefit the audience and their emotions; rather it purges the tragic deed.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

21. Define Aristotle's doctrine of catharsis.
22. What is the modern critique of catharsis?

2.10 ARISTOTELIAN VIEW OF MIMESIS

Aristotle's *Poetics* opens with his views on mimesis (imitation), where he differs to a great extent from his teacher, Plato. Plato regarded art to be 'thrice removed from reality', which could be in no way a valid means to attain knowledge. For Plato, art merely nurtured the emotional self. He thought that poets should be banished from society, as they write under the influence of 'divine madness'. They do not know what they are talking about in their creative output. While Plato thought that poets were of no use for societal good, Aristotle regarded them to be supreme. Aristotle was of the view that poets in their imitation of reality are not denigrating reality, but are trying to incorporate the "universal aspect. Poetry from the Aristotelian point of view is not about 'what was' or 'what is', but about 'what ought to be'. In that sense, for Aristotle, poetry or art aspires to capture that aspect of nature in its imitation, which is idealistic, a better version of what actually exists in this world. Imitation or mimesis is not demeaning, as it is only through imitation that human beings learn. Moreover, human beings love to imitate—as Aristotle states in *Poetics*,

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature.' First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one key difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of all the living creatures. It is through imitation that he learns his

earliest lessons, and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. Thus, the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is that in contemplating it, they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he. For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the colouring or some such other cause. Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature.

Therefore, if imitation is an innate fact of nature, then poets are not liars. Moreover, poets labour in order to attain truth. In other words, Aristotle upheld art and celebrated it (as against Plato) by pointing out that 'art imitates nature' and at the same time presents the ideal.

2.11 DIFFERENT GENRES: EPIC, TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

Aristotle begins his *Poetics* with mimesis, by directly stating that different art forms are only different modes of imitation and they differ from each other in three parameters:

1. Means (language for literature)
2. Objects (actions with agents)
3. Manner (dramatic or narrative)

It is often thought that Aristotle's *Poetics*, as a text is not complete. There may be chapters on comedy and satire, which are missing. Assuming the kind of thoroughness that Aristotle has in his writing, it is impossible to think that he discussed only tragedy in *Poetics* and left the other genres of drama untouched. Drawing a comparison between tragedy and comedy, Aristotle says that tragedy is inclined to imitate people above the level of our world while comedy imitates people below our level.

He further compares tragedy with epic and sees tragedy to be a much better form of art than epic. While tragedy is for the common audience, epic poetry is addressed to an educated and enlightened audience. The epic, says Aristotle, 'addresses a cultivated audience, which does not need the accompaniment of gesture'. Yet Aristotle points out that tragedy is superior to epic for the following reasons:

- Aristotle says that performance does not censure the tragic poet. If a tragedy can be spoiled in a performance, an epic can also be spoiled in its recitation. .Tragedy, like epic, does not depend on performance for its full effect.
- Tragedy has all the elements of an epic. Furthermore, it has two more elements— a greater economy and concentration of effect. The tragic poet requires less space for the attainment of its end.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

23. Define poetry from the Aristotelian point of view.
24. Different art forms are only different modes of imitation and they differ from each other in three parameters. Identify these three parameters.

2.12 A REVIEW OF ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*

Gilbert Murray in the Introduction of Ingram Bywater's translation of Aristotle titled *On the Art of Poetry* writes, 'In the tenth book of the Republic ... Plato has completed his final burning denunciation of poetry... Aristotle certainly knew the passage, and it looks as if his treatise on poetry was an answer to Plato's challenge.'

Plato and Aristotle are the two founding fathers of western metaphysics. If Plato is transcendental and abstract, Aristotle is biological and concrete. Though these two classical philosophers may differ in their views, yet it is the Plato-Aristotelian framework that dominated the western mode of thinking till about the twentieth century.

Aristotle is also significant for his interpretation of art and literature; primarily the genre of tragedy. Based on the practitioners of classical Greek tragedy, Aristotle developed his theory of tragedy in which he not only describes what tragedy should be but also provides a detailed recommendation on what would make a great tragedy. According to him, tragedy is the greatest form of art, even better than the epic. Therefore, Aristotle discusses the various elements of tragedy in detail, which would lead to the purgation of pity and fear (*catharsis*). However, what remains at the base of his analysis is that the audience identifies with the tragic protagonist in his change of fortune as he is essentially good albeit answerable to a specific tragic flaw. In the

tragic protagonist's rise and fall the spectator recognizes himself as the hero and consequently in his fall, the spectator experiences an emotional turmoil.

Marxist critics think that this identification with the hero and the consequent emotional experience makes readers or the audiences go through an entire experience. This experience, however, is not going to help them see reality in its proper perspective. The Marxists think that Aristotelian norms are *bourgeoisie*, in terms of literature or art being an escape from reality. Therefore, in the twentieth century, dramatists like Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett and others wrote plays that were anti-Aristotelian. This was because, for them, the objective of art was not merely to give readers an experience, which will merely provide them with pleasure, but the desired objective was to make them think and act. From that perspective, Aristotle has been critiqued by Marxist scholars. This is because they are of the opinion that the role of literature as a bearer of ideology is not merely to provide consent for the ruling class or to critique the way the ruling class tries to represent reality. It is also to provide a perspective to readers that will help them understand social formations.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

25. State the Marxist view of Aristotelian philosophy.
26. Why has Aristotle been critiqued by Marxist scholars?

ACTIVITY

Organize a debate session where your friend is Plato and you play Aristotle. Now debate on the relevance of poetry, you can may refer to articles given on the Internet.

DID YOU KNOW?

Aristotle was a student of Plato in the Academy. He founded his own school known as the Lyceum. He was a teacher to Cassander and Ptolemy, who would both eventually be crowned kings. Cassander became king of Macedonia and Ptolemy became king of Egypt

2.13 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Aristotle was the disciple of Plato. He is responsible for enriching the Greek . philosophical and literary critical tradition with his incisive critique of Plato.
 - Aristotle paved the way for all critics from his age till today to create their own theories of literary criticism.
 - Aristotle has given a systematic theory of tragedy as a theatrical experience.
 - Aristotle has described the six elements of tragedy.
-
- As per Aristotle, plot is crucial to this conception and is described as the most important part of theatre. Character and thought are ascribed second position and the third place; has been devoted to the discussion of lexis, melopoeia and opsis.
 - Lastly Aristotle states that pleasure proper to tragedy was derived from fear and pity through mimesis.
 - Aristotle maintains that tragedy creates catharsis.
 - The sequence in Aristotle's scheme of artistic creation is as follows: Mimesis was the prime theory which resulted in the arousal of powerful emotion which provided both: hedone (pleasure) and catharsis (relief).
 - Aristotle divided knowledge into three major categories: Productive knowledge, practical

knowledge/science, and theoretical science.

- Aristotle's *Poetics* deals primarily with productive knowledge, as well as that of the theoretical besides dealing with epistemological questions.
- Aristotle's *Poetics* opens with Aristotle's views on Mimesis (imitation), where he differs to a great extent from his teacher, Plato. While Plato thought that poets were of no use to society, Aristotle regarded them highly.
- Aristotle upheld art and celebrated it (as opposed to Plato) by pointing out that 'art imitates nature' and at the same time presents the ideal.
- Aristotle asserts that different art forms are only different modes of imitation, and they differ from each other in almost three parameters: means, objects, and manner.
- Drawing a comparison between tragedy and comedy, Aristotle says that tragedy is inclined to imitate people above the level of our world while comedy imitates people below our level.
- Aristotle says that though tragedy is for the common audience who feel restless for gross desires/dull wits, epic poetry is addressed to an educated and enlightened audience. He claims that tragedy has all the elements of an epic. Furthermore, it has two more elements—a greater economy and concentration of effect. He adds that tragedy, like epic, does not depend on performance for its full effect.
- According to Aristotle, the six elements of tragedy are plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle.
- Aristotle asserted that myth or plot or the myth is the most significant part of a work as it binds together the other elements of the tragedy. Plot simply means a story. Plot should be an organic whole, having magnitude.
- According to Aristotle, there are two kinds of plots: simple (*aploi*) and complex (*peplegmenoi*). A simple plot is without *peripetia* (reversal of fortune) and *agagnorisis* (recognition of the past act or identity or person), whereas the complex plot would have both *peripetia* and *agagnorisis*.
- The essential elements of a tragic plot are completeness, magnitude, unity of action, necessity and probability, *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*.
- Aristotle, in *Poetics*, mentions the following characteristics of the tragic protagonist or the tragic hero: goodness, lifelike, appropriateness, consistency, and heroism.

- The hero should be a better than an average person whose reversal of fortune has been brought by *Hamartia* or tragic error. The characterization should be truthful to the class or profession he belongs to. The traits of a character should not be changed within the same play without any rhyme or reason.
- According to Aristotle, the tragic protagonist must have nobility. He must be better than us, but at the same time he must also have a defect.
- The inner questioning that goes on in the mind of a character and makes him choose one way or another is called *Dianoia*. This thought process often becomes a part of the dialogue when a character bewails his or her plight and speculates on the nature of things.
- Aristotle argued that the chorus should be fully integrated into the play like an actor. Choral odes should not be 'mere interludes', but should contribute to the unity of the plot.
- The visual element or spectacle or *Opsis* has the least importance in Aristotelian scheme of tragedy.
- Although Aristotle recognizes the emotional attraction of spectacle, he is of the view that superior poets rely on the mythos or the plot of the play.
- Aristotle regards *Catharsis* as the prime objective of a tragic play. Aristotle states that pleasure can be derived from tragedy.
- *Catharsis* is defined as the emotional satisfaction that the audience experiences when he/she watches a tragedy.
- According to Aristotle, a play achieves catharsis by evoking the feelings of 'pity' and 'fear'.
- Aristotle says that a tragedy involves the double vision of the human sufferer (the tragic protagonist who suffers because of his tragic flaw of character or *Hamartia*) and the secret cause (the fate).
- Plato and Aristotle are the two founding fathers of western metaphysics.
- In Western philosophy if Plato is transcendental and abstract, Aristotle is biological and concrete.
- Marxists think that Aristotelian norms are *bourgeoisie*, in terms of literature or art being an escape from reality.
- In the twentieth century, dramatists like Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett and others wrote plays that were anti-Aristotelian in nature.

2.14 KEY TERMS

- **Abstraction:** The act of considering something as a general quality or characteristic, apart from concrete realities, specific objects or actual instances is known as abstraction.

- **Catharsis:** Purging of the emotions or relieving of emotional tensions, especially through certain kinds of art, as tragedy or music is known as catharsis.
- **Curtail:** To shorten; reduce
- **Conform:** To act in accordance; comply
- **Elegiac:** Expressing sorrow or lament
- **Hindrance:** Stopping or preventing something from happening
- **Inevitable:** Unable to be avoided, evaded, or escaped; mimesis - to imitate
- **Purgation:** The act of cleaning the undesirable propriety - conform to proper behaviour
- **Epic:** An extended narrative poem written in dignified language, which celebrates the character of a legendary or traditional hero
- **Tragedy:** A literary work in which the main character suffers extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances
- **Mimesis:** The imitation or representation of aspects of the sensible world, especially human actions, in literature and art
- **Plot:** The pattern of events or main story in a narrative or drama
- **Catharsis:** Apurifying or figurative cleansing of emotions, especially pity and fear, described by Aristotle as an effect of tragic drama on its audience
- **Rhetoric:** The study of the technique of using language effectively
- **Denouement:** The final resolution or clarification of a dramatic or narrative plot
- **Metaphor:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison
- **Hamartia:** The flaw in character which leads to the downfall of the protagonist in a tragedy

2.15 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Classical literature is generally perceived as anything which is in accordance with ancient Greek and Roman literature. It is seen as a work of art which has stood the test of time.
2. Literary criticism in common paradigm is seen as a kind of judgement where the critic examines and appreciates what has been created.
3. Plato regarded poetry as inferior because it was seen as a hindrance in the making of an ideal state. It was further seen as an imitation of an imitation and not as an idea.
4. Plato and Aristotle have propounded contrasting views on poetry. While Plato's strong reservation against poetry was rooted in his bias for a metaphysical and Utopian society, Aristotle left no stone unturned in establishing the dignity and relevance of poetry and tragedy.
5. The three famous unities propagated by Aristotle are the: unities of time, place and

action.

6. Dithyrambic poetry means inflated speech sung in praise of Dionysius.
7. As per Aristotle, the two aspects of language in theatre are: dramatic discourse and its linguistic and phonological aspects.
8. Aristotle's notion of tragedy as a 'complete' story refers to the proper building of the story, i.e., a suitable beginning, its development with a proper middle and then a gradual completion (end).
9. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, plot, character and thoughts are considered to be internal while music, spectacle and diction are considered to be external components of a play.
10. Aristotle regarded myth as 'the soul of tragedy' where every aspect is important. Moreover, it was also regarded as the only binding force which holds the other elements together.
11. In a play myth is seen as an organic whole and comprises a series of episodes that show a passage of a protagonist's earlier state of being to his persona in the later stages.
12. The two types of plots according to Aristotle are: the simple (a *ploti*) and the complex (*peplegmenoi*).
13. The importance of character in Aristotle's view can be understood as a unique element which reveals a man's personal and inner self-his intellectual powers being as important as his emotions and feelings.
14. The objection that was levelled against Aristotle's theory of character was that it - was based upon the changing trends of tragedies and tragic characters in the modern world.
15. The importance of thought in a play is that it represents the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in a given circumstance- that is, the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in a given circumstance. The thought process of the mind of the protagonist is unravelled to the audience through his dialogues.
16. There are two kinds of nouns: (a) simple, made by insignificant parts like the word 'earth' or (b) double.
17. The rules for masculine and feminine nouns are: Nouns ending in N, R, or S, or in the two compounds of this last PS and KS are considered to be the masculine form of nouns. Whereas, words ending in long vowels like E, O and A are considered to be feminine form of nouns.
18. The significance of music and dance in a Greek play was of utmost importance and was used to convey a particular occasion.
19. The term *opsis* signifies the spectacular element in theatre such as: gestures, movements, dance, chorus, hand signs and body language.
20. A prologue or the beginning is spoken by a single actor or at times by two which is a brief introduction to the play.
21. Aristotle's doctrine of catharsis is defined as emotion which unites fear and pity as one psychological emotion.

22. The modern critics of catharsis believes that medicines and vaccines may cure but they don't provide 'pleasure' - something which is the essence of Aristotle's theory of tragedy.
23. Poetry from the Aristotelian point of view is not about 'what was' or 'what is', but about 'what ought to be'. In that sense, for Aristotle, poetry or art aspires to capture that aspect of nature in its imitation, which is idealistic, a better version of what actually exists in this world.
24. Different art forms are only different modes of imitation and they differ from each other in three parameters. These are:
 - (i) Means (language for literature) (ii) Objects (actions with agents) (iii) Manner (dramatic or narrative)
25. The Marxists think that Aristotelian norms are *bourgeoisie*, in terms of literature or art being an escape from reality.
26. Aristotle has been critiqued by Marxists scholars because they are of the opinion that the role of literature as a bearer of ideology is not merely to provide consent for the ruling class or to critique the way the ruling class tries to represent reality. Literature should also provide a perspective to readers that will help them. understand social formations.

2.16 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define Plato's concept of 'idea'?
2. What is the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's views on mimesis?
3. Explain Aristotle's notion of completeness.
4. How is 'thought' used in a play?
5. In a play, what is the relevance of variation in musical notes?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically examine Aristotle's concept of *catharsis*.
2. Discuss the various kinds of plots according to Aristotle. Which of them is most suitable for tragedy? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Aristotle's theory of plot is no longer relevant. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Discuss in your own words Aristotle's definition of tragedy as an imitation of action, serious, complete and of a certain magnitude.
5. As per Aristotle what are the characteristics of a tragic protagonist?

6. How are Aristotle's views on Mimesis different from Plato's notion of imitation?

2.17 FURTHER READING

Ross, W.D., *Work of Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, London, 1928.

Stanford, W.B., *Greek Tragedy and Emotions: An Introductory Study*, Routledge and KeganPaul, London, 1983.

Endnote

1 Hornby, A S: Oxford English Learner's Dictionary of Current English; Fifth Edition, Oxford University Press.

UNIT 3 JOHN DRYDEN AND SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Structure

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Unit Objectives

3.2 John Dryden: A Brief Biographical Sketch

3.3 Different Views on Dramatic Poesy

3.3.1 Crites' Viewpoint

3.3.2 Eugenius'Viewpoint

3.3.3 Liseidius'Viewpoint

3.3.4 Neander'sViewpoint

3.3.5 Review

3.4 Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Brief Biographical Sketch

3.4.1 Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Biographia Literaria 3.4.2 Role of Imagination in Romantic Poetry

3.5 Biographia Literaria: Chapter IV

3.5.1 Biographia Literaria: Chapter XIV

3.5.2 Coleridge's Notions of Poetry and the figure of the Poet

3.5.3 Superaddition of Rhyme to Poetry

3.6 Biographia Literaria: Chapter XVII

3.6.1 Coleridge's Views on Meter

3.6.2 Review

3.7 Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Critic and Philosopher

- 3.8 The German Angle and the Theory of Fancy and Imagination
- 3.9 Wordsworth and Coleridge: An Exposition on Fancy and Imagination
- 3.10 Summary
- 3.11 Key Terms
- 3.12 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.13 Questions and Exercises
- 3.14 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will give you a brief commentary on the poet-critic John Dryden's treatise, *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*. Author, poet, essayist, editor and lexicographer, Samuel Johnson, called Dryden the 'father of English criticism'. Dryden's treatise is an important landmark in the history of literary criticism in England. It was published in 1668. Dryden states that his aim in writing this essay was 'to vindicate the honour of (our) English writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them'. The treatise does more than that. It provides its readers a benchmark on how to judge a play. It provides a balanced answer to the debate over who is better—the ancients or the moderns. In this essay, Dryden also offers the comparative merits and demerits of **blank** verse and rhyme for dramatic purposes. The setting of the tract is 'dramatic' as the 'essay' is in the form of a dialogue that takes place between four speakers, who have very different opinions in matters of poetry and drama. Dryden never claims **that** he knows the truth; his treatise is only an attempt to get closer to the truth. Let us read more about it.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Recall important biographical aspects of John Dryden and Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- Discuss Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*
- Explain Coleridge's notion of the role of Imagination in romantic poesy
- Paraphrase chapter IV of *Biographia Literaria*
- Describe the role of fancy and imagination as per Coleridge

3.2 JOHN DRYDEN: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* was published in 1668. It is believed to have been written during the plague year of 1666. The essay is considered to be his masterpiece in critical writing. It was written in the form of dialogue between Crites, Eugenius, Lisideius and Neander when the four friends undertook a journey by boat on the river Thames. It is here that they take turns to express their divergent views on different aspects of literature. They express their views so that the readers get different perspectives of looking at literature and poetic creativity and evaluate for themselves which is better.

John Dryden was a poet who was considered to be the best representative of the Restoration Age (1660-1700). It was an age that marked the end of the Puritan regime in England as Prince Charles II was restored to the English throne. Charles II, during his exile from England from 1642 to 1660, had been in France. Therefore, when he ascended the throne, he and his courtiers, who were in love with French manners and fashion, influenced the literary production and criticism of the age by fashioning it in French ways. The French critical parameter was influenced by the neo-classical thought, which was derived from Italy in the sixteenth century. However, unlike the Italians, the French were very rigid and systematic in their critical outlook.

It is generally assumed that John Dryden was neoclassical in his outlook, though he was not as rigid as the French. For the neoclassical, one of the fundamental principles was that the poets, writers and critics should follow the ancient masters, primarily Aristotle. Aristotle's *Poetics* was *the Bible* for them. Though Dryden admired and respected Aristotle, and made an elaborate analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics*, he did not agree to everything that Aristotle propounded. Dryden himself being an excellent poet and dramatist had an excellent understanding of the nature of poetic and dramatic creativity in the Restoration. Consequently his *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* became a significant piece of critical work that promoted the understanding of the essence and parameter of neoclassical age.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What was the basic premise of Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.
2. What was the extent of Aristotle's influence on Dryden?

3.3 DIFFERENT VIEWS ON DRAMATIC POESY

This tract is a dialogue between four speakers, who are also contemporaries of Dryden. They make the critical work dialectic and provide freshness to the discussion on different aspects of drama (both theoretical and practical). Dryden, in keeping with the British Neo-classical tradition, handles five critical questions in his treatise, *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.

Table 3.1 states the names of the speakers and the topics of their discussion. *Table 3.1*

Four Friends and their Topics

Crites	Sir Robert Howard	Arguing on behalf of the superiority of the Ancients
Eugenius	Dorset	Celebrating the Moderns
Lisideius	Sir Chrales Sedley	In favour of the seventeenth century French neo-classical theatre
Neander	Dryden	Defending the English theatre and the Elizabethans

The questions asked are as follows:

1. What are the relative merits of classical and modern poets?
2. Is the existing French theatre superior or inferior to the English theatre?
3. Are Elizabethan Dramatists superior to the eighteenth century dramatists?
4. Do the plays become more perfect when they follow the classical rules?
5. Is rhyme in serious plays desirable or not?

The viewpoints of each speaker will now be discussed in detail.

3.3.1 Crites' Viewpoint

Crites begins by asserting the superiority of the ancient poets of classical antiquity. For him, the classical poets and dramatists had shown their mastery in the representation of human nature. The Moderns, according to Crites, had built their foundation on the ancient masters. Crites says, 'Those Ancients have been faithful imitators and wise observers of that nature, which is so torn

and ill represented in our plays; they have handed down to us a perfect resemblance of her; which we, like ill copiers, neglecting to look on, have rendered monstrous and disfigured'. All good modern plays are fashioned according to the Aristotelian norms. For him, the plays are not good if they do not follow the ancient rules of writing. Thus, Crites takes up a rigid Neo-classical position in the debate among the four speakers. The rigidity of the Neo-classical norms, for Crites, makes a piece of dramatic work better as by following the rules, the work of art can prove to be faithful and just.

3.3.2 Eugenius' Viewpoint

Listening to the tirades against the Moderns, Eugenius tries to defend the modern dramatists. He states that he had deep respect for the Ancients, but that does not take away the credibility of the modern writers. He says,

If your quarrel to those who now write, be grounded only upon your reverence to the antiquity, there is no man more ready to adore those great Greeks and Romans than I am: but on the other side, I cannot think so contemptibly of the age I live in, or so dishonourably of my own country, as not to judge we equal the Ancients in most kinds of Poesy, and in some surpass them; neither know I any reason why I may not be as zealous for the reputation of our age, as we find the Ancients themselves in reference to those who lived before them.

The Moderns have profited from the Ancients as any artist builds on the achievements of his predecessors. However, according to Eugenius, the Moderns excelled more than the poets of antiquity. Eugenius criticizes the Ancients for not following the dramatic unities strictly and for the use of the stock characters. Modern dramatists follow the classical norms more closely than the Ancients and that is how Eugenius concluded that the Moderns were better than the ancient poets. Eugenius being a Neoclassical himself also gave importance to the classical norms of drama and tried to analyze the Moderns from that perspective. Eugenius pointed out the narrow range and the lack of innovation of the Greek theatre. He stated that 'their appetites were cloyed with the same dish, and the novelty being gone, the pleasure vanished'. He also emphasized on the limitations of the conventional plot of the Roman comedy by stating that '... in how straight a compass so ever they have bounded their plots and characters' As against the classical masters, the Moderns are not dull imitators and are innovative'... natural causes more known... because more studied, it follows that poetry and other arts may... arrive till nearer to perfection....'

Eugenius also remarked that the Ancients also had problems in the instructive apart and had shown a 'prosperous wickedness and an unhappy piety'. In terms of their representation of passions, Eugenius felt that there is nothing in the ancient drama that can be compared with the Moderns. He goes on to state that:

... in their tragedies to the excellent scenes of passion in Shakespeare, or in Fletcher for love scenes, you will find few among them; their tragic poets dealt not with that soft passion, but with lust, cruelty, revenge, ambition and

those bloody actions they produced, which were more capable of raising horror than compassion in an audience: leaving love untouched, whose gentleness would have tempered them, which is the most frequent of all the passions, and which being the private concernment of every person, is soothed by viewing its own image in a public entertainment.

Crites disagrees with this view by saying that 'in their love scenes ... the ancients were more hearty....'

3.3.3 Lisideius' Viewpoint

Lisideius on the other hand defends the dramatists of the seventeenth century France, for following the Neo-classical outlook very scrupulously. According to Lisideius, French theatre is better than the English because of four reasons, which are as follows:

1. Observance of classical dramatic rules
2. Simplicity of plot
3. Decorum of the stage
4. Beauty of the rhyme

Further, he condemns the English tragi-comedy by stating that 'There is no theatre in the world has anything so absurd as the English tragi-comedy;' It is a drama of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so; here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, and a third of honour and a duel: thus, in two hours and a half, we run through all the fits of Bedlam.' The classical dramatic practitioners never mixed or mingled tragedy and comedy in a single work of art. For them, the two were distinct genres and needed to be dealt with separately. However, in the Elizabethan age, from the time of Shakespeare, tragedy and comedy were mingled together by the dramatists, which many critics could not digest. This innovation of the mingling of tragedy and comedy is perceived by the Neo-classical scholars as absurd, since 'classical theory of drama' does not approve of it.

Then, he draws a comparison between the classical and the seventeenth century French dramatists. He says that the French have followed the classical rules better than the classical poets themselves. He praises the French for their single and unified plots, for their well-contended development of action, for the just relation between exposition and action. Moreover, he praises the French dramatists for being grounded in history, 'so interweaves truth with pleasing fiction'. The French were mainly preoccupied with the emotional struggles of powerful characters trapped in a web of circumstances, which makes their plays great. In comparison to all these, according to Lisideius, the English theatre lacks the dramatic unity in their plays.

3.3.4 Neander's Viewpoint

Neander (Dryden himself) vindicates the English drama over others by saying that, 'neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us'. He reminds Lisideius of the definition of the play: 'a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind'. He further states that the French plays have the beauty of the statue, but they are not lively. He states, 'For the lively imitation of nature being in the definition of a play, those which best fulfill that law ought to be esteemed superior to the others.' It is true, those beauties of the French poesies are such as will raise perfection higher where it is, but are not sufficient to give it where it is not: they are indeed the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of Poesie, which is imitation of humour and passions.' Excessive formality in observing the classical rules have destroyed their liveliness. In their effort to follow the classical norms of drama, the French have proved to be faithful to the rules, but that has taken away the creativity from their works of dramatic art. For Neander, the purpose of literature is first to delight and the French are far behind than the British dramatists in providing pleasure to the audience in following the classical norms.

Neander then defends tragi-comedy on English stage, saying that pleasure can be derived from interspersing tragic scenes with the comic. 'A scene of mirth mixed

with tragedy has the same effect upon us that our music has betwixt the acts ... must therefore have stronger arguments ere I am convinced, that compassion and mirth in the same subject destroy each other; and in the meantime cannot but conclude, to the honour of our nation, that we have invented, increased and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage than was ever known to the Ancients or Moderns of any nation, which is -tragi-comedy'. Neander convincingly tries to defend the irregularities of the English stage as against the coldness of the French drama by saying that the English theatre is much livelier because of its innovations. In English theatre, the sub-plots do not mar the main plot and its unity of action; rather they uphold the main plot and contribute to the overall signification of the play. Similarly, a variety of characters also provide certain beauty to the play when the plot of the play has unity of action, as against the French theatre, which may follow all the Neo-classical norms, but suffers from the 'dearth of plot' and 'narrowness of imagination'.

Neander goes on to defend the Elizabethan dramatists for their brilliant rendition of the theatrical activity. He takes up the Elizabethan dramatists—William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher and makes a comparative study of the four dramatists where he concludes that Jonson is the most learned and judicious; Beaumont and Fletcher, most cultivated and Shakespeare as having the greatest natural gifts. Neander says, 'Shakespeare was the Homer, or the father of dramatic poets; Jonson was the "Virgil of the pattern of elaborate writing. I admire him, but I love Shakespeare.' Moreover, about Shakespeare, Neander says, '(Shakespeare) was the man of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously but luckily; when he describes anything,

you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accused him to have wanted learning gave him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned.' Dryden's such appreciation of Shakespeare has been praised by Dr. Samuel Johnson, who calls him a model of eulogistical (praiseworthy) criticism.

Neander praises Ben Jonson for his technical achievement, as he comments, 'Jonson was the most learned and judicious writer that any theatre ever had ... if I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit'. If one tries to judge a play merely from the point of view of the rules observed, then Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* or *The Silent Woman* points out the successful integration of action, observance of dramatic unities, and successful illustration of varieties of human nature. Beaumont and Fletcher, for Neander, present their 'great natural gifts' in their dramatic creations. Beaumont and Fletcher 'understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better; whose wild debaucheries, and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet can ever paint as they have done'. He praises them for the gaiety in their comedies and pathos in the serious plays.

Dryden then, through Neander, defends rhyme in serious plays saying that it is neither artificial nor unnatural as 'tragedy is indeed the representation of nature, but ... nature wrought up in high pitch'. Rhyme may seem unnatural in comedy where greater realism is demanded, but fits well in tragedy as 'the plot, the character, the wit, the passions, the descriptions are all exalted above the level of common converse as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them with proportion of verisimilitude'.

Thus, Dryden defends the Elizabethan dramatists and shows how they epitomize the virtues in English theatre. Dryden shows great sophistication in showing the virtues and faults of the dramatists of different ages and different nations, which is the mark of a great critic.

3.3.5 Review

Dryden, addressing the readers, comments that the objective of his essay was chiefly to vindicate the honour of our English writers. At a time when the classical rules and French theatre influenced British culture, the British Neo-classicists—John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Samuel Johnson and others—emphasized two important aspects of British Neo-classicism. These are as follows:

1. They did not blindly follow the classical norms.
2. They opposed the French practices and models.

It is thought that Dryden's primary contribution to the English criticism is that he set the tone, style and mode of British critical discourse—as pointed out by Wimsatt and Brooks: 'the

conversational prose, the gentlemanly tone, the cool and judicial posture'. Dryden is the first critic in the history of English literary criticism to reasonably defend the British dramatists. But more than that, as T.S. Eliot pointed out in *Uses of Poetry*, 'The Great work of Dryden in criticism is that at the right moment he became conscious of the necessity of affirming the native element in literature.'

Dr Johnson sums up Dryden's contribution: 'Dryden maybe properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merits of composition'. Moreover, he adds that 'the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems... with imagery, so brightened with illustration'. Thus Dryden's 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' is considered to be a significant piece of critical work, which for the first time makes the English nation aware of its own greatness in literature in comparison to its European counterparts. At a time when Milton was writing *Paradise Lost* to celebrate the English nation and language, Dryden's *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* gained importance as it established the English dramatic canon. Moreover, the treatise is significant as it is the first piece of critical work that tries to define drama.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

3. State the questions that were asked by the four friends in the 'Essay'.
4. What was the significance of the moderns as per the viewpoint of Eugenius.

UNIT 3 JOHN DRYDEN

Structure

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- 3.5 Unit Objectives
- 3.6 John Dryden: A Brief Biographical Sketch
- 3.7 Different Views on Dramatic Poesy
 - 3.3.6 Crites' Viewpoint
 - 3.3.7 Eugenius'Viewpoint
 - 3.3.8 Lasideius'Viewpoint
 - 3.3.9 Neander'sViewpoint
 - 3.3.10Review
- 3.4 Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Brief Biographical Sketch
 - 3.4.1 Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Biographia Literaria
 - 3.4.2 Role of Imagination in Romantic Poetry
- 3.5 Biographia Literaria: Chapter IV
 - 3.5.4 Biographia Literaria: Chapter XIV
 - 3.5.5 Coleridge's Notions of Poetry and the figure of the Poet
 - 3.5.6 Superaddition of Rhyme to Poetry
- 3.6 Biographia Literaria: Chapter XVII
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- 3.16 Key Terms
- 3.17 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.18 Questions and Exercises
- 3.19 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will give you a brief commentary on the poet-critic John Dryden's treatise, *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*. Author, poet, essayist, editor and lexicographer, Samuel Johnson, called Dryden the 'father of English criticism'. Dryden's treatise is an important landmark in the history of literary criticism in England. It was published in 1668. Dryden states that his aim in writing this essay was 'to vindicate the honour of (our) English writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them'. The treatise does more than that. It provides its readers a benchmark on how to judge a play. It provides a balanced answer to the debate over who is better—the ancients or the moderns. In this essay, Dryden also offers the comparative merits and demerits of **blank**

verse and rhyme for dramatic purposes. The setting of the tract is 'dramatic' as the 'essay' is in the form of a dialogue that takes place between four speakers, who have very different opinions in matters of poetry and drama. Dryden never claims **that** he knows the truth; his treatise is only an attempt to get closer to the truth. Let us read more about it.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Recall important biographical aspects of John Dryden and Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- Discuss Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*
- Explain Coleridge's notion of the role of Imagination in romantic poesy
- Paraphrase chapter IV of *Biographia Literaria*
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3.2 JOHN DRYDEN: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* was published in 1668. It is believed to have been written during the plague year of 1666. The essay is considered to be his masterpiece in critical writing. It was written in the form of dialogue between Crites, Eugenius, Lisideius and Neander when the four friends undertook a journey by boat on the river Thames. It is here that they take turns to express their divergent views on different aspects of literature. They express their views so that the readers get different perspectives of looking at literature and poetic creativity and evaluate for themselves which is better.

John Dryden was a poet who was considered to be the best representative of the Restoration Age (1660-1700). It was an age that marked the end of the Puritan regime in England as Prince Charles II was restored to the English throne. Charles II, during his exile from England from 1642 to 1660, had been in France. Therefore, when he ascended the throne, he and his courtiers, who were in love with French manners and fashion, influenced the literary production and criticism of the age by fashioning it in French ways. The French critical parameter was influenced by the neo-classical thought, which was derived from Italy in the sixteenth century. However, unlike the Italians, the French were very rigid and systematic in their critical outlook.

It is generally assumed that John Dryden was neoclassical in his outlook, though he was not as rigid as the French. For the neoclassical, one of the fundamental principles was that the poets, writers and critics should follow the ancient masters, primarily Aristotle. Aristotle's *Poetics* was *the Bible* for them. Though Dryden admired and respected Aristotle, and made an elaborate analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics*, he did not agree to everything that Aristotle propounded. Dryden himself being an excellent poet and dramatist had an excellent understanding

of the nature of poetic and dramatic creativity in the Restoration. Consequently his *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* became a significant piece of critical work that promoted the understanding of the essence and parameter of neoclassical age.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

3. What was the basic premise of Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.
4. What was the extent of Aristotle's influence on Dryden?

3.3 DIFFERENT VIEWS ON DRAMATIC POESY

This tract is a dialogue between four speakers, who are also contemporaries of Dryden. They make the critical work dialectic and provide freshness to the discussion on different aspects of drama (both theoretical and practical). Dryden, in keeping with the British Neo-classical tradition, handles five critical questions in his treatise, *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.

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Neander	Dryden	Defending the English theatre and the Elizabethans

The questions asked are as follows:

6. What are the relative merits of classical and modern poets?
7. Is the existing French theatre superior or inferior to the English theatre?
8. Are Elizabethan Dramatists superior to the eighteenth century dramatists?
9. Do the plays become more perfect when they follow the classical rules?
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The viewpoints of each speaker will now be discussed in detail.

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The Moderns, according to Crites, had built their foundation on the ancient masters. Crites says, 'Those Ancients have been faithful imitators and wise observers of that nature, which is so torn and ill represented in our plays; they have handed down to us a perfect resemblance of her; which we, like ill copiers, neglecting to look on, have rendered monstrous and disfigured'. All good modern plays are fashioned according to the Aristotelian norms. For him, the plays are not good if they do not follow the ancient rules of writing. Thus, Crites takes up a rigid Neo-classical position in the debate among the four speakers. The rigidity of the Neo-classical norms, for Crites, makes a piece of dramatic work better as by following the rules, the work of art can prove to be faithful and just.

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Eugenius also remarked that the Ancients also had problems in the instructive apart and had shown a 'prosperous wickedness and an unhappy piety'. In terms of their representation of passions, Eugenius felt that there is nothing in the ancient drama that can be compared with the Moderns. He goes on to state that:

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6. Decorum of the stage
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Further, he condemns the English tragi-comedy by stating that 'There is no theatre in the world has anything so absurd as the English tragi-comedy;' It is a drama of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so; here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, and a third of honour and a duel: thus, in two hours and a half, we run through all the fits of Bedlam.' The classical dramatic practitioners never mixed or mingled tragedy and comedy in a single work of art. For them, the two were distinct genres and needed to be dealt with separately. However, in the Elizabethan age, from the time of Shakespeare, tragedy and comedy were mingled together by the dramatists, which many critics could not digest. This innovation of the mingling of tragedy and comedy is perceived by the Neo-classical scholars as absurd, since 'classical theory of drama' does not approve of it.

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Neander then defends tragi-comedy on English stage, saying that pleasure can be derived from interspersing tragic scenes with the comic. 'A scene of mirth mixed

with tragedy has the same effect upon us that our music has betwixt the acts ... must therefore have stronger arguments ere I am convinced, that compassion and mirth in the same subject destroy each other; and in the meantime cannot but conclude, to the honour of our nation, that we have invented, increased and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage than was ever known to the Ancients or Moderns of any nation, which is -tragi-comedy'. Neander convincingly tries to defend the irregularities of the English stage as against the coldness of the French drama by saying that the English theatre is much livelier because of its innovations. In English theatre, the sub-plots do not mar the main plot and its unity of action; rather they uphold the main plot and contribute to the overall signification of the play. Similarly, a variety of characters also provide certain beauty to the play when the plot of the play has unity of action, as against the French theatre, which may follow all the Neo-classical norms, but suffers from the 'dearth of plot' and 'narrowness of imagination'.

Neander goes on to defend the Elizabethan dramatists for their brilliant rendition of the theatrical activity. He takes up the Elizabethan dramatists—William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher and makes a comparative study of the four dramatists where he concludes that Jonson is the most learned and judicious; Beaumont and Fletcher, most cultivated and Shakespeare as having the greatest natural gifts. Neander says, 'Shakespeare was the Homer, or the father of dramatic poets; Jonson was the "Virgil of the pattern of elaborate writing. I admire him, but I love Shakespeare.' Moreover, about Shakespeare, Neander says, '(Shakespeare) was the man of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accused him to have wanted learning gave him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned.' Dryden's such appreciation of

Shakespeare has been praised by Dr. Samuel Johnson, who calls him a model of eulogistical (praiseworthy) criticism.

Neander praises Ben Jonson for his technical achievement, as he comments, 'Jonson was the most learned and judicious writer that any theatre ever had ... if I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit'. If one tries to judge a play merely from the point of view of the rules observed, then Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* or *The Silent Woman* points out the successful integration of action, observance of dramatic unities, and successful illustration of varieties of human nature. Beaumont and Fletcher, for Neander, present their 'great natural gifts' in their dramatic creations. Beaumont and Fletcher 'understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better; whose wild debaucheries, and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet can ever paint as they have done'. He praises them for the gaiety in their comedies and pathos in the serious plays.

Dryden then, through Neander, defends rhyme in serious plays saying that it is neither artificial nor unnatural as 'tragedy is indeed the representation of nature, but ... nature wrought up in high pitch'. Rhyme may seem unnatural in comedy where greater realism is demanded, but fits well in tragedy as 'the plot, the character, the wit, the passions, the descriptions are all exalted above the level of common converse as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them with proportion of verisimilarity'.

Thus, Dryden defends the Elizabethan dramatists and shows how they epitomize the virtues in English theatre. Dryden shows great sophistication in showing the virtues and faults of the dramatists of different ages and different nations, which is the mark of a great critic.

3.3.5 Review

Dryden, addressing the readers, comments that the objective of his essay was chiefly to vindicate the honour of our English writers. At a time when the classical rules and French theatre influenced British culture, the British Neo-classicists—John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Samuel Johnson and others—emphasized two important aspects of British Neo-classicism. These are as follows:

3. They did not blindly follow the classical norms.
4. They opposed the French practices and models.

It is thought that Dryden's primary contribution to the English criticism is that he set the tone, style and mode of British critical discourse—as pointed out by Wimsatt and Brooks: 'the conversational prose, the gentlemanly tone, the cool and judicial posture'. Dryden is the first critic in the history of English literary criticism to reasonably defend the British dramatists. But more than that, as T.S. Eliot pointed out in *Uses of Poetry*, 'The Great work of Dryden in

criticism is that at the right moment he became conscious of the necessity of affirming the native element in literature.'

Dr Johnson sums up Dryden's contribution: 'Dryden maybe properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merits of composition'. Moreover, he adds that 'the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems... with imagery, so brightened with illustration'. Thus Dryden's 'An Essay on Dramatic Poesy' is considered to be a significant piece of critical work, which for the first time makes the English nation aware of its own greatness in literature in comparison to its European counterparts. At a time when Milton was writing *Paradise Lost* to celebrate the English nation and language, Dryden's *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* gained importance as it established the English dramatic canon. Moreover, the treatise is significant as it is the first piece of critical work that tries to define drama.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. State the questions that were asked by the four friends in the 'Essay'.
6. What was the significance of the moderns as per the viewpoint of Eugenius.

UNIT IV S. T. Coleridge

4.4 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Coleridge was a great Romantic poet, and a great critic. *Biographia Literaria* is a kind of an autobiographical sketch of Coleridge's life, published in 1817. It illustrates Coleridge's literary aesthetics and theory. An important theme of the book is the role that philosophy

plays in literature, which is all pervading. Coleridge's digressions on the matters of poetry and literary theories make it an important piece of literary criticism. The book is an odd mix and contains components of a biography, philosophy and literary theory. Coleridge discusses the role of critics, the power of poetry to reveal the character of a man, issues of perception and how the mind processes information as well as the characteristics of poetic power. In Chapters XIV-XXII of the book, Coleridge analyses Wordsworth's theory of poetry. He did not support Wordsworth's views on poetic diction and his choice of rustic themes. In Chapter XXIII of the book, Coleridge explains what the terms, 'fancy' and 'imagination' mean to him. He asserts that the purpose of poetry is to give pleasure to its readers and to the poet. His theory of 'imagination' is his most significant contribution to the subject of literary criticism. Let us read about Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* in brief.

3.4.1 Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Biographia Literaria*

The Romantic Age began with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the year 1798. The literary historians are of the view that the publication of this collection of poems along with its Preface, heralded a new era in the history of English literature. Every age is either a reaction to the immediate earlier age or a continuation of the earlier age with subtle changes. The Romantic Age is a complete reversal of the Age of Reason (eighteenth century). The term Romantic not only means a poetic creed in English literature; it also connects a highly complicated set of attitudes and beliefs as well.

Romanticism was largely a reaction against the prevailing Neo-classical school of writing, which laid great stress on form, structure and conventions of poetic diction. Thus, opposed to classicism and its sophisticated culture, the Romantics brought with them the 'Renaissance of wonder' where the natural world is revealed and vividly portrayed for the first time. This led to the idea of nature as an inspiring force, as felt by William Wordsworth and Percy B. Shelley.

The governing word of the eighteenth century was 'reason' and the dominating word of literature in this century (also termed Neo-classical age) was 'diction'. The Romantics tried to oppose both these notions and thus reason was replaced by imagination/emotion. The diction of the eighteenth century poetry was replaced by the language of the common man, as Wordsworth talks about it in the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads'. Thus, a stark contrast can be perceived between the eighteenth century poems and the poems of the Romantics.

However, this change that you perceive did not happen suddenly; it was gradual. The Pre-Romantics (Thomson, Gray and others; some literary scholars even include William Blake in the list of the Pre-Romantics) had their contribution in achieving this change in the history of the English literature. However, Wordsworth in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* emphasized the aims and objectives of the new poetry. According to him, the subject of the new poetry should be taken from the ordinary and commonplace life and coloured with imagination to make it poetic and to express in common man's language. Though Coleridge published poetry with Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), these two eminent poets of the Romantic Age differed in their outlook in many ways. Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* not only professed his ideas about poetry and creative processes, but also expressed his intellectual difference from Wordsworth, though he had deep veneration for him. In chapters fourteen and seventeen of *Biographia Literaria*, you learn about the admiration Coleridge had for Wordsworth. However, that does not deter him from pointing out the lapses in Wordsworth's notion of poetry as propounded in the 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*'.

Biographia Literaria is an autobiographical sketch by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, published in 1817. It is a discourse that is contemplative, and lays heavily on philosophy. It elaborates the philosophies propounded by Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling.

3.4.2 Role of Imagination in Romantic Poetry

Wordsworth in the 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*' has talked about how imagination should be the means through which one should colour the commonplace incidents of one's life. He spoke of poetry as a 'work of imagination and sentiment'. Keats wrote in a letter in 1819—'I describe what I imagine'. Thus, all the Romantics are preoccupied with imagination, though it was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who tried to theoretically and critically talk about imagination in his book of criticism named *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817. Coleridge made a distinction between 'fancy' and 'imagination'. Coleridge in chapter thirteen of *Biographia Literaria* writes the following:

The imagination, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the Infinite I am. The secondary imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet as identical with the primary in its kind of agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space

Primary imagination, according to Coleridge, is the only means through which the poet can transcend the worries, tensions and pains of this reality so as to communicate with the 'infinite' or the 'divine' and get some access to the ideal world. Coleridge asserts that the only poetic means through which a poet can surpass the 'fixities and definites' of the world

of fancy is through primary imagination. He also distinguishes between the the fanciful and the imaginative poet when he compares John Milton and Abraham Cowley, and says 'Milton is an imaginative poet, whereas Cowley, a fanciful one'.

However, the poet's work is not only that of a seer, as he does it while getting into the mode of perceiving the supreme reality with primary imagination. His next role is that of a prophet, where his duty is to talk about the things that he has perceived in his primary imagination. Thus, the poet now tries to make the perception of the primary imagination concrete, through the secondary one. However, as Coleridge says it is not altogether possible to recreate the things of the primary imagination, as the secondary imagination 'dissolves, diffuses and dissipates, in order to re-create'. Therefore, it is never possible for any imaginative poet to be completely satisfied with his creative output as the essence of what he had perceived through his primary imagination is lost if not fully, at least partially. T. S. Eliot, later on, in a different context altogether in the poem *The Hollow Men* writes the following:

'Between the conception and the creation

Falls the shadow'

This shadow disappointed the Romantic poets. It is termed by literary scholars as 'Romantic Agony'.

Coleridge's famous poem *Kubla Khan* represents the concept of imagination that Coleridge tried to theoretically talk about in *Biographia Literaria*. The poem is about poetic creativity and about how primary and secondary imagination work. Coleridge like *Kubla Khan* fails to create a dome, though he as a 'poet' is able to make it. This is because the poet as a seer can use his primary imagination to transcend from the world of the real to reach the ideal world. However, after experiencing the ideal world, his next role is to substantiate it for the readers. Coleridge like *Kubla Khan* is the poet in his secondary imagination where he fails to substantiate the ideal that he has come to know when he heard the song of the 'Abyssinian Maid' talking about the hidden knowledge of existence. The knowledge of the ideal is clear to the poet's mind—he knows that if opposites are juxtaposed in proper order, the ideal can be reached. He probably got this idea from Renaissance alchemy (alchemical practices during the Renaissance that used trial and error methods to discover the nature of substances) or from John Donne, 'whatever dies is not mixed equally'. So, the poet wanted to create a dome, which has the opposites existing in it, 'that sunny dome! those caves of ice!'

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. What was the chief characteristic of the Romantic age?
6. State Coleridge's formulation of Primary imagination.

3.5 BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA: CHAPTER IV

In Chapter IV, Coleridge returns to the initial formation of his poetic doctrine and to the third (and most significant) impact upon it — Wordsworth's poetry. Although crucial opening insights were provided by Boyer and Bowles, Wordsworth's works revealed something radical to Coleridge. Coleridge had gone through Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches*, while he was at Cambridge. He was convinced that Wordsworth was the original poetic genius. Wordsworth's skills were fully revealed later in 1795, when Coleridge got a chance to hear Wordsworth reciting *Guilt and Sorrow*, his manuscript poem, when they first met. Coleridge was deeply and instantly affected by this reading. What impacted him was the unusual manner in which the depth of feeling had united with intense thought. This had a deep effect on Coleridge's judgement too. There was this extraordinary balance between what was truly observed and what was imagined in the way the observed objects were modified.

Wordsworth had managed to spread the tone, atmosphere, depth and height of the idyllic world around, with its scenarios, events and forms, which had otherwise lost

their sparkle to custom. Coleridge was impressed by this decisive and influential insight, whose nature he could not easily and accurately define.

The manner in which Wordsworth's poetry brought about a unification of thought and feeling, had never been done in English literature after Milton. He had a way of realizing and idealizing the commonplace. He had the knack to make the readers see man and nature as if they were laying their eyes on them for the very first time. Where did Wordsworth obtain this fresh sensation? What distinguished **his** poetry from the works of eighteenth-century writers? According to Coleridge, repeated meditations and the ability to anticipate and also prepare for the inevitable arguments and illustrations that would follow, had led him to initially suspect that 'fancy' and 'imagination' were two separate and different faculties. They were not two terms with the same meaning as was popularly believed. They were not a smaller or greater degree of the same power either.

At the centre of *Biographic/ Literaria* lies the desynonymisation of fancy and imagination. In the true sense of the word, it is the *raison d'etre*. Coleridge's aim was to find out the principle that determines imagination and in the process be able to state his own poetic doctrine. He did not wish to express these principles as his own opinions, but as the result of derivations from existing principles. The terminus a quo of this study/ research was primarily Wordsworth, whose *Guilt and Sorrow* initially drew Coleridge's attention to poetry and related imagination. The terminus ad quem, that follows the philosophic deduction of the imagination, maturely assesses all that has been achieved by Wordsworth's poetically.

3.5.1 *Biographia Literaria*: Chapter XIV

William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge met in 1795. They immediately recognized each other's talent and what bloomed from their friendship is *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of poems published by the duo in 1798, which changed the course of poetry in England. They often met each other and discussed different aspects of poetry, as Coleridge himself claims in the beginning of chapter fourteen of *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge states, 'During the first year that Mr Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations

turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination'.

The discussions on divergent topics related to art and poetry—on the notion of art being true to reality and the factor of imagination being true to the creative process— paved the path for a fresh outlook in poetry. Moreover, Wordsworth and Coleridge decided to delve into two different aspects of Romanticism and write poetry on those aspects, as Coleridge himself mentions, 'that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts'.

'In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interest of the affections by the dramatic • truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves'. Coleridge thought of directing his endeavours 'to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic' in the poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and *Christabel* (the poems of Coleridge in the collection *Lyrical Ballads*).

Wordsworth tried 'to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday'. Thus, Wordsworth and Coleridge decided to champion two different, but significant aspects of poetry in the Romantic Age. They did this in order to set an example of a collection of poetry, which would provide freshness to the readers who were cramped with too much of poetic diction and elitism of the eighteenth century poetry.

Coleridge then goes on to praise the efforts of Wordsworth, 'for rejecting the usual ornaments an extra-colloquial style of (his) poems' (poetic diction) in *Lyrical Ballads*. He points out that the assailants of Wordsworth are dubious in presenting their 'acrimonious passion' against Wordsworth and his notion of poetry as presented in the 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' and in practice in his poems. For Coleridge, Wordsworth is an institution in himself and it is proved by the sale and popularity of *Lyrical Ballads*. If Wordsworth's works would have been 'silly' or of no importance as far as poetic process is concerned then his poetry would have been disregarded or forgotten. However, the popularity of *Lyrical Ballads* only goes on to prove the prominence of Wordsworth, 'Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things, which they were for a long time described as being had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them; they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers.'

In any case, if Wordsworth is great in his poetic creed, it does not make Coleridge uncritically admiring towards Wordsworth, as he too has his own critical mind. Coleridge's mind differs from Wordsworth and he asserts it vehemently in chapter fourteen of *Biographia Literaria*. He says, 'I think it expedient to declare once for all, in what points I coincide with the

opinions supported in that preface, and in what points I altogether differ.' When Coleridge asserts his difference from Wordsworth, he is not trying to cast his aspersions on Wordsworth as the other assailants of the age did, but is trying to justify his own stand in terms of the creed set up by Wordsworth in the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads', which Wordsworth added to the later publications of *Lyrical Ballads*.

3.5.2 Coleridge's Notions of Poetry and the figure of the Poet

Coleridge's conceptions of poetry and the poet arose from his notion of imagination, which according to him was the defining characteristic of Romantic poetry in particular and poetry in general. Coleridge began by distinguishing between poetry and poem. Poetry, for Coleridge, was of wider connotation as he used the word poetry to cover almost all forms of imaginative writing and art whose immediate intention was to impart pleasure.

In poetry, Coleridge included unrhymed imaginative writing, as he said, "The writing of Plato and Bishop Taylor, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry if the highest kind exist without meter... The first chapter of Isaiah (indeed a very large portion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic sense.' If that is the case, how can one distinguish a poem from poetry? Coleridge was of the opinion that a poem combined the same elements, as were found in imaginative prose compositions, but rendered in a different manner because it aimed at a different object. Sometimes, the intention may be communication of truth and such communication may give pleasure, but this pleasure was not the immediate end. It was indirectly obtained, whereas pleasure was the immediate objective of poetry.

Coleridge defined poem as—'A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth and from all other species—(having this object in common with it)—it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.' He added, 'a poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of different object being proposed'. For Coleridge, poems do not differ much from prose, except in terms of them being metrical and rhythmical. These distinguishing elements in poetry make it distinct and 'pleasurable' to the readers.

3.5.3 Superaddition of Rhyme to Poetry

Coleridge discusses that whether the superaddition of rhyme would make a literary work, a poem. If meter is superadded in composition, then all other parts should be at par with it. According to Coleridge, a legitimate poem is that 'the parts of which mutually support and explain each other'. This originates from a corresponding organic process whose source is the poet. "The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of imagination.' Here it must be stressed that pleasure and truth which Coleridge seems to separate are derived both from poetry as well as science. Coleridge's separation of the two

seems arbitrary and can be explained by the fact that Coleridge, like other nineteenth century thinkers in general, was not able to shed the dichotomies of the current philosophy.

As a poet, Coleridge thought that Wordsworth's greatness lay in 'the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed and above all the original fight of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents and situations'.

3.6 BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA: CHAPTER XVII

In chapter seventeen of *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge deals with William Wordsworth's faith in low and rustic life as especially favourable to the formation of poetic diction. To Coleridge, William Wordsworth was the greatest poet of his age. In a letter, Coleridge mentioned Wordsworth's esteem by saying 'I feel myself a little man by his side.'

Wordsworth's championing of the language of the rustics and Coleridge's disagreement

Coleridge starts the chapter by stating the theory of language as is being propagated by Wordsworth in the 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' and how it affected the age and its writings. 'Mr. Wordsworth is fully justified in believing his efforts to have been by no means ineffectual. Not only in the verses of those who have professed their admiration of his genius, but even of those who have distinguished themselves by hostility to his theory, and depreciation of his writings, are the impressions of his principles plainly visible.' Coleridge feels that Wordsworth was justified in pointing out the artificiality of a poetic diction of the eighteenth century, as it was stagnant and to a greater extent hindered the manifestation of the poet's experience. However, at the same time, Coleridge disagrees with Wordsworth's view that the language of poetry should be 'the language of natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings'. However, his disagreement with Wordsworth cannot be compared with the remonstrations of other people of the age. According to Coleridge, the people who challenged Wordsworth did so without any real basis as they did not try to interpret Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' in a just manner. Though Coleridge speaks in favour of Wordsworth and the effect of his critical and creative writing still it does not mean that Coleridge's thoughts are no different from that of Wordsworth. Chapter seventeen especially focuses on those aspects where Coleridge points out the grounds on which he differs from Wordsworth's doctrine on poetic diction, by presenting his strong objections to Wordsworth's praising of the language of the rustics. Coleridge states that poetry cannot be of everyday language because poetry needs certain elements in order to provide pleasure to the reader like the naturalness of a thing described, way of representation and the feelings it generates in the reader.

Wordsworth thought that 'because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social

vanity, they convey their feelings, and notions in simple and unelaborated expression. Moreover, Wordsworth thinks that the language of the rustics needs to be purified from all defects for it to be the medium of poetic expression. Coleridge feels that one should object to this purification of rustics' language for the purpose of poetry. He thinks that if rustics' language is purified from its defects, then it is no different from the language of any common man.

3.6.1 Coleridge's Views on Meter

Coleridge makes a close reading of 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' and also points out Wordsworth's contradictions of ideas. On the one hand, Wordsworth advocated poetic use of the language of men; while on the other, he insisted on the principle of selection. Wordsworth denied the essential differences between the language of poetry and that of prose. At the same time, he was against the use of meter in poetry. Coleridge is of the opinion that though poetry and prose make use of the same vocabulary, yet in poetry the way the words are ordered is what makes it poetry. Coleridge writes,

the true question must be, whether there are not modes of expression, a construction and an order of sentences, which are in their fit and natural place in a serious prose composition, but would be disproportionate and heterogeneous in metrical poetry; and vice versa, whether in the language of a serious poem

there may not be an arrangement both of words and sentences and a use and selection of (what are called) figures of speech, both as to their kind, their frequency and their occasions, which on a subject of equal weight would be vicious and alien in correct/ and manly prose. I contend, that in both cases this unfitness of each for the place of the other frequently will and ought to exist.

Therefore, for Coleridge, the primary difference between the language of prose and poetry is meter. Meter determines the use of a particular language in poetry, which has to be different from that of prose. Coleridge says, 'I write in meter, because I am about to use a language different from that of prose.'

Coleridge then points out how some parts of Wordsworth's theory of diction are contradictory to his own practice. He points out how Wordsworth's poetry is even composed in a poetic diction which is 'impassioned, lofty and sustained'. Coleridge does this to point out that Wordsworth has discarded his own theory in practice. Therefore, it is difficult to reconcile Wordsworth's theory of diction and its practice, as he says, 'to me it will always remain a singular and noticeable fact; that a theory which will establish this lingua communis is not only as the best, but-as the only commendable style, should have proceeded from a poet, whose diction, next to that of Shakespeare and Milton, appears to me of all others the most individualized and characteristic'.

3.6.2 Review

The simplicity and primitivity of Wordsworth's poems, and even more of his theoretical views, provoked a considerable volume of immediate protests from his reading public. However, the critic who spoke with the shrewdest authority was Coleridge, after a lapse of seventeen

years in his reminiscential *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge's argument about poetic diction may be summarized in three main parts, which are as follows:

1. He said that if Wordsworth, in arguing that the language of 'metrical composition' is essentially the same as that of prose, meant only that poetry and prose have the same vocabulary, or dictionary, on which to draw, he was . uttering a truism. Coleridge concluded that Wordsworth really meant that the poetic manner of combining words was no different from that of prose and this, he retorted, was patently false. It is perhaps worth observing that Wordsworth may not in fact have made it quite clear whether he excluded either of the meanings defined by Coleridge; and that it is not necessary, either for justice to Wordsworth or for purposes of literary history, to suppose that he had brought himself to the point of facing a sharp distinction.
2. Coleridge argued that if a given image or figure (for instance, the 'image' of Phoebus as the sun) is used badly by a given poet (for instance, Gray in a sonnet criticized by Wordsworth), the reason for the bad quality is not the figure; it is a repetition of what other poems have done, but that it is in some way a violation of 'grammar, logic, psychology', 'good sense', or 'taste'—the 'rules of imagination'.
3. Coleridge argued that education, and not the lack of it, tends to make a poet. Uneducated men are disorderly in their writing; they lack purview. If the peasantry of Wordsworth's Westmoreland and Cumberland spoke a pure and vigorous language, this did not come from an uninstructed communion with nature, but from a spirit of independence and from a solid religious education and acquaintance with the Bible and hymn book.

One kind of speech (socially defined) could not be more real than another. However, in a given instance it might be either more or less poetic. In his appreciation of Wordsworth's own poetic performance, Coleridge noted that Wordsworth suffered the difficulties of a ventriloquist in his undue liking for the dramatic form. Either a rustic speaker was invested with Wordsworth's authority of utterance, or an opposite fault appeared, matter-of-factness, circumstantiality, and a downright prosaism, 'I've measured it from side to side; 'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.' It is not possible for a poet, urged Coleridge, especially not for a lyric poet, 'to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourses without repeating the effects of dullness and garrulity'.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. What was the basic premise of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* Chapter IV.
8. Give a brief description of Coleridge's notions of poetry and the figure of the poet.

3.7 SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE: A CRITIC AND PHILOSOPHER

The true blending of literary criticism with philosophy begins with Coleridge. However, one need not be misled by this statement and feel that Coleridge was a philosopher first and then a man of literature or a literary critic. Coleridge turned literary criticism into a philosophical discipline. He was primarily a poet and a literary man who attempted to base literary criticism in philosophy. However, to understand Coleridge as a literary artist and a philosopher, we need to study Coleridge's own philosophical development. Coleridge believed that poetry cannot be separated from philosophy and philosophy could be best understood if it was studied in poetry. In a letter which he wrote to one of his friends in 1816, Coleridge states:

I am convinced that a true system of philosophy - the science of life - is best taught in poetry.

The greatness of philosophy lies in the fact that it is the study of life. The main strength of Coleridge's criticism is its philosophical basis. The development of Coleridge as a philosophical critic can be seen in two stages. In the first phase, the development of Coleridge's critical faculty began with *associationist* philosophy, where he was greatly influenced by Hartley. The second stage of Coleridge's development, as a critic stands in sharp contrast to the first stage. In the beginning, he was the follower of Hume and Hartley and his associationist philosophy was a product of the classical developments in eighteenth century; in the later stage, he repudiated both Hume and Hartley. In other words, the early period of Coleridge's criticism bears a mark of Associationist philosophy. To understand Coleridge's views in the two stages as a literary critic, we need to understand the meaning of Associationism. The emergence of Romanticism lies in its reaction of the mechanistic and materialistic classical theories of the eighteenth century. An introduction to the theories of Associationism and Necessitarianism will enable us to understand the psychology and moral philosophy of the pre-Romantic era. Romantic criticism rejects these eighteenth century classical ideas and Coleridge was a fanatic opponent of the neo-classical theories based on Associationism and Necessitarianism.

Associationism began with David Hume and David Hartley. A study of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1738) proves that Hume was a skeptic as far as the *power of reason* was concerned. The eighteenth century was also known as the *"age of prose or age of reason"*. However, both Hume and Hartley rejected the superiority of reason. In the eighteenth century, reason was considered the primary force in the study of nature.

Hartley tried to establish the supremacy of instinct over reason. He wanted people to examine the moral issues with reason. He was looking for moral and psychological parallel of reason. Newton's theory of gravitation became the basis of a number of concepts in Physics and helped in unifying the physical world. Similarly, Hartley was also looking for some theory - some fundamental doctrine which could be seen as the unifying force in the physical world. In this sense, Hartley's Associationist philosophy can be seen as moral Newtonism.

Even Hume was on lookout for some basic force which could unite the physical world. For this purpose, he had already propounded the theory of the *'association of ideas'* as the unifying agent in the world of human experience. According to Hartley, the human mind works in a mechanical way through the association of ideas. He has elaborated this theory in

Observations on Man (1749). Hume also believes in the association of ideas. But he gives a more scientific explanation of this theory as stated in *Treatise of Human Nature*:

The qualities from which this association arises, and by which the mind is after this manner conveyed from the idea to another, are three, viz. resemblance, continuity of time and place, and cause and effect.

Hume was interested in establishing a standard of taste on a rational foundation. The proper judgment about an object should be made according to the features inherent in it. An object is found beautiful by a person because the mind contemplates it to be so. This is purely a subjective method of looking at things. However, as Hume believes, subjectivity alone cannot account for the beauty of an object. One has to discover the rules of art in our experience and in the observation of human life. Hume feels that the universal appeal of Homer depends on his adherence to the rules of art. However, the judgment about a work of art should be studied and comprehended from various points of view. Besides, an acquaintance, with the great works of art in the past is also necessary for a proper evaluation of a work of art. The proper evaluation of a work of art should be done without subduing reason. He observes, "If reason be not an essential part of taste, it is at best a requisite to the operation of this latter faculty". Reason enables us to grasp the design of a work of art and judge whether its function is well realized. A good critic possesses "strong sense, united to delicate feeling, improved by practice, perfected by comparison and cleared of all prejudice". The judgment given by such a critic is "the true standard of taste and beauty".

All human experiences have been divided into two categories by Hume. The first is *impressions* which consist of our emotions, feeling, ideas and sensations. The first appearance in the soul of a human being is made by impressions. These very images are reflected in thinking and reasoning. The function of memory is to hold these ideas and memories in the mind. It is left to the imagination to unite these simple ideas into complex ones. Thus, the *principle of association* functions on the basis of resemblance, closeness in time and place and cause and effect: In the *Treatise of Human Nature*, it is observed:

There are therefore the principles of union or cohesion among our simple ideas and in the imagination supply the place of that in separable action by which they are united in memory. Here is a kind of attraction.

Many complex ideas are derived from this principle of association. These ideas comprise of "relations, modes and substances". For example, what do we know about "substance"? It is nothing but a collection of specific features. The idea of a substance, like iron, is the idea of its properties. The idea of a mode of being like the idea of duty is all the notions that we have about duty. In this way, the idea of a substance is a collection of simple idea. These ideas are united by the *principles of association*. The theory of association, initiated by Hartley, studies this fundamental principle of the association of substances. This philosophy has played a major role in moulding Coleridge's career as a literary critic in 1798.

Hume and Hartley's contribution to the theory of '*association of ideas*' has been summarized by A.G. George:

Hartley is chiefly remembered for the development of the moral principle of association of ideas. He carries the application of Hume's theory further. Hume had explained the laws of cohesion on the principle of ideas. Hartley goes further and uses the principle of association not only for explaining the mechanism of mental process but also for the evolution of our moral characters from childhood to manhood. The development of the moral sense is itself out of simple sensations. Hartley's theory explains the formation of human character by circumstances through the universal principle of association. As a corollary to this, Hartley holds that it is possible to improve man's moral and intellectual conditions by education. The moral sense is not congenital. It is acquired through the principle of association.

If we talk of pleasure and the association of ideas, pleasure can be easily associated with notions of right and wrong. However, the role of instinct becomes important here. Naturally, the human mind associates pleasure with the right kind of objects. The mind does not find pleasure in the wrong objects. It seems that there is some unseen power which shapes our characters and controls or checks us with discipline. The unseen power monitors our development from childhood to youth and then to old age i.e. the age of wisdom, experience and maturity. In other words, we are not actively involved in our gradual development. We are passive onlookers, carried forward by providence to the right path. In the initial stage, we feel the pleasurable sensations, then we associate these pleasures with sublime objects and finally realise the presence of God everywhere.

The theory of association of ideas cannot be understood at length without knowing about Necessitarianism. Necessitarianism believes that the external world is arranged by the providence. The laws of human nature are framed on the basis of association of ideas. The moral order of the world and the capability of associating pleasure with correct objects are inherent in human nature. The principle of association of ideas is always operational in the world. It operates by itself. That is why there is moral order and perfection in the world. If human beings want the order of perfection to continue, they need not interfere with this associative principle. Rather its inherent functioning should be allowed to continue. In other words, the human mind has no active role to perform, in maintaining moral order in the world. Thus, both Associationism and Necessitarianism suggest that there is an unseen power which imposes its will in the world; hence its conception is mechanistic. Associationism and Necessitarianism also lead to a materialist psychology.

The early phase of Coleridge as a critic manifests a deep influence of Associationism and Necessitarianism which were the products of the eighteenth century and hence materialistic and mechanistic philosophies. However, these ideas could not remain the source of inspiration for long in front of the daunting personality of Coleridge. There were two incidents which are significant in the birth of Coleridge as a literary critic. He visited Germany and was greatly inspired by the Romantic ideologies of Kant and Schlegel brothers. His acquaintance with William Wordsworth also played a significant role in moulding his personality into what he is famous for. He underwent a transformation and repudiated the materialistic and mechanistic twin doctrines of Associationism and Necessitarianism, of which he was an ardent follower some time before.

The second phase of Coleridge is remarkable for its allegiance to the *transcendental philosophy* of Immanuel Kant. According to this theory, the human mind is an active agent. Thus, we see the difference between two streams of thought. The human mind, which incorporated *imagination said fancy*, were passive in Hartleyan principle of association of ideas where the human mind (imagination) becomes the centre of all activities and is an active performer, according to the transcendental notion. The new influence was so powerful on the mind of Coleridge that he talks of having thrown the Hartleyan influence forever. As written to Thomas Poole by Coleridge in 1801:

If I do not delude myself I have not only completely extricated myself from the opinions of time and place, but have overthrown the doctrine of Association, as taught by Hartley ... Especially the doctrine of necessity.

Moving to Coleridge's eminence as a literary critic and an analysis of his major critical work *Biographia Literaria*. It began as a literary autobiography by Coleridge. Later on, it developed into philosophical discussions about Kant and Schelling. It was published in 1817. However, originally it was conceived as a brief critical preface to *Sibylline Leaves*. Rapidly, it grew into a causerie on his literary life and opinions, in two volumes. As a conventional autobiography, it lacks in the aesthetic and recapitulatory 'finish' because of its being unsystematic, inexhaustibly communicative and not belonging to a single literary register. Its subject matter is not one but many. Whether it is his youthful admiration for the sonnets of William Bowles, his early friendship and intimacy with William Wordsworth, or talks about the associationist philosophy from Aristotle to Hartley and how it faces challenge in the hands of Kant and other German Romantic successors, Coleridge begins invariably and frequently ends his literary work in *medias res*. A curious student has to look for important theoretical matters behind long passages

of advice to would-be writers and the detailed analyses of the practical difficulties of publishing and editing journals. His method is excitingly inspirational in Table Talk. The reader comes across sudden insight and wonderful incandescence.

However, the underlying concern of *Biographia Literaria* is the process of human creativity. The literary and philosophical thought of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was empirical. The daunting task left to Coleridge was to 'view culture and creativity as simple givens rather than as the products of a specifically constituted intelligence'. His exploration of the pioneering works of Kant, Schilling and the Schelegel brothers results in the famous definition of the creative intelligence or the 'Imagination'. In chapters IX, XII and XIII Coleridge analyses the relations between subjectivity and objectivity, self and the world, rational understanding and speculative reason. Coleridge is often accused of borrowing the ideas of the German, although he himself arrived at most of the ideas. He himself created the system into which these ideas were fitted. It is his theory of Imagination around which his whole aesthetic - definition of poetry, and idea of the poet and poetical criticism - revolves. Chapters XIII and XIV are of great importance from this point of view. His theory of imagination is preceded by a prolix. Coleridge's abstruse philosophical discourse comprises of certain or propositions relating to Nature and Self. Nature is objective, passive and unconscious. Self or Intelligence is subjective, vital and conscious. The coalescence of the subject and the object produces all knowledge which leads to the act of creation, 'I AM!'. In this state the 'subject and the object, being and knowledge' become identical. At this stage one can experience and affirm the reality of "the one life in us and abroad". The cosmos is produced out of chaos. Coleridge suggests that this is possible when the self or the spirit views itself in all the objects which are dead and finite. The finite become infinite, the dead come alive because of the functioning of the creative imagination. Kant and Schelling also believed in the independence of the subject and the object as complementary objects of a single reality. Herein lays the affinity in the views of Coleridge and the German philosophers. Another point of similarity is the notion of the self-conceived as a Totality. Thoughts and feelings are no more abstractions; rather they are viewed in their original identity. However, Coleridge firmly believed that Imagination is not the monopoly of a particular group or a specific practice, although he knew that it found its best manifestation in poets and highest form of expression in poetry and aesthetic culture.

Having reached the central part of his theoretical meditations, Coleridge abruptly drops it. Volume II of the book is largely a critique of Wordsworth's theory of poetry and poetic diction. This main theme is interspersed with essays of Shakespeare. The difference between poetry and prose along with a detailed discussion of metre - its origin and elements - also form the body of the book. Here, he turns from the theory to the psychology of the creative process. He also discusses the inner preconditions and workings of authentic imagination. *Biographia Literaria* is the most carefully articulated piece of literature of the Romantic era in response to the multiple

contradictions of the early industrial society, before Shelley's unpublished work *Philosophical View of Reform*. Its influence on, upon later nineteenth and twentieth century literary theory has been immense. The students of poetry and literature are still most readily familiar with its model of the creative process. It has, therefore, justifiably been described by critics like Arthur Symonds as "the greatest book of English criticism".

3.8 THE GERMAN ANGLE AND THE THEORY OF FANCY AND IMAGINATION

In the eighteenth century the imitative - rationalist theory was mechanical and mechanistic. There were certain rules laid down for artistic creation. The creative artist was supposed to master the rules for artistic craftsmanship. Thus, poetry was good if the poet's understanding of the rules was sound. Ways to seek standards of lasting validity in arts were laid down by critics like Racine and Boole. According to them, the act of creative writing was nothing more than producing a mechanical device like a clock or an engine. Let us look at the prescribed way for making a tragedy:

Let the poet first choose a moral precept which he wants to impress on his audience by means of the senses. Then he invents a general story to illustrate the truth for famous people to whom something similar has happened and from them he borrows names for the characters in his story in order to give it a semblance of reality. After this he things up all the attendant circumstances necessary to make the main story really probable, and these are called the subplots and episodes. He then divides his material into five pieces, all of approximately equal length, and arranges them so that each section follows from the preceding section, but he does not bother further whether everything corresponds to the historical happenings, nor whether the subsidiary characters bore these or other names.

Such is the recipe given by Gottsched for the making of a tragedy. Obviously, creative writing was an invention and not imagination. Not that there was no concept of imagination in the eighteenth century. Here we find no scope for creative imagination, in the sense it was, later on, used by the Romantics. In the mind's eye, images come across one after the other. The difference between memory and imagination lies not in their functions, but in how they occur. If the images recur as in original experience, it is memory. If the recurrence is in a different order and if they combine to produce a new whole, it is imagination.

Imagination is something far and beyond reason according to the Romantic point of view. It is a mysterious creative faculty. It is divine. Its procedure is synthetic and not analytical. Intuition helps us to grasp the truth all at once. Imagination does not follow the route of reason or circumlocutions. It is active and productive. It does not only reproduce external data. It is not determined by some other faculty, rather it is determinative. In Kantian philosophy, the power that determines sense is prior in respect of its form or imagination. Its main function is to bridge the gap between thought and sensation. The world which is given to us by sensations is chaotic whereas the world of thought has an order and a system. The task of the creative artist is to bridge the gap between the two extremes - thought and sensation. This can be done by none other than the 'shaping spirit of imagination'. William Blake goes to the extent of declaring that there is nothing other than imagination which makes artistic creation

possible. Imagination, in Blake's views, is divinity incarnate. It is the image of God which operates in the human mind. Plato's theory of knowledge as recollection and art as imitation has been thoroughly rejected by him. Just as memory was the ultimate power for Plato, imagination is the highest creative power for Blake. Even Wordsworth has assigned a very important place to imagination in his 'Preface' of 1815. The mechanical approach of the neoclassicists is refuted yet again in his hands:

Imagination in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following poems, has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but in a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws.

The importance of imagination is yet again confirmed by P.B. Shelley and Keats. In *A Defence of Poetry*, Shelley made a distinction between reason and imagination. Reason is the analytic process where imagination is the synthetic process. Reason enumerates known qualities. The task of imagination is to perceive and determine their value. In the typical Romantic spirit, Keats has expressed his views on imagination in letters which are regarded as the storehouse of his critical thoughts. Imagination comprehends truth in the form of beauty. It, therefore, is a surer guide to truth than reason. One of his letters written to Benjamin Bailey contains his ideas on imagination:

I am certain of nothing but the holiness of heart's affections and the truth of imagination. What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth ... The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream - he awoke and found it truth.

However, the theory of imagination finds its best and most comprehensive expression in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Besides *Table Talk*, his letters also contain valuable information about his theory of imagination. He rejected the eighteenth century idea of viewing imagination as the 'despotism of the eye'. Let us move to the *Table Talk* of May 1 1833, where he observes that 'the genius of the highest kind implies an unusual intensity of the modifying power, which detached from the discriminative power, might conjure a platted straw into a royal diadem'. He also believed that 'the activity of thought and vivacity of the accumulative memory are essential'. He also speaks of the imagination as 'the modifying power' which is opposed 'to fancy, or the aggregating power in that sense in which it is a dim analogue of creation, not all that we can believe, but all that we can conceive of creation'. Imagination modifies or transforms the material on which it operates. Fancy is contrary to imagination because it can group the materials mechanically. Fancy depends upon the succession of events in time and its combines them associatively in such a way that the event retains its original character. Imagination, as its opposite, introduces harmony and transforms the given into a whole. Coleridge was greatly influenced by Kant's philosophical ideology which was expressed in *Critique of Judgement*. Kant's reproductive imagination is similar to fancy. There are many forms of imagination. So it is possible that fancy and imagination may co-exist in one and the same activity. The higher intellectual powers can only act through a corresponding energy of the lower kind. Fancy regulates the mental activity, but imagination is constituent of this activity. Fancy regulates the figures and other external ornaments, the form of the creative art. It is a power associating the figures, images and diction with the thought or feeling. Hobbes has treated fancy

as imagination. In 1795, Coleridge borrowed Bishop Burnet's *History of My Own Times* from the Bristol library, which spoke of the struggle launched by the Cambridge Platonists against the teaching of Hobbes. One of Cadworth's work 'True Intellectual System' states that the mind has a creative function even in the knowledge situation. It can form concepts. The creative activity is said to be necessary for an apprehension of the ideas.

However, in propounding his theory of imagination, Coleridge was greatly influenced by Wordsworth, Schelling and Kant. Coleridge's association with Wordsworth has been a fruitful one. Only after this he realized that the mechanistic theory of mind was not sound. It would not explain the active function of the mind. After meeting Wordsworth, he realized his potential as a human being who could think and imagine. He came to know that he was not a commodity or an object that could only receive external impressions. There was something peculiar in the human mind which enabled it to perceive, to feel the inner moorings and to create something new. This knowledge prompted Coleridge to examine the existing theories of artistic creation of the neo-classical age. Consequently, all mental activity of the human mind is divided under two heads: (a) imagination and (b) fancy. Coleridge's visit to Germany was also instrumental in shaping his vision. Gradually, he had a conviction that into truth was essentially dependent upon the soul and the emotions. The human will is affected by the mind and in return the mind cannot function without the effect of the human will. Coleridge experienced the emotion of love and based his philosophy on it. Once he wrote to Thomas Wedgewood about how his power of imagination was born out of his craving for love:

Love is limitless sensation, I...think ideas never recall ideas no more than leaves in a forest created each other's motion-the breeze it is that runs through them -it is the soul, the state of feeling.

Nature and human soul are inherently related to each other. There is an element of the infinite in every object. This 'infinite' can be arrived at by insight and not reason. This infinite is the fundamental of all nature. Those human beings who have this insight are specially gifted and as a result few. In other words, this insight is none other than their imaginative faculty. The major characteristic of insight is that it reveals the infinite in all finite things. Coleridge's theory of imagination examines this very nature of the insight. He also regards human soul as superior to nature. The appreciation of the nature by the human mind is not only superficial. It is deep and philosophical. It goes and unravels those aspects of nature which are not visible to the naked eye. Human mind appreciates the mystery and beauty of the inner life along with its external functions. The manifestation of the mysteries of nature is found in the sensual world. Our spiritual experiences get reflected in the sensual world. Coleridge was a firm believer in the fact that ideal and symbolic meanings were inherent in nature. The special faculty which enables a man to understand these deep rooted symbolic meanings of nature is none other than imagination. This special faculty is not possessed by an ordinary man. Here, we are reminded of Wordsworth who believes that a poet is a man different from ordinary human beings because of his sensitivity and ability to probe those aspects of finite objects which are beyond the perception of lesser mortals. The ordinary man, Coleridge maintains, lives in the real world-the world of 'fever and fret', physical torments and the tyranny of the senses. It is the faculty of imagination which can break through the world of actuality. These views find a beautiful expression in 'Dejection: An Ode' by Coleridge:

*"Late, late yestreen I saw the new moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And 1 fear, 1 fear, my master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.*

Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence

*Well, if the bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mold you cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far we mute.
For lo! The New Moon winter - bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o 'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! That even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,*

And sent my soul abroad

Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,

Might startle this dull pain, and make it more and live!

2

A grief without a pang, void, dark and clean,

A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,

Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,

In word, or sigh, or tear —

O Lady in this wan and heartless mood,

To other thoughts by yonder throstle wooed,

All this long eve, so balmy and serene,

Have I been gazing on the Western sky,

And its peculiar tint of yellow green:

And still I gaze - and with how blank an eye!

And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,

That give away their motion to the stars;

*Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
You crescent moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!*

3

*My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off any breast!
It were a vain endeavor,
Though I should gaze forever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.*

4

*O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature Live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would be aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed,
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,*

Ah! From the soul itself must issue forth

A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud

Enveloping the Earth –

And from the soul itself must there be sent

A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,

Of all sweet sound the life and element!

5

Opure of heart! Thou need'st not ask of me

What this strong music in the soul may be!

What, and wherein in doth exist,

This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,

This beautiful and beauty-making power.

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne 'er was given,

Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,

Life and Life's effluence, cloud at once at shower,

Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,

Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,

A new Earth and New Heaven,

Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud-

Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud-

We in ourselves rejoice!

*And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.*

6

*There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Now care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! Each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth
My shaping spirit of Imagination
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And happy by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man
This was my sole resource, my only plan;
Till that which suits apart inflects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.*

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,

Reality's a dark dream

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,

Which long have raved unnoticed.

What a scream of agony by fortune lengthened out

That lute sent forth! Thou wind, that rav'st without,

Bare crag, or mountain tairn, or blasted tree,

Or pine grove whither woodman never clomb,

Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,

Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,

Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,

Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,

Mak'st devils Yule, with worse than wintry song,

The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.

Thou actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!

Thou mighty poet, e 'en to frenzy bold'

What tell st thou now about?

'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,

With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds –

At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!

But hush! There is a pause of deepest silence!

*And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shuddering - all is over –
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright
And tempered with delight.
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay -'
Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear*

8

*'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle sleep! With wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain birth,*

*May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice,
To her may all things live from pole to pole,
This life the eddy of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! Friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus, mayst thou ever, evermore rejoice.*

In this Ode written to Sara Hutchinson in 1802 as a 'verse letter', Coleridge explains the Romantic idea of imagination. About this time Coleridge's health had begun to deteriorate. He suffered from pain and was becoming a slave to opium. This poem is an account of his periodical fits of acute depression on the gradual loss of the poet's imaginative powers - the shaping spirit of imagination which is responsible for bringing about a harmonious relationship between external nature and the inner moorings of the poet's imagination. This creative faculty produces joy when one is at peace with one's own self and with the universe. With the slow departure his imaginative faculty, the poet is not able to perceive any beauty and charm in nature.

Imagination presupposes a sense of harmony and spirit. The outward form of nature displays harmony and spirit. There is a sort of hidden consciousness in the imagination which leads to creation and the transformation of the finite into the infinite. Coleridge's theory of imagination, as discussed in the *Biographia Literaria*, bears a lot of resemblance with the theory of the idealist philosopher, Schelling, of Germany. As we know, according to Schelling, artistic creation and the discovery of philosophical truth is possible because of imagination. The power of imagination lies in bringing about reconciliation between the opposites and producing harmony. Thus, both poetry and philosophy incorporate imagination as a reconciling principle. The philosophy of Schelling was transcendentalist. Hence, he believes that the unity of life is possible only through the nature of imagination. The imaginative is bestowed differently upon individuals. This faculty among ordinary human beings enables them to differentiate between the self and the world. In the case of philosopher, the imaginative faculty firstly enables him to draw a distinction between the self and the nature and then to mediate on this ground of

distinction. A step ahead goes the mind of a poet. His imagination reconciles the opposites and provides an outward and objective expression to them. Hence, Schelling ascribes the highest place to art and poetry than all other forms of knowledge. He also believed that the subject and the object are inherently interdependent because of the power of imagination. This quality of unifying the opposites is named as an 'esemplastic power' by Coleridge. The unification of the human consciousness is possible through imagination. The gap between thought and emotion, reason and intuition is bridged by imagination. Thus, the philosophical basis of Coleridge's theory of imagination lies in Schelling's view that the whole self of man is involved in the apprehensions of reality.

However, Schelling is not the only influence on Coleridge in the shaping of his theory of imagination. The German stream of thought has been adopted by him in an eclectic way i.e. that the inspiration is drawn from various sources and then homogeneously mixed together to make a single whole. Coleridge's idea that all experiences are not made up of merely general notions but as forms of mental image is a typical German influence. The other view that in a common spiritual life both symbol and the mind participate equally, is also German. This participation results in the experience of the beautiful.

Coleridge was prompted by his close friend William Wordsworth to study and reform the theory of imagination. However, Wordsworth has accepted the theory of imagination as propounded by Coleridge with some minor modifications. *Excursion* is Wordsworth's attempt to give a poetic exposition to his theory of imagination. Coleridge has drawn distinctions between primary imagination, secondary imagination and fancy. Wordsworth and Coleridge have differed about the nature of fancy. However, we will see these differences after an analysis of Coleridge's theory of imagination. Before Coleridge, the terms fancy and imagination were more or less indistinguishable. The same idea was expressed generally by both the terms. We come across a significant distinction of fancy and imagination for the first time in Chapter IV of *Biographia Literaria* where he considers the greatness of Wordsworth's mind as a poet.

Repeated meditations led me first suspect (and a more intimate analysis of human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions and effects matured my conjectured into full conviction) that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or, at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power.

Then he goes on to describe, how the two faculties were possessed differently by Milton and Cowley: 'Milton had a highly imaginative, Cowley a very fanciful mind. If therefore I should succeed in establishing the actual existence of two faculties generally different, the nomenclature would be at once determined. To the faculty by which I had characterized Milton, we should confine the term "imagination, while the other would be contradistinguished as fancy"'.

Coleridge assigns the same role to fancy which was ascribed to imagination in the eighteenth century. Fancy, viewed in this light, is mechanical. It functions according to the law of association. In Chapter XHI, Coleridge describes fancy in these terms:

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of

time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the fancy must receive all its materials readymade from the law of association.

Although Coleridge assigns minor role to fancy, it is a pejorative term. Fancy is lawless and arbitrary. No higher powers of judgement or selection control it. Its purpose is not very serious. In contrast to fancy, imagination is creative. Imagination is further subdivided into Primary and Secondary imagination. All men are imaginative whether it is a scientist or a poet, a farmer or a labourer. This is possible because of the presence of the primary imagination. It is the basis of all human perception. It enables us to identify, to discriminate, to synthesize and thus to produce order out of disorder:

The Imagination then I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary imagination, I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, and dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

Kant's 'Imagination' corresponds to Coleridge's 'primary imagination'. Imagination, Kant believes, is a universal faculty. It has the ability to reconstruct experience. The external data is received through our senses. Imagination is functional in arranging the data in various forms and designs. Imagination, thus, is a common faculty with which all of us are born. It has no special powers. Kant gives it no poetic status. It is a common cognitive faculty with which everybody is endowed. Coleridge does not agree with this. Imagination is a poetic faculty in its most advanced form. In Kant's opinion imagination is only a synthesizing power with hardly any creative ability. It cannot make the creation of poetry possible. On the contrary, imagination is a 'dim analogue of creation' in Coleridge's opinion. The secondary imagination makes artistic creation possible. It coexists with the conscious will. It differs from the primary imagination only in the degree and mode of operation. There is no difference in the kind of operation. All objects in the world are fixed and dead. Secondary imagination vitalizes them. It is active because it can give life to objects. It gives such attributes to the objects that they become responsive and hospitable to man. Secondly, it idealizes and unifies. It dissolves, diffuses and dissipates in order to recreate. The secondary imagination or the creative imagination creates a chaos through the process of dissolution, diffusion and dissipation. Out of the chaos it creates a universe. It is an esemplastic power which can reconcile opposites, unify disparate elements and synthesize dialectically opposed forces. It idealizes and reshapes the data of experience to create a new reality out of them. This reality is endowed with the attribute of organic unity in it. The secondary imagination is the poetic faculty. It dissolves the work of the primary imagination and recreates it; it transforms the sense impressions which are already modified by the primary imagination. Thus, the charge that

Coleridge has borrowed his materials from the Germans bears no significance. He has worked upon the material and given it his own interpretations. The imagination of the creative artist is secondary. The utilitarian world of the primary is one of value. The secondary imagination explains how the world of experience is to be grasped in a fuller unity so that we can have a significant experience of reality.

The will also operate in the primary imagination. The secondary imagination breaks up the original perception and constructs a new one. Both the primary and the secondary imagination are constructive, but it is the latter which is also destructive. The process of unification in the absorption of the experiences into a whole. The poet feels the need to create a coherent whole, and he embodies the experience in an all-inclusive pattern. In this process it destroys the isolation of objects. The creative imagination brings forth a 'charm of novelty'. Such a picture is not possible to the primary imagination in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude'.

Imagination 'informs and animates other existences' and hence becomes essentially vital. In normal life the objects are means, utilities and counters. With the focus of conscious imagination, they become ends in themselves. They are *vital* because they are integrated to the consciousness of the artist. Under the influence of the primary imagination we do not apprehend the living principle in the world of objects. The living principle is apprehended by the secondary imagination. As a result the objects appear more complex and significant. At the level of primary imagination, the objects are in the epistemological situation. They have an anthological status at the level of secondary imagination. Primary imagination is purely intellectual because it gives the sense of data. The secondary imagination reveals the agreement of the external with the internal, by revealing the organic unity of the world with the consciousness of the individual and of the creativity of Nature with that of the human mind. Secondary imagination results in poetic passion and aesthetic pleasure. It unifies the data and breathes into it a new life of its own.

Imagination is a creative activity of the mind, fancy is its mechanical activity because it only assembles past experiences. Fancy collects its materials from the law of association. The objects do not enter as and when they come. Each item is fixed. Each bears its original character. It is the unconscious will which create a few events or facts from the original experience. Then the objects are randomly grouped. How this grouping or association is done depends on the feeling present at the onset. "Association depends in a much greater degree on the recurrence of resembling states of feeling than on trains of ideas... Ideas never recall ideas any more than the leaves in a forest create each other's motion. Feelings are associated with one another by fancy. Each feeling branches off into another and corresponding to this there is a recollection of the images. However, no attempt is made by fancy to harmonize the feelings. Fancy enters the domain of poetic creation first because of the collected feelings. The governing principle of fancy is associationism. Fancy and imagination are two distinct faculties. Fancy is not concerned with feelings. Imagination is concerned with ideas. Reason leads to truths or ideas through the imaginative process which is directly concerned with ideas. *Thus*, the imaginative activity also becomes the spiritual activity of human life due to the involvement of factors like reason, intuition, truths and ideas.

The associationistic philosophy based on mechanical or mechanistic approach 'mistakes clear images for distinct conceptions' and it 'demands conceptions where intuitions alone are possible or adequate to the majesty of the truth'. The contemplation evoked by this is directed to 'external casualty in which the train of thought may be considered as the result of outward impressions, of accidental combinations of fancy or the associations of the memory.' Another type of thinking contemplates 'internal casualty' in which we have the operation of 'the energy of the will on the mind itself. In this way 'thought is active or passive and the same faculties may in a popular sense be expressed as perception or observation, fancy or imagination, memory or recollection'. Fancy is passive. Hence, it can be compared with dreams or day-dreaming. We neither believe nor disbelieve the dreams while dreaming. And the strong feelings that are connected with these forms are 'bodily sensations which are causes or occasions of the images, not their effects. Fancy presents everything as independent of the rest. While combining it does not establish any relation between the feelings or between the images. The principles that govern its combining activity are derived from the activity of the imagination. We need imagination even to associate. By giving imagination 'the charm of novelty to things of every day' imagination awakens the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directs it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us.' Imagination transforms the given into the beautiful by virtue of the feelings and intuitions. Both fancy and imagination are necessary for the creative process. Imagination is superior to fancy only because of its capacity to unite.

Imagination is 'an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.' In his *Diary* for November 15, 1810, Crabb Robinson noted 'Coleridge made an elaborate distinction between fancy and imagination. The excess of fancy is delirium, of imagination mania. Fancy is the arbitrary bringing together of things that lie remote, and forming them into a unity. The materials lie ready for the fancy, which acts by a sort of juxtaposition. On the other hand, the imagination under excitement generates and produces a form of its own.'

The creative artist has an 'intuition of absolute existence' which makes him realize within himself 'a something ineffably greater than his own individual nature'. Imagination is concerned with existence and quality. Imagination is also necessary to make any perceptual experience possible. It is the point on which the activities of reason and understanding converge. Understanding is the science of phenomena. It is 'discursive', analytical and directed to the external world. Reason, on the other hand, is 'the immediate and inward beholding of the spiritual as sense is of the material'. Understanding enables us to apprehend the concepts of objects. The only object of understanding is 'the material world in relation to our worldly interests'. 'In reason there are no means, nor ends, reason itself being one with the ultimate end, of which it is the manifestation'. Reason can be conveyed only through symbols. Reason is close to ordinary experience, and normal understanding aids imagination.

3.9 WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE: AN

EXPOSITION ON FANCY AND IMAGINATION

Wordsworth and Coleridge were friends, collaborators of the *Lyrical Ballads* and literary theorists. They have collaborated with each other in creative as well as critical writing. As a result it is not possible for a student of literature to discuss the achievements of one without any reference to the other. The mutual understanding and trust which they shared has allowed both of them to flourish as great critical and creative artists. The general practice is to discuss their theories and poems separately. But when taken together their works (both creative and critical) constitute a complete picture of the Romantic Movement in England. It is better to focus on them as critical writers for the time being. We have already discussed Coleridge's views on imagination so let us concentrate on Wordsworth's stand on it. He has also refuted the mechanical view of imagination which was popular during the eighteenth century:

Imagination in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following poems, has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws.

Wordsworth discusses 'the conferring, the abstracting and modifying powers of the imagination.' The word 'hang' is used by Virgil, Shakespeare and Milton. Wordsworth uses this term to illustrate the operation of imagination:

... the imagination also shapes and creates... by innumerable process; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity and dissolving and separating unity into number,... alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers.

The differences between Wordsworth's theory of imagination and Coleridge's are only superficial. There is no serious difference of opinion regarding the theory of imagination. There are some differences even in their views on fancy. To understand what Wordsworth has to say about fancy, one needs to read the following lines by him:

To the mode in which Fancy has already been characterized as the power of evoking and combining, or as my friend Mr. Coleridge has styled it, "the aggregative and associative power" my objection is only that the definition is too general. To aggregate and to associate, to evoke and to combine, belong as well to the... imagination as to the fancy, but either the materials evoked and combined are different; or they are brought together under a different law, and for a different purpose. Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch; and, where they admit of modification, it is enough, for her purpose... under which the processes of fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender or pathetic, as the objects happen to be oppositely produced or fortunately combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which scatters her thoughts and images, trusting that their number, and the felicity with which they are linked together, will make amends for the want of individual value; or she prides herself upon the curious subtlety and the successful elaboration with which she can detect their lurking affinities.

Wordsworth also tries to separate fancy from spiritual truth. 'Fancy is given to quicken and beguile the temporal part of our nature, imagination to incite and to support the eternal.'

This view of Wordsworth has been objected to by Coleridge in the twelfth chapter of *Biographia Literaria*:

If by the power of evoking and combining, Mr. Wordsworth means the same as, and no more than, I meant by the aggregative and associative, I continue to deny that it belongs to all to the imagination; and I am disposed to conjecture, that he has mistaken the co-presence of fancy and imagination for the operation of the latter singly.

Wordsworth has talked about fancy and imagination as two categories with fancy as the inferior and imagination as the superior faculty of the mind. Fancy is an arbitrary way of imaging according to Wordsworth whereas imagination is the creative faculty. Coleridge has added one more category in his study of fancy and imagination - (a) fancy (b) primary imagination and (c) secondary imagination. Fancy, in his views, is again arbitrary. It is the fixed memory in the human mind. It receives its materials from the law of association. The primary imagination is common to all human beings. It is universal the source of all human perception. Artistic creation is possible by a poet due to the secondary imagination. It is not a common phenomenon with all human beings. The underlying unity in man and nature is revealed through the artistic imagination.

Coleridge's views on poetry and the poet cannot be separated from his views on imagination. He makes a distinction between the terms 'poetry' and 'poem'. The term 'poetry' is used to cover all the forms of imaginative literature. Its connotation is wider. The medium of imparting pleasure in poetry is beauty. As stated by Coleridge in the essay 'On the Principles of Genial Criticism' in *Biographia Literaria* -

All the fine arts are different species of poetry... They admit, therefore, of a natural division into poetry of language (poetry in the emphatic sense, because less subject to the accident and limitation of time and space); poetry of the ear, or music; and poetry of the eye, which is again divided into plastic poetry of the eye, which is again divided into plastic poetry or statuary and a graphic poetry, or painting. The common essence of all consists in the excitement of emotion for the immediate purpose of pleasure through the medium of beauty; herein contradistinguishing poetry from science, the immediate object and primary purpose of which is truth and possible utility.

Since *Lyrical Ballads* was composed in collaboration between the two friends. They had together decided the subjects for their poems. Wordsworth was supposed to take up subjects which dealt with nature and Coleridge had to write on the supernatural subject:

During the first year that Mr Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the

practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself... that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural, and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any anytime believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the Lyrical Ballads; in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural or at least Romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity, and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

Coleridge suggests that metre or rhyme alone cannot make a piece of composition, a poem. If it were so, anything would deserve to be called poem on the basis of rhyme

or meter:

A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference, therefore, must consist in a different combination of them; in consequence of a different object being proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observation by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by meter, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months:

Thirty days hath September,

April, June and November.

However, communication of pleasure can be possible not only by a work of art metrically composed. Other genres can also give pleasure. Novels and romances also impart pleasure but they can't be called poems. All the parts of a work of art must be in harmony with each other:

... nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If metre be superadded, all other

parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of sound and accent are calculated to excite. The final definition, then so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth, and from all other species it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.

Coleridge believes that metre alone cannot make poetry, and poetry can be of the highest kind even without metre. 'The writings of Plato, and Jeremy Taylor, and Burnets' Theory of the Earth, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem. The first chapter of Isaiah is poetry in the most emphatic sense'. The question is how to distinguish the poem proper from this poetry, which too has language as its medium like the writings of Plato and the Book of Isaiah. The poem proper and the imaginative prose compositions combine the same elements. The difference lies in the manner in which these elements are combined because it aims at a different object. Similarly, by adding metre also, we cannot name a work of art poem. The immediate object of a poem is pleasure not truth. Besides if one understands what poetry is, it is easier to understand what makes a poet. 'What is poetry? Is so nearly the same question as what is a poet? The answer to one is involved in the solution of the other. For, it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts and emotions of the poet's own mind.' If the parts of a poem mutually support and explain each other, it becomes a legitimate poem. This organicism originates from a corresponding organic process whose source lies in the poet:

The poet described in ideal perfection brings the whole soul of man into activity with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power. To which would exclusively appropriate the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control, *Laxis efferteen habenis*, reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound and vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the actual and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.

Coleridge, in his views on Poetry and the poet seems to separate truth and pleasure. However, truth and pleasure are derived both by science and poetry. It seems that, like other thinkers of the nineteenth century, Coleridge was not able to shed the dichotomies of the current philosophy. Obviously this separation seems arbitrary.

Coleridge defines poetry in terms of the function of a poet. It is the poet who composes poetry and imagination is a creative faculty which works in the poet. The idea of the poet, the poetic, and imagination is exemplified with a reference to Sir John Davies:

Doubtless, as Sir John Davies observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately to the poetic imagination). Doubtless this could not be, but that she turn Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange, As fix converts to fire the things it burns, As we our food into our nature change. From their gross matter she abstracts their forms, and draws a kind of quintessence from things which to her proper nature she transforms, to bear them light on her celestial works. *Thus*, does she, when from individual states. She doth abstract the universal kinds; which then re clothed in divers names and fakes steal access through the senses to our mind.

The concept of poetry is wider and larger than that of the poem. The poet is exactly what his poetry is:

Finally, good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life and imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

The whole soul of man is brought into activity by poetry. He believes that the immediate object of a poem is pleasure not truth. But the immediate object of poetry is truth. Thus, poetry is different from poem due to the distinction in their objects. While critically analyzing Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis' and *Rape of Lucrece*, Coleridge elucidates the specific symptoms of poetic power. A true creative artist should first of all have music in his soul. Secondly, as for the choice of subjects, Coleridge maintains that the poet should choose subjects very remote from his private interests. Thirdly, images should be modified by a predominant passion. Lastly, the poet should have depth and energy of thought. Regarding the first characteristic of poetic genius, Coleridge says:

In the Venus and Adonis, the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant... The man that hath not music in his soul can indeed never be a genuine poet.

Regarding the second characteristic he says, 'A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a poem is but an

equivocal mark, and after a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power'. Then the raw material is to be coloured by the imaginative power of the poet: 'It has been observed that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity or succession to an instinct; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit'.

The last feature he talks about is depth, 'The last character I shall mention... is depth, and energy of thought. No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and the fragrance of all human knowledge, Human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language. In Shakespeare's poems the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a warlike embrace'.

Coleridge's views on the nature of poetry, art and poet remind us of Schelling. He believes that art is not a blind imitation; it is rather the recreation of what is around.

The poet does not copy nature blindly. The poet 'must master the essence which presupposed the bond between nature and the highest sense and the soul of man. There is an analogy between the process of nature and intelligence which is the business of the poet.' He states that 'the mystery of genius in the fine arts' is 'to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought and thought nature'.

The creative artist does not copy external nature. Rather the spirit of nature is communicated to us through symbols. Here, Coleridge's seems to be influenced by Schelling's view of creative imitation, as reflected in his book *The System of Transcendental Idealism*. Schelling maintains that philosophy cannot give what poetry can. Poetry can present the unconscious in action and creation. Nature appears to be an idle world with many limitations to the philosopher as well as the poet. Herein lays the difference between Schelling and Coleridge. Schelling's philosophy can be easily termed as pantheistic whereas Coleridge's philosophy is theistic. It is also important to realize that Coleridge has not provided a fully developed aesthetic theory on the nature of poetry. It is fragmentary and incomplete. The student of Coleridge has to gather information in bits and pieces from here and there and join the loose ends together.

However, the greatness of Coleridge as a philosopher and poet lies in his attempt to discover the relationship between form and content, manner and matter in his aesthetic theory. As is clear by now, the neoclassicists were interested in analyzing the form of a work of art. The content was hardly an important issue for them. Their discussions on form were related to the metre in a creative work. Coleridge has tried to handle both the issues of form and content in *Biographia Literaria*. In this process he becomes not only a literary critic but also a serious

philosopher. He goes on to distinguish between a poem and poetry. The former pursues pleasure whereas the latter pursues truth. In this endeavour poetry becomes an imaginative synthesis. According to A.G George 'The ideal poet not only produces poems but composes poetry. Thus, poetry is an imaginative synthesis or a special insight. Related to this idea is the notion of the aesthetic unity of the form. A poem is in organic unity. We derive pleasure from poems because we are appreciating the element of organic unity in it. This conception of organic unity is advanced by Coleridge as the essential distinction between the poetic verbal structure and the non-poetic verbal structure'.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

9. State the underlying concern of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. 10. Why does Coleridge's view on nature of poetry remind us of Schelling?

ACTIVITY 1

Read Dryden's Essay on Satire and prepare a synopsis.

ACTIVITY 2

Browse the Internet and find out the meaning of Romantic Agony. Write a brief essay on it. You may also draw comparisons between Wordsworth and Coleridge's notion of romantic poetry.

DID YOU KNOW?

John Dryden studied at the University of Cambridge.

3.10 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- John Dryden was a poet who was considered to be the best representative of the Restoration Age (1660-1700).
- The Restoration was the age that marked the end of the Puritan regime in England as Prince Charles II was restored to the English throne.
- Dryden wrote an essay called *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*. This essay is in the form of a dialogue between four speakers: Neander, Crites, Eugenius, and Lisidius, with Neander representing Dryden himself.
- Crites begins by asserting the superiority of the ancient poets of classical antiquity.

- For Crites, the classical poets and dramatists had shown their mastery in the representation of human nature.
- The Moderns, according to Crites, had built their foundation on the ancient masters.
- Crites takes up a rigid neo-classical position in the debate among the four speakers. The rigidity of the neo-classical norms, for Crites, makes a piece of dramatic work better as by following the rules, the work of art can prove to be faithful and just.
- Listening to the tirades against the Moderns, Eugenius tries to defend the modern dramatists.
- Eugenius says that he has deep respect for the Ancients, but that does not take away the credibility of the modern writers.
- According to Eugenius, the modern poets have excelled more than the poets of antiquity.
- Eugenius is critical of the Ancients for not following the dramatic unities strictly and for the use of the stock characters.
- Eugenius feels that modern dramatists follow the classical norms more closely than the Ancients and that is how the moderns are better than the ancient poets.
- Lisideius on the other hand defends the dramatists of the seventeenth century France for following the neo-classical outlook very scrupulously. According to Lisideius, French theatre is better than the English because English theatre lacks dramatic unity in their plays.
- For Neander, the purpose of literature is first to delight and the French are far behind than the British dramatists in providing pleasure to the audience in following the classical norms.
- Neander convincingly tries to defend the irregularities of the English stage as against the coldness of the French drama by saying that the English theatre is much livelier because of its innovations.
- Neander defends tragi-comedy on English stage by saying that pleasure can be derived from interspersing tragic scenes with the comic.
- Neander goes on to defend the Elizabethan dramatists for their brilliant rendition of the theatrical activity.
- Dryden defends the Elizabethan dramatists and shows how they epitomize the virtues in English theatre.
- The Romantic Age began with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the year 1798.
- *Biographia Literaria* is an autobiography in discourse by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, published in 1817. The work is lengthy and appears to be loosely structured.
- Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* not only professes his ideas about poetry and creative processes, but also ponders his intellectual difference from Wordsworth, though he held him in high esteem.
- *Biographia Literaria* is not a straightforward or linear autobiography. Instead, it is meditative, with a number of essays on philosophy.

- Though all the Romantics are preoccupied with the imagination it was Samuel Taylor Coleridge who tried to theoretically and critically talk about imagination in his book of criticism named *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817.
- According to Coleridge, primary imagination is the only means through which the poet can transcend the worries, tensions and pains of this reality so as to communicate with the 'infinite' or the 'divine' and get some access to the ideal world of His.
- Coleridge's conceptions of poetry and the poet arose from his notion of imagination, which according to him was the defining characteristic of Romantic poetry in particular and poetry in general.
- Coleridge defines poetry as all forms of imaginative writing and art whose immediate intention was to impart pleasure.
 - Coleridge was of the opinion that poem combined the same elements, as were found in imaginative prose compositions, but rendered in a different manner because it aimed at a different object.
 - For Coleridge, poems do not differ much from prose, except in terms of them being metrical and rhythmical.
 - In chapter seventeen of *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge deals with William Wordsworth's faith in low and rustic life as especially favourable to the formation of poetic diction. To Coleridge, William Wordsworth was the greatest poet of his age.
 - Coleridge feels that Wordsworth was justified in pointing out the artificiality of a poetic diction of the eighteenth century, as it was stagnant and to a greater extent hindered the manifestation of the poet's experience.
 - Coleridge also presents his strong objection to Wordsworth's eulogization of the language of the rustics. He thinks that if rustic's language is purified from its defects then it is no different from the language of any common man.
 - Coleridge is of the opinion that though poetry and prose make use of the same vocabulary, yet in poetry the way the words are ordered is what makes it poetry For Coleridge, the primary difference between the language of prose and poetry is meter.
 - Coleridge also points out that in practice; Wordsworth has discarded his own theory of diction.

3.11 KEY TERMS

- **Neo-classicism:** A revival in literature in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, characterized by a regard for the classical ideals of reason, form, and restraint
- **Tragi-comedy:** A kind of drama representing some action in which serious and comic scenes are combined; a composition partaking of the nature both of tragedy and comedy
- **Ancients:** The ancient Greek and Roman authors
- **Autobiography:** An account of a person's life written or otherwise recorded by that person

- **Rhyme:** Correspondence in the sounds of two or more lines (especially final sounds)
- **Meter:** The measured arrangement of words in poetry, as by accentual rhythm, syllabic quantity, or the number of syllables in a line

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1. John Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, published in 1668 and considered to be his masterpiece in critical writing. It was written, in the form of dialogue between Crites, Eugenius, Lisideus and Neander when the four friends undertook a journey by boat on the river Thames. It is here that they took turns to express their divergent views on different aspects of literature.
2. Though Dryden admired and respected Aristotle, and made an elaborate analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics*, he did not agree to everything that Aristotle propounded. Dryden himself being an excellent poet and dramatist had an excellent understanding of the nature of poetic and dramatic creativity in the Restoration.
3. The questions asked by the four friends in the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* are:
 - What are the relative merits of classical and modern poets?
 - Is the existing French theatre superior or inferior to the English theatre?
 - Are Elizabethan dramatists superior to the eighteenth century dramatists?
 - Do the plays become more perfect when they follow the classical rules?
 - Is rhyme in serious plays desirable or not?
4. Listening to the tirades against the Moderns, Eugenius tries to defend the modern dramatists. He states that he had deep respect for the Ancients, but that does not take away the credibility of the modern writers.
5. The Romantic Age is a complete reversal of the Age of Reason (eighteenth century). The term Romantic not only means a poetic creed in English literature; it also connects a highly complicated set of attitudes and beliefs as well.
6. Primary imagination, according to Coleridge, is the only means through which the poet can transcend the worries, tensions and pains of this reality so as to communicate with the 'infinite' or the 'divine' and get some access to the ideal world.
7. The basic premise of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* Chapter IV is 'to investigate the seminal principle' of imagination and, in so doing, 'to present an intelligible statement of my poetic creed; not as my *opinions*, which weigh for nothing, but as deductions from established premises'.
8. Coleridge's view of poetry and the figure of the poet cannot be separated from his views on imagination. He makes a distinction between the terms 'poetry' and 'poem'. The term 'poetry' is used to cover all the forms of imaginative literature. Its connotation is wider.

9. The underlying concern of *Biographia Literaria* is the process of human creativity.
10. Coleridge's views on the nature of poetry, art and poet remind us of Schelling. He believes that art is not a blind imitation; it is rather the recreation of what is around. The poet does not copy nature blindly.

3.13 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Neander's (Dryden's) dialogue expressing his views on dramatic poesy.
2. What were the important aspects of British neo-classicism emphasized by Dryden, Pope, Addison and Johnson.
3. Give a brief overview of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.
4. What was Coleridge's notion of imagination in romantic poetry?
5. Comment on Coleridge as a philosopher.
6. Write a synopsis of Wordsworth and Coleridge's exposition on fancy and imagination.

Long-Answer Questions

1. What were the reasons that led to Dryden's 'Essay' becoming a significant contribution to literary criticism?
2. Discuss *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* as a major work of a poet-critic rather than of a professional critic alone.
3. Would you regard Dryden as a conformist or a rebel in relation to neo-classicism?
4. Who are the main interlocutors and what do they represent in *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*? Discuss briefly.
5. A study of Dryden's *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* seems to give the impression that classical norms may be desirable but are not essential for the playwright to observe. Comment.
6. Write a critical note on the salient features of Dryden's *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.
7. Describe the difference between fancy and imagination as explicated by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*.
8. As per Coleridge how does primary and secondary imagination help in the process of poetic creation?
9. Describe Coleridge's notions of poetry and the poet.
10. What was the objective of Wordsworth and Coleridge in creating the *Lyrical Ballads*? Were they successful in carrying out their intentions?
11. Analyse Coleridge's disagreement on Wordsworth's use of the language of the rustics in his poetry. Write a short note on Coleridge's reasoning in arguing against it.

12. Write a short note on Coleridge's views on meter and rhyme in poetry.

3.14 FURTHER READING

Gilbert, Allan H.; *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1963.

Pechter, Edward.; *Dryden's Classical Theory of Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975.

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UNIT V: William Wordsworth

INTRODUCTION

Romanticism was a movement that emerged in the 1790s in Germany and Britain and is also known as the Romantic Movement or romantic revival. But with the advent of Romanticism, new critical problems crept up. The changes were evident in comparison to the previous ages. One could make out how the function of criticism had changed and that critical emphasis had shifted. As the scope of literary criticism widened, aesthetics and social criticism also became philosophical with Coleridge. It was for the first time after the Renaissance that criticism challenged the old order- the classical and the neoclassical criticism. First of all, the Romantics refuted the concept of social conditioning of literary process in the neo-classical era. The impact of society on literature was supposed to be of great importance during the eighteenth century. As a result, we see that writers like Pope and Johnson were deeply interested in social factors. In a way, this age started a debate on the relative merits of the ancients and the moderns. An individual writer was free to express himself. Interest in the individual psychology of the creative artist became the notion of the genius. In the Augustan age, the focus was on ordered rationality which was mechanical, artificial and impersonal. These characteristic features of eighteenth century were replaced by sincerity, spontaneity and originality. The neo-classicists like Dryden, Johnson and Pope favoured the imitation of classical models. However, Romantic poets like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats and Shelly saw the artist as a kind of genius whose works were an expression of his inspiration, emotion and imagination. The romantics stressed on freedom from the rules of composition and organic form. Consequently, they were preoccupied with the biography and psychology of the poet. Literature and criticism of this age reflected the changes in attitudes to life and values. Hence, Lessing's views are of great significance. Credit goes to Coleridge for composing standard biological and critical study of Lessing. The critical terminology that entered England from Germany was due to Coleridge. Lessing's *Laokoon* is a landmark work as it recognizes the difference between poetry and painting and between the medium of time and space.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Elaborate Romanticism and its effect on society
- Discuss the life of William Wordsworth and T.S. Eliot
- Critically analyze Wordsworth's theory of Poetry in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*
- Explain Wordsworth's views on poetic diction
- Recognize the importance of Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent*

4.2 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Wordsworth was a world-acclaimed English poet who was born on the 7 April 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland, in North-west England. Second of the five children to John Wordsworth and Ann Cookson, poetry was infused in him right from the beginning by his father. His mother taught him to read while he attended various local schools. He was also introduced to Milton, Shakespeare and Spenser through his father's library quite early in his life. Noted poet and diarist, Dorothy Wordsworth was his sister, younger to him by only a year.

In 1778, after the death of his mother, his father sent him to Hawkshead Grammar School in Lancashire. In 1787, he began attending the St. John's College in Cambridge from where he received his B.A. degree in 1791. By then, he had already started writing. His first publication was a sonnet in *The European Magazine* back in 1787.

Wordsworth toured the scenic locales of Europe and its influence can be seen in his works. Of all his works, his magnum opus is considered to be *The Prelude* which is a semiautobiographical poem. But his work *Lyrical Ballads* in collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge heralded the Romantic Age in English Literature. Britain honoured him with 'Poet Laureate' in 1843. He died of Pleurisy on 23rd April 1850.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How did Wordsworth contribute to Romanticism in England?
2. How was Wordsworth influenced by his father?
3. How was William Wordsworth related to poet Dorothy Wordsworth?

4.3 UNDERSTANDING ROMANTICISM

A particular type of critical writing with a particular historical background and certain general features can be defined as Romantic criticism. However, the definition of the term Romanticism has been controversial and elusive. As a result, we come across various interpretations and definitions of the term. Some people go to the extent of saying that there cannot be one precise definition of Romanticism as it is subject to individual interpretation of the subjective mind. In other words, there are as many definitions of Romanticism as there are individual dimensions that are taken into account. A. O. Lovejoy, in his essay *On the Discrimination of Romanticisms* expresses similar views.

According to Reeve Wellek, Romanticism takes into account various types of imaginations and different attitudes to nature and individual styles of writing. Romanticism salutes the individual voice and the individual genius like never before. Its emphasis on the individual genius associates it with the common man. His attributes:

Historically, the advent of Romanticism is associated with the early nineteenth century in Europe. However, this statement should not imply that the romantic spirit was altogether a new entity. It has always coexisted with the classical spirit. Western literary tradition was influenced by the Greek and Roman classicists up to the eighteenth century. The romantic impulse was overshadowed due to the predominance of the external reality and scientific materialism. The neo-classicists held classical masters like Aristotle, Horace and Quintilian in high esteem and drew inspiration from them. The critics in this age tried to reinterpret Aristotelian concept of imitation to include the idea of original creation. However, a deeper scrutiny of the maxims of Aristotle showed that imitation serves the purpose of artistic delight. It was not just a copy of the real. It aimed at something more than what actually existed. This means that the romantic impulse was very much present. Even Horace's dictum, that the purpose of a work of art is to instruct and delight, hints at the subdued romantic element. However, the end of the 18th century marks the beginning of a new dawn. This brought about a new orientation of attitudes and values which questioned the basis of the rationalist aesthetics. The movements of enlightenment and sentimentalism strengthened this tendency.

The Romantic Movement in general was pioneered by men like Goethe, Schiller and Herder in Germany. They began the movement called Sturm Und Drang (storm and stress) by stressing on the independence of the individual. Kant and Fichte demanded to establish the subjective order instead of the objective order. Poets like Heine and Uhland and the Schlegel Brothers -A. W. Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel also made significant contributions to the inauguration of the Romantic Movement in Germany. To understand the scope of romanticism in England, we need to study the historical development of literature and criticism. In England, literary criticism started with the humanists whose chief preoccupation was with language style and rhetoric. In its infancy, this was a welcome trend for the growth of English language. But in the neoclassical age, it could do no good to creative writing. The bias of language, style and rhetoric got converted into the theory of poetic diction. During the neo-classical age, the basic questions concerning the:

- nature of poetic creation,
- nature of poetry, and
- nature of the pleasure derived were secondary. Discussion about the rules and principles of composition were of prime importance.

However, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the signs of unmistakable change became discernible. More and more people advocated democratic liberalism in thought, philosophic rationalism and individualism. The tendency of spiritualism prompted critical inquiry of the ancient rules and practices with a skeptical frame of mind. The new spirit did not believe in strict adherence to ancient literary forms. Instead, new interest in human psychology became evident. Poets and philosophers were trying to probe the vast expanse of human mind and psychology. This included the psychology of knowledge and aesthetic experience, the psychology of moral action and poetic creation. A new theory of aesthetic thought was propounded in England by Edmund Burke. Lessing, Goethe and Baumgartner laid the foundation of a new science of aestheticism in Germany.

As we know, Aristotle emphasized that poetry must present objects in action. According to Lessing, poetry should be a vocal moving picture with the emphasis on the narrative kind of description. According to him, some natural signs are required in poetry. These signs depend on the tone and position of words and on the measure and figures. The directness of drama and its mimetic use completely transforms the arbitrary sign into a natural sign. Lessing was a great supporter of Aristotle's theory of poetry. Like Aristotle, he too strongly felt that drama is the highest form of poetry and the object of poetry is action.

Besides, Lessing had defended Romantic drama on the basis of Aristotelian theory. In this way, he also pioneered a new type of criticism. Aristotle's theory was viewed favourably by Lessing due to his preference for the ideal forms of sculpture. Hence, the object became of prime importance and the neoclassical ideal of being true to life was also modified. The impact of Lessing is reflected in the modified humanistic *Critical Theories* of Mathew Arnold.

The mimetic and expressive nature of poetry is emphasized by Herder also. His argument is that poetry has been natural expression of feelings since primitive ages. In this way, we see a shift from the organic view of nature of art criticism. Poetry responds to the social, political, religious, economic and psychological conditions and assimilates and integrates them. This organic theory of Herder is very close to aesthetic relativism. The rules laid down by Aristotle may suit Greek drama but not necessarily Shakespearean work. This is because they have emerged from a different soil, culture and environment. The notion of aesthetic relativism can be traced back to Dryden. Gradually, it was assuming a new dimension. Critics and poets were rejecting the rules and the rule makers. Obviously, the emphasis was not on the autonomy of the literary artists. As a result, we see that the creative writers are full of insight and imagination. Such autonomy excludes considerations of pleasure, interest and didacticism. It involves an element of the unity of mind and ruse. Each work of art bears the impression of the author- follows its own laws, takes new flights of fancy. Hence, the tendency of criticism becomes biographical. But Herder saves criticism from this by saying that a great poem is a work of the soul. He wanted to capture the spiritual life of the author. Herder also believed that the primitive language was made of mythology, metaphor, system and allegory. This arouses a kind of aesthetic primitivism which finds prominence in the works of Wordsworth and Shelley.

It goes to the credit of Immanuel Kant to liberate aesthetic enquiry from its traditional moorings. He classified the arts into:

- speech-poetry and rhetoric
- shaping - architecture, sculpture and painting
- sensory form-music and colour design

According to Kant, a work of art reveals purposiveness without any purpose. A work of art is not a means to an end. It is a work of nature. He believed in the unconscious element in the artistic process. For Kant, the inspirational element in the process of artistic creation is the unconscious or the inward process. Although artistic genius is not independent of training, yet it is a natural gift. It cannot be acquired by practice or learning. It is not like understanding Newton's laws of science. One can easily understand science, but it is not possible to compose a poem unless one is naturally gifted.

Kant's views on the productive and reproductive forms of imagination suggest Coleridge's understanding of the Primary Imagination and Fancy. It was Coleridge who brought Kant's ideas to England.

Schiller disagreed with Kant's ideas on subjectivity and abstraction. He believed in a balance between freedom and necessity, the particular and the universal, sensuous and the rational. He created a unity between matter and form; between receptivity and activity. For him, beauty was both subjective and objective. It is an object because we become aware of it when we reflect. It is subjective because we realize/feel it only through feeling. According to him, naive and sentimental are the two forms of poetry. The classical spirit is termed as 'naive' and the romantic as 'sentimental'. This is because the former is realistic and impersonal whereas the latter is personal. Both these impulses find manifestation in a man's personality. Human beings have a natural ability for the syntheisis of these opposed impulses. This is known as 'play impulse' which is the source of all artistic creation.

Goethe also had great influence on English poets. He believed that a work of art follows its own rules, standards and values. However, the truth of art and nature are different from each other. Each follows its own laws and standards. Still, a good work resembles a natural one because it presents the human spirit. According to him, 'The artist, grateful to the nature which produced him, gives back to her a second nature, but one which has been felt, thought out and humanly perfected.' This second nature is responsible for the creation of the higher reality which the fine art tries to express and realize. Hence, the artistic reality is truer and more valuable than the actual world in which we live.

Schelling starts with the anti-thesis of:

- subject and object
- nature and intelligence
- freedom and necessity
- Conscious and unconscious

Both nature and art are necessary for the creation of a work of art. The creative process is the result of the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious act is voluntary whereas the unconscious is involuntary. Novalis believed that poetry is a representation of the spirit of the inner world. Jean Paul Richter also admits that the operation of the conscious and the unconscious is genius. Friedrich Schlegel spoke of poetry as 'spiritual music'. Hegel made 'reason' or 'thought' central to his philosophy. But Schopenhauer made 'will' the basis of all artistic creation. William Blake views 'vision' as basic to artistic creation. He claimed to have written poem by 'immediate dictation' without any element of premeditation or will. He said that imagination is the real world. This world is a faint shadow of the real and eternal world of imagination. According to him, nature is not real and science cannot understand reality. Only imagination can do this.

Theories of Schelling, Kant and the Schlegel brothers deeply influenced romantic criticism in England. The critical writings of Coleridge bear the mark of their influences. The Romantics showed interest in the mind of the man and his consciousness. This resulted in a new sociology and anthropology which reflected in the works of Rousseau of France. His social

theory maintained that all men are born free with equal original features. It is the process of civilization which suppresses originality. Hence, the urge of the romantic critic was to reinterpret and judge according to his own criteria. This resulted in re-evaluation and reinterpretation of ancient masters and their theories. The neo-classical masters like Dryden, Pope and Dr Johnson were also studied and interpreted in the new light. Post-Renaissance creative artists like Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton were also reinterpreted according to the new classical theories.

Different critics have tried to understand and interpret the works of Shakespeare in their own ways. Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare focuses on the study of his characters. Wordsworth found profound imagination in Shakespeare. Keats was interested in the 'negative capability' of Shakespeare. Most romantic poets were under the romantic spell of Milton's poetry. According to A. G George, 'both in theory and practical application, romantic criticism is widely diverged from the Renaissance and the neo-classical schools of criticism. (P 78).'

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. How many classes did Kant classify the arts into?
5. Recapitulate William Blake's views on artistic creation.
6. What is the meaning of Paly Impulse?

4.4 ROMANTIC EPISTEMOLOGY

Romantic theory is quite distinct from its classical counterpart. Romantic criticism focused on the active involvement of the human mind; the prime importance of the individual and distrust of reason. The role of human mind becomes secondary in the mimetic view. Plato's analogy of a mirror depends on the significance of external reality. Even Aristotle did not suggest the inner reality of the mind in his Poetics. Locke and Hartley also tried to explain the working of the human mind in mechanical terms. In the mimetic view, value was attached to what was general and not to the particular. What Dr. Johnson has to say about the role of the poet is indicative of the rationalist neo-classicist spirit:

The business of poet is to examine, not the individual but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances (He) must neglect the minute discrimination, which one may have remarked and another neglected.

These lines from the History of Rasselas: Prince of Abyssinia enables us to grasp the neo-classical spirit. The same spirit is reflected in the following lines where Dr Johnson praises Shakespeare in his Preface to Shakespeare:

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general

nature ..Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life.

According to Dr. Johnson, the artist should present the passions of men which are uniform. They should avoid presenting their customs which are particular. Shakespeare has successfully been able to achieve this goal hence, he is praised:

This, therefore, in the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life, that he who mazes his imagination May here be cured of his delirious

ecstasies by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and confess or predict the progress of the passions His scenes are occupied by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks he should himself have spoken or acted on the same

occasion .The dialogue of this author (seems) to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation and common occurrences. According to him literature represents 'things really existing and actions really performed'.

All that the classicists and the neo-classicists rejected was of great importance for the Romantics. As Blake puts it:

'To generalize is to be an idiot. To particularize is the lone distinction of merit.' He feels that the individual is a mysterious reservoir of boundless potential. The distinction between the neo-classical and the romantic can further be elaborated by the understanding and handling of similar subject - man - by Pope and Wordsworth. When Pope talks of man, he talks of a species in 'Essay on Man'. But when Wordsworth takes up the same subject, he ends up by composing an autobiographical poem- *The Prelude*.

Reason, as the Romantics believed, has a limited role to play in the creation of art. However, they have never tried to discard it just as the classicists never rejected the romantic spirit thoroughly. The Romantics have accommodated reason with emotion despite their reservations against it.

The romantic theory of art, thus, lays emphasis on expression, on the inner self. The definitions of poetry and art may differ from one romantic to the other but the basic focus remains the same. Wordsworth defines poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. Coleridge states that poetry reveals the inner world of man in *On Poetry or Art*. According to Shelley, poetry is an 'expression of imagination'. But Byron maintains that poetry is 'the lava of imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake'. Although it is difficult to describe romanticism in a few words, yet we are trying to categorize the romantic features broadly. The basic ideas of romanticism are:

- imagination
- inspiration

- organicism
- emotion

Imagination, according to the romantics, is a wonderful creative faculty which is superior to reason. Inspiration for them is one of the most central concepts required for poetic art. The idea of organicism also plays an important role in the creation of a work of art. A work of art achieves form and unity because of the element of organicism. The process of poetic creation is described by Wordsworth as the natural growth of a forest tree; Shelley relates it with the natural growth of a child in the womb; Coleridge is reminded of the growth of a plant for this purpose.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Whom does Dr Johnson praise and why?
8. Explain how Wordsworth is different from Pope.
9. What are the basic ideas of Romanticism and how have they been described?

4.5 FORMS OF POETRY IN THE ROMANTIC ERA

All the features of romantic poetry are bound together by strong passion or emotion. Coleridge described the function of emotion or feeling in a poem, in a letter to Southey. For him, it is like the gentle and soothing movement of the breeze. All art forms are determined by the aesthetics that underlie them. The aesthetics of a particular age are determined by its social, political, cultural, economic and psychological background. Since gods were regarded as the supreme power and men were mere puppets in their hands in ancient Greece, tragedy proved to be the most suitable art form. The post-Renaissance period saw the rise of different art forms with modifications. This was primarily because of the spirit of adventure and discovery. The eighteenth century is known as the 'age of prose and satire'. The reason behind it is its pragmatic and mechanical outlook. Didactic verses, essays, prose, satires, comedy of manners, comic epic in prose were best written in this period. In the age of individualism, inspiration and subjectivity of the art forms underwent a great transformation. Wordsworth's *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* can be regarded as the manifesto of the new aesthetics. Lyrical poetry became the poetic norm as it is the purest expression of the feelings of the self, i.e., the author. Hence, a great emphasis was given on:

- intensity
- sincerity
- spontaneity
- feeling
- emotion
- free expression
- self-expression

- individualism

Hence the lyric forms -

- ode,
- sonnet,
- song
- elegy

found new freedom, flexibility and intensity in the hands of the Romantics. This new trend also led to the failure of the narrative forms of poetry and drama. This happened because of the interference of the elements of subjectivity and lyricism where objectivity and narrative technique were required. Barring Shelley's play, *The Cenci*, all other dramatic works like Wordsworth's *The Borderers*, Coleridge's *The Remorse* and Keats's *Otho the Great* lack a real dramatic tension and conflict.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

10. Why is the eighteenth century called 'the age of prose and satire'?
11. What are the accepted forms of lyric poetry?
12. What was the poetic norm in the eighteenth century and why?

4.6 WORDSWORTH'S PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) met Coleridge sometime in 1795 and moved to 'Alfoxton House', Somerset in 1797 in order to be close to Coleridge. Together, they issued the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. It is a volume of poems which deals with common subjects in an imaginative way.

The two friends had discussions on the theory of poetry which can be summarized as:

- (i) The power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a 'faithful adherence to the truth of nature'
- (ii) By the compelling nature of the imagination

While discussing these two problems, the friends were also encountered with a third problem: the synthesis of the first two problems.

Wordsworth has dealt with the first problem and to a certain extent with the second one. This is evident when he talks of 'the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us'. But he has not touched upon the third one.

According to the initial plan Coleridge was supposed to write the preface. However, it was Wordsworth who finally wrote it according to the conversations which took place between him and Coleridge.

As Coleridge states: 'To the second edition, he added a preface of considerable length in which, notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary report, he (Wordsworth) was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds.'

Here, while talking of lyric poetry, Wordsworth included all forms of poetry. He made lyric poetry the symbol of all poetry. Coleridge would never have allowed this, had he written the preface.

In a letter to Southey, July 1802 Coleridge writes: 'I will surprise you of one thing, that although Wordsworth's preface is half a child of my own brain, and arose out of conversations so frequently that, with few exceptions, we could scarcely either of us, perhaps, positively say which first started any particular thought, yet I am far from going all lengths with Wordsworth.'

In yet another letter written to Southey, Coleridge says, 'It is most certain that the heads of our mutual conversations, etc., and the passages were indeed partly taken from notes of mine; for it was first intended that the preface should be written by me.'

The first volume of 1798 was published with a short 'foreword'. Many new poems were added in the second edition published in 1800. It also had a much longer and detailed preface. In 1802, it was further revised and expanded. Many additions were made regarding the definition of the poet and the value of poetry and its universality. His literary criticism is also available in:

- *Note to the Thorn*, 1800,
- *Appendix to Lyrical Ballads*,
- *Preface to Poems*, 1815,
- The 'Essay' supplementary to the preface 1815

The *preface* is a revolutionary critical statement of a poet who wants to take poetry nearer to life. He wants to take it as it is actually lived, make it a sincere expression of feelings and emotions. In other words, he wanted to free poetry from the hackneyed and artificial style of writing which was the order of the eighteenth century. Credit goes to Wordsworth for heralding and inaugurating a new era in English poetry and criticism. The subjects with which Wordsworth seems to be mainly concerned fall into four categories:

- (a) What is poetry
- (b) Characteristics of a poet
- (c) The value of poetry
- (d) What is poetic diction

In the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth argues that poetry should be written in language that comes naturally to a poet and understood easily. Too lofty words, which are regarded as

'poetic', should be avoided. Words should be used to convey the emotions in the memory and poetry is a passage. According to Wordsworth, poetry should give pleasure through a rhythmic and beautiful expression of feeling—for all human sympathy, he claims, is based on a subtle pleasure principle that is 'the naked and native dignity of man.' *Lyrical Ballads* became both the symbol and instrument of that revolution.

Let us begin with the nature of poetry. As opposed to the classical norms, Romantic poetry is an expression of feelings and emotions.

In the words of Wordsworth: '... all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: but though this be true, poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man, who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply.

Poetry is a continuous expression of feelings and emotions, but the role of thought and reason is not to be undermined. Feelings are always emerging like a gush of stream but they are to be controlled and directed by thoughts. Our feelings are made by past experiences. According to Eliot, 'We must be capable of thinking our feelings and feeling our thoughts. If this is done by practice, we can very well be quite imaginative and at the same time thoughtful.'

According to Rene Wellek, Wordsworth faces the problem of justifying poetic pleasure. For this, he unites the concept of poetic pleasure and that of truth.

The purpose of poetry is to provide pleasure. As Wordsworth acknowledges:

„^ When the style is manly, and the subject is of some importance, words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as

he who is sensible of the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of poetry is to produce excitement in coexistence with an overbalance of pleasure. Now, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. But if the words by which this excitement is produced are in themselves powerful or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed when in an unexcited or a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and retaining the passion by an intercourse of ordinary feeling. This may be illustrated by appealing to the reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe* or *the Gamester*. While Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us as pathetic beyond the bounds of pleasure - an effect which is in a great degree to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement. On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen) if the poet's words should be commensurate with passion, and inadequate to raise the reader to a height of desirable excitement, then, (unless the poet's choice of his metre has been grossly

injudicious) in the feelings of pleasure which the reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general, and in the feeling whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the poet proposes to himself.

Poetry is not the product of mere imitation, external realities and superb craftsmanship. Something goes on in the depth of the human mind and then it originates with an element of sincerity. As stated by Wordsworth in his 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface' poetry is 'the reflection of the wisdom of the heart and the grandeur of the imagination.' Having rejected the artistic poetic diction of the neo-classical age, Wordsworth found solace and genuine inspiration for the poet in the simple and sane life of the common man - the peasant and the farmer. Wordsworth states:

Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which given competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature.

The purpose of poetry is to provide pleasure; poetry is regarded superior to science. Poetry will not cease even if science brings about a major change in our environment. It will be 'carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of science itself.' Whatever discovery is made by science, it will provide material for poetry. Science deals with reason and intellect. It is 'the false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions'. The 'dull eye, dull and inanimate' of science is put 'aprop to our infirmity.' Referring to Aristotle, Wordsworth says:

Aristotle, I have been told, has said that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which given competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature.

Wordsworth further said, 'There are obstacles, which stand in the way of the fidelity of the biographer and historian, and of their consequent utility. They are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The poet writes under one restriction only: the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being, possessing that information. This may be expected of him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between them, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.'

Poetry is also superior to history. The subject matter of history is individual and local; it talks about a particular place and time. It narrates the events related to a certain king or prince. But the truth of poetry is universal. It is of all time and all place. It is not the truth of a

person, place or thing. It is the truth of human life. It is truth which is 'carried alive into the heart by passion.' The historian has to be true to dates and years and the actual place where the event took place. There is no such binding for poetry. Its purpose is to provide pleasure.

The poem has to be true to human nature. The poet experiences the unity and truth of humanity. He finds an organic relationship between man and nature because it is superior to science and history. The only restriction which the poet follows is that of giving immediate pleasure to a human being. Poetry deals with the personal and the intimate whereas science is preoccupied with the impersonal and the objective.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies converses with general nature, with affections akin to those, which through labour and length of time, the Man of Science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge of both the poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings.

The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of knowledge, it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, 'that he looks before and after'. He is the rock of defense for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.

The objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet we will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of Science, not only in those general indirect, but he will be at his side carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to man, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid

the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.'

Here again, it is nice to know that Wordsworth does not feel that science is the enemy of poetry. He sees science as complementary to it. Besides, the importance of poetry will increase with the growth of science. He negates that industrialization and modernity will do any harm to the health of poetry.

Poetry is also better than philosophy because it gives rise to rational enjoyment. In the words of Wordsworth:

The appropriate business of poetry (which, nevertheless, if genuine is as permanent as pure science) her appropriate employment, her privilege and her duty, is to treat things not as they are, but as they appear; not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exist to the senses and to the passions. What a world of delusion does this acknowledged principle prepare for the inexperienced! What temptations to go astray are here held forth for them whose thoughts have been little disciplined by the understanding and whose feelings revolt from the sway of reasons! When a juvenile reader is in the height of his rapture with some vicious passage, should experience throw in doubts, or common sense suggest suspicions, a lurking consciousness that the realities of the muse are but shows, and that her liveliest excitements are raised by transient shocks of conflicting feeling and successive assemblages of contradictory thoughts - is ever at hand to justify extravagance, and to sanction absurdity. (Essay supplementary to the Preface, 1815).

He talks of higher poetry in the following words:

In the higher poetry, an enlightened critic chiefly looks for a reflection of the wisdom of the heart and grandeur of the imagination. Wherever these appear, simplicity accompanies them. Magnificence herself, when legitimate, depending upon simplicity of her own, to regulate her comments. But it is a well known property of human nature that our estimates are ever governed by comparisons, of which we are conscious with various degrees of distinctness. It is not, then, inevitable (confining these observations to the effects of style merely) that an eye, accustomed to the glaring hues of diction by which such readers are caught and excited, will for the most part be rather repelled than attracted by an original work, the colouring of which is disposed according to a pure and refined scheme of harmony? It is in the fine arts as in the affairs of life, no man can serve (i.e., obey with zeal and fidelity) two masters."(Essay Supplementary to the Preface, 1815)

Talking about the similarities between religion and poetry, he says that poetry which deals with religion as its subject gets distorted:

The concerns of religion refer to indefinite objects, and are too weighty for the mind to support them without relieving itself by resting a great part of the burthen upon words and symbols. The commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried on but by a process where much is represented in little, and the Infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity. In all, this may be perceived as the affinities between religion and poetry - between religion - making up the deficiencies of reason by faith and poetry - passionate for the instruction of reason; between religion - whose element is

infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry - emereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation. In this community of nature may be perceived also the lurking incitements of kindred error- so mat we shall find that no poetry has been more subject to distortion then that species the argument and scope of which is religious; and no lovers of the art have gone further astray than the pious and the devout.

Wordsworth speaks of poetry as passion - not the original passion of the first experience but the purified and carefully selected one. The passion, as Wordsworth feels, is rendered impersonal. In the process of poetic contemplation, the passion spiritualizes itself. Wordsworth says in his *Note on the Thorn* (1800:

.... poetry is passion: it is the history of science of feelings: now every man must know mat an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without somediing of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of our own powers, or me deficiencies of language. During such efforts, there will be a craving in me mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the speaker will cling to me same words, or words of the same character. There are also various other reasons why repletion and apparent tautology are frequently beauties of the highest kind. Among die chief of those reasons is die interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as things, active and efficient, which are of diemselves part of the passion. And further, from a spirit of fondness, exultation, and gratitude, the mind luxuriates in me repetition of words which appear to successfully communicate feelings.

The truth of these remarks might be shown by innumerable passages from the Bible and from the impassioned poetry of every nation.

Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: Arise Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

'At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed there he fell down dead.'" Why is his Chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his Chariot?' - Judges, chap V, verses 12,27 and part of 28. (See also the whole of that tumultuous and wonderful poem.)

The 'vital union' of thoughts and feelings leads to the creation of genuine poetry. In his essay on epitaphs, Wordsworth argues:

If words be not an incarnation of the thought, but only clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift." He firmly believes that "by the act of writing in verse an author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known laws of association". The associationist doctrine, which was the product of the 18th century, seems to have a deep-rooted influence on Wordsworth's mind also. He also says that the moment someone engages himself in writing in verse, he "makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known laws of association". There is no denying the fact that he refers to metre and a certain form of expression. He further elaborates that he is keenly

interested in rustic life, "chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement". There is an association between ideas and passion. As told to Gillies on 22nd December 1814, "My first expression I often find detestable; and it is frequently true of second words, as of second thoughts, that they are best". The information which he shared with Haywood in 1828 is sufficient to understand the pain he took in the composition and revision of his poems: "Composition of verse is infinitely more of an art than men are prepared to believe: and absolute success in it depends upon innumerable minutiae". In this way, we see that the criteria of spontaneity undergo a serious thought process. It is a manipulation of feelings for the purpose of man's edification. The greatness of poetry lies in its emotional effect. It should be of affecting right kind of sensibility, feelings and awareness. The poetry of the highest kind can humble and humanize men; it can exalt and purify them. Sincere poetry works towards the unification of sensibility.

Wordsworth brought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. The well-known characteristics of his revolutionary artistic achievements are his objections to an over-stylized poetic diction, his attitude to nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects for his poetry. Poetry for him was primarily a record of a certain kind of state of mind, and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of the state of mind which the poem recorded.

4.6.1 Four Principles of Poetry

Wordsworth in the very beginning of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* points out four essential principles of poetry that are included in it. Those four principles are as follows:

1. Themes from ordinary life
2. Expressed in the day to day language of ordinary men
3. Coloured by imagination
4. Through them and in them the universal and primary laws of human nature be brought out

He also propagates the reason for such poems. In Wordsworth's language, the principal object of the poems in *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads* is 'to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature ...'.

Thus, '*The Preface*' is an epoch-making critical writing as it marks a definite break from the earlier poetry of the eighteenth century. In *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, the poet - critic Wordsworth discusses several issues related to poetry, which can be categorized under the following heads:

- Definition of poetry

- Defining the poet
- Value of poetry
- The nature of poetic diction

4.6.2 Wordsworth's Definition of Poetry

One of the key issues Wordsworth deals with in *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads* is the notion of poetry. For Wordsworth, '... all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with ^ each other, that the understanding of the reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified'.

Wordsworth considers poetry 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'; at the same time, the expression of the feelings is not as spontaneous. This is proved by Wordsworth's comment that the poet has to think 'long and deeply' before he gives expression to his feelings. Later in *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth adds, 'I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity. The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on ...'. Thus, for Wordsworth, unlike the eighteenth century poets whose emphasis is on the imitative rationalist aesthetic, poetry finds its origin from the emotions of the poet though it should have universal appeal, as that is the only way the poet can ensure that his creation is understood by his readers.

Thus, going along with the beliefs of the Romantics, Wordsworth emphasized that the tendency of art or aesthetic object should be from the individual to the universal.

'Poetry being the image of man and nature' makes Wordsworth transcend the personal feelings in the process of creative expression to make it have a universal appeal.

4.6.3 Defining the Poet

While identifying the key issues of good poetry, Wordsworth shifts his attention to what the poet should be. It is here that he identifies three key features of a poet, which are as follows:

1. The poet should be exceptionally sensitive 'endued with more than a very sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness... a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind'. This exceptional sensitivity of the poet makes him a perceiver who not only does feel his emotions strongly, but feels for everything around him—man and nature. Thus, for Wordsworth, the poet is an extraordinary creature having the power of feeling more comprehensively than any other common human being.
2. The poet is 'a man speaking to men'. The poet's role does not stop at the power to feel enthusiastically and sensitively, but the other greater role is to express those strongly felt emotions to his readers. In other words, the poet is not merely a self-indulgent creature seeking pleasure in deep feelings, but has a social responsibility. A great poet is a man of integrity who gives his readers the chance to rectify their feelings by his poetry. Therefore, Wordsworth adds, 'every great poet is a teacher. I wish either to be considered a teacher or as nothing'.
3. Wordsworth also endows the poet with a strong imaginative power, that is, he has the power to perceive 'absent things as if they are present'. The Romantics believe that it is through imagination that they can transcend the pains of this world and aspire for the ideal. Wordsworth, thinking along the similar line, asks the poets to be imaginative as it is this quality that distinguishes them from the commoners and makes them a poet. Percy B. Shelley significantly says 'the poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'. They are legislators as they provide the world with better or the idealistic version through their imagination; even though they live in the same world of flux, fever and fret.

4.6.4 The Value of Poetry

Wordsworth attaches much importance to the language of poetry as it is the medium through which the poet communicates with his readers. He says '... the medium through which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected, is language; a thing subject to endless fluctuations and arbitrary associations. The genius of the poet melts down these to his purpose'. Wordsworth thought, similar to others, that language is the most significant aspect of poetry as 'language and the human mind acts and react on each other'. Moreover, he thinks that with the growth of science, poetry has become more crucial as 'If the labours of the man of science should ever create a material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep than no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of objects of science itself.

While comparing science with poetry, Wordsworth says 'The knowledge both of the poet and the man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude. The poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoice in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge. It is the impassioned

expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after". He is the rock of defense of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time'.

4.6.5 Poetic Diction

Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, as put forward in *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads* invited a lot of controversy in the Romantic Age and afterwards. It is true that his views of poetic diction were not so much criticized as his practical application of the theory in his own poems. Wordsworth was against his predecessors, the eighteenth century poets for their use of stylistic devices and figures of speech in particular and the poetic diction in general. He thought that neither did it suit their creative output nor the period in which they were writing.

Wordsworth is of the view that there can be no general poetic style that all the poets can follow, as every poet's mode of experience is peculiar to him. That experience should find expression in the language, which is best suited to put forward that experience to the readers. The classical poets naturally wrote in a figurative language as it suited their themes and the age in which they were writing. The eighteenth century poets, according to Wordsworth, consciously imitated the classical model of writing and consequently there was artificiality in their diction. Therefore, Wordsworth rejected the stereotypical, artificial and stagnant poetic diction of his predecessors. Moreover, he asserted that his poetry will have in the language of men, the language of the rustic as their language, which is similar to their way of living, not artificial and most natural. It is the language of the rustics, which needs to be purified for the sake of poetic use.

Wordsworth says, 'Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily

comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is

frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation.'

Moreover, Wordsworth felt that the language of poetry does not differ much from good prose as he says 'the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the meter, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written... the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and I have previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose. I will go further. I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition'. As the aim of poetry is to produce excitement with pleasure and the regularity provided by a particular rhythm, functions to tamper the feelings generated. Similarly, meter can also function to mitigate the more pathetic situations and sentiments. Thus, Wordsworth expresses his reservations about the artificiality of meter and, particularly, of rhyme. They, however, tamper and restrain 'the passions' and contribute to regularity of effect.

4.6.6 Review

1650 to 1770 was the period of the neo-classicist dominance in English Literature. The change began in 1770 and in 1798, with the publication of Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* the form and content of poetry changed altogether. *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads* also marked the beginning of Romantic criticism. It was an end of the creed of authority as the canonical treatise on poetry dealt with the questions like, what is poetry, nature of poetry, creative process, etc. in a new way, a way that marked a definite break from the neo-classicist thought process.

Romantic theory of poetry, primarily that of Wordsworth, attaches value to subjective experience, to personal feelings, emotions and passions. Reacting against the artificiality of the eighteenth century poetry, Wordsworth promotes simplicity both in the theme and form of poetry. Wordsworth is of the opinion that the subject of poetry should be taken from the humble and rustic life and presented to the readers in the language of > common man. Thus, the common man of humble and rustic origin is the chief concern of Wordsworth in his poems. *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads* is not merely a statement of the theme and nature of poetry but Wordsworth in *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads*

makes a declaration of the Romantic creed where 'spontaneity' is the key word. When Wordsworth defines poetry as 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings... recollected in tranquility'; he is saying that poetry should not be pre-meditated, and in poetry emotions should be privileged over rationality.

For Wordsworth poetry is 'the most philosophic of writing' as in it the general truth and essential laws of the universe and human existence find their expression. Juxtaposing poetry against science, Wordsworth says that as against the practicality of science, poetry is an instrument of truth that does not need external validity, as it is its 'own testimony'. Wordsworth says, 'Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing. It is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony ... Poetry is the image of man and nature. ... The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information, which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand'. Thus, a poet for Wordsworth is a specially gifted individual, out of the ordinary in his perception and in his ability to feel'... affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present ... and a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels...'. Thus, for Wordsworth, the poet is a genius, an extraordinary individual who has the capability in him to perceive the ideal, which the common people do not have. It is this characteristic of the poet that makes him see extraordinary things in the ordinary and present it to the readers for their pleasure. T. S. Eliot vehemently criticizes the Wordsworthian theory of poetry and poet in his critical essay *Tradition and Individual Talent*.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

13. What were the circumstances that led to the creation of the *Lyrical Ballads*.
14. What were the initial problems encountered by Wordsworth and Coleridge while scripting *Lyrical Ballads*!
15. What were the circumstances under which Wordsworth wrote *The Daffodils*!

4.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF A POET

Wordsworth explored a wide range of ideas related to a poet. According to him, the poet is a man who has more sensibility than ordinary human beings. He is a man who speaks to men and his imaginative and creative faculty is superior to the lesser mortals. The difference between the poet and an ordinary man lies not in the kind but in the degree of his qualities. A good poet is naturally endowed with the capability of blending thought and feeling. His mind process allows him to think long and deeply and his feelings are the outcome of his superior organic sensibility. In the Preface to Poems in 1815, he states the qualities of a poet:

The powers requisite for the production of poet are, first, those of observation and description, i.e., the ability to observe with accuracy, things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer: whether the things depicted are actually present to the senses, or have a place only in the memory. This power, though indispensable to a poet, is one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time; as its exercise supposes all its higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects, much in the same way as translator or engraver ought to be to his original. Secondly, sensibility - which, the more exquisite it is, the wider will be the range of poet's perception; and the more will he be incited to observe objects, both as they exist in themselves and as re-acted upon by his own mind. (The distinction between poetic and human sensibility has been marked in the character of the poet delineated in the original preface). Thirdly, reflection which makes the poet acquainted with the value of actions, images, thoughts and feelings, and assists the sensibility in perceiving their connection with each other. Fourthly, imagination and fancy - to modify, to create and to associate. Fifthly, invention - by which characters are composed out of materials supplied by observation; whether of the poet's own heart and mind, or of external life and nature, and such incidents and situations produced as are most impressive to the imagination, and most fitted to do justice to the characters, sentiments, and passions, which the poet undertake to illustrate. And, lastly, judgment - to decide how and where, and in what degree, each of these faculties ought to be exerted; so that the less shall not be sacrificed to the greater; nor the greater, slighting the less, arrogate, to its own injury, more than its due. By judgment, also is determined what are the laws and appropriate graces of every species of composition.

In the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth answers queries like:

- What is meant by word?
- What is a poet?
- To whom does he address himself? And
- What language is to be expected from him?

What makes a man a poet is something that Wordsworth talks about in these lines:

He is a man speaking to men: and man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him, delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passion produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves: - whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially

those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

The poet is a person different from the ordinary human beings because of his capability of observing things differently. This observation is accurate and the poet uses this with honesty in composition of a poem. Any passion or feeling is best suited for artistic creation when it is in its original form. There should be no interference of wit and intellect in it. The second quality which is required to be a poet is 'sensitivity'. He should be soft and tender at heart. An element of magnanimity is also essential for a poet. A large-hearted man should always know that human nature is very peculiar and erratic. Moreover, he should be full of life and enthusiasm. He has to be a true lover of life and its ways. He should be able to find liveliness even where it is lacking. It is not only the concrete and material things which should exert their influence on the poet; he should also feel and sense what is absent and invisible; abstract and unseen. He must be able to conjure those thoughts and feelings which do not find a direct and clear stimulus in the external world. He is gifted to express those thoughts and feelings better than an ordinary man, which are not the immediate response of external environment. The third point is 'reflection'. The thoughts, feelings, emotions ideas, images and action are the raw materials for the creation of poetry. But these cannot lead to a good artistic creation unless they are perceived in association with each other. Imagination and fancy occupy the fourth place in the realm of artistic creation. Their function is to modify the first impression, create a new body of ideas and then to associate them. The fifth step in this process is to invent - the poet- observes and forms ideas. These ideas can be formed by events in the outside world or they may be the creation of the author's own mind and heart i.e. his imagination. The final step in the process of artistic creation is 'judgment'. The poet's power of judgment enables him to choose and reject from the outward and the inward material available to him.

Despite possessing these characteristics the poet succumbs to be mechanical:

However, exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a poet, it is obvious, that while he describes and imitates passions, his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, may, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with their; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon. He will depend upon this for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion, he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature; and the more industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith that no words, which his fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

16. What are the qualities of a poet, as listed by Wordsworth?
17. According to Wordsworth how is a poet different from a common man ?

18. As per the Wordsworthian perspective, is the work of a poet mechanical?

4.8 VALUE OF POETRY

The medium used by the poet for the expression of his thoughts and feeling is language. Poetry is the product of the interaction between the language and the poet's mind.

Both of these influence each other. The ancient critical tradition provided more importance to language and less to the poet's mind. In the new critical tradition initiated by Wordsworth, we come across a more balanced view. Now, he attaches equal importance to language and human mind. However, it is important to know that the poet performs his role by indirectly manipulating language:

.....the medium through which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected, is language;

a thing subject to endless fluctuations and arbitrary associations. The genius of the poet melts down these to his purpose.

The role of language in poetry is to sensitize the readers. The relevance of poetry has increased in the modern industrial and mechanical age:

For a multitude of causes, known to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor.

Wordsworth has always emphasized the necessity of freeing language from the clichéd shopworn expression of the eighteenth century.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

19. What is the medium used by Wordsworth to express himself and how does he use it?
20. According to Wordsworth, what is the role of language in poetry?

4.9 POETIC DICTION

Of all his critical / prose writings the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* puts forward his most celebrated and most criticized theory of poetic diction. Ever since it was first elaborated, it has invited a lot of controversy. It is noteworthy that his theory of language criticizes his own theory of poetic diction. The basic idea being that there is no difference between the language of poetry and day to day communication. As Wordsworth states:

Is there then, it will be added, no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition? I answer that there neither is nor can be any essential difference. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we find bonds of

connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity between Metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; poetry sheds no tears 'such as Angels weep, but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial Ichors that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.'

Wordsworth's observation is restricted to lyrical poetry only. Wordsworth's theory is an appeal for the passionate and primitive, for the real and the naturally spoken word. It is a protest against pedantry and affectation. Figurative language is un-poetic and artificial. Wordsworth's poetry is the outcome of his concept of what poetry is. In it, he advocates the most natural subjects treated in the most natural way. As he says:

The principal object than which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to make the incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: Chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passion of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that situation our elementary feelings exist in a state of greater simplicity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are those easily comprehended, and are more durable: and lastly because in that situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language too of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expressing in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.

His theory of language is self-contradictory. However, he believes that the poet is a man who speaks to men. His language should conform to this principle and be the language of men. In *Essay on Epitaphs*, Wordsworth expresses that language is the incarnation of thought; it is not its dress. This theory supports the fundamental Romantic view that language is organic and not prescriptive. It is also significant to note that Wordsworth's basic view - the language of poetry should be natural - is not questioned. What is criticized is his justification of his theory and the gap between the doctrine propounded by him and its real application in his own poems. According to his theory, rustic speech of farmers and peasants is passionate in its innate simplicity; it is charged with high emotion. There is also an element of universality in this naturalness and peculiarity. The mode of experience of every poet is peculiar to him. The poet expresses his experiences in a style which is appropriate for it. As a result no two subjects can be

treated in the same style and no two poets can follow the same language. A poet is different from other in his choice of subject and its treatment. No general style can be prescribed for all poets. This element of peculiarity makes poetry unique. Here, Wordsworth seems to be revolutionizing the ideas and theories propounded by his predecessors in the eighteenth century who prescribed a general poetic diction with known stylistic devices and figures of speech for all poets and forms of poetry. The language of the common, if selected carefully and variegated with metaphors, can give that pleasure which is peculiar to poetry. The poetic devices were quite naturally and powerfully used by the first poets. However, during the neo-classical age style was imitated quite artificially and as an infallible model. As we know Dryden felt that the language used by the royal people - the king and his courtiers - was best suited for poetry. Gray, in a similar fashion, knew that the language used in his age was not the language of poetry. Wordsworth has rejected the distorted, artificial, unfeeling and glossy poetic diction of the eighteenth century, with all spirit, both in theory and practice. In a reaction to the neo-classical poetic diction stereotyped, he advocated the use of the real language of man - the language of the rustics - whose language was very natural and genuine.

The earliest poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events: they wrote naturally, and as men: feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring and figurative. In succeeding times, poets and men ambitious of the fame of poets, perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect, without having the same animating passion, set themselves to a mechanical adoption of those figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and ideas with which they had no natural connection whatsoever. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men in any situation.

However, several charges are levelled against Wordsworth's theory.

In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* Wordsworth is first charged for being driven by a democratic impulse in rejecting the language of the Kings and the aristocrats.

Next, when Wordsworth talks of using the language of the rustics he does not take into account the fact that, howsoever natural it might be, it is to be used by the poet for the sake of artistic creation.

Thirdly, when he talks of selecting the language used by men, he does not realize that the term 'selection' itself means that it is done deliberately and not naturally the rustic speech. This selected language throws away all the baseness of the ordinarily spoken words. It is like the natural speech of ordinary men, but actually it is not. It embodies all the qualities of figurative language.

Wordsworth tried to point towards that art, which conceals itself. Wordsworth was a strong proponent of the belief that art lies in concealing art. That is why when he advocates the cause of naturalness and simplicity, he does not rule out the importance of figurative language. In this way he was asserting his faith in the organic view of style. He was not against metaphors and figures of speech. However, they were not appropriately used if they were added to a

poem like ornaments from without. These rhetorical devices should be organic to a poem. As he has said:

If the poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion lead him to passions the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures.

As we have stated earlier that Wordsworth could not follow his own critical theories in his poems. He has opposed the artificial poetic diction and advocated simplicity. He, however, failed to perceive his own poems which have employed all the figurative devices which his theory didn't approve of. In the process of refuting the hackneyed poetic diction of his age, he made some self-contradictory arguments. In the most emotional moments we use figurative language. Also, the language used by the primitive man is rhetorical, figurative and passionate. The earliest poets wrote naturally and felt powerful when they used figurative language. Wordsworth has tried to associate true rhetoric with spontaneous expression but at the same time challenged the artificial rhetoric of his time.

'But the first poets, as I have said, spoke a language which, though unusual, was still the language of men. This circumstance, however, was disregarded by their successors; they found that they could please by easier means: they become proud of a language which they themselves had invented, and which was uttered only by themselves as their own. With passage of time, it became a symbol of promise of this unusual language, and whoever took upon him to write in metre, accordingly as he possessed more or less of true genius, introduces less of more of this adulterated phraseology into his compositions; and the true and the false became so inseparably interwoven that the taste of men was gradually perverted; and this language was received as a natural language.'

He goes on to explain that the language of the earliest poets differed from that of the ordinary men. This was because it was created out of some extraordinary heroic occasion. The language of the ordinary was not the product of such heroic occasion. This explains the difference between the two. As an example he refers to the language of Homer. A.G. George in his books *Critics and Criticism* terms it as Wordsworth's inclination towards 'poetic primitivism'. According to George, 'Wordsworth's theory of language recommends the poetry of strong passion and heroic occasions written in an elevated metaphorical language which the primitive bard was supposed to have used'.

It seems that while delineating the theories of poetical composition, poetic diction and metre, Wordsworth was inspired by psychological considerations. Metre is used by the poets to produce excitement with an over balance of pleasure. It is also used to check the excitement produced by poetry. The metrical alternation of sound enables the poet to discover similitude in dissimilitude and dissimilitude in similitude and thus, enhances the pleasure in poetry.

Connected with his theory of poetry language or diction is the theory of sincerity. It is to be followed to attain poetic excellence. The greatness of a poem lies in the greatness of its experience. In the best poetry, there is a correspondence between the poet's convictions and the subject of the poem. The better the correspondence, the higher is the level of the poem.

According to A.G George, Wordsworth's theory again shifts to psychology and biography of the author. However, we should not conclude that poetry is the mirror of the poet's life. Wordsworth also suggests that there are two types of poetry subjective and objective. The poetry of Burns bears the marks of the personality, hence it is subjective. On the other hand the poetry of Homer and Shakespeare is objective because the life and ideas of the poet do not influence their poetry. Thus, it is clear that when Wordsworth talked of sincerity, he did not want the poet to succumb to biography. He finds the objective poetry of Homer and Shakespeare more sincere than of many others who created subjective poetry. Sincerity in the composition of poet can be achieved by:

- a sensible observation,
- reflection,
- imagination,
- fancy and
- Judgment.

Carelessness in artistic creation cannot be regarded as poetic sincerity. Wordsworth himself has thoroughly revised the second edition of *The Prelude*. He, therefore, cannot undermine the importance of revision and technique in poetic excellence. He has been an ardent supporter of discipline in artistic creation. In a nutshell, the doctrine of sincerity does not deal with the initial process; it gives poetry its refinement. It deals with the aim and end of poetry.

In the end, we can say that Wordsworth has followed his creative impulse in his poetic creation. His poetic triumphs, as Coleridge observes, could be achieved as he followed his instinct as a poet. Even his unbalanced critical remarks should be judged sympathetically and with an understanding of the contemporary age. Phrases such as 'real language of men', 'selection' and 'a colouring of imagination' contradict each other. And a balanced understanding of these arguments will enable the reader to understand Wordsworth, the critic and poet, in a better way.

Besides Wordsworth's theory of poetic language, sincerity cannot be complete without an evolution of his doctrines by his friend Coleridge. Coleridge was very much aware of the lapses in Wordsworth's theory; however, he also knew that their age will be known by Wordsworth in the days to come. He places him in importance only after Shakespeare and Milton. Here, it is also interesting to notice that another great romantic poet Keats regarded Wordsworth as next to Shakespeare. Coleridge has all praise for Wordsworth as a poet, but at the same time he does not miss to notice the essential drawbacks in his theory of poetic diction. He finds himself very small in comparison with Wordsworth's poetic excellence. The man 'to whom at all time and in all modes of excellence I feel myself inferior' was no other than Wordsworth. 'I feel myself a little man by his side' says Coleridge in one of his letters. Coleridge feels, the greatness of Wordsworth, lies in his ability to unite profound thought with deep feeling, observation with imagination. However, Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction has been vehemently criticized by Coleridge.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

21. What language does Wordsworth recommend in his theory of language?

22. What are the shortcomings that are attributed to Wordsworth's theory of poetry?
23. What, according to Wordsworth, are the two kinds of poetry?

4.10 WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF IMAGINATION AND FANCY

In the book *Wordsworth's Imagery*, Florence Marsh has explained the theory of Imagination in these words:

Imagination, as Wordsworth defined it, becomes the name for the mental power that transforms the literal to the figurative. It has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but it is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and process, of creation or of compositions, by certain fixed laws. It is the power of the mind to do more than associate mechanically. The mind can confer on objects, properties not inherent in them, it can abstract from them some of the properties that they actually possess and it can modify an image by another. In every case, the mind alters the object creatively. Wordsworth takes the example of

Milton's use of the word "hangs" (*in Paradise Lost Book II*) to illustrate this modifying power of imagination. Above all, it is through the power of imagination operates upon the raw material of sensation to illustrate the evidence of eternal truth. Fancy merely relates to temporal or worldly enjoyments.

Wordsworth's views on imagination and fancy are fully set forth in the *'Preface to Poems'*, 1815. He makes a distinction between fancy and imagination. For him mind is the creative faculty in human body. Unlike his predecessors, Wordsworth believes in the active participation of mind in the creative process. It does not reflect the world around it passively. The mind is an active agent; its imaginative faculty enables it to create. Here, Wordsworth challenges the early associationist psychology, developed in the eighteenth century, especially by David Hartley, which ascribes a passive role to the human mind—it only reflects the external world, like a mirror. The term 'associationist' has been ascribed to this notion of psychology because cognition is the result of accidental psychology. According to Wordsworth, imagination is creative and active whereas fancy is passive. In the words of Wordsworth;

I come now to the consideration of the words fancy and imagination, as employed in the classification of the following poems. "A man", says an intelligent author, "has imagination in proportion as he can distinctly copy in idea the impressions of sense: it is the faculty with images within the mind the phenomena of sensation. A man has fancy in proportion as he can call up, connect, or associate, at pleasure,

those internal images so as to complete ideal representations of absent

objects. The imagination is formed by patient observation; the fancy by a voluntary activity in shifting the scenery of the mind. The more accurate the imagination the more safely may a painter, or a poet, undertake a delineating, or a description, without the presence of the objects to be

characterized. The more versatile the fancy, the more original and striking will be the decorations produced" - British Synonyms discriminated, by W. Taylor.

Wordsworth was against the eighteenth century perception of imagination which crippled it of its creative ability. In the following, Wordsworth tries to distinguish between the two perceptions of imagination-the neo-classical and the romantic.

'Is not this as if a man should undertake to supply an account of a building, and be so intent upon what he has discovered of the foundation as to conclude his task without once looking up at the superstructure? Here, as in other instances, throughout the volume, the judicious author's mind is enthralled by etymology; he takes up the original word as his guide, his conductor, his escort, and too often does not perceive how soon he becomes its prisoner, without liberty to tread in any path but that to which it confines him. It is not easy to find out how imagination, thus explained, differs from distinct remembrance of images; or fancy from quick and vivid recollection of them: each in nothing more than a mode of memory. If the two words bear the above meaning, and no other, what term is left to designate that faculty of which the poet is "all compact", he whose eye glances from earth to heaven, whose spiritual attributes body forth what his pen is prompt in turning to shape; or what is left to characterize fancy, as insinuating herself into the heart of objects with creative activity? Imagination, in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following poems, has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but in a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind open those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws.'

Wordsworth cites many examples to explain his ideas about imagination. Let us look at one of the examples used by Wordsworth and his explanation of it according to imagination:

Shall I call thee, Bird,

Or but a wandering voice?

This concise interrogation characterizes the seeming ubiquity of the voice of the cuckoo, and dispossesses the creature almost of a corporeal existence; the imagination being tempted to this exertion of power by a consciousness in the memory that the cuckoo is almost perpetually heard throughout the season of spring, but seldom becomes an object of sight.

Further elaboration on the faculty of imagination suggests how imagination confers additional features upon an object, or abstracts the other from its natural properties:

The force of images independent of each other, and immediately endowed by the mind with properties that do not inhere in them, upon an incitement from properties and qualities the existence of which is inherent and obvious. These processes of imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses

and thus enabling to react upon the mind which had performed the process, like new existence.

Besides being an endowing and modifying power, imagination also helps in shaping and creating. Wordsworth explains how it is done:

By immediate process; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number alterations proceeding from and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own might and almost divine powers.

Wordsworth also talks about the great masters of the post Renaissance period whose imagination have enriched literature. He prefers their genius to that of the ancient Greek and Roman poets. In Wordsworth's view:

... I shall spare myself and the reader the trouble of considering the imagination

as it deals with thoughts and sentiments, as it regulates the composition of characters, and determines the course of actions: I will not consider it... As that power which, in the language of one of my most esteemed friends, "draws all things to one, which makes things animate or inanimate, being with their attributes, subjects with their accessories, take one colour and serve to one effect". The grand storehouse of enthusiastic and meditative imagination, of poetical, as contradistinguished from human and dramatic imagination, is the prophetic and lyrical parts of the holy scriptures, and the works of Milton, to which I cannot forbear to add those of Spenser. I select these writers in preference to those of ancient Greece and Rome because the anthropomorphism of the pagan religion subjected the minds of the greatest poets in those countries to the bondage of definite form; from which the Hebrews were preserved by their abhorrence of idolatry. This abhorrence was almost as strong in our great epic poet, both from circumstances of his life, and from the constitution of his mind. However, imbued the surface might be with classical literature, he was a Hebrew in soul; and all things tended in him towards the sublime: Spenser, of a gentler nature, maintained his freedom by aid of his allegorical spirit, at one time inciting him to create persons out of abstractions; and at another, by a superior effort of genius, to give the universality and permanence of abstractions to his human beings, by means of attributes and emblems that belong to the highest moral truths and the purest sensations - of which his character of Una is a glorious example. Of the human and dramatic imagination the works of Shakespeare are an inexhaustible source.

'I tax not you, ye elements, with unkindness, I never gave you kingdoms, called you daughters.'

Imagination can bring about vital changes in an object but fancy can't:

Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch, and where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose of it be slight, limited and evanescent.

Directly the reverse of these, are the desires and demands of the imagination

The law under which the processes of fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing,

tender or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortunately combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which she scatters her thoughts and images, trusting that their number, and the felicity with which they are linked together, will make amends for the want of individual value Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature, imagination to incite and to support the eternal.

Fancy is not related to our cognition; it merely reflects the world around us. Fancy gives us impressions whereas imagination creates the patterns of perceptions. Imagination is the power of creation; it gives a new look and significance to first impressions.

However, an intellectualist approach to truth is rejected by Wordsworth. Intellect is the main guiding principle of science and artistic creation, hence Wordsworth rejects it. He recognizes intellect as a false secondary power. However, the true knowledge of things is obtained through insight or imagination only. The sensuous incarnation of philosophy is poetry. In this way Wordsworth unites truth, nature, philosophy and poetry through the theory of imagination.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

24. What are Wordsworth's views on imagination?
25. How does Wordsworth differentiate between imagination and fancy?
26. What are Wordsworth's views on intellect?

4.11 THE LYRICAL BALLADS AND WORDSWORTH'S CRITICISM

Wordsworth's purpose was to arouse pleasure, excitement and enjoyment through poetry. His concept of pleasure has sometimes been misunderstood. Pleasure was supposed to appeal only to the senses. However, when he talked about pleasure proper to poetry, he meant neither intellectual nor spiritual pleasure only. Again it was neither bodiless nor metaphysical. Pleasure, in Wordsworth's poetry, lies in stimulating imagination to perceive beauty and newness in day to day commonplace activities. The poems in the Lyrical

Ballads aimed at providing this pleasure. Wordsworth was a firm believer in the individuality of human beings. It is this which made them different from each other. The peculiarities of a man; his reactions and responses make a man what he is. He celebrates this idea in the poems in *Lyrical Ballads*. 'Lines composed above the Tintern Abbey' exemplify the notion of dissociation of sensibility along with the doctrine of pleasure. 'The Thorn', the most criticized poem in this collection, deals with the story of Martha Ray who was cruelly treated by her lover and fiance, Stephen Hill. She also had a child who died / or was killed. Wordsworth describes the mental agony, the psychological turmoil of Martha Ray. The poem provides pleasure by exciting imagination. Barring a few poems like 'Michael' and 'The Idiot Boy', most of the

poems published in the *Lyrical Ballads* adhere to the theory of poetry and poetry pleasure delineated in the Preface.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

27. What does Wordsworth say about pleasure?
28. Which is Wordsworth most criticized poem and why?

4.12 WORDSWORTH'S LITERARY CRITICISM: ITS CULTURAL CONCERNS

One of the main concerns of Wordsworth's literary criticism is to strengthen a culture, which is humane and sensitive. Here, the first thing is to see what is meant by culture. The most common meaning of the term is improvement and refined attained by training and education. Besides this denotative meaning, the term enjoys many connotations. Figurative applications of the word 'culture' are developed by many thinkers with a strong culture concern. With the advent of industrialization and urbanization, many people felt the necessity of saving culture for the welfare of human society. As a result, cultural critics like Arnold, Carlyle and Ruskin have tried to fill the vacuum created in life by science and modernity by humanizing and sensitizing people.

According to Coleridge, culture is 'the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterize our humanity.' Matthew Arnold views culture as 'the best that has been thought and known in the world' in *Culture and Anarchy*. The cultural critics felt an urgent need for culture since life was becoming mechanical and external. The inner values were losing their importance and man was lured by the rosy and comfortable prospects of science. This lineage of thought has been developed in literature with a peculiar orientation of its own. These cultural critics may differ in their views and ways of looking at life. But one thing is common: they are shattered to see how people getting away from their roots to create a de-humanized and lifeless world for themselves. The culture critics felt that literature was best suited for this purpose: to orient people and fill the world with sweetness, life, vitality and light.

This breed of cultural critics belongs to the later age: the Victorian era. However, Wordsworth had anticipated the necessity for culture much before them. His writings have pioneered the cause of culture by using the phrase 'the people' in contradiction

to 'the public'. A clear distinction between the two has been brought about by Wordsworth in the essay 'supplementary to the Preface (1815)':

Still more lamentable is his error who can believe that there is anything of divine infallibility, in the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community, ever grounded by factious influence, which, under the name of the PUBLIC, passes itself upon the unthinking, for the PEOPLE. Towards the PUBLIC, the writer hopes that he feels as much difference as it is entitled to: but to the PEOPLE, philosophically characterized, and to the embodied spirit of their knowledge, so far as it exists and moves, at the present faithfully supported by its two wings, the past and the future, his devout respect is due". Wordsworth felt that he was responsible to the 'PEOPLE' as a poet. Hence he says that "every great poet is a teacher. I wish either to be considered a teacher or as nothing.

Wordsworth could foresee the cultural deterioration in the society. He acknowledges the responsibility for bringing refinement and culture in the society through his poetry. In the 'Preface' Wordsworth states that a mentally and spiritually healthy reader of poetry would really feel exalted and enlightened. Poetry, in this way, becomes the image of man and nature; the most refined form of human knowledge and the upholder and preserver of relationship and love, mutual understanding and trust.

Wordsworth sees the relevance of poetry in the modern world of fever and fret. It has provided solace in the ancient times; it can safeguard and promote cultural values in the era of science and technology. Poetry, from this angle, becomes the most refined form of man and nature. It provides defense for human nature. Mass society and mass culture are the two most important causes of such cultural crisis. Thus, Wordsworth becomes the prophet of culture before the arrival of Arnold, Ruskin, Carlyle, Leavis and Eliot on the centre stage.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

29. According to Wordsworth what are the issues faced by today's culture?
30. How does Wordsworth address the cause of culture?
31. How, according to Wordsworth, does poetry find relevance in today's world?

4.13 T.S. ELIOT: AN INTRODUCTION

Thomas Stearns Eliot was an American writer of great talent. Eliot was an important contributor to the modern literary criticism. In this section you will be introduced to Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent* as an important work in the oeuvre of literary criticism.

Despite being a poet of great repute, with a Nobel Prize in Literature, Eliot's body of work was quite small. Eliot was aware of this shortcoming and had admitted to a friend and a Harvard Professor on his career that:

My reputation in London is built upon one small volume of verse, and is kept up by printing two or three more poems in a year. The only thing that matters is that these should be perfect in their kind, so that each should be an event.

Eliot had a style of his own in the publication of his poems. He would first publish the poems individually in magazines or periodicals. This would be followed by publication in books. His first collection was *Prufrock and Other Observations* which was published in 1917. Eliot published more poems in London and New York than anywhere else. Both the editions had the same poems except that *Ode* in the British edition was replaced with *Hysteria* in the American edition. Later, in the year 1925, he published another collection which also included *The Waste Land*, with these poems.

The other collections included *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, which was a collection of light verse published in 1939. There was a collection of poems, published posthumously in 1967, which consisted of poems written much earlier in the period 1907-1910 and 1909-1917.

Eliot was influenced by his birth place and his nationality to which he had quipped later:

[M]y poetry has obviously more in common with my distinguished contemporaries in America than with anything written in my generation in England... It wouldn't be what it is, and I imagine it wouldn't be so good... if I'd been born in England, and it wouldn't be what it is if I'd stayed in America. It's a combination of things. But in its sources, in its emotional springs, it comes from America.

His first major work *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* was written when he was just twenty two years old, but his character, Prufrock, was a middle aged person lamenting a wasted life with missed opportunities. In this work, Prufrock, the character, described his physical and intellectual shortcomings in a manner distinct from the poetry of the earlier Romantic poets. The description of unattained physical love was considered to be offensive for that period. In a way, he was one of the first to adhere to the modernist expressions, deviating from the Romantic poets of yore.

Critics are divided in their opinion as to whether the narrator left his residence in the course of the narration. From the poet's perspective, the locations described can be interpreted from many angles. These include actual physical experiences, mental recollections, or possibly symbolic images. Eliot in this writing was heavily influenced by Dante of Italy, whose greatest work was *The Divine Comedy*. The poem found a very frigid reception as observed by the following review which appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* on June 21, 1917:

The fact that these things occurred to the mind of Mr Eliot is surely of the very smallest importance to anyone, even to himself. They certainly have no relation to poetry...

Ezra Pound was an American expatriate poet and critic. He was a major figure in the early modernist movement in poetry. He was known for his role in developing *imagism*. *Imagism* was a reactionary movement against the Victorian and Georgian poets. It favoured tight language

with unadorned imagery. It relied on a strong relation between the verbal and musical qualities of verse and mood. His best-known works include *Ripostes* published in 1912, and *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* published in 1920. There was an unfinished work called the *Cantos* which had 120 sections. The *Cantos* was published between 1917 and 1969.

Ezra Pound played an important role in shaping T.S. Eliot's thoughts and writings. Pound was in fact greatly disturbed by the extensive loss of life and destruction caused by World War I as was Eliot. The disillusionment is also due to his failing marriage.

While working in London, Pound helped to discover and shape the work of authors such as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Robert Frost and Ernest Hemingway. This was a period when he was working as a foreign editor for many American Magazines. In a manner, Pound helped the publication of Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in 1915 and for the serialization of Joyce's *Ulysses* from 1918. *The Waste Land* was another significant publication in the year 1922. In its dedication, he appreciates the significant support of Ezra Pound in helping shape and publish this work. Elements of influence from Indian philosophy are evinced by the ending lines which have 'Shanti Shanti Shanti'. The poem is not about individual failure but the failure of a chaotic society itself.

Eliot was to later on write about this poem in the following words:

As for *The Waste Land*, that is a thing of the past so far as I am concerned and I am now feeling toward a new form and style.

The poem was known for its obscurity and the frequent slippage between satire and prophecy. There was an abruptness of various facets in the poem, including speaker, location, and time. This poem is the poetic counterpart of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which was also influenced by Ezra Pound. The similarities between the two, in form, mark the beginning of modern literature.

Later, other poems were to appear which had strong elements of despair, as evinced in *The Waste Land*. They were influenced by the general pessimism of the times after World War I and a shortage of hope as evinced by these lines from his poem *The Hollow Men*:

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper.

Eliot's conflict with religion also shaped his writing. Eliot converted to the Anglican Church in 1927 and *Ash Wednesday* his first long poem was published in 1930. This was greatly influenced by matters of faith and the hope for salvation. The poem marked the beginning of a

more contemplative period of writing of a casual and melodic phase. Although the critics were enthusiastic about this poem, the interplay with orthodox Christianity caused discomfort to the more secular people.

The Four Quartets was considered a masterpiece by Eliot. It consisted of four long poems, each initially published separately. The first was *Burnt Norton* published in 1936 followed by *East Coker* in 1940, the *The Dry Salvages* in 1941 and finally *Little Gidding* in 1942. The poems followed a standard structure with five sections each. Each poem is associated with one of the four classical elements: air, earth, water, and fire. This work was also greatly influenced by Christianity. Christian thoughts and

traditions have been heavily drawn on by Eliot. These include art and symbolism. There is a commonality with the language of figures such as Dante, St. John of the Cross and Julian of Norwich. The deeper communion sought in *East Coker*, the 'hints and whispers of children, the sickness that must grow worse in order to find healing', and the exploration which inevitably leads us home - all point to the pilgrim's path along the road of sanctification. For this work, T.S. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize.

Over a period of time, Eliot's focus shifted from the gloomy to the more lyrical and from poetry to writing plays, with components of comedy and a redemptive end. Some of his famous plays were *Murder in the Cathedral*, *The Rock*, *The Family Reunion* and *The Elder Statesman*.

While giving a lecture in 1933, he said: 'Every poet would like, I fancy, being able to think that he had some direct social utility He would like to be something of a popular entertainer, and be able to think his own thoughts behind a tragic or a comic mask. He would like to convey the pleasures of poetry, not only to a larger audience, but to larger groups of people collectively; and the theatre is the best place in which to do it.'

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

32. In which medium did Eliot first publish his poems?
33. In which year was his first collection *Prufrock and Other Observations* published?
34. What was Eliot's age when his first major work *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* was written ?
35. Name the American expatriate poet and critic who helped to discover and shape the work of T.S. Eliot.
36. Which significant publication of Eliot was published in the year 1922?
37. Name the work that is considered to be his masterpiece.



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