



Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon
Open University

Master of Arts

MAEN-109 (N)

Literary Criticism and Theories

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Course Introduction

In this paper, we will cover the basics of literary criticism and theories. Literary criticism and theories form the backbone of literary studies, providing tools and frameworks for analyzing, interpreting, and understanding literary texts. Literary criticism involves evaluating and discussing literature to uncover deeper meanings, explore thematic elements, and assess the artistic quality of works. Literary theories, on the other hand, offer systematic approaches and methodologies to guide critics and scholars in their analysis.

The study of literary criticism and theories allows readers to engage with texts on multiple levels, considering not only the content but also the form, context, and underlying structures. From examining the technical aspects of language and narrative to exploring broader socio-cultural and historical influences, literary criticism and theories open up diverse pathways for interpreting literature. These theories offer different perspectives and methods for exploring literature, considering various elements such as language, structure, context, and meaning. It helps readers gain a deeper understanding of literature by using critical theory to gain further insight into literary texts. Therefore, understanding theories is necessary. Hence this paper has been divided into five Blocks.

The first Block is “Introduction to Criticism and Theories”, which is divided into 4 different units. The aim of this Block is to provide an insight of what are the functions of criticism, what is literary criticism why study of literary theory is important. Further in this unit Indian Aesthetics of literary theories and criticism have also been discussed.

The Second Block deals with “Classical Criticism”. Classical criticism is a cornerstone of literary analysis, rooted in the traditions and works of ancient Greek and Roman thinkers. classical criticism is fundamental to literary studies. In this Block, with the help of two units, learners will read about Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Longinus’ “On the Sublime”.

The Third Block is “Neo- Classical and Romantic Criticism” having 3 units. Both Neo-Classical and Romantic Criticism played crucial roles in the evolution of literary theory and practice. Together, these movements reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of literary criticism, highlighting different aspects of human experience and artistic expression. With the help of three units, learners will get the knowledge how the criticism changed with the passage of time.

The Fourth Block is “Victorian and New Criticism”. In this Block learners will get the knowledge of criticism of Victorian and modern age. Victorian criticism reflects the era’s social, moral, and cultural concerns, often integrating interdisciplinary approaches to address the complex issues of the time. In contrast, New Criticism represents a shift towards formalism and textual autonomy, focusing on close reading and the intrinsic elements of the text itself. Both movements have significantly influenced literary theory and practice, shaping how literature is analyzed and understood. For the better understanding of learners this Block is divided into 3 units- Matthew Arnold: “The Study of Poetry”, T. S. Eliot: “Tradition and the Individual Talent” and I. A. Richards: “The Four Kinds of Meaning” in *Practical Criticism*.

The Fifth block is “Twentieth Century Literary Theories”. Twentieth-century literary theories represent a period of rich diversity and innovation in the study of literature. These theories have profoundly influenced the ways we understand, interpret, and value literary texts. This Block is divided into 4 units having theories like Multiculturalism, Marxist theory, Post Modernism, Deconstruction, Eco-Criticism and Diaspora studies. Twentieth-century literary theories have revolutionized the study of literature by introducing diverse perspectives, challenging traditional canons, and promoting interdisciplinary and politically engaged approaches. These theories have expanded the scope of literary analysis, fostering a deeper and more nuanced understanding of texts and their broader cultural, social, and political contexts.



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Literary Criticism and Theories

Block I Introduction to Criticism and Theories

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|---------------|---|
| Unit 1 | Functions of Criticism |
| Unit 2 | Introduction to Literary Criticism |
| Unit 3 | Study of Literary Theory |
| Unit 4 | Indian Aesthetics |

BLOCK I INTRODUCTION TO CRITICISM AND THEORIES

Literary criticism and theory, including the rich traditions of Indian aesthetics, are essential for deepening our understanding of literature. They enable us to explore the myriad ways in which texts communicate ideas, emotions, and cultural values, enriching our engagement with the written word. Hence, this block is divided into four Units- 1: Functions of Criticism, 2: Introduction to Literary Criticism, 3: Study of Aesthetics and 4: Indian Aesthetics.

The aim of the first unit is to introduce the functions of criticism to the learners. This unit will provide an insight that how literary criticism works as an art of analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating literary works. It serves as a bridge between the reader and the text, helping to uncover deeper meanings, themes, and artistic techniques.

The aim of study of second unit is to provide an introduction to literary criticism. This unit will provide an information that how literary criticism serves as a means to search into the deeper layers of a text, exploring its themes, structures, and stylistic elements.

The third unit deals with “Study of Literary Theory”.

Literary theory tells the different ways through which we can interpret and analyse literature. It offers various frameworks and approaches to help us understand the deeper meanings and structures of literary texts, rather than just looking at the surface content.

The fourth unit is “Indian Aesthetics”. In the context of Indian aesthetics, literary criticism takes on additional dimensions. Indian aesthetics, rooted in ancient philosophical traditions, emphasizes the emotional and sensory experiences of art. Concepts like Rasa (the aesthetic flavor or essence) and Dhvani (suggestion or resonance) are central to understanding the aesthetic experience in Indian literature and art. These ideas provide unique frameworks for analyzing Indian literary works, focusing on the emotional responses they evoke and the subtle layers of meaning they convey.

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Functions of Criticism
 - 1.2.1 Matthew Arnold
 - 1.2.2 T. S. Eliot
 - 1.2.3 R. S. Crane
- 1.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.4 Questions and Their Answers
- 1.5 Further Reading

1.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we shall first discuss the functions of criticism in general and then try to analyse the critical opinions of critics like Matthew Arnold, T. S. Eliot, and R. S. Crane. These critics made criticism the tool of change in the field of creative and critical activities. Hopefully, this unit will help learners realize how important criticism has been and is.

1.1 Introduction

The discipline of criticism has also changed over the course of time. Several kinds of criticism came into fashion one after another with the change in taste, thinking-pattern and approach of writers and thinkers. The Elizabethan period accelerated interrogation and free inquiry. Consequently, each work of art was then subjected to critical analysis and inquiry. Joseph Addison in 18th century set the trend of appreciative criticism. For him, the exclusive job of a good critic was to discuss ‘excellences rather than imperfections’ (The Spectator, No.

291). He was interested in providing readers with aesthetic pleasure by highlighting the occasions of beauty and loveliness in any piece of art. In the Romantic period, Coleridge and other critics were busy making distinctions between the poetic mind and the non-poetic. In the Victorian era, writers like John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, and Matthew Arnold took criticism for the socio-cultural, political, and economic transformation of English society.

Walter Pater, an aesthete, is of the view that the business of criticism is to look at things in the light of their respective excellences and beauties without being affected by preconceived notions, that is, prose is bad and poetry is good; 19th-century poetry is good and 20th-century poetry is bad.

George Watson writes, “Criticism, of course, cannot prevent lies from being told. But it does make it its business to see that they do not establish themselves as truths. It presupposes an open society, and it is one of the conditions by which such a society survives” (Watson 11).

After having studied this Unit, we want you write down answers to the questions as suggested in section 1.4.

1.2 Functions of Criticism

Just as critics are not unanimous about the definition of criticism, they differ about the functions of criticism as well as the role of critics to be played out. In general, the function of criticism is to train the would-be writers how to write properly, to interpret, to evaluate, and to enlighten. Literature helps us understand life, so criticism helps us understand literature. Criticism serves as a bridge to take over literary complexes. Aristotle and Horace, during the classical period, wrote works like *Poetics* and *The Art of Poetry* to train and teach forthcoming writers how to write. This tradition continued in the Neoclassical period. During this era, Dryden, Pope, and Johnson suggested that the main purpose of criticism is to devise rules for the writer’s guidance. Carlyle took criticism for interpretation because it was his belief that the full meaning and value of a work of art cannot be acquired and grasped by the reader without the help of a critic. And therefore, it is the moral duty of critics to help readers savour the full import of the work.

Prof. Raj Nath writes in his book *Essays in Criticism*:

The function of criticism as set forth by various criticisms is of two kinds, namely *a priori* and *a posteriori*. The former formulates the business of a literary critic and lays down certain rules for him, while the latter allows him to follow his own way in the investigation and assessment of individual works. The two critics who represent,

importantly, *a priori* and *a posteriori* functions are Coleridge and Aristotle, respectively” (103).

Matthew Arnold, I. A. Richards, T.S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Cleanth Brooks subscribe to an *a priori* approach to the function of criticism, though Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot have drawn on Aristotle at times. R. S. Crane is an advocate of the *a posteriori* function of criticism, which he evolved from Aristotle’s *Poetics*. “He lays down a two-fold function of criticism, namely analysis and evaluation” (Raj Nath 120).

1.2.1 Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold saw criticism as a tool for social reformation and betterment. To achieve the end, a critic is supposed to carry out social duties as well. Thus, he attributed social roles to critics to perform. Their roles are not limited to mere explication, evaluation, and explanation of various texts.

Critical faculty is for sure less inventive than creative, but it is not injurious or baneful in itself. Criticism is what Europe needs immediately, according to Arnold, for the removal of social ills. The business of critical power is to see things as they really are. It creates an intellectual ambience for creative power to come forth. “It tends to establish an order of ideas” (*Essays in Criticism* 5) at least by making comparisons, “to make the best ideas prevail” (*Essays in Criticism* 5). These “new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature” (*Essays in Criticism* 5).

Arnold found his time very complex, characterized by doubt, despair and dispute so a modern poet like him needed critical faculty to characterize it satisfactorily. For the lack of critical faculty, Arnold found:

...the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy and creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, and Wordsworth even more profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety. Wordsworth cared little for books and disparaged Goethe. I admire Wordsworth, as he is, so much that I cannot wish him different, and it is vain, no doubt, to imagine such a man different. (*Essays in Criticism* 5-6)

According to Arnold, Wordsworth would have become a greater poet and richer in thought if he had read more books, at least in proportion with Goethe, whom he downgraded. Arnold categorically talks about the function of criticism:

Its business is... simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty and due ability, but its business is to do no more and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions that will never fail to have due prominence given to them. (*Essays in Criticism* 14)

The disinterested endeavour is purely an intellectual domain. By contrast, the existing mode of criticism of the country has become simply controversial for its favouritism and bias. It has disfigured even the best spiritual works. This is baneful, false, and malicious criticism. The disinterested criticism, which is real criticism, dissuades one from self-satisfaction “which is retarding and vulgarizing” (*Essays in Criticism* 15). It “leads him towards perfection by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself and the absolute beauty and fitness of things” (*Essays in Criticism* 15). The negative criticism that serves practical ends even fails to see the ideal perfection. The true purpose of criticism is to establish perfection.

Without the free, disinterested treatment of things, the evolution of truth and the highest culture is impossible. He argues:

Criticism must maintain its independence from the practical spirit and its aims. Even with the well-meant efforts of the practical spirit, it must express dissatisfaction. (*Essays in Criticism* 25)

The disinterested criticism seeks to enlarge ‘the stock of true and fresh ideas’ because “our ideas will, in the end, shape the world all the better for maturing a little” (*Essays in Criticism* 27). The disinterested endeavour aims mainly “to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas” (*Essays in Criticism* 27). Judging is often spoken of as one of the acts of critics, but it is not a

total endeavour. Judgment naturally develops by itself ‘in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus, knowledge and ever fresh knowledge must be the critic’s great concern for himself’ (*Essays in Criticism* 28). The critic is not a lawgiver. By communicating fresh knowledge, the critics may ‘do most good to their readers’.

Actually, Arnold saw the criticism of his time as personal, social, and literary. It was to him a handmaid of culture. It was not disinterested. The real criticism is to see things beyond the likes and dislikes of a party line or group. Thus, criticism of Arnold is a three-fold activity. First, ‘to learn the best that is known and thought’; second, ‘to propagate’ the same; and third, ‘to establish a current of fresh and true ideas’. To discharge the first two duties, a ‘fresh and ever fresh’ flow of knowledge will be of great help to critics. And for the third activity, a critic is supposed to have the best knowledge of the best literature in the world.

1.2.2 T. S. Eliot

To Eliot, criticism in its limited sense stands for “commentation and exposition of works of art by means of written words” (*Selected Essays* 24) as Arnold used in his works. Eliot, as usual, promises to effect certain modifications in the current English critical order. Eliot views criticism not as an ‘autotelic activity’ that is, it is not self-justified or self-fulfilling. To be more precise, literary criticism exists because there is literature too. Creative endeavors may be ‘autotelic’ but not critical because the latter is dependent upon the former. Literature can serve a particular purpose in itself and beyond itself, but only if we are unconscious of it. Literature definitely performs its function, of whatever kind or degree, but only indifferently. At last, Eliot identifies two tasks of critics as the purpose of criticism: “the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste” (*Selected Essays* 24).

By the yardstick of “the elucidation of works of art” and “the correction of taste” the critical endeavour would become “a simple and orderly field of beneficent activity” (*Selected Essays* 25). It would also become comparatively easier to distinguish useful criticism from worthless criticism, a true critic from a pseudo-critic.

Eliot excoriates the existing mode of criticism, wherein critics excel at opposing each other. As Eliot writes in English criticism, it is “no better than a Sunday park of contending and contentious orators who have not even arrived at the articulation of their differences”

(*Selected Essays* 25). For Eliot, criticism is a cooperative endeavour, and a critic who wishes to justify his existence is supposed to keep his personal prejudices and eccentricities outside while he is on a critical mission, seeking at the same time to compose and settle “his differences with as many of his fellows as possible, in *the common pursuit* of true judgment” (*Selected Essays* 25). In this way, all those who air their personal views and opinions are not critics; instead, they are professionals. Thus, for Eliot, criticism is not for promoting discord among those who are pursuing critical endeavours. It is cooperative and collaborative. The final end of it is to arrive at ‘true judgment’.

Eliot hereafter looks at his own critical stand that the business of criticism is the privilege of only those who practice it very well with reference to their own works. Eliot had a habit of stretching the diameter of any line, frame, or creed with the passage of time. With this intention, Eliot turns to stretching his formula so that important inclusions and qualifications can be carried out. For this purpose, Eliot says that “a critic must have a very highly developed sense of fact” (*Selected Essays* 31). The ‘sense of fact’ is not an ordinary quality. “The sense of fact is something very slow to develop, and its complete development means perhaps the very pinnacle of civilization” (*Selected Essays* 31). Those who have mastered ‘the sense of fact’ are among the best critics. Only their criticism would be ‘precise, tractable, and under control’.

1.2.3 R. S. Crane

R. S. Crane, the leader of the Chicago School of Critics, approved the *aposteriori* function of criticism. He suggested twofold functions of criticism: analysis and evaluation. It was his belief that in analysis and evaluation, one should strictly avoid personal taste. In this regard, he finds Arnold and Eliot both guilty. They could not get over this problem despite their brilliant attempts. Crane writes in his essay “History versus Criticism” that criticism “is simply the disciplined consideration at once analytical and evaluative of literary works as works of art” (Raj Nath 120). Crane lays emphasis on the identification of problems that set the literary task rolling. So, analysis should be carried out in light of literary problems. Evaluation is another function of criticism for Crane. It should be accomplished in light of the end or goal the writer has set for himself. How much success has the writer achieved in meeting the goal?

1.3 Let Us Sum Up

At the conclusion of this *unit*, we can say that both creative and critical exercises and writings were set out almost simultaneously. Both activities are equally important. Healthy creativity and criticism shape the future of a nation. Both activities must be encouraged for the sake of a civilized society. Sometimes critical exercises guide creative endeavours, and sometimes the latter invites the former to proceed. This is perhaps the reason we have more critical works than creative works. In fact, critical work keeps creative endeavours alive and fresh. Doing criticism is not a layman's job. A layman may be creative in certain ways but cannot get critical unless he or she has acquired a good amount of knowledge and skill. Criticism is an evergreen activity, and it will continue to provide guidance to lovers of literature. It should be worth encouraging a better understanding of not only the creative works but also the nature of our society as well as its working patterns.

1.4 Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Briefly discuss the function of criticism.

Ans. See section 1.2

Q.2 What is difference between a priori and a posteriori?

Ans. See section no. 1.2

Q. 3 Discuss criticism as a disinterested endeavour.

Ans. See section no. 1.2.1

Q. 4 Trace growth in Eliot's opinion about criticism

Ans. Read carefully section no. 1.2.2.

Q. 5 Evaluate R. S. Crane's views on criticism.

Ans. See section no. 1.2.3.

1.5 Further Reading

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Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 What is literature?
- 2.3 The Meaning of Criticism
- 2.4 Criticism and literature
- 2.5 What is literary criticism?
- 2.6 Forms of criticism
- 2.7 Qualifications of Critics
- 2.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.9 Questions and their Answers
- 2.10 Further Reading

2.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, our objectives are to make self-learners doing their postgraduate studies well familiar with the nuances of literary criticism. It has been experienced that students usually find criticism a little tiresome and uninteresting, but here the attempt is to make this *unit* comprehensive, lucid, and clear. After having read the entire *unit*, we hope you will feel enlightened and able to discuss among your peers the following points:

- What is literature?
- What makes a work of art literary?
- What is criticism?
- How are literature and criticism related to each other?
- What is literary criticism?
- Forms of criticism.
- Qualifications of a good critic

2.1 Introduction

Of course, having an insight into literary criticism is very important, not only for those teachers who teach graduate and postgraduate students certain blocks and units of literary criticism as core or compulsory papers, but whoever is engaged in literary studies should also have an understanding of literary criticism. The matter of fact is that the most intricate, subtle, and novel aspects of literature cannot be studied and taught effectively without an understanding of literary criticism. Creative and critical activities take place almost simultaneously. Indeed, for a better understanding of literature, the study of literary criticism is of immediate need.

In this *unit*, we have focused on a few select basic but very crucial terms we come across while studying literary criticism. After having studied this *unit*, we want you to write down answers to the questions in the light of suggestions given in section 2.9. In addition, read a few more important books devoted to the study of literary criticism as suggested in ‘Further Reading’.

2.2 What is literature?

Well, it seems illogical to talk about criticism without having a critical discussion of the concept of literature. Etymologically, modern-day literature is very close to the Latin word "litteratura," which is derived from Latin "littera," meaning letter. The idiom a man or woman of letters means someone who is well grounded in literary pursuits or one who keeps a wide range of knowledge. It seems very difficult to encapsulate all the features and functions of literature in a sentence or paragraph. However, I will try to define it on the basis of context and structure.

Literature is one that elevates one ever and ever. It deals with human joys and sorrows in accordance with the formula of probability and necessity (Aristotle). Literature is one that supports life by being consistent with ethical modes and patterns. Literature is one that argues for the humanization, not the animalization or criminalization of the human world. Literature is one that inculcates a sense of seeing all living and non-living beings as equal. Literature is one that tirades against rat race. Literature is one that prepares a platform for the cultivation of fortitude and forbearance. Literature is no island. Anyone can possess this domain. Literature softens out the complexes of life. Literature helps him or her lift out of his or her

personality. Literature is an implied prophecy. Literature is more visionary and philosophic than other branches of knowledge. Literature is a very secular science. Considering the state-of-the-art, only the most objective and elevated literature can work out problems of relation. Literature does not clean the ills of so-called society and the social mind; instead, it prepares the ground for their transformation. Literature is the remedial grammar of life and time.

Literature is not something static. Literature dwells on particular surprising and prying moments that have the ability to take one upward ad infinitum. It not only poses questions before mankind but also prepares suitable conditions for him or her to get at the possible solutions and, moreover, verifies the possible solutions continuously. Literature is something divine because it finds life and growth above the height and size of man. That is, when a man of genius rises above his petty existence and identifies himself with the rest of the world, he produces some work of art worthwhile through individual talent. Literature enables its beneficiaries to go up to the state where earthly feuds and frauds seem too short to take into consideration. And moreover, it enables us to face the challenges of time and space unaffected. As such, literature is an artistic, emotional, and objective representation. Even most personal arts are objective, too. Without the transcendence of emotions, no art can take on the proper shape and color. So far, I have discussed the matter in general. Let us try to think about its formal aspects.

Terry Eagleton, in his book titled *Literary Theory* (1983), tried to define literature in the manner of Russian formalists. In general, all imaginative or creative writing is considered literature. But it does not mean that all other forms of writing are non-creative exercises. Poetry, fiction, drama, novels, and many other sub-genres are accepted as sub-categories of literature. The Russian formalists were the first to seriously think about the difference between literature and non-literature. They elaborated on the exclusive characteristics of literature and literary language. It is 'literariness' that makes a work of literature distinct from other kinds of writing. In fact, the Russian formalist approach focuses on the linguistic aspects of literature, which makes it distinct. For the effect of 'literariness', a work of literature uses a peculiar language that is subjected to 'organized violence' (Roman Jakobson). Eagleton writes, "Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language and deviates systematically from everyday speech" (Eagleton 2). This process is called 'defamiliarization' of language. Thus, the language of literature is de-automatized and defamiliarized. To Russian formalists, their prime concern is 'literariness'. To achieve this

end, they talk much about meter, rhyme scheme, rhythm, figures of speech, narrative technique, and other devices that are ancillary (syntax, structure, imagery, motifs, styles, conventions, etc.). Still, the question seems unanswered: What is literature? No doubt, literature is a special kind of writing in terms of its nature, function, content, and orientation.

2.3 The Meaning of Criticism

The term ‘criticism’ comes from the Greek verb *kritikos*, which means an ability to discern or judge. This Greek term originated as early as the 4th century. The English term ‘criticism’ came into fashion in the early decades of the 17th century from ‘critic’ and ‘critical’. It is usually used to mean the study, analysis, comparison, interpretation, and evaluation of works of literature. It is a reasoned discussion. In common parlance, it is used for negative purposes, but among academics, it is used for deliberate and sound discussion. Even before the currency of criticism as a term, there were ‘aesthetics’ and ‘poetics’ widely used. The former was used for the study of the beauty of the arts and nature, whereas the latter was used for the explication and evaluation of a work of art. Criticism as an independent branch of study concerns itself with the task of ‘defining, classifying, expounding, and evaluating works of literature’ (Abrams 49-50). Walter Pater says, ‘Criticism is the art of interpreting art. It serves as an intermediary between the author and the reader by explaining one to the other. Through his special aptitude and training, the critic feels the virtue of a masterpiece, disengages it, and sets it forth’ (*A Background* 178). Criticism helps the reader understand the deeper meaning and import of the text.

John Dryden used the term ‘criticism’ for the first time in print in regard to ‘any formal discussion on literature’. He wrote in his ‘preface’ to *The State of Innocence* (1677) that ‘criticism, as it was first instituted by Aristotle, was meant to be a standard of judging well.’ Alexander Pope firmly established and popularized it in his poem *An Essay on Criticism* (1711). To Matthew Arnold, criticism is an exercise of disinterested curiosity. It is “a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas.” In the same essay, he says that this disinterested endeavour is ‘to see the object as in itself it really is’ ‘in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, and science’ (Arnold), ‘irrespective of practice, politics, and everything of the kind’ (Blamires 270). T. S. Eliot, in his essay “The Function of Criticism,” decries subjectivism, inspiration, and impressionism. To him,

criticism helps grow aesthetic sensibility. It “appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste” (Eliot). Criticism includes a number of ways and approaches to test and taste the aesthetic values and qualities of works of art. Murfin & Ray write, “In addition to the assessment and analysis of works of literature, criticism may refer to the establishment of a general set of principles applicable to any number of works” (Murfin & Ray 64).

2.4 Criticism and literature

You can ask yourself whether criticism arose first or literature. Definitely, the latter arose first. Just as literature helps us understand life and its subtleties, criticism helps us understand the nuances and motifs of literature. Generally, critical activity is put second to creative. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Matthew Arnold even gave up composing poems in favour of criticism. To Arnold, both creative and critical activities are equally important. Matthew Arnold writes, “The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery”. For ‘analysis and discovery’ of grand works, critical activities are very important. In fact, critical activities make the works of great literary minds democratic in the truest sense; otherwise, such works may not be enjoyed by commoners. For objective critical activity, one is supposed to have surprising knowledge and exposure to works of the past as well as the present.

2.5 What is literary criticism?

Most probably, the exegesis of the Bible and the interpretation of legal texts paved the path of ‘literary criticism’. The textual study of these two areas was based on the assumption that the meaning of a text can be obtained through the act of interpretation. Thus, literary criticism is the interpretation, evaluation, and explication of any literary text. For it, literary critics sometimes use the biblical term ‘hermeneutic’. Jonathan Culler differentiates ‘poetics’ from ‘hermeneutics’. According to him, the former is solely concerned with effects and how such effects are achieved by literary texts, whereas the latter “starts with texts and asks what they mean, seeking to discover new and better interpretations” (Culler 61). Literary criticism is an applied theory. It combines ‘poetics’ and ‘hermeneutics’ both. A ‘poetics’ focuses on codes and conventions that make possible the structure, meaning, plot, character, theme, genre, etc. of the literary text. Generally, when we read a piece of literature keeping in mind the assumptions of theory, it is called literary criticism. M. S. Nagarajan writes, “Literary criticism deals with the understanding and appreciation of specific works and authors”

(Nagarajan 2). In fact, it is more concerned with the nature or defining characters of literature. Literary criticism as a branch of study encompasses a number of opinions concerning the applicability, validity, and objectivity of textual interpretations.

2.6 Forms of criticism

Interpretation, analysis, and evaluation have been focal concerns of critics of almost all ages, but they sometimes agree, sometimes disagree, and even sometimes contradict one principle of criticism for their different modes and workmanship. B. Prasad is of the view, “Today nothing is sacrosanct to criticism. It subjects everything to the closest scrutiny. Its approach is that of science—a disinterested application to its subject to understand and interpret it fully. It requires an atmosphere in which questioning and inquiry are freely allowed” (Prasad xi). Today, we have a very long list of critical approaches. George Watson, in his book *The Literary Critics* (1962), suggested just three types of criticism. They are called legislative criticism, aesthetic criticism, and descriptive criticism.

Legislative criticism is the earliest form of critical endeavour. It includes books of rhetoric. This form of criticism “claims to teach the poet how to write, or how to write better” (Watson 11). It “lays down rules for the art of writing largely based on standard works of literature in Greek and Latin” (Prasad xii-xiii). The writers are supposed to put these rules into practice without doing any interrogation. Most of the Elizabethan critics except Philip Sidney and a large part of the writings of Alexander Pope are of ‘legislative’ order.

Theoretical or *aesthetic Criticism* is also called ‘literary aesthetics.’ It tries to explain the principles of beauty in a work of art. This form of criticism “treats literature as an art—an independent activity of the mind, having an end of its own, which may or may not coincide with that of religion, morality, science, or politics. It therefore probes the nature of literary art as such and formulates its theories accordingly” (Prasad xiii). Aristotle, Longinus, Philip Sidney, Samuel Johnson, John Dryden, Joseph Addison, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, and I. A. Richards are counted among ‘theoretical’ critics.

Descriptive criticism is the youngest critical mode but the most popular of all three forms. Its main concern is to interpret, analyse, discuss, and appreciate a literary work for the reader’s delight. *Descriptive criticism* “may draw on the legislative or aesthetic norms to justify its conclusions, or it may follow an independent line of its own, assured that what it

says can always be confirmed by the work under discussion” (Prasad xiii). Ben Jonson’s *Conversations*, recorded by William Drummond of Hawthornden, and John Dryden’s *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) are classic examples of ‘descriptive criticism, though much of English criticism is of this type. Much of the critical essays of Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Henry Fielding, Dr. Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Arnold, Eliot, I. A. Richards, William Empson, etc. are descriptive in mode and nature.

Thus, we saw that ‘legislative criticism’ lays stress on the writer, ‘aesthetic criticism’ on the art, and ‘descriptive criticism’ is directed to readers. Out of these three basic forms of criticism, there emerged a number of critical modes as sub-types; for instance, ‘impressionistic criticism’, ‘judicial criticism’, ‘inductive criticism’, ‘evaluative criticism’, ‘historical criticism’, ‘sociological criticism’, ‘textual criticism’, ‘biographical criticism’, ‘psychological criticism’, ‘comparative criticism’, ‘practical criticism’, ‘formalist criticism’, ‘marxist criticism’, ‘archetypal criticism’, ‘objective criticism’, ‘reader-response criticism’, ‘feminist criticism’, ‘postcolonial criticism’, ‘poststructuralist criticism’, etc.

In recent years, various scholars dedicated to the study of literature and literary approaches have identified four chief angles to encompass all forms of critical endeavours. These are author-centric, reader-centric, context-centric, and text-and language-centric.

Most traditional literary criticism is author-oriented. The central task of this angle is to ascertain authorial intentions or intended meanings. Among ‘author-centric’ approaches are ‘biographical criticism’, ‘psychoanalytical criticism’, and ‘phenomenology’.

Among reader-centric critical inquiries, we have reader-response criticism, reception theory, and reception history. Critics associated with these schools shifted the critical perspective from text to reader. They believed that the reader was the generator of meaning. The text does not contain meaning in itself. A text cannot attain perfection unless the readership is accounted for.

Formal or structural distinctions or defining characters of texts are central concerns of text-oriented traditions. Among text-centric critical perspectives, I shall dwell in brief on Philology, Rhetoric, Stylistics, Formalism, Myth Criticism, Archetypal Criticism, New Criticism, Semiotics, Structuralism, and Deconstruction.

The context-centric approaches are very colourful, varied, and interesting. These approaches draw on sociological, historical, political, economic, and cultural aspects of life and society. Among these approaches, we like to name a few because the background for these approaches bears tremendous possibilities. It is almost not going to be exhausted. Sociological criticism, historical criticism, Marxist criticism, feminist criticism, new historicism, cultural criticism, and modernism, Postmodernism, postcolonial criticism, queer criticism, ecocriticism, etc. are a few approaches I cited to substantiate the given point of view. Even so, there are so many other context-centric approaches that grew as subtypes in world academia.

2.7 Qualifications of a Critic

A good critic is supposed to be a man of wide and varied learning, extraordinary sensitivity and sympathy, objectivity, and intuitive and instinctive power so that he or she can discover worthwhile points in a work of art as well as express them in a lucid and comprehensive manner. B. Prasad, in this regard, is of the opinion that “he must be firm in his standards but responsive to new impressions, sensitive, penetrating, and wise. What is of great importance is that he should be free from bias, able to pronounce on a literary question without regard to any other consideration, political, religious, or anything else” (*A Background* 184). T. G. Williams says, “The qualities required in a critic are primarily sensitivity, imagination, knowledge, and judgment. His equipment should include a just perception of the ‘value-possibilities’ of the art and a capacity for judging how near the intrinsic qualities of the work that is under examination come to realizing these potentialities. A good critic must also possess a strong historical sense; otherwise, he may fall into the common error of attributing to a writer the past opinions and feelings that belong to his own time.” In fact, the teaching or learning of ‘literary criticism’ requires lots of labour. One who is not well-grounded in literature cannot do full justice to the spirit of criticism. And therefore, critics are supposed to have extraordinary knowledge of literature as well as critical acumen.

2.8 Let Us Sum Up

Thus, we have discussed almost all the necessary points that are needed to know at the very outset of literary studies. We tried to explain and answer questions like what is literature? what is criticism? and what is literary criticism? And what are the basic forms of

criticism? Understanding these inquiries will for sure enrich readers and enable them to always view things in a new and fresh light.

2.9 Questions and Their Answers

Q.1 What is literature and how it is close to criticism?

Ans. Read carefully sections 2.2 and 2.4.

Q.2 Discuss the meaning and implication of literary criticism.

Ans. Study sections 2.3 and 2.5.

Q.3 Discuss forms of criticism.

Ans. Read carefully sections 2.6.

Q.4 The knowledge of literary critical tools helps understand literature better. Do you agree?

Ans. Read attentively the whole unit.

Q.5 What are the basic qualifications of a critic?

Ans. Read section no. 2.7.

2.10 Further Reading

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Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 What is text?
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 - 3.3.1 Literary Theory
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3.0 Objectives

In the previous two *unit*, you have been introduced to various general but fundamental questions about criticism. In this *unit*, we shall discuss various terms like text, theory, literary theory, critical theory, and cultural theory, bearing in mind the following concerns:

- What is text, and what is theory?
- Are literary theory, critical theory, and cultural theory different?
- About some modern theoretical approaches.

3.1 Introduction

It is really important and interesting to have an insight into the study of literary theory. Studying literary theory seems in the beginning a little intimidating to the learners, but slowly and slowly it gets interesting as it starts influencing and directing the thinking of readers in a quite new way.

Having gone through this *unit*, I hope you will be able to discern growth in critical approaches and methods and their circulations in the academic and philosophical quarters

across the world. At the same time, you are supposed to read a few more books suggested in the section *Further Reading*.

3.2 What is text?

Text by its Latin route, 'texere' means "to weave". A text is made up of words and phrases. It is related to textiles or fabrics. A poem is a text. Imagery, meter, rhyme, diction, and poetic vision, when weaved into one whole, are called poems. Barthes, in his essay "From Work to Text," differentiates between 'work' and 'text'. To him, "the work is concrete, occupying a portion of book space (in a library, for example); the text, on the other hand, is a methodological field" (Das & Mohanty 414). In contemporary theory, 'work' is viewed as a physical entity, while text being immune to authorial control provides space for irreducible plurality. He further writes: "The work can be seen in book stores, in card catalogues, and on course lists, while the text reveals itself and articulates itself according to or against certain rules. While the work is held in the hand, the text is held in language; it exists only as discourse. The text is not the decomposition of the work; rather, it is the work that is the text's imaginary tail. In other words, the text is experienced only in an activity, a production" (Das & Mohanty 414).

In brief, the 'text' is directed at the reader and makes him reproduce the 'text' ad infinitum. The 'text' is without 'authorial control' while 'work' deals with the author's monistic philosophy. In 'text' the author can enter, but via the back door and as a guest (as one of his characters), but in 'work' he is everywhere.

3.3 What is theory?

The term 'theory' is derived from the Greek verb *theorein*, which means to look at or speculate. The term 'theory' is more comprehensive than 'criticism'. In general, it refers to a system made up of widely applied and accepted principles to comprehend and explain social, cultural, economic, and political phenomena. Theory refers to 'a set of principles and assumptions used in certain situations to explain or make predictions about a particular phenomenon' (Murfin & Ray 400). M. S. Nagarajan writes, 'the term *theory* includes, in a very broad sense, the origins and history of literature: its nature and function, and its relationship to our lives and society' (Nagarajan 2). Theory and practice are both different in terms of operation. "In literary criticism, theory has traditionally referred to a set of general

principles that can be used to classify or otherwise analyze literary works, and in some cases to interpret or even evaluate them” (Murfin & Ray 401).

In the light of the 1950s and 1960s of the twentieth century, Jonathan Culler found ‘theory’ as a new genre intimidating and inviting. Simply put, every learner wishes for mastery in ‘theory’ for its complex and fearsome approach to everything under the sun. The term ‘theory’ is quite loose and liberal. Its limits are exceedingly hard to define. Culler writes, “Theory is a bunch of (mostly foreign) names: it means Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler, Louis Althusser, and Gayatri Spivak, for instance” (Culler 2). He further argues, “The genre of ‘theory’ includes works of anthropology, art history, film studies, gender studies, linguistics, philosophy, political theory, psychoanalysis, science studies, social and intellectual history, and sociology” (Culler 3). Theory as an independent discipline radically changed the attitudes of people towards everything. This effect was realized beyond their field of birth. Culler identified four key points to denote ‘theory’:

- Theory is interdisciplinary discourse with effects outside an original discipline.
- Theory is analytical and speculative—an attempt to work out what is involved in what we call sex, language, writing, meaning, or the subject.
- Theory is a critique of common sense and of concepts taken as natural.
- Theory is reflexive, thinking about thinking, and inquiry into the categories we use in making sense of things, in literature, and in other discursive practices.

Theory as a discipline is constantly growing, and therefore it changes itself with the passage of time. Theory is not something to be mastered for good. Perhaps it is the reason for its charm. “It is an unbounded corpus of writings that is always being augmented as the young and the restless, in critiques of the guiding conceptions of their elders, promote the contributions to theory of new thinkers and rediscover the work of older, neglected ones” (Culler 15).

3.3.1 Literary Theory

Theory as a branch of study is based on numerous ideas and concepts developed in the fields of philosophy, linguistics, politics, sociology, history, and psychology. It has effectively amalgamated and augmented itself. Under this genre, both literary and non-

literary texts are studied in a similar manner. Pramod K. Nayar tries to define ‘literary theory’ in the following manner: “Literary theory is the organized, systematized analysis of literary texts, the institution of literature (with L in upper case), and a reflection on the interpretative strategies applied to these texts” (Nayar ix). Mario Klarer elaborates on the concept of ‘literary theory’:

Within the field of literary studies, **literary theory** has developed as a distinct discipline influenced by philosophy. Literary theory explains the philosophical and methodological premises of literary criticism. While literary criticism is mostly interested in the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of primary sources, literary theory tries to shed light on the very methods used in these readings of primary texts. Literary theory thus functions as the theoretical and philosophical consciousness of textual studies, constantly reflecting on its own development and methodology. (Klarer 77)

Literary theory usually deals with the work of a specific author. In a sense, it is an applied criticism. Nagarajan is of the view that “literary theory lays down the principles of literature, its categories and criteria, and describes the features and forms that make up a literary work. It is a systematic account of the nature of literature.” (Nagarajan 2)

3.3.2 Critical Theory

The phrase ‘critical theory’ is historically associated with the Frankfurt School, Germany. The phrase ‘critical theory’ was coined in 1937 in the USA when the Frankfurt School was in exile. This school of thought arose against the existing ills of society, fascism, and capitalism of the 1920s and onward. The early phase of this school was Marxian and Kantian. The purpose of this school was to materialize freedom or liberation from institutionalized thoughts and ideologies. “Critical theory is, by and large, concerned with the critique of modernity, modernization, and the modern state. The first generation of critical theorists—Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm—came together in the early 1930s from different disciplines within the humanities and social sciences in order to analyse and critique ideologies, institutions, discourses, and media, as well as to research the social psychology of disturbing new trends like fascism and the “administered society” (Castle 65). This school of thought had noted members like Max Horkheimer (the central figure), Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin,

Erich Fromm, and Jurgen Habermas, to name a few. Stephen Eric Bronner writes, “Critical theory refuses to identify freedom with any institutional arrangement or fixed system of thought.” He further argues, “Interdisciplinary and uniquely experimental in character, deeply skeptical of tradition and all absolute claims, critical theory was always concerned not merely with how things were but how they might be and should be” (Bronner 1-2).

Critical theorists have always looked for the transformation of everyday life and experiences by getting thoughts and ideas associated with establishments illuminated and reviewed. Human emancipation was the motto of this school. “Critical theory was intended as a general theory of society fuelled by the desire for liberation” (Bronner 24). “Critical theory was originally intended as an alternative to mainstream forms of both metaphysics and materialism. Its aim was to illuminate hidden sources of repression and neglected transformative possibilities” (Bronner 100). Under the influence of this school, ideas related to subjectivity, textuality, language, totality, power, knowledge, body, sexuality, discourse, ideology, domination, etc. were rigorously revisited. Being grounded in philosophy, this school of thought looks upon socio-political situations skeptically to bring about their transformation and illumination.

In the 1970s of the twentieth century, the impact of ‘critical theory’ was so powerful that the phrase came to be used along with, for instance, ‘feminism’, ‘psychoanalysis’, etc. Dani Cavallaro, in this regard, writes:

Today, the phrase ‘critical theory’ is generally used in a far less specialized fashion. Indeed, employed in tandem with ‘cultural theory’, it describes a cluster of approaches that, especially since the 1970s, have prompted a radical reassessment of notions of meaning, history, identity, power, cultural production, and cultural consumption. Several subject areas and doctrines have participated in this process: philosophy of language, semiotics, aesthetics, theories of representation, political theory, psychoanalysis, feminism, ethics, epistemology, and science. (Cavallaro x)

Now, one can say that ‘critical theory’ as a discipline revolutionized thinking. It ushered in a new sensibility.

3.3.3 Cultural Theory

The phrases ‘literary theory’, ‘critical theory’, and now ‘cultural theory’ are more or less related to one another. Within literary studies, these phrases are often used interchangeably. Pramod K. Nayar writes, “Cultural Theory moves beyond literary texts and studies art forms, film, the superhero comic book, sports, fashion—all cultural practices, of which literature is one” (Nayar ix). As such, ‘literary theory’, ‘critical theory’, and ‘cultural theory’ look at or speculate on literature beyond traditional plot-character-theme-setting studies.

3.4 Some Theoretical Schools

Phenomenological criticism is based on the assumption that the author is available in his or her work in an encoded form. German philosopher Edmund Husserl is the chief proponent of this school. He believed that it was our consciousness that created the world. This spirit of the author can be revived by reading his or her complete works. This form of criticism is usually associated with the Geneva School. The Geneva Critics seek to experience the author’s worldview more completely and accurately without considering external references.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism often deals with the author. It adopts the method of reading to interpret the text. It argues that literary texts like dreams express the unconscious desires and anxieties of the author. The object of ‘psychoanalytic literary criticism’ can be the psychoanalysis of the author or of a particular interesting character. Such characters are assumed in the author’s psyche. It attempts to explain the presence of sexuality in a text. As such, “it can be author-based, text-based, or reader-based” (Nagarajan). Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan popularized and fully established this kind of critical inquiry. William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* has been studied from a psychoanalytic point of view. It has been argued that Hamlet was suffering from the Oedipus complex, a repressed desire for his own mother, and a wish to remove his father. Hamlet’s uncle did what Hamlet himself desired. For this reason, Hamlet failed to take revenge on his father. This accounts for Hamlet’s dilemma and delay.

Semiotics, or *Semiology*, is the study of signs. The term ‘semiology’ was coined by Ferdinand de Saussure, and it is preferred by British critics. ‘Semiotics’ and ‘semiology’ are

used in literary criticism synonymously. Charles Sanders Peirce coined the term 'semiotics'. The Americans prefer 'semiotics' to 'semiology'. To semioticians, a text is a system of signs. By sign, they mean not only something familiar, such as the sign of a stop, a restaurant, or language, but also the body language, ways of greeting and parting, and even clothing articles. "A sign is anything that conveys information to others who understand it based upon a system of codes and conventions that they have consciously learned or unconsciously internalized as members of a certain culture" (Murfin & Ray). Much semiotic theory rests on Saussure.

Structuralism is solely interested in the process that facilitates the generation of meaning, rather than the meaning itself. As such, 'structuralists' put author and reality as ends of reference outside of concern. Ferdinand de Saussure, the founding father of 'structuralism', was the first 'formalist'. It is commonly held by 'structuralists' that all elements of human culture, including literature, may be taken as parts of a system of signs, and no individual units can be comprehended in isolation until they are put in the larger network or structure. The structuralist approach to literature examines structures, for instance, a poem, essay, novel, drama, etc., along with their constitutive components, which, when put together, give meaning as a post-effect to the text. For instance, a poem is a structure, and its components are sounds, images, phrases, punctuation, and words.

The 'poststructuralist' period has been revolutionized by the well-known French philosopher Jacques Derrida. His approach is designated *as deconstruction*. During the 1970s and 1980s, deconstruction emerged as the most influential theoretical mode of reading and practice. To Derrida, everything is text. He explains how the conflicting forces underlying every text postpone rather than cancel its journey to perfection. The wholeness or integrity of individual works is unacceptable all the way to 'deconstructionists'. They argue that it is wild-goose-chase to look for ultimate meaning in a text. Indeterminacy with regard to meaning in any context or situation is the finale of every 'deconstructive' reading. A text is created and then recreated endlessly in the reading process.

Marxist criticism is a type of literary criticism that examines the actual socio-economic and political conditions in the light of the socio-economic and political conditions represented in various literary works. The writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels played a key role in the emergence of this kind of criticism. Marxists think of literature as both a production and a reflection of and on culture and society. Socio-economic and historical

conditions shape human consciousness, not vice versa. They reveal the veil of politics hidden behind every work of art. They look for change in the socio-economic and political order of the world.

Feminist criticism examines women's roles, their positions, and their treatments as reflected and portrayed in various literary works. This field of study is very glittering and promising. It fights against sexism, the politics of patriarchy, gender disparity and discrimination, and various forces of subordination that hinder women from realizing their full potential and talents. Feminist critics look for ways to ensure equality, justice, and safety for them.

New Historicism, drawing upon insights from 'new criticism', 'structuralism', 'poststructuralism', 'marxism', an, and 'feminism', reaffirmed the importance of history in literary analysis. An American, Stephen Greenblatt, coined the term 'new historicism'. Around the 1980s, a group of critics began to think that literature was not a transhistorical phenomenon. These critics studied text and discourse, adding historical dimension. To 'new historicists', literary and non-literary, both texts are equally important. They believe in the reciprocal relationship between text and context; this is what Louis Montrose called the historicity of the text and the textuality of history. New historicists aim to ground the meanings of texts in the particular historical conditions of their production, distribution, and consumption.

The British version of 'new historicism' is known as 'cultural materialism'. It is also called *cultural criticism*. It is an 'outgrowth of Marxism'. The appellation 'cultural materialism' gained currency with the publication of *Political Shakespeare* by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. M. S. Nagarajan identifies three key areas where cultural criticism differs from 'new historicism':

- It is overtly political in questioning the dominant forces and supporting oppressed groups. Its conviction is that it can resist and transform dominant power structures.
- It draws on Marxist and feminist ideologies.
- It is concerned mostly with popular forms of art and culture, but not always.

Postcolonialism is firmly bound up with colonial experiences, not with any specific historical period or date. Thus, *postcolonialism* can be defined in two ways. First, it marks the

end of colonies worldwide. If this has either a spatial or temporal implication, we admit that it means that we are going to delimit the dimension of ‘postcolonialism’. The second denotes a multithreaded approach and is generally applied ‘to describe any kind of resistance, particularly against class, race, and gender oppression’.

The term *queer* is often used as a hold-all to address multiple non-normative sexualities. Queer studies of western form largely concentrate on the lives of LGBT people (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual). Taking a cue from postmodern ideologues, queer activists and theorists look for ways to explode the institution of heterosexuality so that other sexualities can be accommodated and absorbed into mainstream society.

3.5 Let Us Sum Up

At the conclusion of this unit, I can say that both creative and critical exercises were set out almost simultaneously. Both activities are equally important. Sometimes critical exercises guide creative endeavours, and sometimes the latter invites the former to proceed. This is perhaps the reason we have more critical works than creative works. In fact, critical work keeps creative endeavours alive and fresh. Doing criticism is not a layman’s job. A layman may be creative in certain ways but cannot get critical unless he or she has acquired a good amount of knowledge and skill. Criticism is an evergreen activity, and it will continue to provide guidance to lovers of literature. It should be worth encouraging a better understanding of not only the creative works but also the nature of our society as well as its working patterns.

3.6 Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 What is theory?

Ans. See section 3.3.

Q. 2 What is critical theory?

Ans. See section no. 3.3.2.

Q. 3 Briefly discuss difference between literary theory and cultural theory.

Ans. See section no. 3.3.1 and 3.3.3.

Q. 4 Psychoanalytic criticism can be text, reader, and author centric. Do you agree?

Ans. Study carefully section no. 3.4

Q. 5 How is Cultural criticism different from New Historicism?

Ans. Study carefully section no. 3.4

3.7 Further Reading

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Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction to Indian Aesthetics
- 4.2 Major Schools of Indian Aesthetics
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4.0 Objectives

In the previous three units, we studied the western forms of criticism, but the present unit will be looking at how Indian Sanskrit scholars have handled the study of literature. In the face of the increasing interest of academicians in the Western model of theory and criticism, Indian theories found in Sanskrit texts have been almost forgotten by scholars working in departments of English studies in India. It shall be a moderate attempt to re-ignite interest in Sanskrit theories for the purpose of decolonizing not only the Indian minds but also to extend the boundaries of English critical acumen. The study of this unit will acquaint learners with the rich critical heritage of India.

4.1 Introduction to Indian Aesthetics

In general, phrases like "Indian aesthetics," "Indian poetics," "Sanskrit poetics," etc. are used interchangeably to denote ancient Indian critical scholarship. Let me first explain what poetics is. Poetics simply studies literature, its various forms, techniques, and resources

to define the nature and function of creative and imaginative writings. More precisely, it looks at the beauty of the creative use of language, which ultimately gives pleasure to both the reader and the writer. In the West, various theories of beauty promulgated by Plato, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Coleridge, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Croce, and many others made aesthetics an important offshoot of philosophy. However, in the context of India, “the study of aesthetics does not form a branch of philosophy” (Kulkarni 1) because it was attended by those thinkers and literary critics who were not philosophers in the regular sense. They studied the conception of beauty with regard to creative literary works as one of the fine arts. They chiefly inquire into the source of beauty in literary works. To them, aesthetic pleasure is the most important source of beauty in literature. In general, “aesthetics identifies the effect of art, its enjoyment, and seeks to explain or account for the ground of this enjoyment” (Kapoor 96).

The ancient critical acumen fortunately took birth in the soil of India, where the medium of communication was Sanskrit. Hence, it is confidently called Indian Poetics, Sanskrit Poetics, or Sanskrit Criticism by academicians. Ancient Indian critical acumen is the representative of the whole Eastern treasure of critical knowledge, and hence, a few academicians prefer to call it Eastern Poetics. After all, Indian Poetics seems to be very catchy. Many Sanskrit scholars like S. K. De, Kapil Kapoor, M. S. Kushwaha, Krishna Gopal Srivastava etc. have preferably used the phrase “Indian Poetics” in their critical essays and books.

4.2 Major Schools of Indian Aesthetics

In Indian aesthetics, we have literary theories, namely, *rasa*, *alankara*, *riti*, *dhvani*, *vakrokti*, *auchitya*, *guna*, *dosha*, and *vritti*. These theories are comprehensive and can be applied to any text in world literature. We shall now briefly describe the major theories.

4.2.1 Rasa

Rasa as a meaningful term has been in circulation since the Vedic period. *Rasa*, as a critical term in Indian poetry, denotes aesthetic delight or pleasure that a sensitive reader savours. The theory of *Rasa* deals with various human emotions and feelings and how these emotions are aesthetically depicted, evoked, and transmitted through imaginative and creative

works. It validates the presence of emotions in both the text and the reader. Rasa-theorists think of *rasa* as the soul of all imaginative writings (dramatic and non-dramatic, both).

Bharatamuni propounded the theory of *rasa* in his book, the *Natyashashtra*. All theorists of the *Alankara* school accept Bharata as the earliest exponent of *rasa* doctrine. The Bharata in the sixth chapter, "Rasadhyaya," of the *Natyasastra* states: *Na hi rasad rite kascid arthah pravartate*. Simply put, no work of art will be appealing in the absence of *rasa*. In fact, *Rasa* is the be-all and the end-all of *Natya*, which includes *Kavya*. Aesthetic delight is the bottom-line purpose of any work of art. Without *rasa*, no outcome will be met. Right after the above statement, Bharata puts up his *rasa*-formula: *tatra vibhavanubhava-vabhicari-samyogad rasa-nispattih* (VI: 31). That is, out of the conjunction of *vibhavas* (determinants or causes), *anubhavas* (ensuants or consequents), and *vyabharibhavas* (transitory or ancillary feelings), *rasa* is generated or evoked in the reader.

Vibhava is a mood – building device. It is of two types chiefly - *Alambana* (attractant) and *Uddipana* (excitant). The former may be a person, scene, object or thought that activates hero or heroine's particular emotion; but the latter refers to some suitable atmospheric setting that helps considerably in determining tone. Thus, for any emotive discourse or situation, there must be an object that works up an emotion in a person and that person must express it (emotion) in outward behaviour (*Anubhava*). And the ancillary feelings (*Vyabharibhavas*) are only associates that merely help in the development of an emotion. *Vyabharibhavas* are also known as *sancharibhavas* (fleeting or transitory *bhavas*) because these emotions change from person to person in association with the permanent emotion (*sthayibhavas*).

Bharata has identified eight-fold basic human emotions (*Srngara, Hasya Karuna, Raudra, Vira, Bhayanaka Bibhatsa, Adbhuta*) that represent the most basic and instinctual human emotions. The ninth *Rasa* (*Shanta*), which is certainly a later addition, persists in the beginning and in the end too. All nine *sthaayibhavas* are love (*rati*), laughter (*hashya*), sorrow (*Shoka*), anger (*krodha*), enthusiasm (*utsaaha*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*jugupsha*), astonishment (*vishmaya*), and indifference (*nirveda*). Bharata has identified eight inbuilt bodily responses known as *saattvikbhavaas*, which are: paralysis (*stambha*), perspiration (*sveda*), horripilation (*romaanchit*), change of voice (*svarabhanga*), trembling (*vepathu*), change of color (*vaivarnya*), weeping (*ashru*), and loss of consciousness (*pralaya*). He told thirty-three *vyabharibhavas*- indifference (*nirveda*), debility (*glaani*), apprehension (*shankaa*), envy (*asuya*), intoxication of pride (*mada*), weariness (*shrama*), indolence

(*aalasya*), depression (*dainya*), painful reflection (*chinta*), delusion of mind (*moha*), recollection (*smriti*), contentment (*dhriti*), shame (*vrida*), unsteadiness (*chupalata*), joy (*harsha*), agitation or flurry (*aavega*), stupefaction (*jadataa*), arrogance (*garva*), despondency (*vishada*), impatience (*autsukya*), sleep (*nidra*), dementedness (*apasmaara*), dreaming (*supta*), awakening (*vibodha*), indignation (*amarsha*), dissimulation (*avahittha*), ferocity (*ugrata*), resolve (*mati*), sickness (*vyaadhi*), madness (*unmaada*), demise (*marana*), alarm (*traasa*), and trepidation (*vitarka*). In this way, the Bharata told all forty-nine *bhavas*. Human emotions occupy central space in *rasa* theory.

4.2.2 Alankara

After *Rasa* aesthetics, *Alankara* is the oldest school of classical Indian critical tradition. The use of figurative expressions has been in dramatic as well as non-dramatic poetry as a matter of discussion and circulation down the centuries, but it was never considered to be the soul of poetry until Bhamaha. The *Alankara* theory defines, analyzes, and classifies figurative utterances. Just as Bharata concentrated upon dramatic poetry, Bhamaha, the founder of the *Alankara* school, concentrated upon non-dramatic poetry. *Rasa* is the soul of dramatic poetry, whereas *Alankara* is the soul of non-dramatic poetry. Bhamaha, the 6th-century rhetorician, systematically focused on the art and craft of poetry in his treatise *Kavyalankara*. It is the first regular work on the art of poetry in the Sanskrit critical tradition, as *Natyashastra* is the first systematic account of dramaturgy. Sometimes it is also called *Alankarashstra*.

Before Bhamaha, the Bharata enumerated quite casually four types of figures by name: *Upama*, *Dipaka*, *Rupaka*, and *Yamaka*. Even after him, there were two groups of acharyas: one placed emphasis on the figures of words (*shabdalankara*) and the other on figures of sense (*arthalankara*). Thus, they had their own prejudices, so Bhamaha took poetry in a balanced manner and defined poetry as "togetherness of word and meaning". Without this togetherness, poetry cannot flourish in totality. He mentions in his book *Kavyalankara* two kinds of *Sabdalankara* and thirty-six types of *arthalankara*.

Acharya Dandi (late 7th century and early 8th century rhetorician) is next to Bhamaha. A major portion of his work, *Kavyadarsha*, engages attention on *alankaras*, though he nowhere came forward, affirming *alankara* as the soul of poetry. According to Dandi, the body of poetry should be given premium attention. Excellence, flawlessness, and figures of

speech constitute the body of poetry. However, out of these, *alankaras* play the most effective role in the construction of the poetic body. Dandi enumerates thirty-five kinds of *alankaras*.

Next to Dandi, Acharya Rudrata of the 9th century comes to the fore, arguing for *alankara* in his book bearing the same title, *Kavyalankara* of Bhamaha. He classified *alankaras* into four heads based on: 1) the essential nature of things; 2) similarity; 3) exaggeration; and 4) pun. His approach is very simple.

Jayadeva of the 13th century, in his famous work *Chandraloka*, discusses 104 kinds of figures of speech. Out of which, 87 are fundamentals, and the remaining are just extensions of them. There had definitely been other acharyas who paid attention to the use of figures in poetry, but they didn't accept it as the *summum bonum* of poetry. Among them are Udbhata, Ruyyaka, Anandavardhana, Vamana, Kuntaka, Mammata, Vishwantha, Jagannatha, Appayya Dikshita, etc. They also took up the issue but did not make a comprehensive study of *alankaras*.

4.2.3 Riti

Vamana is the second half of the 8th-century Acharya of Indian critical tradition. He is the lone supporter and founder of *Riti* School. *Riti* theory deals with problems of style in literature. Vamana considers *riti* to be the soul or the life of poetry. It is *Riti* that differentiates poetry from other forms of writing like philosophy, history, science, etc. Vamana in his *Kavyalankarasutra* defines *Riti* as "Special Framing of Phrases," and this peculiarity is achieved by the incorporation of *gunas* (excellences). In this way, we see that both *riti* and *guna* are bound up together. Vamana picks up twenty *gunas*. Out of which ten pertain to words (*sabda-guna*) and the remaining to the meaning of the word (*artha-guna*). These *gunas* affect the beauty of the poetry. Vamana considers these *gunas* to be intrinsic and integral factors of poetry. About figures of speech, he is of the view that these are extrinsic and incidental because they simply endow beauty, but without them, there can be good poetry. Without *gunas*, there cannot be any poetry worth attention. They make up for the soul of poetry. The soul of poetry is located in *Gunas*.

Vamana identifies three types of *Riti*: *Vaidarbhi*, *Gaudi* (bombastic), and *Panchali* (a mix of two). The whole of the poetry is covered by these styles of writing. *Vaidarbhi* is an

excellent kind of *riti* as it contains all ten *gunas*: *Ojas*, *Prasad*, *Shlesha*, *Samata*, *Samadhi*, *Madhurya*, *Saukumarya*, *Udarata*, *Arthavyakti*, and *Kanti*. These *gunas* effect beauty in both contexts—*sabda* and *artha*. Like Dandin, he simply includes *rasa* in *gunas*. He thinks that *rasa* arises after the brilliance of the style.

4.2.4 Dhvani

The *Dhvani* theory deals with the problem of meaning. Literally, *dhvani* means sound, but it does not have any concern with sound. The *Dhvani* theory underlines indirectly evoked or suggested meaning as the characteristic feature of poetic expression. Anandavardhana, a 9th-century Kashmiri Sanskrit scholar, propounded this theory in his work *Dhvanyaloka*, or “Light of Poetic Essence”. Here, he exhaustively makes a structural analysis of indirect meanings as to how these meanings arise systematically. According to him, *Dhvani* is the soul of literature. It is comprehensive enough to analyze the mechanisms of meaning in literature. Where *Dhvani* is at work, *vachya* (word) and *vachyārtha* (literal meaning) lose their independent entities and suggest another special meaning that endows undying charm and grace to the work. Say more precisely, *dhvani* is “illumination in a flash” (*Aestheticians*). It is “illuminatingly revealed in a flash, whether in a syllable, a word, a pronoun, a phrase, a sentence, or a whole poem itself” (*Aestheticians*). In the 13th *Karika* of the first *Udyota* of *Dhvanyaloka*, Anandavardhana defines *dhvani* as “a special kind of poetry in which the word or sense becomes the deserter of its commonly understood meaning, and all this is suggested rather than stated” (K. G. Srivastava). For the *Dhvani* theory, Anandavardhana acknowledges his indebtedness to Bhartrihari’s *sphota* theory. Bhartrihari and Patanjali used *sphota* and *dhvani* as synonyms in their grammar texts.

Anandavardhana in *Dhvanyaloka* suggested more than ten thousand types of *dhvani*, which is too much for a general reader. For a general theory of *dhvani*, there are three types: *vastu-dhvani*, *alankara-dhavni*, and *rasa-dhvani*. Where the suggestion of an idea or fact seems more powerful and charming than the *vachyārtha* (literal sense), there is the verbal operation of *Vastu-Dhvani*. When some *alankara* suggests another *alankara* or some *alankara* is suggested through the *vyangyārtha*, it is called *alankara-dhvani*. *Rasa-dhvani* denotes that *rasa* is not something to be stated, but rather a suggested meaning. It is *vyangya*, not *vachya*. Anandavardhana accepts the supremacy of *rasa* in *kavya*, but how it is to be enjoyed, he told, through suggestion. *Rasa-dhvani* is equivalent to Eliot’s formula of objective-correlative. It is the most satisfying approach for the analysis of literary meaning.

4.2.5 Vakrokti

Kuntaka or Kuntala A leading aesthetician of 11th-century ancient India formulated *vakrokti* theory in his book *Vakroktijivitam*. *Vakrokti* literally means crooked speech, but in the context of poetics, it means a unique utterance or expression. It is an expression that is more refined, elevated, and appealing. R. S. Tiwari defines *vakrokti* as "the uniqueness of expression, born of a poet's compositional skill, adorning both word and meaning, is *vakrokti*." In other words, this is what Russian formalists meant by the concept of 'defamiliarization'. Before Kuntaka, the term *vakrokti* was used by Bharata and Bhamaha. Kuntaka proclaimed that *vakrokti* was the life of poetry.

Drawing on Bhamaha, Kuntaka says that the poetry is a well-matched pack of form and content where sound and idea beautifully vie with and add extraordinary charm to it. It thus differs from general modes of expression and gives aesthetic pleasure to those readers who know its true nature. Another Kuntaka's concept is '*pratibha*'. It implies an ability to bring about the organic juxtaposition of words and meaning, which ultimately evokes *rasa* and enhances the beauty of poetry. This '*pratibha*', or intelligence, is stressed. This faculty selects the most suitable image out of the welter of images for the concerned purpose. This reminds me of Coleridge's 'esemplastic imagination'. Kuntaka agrees with both *Dhvani* theorists and *rasa* theorists in his concept of *Vakrokti*.

Kuntaka classifies forty-nine types of *vakrata* into six major heads. These are:

1. *Varṇa-vinyasha-vakrata*: at the level of letters and syllables as alliteration.
2. *Pada-purvardha -vakrata*: or at the level of the word as the first half of a noun or verb.
3. *Pada-parardha -vakrata*: at the level of the grammar, like number, tense, case, etc.
4. *Vakya-vakrata*: at the level of the sentence.
5. *Prakaraṇa-vakrata*: at the level of episodes or incidents.
6. *Prabāṇdha-vakrata*: at the level of the narrative as a whole.

Vakrokti is in fact a happy blending of word and meaning in a creative utterance that finally culminates in aesthetic pleasure or relish in a competent reader, or *sahridaya*. Kuntaka, in this way, covered total art and craft, from the smallest unit of language to the whole of composition.

4.2.6 Auchitya

Kshemendra, a Kashmiri scholar, evolved his doctrine of *auchitya* (propriety) in his treatise *Auchtyavicharcharca*. According to him, appropriateness is the soul of poetry. For this theory, Kshemendra took inspiration from Anandavardhana. By *auchitya*, the latter means poetic harmony or fitness of things. It is essential because no work of art can survive long without it. To Kshemendra, it is the sap-duct of the poetry. To Anandavardhana, the lack of propriety is one of the hurdles to the *realization*. It is essential for aesthetic pleasure. As such, Anandavardhana specifically related *Auchitya* to *rasa*. The concept of propriety in regard to costume, subject, character, sentiment, gender, verb, case, etc. is discussed by almost all theorists. But it is also seen in association with figures of speech, *guna*, *dosa*, and *rittis*. In another treatise, *Suvrittatilaka*, Kshemendra makes an exhaustive study devoted to the meters in respect of their choice and contribution to the evocation of *rasas*. Thus, his stand is patronizing to *Rasa*. Propriety is everywhere preferred, and inharmony is abhorred. Of course, without the observance of *Auchitya*, no work of art can do marvel. Kshemendra defines *auchitya* as the exact similarity between signifier (expression) and signified (expressed).

Kshemendra adeptly selects twenty-seven instances (pertaining to syntactic, semantic, and socio-cultural aspects) in *kavya*, or poetry, where propriety is required. These are: Pada (word and phrase), vakya (sentence), prabandhanartha (central theme of composition), guna (excellence or merit), alankara (poetic figure), rasa (sentiment), karaka (case ending), kriya (verb), linga (gender), vachana (number), visheshana (adjective), upsarga (prefix), nipata (redundances), kala (tense), desha (country), kula (family), vrata (custom), tattva (philosophical truth), sattva (spirit or inherent self), abhipraya (clear implication), svabhava (nature), sara-sangraha (location of essence), Pratibha (genius), avashtha (age), vichara (thought), nama (name), ashirvada (blessing).

Thus, Kshemendra validated the paramountcy of *auchitya* (propriety).

4.3 Kavya-bheda

Anandavardhana classifies poetry (*kavya*) into three types: *Dhvani-kavya*, *Gunibhuta-vyngya*, and *Chitra-kavya*. Mammata, in his *Kavyaprakasha*, called respectively *Uttama*, *Madhyama*, and *Adhama*. In *Dhvani-Kavya*, the *vyangyārtha* (suggested meaning) seems more appealing and impressive than the *vachyārtha* (literal meaning). *Gunibhuta-vyngya*

denotes a kind of poetry wherein *vyangyārtha* seems secondary to *vachyārtha* in terms of charm and appeal. This kind of poetry is not bereft of suggestiveness altogether, but it is not in the state of playing a primary role in terms of effect and charm. The matter of fact is that where *rasa* and *bhava* have attained prominence, it is known as *Dhvani-kavya*, and where they play a subordinate role, apparently, it is called *Gunibhuta-vyangya*. In the third type of poetry, *Chitra-kavya*, there is the poverty of *rasa* and *bhava*, which are hence unable to evoke *vyangyārtha*. In this kind of poetry, the skillful arrangement of words looks like that of a picture or shape like a lotus, sword, etc. This kind of poetry is named after its shape or appearance, for instance, *padmababdha* (where poetic words are arranged in the shape of a lotus). There is no presence of *vyangyārtha* in it. It has only one *vachyārtha*. This kind of poetry is dominated of *alankaras*—*sabdalankara* and *arthalankara*, respectively. It is also known as *alankara-nibandha*. The use of figures of speech does not evoke any idea, figure, or *rasa*. For this reason, it is called *Adhama kavya*. It has never gained the acceptance of sincere poetry lovers. However, it seems quite difficult to point out that this kind of poetry is entirely cut off from suggestibility. For example, George Herbert's poem *Easter Wings* as a pattern poem is a devotional song and is very interesting.

4.4 Let Us Sum-Up

At the conclusion of this unit, it is to point out that summing up Indian aesthetic tradition in a few pages is an invalid attempt. Actually, the Indian aesthetic tradition is very wide, deep, comprehensive, and all-encompassing. No aspect of literature seems left unaddressed in this critical tradition. Our attempt in this unit has been simply to give you some introductory knowledge that cannot be completed in its present task. There is hardly any aspect of western literary criticism whose counterpart or parallel is unavailable in Indian Sanskrit critical tradition.

4.5 Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 What is poetics?

Ans. Read section no. 4.1.

Q. 2 Explain *rasa-sutra* of Bharatamuni.

Ans. Please go through section no. 4.2.1.

Q. 3 What is *Dhvani* theory?

Ans. Answer this question in the light of section no. 4.2.4.

Q. 4 Discuss types of *Vakrokti*.

Ans. Read section no. 4.2.5.

Q. 5 What is *auchitya*? Mention types of *auchitya*.

Ans. Read section no. 4.2.6.

Q. 6 Discuss *Kavya-bheda*.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 4.3.

Q. 7 Briefly throw light upon the *Alankara* school.

Ans. Study section no. 4.2.2.

4.6 Further Reading

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Literary Criticism and Theories

Block II Classical Criticism

Unit 5 Aristotle : *Poetics*

Unit 6 Longinus : “On The Sublime”

BLOCK II CLASSICAL CRITICISM

This block is divided into two units- Unit 5 and 6. Unit 5 deals with “Aristotle’s *Poetics*”. Aristotle’s *Poetics* is a key text in classical literary criticism, focusing on the nature and structure of tragedy. It defines tragedy as an imitation of serious actions that evoke pity and fear, leading to catharsis, an emotional cleansing for the audience. The work emphasizes the importance of a well-structured plot, along with key concepts like mimesis (imitation), peripeteia (reversal), and anagnorisis (recognition). Aristotle’s ideas have shaped the understanding of literature’s emotional and ethical impact, making the *Poetics* a foundational guide for literary analysis.

Unit 6 is Longinus: “On the Sublime”. Longinus’ “On the Sublime” explores the concept of the sublime in literature, emphasizing the power of great writing to inspire, wonder and elevate the reader’s mind. It highlights the importance of emotional impact, grandeur of thought, and elevated language in achieving sublimity. The treatise has influenced classical criticism by focusing on the aesthetic and emotional effects of literary works, rather than just their formal aspects.

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Aristotle: His Career and Contribution
- 5.3 Aristotle's Theory of *Mimesis*
- 5.4 Concept of Tragedy
- 5.5 Tragic Plot
- 5.6 Concept of Tragic *Catharsis*
 - 5.6.1 Therapeutic Approach
 - 5.6.2 Moral Approach
 - 5.6.3 Intellectual Approach
 - 5.6.4 Structural Approach
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Some Questions and Their Answers
- 5.9 Further Reading

5.0 Objectives

It is a well-known fact that Aristotle was the most brilliant student of Plato at the *Academy*. But he successfully made a departure from Plato on different critical issues, firmly establishing his own philosophy of art. In this unit, we shall be looking at the following key points:

- How imaginative writings differ from other writings
- Aristotle's concept of 'mimesis' and where he differs from Plato
- Aristotle's definition of 'tragedy' and its constitutive parts
- His prescriptions for the tragic plot
- Views on tragic catharsis

5.1 Introduction

After the *Bible*, perhaps Aristotle's *Poetics* is the single work in the world that has appeared in more editions. It is a critical treatise on the art of poetry. He formulated his views based on the extant works of Greek literature. The way he raised questions in it regarding the nature, form, and function of art still surprises students as well as teachers across the world. The *Poetics* has twenty-six small chapters on about fifty-two pages. About its origin, scholars are not unanimous but mostly believe that it was written sometime in 330 BCE. It is also believed that Aristotle's *Poetics* is an incomplete document, as he has promised to discuss 'comedy' and 'catharsis' in some detail in a separate book that never saw the light of day.

The original Greek text of the *Poetics* is not available with us, and therefore we are left with its translations only. Among the 10th-century Arabic, 11th-century, 13th-century, and 14th-century translations of the original Greek manuscript, the 11th-century translation is perhaps the most important. Let me skip here. In the 19th century, S. H. Butcher's edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* exerted tremendous influence on entire western aesthetic theory. It was published in 1894 in Edinburgh. Most of the subsequent translations in the world languages are based on this very edition of Butcher. In the 20th century, editions of Ingram Bywater (1909), G. F. Else (1957), and Leon Golden-O. B. Hardison (1968) have earned recognition world-wide. Of course, no work in Greek except the Testament has been brought out as frequently as the *Poetics*. The *Poetics* is the very zenith of Greek literary criticism. It is a highly influential and significant work. Aristotelian scholars believe that each of his works cannot be understood properly without the additional knowledge of his other works. They call his works 'acromatic'.

In chapters 1–5, Aristotle discusses in general the chief forms of mimetic poetry. From chapter six to chapter twenty-second, he discusses tragedy alongside various rules for its proper construction. In chapters 23–24, he discussed rules for the construction of epics. In chapter 25, Aristotle enumerates possible comments regarding epics and tragedies and replies to them. In the last chapter, Aristotle made a comparison between epic and tragedy to establish the superiority of the latter on artistic grounds.

5.2 Aristotle: His Career and Contribution

Aristotle was born in 384 BCE at Stageira, a small town near Macedonia in northern Greece. It was under the rule of Macedonia. After his birthplace, Aristotle is also called Stagyrate. His father, Nichomachus, was a court physician and friend to Amyntus II, the king of Macedonia and father of Philip of Macedon. At the age of 17, Aristotle was sent to Athens to join the *Academy* of Plato in 367 BCE, where he distinguished himself as the best student. Here at the *academy*, Aristotle studied under the tutelage of Plato for twenty years. About Aristotle's scholarship, news reached King Philip of Macedon, who invited him in 343 BCE to work as a tutor to his son Alexander at his court, Pella. Alexander the Great had won almost the entire north-western region of India. Aristotle concluded tutoring Alexander in 340 BCE and perhaps returned to his native As such, he served as a tutor for four years. In 335 BCE, Alexander ascended to the throne of Macedonia, and in the same year, he set out for his campaign in Asia. The same year, Aristotle returned to Athens to open his own school of philosophy and rhetoric. It was called the *Lyceum*, dedicated to Apollo Lyceus, God of shepherds. This school's unique style earned it two nicknames: the *peripatetic* school and the school of *strolling philosophers*. For thirteen years, Aristotle directed his school and gave lectures on wide-ranging issues. His school was popular among students from middle-class families, whereas Plato's Academy attracted aristocratic students. Aristotle left Athens in 323 BCE, the year of Alexander's death. For fear of Athenian ill-will towards Macedonians, Aristotle moved from Athens to Chalcis, Macedonia. Actually, Aristotle wanted to avoid repeating the history of poison killing as Socrates had done for his philosophy. Aristotle died in 322 BCE of a stomach illness at his residence in Chalcis, Macedonia.

Aristotle was famous for his *peripatetic* approach. Actually, he used to discuss matters with his disciples while walking about. For this, scholars call him a *peripatetic* philosopher. As far as the intellectual calibre of Aristotle is concerned, it was too wide in scope. Aristotle left almost nothing that had any concern for human knowledge or activity. Some of his important works are *Rhetoric*, *Logic*, *Eudemian Ethics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Politics*, and *Poetics*. Aristotle wrote almost four hundred volumes in all. Aristotle's literary criticism is chiefly contained in his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. As far as his contribution is concerned, it is almost immeasurable. His *Poetics* is the most significant text of literary criticism. He is sometimes designated as the father of literary criticism. At the same time, he

is regarded as the father of many other subjects in the natural sciences. In fact, he gave direction to every walk of life that had social goodness.

5.3 Aristotle's Theory of *Mimesis*

The Greek term *mimesis* is usually translated into English as 'imitation'. And the English term 'imitation' refers immediately to an act of copying or mimicking. As such, the English rendering of *mimesis* seems un-aesthetic altogether. For Plato, poetry is twice removed from truth; poets are propagators of falsehood; and moreover, the impact of poetry on the audience is both dangerous and discouraging. For these reasons, Plato preferred philosophy to poetry and exiled poets from his ideal republic. For Plato, *mimesis* does not entail creativity. He was, in fact, prejudiced against poetry.

Like Plato, Aristotle also saw poetry as a mode of *mimesis*. Plato reconceived *mimesis* in a philosophical sense, but Aristotle conceived it in an aesthetic sense. Aristotle equated poetry with music, whereas Plato equated with painting. For Aristotle, *mimesis* is an act of learning and an active mode. Aristotle, in the first chapter of *Poetics*, writes:

Epic poetry and tragedy, as well as comedy, dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and lyre-playing, are all, viewed as a whole, modes of imitation. (Ingram Bywater's rendering)

At this point, it is crystal clear that Aristotle took *mimesis* for both creative power and creative process. It is an indwelling principle. The 'creative power' plus 'creative process' is equal to *mimesis*. In fact, the creative mind transforms the raw material through *mimesis*. Nowhere in the *Poetics* has Aristotle suggested that mimetic art is a photographic or literal reproduction of reality completely bereft of creativity.

Mimesis is central to every imaginative work of art. It presupposes the observance of the laws of probability and necessity. It refers to the imaginative and artistic re-construction or re-creation of grave and grand material. Actually, Aristotle used the term *mimesis* in an aesthetic context and agreed to the point that a poet is not supposed to produce exactly what he or she finds around; instead, he or she is expected to present or draw a world of his or her experience, emotion, character, and vision in conformity with the laws of necessity and probability.

In Chapter I, Aristotle made it clear that *mimesis* is the principle common to all imaginative art forms. They differ in their use of different mediums, objects, and manners. The main media of *mimesis* are language, rhythm, harmony, or melody.

In Chapter 2 of *Poetics*, Aristotle affirms that all fine arts are made distinct by the objects. The objects of *mimesis* are human actions. All human actions are identified either as noble or as base; virtuous or vicious. Tragedy deals with the actions of noble men (spoudaics), whereas comedy deals with those of ignoble ones (*phaulos*).

Just as all fine arts use different media and objects, they employ different manners to represent life. In Chapter III, Aristotle discusses the manners of *mimesis*. “Poetic *mimesis* has two broad ways: narrative and dramatic. A poet can represent men by merely narrating the story or by making his characters enact the entire story. A poet can employ both of these ways in the same composition.

5.4 Concept of Tragedy

In the 6th chapter of *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy and explains its six constitutive parts. His discussion on tragedy continues up to chapter XXII. Usually scholars depend on Butcher’s rendering; I also fall into the same category, but here I am trying to effect a slight change:

Tragedy is an artistic/imaginative representation or reworking (*mimesis*) of action (*praxis*) of a noble character (spoudaios), which must be complete (*teleios*) and of proper size (*megethos*); 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 (*dronon*), not of narrative (*apangelias*); as such, to effect the *catharsis* of pitiable and fearful incidents, exciting our emotions of pity and fear.

This is my formal-structural attempt to dovetail all the characteristics of a tragedy. All structural elements cumulatively render pitiable and fearful events bearable, beautiful, and pleasure-giving. Aristotle describes six formative aspects that a tragedy must bear. These are serial plot, character, thought, diction, song, and spectacle. The first three are internal, and the remaining are external aspects of tragedy. The first three aspects are the objects that tragedy

imitates or represents. Tragedy imitates these objects through the media of diction and song. Tragedy imitates these objects in the manner of spectacle.

5.5 Tragic Plot

In Greek, the term *mythos* is used for plot. It refers to the logical structuring of events. Aristotle thinks it “the first principle” and “the soul of tragedy” (Butcher). In chapter 7, Aristotle discusses the size of tragedy. *Telos* and *megethos* are two essential features of the action of tragedy. By wholeness or completeness (*telos*), Aristotle means that the plot should be complete and a perfect unit with a traceable beginning, middle, and end. By *megethos*, Aristotle means a rational length of tragic action. It should not be either too long or too short. If the length of the action is too long, the audience will certainly fail to embrace all the events. And if it is too short, it would not be comprehensible to the audience. Thus, the length of action should have enough scope to unfold all the events.

In chapter 8 of *Poetics*, Aristotle talks about the unity of a plot. There should be organic or architectonic (Arnold) unity in the arrangement of events. There may be several actions in the life of the hero, but unless they have something to do with the central action, that is, the fall of the hero, they must be put outside. In the middle of Chapter 9, Aristotle mentions the *episodic plot*, which is a sub-division of the simple plot. It is the worst type of plot. An episodic plot is one wherein there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of episodes or acts. Tragedy deals with events that are capable of striking and arousing pity and fear. When emotions of pity and fear arise unexpectedly, the tragic wonder gets more effective and striking. Such plots are the best ones. In a nutshell, the best effect of tragedy is obtained through the combination of the inevitable and the probable causes.

In chapter 10, Aristotle talks about two kinds of plots: simple and complex. The elements of *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* distinguish simple and complex plots. *Peripeteia* means reversal of fortune, intention and situation and *anagnorisis* means revelation or discovery of truth. The simple plot neither has the element of *peripeteia* nor *anagnorisis*. *Peripeteia*, by *anagnorisis*, or by both. Aristotle claims the superiority of complex plots over simple ones.

In Chapter 12, Aristotle discusses the structural aspects of the tragic plot. He divides it into four parts: *prologue*, *episode*, *exode*, and *choric song*. The choric portion is divided into *parode* and *stasimon*. *Parode* and *Stasimon* are common to all tragedies. Each choral song in

a tragedy is divided into a *parode* and a *stasimon*. The *parode* is performed by a group of 12 or 15 singers (the chorus) who enter with musical instruments, chanting Its purpose is to report what happened off the stage and to make time-to-time moral commentary. Stasimon is a stationary song. The *prologue* (as an introductory section it establishes theme of the play and portrays one or more characters) precedes the *parode*; *the episode* occurs between the *parode* and *stasimon*; and *the exode* (the concluding part) follows the last choral song.

In chapter 13, Aristotle identifies three forms of tragic action to be avoided for the arousal of pity and fear:

- A good man must not be seen passing from happiness to misery.
- A bad man goes from misery to happiness.
- An extremely bad man must not be seen falling from happiness into misery.

The first condition is simply odious, and the second is most untragic. The third situation is neither productive of fear nor of pity. The finest form of tragic plot is left with only one alternative, that is, the intermediate kind of personage—a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just whose misfortune is brought upon not by any vice or depravity but by some intellectual inability, weakness, or error (*hamartia*) ingrained into his or her nature. The term *hamartia* was usually used in the field of archery to mean the missing or failure of a mark with a bow and arrow, an unskilful but not morally culpable act” (Wimsatt & Brooks 39). Thus, we see that *peripeteia*, *anagnorisis*, and *hamartia* are inextricably bound up with each other. At the end of the chapter, Aristotle warns against the mixing of tragic and comic endings. It is a double-plot structure wherein bad characters are shown meeting their unhappy end and good characters happy end. This practice is against the spirit of the tragic genre.

At the end of chapter 15, Aristotle advises keeping mechanical devices such as, by chance, supernatural machinery (*dues ex machina*) outside the plot. They need to be only announced because past events are beyond human knowledge and future events only God can know. In fact, it is the plot that gives vim and vigor to the action of the play.

5.6 Concept of Tragic Catharsis

Aristotle used the term *Katharsis* or *Catharsis* only twice in the treatise. In the last clause of the definition of tragedy, Aristotle uses the term almost vaguely. Being unexplained, the term

keeps vexing scholars up until now. Most critics agree upon the point that the arousal of pity and fear is the sole purpose and catharsis the only function. The term had been in circulation in Greek practice during the time of Aristotle in many branches of knowledge. In general, it was used and applied to mean ‘to purge’, ‘to purify’, or ‘to clarify’. These three connotations gave birth to three approaches, namely ‘therapeutic approach’, ‘moral approach’, and ‘intellectual approach’.

5.6.1 Therapeutic Approach

Those critics who believe in the therapeutic effect of tragedy take the term catharsis as a medical metaphor and explain it in the manner of John Milton (also a purgationist), who wrote in his Preface to *Samson Agonistes*, “And calm of mind, all passions spent.” The English word ‘purgation’ is equivalent to the Greek term *Katharsis*. These critics read the catharsis clause in the manner of S. H. Butcher: ‘through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.’ For them, it denotes the pathological effect exerted by tragedy on the soul of the audience. This effect is analogous to the effect of a medicine on the human body. But they do not believe in the complete removal of these emotions; rather, they are quietened for the time being so that the system will go back to normal. This approach reminds me of the homeopathic theory of medicine, in which ‘like cures like’, for instance, heat is applied to cure fever and cold to cold. These purgationists quote passages from the medical works of Hippocrates, Galen, and Aristotle’s *Politics* to substantiate their approach.

5.6.2 Moral Approach

Critics who look upon tragedy as having originated in religious practices believe ‘katharsis’ is a religious metaphor. They read the clause as follows: ‘through pity and fear (tragedy effects), the purification of such emotions.’ They argue that tragedy deserved a very honourable position and that it had the potential to purify the community of its sins and consequent sufferings. Thus, to them, ‘katharsis’ should mean ‘religious purification’.

Critics like Robertillo, Castelvetro, Addison, Johnson, Croce, C. M. Bowra, S. H. Butcher, Humphry House, etc. believe in ‘the moral approach’, and they translate the term ‘katharsis’ as ‘purification’. S. H. Butcher, in his book titled *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, first published in 1894, frankly admits that *Katharsis* is a medical metaphor and purges its appropriate English translation. All the same, he denies that the term purely conveys medical

implications. He tried his level best to interpret the 'katharsis clause' in the light of the text itself. He is of the view that the function of tragedy is not merely to provide an outlet for pity and fear but to provide aesthetic satisfaction to viewers by passing them through the medium of art. In this clarifying process, the tragedy universalizes the personal emotions of pity and fear. The particular emotions are emotions in general. The viewer first identifies with the tragic sufferer and then with humanity in general. He breaks the narrow limitations of individuality. Thus, to Butcher, *Katharsis* is the universalization of the emotions of pity and fear. More or less, all critics are concerned with the psychology of the audience. Against 'purificationists' the intellectual approach emerged.

5.6.3 Intellectual Approach

Critics like Leon Golden and O. B. Hardison popularized this approach. They took the third meaning of the term 'katharsis', which is 'to clarify'; hence, their approach came to be known as 'clarification theory'. They read the 'katharsis clause' as '... through the representation of pitiable and fearful incidents (tragedy achieves) the *Katharsis* of such incidents.' Leon Golden, an American professor, identifies *mimesis* with *catharsis*. To him, *mimesis* is learning with pleasure, and thus 'katharsis' is the intellectual clarification of fearful and pitiable situations that it enacts before an audience. This approach believes in the illumination of human existence. In this regard, he also falls in the line of S. H. Butcher.

5.6.4 Structural Approach

The last approach of my concern is 'the structural approach'. This approach seeks to interpret 'katharsis' in light of the total structure of the tragedy. This approach was popularized by Prof. Gerald Frank Else in the 1960s of the twentieth century. He took 'katharsis' for structural process. He tried to explain it "in terms of what happens in the play itself instead of what happens to the audience after the play is over" (Srivastava). To my mind, it is 'katharsis' that adds grace and brilliance to the tragedy as an art form when all the constitutive parts of tragedy are put together logically. The end of tragedy is to bring about 'katharsis' of fearful and pitiable situations being surrounded by a series of probable occurrences. It is the artistic charm that makes pity and fear pleasure-giving to the viewer or reader. Hence, 'katharsis' should mean structural grace and brilliance. I think it is useless to roam into a world other than the world of art.

Poetics is a kind of grammar dealing with technical aspects that make a drama successful. It is a manual for playwrights. In this sense, it is foolish to take *katharsis* as a medical, moral, religious, or intellectual metaphor. *Katharsis*, at the structural level, is a kind of potential that lends charm to situations of fear and pity. Otherwise, the reader or audience would lose control over him or her and could not enjoy it fully. All the terms mentioned in the definition put together bring about *katharsis*, or beautification. If *mimesis* is learning plus pleasure, *katharsis* is artistic grace plus learning plus aesthetic pleasure.

5.7 Let Us Sum Up

In this unit, we attempted to include a few important aspects of the poetics, keeping in mind the clarity of the presentation. In fact, Aristotle left nothing useful in this book. He exhausted the potential of imaginative writing. In it, he centrally focused on tragedy and the epic mode of *mimesis*. Besides Aristotle's brilliant attempt, we are still left with many critical questions that he himself left unexplained.

5.8 Some Questions and their Answers

Q. 1 What is mimesis?

Ans. Read section no. 5.3.

Q. 2 Define tragedy and explain briefly its parts.

Ans. Read section no. 5.4.

Q. 3 Elucidate Aristotle's concept of catharsis.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 5.6.

Q. 4 What is hamartia?

Ans. Read section no. 5.5.

Q. 5 What is methos?

Ans. Read section no. 5.5.

Q. 6 Distinguish simple and complex plot.

Ans. Read section no. 5.5.

Q. 7 Explain the concept of peripeteia.

Ans. Go through section no. 5.5.

5.9 Further Reading

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Structure

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6.0 Objectives

As we know, Plato never professed himself as a critic, but his critical philosophical thoughts started off with literary criticism and theory. Among the triumvirate of classical critics, Longinus is the third critic after Aristotle and Horace. In this unit, you will be introduced to Longinus' *theory of the sublime*. At the end of this *unit*, you are expected to discuss the following key points concerning sublimity:

- Meaning of sublime
- Impediments to sublimity
- Essentials of sublimity
- Romanticism of Longinus
- Place of Longinus among literary critics

6.1 Introduction

Since the classical period, it has been almost customary among thinkers and critics to think about the function, purpose, and nature of literature. Before Longinus, the purpose of literature (say, poetry) was either to give delight or to give instruction, or both. And prose works were concerned with persuasion. Longinus added to the scholarship. According to him, the real success of any great work of art lies in the transportation or movement of the reader or audience out of himself or herself. In this way, the purpose of literature is either to delight, to instruct, or to move. Longinus formulated his *theory of the sublime* in the treatise *On the Sublime*.

6.2 Longinus: His Career and Contribution

A text whose authorship has been subjected to much query: how can anything be said with any certainty about the life and career of the author of the text? Some critics think that the author of the treatise belongs to the 3rd century AD, and others think of him as of the 1st century AD. Likewise, the title of the treatise has also been subjected to the difficulty of translation. The uncertainty regarding the date of publication makes any attempt frustrating.

By the common consent of critics *On the Sublime* is a Greek rhetorical treatise. Though the treatise bearing the title in Greek has been translated differently, such as ‘Elevated Writing’ (Wordsworth), ‘On the Sovereign Perfection of Writing’ (Arthur Quiller-Couch), ‘Elevation of Language’ (Allen Tate), Harry Blamires suggests an alternative title, namely, ‘On Elevation of Style’. One-third of the treatise is still missing. On the basis of the available incomplete text, two things are certain: it was a Greek text, and its central subject was rhetoric. Say otherwise; the central concern of the treatise was to focus on the essentials of sublimity.

George Saintsbury, a well-grounded critic of Western poetics, rates him just after Aristotle. *On the Sublime* is both a work on aesthetics and literary criticism. It is written in epistolary form. Longinus’s approach to the treatise differs from that of Plato and Aristotle. To the latter, art produces a peculiar pleasurable effect of its own, whereas Longinus expounds the pleasurable effect of the art on the reader or audience. As such, Longinus formulated the first ‘affective theory’ of literature. To Plato, art is merely a blow-off of emotions and holds the rationality of mankind captive, whereas he or she should be directed by reason and intellect.

Plato condemns poetry for its emotionality and emotive nature. Plato writes: Poetry fed and watered the passions instead of drying them up, and let them rule instead of ruling them as they ought to be ruled, with a view to the happiness and virtue of mankind.

6.3 Meanings of Sublime

The term 'sublime' literally means 'height' or 'elevation'. Of course, to get the sense of 'sublime' precisely, one must have some sense of the world other than the empirical world we live in. The virtue of 'sublime' takes the reader to new heights and to a state where one realizes that there is much more to human life than to ordinary and day-to-day life. 'Sublime' entails a kind of mystery whose presence reduces all else to nothingness.

The 'sublime' effect is not gained by argumentation but rather by revelation or illumination. It depends on the ecstasy or transport. It does not hail any kind of attempts of sense or imagination to picture it. It is suggested by the use of metaphorical language. To Longinus, 'sublime' is the true and most reliable essence of a great work. It is the touchstone. And the goal of a genius is not to express dry feelings but rather to evoke or work up the emotions of the reader or audience.

Longinus' theory of 'sublime' largely blurred the distinction between prose and poetry. While dealing with the theory of 'sublime', we naturally think of terms like 'transport', 'transcend', 'awful', 'amazement', 'elevation', etc. Thomas De Quincey writes in *London Magazine*: The true antithesis to knowledge in this case is not pleasure but power. All that is literature seeks to communicate power; all that is not literature seeks to communicate knowledge. By the above arguments, 'textasy', 'ecstasy', 'bliss', or 'vital feeling', etc. can be given to 'sublime' for synonyms.

Longinus is of the view that "real sublimity contains much food for reflection, is difficult or rather impossible to resist, and makes a strong and ineffaceable impression on the memory. In a word, reckon those things that please everybody all the time as genuinely and finely sublime. When people of different trainings, ways of life, tastes, ages, and manners all agree about something, the judgment and assent of so many distinct voices lend strength and irrefutability to the conviction that their admiration is rightly directed" (Russel 148). In this way, we can say that a sublime text is above space and time distinctions.

6.4 Sublimity and Amplification

Amplification as a rhetorical device is closely connected with sublimity. It is part of the oratory. It was usually used to extend or magnify the language to put emphasis on it. Like sublimity, ‘amplification’ also has the potential to combine related elements to form an organic whole. Longinus makes sublimity distinct from amplification. In ‘amplification’ “the subject matter admits of fresh starts and halting places, phrases can be multiplied with increasing force, using exaggeration, emphasis on arguments or events, or by careful assemblage of facts or feelings (XI.1–2). However, Longinus departs from previous definitions, which equate amplification with sublimity. Sublimity, he suggests, “lies in elevation” and is found “in a single idea,” whereas amplification lies in quantity and redundancy. Amplification consists of “accumulating all the aspects and topics inherent in the subject and thus strengthening the argument by dwelling upon it. Therein it differs from proof, which demonstrates the required point” (XII.1–3). In illustration of this difference between sublimity and amplification, Longinus cites the rhetorical styles of Demosthenes and Cicero: the former has a sublime power of rhetoric that “scatters everything before him” like a flash of lightning, while the latter, using amplification, is like “a widespread conflagration” devouring all around it (XII.4). What also emerges from Longinus’ comments here is that, while sublimity and amplification are mutually distinct, they both differ from formal argument in that they employ alternative means of persuasion: sublimity strikes the hearer and possesses him, whereas amplification ponders over an argument, bringing it out in various guises” (Habib 121).

6.5 Pitfalls to Sublimity

In chapter III of *On the Sublime*, Longinus picks up three pitfalls that are to be avoided for the effect of sublimity. These emerge from the lack of passion and sincerity and the inadequacy of communication caused by faulty technique. These are:

1. A) Turgidity: When one seeks to bring in sublimity through false elevation and overblown language, it is called turgidity. It is quite difficult to avoid; one who aims for grandeur naturally lapses into turgidity.
2. B) Puerility: This is the second lapse that Longinus associates with pedants. It is comprised of learned trifling and hair-splitting details that become tawdry and affected. In fact, this lapse removes the liveliness of the text.

3. C) Parenthyrsus: It refers to the expression of misplaced sentiments. To Longinus, mere expression of emotion is not enough. It must conform to the place, manner, occasion, and purpose. This lapse, of course, springs out of the craze for novelty, a craze of which Longinus finds his contemporaries especially culpable. And these defects can be removed by the employment of good taste, restraint, and technical skill.

6.6 Sources of sublimity

Longinus, in Chapter VIII of *On the Sublime*, sets out five essential requisites of sublimity. The first two—"great thoughts", and "strong emotions"—are natural gifts, and the rest three are the artistic gifts—certain figures of thought and speech, noble diction, and dignified arrangement. As such, Longinus sought to bring about a blending of natural and artistic sources of sublimity.

The 'great thoughts' that Arnold in *The Study of Poetry* called 'truth and seriousness of substance and matter' stand first in the five-fold series of 'sublime' constituents because they are the echo of the great soul. Allen H. Gilbert writes: 'Excellence of style is the concomitant of a great soul' (Gilbert 155). Longinus is of the view that it is not possible that men with mean and servile ideas and aims prevailing throughout their lives should produce anything that is admirable and worthy of immortality. We expect great accents to fall from the lips of those whose thoughts are deep and grave. For the cultivation of 'great thought', Longinus thinks Plato's *theory of imitation* very significant. He suggests that, for the sake of posthumous fame, the cultivation of 'great thoughts' is requisite. For the cultivation of 'great thoughts', creative writers should imitate and emulate great writers of the past, such as Homer. Longinus even makes comparisons between Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to prove his point. He calls *Odyssey* an epilogue to *Iliad*. "Homer in the *Odyssey* may be compared to the setting sun: the size remains without the force" (Russel 153). In this regard, Longinus anticipates Arnold's 'touchstone theory', Eliot's 'theory of tradition', and Harold Bloom's 'anxiety of influence'.

The second natural source is *strong emotions*. Longinus had promised to deal with it in a separate book, which is not extant. Yet, based on their remarks, we can consolidate his ideas. According to him, great men with great thoughts are capable of deep and sincere feelings, which in the long run transcend or transport them. His stress on passion, ecstasy, imagination, transport, intensity, and exaltation perhaps led Scott-James to designate him 'the first

romantic critic' (Scott-James 80). Longinus even goes to the extent of making distinctions between true and false emotion, like true and false 'sublime'. Perhaps while making such a distinction, Aristotle was in his mind. According to him, some emotions, such as fear, grief, and pity, are incapable of attaining sublimity. T. S. Eliot, too, approves of emotions and feelings for poetic discourse, provided they are depersonalized (*Tradition and Individual Talent*).

The third requisite is the appropriate use of figures. Adding strangeness to ordinary speech (what Russian formalists called 'defamiliarization') causes a pleasant surprise and makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. Longinus selects six figures to bring about sublimity:

1. A) Apostrophe: the direct address to some person, thing, or some abstract idea;
2. B) Asyndeton: when clauses are left loose by avoiding the use of conjunctions, it results in rapidity and evokes a sudden flow of feelings and emotions;
3. C) Hyperbaton is suggestive of an unordered utterance made under emotional stress;
4. D) Polysyndeton, which is opposite to asyndeton and uses conjunctions in excess;
5. E) Periphrasis (circumlocution) is a circumlocutory way of writing as it employs more words to convey a few ideas. Longinus thinks it is quite dangerous if it is not handled properly.
6. F) Rhetorical Question: It does not require an answer; instead, the answer is already implied.

The fourth constituent is *noble diction*. The proper and striking use of words spontaneously bewitch readers is quickly provided; diction is consistent with noble thoughts. Longinus writes: The proper time for using metaphors is when the passions roll like a torrent and sweep a multitude of them down their restless flood.

The last but not least constituent is the orderly placing of words, thoughts, emotions, figures, and fluency into a harmonious whole. This stand immediately reminds me, like scholars, of Roman poet and critic Horace and his *Ars Poetica*, where he emphasizes the need for and significance of craftsmanship and propriety in poetry. He recommended 'consistency and coherence in overall structure'.

6.7 Longinus as the First Romantic Critic

Longinus, truly, is a fine fusion of classical and romantic elements. He balanced sublimity and propriety. Critics like R. A. Scott-James call him 'the first romantic' for his stress on emotion and imagination. He even does not prefer to adhere to any set rules of criticism. For his belief in 'propriety', use of figures, artistic organicism, and other artistic rules and styles, he is called classical. Longinus was well acquainted with the idea that mere technical excellence cannot ensure sublimity.

Prof. Atkins does not agree with Scott-James, whom Longinus was the first romantic critic. According to him, Longinus has great reverence for ancient Greek models. He agrees with the theory of imitation and tradition. He wants to put a curb on wayward genius. He stands for correctness and balance, rules and regulations, and dignified poetic style. In this regard, Atkins' stand is justified.

Habib evaluates the critical acumen of Longinus: "Longinus' preoccupation with the sublime might be seen as a call for spiritual reorientation, a movement away from rationality and merely technical competence, itself a reflex of materialist and pragmatic thinking, toward acknowledgment of a profounder and more authentic strain in human nature that, through its exercise of emotion and imagination, sees itself not in isolation but as part of a vaster and divine scheme. This call has been repeated endlessly under numerous guises in various literary periods. The themes raised by Longinus, and much of his mode of treating them, persist into our own day, in the realms of literature, politics, law, and the media: the idea that poetry or indeed prose can emotionally transport, rather than merely persuade, a listener; the idea of organic unity and totality; the nature of imitation; the connection between reason and imagination, reason and emotion, beauty and utility, art and genius, art and nature; and, most importantly, a recognition of the power of language—founded on grandeur of thought and the skilful use of figures—to attain sublimity, thereby transforming our perception of the world" (Habib 127).

Longinus, in fact, is the most modern of all ancient critics. His thoughts move around the reader or audience, text, and author. What he did for literature is worthy of indelible recognition.

6.8 Theory of Rasa and Sublime

The most basic assumption of *rasa* theory is that the object of poetry is not to convey dry information about the world; instead, it is to exhibit the emotional responses arose in a person by the objects or the facts of the world. In effect, emotions occupy central space in *rasa* theory. Longinus emphasizes the emotionality of the text in *On the Sublime*. Thus, both theories meet on the point of emotionality. It is this feeling that, of course, distinguishes poetry from prose. Alexander Smith, a Scottish philosopher, reaches the same conclusion: The essential distinction between poetry and prose is that prose is the language of intelligence, poetry of emotion. In prose, we communicate our knowledge of the objects of our senses or thoughts; in poetry, we express how these objects affect us. When Longinus talks of ‘excellence of style’, he comes closer to Vamana. Vamana of 9th century AD took poetry as a structured expression, that is, a due organism of the qualities both of sound and meaning. Bhamaha (6th century), Dandin (7th century), and Anandavardhana (9th century) approve of figurative expression. Longinus, too, approves of the use of figures to attain sublimity.

6.9 The Significance of His Criticism

In many ways, Longinus is more comprehensive than any other critic of Greco-Roman tradition. Though he heavily drew upon his predecessors like Plato, Aristotle, and Horace, he excelled them all in his theory of the sublime. B. Prasad writes, “Here he transcends all rules and pleads for a purely aesthetic appreciation of literature. He admires the Greek classics not because they observe the rules of their 'kind'—sometimes they do not—but because they excite, move, transport, and elevate” (Prasad 63). Even a work of art with poor form succeeds in moving readers; it is a sublime work. He judges Greek standards high for their spirit, not for their formal excellence. He believed like Plato in divine inspiration, which Shelley noticed very well when he commented that ‘Poetry is indeed divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of all knowledge.’ Longinus includes three spirits in one: “a classicist in taste, a romanticist in temper, and an idealist at heart.” He is the most modern of all ancient classical critics. He has been a source of inspiration to many forthcoming critics to date. Longinus will continue exerting his influence on forthcoming critics with evergreen freshness and light. His aesthetic interpretation of literature does great justice to the spirit of literature. And for this reason, he will be ever contemporaneous in all the ages.

6.10 Let Us Sum Up

We have discussed Longinus and his doctrines in the preceding section at some length and evaluated his contributions randomly. In the 18th century, Alexander Pope appreciated him very much for his “balanced sensitivity to both the inspirational and technical aspects of poetry. He found in Longinus’s own work a model and justification of his theory. Longinus is perhaps best measured by his influence upon others. As far as English literature is concerned, his influence has been an inspiring one. Longinus is a critic who is eminently creative himself in those inspiring bursts of revelatory illumination that he rightly valued in others. He is an opener of doors” (Blamires 18). In fact, Plato’s *The Republic*, Aristotle’s *The Poetics*, Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, and Longinus’s *On the Sublimity* make the very basis of Western critical thought solid and secure.

6.11 Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 What is ‘sublime’?

Ans. Read carefully section no. 6.3.

Q. 2 Differentiate between ‘sublimity’ and ‘amplification’.

Ans. Read section no. 6.4.

Q. 3 Discuss various ways to attain sublimity.

Ans. Read section no. 6.6.

Q. 4 Do you agree that ‘great thought is an echo of great soul’?

Ans. Go through section no. 6.6.

Q. 5 What are impediments to sublimity?

Ans. Read section no. 6.5.

Q. 6 In many ways, Longinus is most modern of all ancient critics. Discuss.

Ans. Go through section no. 6.7.

Q. 7 Longinus is a fine blend of idealism, classicism, and romanticism. Elaborate.

Ans. Go through section no. 6.9 and 6.7.

6.12 Further Readings

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Master of Arts
MAEN-109 (N)

Literary Criticism and Theories

Block III Neo- Classical and Romantic Criticism

Unit 7 John Dryden: “An Essay Of Dramatic Poesie”

Unit 8 William Wordsworth: “Preface to Lyrical Ballads”

Unit 9 S.T. Coleridge: “Biographia Literaria” Chapter XIV

BLOCK III NEO- CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC CRITICISM

This Block has 3 units (7, 8 and 9) which focus on the criticism of Neo-classical age and Romantic age. The unit 7 of the block deals with John Dryden: “An Essay on Dramatic Poesy”. John Dryden’s “An Essay on Dramatic Poesy” is an important work of literary criticism written in 1668. It presents a dialogue among four characters—Crites, Eugenius, Lisideius, and Neander—who debate the merits of classical drama versus modern drama, the use of rhyme in plays, and the unities of time, place, and action. The essay defends the English drama of Dryden's time and explores key issues in dramatic theory, making it a foundational text in the history of English literary criticism.

The Unit 8 is William Wordsworth: “Preface to the Lyrical Ballads”. It is written in 1800, and considered as a foundational text of Romantic literary theory. In it, Wordsworth argues for poetry that reflects ordinary life and language, focusing on the expression of genuine emotions and the beauty of nature. He emphasizes the role of the poet as a person who feels things more deeply and communicates these feelings to others, making poetry accessible and relevant to everyday people. The preface serves as a manifesto for the Romantic movement, advocating for a break from the formal and artificial styles of the past.

The Unit 9 is “S. T. Coleridge: *Biographia Literaria*”. Published in 1817, it is a critical work that blends autobiography with literary criticism and philosophy. In it, Coleridge explores the nature of imagination, distinguishing between the primary and secondary imagination, and discusses the creative process. He critiques contemporary poets and theories, including Wordsworth’s poetic principles, while also offering insights into his own poetic philosophy.

Unit 7 John Dryden: *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 John Dryden: His Career and Contribution
- 7.3 Outline of the *Essay*
 - 7.3.1 Ancient versus modern
 - 7.3.2 French drama versus English drama
 - 7.3.3 On Elizabethan playwrights
 - 7.3.4 Shakespeare versus Ben Jonson
 - 7.3.5 Rhymed verse versus blank verse
- 7.4 Dryden as a Critic
- 7.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.6 Some Model Questions and Their Answers
- 7.7 Further Reading

7.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we shall look at John Dryden's well-known critical treatise, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. It is often considered to be the earliest critical work of English literary criticism. In many ways, it is very significant formal work. The *unit* will principally address the following points:

- The relative merits of ancient and modern writers
- The English play in comparison to the French.
- The Elizabethan dramatists in relation to the Neoclassical
- Heroic verse in comparison with blank verse and
- The value and significance of Dryden as a critic

7.1 Introduction

John Dryden made English literary criticism systematic and footed it firmly. Dryden had extensively worked in the fields of poetry, drama, criticism, and translation. Dryden by this

Essay instructed many future critics, such as Pope and Johnson, how to render critical appreciation. It is considered to be a fine piece of prose. It is a dialogic essay. There are four participants arguing four different points of view in it.

An Essay of Dramatic Poesy was published as a separate work, unlike his numerous ‘prefaces’ in 1668. And later on, it was revised and republished two more times before his death in 1684 and 1693. It has been reprinted three times: in 1750, 1800, and 1808.

7.2 John Dryden: His Career and Contribution

John Dryden was born to a middle-class couple, Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering, by Julian calendar on August 9, 1631, at Aldwincle, close to Thrapston and Oundle in Northhamptonshire, England. Dryden’s early schooling began at the Oundle Grammar School and Westminster School; henceforth, he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1650 and graduated from there in 1654, the year of his father’s death. Initially, his dead body was buried in St. Anne’s Cemetery in Soho. Ten days later, his body was exhumed and reburied in Westminster Abbey.

Dryden’s first play, *The Wild Gallant*, appeared in 1663. But it achieved very little success. His play, *The Indian Emperor*, appeared in 1665. In 1668, he was appointed as the Poet Laureate. In 1670, he published *The Conquest of Granada*, and the same year, he was made the Historiographer Royal. His best comedy, *Marriage a la Mode*, came in 1672. His other best plays are *Aureng-Zebe or the Great Mogul* (1675), *All for Love or the World Well Lost* (1678, based on Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*), and *Troilus and Cressida* (the revised version of Shakespeare’s play of the same title) in 1679. Before his death on May 1, 1700, Dryden engaged himself in translations of Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal, and Boccaccio. He is considered to be the most representative writer of the Restoration era.

7.3 Outline of the *Essay*

Dryden in the *Essay* engages four characters (interlocutors). Each of them is the voice of the critical stand of his choice. Dryden imagines them traveling in a boat on the Thames. These men of letters engage in a literary debate. These are: Lisideius (Charles Sedley), Crites (Greek for judge or critic stands for Robert Howard), Eugenius (in Greek it means well-born and stands for Charles Sackville or Lord Buckhurst), and Neander (Greek for ‘new man’ and

stands for Dryden himself). Crites is the mouthpiece of ancient classical writers; Eugenius of modern writers; Lisideius of French writers; and Neander of English writers.

Dryden frankly writes about the motto of *the Essay* in his preliminary note, "To the Reader":

The drift of the ensuing discourse was chiefly to vindicate the honor of our English writers from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them. (Arnold 7)

7.3.1 Ancient versus modern

Crites ascertains the topic of discussion that is, dramatic poesy. Crites opens up the discussion favouring ancients. For him, ancients were true imitators of nature and in this regard, moderns are inferior to them. Ancients provided us with perfect models and moderns simply disfigured them. Crites condemns moderns for their disloyalty towards the ancient masters. He argues further that all the rules of drama were invented by the ancients and the moderns added nothing of their own except borrowing those rules which were formulated in Horace and Aristotle. The famous Rules which the French called *The Three Unities* were evolved in them. These unities are- Time, Place, and Action ought to be observed in every regular play.

According to Crites, the ancients meant by 'the unity of time' a natural day. There should be sufficient proximity between the length of time of the play and the time taken for representation to make the dramatized action close to nature. All parts of the play should be equally divided. It means that one act should not cover half of the time and the rest in the remaining time. The ancients were very successful.

By 'the unity of place', according to Crites, the ancients meant that all the action should take place in one place where it started to promote greater likelihood of truth. Crites admires the French playwrights next to the ancients in the strict observance of 'the unity of place'. In their plays, if the scene begins in a garden, it will end in the same garden necessarily.

The third unity is 'the unity of action'. The dramatist must look for one great and complete action. There may be many actions in a play but they must be made subservient to the main action. Such secondary actions may be put in sub-plots. Thus, Crites approves of under-plots in a play. Here Crites agrees with Ben Jonson and Corneille.

In respect to rules, according to Crites, modern plays are dwarfish and hardly any can endure the trial. Finally, Crites assures that if the moderns closely look at their own works and those of the ancients objectively, they will instruct you to admire the ancients and none else.

Eugenius, the spokesperson of moderns, replies to Crites. He agrees with Crites regarding how much the moderns have been benefited by the rules of the ancients but criticizes ancients for his indifference towards how much the moderns have excelled the ancients. Hereafter, Eugenius goes pointing out some deficiencies of the ancients and a few excellences of the moderns.

Eugenius clarifies his point of view when he condemns the ancients:

I declare it [condemnation] is not altogether because they have not five acts to every play, but because they have not confined themselves to one certain number: it is building a house without a model; and when they succeeded in such undertakings, they ought to have sacrificed to Fortune, not to the Muses. (Enright 63)

The next defect pertains to the recurrent use of worn-out and hackneyed plots. By repeating the stories, the ancient playwrights killed the charm of novelty. Though the ancients invented the principles of unities, they failed to go by frequently. Besides the unity of action, which is the origin of Aristotle, the other two unities—place and time—are of French origin. They were not invented by Aristotle and Horace.

The modern playwrights are better than the ancients because they handle both comedy and tragedy with equal dexterity, whereas the ancients could only do either one or the other. Modern playwrights even attempt both genres within one play with full confidence.

7.3.2 French drama versus English drama

Lisideius talks about the relative merits of the French and the English dramatic poets. Lisideius favours the French drama for its faithful adherence and observance of the unities, structural regularity, and the use of rhyme. The French drama takes a maximum of thirty hours to maintain the golden rule of the unity of time. For unity of action, the French playwrights never burden their plays with underplots, while the English dramatists usually do so. About the English plays, he points out that the playwrights vainly combine incompatible

qualities such as mirth and compassion. Lisideius mocks Ben Jonson for his mixing of tragedy and comedy.

The French plays focus on ‘one whole and great action sufficient for a play.’ In order to have the focus on one action, the French playwrights make one-character worth full consideration while the rest of the characters serve merely as subservient to him.

The English playwrights represent death scenes ridiculously in their tragedies, even though the audience does not feel sad to have a scene of death. On the contrary, the French playwrights use third-person narratives about death.

Neander answers the objections raised by Lisideius against the English plays. Neander acknowledges “that the French contrive their plots more regularly and observe the laws of comedy and decorum of the stage (to speak generally) with more exactness than the English” (Enright). Nevertheless, their virtues and our faults cannot affirm the superiority of the French over the English. Neander argues that if the ‘lively imitation of nature’ is taken as a parameter, ‘the beauties of French poesy’ will appear only as ‘the beauties of a statue, but not of a man.’

Neander defends English tragic comedies. According to Neander, the French plays utterly lack variety, which is why they cannot please often. Lisideius denounces the English practice of mixing tragedy and comedy. Neander argues as we pass from one pleasant object to an unpleasant one in a flash, just as our spirits quickly do. Neander points out:

A continued gravity keeps the spirit too much bent; we must refresh it sometimes... A scene of mirth, mixed with tragedy, has the same effect upon us which our music has betwixt the acts... 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 tragic-comedy. (Enright 81)

Neander invalidates Lisideius’ claim regarding the question of the use of narration. In French theatres, usually death-scenes, battles, calamities, and duels are reported rather than performed on the stage. By contrast, in English theatres, these are performed before the audience. The English audiences enjoy it to the point where they feel that “deaths may be better off stage.”

Neander concedes that the English plays are not as regular and punctual as those of the French in observing rules, yet there are many other aspects wherein the English plays took over the French, so they should be preferred to the French. By the slavish observance of the unities of time, place, and action and the integrity of scenes, the French plays banished many beauties from the stage. Neander praises the English plays for their' masculine fancy and greater spirit than there is in any of the French.

7.3.3 On Elizabethan Playwrights

Neander admires Elizabethan playwrights such as Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher. He makes a noble statement about Shakespeare:

He was the man who 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 any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is every where alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him.... (Enright 88-89)

According to Neander, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher had the natural sparks of Shakespeare's wit. It would have been polished if they had done a little more studying. Neander sums up:

I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived at its highest perfection: what words have since been taken in are rather superfluous than ornament. Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage, two of them being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Jonson's. The reason is that there is a certain gaiety in their comedies and pathos in their more serious plays, which suit generally all men's humours. Shakespeare's language is likewise a little obsolete, and Ben Jonson's wit comes short of theirs. (Enright 89-90)

Neander turns to speak of Ben Jonson and points out:

I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter.... Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanick people. He was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them: there is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times whom he has not translated in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. (Enright 90)

7.3.4 Shakespeare versus Ben Jonson

Neander made a comparative study of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. He recognizes Ben Jonson as ‘the more correct poet’ and Shakespeare as ‘the greater wit’. He continues-

Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing. I admire him, but I love Shakespeare. To conclude of him, as he has given us the most correct plays, in the precepts which he has laid down in his *Discoveries*, we have as many and profitable rules for perfecting the stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us. (Enright 91)

Neander sums up his arguments on the Elizabethan drama with an exhaustive study of Jonson’s comedy *The Silent Woman* to justify his stand points.

7.3.5 Rhymed verse versus blank verse

In the final section of the *Essay*, there is a conversation between Crites and Neander on rhymed verse and blank verse in drama. Crites is not in favour of rhymed verse, whereas Neander speaks in favour of it. Dryden himself wrote his plays in heroic verse or rhymed verse. Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists wrote in blank verse. Crites, the staunch supporter of the ancients, justifies blank verse. Invoking the authority of Aristotle, Crites believes that rhymed verse is unnatural and improper for the drama, as “no man, without premeditation, speaks in rhyme.” Blank verse is closest to prose. Perhaps for this reason, the Elizabethans, like Shakespeare, wrote their plays in blank verse. The gist of his argument is that blank verse is the best medium for dramatic expressions.

Neander or Dryden bears an ambivalent attitude toward the use of rhymed or blank verse in drama, as in the beginning he favours rhymed verse, but a little later he is seen justifying the blank verse, partially if not fully.

7.4 Dryden as a Critic

Samuel Johnson designated Dryden ‘the father of English criticism’ in his book *The Life of Dryden*. According to Johnson, Dryden was the first writer to teach how to determine the merits of any composition.

Johnson sees Dryden’s criticism as the criticism of a poet. He appreciates Dryden’s *essay* for its ‘sheer verbal opulence and imaginative vitality’ and regards Dryden’s comparative appreciation of Jonson and Shakespeare as an ‘epitome of excellence’ and a ‘model of encomiastic criticism’. Dryden’s views on the nature and function of poetry, tragedy, comedy, epic, satire, tragic-comedy, the unities, characterization, dialogues, rhymed verse and blank verse, and critical art in itself are in many ways path-breaking. With Dryden, actually, an era of regular criticism begins. George Saintsbury, in his *History of Criticism*, very well remarked about the achievement of Dryden. He established “the English fashion of criticizing, as Shakespeare did the English fashion of dramatizing—the fashion of aiming for delight, at truth, at justice, at nature, at poetry, and letting the rules take care of themselves” (Saintsbury 129).

Dryden’s critical remarks before 1660 were largely legislative or theoretical in nature. His legislative criticism is contained in prescriptive rules with a view to guiding writers on how to write literary compositions. His theoretical criticism consists of a few abstract questions and their answers pertaining to literary aesthetics. Dryden, assuming the role of a mediator between the reader and the writer, began the fashion of descriptive criticism. His descriptive analysis of existing earlier works with a view to interpreting them to the public perhaps inspired George Watson to point out he was “the first Englishman to attempt any extended descriptive criticism” (Watson 32). *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* and the *Preface to the Fables* are the best examples of ‘descriptive criticism’. His analysis of Ben Jonson’s comedy *The Silent Woman* is a fine example of critical analysis in English. Dryden’s comparisons between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, between Homer and Virgil, Ovid and Chaucer, and Chaucer and Boccaccio are the finest examples of comparative criticism.

Dryden is the pioneer of liberal classicism. Dryden admired and followed many ancient writers and their principles. But he was not a slavish imitator of them. Under the impact of Taine, he believed to view a work of art in light time, generation, and atmosphere. He discarded all those principles that he found unfit for the current need for time. Dryden defended English plays and argued that “the climate, the age, and the disposition of the people to whom a poet writes may be so different that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience” (Scott & Saintsbury 385). Dryden further pointed out that it “is not enough that Aristotle said so; Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides, and if he had seen ours, he might have changed his mind” (Scott & Saintsbury 390).

7.5 Let Us Sum Up

In this way, it can be said that Dryden was comprehensive in terms of range. His approach to literary studies has proved to be a milestone in English literary criticism. In fact, critical bending was inherent. On the whole, Dryden has control over both theory and practice. He was the pioneer of theoretical, legislative, descriptive, comparative, and historical criticism. As far as his attitude is concerned, he was a liberal classicist.

7.6 Some Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Briefly focus on the plan and purpose of the *Essay*.

Ans. Read section no. 7.3.

Q. 2 Evaluate Dryden’s remarks on Elizabethan playwrights.

Ans. Go through section no. 7.3.3.

Q. 3 Explain the concept of unities.

Ans. Read section no. 7.3.1.

Q. 4 Evaluate Dryden’s remarks on Shakespeare.

Ans. Study carefully section no. 7.3.4.

Q. 5 Discuss Dryden as a critic.

Ans. Read section no. 7.4.

7.7 Further Reading

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Unit 8 William Wordsworth: Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Wordsworth: His Career and Contribution
- 8.3 Key issues of the *Preface*
 - 8.3.1 Poets and Poetry
 - 8.3.2 The Significance of Poetry
 - 8.3.3 Poetic Language and Style
 - 8.3.4 Views on Meter
- 8.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.5 Some Model Questions and Their Answers
- 8.6 Further Reading

8.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we shall be looking at Wordsworth's famous *Preface*, published along with the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. It was definitely very challenging for romantic poets and critics to get rid of the over-one hundred-year-old established literary tradition of *Neo-classicism*. The following key points are to be examined, analysed, and evaluated:

- Who is a poet?
- What is poetry?
- What should be the role of poetry?
- Wordsworth's views on poetic diction

8.1 Introduction

The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 is believed to have ended the age of Neo-classicism and ushered in the age of Romanticism. The neo-classicists focus on polished content and manners for poetic treatment. By contrast, Wordsworth and Coleridge attempted a new kind of poetry. Likewise, it can also be said that the "Preface" to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800 set the tone of romantic literary criticism. Wordsworth wrote "Preface" in defence of the subject matter, language, and style he and Coleridge had chosen for poetic endeavours.

After reading this *unit*, readers are advised to read a few more books suggested in the section *Further Reading* for better understanding of Wordsworth's literary theory.

8.2 Wordsworth: His Career and Contribution

William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, a town near the border of Cumberland, a lake district. His father, John Wordsworth, was a lawyer. His mother, Ann Cookson, died when he was just eight years old, and his father died when he was just 13. Wordsworth's schooling begins at Hawkshead Grammar School in Westmorland, Lancashire. It was well surrounded by lush green mountains, flora, and fauna, which attracted him more than the school. In 1787, he went to St. John's College, Cambridge, but it could not create interest in him. He visited France many times. During his stay in France, he fell in love with Marie Annette Vallon of a Catholic and Royalist family and married her despite their families' opposition. Annette conceived and bore a female baby named Caroline in 1792 in the absence of Wordsworth due to the increasing pressure of the impending war. Wordsworth was compelled to stay away from her for nine years. It has a very frustrating effect on him.

Wordsworth's first works of poetry, *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, came out in 1793. In 1802, he married second-time Mary Hutchinson, who proved to him to be a very thoughtful wife and a true helpmate. In 1798, Wordsworth and Coleridge jointly published *Lyrical Ballads* in Bristol anonymously. It consists of nineteen poems by Wordsworth and four by Coleridge. In a later edition, Coleridge contributed one more. Meanwhile, Wordsworth began writing *The Prelude*, which he could complete in 1805 but could not get published before his death on April 23, 1850, at the age of 80. It was published posthumously. It was popular as "the poem to Coleridge". It is the record of his childhood and imaginative growth of mind. It consists of 14 books in blank verse. In 1799, Wordsworth and Dorothy shifted to *Dove Cottage*, at Town End, Grasmere; then to *Allan Bank* in 1808; then to *Grasmere Personage* in 1811; and lastly to *Rydal Mount*, where he stayed from 1813 until his death. These were the residences where he stayed. A few more famous works of Wordsworth are *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815) in 7 cantos; the longest work, *The Excursion* (1814), in 9 books; *The Waggoner* (1819); *Peter Bell* (1819); *The River Duddon* (1820); *Yarrow Revisited* (1835); and only a drama, *The Borderers* (1842).

8.3 Key issues of the *Preface*

After the initial success of poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge, Wordsworth felt a need to write a piece as “a systematic defense of the theory upon which the poems were written” (Enright). For the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1800, Wordsworth wrote a fully developed ‘Preface’ of 7000 words. Wordsworth added some three thousand more words to it in the 1802 version, as well as an *appendix* of two thousand words. An *Essay Supplementary* to the ‘Preface’, he added to the edition of 1815. The *preface* of Wordsworth was the impression of his frequent conversations with Coleridge.

8.3.1 Poets and Poetry

It was Wordsworth’s belief that a poet is not only a creative artist but a social being with some worthy social purpose as well. Hereafter, Wordsworth turns to define poetry:

For 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. (Enright 165-66)

Wordsworth puts a premium on spontaneity in the poetic expression of those who are possessed of extraordinary sensitivity and sensibility. Poetry transmits and transfers emotions, not ideas, and whatever knowledge is communicated, it is rendered through emotions that are ‘powerful’ enough to impart pleasure to readers. Spontaneity doesn’t mean irrationality. Sensibility anticipates spontaneity. Contemplation significantly helps select feelings and emotions before they turn into some poetic structure. The contemplative mind needs sufficient duration. Thus, Wordsworth hinted at the poetic process: observation of

objects in the sensory world (by an extra-sensible person), arousal of certain emotions and feelings, and then their interaction in the state of meditation or contemplation, then a composition. Wordsworth, in the middle of the essay, slightly rectifies his view on poetry:

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. (Italics mine) (Enright 180)

Wordsworth writes about what is a poet, what is meant by the word poet, or to whom does he address-

He (the Poet) 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 going-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. (Enright 171)

The poet talks about men in nature, not men in society. Wordsworth further characterizes a poet as one who “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, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs, modifying only the language that 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 that has already been insisted upon”. The poet must arouse sympathy towards general humanity by translating feelings and thoughts into words and phrases. Poetry is not to him mere an intellectual exercise or craftsmanship. He qualifies for the title of poet, wherein thought and feeling work vice versa.

8.3.2 The Significance of Poetry

Wordsworth, having faith in Aristotle's view that 'poetry is more philosophical than history' writes:

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 gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals and receives them from the same tribunal. (Enright 173)

The poet "considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and feeling everywhere objects that immediately excite in him sympathies, which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment". Whichever creates an atmosphere of sensation that inspires poetic wings is suitable for poetic endeavours because:

Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge; it is as immortal as the heart of man. (Italics mine, Enright 175)

Through poetry, the poet seeks to humanize and sensitize social beings indiscriminately; hence, he wishes to be either a teacher or nothing. It is Wordsworth's belief that where there is pleasure, there is knowledge, whether it is science or poetry. For Wordsworth, pleasure is a necessary condition for teaching. For Wordsworth, science and poetry are not antagonists. Knowledge furnished by both yields pleasure. Wordsworth writes:

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 all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression that is in the countenance of all science. (Italics mine) (Enright 174)

Wordsworth had high opinions about Shakespeare's insight into human nature and environment. He writes:

He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationships and love. In spite of differences in 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. (Enright 174-75)

His idea of a poet as a teacher is not based on the intellect or good sense of neo-classicists.

8.3.3 Language and style

Wordsworth as a strategy detested the language of kings, queens, courtiers, and classical poetic laws and manners. He affirms his poetic manifesto in the *preface*:

The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was *to choose incidents and situations from common life and 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*, chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. (Italics mine) (Enright 164)

Wordsworth believes that simplicity can afford pleasure. To nullify trivialities, true taste and feelings should be applied in the selection of subjects. If the subject matter is judiciously chosen, “it will naturally lead the poet to feelings whose appropriate expression will have dignity, beauty, and metaphorical vitality” (Blamires 220). Wordsworth argues for his selection of subject matter under the impression:

Humble 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.... The language, too, of these

men has been 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. (Enright 164)

Wordsworth didn't believe in any fixed poetic style to be observed in general. To him, poetic style is an organic aspect of creativity, not prescriptive. The use of artistic ornaments should appear very natural, unlike neo-classicists, for whom it became entirely mechanical.

Wordsworth is quite conscious of the use of language when he affirms, keeping in mind Thomas Gray's statement that "the language of age is never the language of poetry". He points out that- "... there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition".

Actually, Wordsworth was here thinking about words in their general application. Words are the same and used similarly, but contexts differ in their meaning and sense. After long and deep thinking, the creative mind brings thoughts forth in simple and natural prose, which seems more lively, efficacious, and comprehensive. Perhaps, under this kind of impression, Wordsworth utters, "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" (168). He even quotes Thomas Gray and John Milton to substantiate his point of view.

Wordsworth in his poems hardly used personification because he took it as an ordinary device to elevate style. So, he rejected it for the sake of the very language of men. Wordsworth trusted in versification because "two descriptions, either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once".

8.3.4 Views on Meter

It was Wordsworth's choice to bring ordinary things to the fore in an unusual manner for the reader's excitement, provided it co-existed with an overbalance of pleasure. Ideas and feelings do not proceed simultaneously. Poetic pleasure emanated by the perception of

“similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude” depends upon our taste and moral feelings. It is the chief activity of the mind. However, Wordsworth hesitatingly points out that “a very small part of the pleasure given by poetry depends upon the meter, and that it is injudicious to write in meter unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which meter is usually accompanied, and that, by such deviation, more will be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the reader’s associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers.”

On one occasion, Wordsworth invalidates meter as an unnecessary part of poetry, considering it just a source of pleasure superadded, but on another occasion, he permits the use of meter because it obeys definite laws and is verified by tradition and authority. Thus, to Wordsworth, the use of meter adds charm and appeal to the poem and regulates the overflow of feelings and emotions. A meter is just an aid to memory. Here, Wordsworth seems to be standing with neo-classicists.

8.4 Let Us Sum Up

As far as Wordsworth as a critic is concerned, it must be decided on the ground. Scattered, often fragmentary, critical remarks shed light on Wordsworth’s critical acumen. He opposed all through the essay the critical standards established by neo-classicists on the basis of external features like structure, meter, diction, rhyme, rhythm, etc. Truly, a work may be technically sound, but that is not enough to claim the appreciation of humanity in general. Moral pleasure is above and beyond aesthetic pleasure. External aspects may produce aesthetic pleasure, but moral pleasure, which is the ultimate test of literary excellence, is possible through the use of common language as effectively as the customary language of poetry. Wordsworth's “Preface” brought the tradition of neo-classical writing to an end for good. Neo-classical poetry believed in the beaten track of the ancients. They were their ideals, but Wordsworth brought himself forward as a model of his own writing. Wordsworth was successful in his poetic pursuit. He put his critical propositions into practice in the form of his poetic compositions.

8.5 Some Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Briefly throw light upon Wordsworth’s life and works.

Ans. Read section no. 8.2.

Q. 2 According to Wordsworth, what are the characteristics of a true poet?

- Ans. Go through carefully section no. 8.3.1.
- Q. 3 Why is poetry significant for mankind?
- Ans. Read section no. 8.3.2.
- Q. 4 Evaluate Wordsworth's remarks on poetic language and style.
- Ans. Study carefully section no. 8.3.3.
- Q. 5 According to Wordsworth, how is meter an addition?
- Ans. Read section no. 8.3.4.
- Q. 6 Evaluate Wordsworth as a critic.
- Ans. Answer this question in the light of the whole unit.

8.6 Further Reading

Blamires, Harry. *A History of Literary Criticism* Delhi: Macmillan India, 2001.

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Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Coleridge: His Career and Contribution

9.3 *Biographia Literaria* (critical analysis of Chapter XIV)

9.4 Coleridge as a literary critic

9.5 Let Us Sum Up

9.6 Some Model Questions and Their Answers

9.7 Further Reading

9.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we shall take up Coleridge's most significant prose work, *Biographia Literaria*. Its formlessness poses difficulty for readers to understand. It is very difficult to neatly fit it into a generic classification. It will attempt to look at the following key points:

- His views on poets and poems
- Idea of poetic creation, manner, and process;
- His views on art
- His criticism of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction
- On poetic genius

9.1 Introduction

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) took some six months to write major sections of *Biographia Literaria* from April to September 1815. He wrote it in a hasty manner. It was actually not well planned, so it remained incomplete and eventually got published in 1817. In terms of its structure and treatment, adjectives like discursive, eclectic, or sporadic are used to characterize Coleridge in it finely amalgamated autobiographical, psychological, philosophical, practical, and literary speculations. He always aspired to blend philosophy and poetry. He claims high praise among academicians. He is placed beside Aristotle and

Longinus. Even I. A. Richards claimed in his book *Coleridge on Imagination* (1934) that all modern criticism originated with him.

After reading this *unit*, students would be able and confident enough to discuss it in peer groups. In addition, they are also advised to read a few more books suggested in the section ‘Further Reading’ to enhance and upgrade their understanding of Coleridge’s literary theory and criticism.

9.2 Coleridge: His Career and Contribution

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born on October 21, 1772, at Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, England. His father, the Reverend John Coleridge, was vicar of the parish and the headmaster of Henry VIII’s Free Grammar School at Ottery. He was married twice. Samuel was the youngest baby out of ten borne by Anne Bowden, the second wife of John Reverend. Samuel was least interested in boyish sports. He used to play by himself. John Coleridge died in 1781, when Samuel was just eight years old. After his father’s death, Coleridge was sent to Christ’s Hospital, a famous London charity school. He had never been systematic in his studies. He was omnivorous as well as a voracious reader. At the school, he made friends with Charles Lamb and read the works of Virgil and William Lisle Bowles.

In 1791, Coleridge took admission to Jesus College, Cambridge University. On December 2, 1793, Coleridge joined King’s Fifteenth Regiment of Light Dragoons under the false name Silas Tomkyn Comberbache, either for heavy debt or frustration at the hands of Mary Evans, whom he loved. But soon he was identified by his family and again sent him back to the university. In 1794, ultimately, Coleridge left the university without completing the degree and settled in Bristol. In Bristol, he worked for a printer and book seller, Joseph Cottle, for a meagre amount of money. In June 1794, he met Robert Southey in Oxford, and along with him, he made a society to be run by equals located somewhere in the agricultural region of Pennsylvania. It was called “Pantisocracy”. It was thought to be run by twelve men with their wives. But the plan never materialized. In 1795, Coleridge, on his meagre earnings, married Miss Sarah Fricker, the sister of Robert Southey’s wife Edith Fricker, and settled at Clevedon, Somersetshire. Towards the end of the year 1796, Coleridge and Sara Fricker moved to Nether Stowey (Coleridge Cottage) in Somersetshire, just 5 kilometres away from Alfoxdon Park. In 1815, their marital life finally collapsed. Coleridge again fell in love with Sara Hutchinson, the younger sister of Wordsworth’s wife, Mary Hutchinson. Sara

Hutchinson remained unmarried, to whom Coleridge addressed his poem *Dejection: An Ode* and *Love*. In 1796, Coleridge started a journal published on every eighth day to escape tax laid on weekly newspapers, *The Watchman*, and another journal, *The Friend*, which lived from June 1809 to March 1810 for just 28 issues. Coleridge wrote a drama, *Osorio*, later called *Remorse*. By March 1798, he had completed *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. From September 1798 to June 1799, Coleridge stayed in Germany to study German philosophers, especially Kant. He came back to England in late 1799. In July 1800, he settled at Greta Hall, Keswick, in Lake City.

From 1808 to 1819, Coleridge lectured on education, politics, religion, philosophy, and literature. During these years, he extensively lectured on Shakespeare and Milton. Besides, Coleridge published *Christabel and Other Poems* in 1816, *Lay Sermons* in 1816, *Sibylline Leaves* in 1817, and *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829). His poems are oftentimes called “conversational poems”.

Coleridge became totally dependent on laudanum, a kind of opium, after his breakup with his wife, Sara Fricker. From 1816 until his death on July 25, 1834, Coleridge lived in Highgate (a suburb of London) under the care of Dr. James Gillman, who helped him control drug addiction. Sometimes he is addressed as “Highgate Sage”. Charles Lamb called him “a logician, metaphysician, and bard.” T. S. Eliot called him “the greatest of English critics”. His critical works include *Biographia Literaria* (1817), *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*, *The Friend: A Series of Essays* (1812), and *The Table Talk* (1835).

9.3 *Biographia Literaria* (critical analysis of Chapter XIV)

Biographia Literaria is a mix of different modes and genres compiled hastily. Some critics believe that Coleridge dictated the subject matter of *Biographia Literaria* rather than what he wrote. He worked on it to overcome his addiction to laudanum, a kind of narcotic drug, and bouts of suicidal depression. It was a very difficult period of his life. By July 1815, Coleridge had completed chapters 1–13. And thereafter, he attempted to write a preface for it. He wrote, but it was too long. So, it was recast into chapters from 14 to 22. In September 1815, Coleridge handed the manuscript to Gutch (J. K. Gutch was his friend and printer of the manuscript), a London firm of Gale and Fenner, but it could not be published before July 1817. Coleridge gave it the title *Autobiographia Literaria*. Finally, it was published in two volumes. The first volume consisted of chapters from 1st to 13th and the second volume from

14th to 22nd, hastily added at the request of the publisher “Satyrane’s Letters” and the “Critique on *Bertram*,” which he had written in Germany, as the 23rd chapter and a conclusion he wrote defending his religious orthodoxy. Finally, it was published in 1817 with the title *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*. Coleridge was fully assured of its success in terms of its content, though he called it an “immethodical miscellany”.

Chapter XIV

This chapter is about the plan of *Lyrical Ballads*, causes of controversy over the *preface* to the second edition, and the definition of poetry and poet. From 1797 to 1798, Coleridge lived close to the residence of Wordsworth in Somersetshire. During the first year, both agreed upon two cardinal powers of poetry: first, it can excite the reader’s sympathy by adhering faithfully to the truth of nature; second, it can give the reader the interest of novelty by modifying colors of imagination. Wordsworth was to go by the first and Coleridge with the second. Coleridge elaborates:

In this one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural, and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interestingness of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing they were real. And real in this sense, they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time 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.

Thus, the plan of *Lyrical Ballads* was finalized: Coleridge would direct his poetic endeavours “to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic”. But they would be presented naturally with “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”. By contrast, Wordsworth has “to give the charm of novelty to things of every day and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural”. With this proposition, Coleridge could contribute just four poems: ‘Ancient Mariner’, ‘The Nightingale’, ‘The Dark Ladie’, and ‘Christabel’, whereas Wordsworth’s contribution is nineteen times greater in number than that of Coleridge. In 1798, *Lyrical Ballads* was published anonymously as an

experiment. Coleridge acknowledges that Wordsworth's poetic industry proved more successful than that of him, and even his poems looked like mere "interpolations of heterogeneous matter." Coleridge claims that Wordsworth went off the proposition by publishing two or three poems in his own character with lofty, impassioned, and sustained diction, which is characteristic of Wordsworth's original genius.

Coleridge writes that Wordsworth added a *preface* to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, which invited a number of doubts regarding the violation of his poetic faith designed and proclaimed for their collaborative venture. Coleridge sets forth his discussion: if the poems of Wordsworth were silly, childish, inane, or senseless in style and substance, they, by all certainties, must have been forgotten and sunken to nadir. But what actually happened was that the admirers of Wordsworth increased year by year. He became popular not only among people of lower classes but also among the most sensitive and meditative readers. This all prepared the background for Coleridge to disagree with Wordsworth's poetic creed. To object to Wordsworth's principle, Coleridge first seeks to define a poem and, secondly, the poetry itself in *kind* and in *essence*.

In all philosophical discussions, it is the thumb rule that distinction is not division. In any attempt to get the truth, one is supposed to identify distinguishable parts and then determine how they actually coexist. Likewise, Coleridge argues:

A poem contains the same elements [namely words] as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object being proposed.

If the object of a poetic composition is just to facilitate recollection or memory by artificial arrangement, all that is needed to distinguish it from prose is meter, rhyme, or both. Coleridge quotes a verse to substantiate his view:

Thirty days hath September,

April, June, and November, etc.

Coleridge sums up his idea of a poem:

And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm superadded, whatever their contents, may be entitled poems.

As the content is determined by the object, the content of scientific and poetic writing is differentiated on the basis of the object. Each kind has its own immediate object and ultimate end. The immediate object of scientific writing is truth, and pleasure is in poetic writing. “But the work of science may nevertheless afford a profound pleasure to its reader, and the poem may be found to contain a profound truth. That is their ultimate object. An ideal state would be one in which truth is pleasure and pleasure truth” (B. Prasad 186). Say otherwise: scientific and historical writings look for the conveyance of truth as an immediate object, and pleasure, if engendered, is simply incidental and secondary. In poetic writings, the conveyance of pleasure is the immediate object, and truth, which is morally and intellectually verified, ought to be their ultimate end. Coleridge, at this point of occasion, intervenes that conveyance of pleasure is also possible in prose narratives like romance and novels. Can the addition of meter to these kinds of writings turn them into poetic works? Coleridge’s reply is that the meter can be superadded to the other parts of the composition, but it must be consistent and harmonized with the whole. Since a novel is a long prose fictitious narrative, it is impossible to maintain the recurrence of accent and sound all through. Coleridge defines a poem:

A poem is that species of composition that is opposed to the 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 against by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.

In the definition, Coleridge laid emphasis on the organic relationship between parts and wholes. A poem is an organic whole in which each part mutually works upon each other to support and explain. In contrast, in philosophical discussions, the single most striking line is picked up and explained to get at the general purpose. A reader of a poem is like a walking tourist filled with excitement and pleasure caused by scenes and sights at different occasions through recollection or memory. He or she has a typical desire for what he or she may see. Hereafter, Coleridge turns to define poetry.

Coleridge believes that the works of Plato, Bishop Taylor, Burnet, and the philosophic books of *The Bible* offer sublime illustrations of poetry, though they are written without meter. So, to define poetry, one must define the poet first. The answer is here implied in the solution of the latter. A poet, by his poetic genius “sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions”. Coleridge explains the typical characteristics of the poet:

The 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. 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 we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination.

The poet, by his poetic or creative imagination, which is a synthetic and magical power, first puts will and understanding into action and thereafter operates under their gentle and unnoticed control. How does creative imagination work?

[It] 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 or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.

To Coleridge, a poetic composition is a living organism. Quite abruptly, he ends the chapter with the following pronouncement:

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

9.4 Coleridge as a literary critic

Criticism in the Romantic era took a new turn, both structurally and contextually. It no longer remained slave to precepts and principles acknowledged during the previous centuries. The romantic critics carved new paths for themselves. No more stress on reasoning, sense (common), and nature (human). Coleridge was well grounded in contemporary philosophy

and psychology. He studied and critiqued them as well. Like Aristotle, he was a man of several disciplines of knowledge. Aristotle and Plato seem to be his ideals. He disapproves of the theories of dualism of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz. Similarly, the mechanical philosophy of Hobbes, John Locke, and David Hume, whose commercial success was the finale, that is, immediate utility and gratification of senses, fix the value of things. At the same time, he disapproves of associationist David Hartley.

Coleridge had faith in transcendental or idealistic philosophy. Empiricists stress matter, whereas idealists focus on mind. Coleridge appears to have drawn on the principles of Immanuel Kant and Schelling, who described three kinds of imagination—perceptual, philosophical, and artistic—and the psychologist Johann Nicolaus Tetens in his theory of imagination. Coleridge thus differs altogether from critics of previous centuries for his stress on the principles of psychology, philosophy, and metaphysics for the study of poetry. Coleridge was more interested in the creative process than the finished product. He linked German transcendentalism with English romanticism, making his canvas of thinking wider than that of any other critic. V. Rai nicely evaluates his achievements in the following words:

Coleridge was too big a man to be confined within the bounds of a school or movement. Indeed, the system of criticism, or the critical theory that emerges out of the promiscuous body of his critical writings, is so balanced and logical that its basic tenets may be taken as sound and permanent signposts for the guidance of poets and critics of all ages. Indeed, he combined the principles of Romantic criticism with all that was sound and useful in the old critical tradition going back to Aristotle and Horace and thus produced a critical instrument that entitles him to a place among the master minds in the history of European criticism.

9.5 Let Us Sum Up

Coleridge gave a philosophical foundation to English literary criticism. Philosophy and psychology interested him very much. Unlike his predecessors, Coleridge was interested in the creative process that had made the creation possible. Before him, critics were seen as interested in the inner fabric of the creations. He was interested in formulating principles of writing instead of suggesting rules by which one can pass judgment on others. Coleridge was such an influential critic that in the forthcoming centuries he got many great followers, such as T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards in England and Edgar Allen Poe and R. W. Emerson in America. Truly, he deserves a place beside Plato, Aristotle, and Longinus or Horace.

9.6 Some Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Throw light upon literary the career of Coleridge.

Ans. Study section no. 9.2.

Q. 2 Give an introduction to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.

Ans. Go through section no. 9.3.

Q. 3 Make an appraisal of chapter xiv of *Biographia Literaria*.

Ans. Study carefully section no. 9.3.

Q. 4 Evaluate Coleridge's contribution to English Criticism.

Ans. Read section no. 9.4 and 9.5.

Q. 5 According to Coleridge, who is poet?

Ans. Read section no. 9.3.

Q. 6 According to Coleridge, what is poem?

Ans. Read section no. 9.3.

9.7 Further Reading

Blamires, Harry. *A History of Literary Criticism* Delhi: Macmillan India, 2001.

Das, B. B., & Jatindra Mohan Mohanty, eds. *Literary Criticism: A Reading*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007.

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Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon
Open University

Master of Arts
MAEN-109 (N)

Literary Criticism and Theories

Block IV Victorian and New Criticism

Unit 10 Matthew Arnold: “The Study of Poetry”

Unit 11 T.S. Eliot : “Tradition and Individual Talent”

**Unit 12 I.A. Richards: “The Four Kinds of Meaning” in Practical
Criticism**

BLOCK IV VICTORIAN AND NEW CRITICISM

With the help of three units (10, 11 and 12), learners will get aware from Victorian and New Criticism. The 10th unit is Matthew Arnold “The Study of Poetry”. Matthew Arnold’s “The Study of Poetry”, published in 1880, is a critical essay. It emphasizes on the importance of poetry and tells that poetry is a vital cultural and moral force. Arnold argues that poetry should replace religion as a source of spiritual and moral guidance in an increasingly secular world. He critiques historical and contemporary poets, advocating for a “touchstone” method to evaluate poetry’s quality by comparing it to the works of great poets like Homer and Shakespeare.

The 11th unit is T.S. Eliot “Tradition and Individual Talent”. This essay was published in 1919, and an important essay in modernist literary criticism. In it, Eliot argues that great poetry is created through a balance of tradition and individual talent. He emphasizes the importance of understanding and incorporating the literary tradition. Eliot also introduces the concept of the “impersonal theory of poetry”. The essay has been influential in shaping modernist views on literary creativity and the role of the poet in relation to tradition.

In the 12th unit, I.A. Richards “Four Kinds of Meaning” in *Practical Criticism* (1929), I.A. Richards outlines four kinds of meaning in poetry: **Sense** (literal meaning), **Feeling** (emotional tone), **Tone** (author’s attitude toward the subject and audience), and **Intention** (the author’s purpose or message). This framework emphasizes the complexity of language and the need for careful analysis in literary criticism.

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Matthew Arnold: His Career and Contribution
- 10.3 *The Study of Poetry: An Analysis*
 - 10.3.1 What is Poetry?
 - 10.3.2 Three Kinds of Evaluation
 - 10.3.3 His Views on Chaucer
 - 10.3.4 High seriousness
- 10.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.5 Some Model Questions and Their Answers
- 10.6 Further Reading

10.0 Objectives

In this *Unit*, we shall be looking at Matthew Arnold's famous critical essay *The Study of Poetry*. In this essays Arnold's critical insight comes to the fore. It will answer to a few questions like-

- How is poetry 'criticism of life'?
- How do creative and critical faculties work and how far they differ from each other?
- What are the parameters to evaluate a piece of art?
- What is criticism and what role does it play?

10.1 Introduction

Matthew Arnold was primarily moralist and humanist. He is sometimes addressed as the modern poet as well as the modern critic. Arnold started his career as a poet but turned to criticism later on under the impression that it was the moral responsibility of a sensible person to work for the redemption of society from existing social, cultural, and economic imbalances. So, his critical insight is actually shaped by his experiences of life in his age.

Having read the whole *Unit* thoroughly, students are supposed to enrich their understanding about Arnold's criticism by reading a few more relevant critical books.

10.2 Matthew Arnold: His Career and Contribution

Matthew Arnold was born on 24th of December 1822 at Laleham, Middlesex. His father, Dr. Thomas Arnold was an educationist, historian, and the headmaster of Rugby school. Arnold got his early schooling from this school. He joined Balliol College, Oxford in 1841. His mother Mary Penrose played significant role in shaping him as a poet. In the year 1845, he earned a Fellowship and joined Oriel College, Oxford. This position was with Arthur Hugh Clough before him. He married Frances Lucy Wightman on 10th of June 1851. Lord Lansdowne same year appointed him Inspector of Schools, a position he held for 35 years until his retirement in 1886. Two years after he retired, one day Arnold ran to catch a tram-car at the Dingle in Liverpool and his heart was overtaxed and died soon on 15th April, 1888 at the age of 65.

Arnold had deep interest in poetry since Rugby-days where he wrote a poem *Alaric at Rome* that bore him *Rugby prize-poem* and a scholarship given by Balliol College, Oxford. In 1843 at Oxford, he wrote *Cromwell* that bore him *Newdigate Poetry Prize*. In 1849, he published a thin volume *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* under the pen-name 'A'. it was followed by *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems* by 'A' in 1852. In 1853 and 1855 he published two collections titled *Poems*. In 1858 he wrote a play *Merope*. He served as a Professor of Poetry at Oxford from 1857 to 1867. In 1867 he published *New Poems*. In 1869 first collected edition was published.

Arnold's critical bending first appeared in *Preface to Poems* (1853). His critical works include *On Translating Homer* (1861-62), *Essays in Criticism* 1st series (1865), *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), *The Study of Poetry* (1880), *Essays in Criticism* 2nd series (1888), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), and *Literature and Dogma* (1873).

10.3 *The Study of Poetry: An Analysis*

The Study of Poetry was first published as the *General Introduction* to T. H. Ward's anthology *Selections from the English Poets* in 1880. In 1888, it was reprinted as the first essay of the second series of *Essays in Criticism*. His critical stance is steeped in humanism.

He was in search of some reliable strategy for living life peacefully amidst growing people's interest in mechanized and materialist life-pattern. To him a critic is nothing but a social reformer. Lionel Trilling called Arnold "the founding father of modern criticism in the English-speaking world".

10.3.1 What is Poetry?

Arnold begins the essay affirming that 'the future of poetry is immense' before the ongoing Victorian conflict between science and religion. Science had threatened, challenged and questioned every creed, dogma, or religion. Even religion could not save itself from being materialistic. Science has attached its emotions with fact. To the contrary, poetry attaches its emotions to idea. Idea, for Arnold, is everything in poetry. For these reasons, the mankind of future will find safe and secure stay in poetry. He argues:

More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it.

Arnold agrees with Wordsworth on two counts, first when he points out that poetry is 'the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science'; second, that poetry is '**the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge**'. Arnold has elevated the level of poetry over science, religion, and philosophy. Arnold prophecies:

The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize 'the breath and finer spirit of knowledge' offered to us by poetry.

To keep up brighter future, it has to be capable of bearing high excellences and utilities. "We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment". Arnold points out:

In poetry, which is thought and art, it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance; that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable.

Charlatanism does not have capacity to make "distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true". In poetry, it is

deemed to be unallowable and unlawful. “For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance... because of the high destinies of poetry”.

Hereafter, Arnold turns to define poetry “as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty”. The mankind will find in this sort of poetry a sure consolation and stay as time goes on and other helps fail. The power of consolation and stay is proportionate to the power of the criticism of life. And the power of the criticism of life will be proportionate to how much neatly poetry is conveying “excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true”.

10.3.2 Three Kinds of Evaluation

According to Arnold, the best kind of poetry has the potential of ‘forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can’. For sorting out the best type of poetry, Arnold suggested three methods of evaluation: real, historic, and personal. Historical and personal estimates are natural fallacies. Only real estimate is worth consideration.

A poem or a poet can be examined in socio-historical perspective. For such estimation, a poem or a poet is evaluated in the light of circumstances, limitations, and opportunities they had in given point of occasion. By this method, the work is largely overlooked as really it is. Arnold called this method ‘historic estimate’. By ‘personal estimate’ Arnold meant the intrusion of critics’ own likes, dislikes, prejudices, and affinities with the work or the author into the poetic judgment. In this case, the critics either rate the work higher or lower than it deserves actually. These are good take-away. Thus, the work as it really itself is again gets less importance than the kinship, choices, and orientations of the critic. Nevertheless, the historical method has its own benefits. It can help one identify classic and classical:

Everything depends on the reality of a poet’s classic character. If he is a dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best (for this is the true and right meaning of the word *classic*, *classical*), then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character.

We must study our classics with open eyes to get free from superstitions and other intervening forces for developing fair and objective critical insight. This is what Arnold has called 'negative criticism'. It will not be of any substantial help to enjoy what is truly excellent. It is 'literary dilettantism' unless 'it has that clear sense and deeper enjoyment for its end'. The more one knows about the classic the better one will enjoy it.

In general, critics are attracted towards historic and personal estimates and ignore 'real estimate'. Matthew Arnold says:

The historic estimate is likely in especial to affect our judgment and our language when we are dealing with ancient poets; the personal estimate when we are dealing with poets our contemporaries, or at any rate modern. The exaggerations due to the historic estimate are not in themselves, perhaps, of very much gravity. Their report hardly enters the general ear; probably they do not always impose even on the literary men who adopt them. But they lead to a dangerous abuse of language.

Hence, the 'historic' and 'personal' estimates are of little help to find out which kind of poetry 'belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can do mostly good'. Arnold advised to bear "in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry". In this evaluative exercise, one is not required to ascertain resemblances formally rather "for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them. Short passages, even single lines, will serve our turn quite sufficiently". This is known as '**touchstone method**'. Arnold formulated it having inspired from Longinus and Addison, whom the greatest test of excellence was the test of time. If a work of art is read and acclaimed in different climes by the people of different taste and temperament, it is the great work of art. Here taste of the reader is noted and given importance. Hereafter Arnold suggests how to make sure the application of the method.

For the said purpose, Arnold picks up total eleven excerpts, three from Homer, three from Dante, three from Milton and two from Shakespeare (one from *Henry IV* and one from *Hamlet*) as touchstones to discover 'the very highest poetical quality' present in the works of other poets. Touchstone is a black, hard, and opaque siliceous stone. It was used in ancient times to test the purity of gold and silver by drawing a line of scratch on it. When, how, and where do the marks of highest poetical quality arise?

They are in the matter and substance of the poetry, and they are in its manner and style. Both of these, the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent, of high beauty, worth, and power.

Arnold was influenced by Aristotle. Aristotle in his *Poetics* approbated the superiority of poetry over history under the impression that the former had the possession of ‘a higher truth and a higher seriousness’ whereas the latter lacked in them. Arnold going a step ahead points out that both the higher truth and the higher seriousness are equally significant in substance and matter, and style and manner. Arnold writes:

The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other.

If the substance and matter of the poet lack in high poetic truth and seriousness, the style and manner, it will lack in the high poetic stamp of diction and movement or rhythm as well. If the poet’s style and manner is absent from the high stamp of diction and movement, the substance and matter of the poet will also be absent from high truth and seriousness. Arnold called this kind of evaluation dry generalities because their whole force lies in their application.

10.3.3 His Views on Chaucer

By common consents of lovers of literature, Chaucer is considered to be the father of English poetry. About Chaucer, Arnold holds different kind of view and points out:

Chaucer’s power of fascination, however, is enduring; his poetical importance does not need the assistance of the historic estimate; it is real. He is a genuine source of joy and strength, which is flowing still for us and will flow always. He will be read, as time goes on, far more generally than he is read now. His language is a cause of difficulty for us; but so also... is the language of Burns. In Chaucer’s case, as in that of Burns, it is a difficulty to be unhesitatingly accepted and overcome.

Arnold sees Chaucer’s poetry superior to the romance-poetry of France. Chaucer’s poetry is superior in both substance and style. The superiority of Chaucer’s poetry in substance consists in “his large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life” which is entirely

absent in the romance-poetry. Chaucer's poetry has large, free, and sound representation of things and has the truth of substance.

Arnold looks at the style and manner of Chaucer's poetry and contrasts it with that of romance-poetry. Arnold appreciates Chaucer's 'divine liquidness of diction' and 'fluidity of movement'. This is what Chaucer's contemporaries called 'gold dew-drops of speech'. Dryden called him 'the first refinement' in terms of 'smooth numbers and easy rhymes'. Arnold contends further:

A nation may have versifiers with smooth numbers and easy rhymes, and yet may have no real poetry at all. Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry; he is our 'well of English undefiled' because by the lovely charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he makes an epoch and founds a tradition.

Chaucer's tradition of 'liquid diction' and 'fluid movement' can be traced in the works of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Keats. In Chaucer, a single line can verify it. Once Wordsworth rewrote Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* in modern accent and diction but it lost its charm. In spite of Chaucer's great qualities, Arnold did not see him among the company of great classics. He argues:

His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth. Of such avail is poetic truth of substance, in its natural and necessary union with poetic truth of style. And yet, I say, Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He has not their accent.

10.3.4 High Seriousness

The accent which was beyond Chaucer's reach was in Dante who died some eighty years earlier to Chaucer. The poetry of Chaucer may be 'placed in the glorious class of the best'. Arnold quotes Aristotle that he had told 'the high and excellent seriousness as one of the grand virtues of poetry'. On this ground, Arnold makes an evaluation of Chaucer:

The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it.

To see increasing demand of poetry in his time, Arnold claims that in future ‘high seriousness’ in poetry will be esteemed high more than ever. Finally, Arnold sums up his view on Chaucer:

...he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

Arnold found Shakespeare and Milton classics of English poetry for ‘high seriousness’ and denied this position to Dryden and Pope who attempted to attain Chaucer’s excellences but failed. To him, they are classics of prose as they had acquired ‘needful qualities of a fit prose; regularity, uniformity, precision, and balance. In pursuit of these qualities, they suppressed their poetry to some extent. He thinks Dryden “as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century”. Their poetry “is the poetry of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Though they may write in verse, though they may in certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and pope are not the classics of our poetry, they are the classics of our prose.” Arnold sees Thomas Gray as the poetical classic of the eighteenth century. “He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic”. The high seriousness arises out of absolute sincerity. This is what Robert Burns lacked in matter and manner both. Like Chaucer, Burns’ view is large, free, shrewd, and poetic yet ‘the world of Chaucer is fairer and more significant than that of Burns’. Arnold ends the essay with the hope that there would never cease the circulation and relevance of poetry in future because it preserves humanity innately.

10.4 Let Us Sum Up

To the conclusion, it can be said that Arnold was a man of extraordinary sense, confidence and knowledge about the critical and creative tradition of the whole world. He is sometimes overpraised. T. S. Eliot does not consider him as a critic. However, his popularity probably rests upon “his rejection of the biases of the individual and of the age” (Blamires 275).

10.5 Some Model Questions and their Answers

Q. 1 Through light upon Arnold's literary achievements.

Ans. Read section no. 10.2.

Q. 2 Write a short introduction to the essay *The Study of Poetry*.

Ans. Study section no. 10.3.

Q. 3 According to Arnold, what is poetry?

Ans. Read section no. 10.3.1.

Q. 4 Summarize three types of evaluation.

Ans. Go through section no. 10.3.2.

Q. 5 What is 'high seriousness'?

Ans. Read section no. 10.3.4.

Q. 6 What is 'touchstone method'?

Ans. Study carefully section no. 10.3.2.

10.6 Further Reading

Blamires, Harry. *A History of Literary Criticism*. Delhi: Macmillan India, 2001.

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Unit 11 **T. S. Eliot: *Tradition and Individual Talent***

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 T. S. Eliot: His Life, Age, and Achievements
- 11.3 *Tradition and Individual Talent: An Analysis*
- 11.4 T. S. Eliot as a Critic
- 11.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.6 Some Model Questions and Their Answers
- 11.7 Further Reading

11.0 Objectives

This *unit* will be looking at a few of Eliot's most influential critical essays, with special emphasis on critical views and terms. On the basis of this study, it is aimed at reaching a safe conclusion regarding Eliot's contribution to English literary criticism. And moreover, this *unit* aims to shed light in general on Eliot's timeline, some of his important works, and historical conditions.

11.1 Introduction

Both Great Wars (*World War I* and *World War II*) brought in global physical devastation and psychological disillusionment. To characterize and portray increasing chaos and absurdity in English and American life, a number of creative writers did a number of experiments with the form, technique, and content. Criticism took so many directions to address the complexities of life and literature. Thomas Stearns Eliot, like Ben Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Arnold, was a poet-critic. For him, creation and criticism were complementary activities. T. S. Eliot, like Aristotle and Coleridge, navigates backward and forward in his critical journey.

Having gone through this *unit*, the learners would be able to make an appraisal of Eliot's critical contributions by themselves. Besides, it is suggested that they go through a few more critical books for the enhancement of their knowledge about T. S. Eliot.

11.2 T. S. Eliot: His Life, Age, and Achievements

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on September 23, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. He was the seventh and last child of Henry Ware Eliot and Charlotte Champe Stearns. His mother was the daughter of a merchant named Thomas Stearns Jr., based in Boston, Massachusetts.

Eliot's early education began at Smith Academy, a division of Washington University in St. Louis, where he learned Latin, Greek, French, and German. For a brief period, he attended Milton Academy near Boston. Then, he moved to Harvard University and stayed there from 1906 to 1910 to complete his graduation (AB) and post-graduation (AM) in English literature. On June 26, 1915, Eliot married Vivien Haigh Wood, the daughter of a landscape and portrait painter, though he had fallen in love with Emily Hale in 1912. In 1916, Eliot began his teaching career at Highgate Junior School. In 1917, he joined Lloyds Bank as a clerk, where he worked in its foreign and colonial departments. Here, he worked for seven years. The same year, he began working for *The Egoist* as an assistant editor. In 1922, he founded a quarterly, *The Criterion*, and ran it until 1939. In 1947, Harvard University conferred upon him an honorary degree. 11 more universities have conferred honorary degrees upon him. In 1948, he got the Order of Merit and the prestigious Nobel Prize for literature. Eliot died on January 4 at his Kensington home in London in 1965. His ashes were interred at East Coker, a village in Somerset, in April.

T. S. Eliot started writing in the very days of Smith Academy. Among his teachers who influenced him most were Irving Babbitt, George Santayana, and Paul Elmer More. Eliot writes in his Introduction to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1932) that 'psychological and sociological are probably the two best advertised varieties of modern criticism, but the number of ways in which the problems of criticism are approached was never before so great or so confusing. Criticism seems to have separated into several diverse kinds'.

T. S. Eliot wrote some five hundred critical essays. His major critical works include *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920), *Homage to John Dryden* (1924), *For Lancelot Andrews: Essays on Style and Order* (1928), *Selected Essays 1917–1932* (1932), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *Elizabethan Essays* (1934), *After Strange*

Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (1934), *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), and the last work, *To Criticize the Critic* (1965).

11.3 *Tradition and Individual Talent: An Analysis*

The essay “Tradition and Individual Talent” was published in two instalments of *The Egoist*, a literary magazine based in London, in its final issues in September and December of 1919. However, it was published anonymously in the magazine. The essay consists of a little more than 3000 words. It is so important that sometimes it is claimed that all subsequent essays by Eliot are just footnotes to it. In 1920, Eliot brought out a collection of essays, *The Sacred Wood*, in which it was reprinted. In Eliot, ‘criticism becomes a by-product of his private poetry workshop in judging others by his own standards as a practicing poet’ (Nagarajan 109).

The essay is divided into three sections. In the first section, Eliot defines ‘tradition’ and looks at the relationship of a piece of poetry by an author to other poems by other authors, which constitutes the literary history or poetic tradition. The second section examines how much a piece of poetry is related to its author. In the last section, Eliot sheds light on the weaknesses of the essay and its purpose, which is to shift attention from author to text.

Eliot begins the essay by claiming that the term ‘tradition’ is hardly used in English writing. Its adjectival form, ‘traditional’, is often used for the purpose of censure. The term ‘traditional’ or ‘too traditional’ bears a derogatory meaning. Eliot here seems to be underscoring the importance of ‘tradition’. He places emphasis on criticism and claims it to be as important as breathing. He writes:

Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative but also its own critical turn of mind, and it is even more oblivious to the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius.

Eliot finds the French more critical than the English (whom he designated ‘unconscious people’). Eliot by ‘tradition’ does not mean the continuance of beliefs, dogmas, habits, and customs simply learned or acquired from forefathers. It is not ‘tradition’. Tradition does not consist in adaptation and imitation of the ways and practices of immediate predecessors, for

“novelty is better than repetition.” Tradition is something of wider significance. It is obtained by great labour. Eliot puts up his blueprint of ‘tradition’:

It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal, of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.

The historical sense is the necessary condition and requirement for a writer to maintain his contemporaneity. It sharpens the sensibility of the writer, which has a major role to play in the creative process. The interaction between past and present in the consciousness shapes historical sense, which ultimately turns into ‘tradition’. This awareness enables the writer to realize his place and rank among his contemporaries. No poet or artist is important in isolation. It is tradition that gives him importance. A piece of art achieves value when it is evaluated from a larger perspective. Eliot justifies:

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.

Eliot approbates the interdependence of the past and present. The existing order is complete by itself to include all the efforts of the past as far as it is not modified by the supervention of novelty. Tradition, to him, is a continuous process. It changes with the changes in the conditions of life. The only alternative is to revive and follow good and essential Eliot writes that “the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the present”. Eliot does not hereby suggest that the present writers should be judged by the standards or canons of dead critics. “It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other”.

Eliot further talks about the relationship of the poet to the past. According to him, the past is not a lump. The difference between past and present “is that the consciousness present is an

awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the poet's awareness of itself cannot show". To procure the consciousness of the past, one should always strive for it and develop it throughout their career. Here, Eliot cautions against too much reading. Actually, too much reading vitiates the poetic sensibility.

Thus, a present author effects changes in the continuing current of thought, making it more complex and refined but not making the older set of writers either dead or inoperative. In the process, the poet continually surrenders his present for the achievement of something more valuable for "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality". Thus, Eliot elaborated on his idea about the relation of a poem to poems by other authors. According to Eliot's concept of poetry, poetry is the living whole of all the poetry written in history.

Hereafter, Eliot talks about "the process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition". Actually, he wants to see art at the level of science, which is possible through depersonalization. In the second section, Eliot explains the relationship of a poem to its poet. In the beginning of the section, Eliot affirms: "Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not at the poet but at the poetry".

In this statement, Eliot asked to leave aside all kinds of biographical references and move to practical criticism, and as such, attention is shifted from author to text. This shift served as the theoretical backbone of The New Criticism. He shifts attention from one poem to the whole of the poetry. To elucidate the impersonal theory of poetry, Eliot quotes an analogy from chemistry. The analogy is that of a catalyst. What happens in the chamber containing two gases, namely oxygen and sulfur dioxide, when the shred of platinum is introduced? There happens a chemical reaction resulting into one new compound that is sulfurous acid. This newly formed acid does not contain any trace of platinum. In the reaction, the role of shreds of platinum is significant. After the reaction, the shred remains entirely unaffected and unchanged.

Likewise, the mind of the poet plays the role of the shred of platinum. Eliot points out that the mind may work either partly or fully upon the experience of the man, but the perfection of the artist depends upon how much the man who suffers and the mind that creates are separate from each other. The mind effects fusion into various passions, which are its objects to work upon. The poet's mind keeps transforming elements into a new compound while being

separate from the whole creative process. There are two elements—emotion and feeling—that enter the poet’s consciousness in the presence of the catalytic mind. Here, he seems to be Coleridgean. Eliot writes, “The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion or may be a combination of several, and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words, phrases, or images, may be added to compose the final result”.

Eliot elaborates his idea a bit more and says, “The poet’s mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, and images, which remain there until all the particles that can unite to form a new compound are present together”. Eliot thus rejects the view that the intensity, sublimity, or greatness of emotion and other components are worthy of attention. According to him, the intensity of the artistic process counts, not the emotion, because in the artistic process, a fusion of emotions takes place. The fusion process may happen in a variety of ways. Poetry, to him, is not an inspiration; instead, it is an organization of various feelings and emotions stored in the mind, occasioned at various moments of time.

Eliot uses the term ‘emotion’ in three ways: personal, structural, and artistic. The personal emotion is excited by the events that actually happened in the life of the poet. The structural emotion we find in a play or a poem is variety. There may be a number of floating feelings. The artistic emotion is the total effect of the art, which arises from the combination of emotion and feeling. It approximates the emotion of a reader or an audience to the emotion of the speaker or the protagonist. Eliot comes close to the ancient Rasa theory of Indian tradition.

Eliot dismisses the 'metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul'. Thus, the meaning is that the poet does not have personality to express. He is just blessed with the medium that is the mind to store and interfuse different impressions and experiences in a unique manner. He writes:

Impressions and experiences that are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those that become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man's personality.

Eliot further elaborates his idea of depersonalization:

The business of the poet is not to find new emotions but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings that are not actually emotions at all. And emotions that he has never experienced will serve his turn, as well as those familiar to him.

So, a good poet is not supposed to be eccentric because it is eccentricity that compels them to look for new emotions for the charm of novelty.

Finally, Eliot declares Wordsworth's formula invalid. For Wordsworth, poetry is an outcome of "emotion recollected in tranquillity". According to Eliot, poetry is neither a whole of emotions, nor the effect of recollection, nor tranquillity. Poetry is the result of the artistic process, which is concentration, not the recollection of a great number of experiences. Concentration is not a deliberate act of mind. Nevertheless, in writing poetry, there are a number of things that must be conscious and deliberate. The meaning thereby is that a good poet is always unconscious where he is not supposed to be conscious, and a bad poet is always conscious where he should be unconscious, which is what makes him personal. Eliot thus affirms: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from the emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality".

Eliot thus did away with the empirical self in a biographical sense. He verifies the importance of the implied author.

The third section is very brief. Herein, Eliot steers clear of his aim, which is to "divert interest from the poet to the poetry" for a more accurate estimation of poetry. The New Critics in America took this appeal of Eliot for granted and made it part of their critical pursuits in the 1940s. Eliot further points out that, on average, critics appreciate "the expression of sincere emotion" in a piece of poetry, but there are a few who appreciate it for its "technical excellence". There are hardly any who could notice the emotion of art, which is impersonal and which is to be found in the poem itself, not outside of it, for instance, in the life history of the poet. In order to reach the emotion of art in its true sense, the poet is certainly required to surrender himself or herself entirely to the work to be done. He or she cannot know when and where it is to be finished unless the author lives in it. For making art timeless and temporal, this sort of objectivity is urgently needed.

Both 'Tradition' and 'individual talent' are complementary, interdependent, and interlinked. Both go together. Both seem to be just two aspects of the same coin—obverse and reverse.

Both work on each other. 'Tradition' influences the 'individual talent' and vice versa. The past directs the present, and the present alters the past. Thus, the text is read and reread, interpreted and reinterpreted always. This is what *reader-response* and *reception* theorists later applauded and elaborated on. It is 'tradition' that sets the course of the 'individual talent'. It is more powerful, valuable, and pervasive than 'individual talent'. The poet achieves individuality by dint of tradition. It is tradition that helps authors get depersonalized. For his theories of 'tradition' and 'impersonality', Eliot drew on Irving Babbitt and Ezra Pound. Tradition is immanent in the whole creative process. It seems that Eliot's theory of impersonality is ultimately to position the author where he or she actually deserves. This is the subjective side of the theory. Eliot's idea of impersonality is evocative of Keats' 'negative capability'. Eliot's 'tradition' includes Dante, Donne, and Baudelaire, whereas Pound's Homer, Cavalcanti, Chaucer, and Rossetti

11.4 T. S. Eliot as a Critic

It is very difficult to write even a single sentence about the hero of ideas and images, T. S. Eliot. Actually, he was Janus-faced. He could look before and after simultaneously. This is the reason why his critical views undergo modifications over time. On the basis of the opinions of critics worldwide, it can be safely said that T. S. Eliot is among the greatest English critics. His critical writings are copious to prove him as a critic. Even modern critics like Northrop Frye and Edward Said acknowledge their indebtedness to Eliot. His concept of 'tradition' still enjoys its validity. It was his great achievement. His concepts of 'impersonality', 'unification of sensibility', 'dissociation of sensibility', 'function of criticism', 'criticism', and 'objective correlative' have been proven highly influential in the field of literary criticism. New Critics heavily drew upon him. Some of his views attracted the attention of 'new historicists', 'reader-response theorists', and 'reception theorists'. His evergreen influences bear testimony to his greatness as a critic.

11.5 Let Us Sum Up

At the conclusion of this unit, it has become quite clear that Eliot's critical endeavour set the trend of criticism and was directed at all those forthcoming scholars who were looking either for how to accomplish the task of criticism or for their career as a critic in criticism. His ideal was Aristotle. He had been passionate about bringing about accuracy and objectivity in critical judgments. His influences were experienced in critical quarters around the world from

the very beginning of his career as a critic. After his death, there was never a trace of a decline in his popularity.

11.6 Some Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Focus briefly on T. S. Eliot's life and literary achievements.

Ans. Read section no. 11.2.

Q. 2 What is difference between 'tradition' and traditional, according to Eliot?

Ans. Read carefully section no. 11.3.

Q. 3 What is 'historical sense' and how it is evolved?

Ans. Go through section no. 11.3.

Q. 4 Elaborate Eliot's depersonalization theory of poetry.

Ans. Read section no. 11.3.

Q. 5 How are 'tradition' and 'individual talent' related to each other?

Ans. Study the last part of section no. 11.3.

Q. 6 Evaluate T. S. Eliot's achievement as a critic.

Ans. Study carefully section no. 11.2 and 11.4.

11.7 Further Reading

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Structure

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12.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we shall be doing a study on I. A. Richards, the most important critic of the twentieth century. Richards' "The Four Kinds of Meaning" will be explained for the convenience of comprehension. Along with that, there will be a brief look at Richard's timeline, upbringing, education, and career. Finally, it will seek to ascertain Richards' contribution to the field of literary criticism and his achievements as a critic.

12.1 Introduction

The New Critics in the 1950s of the twentieth century heavily drew on Richards to set the course of their literary pursuits. I. A. Richards was interdisciplinary in his approach. He set the trend of 'practical criticism' across the world. Like T. S. Eliot, he took the term 'poem' for any creative work and likewise 'the poet' for any creative artist. Along with Eliot, he is considered to be the father of 'new criticism'. Richards stressed the in-depth, close analysis of language, imagery, and metaphor. He believes that insight into psychology is of great help

while interpreting literature. Both Eliot and Richards share the same platform in terms of ‘practical criticism’ but both differ in terms of purpose and approach.

After having studied the *unit* thoroughly, you are suggested to go through a few more critical books given in the section titled *Further Reading*.

12.2 I. A. Richards: His Life and Achievements

Ivor Armstrong Richards was born on February 26, 1893, in Cheshire, England. He was educated at Clifton College and Magdalene College, Cambridge. He studied philosophy at Cambridge University. From thereon, he began speculating that literary studies should be carried out alongside philosophy, psychology, and rhetoric. Literary studies would not be encouraging if done exclusively in their own light. He held positions in various capacities at Cambridge, Tsinghua University, Beijing (China), and later at Harvard University (USA) from 1944 to 1963. As a professor, he had been very influential. William Empson and F. R. Leavis were his pupils, who were also literary critics. He applied significant principles of semantics and psychology to literary readings. He always stressed the textual close analysis. However, his approach seems a little complex to be understood easily because of its heavy reliance on impressions and abstractions.

Richards wrote a number of critical books, both individually and collaboratively. His critical works include *The Meaning of Meaning* (with Ogden, 1923), *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Science and Poetry* (1926), *Practical Criticism* (1929), *Coleridge on Imagination* (1934), *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), *Interpretation of Teaching* (1938), and *How to Read a Page: A Course in Effective Reading* (1942). He died at the age of 86 on September 7, 1979, in Cambridge.

12.3 The Four Kinds of Meaning

I. A. Richards had been very concerned about the problem of communication almost since the beginning of his critical career. He gave much attention to language, which is the medium of communication in general. In the book, *The Meaning of Meaning*, Richards and Ogden carefully focused on the nature of language and the different kinds of meaning the language is capable of giving. Alongside, they suggested two uses of language: scientific or referential use and emotive use. For him, poetic language was ambiguous, plurisignant, and open to

various shades of meaning. Richards, in his book *Principles of Literary Criticism*, reiterated the two different uses of language.

The Four Kinds of Meaning is the first chapter of the third part of the book *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement* (1929). It was Richards who popularized the phrase 'practical criticism' in academia. It means a dispassionate analysis and evaluation of any text to entirely cut off exterior references. It entails only 'words on the page'. This kind of approach has been very influential in the field of teaching English literature from 1930 to 1960. The book *Practical Criticism* is more influential than any of his works. His arguments in favour of 'close reading' in this work established themselves as a milestone in English criticism. New critics heavily drew upon him. The work *Practical Criticism*, of course, embodies what experiments he did in his classroom with students while teaching at Cambridge University. Before I proceed, it is good to tell you about what he did to arrive at 'the kinds of meaning'.

In part two of the book, there is a reference to the distribution of thirteen pieces of poetry bearing no title and no mention of their authors in the classroom so that students could not be swayed by any preconceived notion about either the author or the poem. Richards, as an instructor, asked his students to make commentary. Afterwards, he collected, collated, and analysed their responses and found that there might be thousands of verdicts from thousands of readers on the same piece of writing. It was unbelievable to Richards, actually; he was expecting some consensus in their responses.

Richards identifies ten impediments or hinderances to comprehending a piece of poetry. These factors lead to misreading. These are:

1. The difficulty in getting the general sense or meaning of a poem Similarly, the feeling, tone, and intention of the poem are also misconceived.
2. It is difficult to construe the rhythm and sensuous potential inherent in the poem.
3. Imagery, principally visual imagery, poses difficulty to understand because the picture that was in the mind of the poet may take a different shape in others.
4. The influence of irrelevant mnemonics (intrusions of private and personal associations) makes the piece of poetry difficult to comprehend.
5. Stock responses based on privately established judgments intrude when a poem's opinions and emotions are available to the reader's mind.

6. Sentimentality affects the text.
7. Inhibitions or repressions in the mind serve as hindrances to understanding poetry.
8. Indoctrination of certain views and beliefs about the world in the poetry results in confusion that stops getting the total meaning or reliable conclusion.
9. Technical presuppositions can cause difficulty. That is to say, if a poem is rendered in a certain manner and achieves success, it will be taken for excellence, and if a poem is done differently, it will be evaluated in the light of technical presuppositions outside.
10. Lastly, the general critical preconceptions made by theories about the nature and value of poetry intervene between the reader and the poem.

These ten situations make it difficult to comprehend the meaning of a poem in its entirety. To overcome these impediments, it is good to first know what meaning is.

At the outset of the chapter titled “The Four Kinds of Meaning”, Richards categorically writes that ‘the problem of making out the meaning is the difficulty of all reading’. An attempt to answer questions like “What is a meaning? What are we doing when we endeavour to make it out? What is it we are making out?” led Richards to suggest four types of functions, aspects, or meanings. There are several kinds of meaning, and all kinds of meaning get together to form ‘the total meaning’. The language of poetry performs several functions simultaneously. This aspect of poetry results in misunderstanding and confusion while making out the meaning. With these arguments, Richards points out that there are four aspects to any human utterance. These are: sense, feeling, tone, and intention.

12.3.1. Sense

It is 'sense', according to Richards, that sets the direction of thought. It means what idea or thought is actually to be said or conveyed. It is the presentation of facts. It constitutes the first thread of ‘total meaning’. Actually, ‘sense’ makes the context clear enough. Let me elaborate. When we want to say something in reference to something, we first try to draw the attention of listeners towards the item or issue about which he is going to share his views and opinions with them. These items stir them to think, which ultimately results in the evocation of some thought about the reference or item. Words are used to deliver or carry forward sense on a particular issue or the state of affairs.

12.3.2. Feeling

‘Feeling’ is the second aspect, function, or meaning of what Richards termed ‘total meaning’. By ‘feeling’, Richards meant “the whole conative-affective aspect of life—emotion, emotional attitudes, the will, desire, pleasure-unpleasure, and the rest”. Feelings are evoked through the medium of language. Feelings about some item or affair determine the content of communication. The attitude or standpoint of the speaker on a particular matter constitutes ‘feeling’. Words bear feelings. Feeling is the emotion of the writer.

12.3.3. Tone

Simply put, the attitude towards the listener constitutes ‘tone’. Tone plays a very important role while delivering an idea or thought. It is tone that instructs the listener on how to mean something. The speaker, for the sake of tone, feels obliged to arrange words differently. The attitude or tone of the speaker guides the listener or audience in the way an idea or thought is being delivered. The speaker easily changes tone to meet the requirements of the situation or the demands of the listener or audience. So, apprehension of tone guides the course of meaning generation.

12.3.4. Intention

Besides 'sense" (what to say), ‘feeling’ (standpoint on something), and ‘tone’ (attitude towards the listener), there is the fourth aspect of meaning, that is, ‘intention’. The aim or motto (overt and covert) that the speaker seeks to bring forward or promote constitutes the speaker’s intention. What he actually wants to establish makes up for ‘intention’. It is ‘intention’ that controls the whole of the communication business. Intention modifies speech. It is the vision of the speaker. In the light of ‘intention’, the speaker’s success or failure is measured. Hence, in the process of comprehending any piece of poetry, knowing ‘intention’ is most significant. What led the author to go for a poetic venture was the vision or ‘intention’.

One or the other functions of meaning may become predominant; for instance, in scientific writings, sense enjoys precedence over feeling, academic convention sets tone, and emphasis is placed upon making a clearer statement of what he has to express. In imaginative and psychological writings, it is feeling that predominates. It operates through 'sense'. In thesis

writings for the award of some degree, like a PhD, 'intention' subordinates the other three functions. When a writer looks for the publicity of any result or finding in science, he takes recourse to tone. In public speeches, especially during elections, 'intention' predominates. Public speakers excite the feelings of the audience regarding policies and issues with the help of 'tone', which helps establish a relationship with the listener.

In this way, we see that all four functions—sense, feeling, tone, and intention—are interrelated and interdependent. However, in some writing, for example, scientific treatises, 'sense' predominates 'feeling', and in poetic writing, it is 'feeling' that takes over 'sense'. In any communication, written or spoken, there is an interplay of these functions. Richards writes:

Innumerable cross-influences and complications between these four kinds of meaning are possible and frequently present in what may appear to be a quite simple remark. *A perfect understanding would involve not only an accurate direction of thought, a correct evocation of feeling, an exact apprehension of tone, and a precise recognition of intention, but further, it would get these contributory meanings in their right order and proportion to one another and seize—though not in terms of explicit thought—their interdependence upon one another, their sequences, and their interrelations.* (italics mine)

12.4 I. A. Richards as a Critic

Richards, as a critic, has been equally influential in England and America. He had been associated with the universities of Cambridge and Harvard for a long period, and so his critical outlook and approach influenced scholars both in England and America. He had found criticism of his time chaotic and unsystematic. He even calls critics of previous centuries such as Aristotle, Longinus, Horace, Dryden, etc. by their names. It had been his long-cherished dream to bring scientific accuracy and objectivity to literary criticism. In this way, he actually replied to all men of science who often denounce literature. George Watson, in his book *The Literary Critics*, aptly writes about the influence of Richards while making a comparison between him and T. S. Eliot: "Richards' claim to have pioneered Anglo-American New Criticism of the thirties and forties is unassailable. He provided the theoretical foundations on which the technique of verbal analysis was built". To simplify, T. S. Eliot is the most influential descriptive critic of the twentieth century, and similarly, I. A. Richards is

the most influential theoretical critic. Richards, by his own efforts, formulated a systematic and complete theory of literary art.

Richards was the first critic to apply psychological insights to the reading of literary texts. His work, *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, established him as an aesthetic and psychological critic. He, in fact, made fundamental knowledge of psychology essential to learning the art of literary criticism. For him, poetry arises out of a uniquely ordered state of mind. So, poetry is the record of a poet's mind. As knowledge about the workings of the mind improves, the mysteries of literary activities become clearer. He did a great job by linking literature with psychology. However, sometimes too much stress on psychological processes makes his approach a little burdensome and vague. For laying emphasis on psychology in imaginative writing, he is sometimes designated the father of psychological criticism.

Richards' theory of communication made the distinction between denotative (scientific) and connotative (emotive) use of language highly popular and impactful in academia. Imaginative and creative writings use connotative language, whereas technical writings use denotative language. Communication of meaning or message is an integral part of writing.

I. A. Richards' emphasis on 'words on the page' made him anti-historical, which finally culminated in the New Criticism. He sees historical and sociological references as obstacles to the comprehension of any particular piece of poetry. They cause distraction in the process of doing a fit and fair evaluation and judgement. He was always opposed to stock responses. He believed in objective or scientific analysis.

Richards set the fashion of applied criticism and practical criticism worldwide. Even today, we can see in many university examinations questions asking for an analysis of an unfamiliar poem or piece of prose. For this, credit goes to the lone efforts of Richards.

12.5 Let Us Sum Up

At the end of this *unit*, it is quite safe to point out that Richards' contribution to English literary criticism is very significant. Various strategies, he adopted in making out the meaning of a work of poetry, have been very influential in the field of teaching English literature. He established firmly 'academic criticism. His concepts like 'two uses of language', 'four kinds

of meaning', 'words on the page', the idea of synaesthesia (organizing of impulses), etc. have caught the attention of literary scholars across the world. Richards' stress on psychology links him to Coleridge, who too used psychological processes in his critical endeavour. Apart from his critical achievements, it can also be pointed out that his writing seems too complex and technical for any ordinary reader. B. Prasad writes, "The lay reader who turns over his pages retires harassed and overburdened and looks elsewhere for recreation. He deserts his master and seeks companions" (Prasad 246).

12.6 Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Briefly focus on the life and achievements of Richards.

Ans. Read section no. section no. 12.2.

Q. 2 What are the two uses of language, according to Richards?

Ans. Study carefully section no. 12.3.

Q. 3 What are the four types of meaning?

Ans. Read section no. 12.3.

Q. 4 What is 'sense'?

Ans. Read section no. 12.3.1.

Q. 5 Are 'sense', 'feeling', 'tone' and 'intention' interrelated?

Ans. Read section no. 12.3.

Q. 6 Evaluate the contribution of Richards as a critic.

Ans. Read section no. 12.4.

12.7 Further Reading

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Master of Arts
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Literary Criticism and Theories

Block V Twentieth Century Literary Theories

Unit13 Multiculturalism and Marxist Theories

Unit 14 Post Modernism and Deconstruction

Unit15 Psychoanalysis and Gender Studies

Unit 16 Eco Criticism and Diaspora Studies

BLOCK V TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERARY THEORIES

The Block V is divided into four units (13, 14, 15 and 16). The Unit 13 is “Multiculturalism and Marxist Theories”. The aim of this unit is to give insight on these theories. Multiculturalism in literary theory focuses on the representation and celebration of diverse cultural identities and experiences within literature. It challenges dominant cultural narratives and seeks to give voice to marginalized groups. Marxist theories, on the other hand, analyze literature through the lens of class struggle, economic power, and social inequality. They examine how texts reflect and perpetuate the material conditions and ideologies of their time.

The Unit 14 is “Post Modernism and Deconstruction”. Understanding Postmodernism and Deconstruction helps learners develop critical thinking by challenging established norms and exploring diverse perspectives. It enhances literary analysis by revealing multiple meanings and encourages a deeper appreciation of cultural and social complexities. Together, postmodernism and deconstruction offer critical tools for analyzing and questioning traditional structures and assumptions in literature.

In the Unit 15 “Psychoanalysis and Gender Studies” learners will get the knowledge how psychological and gender dynamics shape identity and behaviour. Psychoanalysis explores how unconscious desires and psychological conflicts influence behaviour and identity. In literary criticism, it examines how these elements shape characters and narratives. Gender Studies focuses on how literature and culture construct and represent gender identities and relations. It analyzes how texts reflect and challenge gender norms and power dynamics.

The Unit 16 is “Eco Criticism and Diaspora Studies”. The aim of this unit is to understand the connection of literature with environmental and migratory experiences. Eco-Criticism aims to explore the relationship between literature and the environment, examining how texts represent and engage with ecological issues, and promoting awareness of environmental concerns. Diaspora Studies focuses on the experiences, identities, and cultural practices of people living outside their country of origin, analyzing how migration and displacement affect individuals and communities.

Unit 13 Multiculturalism and Marxist Theory

Structure

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- 13.2 Multiculturalism: Issues and Challenges
- 13.3 Marxist Theory: Concepts and Concerns
- 13.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.5 Model Questions and Their Answers
- 13.6 Further Readings

13.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we will study multiculturalism, its concepts, issues, and challenges, along with the Marxist approach. Most of the developed countries have shifted themselves from 'a melting pot' to 'a salad bowl' situation. Salad-bowl is an appropriate metaphor in the current world scenario to characterize a multicultural society. A multicultural country legally allows various cultures different from the majoritarian or native to exist. For this reason, such societies are also called 'multi-ethnic', multi-racial, poly-racial, etc. Making sure of legal securities is not enough. Multiculturalism as a discourse emerged to critically examine various social, cultural, and economic problems faced by ethnic or cultural minorities to bring them on par with majority communities. Marxism, too, works for change in actual life and society by transforming economic constraints. Economic determinants find central focus in Marxist thinking.

13.1 Introduction

With the stunning advancements in tourism and communication facilities, the political boundaries of countries are getting frayed. These facilities have accelerated the exchange of art, science, culture, technology, and social mobility. Communities are coming into contact with other communities, and consequently, a new kind of society is evolving known as multicultural society across the world. In the USA and England, multicultural societies began developing in the 1960s and 1970s of the 20th century because of increased immigration and solidarity. Mere cultural acceptance is not enough in any host country. To practice one's

native culture and tradition, one is required to have equal job opportunities. If the source of income is denied to migrant people, it is not altogether possible to live along with native artifacts. Marxists seek to create an exploitation-free atmosphere for everyone in economic and political contexts.

After having studied the whole *unit* thoroughly, you are suggested to read a few more critical books suggested in the section *Further Reading*.

13.2 Multiculturalism: Issues and Challenges

Before moving on to multiculturalism as a discourse, it is better to shed light briefly on what culture is. It denotes common language, literature, history, religious beliefs, customs, values, geographical origin, and so on and so forth. Culture distinguishes its stockholders from those of others. It is identarian, essentially. Multiculturalism is an alternative to monoculturalism. In many parts of the world, cultural diversity is seen as a threat to dominant cultures. Multiculturalism gained currency in debates and discussions over minority rights and the feminists' movement in the late 1960s and 1970s in the USA and England. Multiculturalism as an approach "seems to bring within its range subjects as diverse as cuisine and clothing, ethnicity and nationalism, civil liberties and liberal democracy, education and religion, devolution, and globalization" (Watson 106). C. W. Watson aptly differentiates 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism'. He writes-

Multicultural points to the visible and universally accessible products of cultural diversity—food, clothes, music, theater, and sometimes specialist occupations—and on the whole, it has a very positive resonance: we are all happy to live in multicultural societies, which add to the variety and colour of lifestyles available to us, increasing the breadth of our choices as consumers. 'Multiculturalism', on the other hand, when it is not simply the noun from 'multicultural', directs our attention away from these purely visible aspects of diversity to the deeper philosophical and political implications of the coexistence of different orientations in engagement with the world and the way in which those differences jostle for recognition within national and global boundaries, sometimes in relative harmony with each other, sometimes in real conflict. (Watson 106-7)

Multiculturalism has direct relations with postcolonial countries where diversity and heterogeneity are considered to be the norm. Diasporics ask for one multivalent world with

multiple boundaries but no constraints. A multivalent nation must be ready to accommodate and honour other cultures and cultural practices, retaining their distinctions and uniqueness if at all possible. E. San Juan Jr., in an essay titled “The Paradox of Multiculturalism: Ethnicity and Identity in the Philippines” (1999), writes:

In the case of “third world” societies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, colonialism introduced a politics of difference that multiplied boundaries within and without: the subjugated communities were polarized internally and against one another. Differences marked by race, class, gender, religion, nationality, and other ethnic particulars functioned as the instruments by which the hegemony of the colonized power was established and maintained. In fact, a policy of multiculturalism was devised and applied in order to disintegrate former cohesive groups, foster antagonism between and among their members, and prevent any sense of national unity that would challenge colonial rule” (Juan 1).

Caleb Rosado, in an article titled “Toward a Definition of Multiculturalism,” attempts to define 'multiculturalism':

“Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context that empowers all within the organization or society” (Rosado 3).

Diversity is the essence of multiculturalism. It presumes the coexistence of people of various origins, classes, castes, cultures, races, nationalities, and ethnicities in a nation-state. Most probably, it can resolve tussles between home-creatures and host-creatures by promoting cultural exchanges among them.

According to Bhikhu Parekh, multiculturalism is neither a political theory nor a philosophical school but rather a way of viewing human life. It is made up of the creative interplay of three essential insights. One is the cultural embeddedness of human beings, that is, human beings grow up and live alongside culture, cultural practices, meanings, and significances attributed to it, prevalent in a particular organization or society. Two: cultural plurality, that is, different cultures flourish with different visions and values. Each culture requires others to help understand the existence of humans and humanity. In the modern mobile world, knowledge of other cultures is important, as it strengthens the bond of brotherhood. Three is the plural

nature of each culture, that is, each culture is composed of bits and pieces from many other cultures because culture is also a social or external forces' victim. Each culture bears traces of other cultures, so there is no culture *sui generis*. To bring about a successful multicultural nation, according to Parekh, the sense of belongingness must be encouraged, cultivated, and helped; otherwise, the superstructure of multiculturalism will crumble because a mere grant of citizenship to immigrants is not enough. In short, citizenship, a sense of belonging, and recognition of their culture and cultural differences must be supported by home politics and political doctrines.

Will Kymlicka, a Canadian professor of philosophy, suggests two models of multiculturalism: 'anglo conformity' and 'multicultural model'. The former was introduced in the 1960s with the purpose that immigrants would adopt native cultures and standards within stipulated time. And the latter was brought into action in the early 1970s. This model looks for sufficient tolerance towards ethnic groups from the government side in order to keep the cultures of ethnic groups alive.

Charles Taylor wishes to see the minority and majority on equal footing. Every group must be allowed to practice their culture. Even if a new culture comes into contact, it must be met with due respect. In fact, Taylor is in favour of a liberal state that believes in the coexistence of diverse cultures.

Tariq Modood disapproves of those theorists on multiculturalism who hold that private and public distinctions are essential conditions for multiculturalism. He quotes John Rex, who restricts cultural diversity to the private domain and equality in opportunity and treatment in relation to the public domain—law, politics, economics, and welfare programs. Modood suggests five ways to face the challenges posed by existent cultural diversity in Europe: the decentred self, the liberal state, the republic, the federation of communities, and the plural state. The first model rejects the possibility of politically constituted multiculturalism as well as the unified self in itself. The ideal of this type is that the postmodern self may lose itself without any political aid. The second model believes that immigrants in the beginning may feel disoriented, alienated, or uprooted, but soon they will change and relocate themselves. Liberal theorists don't mind any group based on class, creed, gender, ethnicity, or nationality. A liberal state stands for individual rights and safety. Hence, no serious political policy is required other than one that argues for the elimination of discrimination. The republic, like the liberal state, doesn't recognize any kind of grouping. Individuals are to be prepared for

the formation of a civic community in terms of liberty. All kinds of other identities based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc. are discouraged. The fourth type recognizes communities, not individuals. Communities are formed by individuals, and hence, the protection of communities is of paramount importance. The last type, which Modood himself recognizes and approves, believes in the plurality of identities. It believes in investing in emotional backups by decentralizing power among all individuals. In fact, it seeks to synthesize private and public spaces. It is a two-way process. Both are engaged to bring out something new. Then multiculturalism for plural states means rethinking or re-shaping national identity and citizenship.

Cosmopolitanism is very close to multiculturalism. Albert Pogge is of the opinion that the term denotes respect for others, dialogue, the formation of complex identities, and shared human values. He writes: Three elements are shared by all cosmopolitan positions. First, individualism: the ultimate units of concern are human beings, or persons, rather than, say, family lines, tribes, ethnic, cultural, or religious communities, nations, or states. The latter may be units of concern only indirectly, in virtue of their individual members or citizens. Second, universality: the status of ultimate concern attaches to every living human being equally, not merely to some subset, such as men, aristocrats, Aryans, whites, or Muslims. Third, generality: this special status has global force. Persons are the ultimate units of concern for everyone, not only for their compatriots, fellow religionists, or the like (Pogge 169).

Multiculturalism as an ideology appreciates ethnic diversity and simultaneously promotes people learning from those ethnic communities. Actually, 'multiculturalism' is the urgent need of today's world, which appears disintegrated. Now heterogeneity is the norm. It provides a peaceful solution to all kinds of power struggles. In fact, multiculturalists wish to realize the slogan of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity, unminding innumerable diversities. No doubt, it is multiculturalists' utopianism that might now appear to many as distant.

13.3 Marxist Theory: Concepts and Concerns

Marxist theory is rooted in the works of Karl Heinrich Marx, a nineteenth-century German philosopher and economist, and Friedrich Engels, a German political economist. Karl Marx, in the early part of his career, had written many critical essays on Goethe, Shakespeare, and

Heinrich Heine. In the 1850s, he turned to writing political essays with all his passion. In 1844, Marx met Friedrich Engels in Paris and found that both had similar findings. They decided to collaborate onwards to explain the principles of communism, which later became popular as Marxism, with the aim of setting up an international movement. Marx and Engels are the founding fathers of Marxism. Both jointly wrote *The German Ideology* in 1846 and the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. Though Marxism is a nineteenth-century phenomenon, it is considered a twentieth-century phenomenon. It has a very complicated history. It provided a new, non-traditional, revolutionary way to look at things and the world. It has always claimed to be the science of revolution. The following two well-quoted statements of Marx verify the change in thinking pattern. First, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" second, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (Raman Selden et al.).

Marx and Engels were not in full agreement with G. W. F. Hegel's theories about dialectical synthesis. Hegel believed that the world and our ideas were controlled by some divine intervention. Our ideas, that is, the thesis, are tested by opposite views, that is, the anti-thesis, and finally turn into synthesis by the intervention of some invisible divine agency. Thus, they rejected Hegel's theory and put forward their theory of 'dialectical materialism', which underlined revolution. For them, every reality is material. There is no spiritual essence. Whatever we see and find around us is subject to socio-economic and political principles.

It had been the dream project of Marx and Engels to bring about a classless society through revolution, making sure that everyone had common ownership over the means of production, distribution, and exchange. Actually, they were targeting a European capitalist system in which the merchant class (bourgeoisie) goes on multiplying capital and the proletariat (the labour class who produce things by labouring their bodies day and night) go on exploited due to strategic socio-cultural, economic, and political ideological forces that help the conditioning of the exploitation safely. Karl Marx, in his three-volume work *Das Kapital* (1867), *The Bible* of economists, has argued that history is determined by the economic conditions, and so the private ownership of means of production must be destroyed as soon as possible.

Marxist literary theory, as a school of thought, attempts to understand the relation of a literary text to its social world. Marxists believe that literature is both a production and a reflection of

and on culture and society. The professed political aim of Marxism was to understand the social and political world in order to change it drastically. For Marxists, our lives are material realities. It can be explained only in terms of concrete and observable facts, not in terms of any idealistic philosophy that underscores a world beyond the physical world. For Marxists, history and the world have progressed due to the class struggle for power among different social classes. Marxism is a materialistic philosophy. It argues in favour of a naturalist as opposed to a supernaturalist worldview. Socio-economic and political concerns are central to it. They form the basis for all institutions. Marxism does not provide any set rules for interpreting texts; instead, it refers to a set of social, economic, and political ideas that would change the world.

Marx and Engels did not discuss ideology much after their joint work, *The German Ideology* (1845–46), but it later became one of the most debated concepts in Marxist criticism of literature and other allied arts. Ideology simply refers to the system of beliefs and ideas of any economic and political system. Marxists conceived ideology as a product of economic structure about class relations and class interests.

There are two major types of Marxist criticism. The first seeks to locate literature within its social, economic, political, and historical context to understand how ideas forwarded in the works of literature relate to the ideals circulated in society at the time. The second category of Marxists tries to understand how ideology works in literature to cover up or hide the actual contradictions between economic groups (haves and have-nots).

Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* put forth the *base-superstructure* paradigm. To them, ideology is a *superstructure* consisting of law, politics, philosophy, religion, art, and literature. The socio-economic system is the *base* of society. To simplify, *base* refers to the means of production, class formation, and class relations. The superstructure refers to all social and cultural institutions and traditions that sustain the ideologies of the ruling class. For Marx, ideology is associated with the ruling class. It is the ruling ideas of the ruling class. Ruling class ideologies are made acceptable to the labor class through the *superstructure*. Otherwise, the socio-economic arrangement would appear unjust and unequal. This is the reason why Engels described ideology as ‘false consciousness’.

The concept of ‘socialist realism’ is very important to the development of Marxism. Georg Lukacs, a Hungarian thinker, defined ideology in a flexible manner. According to him, every

great work creates its own specific world distinct from the seemingly apparent real world. He considers Balzac and Tolstoy to be the masters of realism. They brought in the greatest possible objective conditions of real life. He was firm in accepting the relationship between social and literary reality. What he approves is the fictional world of such writers, which accords with the Marxist conception of the real world as constituted by contradiction, conflict, and struggle. He was against modernists who used to portray human beings as surrounded by sheer feelings of alienation and isolation.

Louis Althusser, a French Marxist who drew upon Lacanian psychoanalysis, structuralism, and poststructuralism, pointed out that ideology is the representation of imaginary versions of the real social relations lived by people. In his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," he writes that ideology reproduces subjects, though it has no definite history. For him, ideology is not the matter of conscious beliefs and attitudes, nor is it the matter of false consciousness. Ideology prepares and encourages individuals to see themselves as independent entities. This process is what Althusser termed 'interpellation'. This process does not require physical force to maintain the status quo. Thus, ideology reproduces willing workers in the capitalist system. Capitalism not only needs laboring hands but also the willingness of workers. For Althusser, man is an ideological animal of nature. In the ideological formation of human subjects, social institutions like the family, the church, the school, and the law play a very important role. Ideology is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed, and equipped to respond to the conditions of their existence.

Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey regard literature's aesthetic effect as an ideological dominance effect. They argue that literature is not fiction but a fictive image of the real because it can't define itself simply as a figuration, an appearance of reality. It suggests that the primary material of the literary text is the ideological contradictions, which are not specifically literary but political, religious, etc. In the last analysis, contradictory ideological realizations of determinate class positions in the class struggle. For them, literary texts are the agents that reproduce ideology in its ensemble. The aesthetic effect is an effect of domination, that is, the subjection of individuals to the dominant ideology of the ruling class.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian communist thinker, wrote some thirty documents on political, social, and cultural subjects known as "prison notebooks" in the years between 1929 and 1935. Gramsci concedes Marx's base-superstructure formula and says that both maintain

reciprocal relations. He emphasized popular culture as opposed to elite elements of culture. Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' states that a social class achieves a predominant influence by spreading its ideological views so pervasive that the subordinate classes unwillingly accept and participate in their own operation and subordination.

Raymond Williams, in his book *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (1958), accepts Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'. For him, culture is 'lived experiences' so he prefers to use culture over ideology. The organized productions of culture, that is, the culture industry, play the same role in the form of cinema, opera, etc.

Terry Eagleton, in *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Theory* (1976), argues that a literary text is not the expression of ideology; instead, it is the production of ideology. Literary texts do not represent historical reality; they operate on ideology. Whatever historical account is available in a text, it is there as an ideology. Thus, text and ideology mutually work upon each other in a process of mutual structuring and de-structuring in which the text constantly overdetermines its own determinations.

13.4 Let Us Sum Up

Marxism, as an international phenomenon, is one of the most influential context-oriented approaches. It has successfully situated all the human-centric phenomena in their social, cultural, economic, and political contexts to understand their relationship. It does not visualize the world beyond this one. Everything is material reality. It provided a new science of history. It believed in revolution. It was actually on a mission to fundamentally change the world.

13.5 Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Define multiculturalism.

Ans. Study carefully section no. 13.2.

Q. 2 What is the aim of multiculturalism?

Ans. See section no. 13.2.

Q. 3 Discuss the professed purpose of Marxism.

Ans. Read section no. 13.3.

Q. 4 What is ideology?

Ans. Go through section no. 13.3.

Q. 5 What role does ideology play in the oppression of subject

Ans. See section no. 13.3.

Q. 6 What is interpellation?

Ans. Read section no. 13.3.

Q. 7 Explain the concept of hegemony.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 13.3.

13.6 Further Reading

Bennett, Tony. *Formalism and Marxism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (2nd ed.). New Delhi: Maya Blackwell Doaba Publications, 2000.

Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Watson, C. W. *Multiculturalism*. New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2005.

Unit 14 Postmodernism and Deconstruction

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Postmodernism
- 14.3 Deconstruction
- 14.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.5 Model Questions and Their Answers
- 14.6 Further Reading

14.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we shall be doing a study on postmodernism and deconstruction, along with the issues and changes associated with them. In the 1960s and 1970s of the twentieth century, philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, and Francois Lyotard Baudrillard revolutionized the whole European thinking pattern. In fact, there has been a spate of new thinking. The second half of the twentieth century is a period of critical theories and thinking. Everything European was subjected to review and re-examination.

14.1 Introduction

With the end of World War II, notions of purity, identity, stability, fixity, centrality, etc. received serious jolts and became subject to rethinking. What modernity had gained lost in the aftermath of the World Wars. Everything was disintegrated and de-centered, but these were not the matters for expressing sorrow. European thinking and philosophy got radicalized and rerouted. Postmodernists saw hope in the fragmented and de-cantered world around them. Multiplicity, or plurality, took over the notions of one centre, origin, finality, truth, etc. Postmodernism is often used synonymously with ‘poststructuralism’ or ‘deconstruction’ in critical writings.

After having studied the *unit* thoroughly, you are suggested to read a few more critical works suggested in the section titled *Further Reading*.

14.2 Postmodernism

The term 'postmodernism' being a broader term poses difficulty for scholars to define it historically or temporally. It has "acquired a semantic instability or a shifting meaning that shadows and echoes its notes of indeterminacy and insecurity" (Woods). It encompasses a wide variety of disciplines of study, including art, architecture, painting, music, film, literature, fashion, technology, etc. Historically, 'postmodernism' includes many theories such as, 'structuralism', 'poststructuralism', 'deconstruction', etc. that happened after high modernism. It marks the beginning of a new cultural era after modernism. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari used the metaphor of 'rhizome' to describe postmodernism, "how all social and cultural activities in postmodernism are dispersed, divergent, and acented systems or structures. This contrasts with the organized, hierarchical, 'trunk-and-branch' structure of modernism" (Woods). The currency of the term 'postmodernism' is ubiquitous and contradictory as well.

In relation to literary studies, it refers to certain radically experimental works produced after the Second World War. It refers to a way of life, a way of feeling, and a state of mind. Much of 'postmodernist' writing highlights alienating individuals and the meaninglessness of human existence in a calm and cool style. Postmodernists celebrate such discrepancies. They don't look for continuity. They don't complain about such things. Disintegration is the concern of both modernist and postmodernist studies, but postmodernists celebrate the absence of a fixed value system, whereas modernists mourn it. Postmodernism endeavours to de-centre, whereas modernism is desperate to hold on to the centre. Jacques Derrida, Jean Francois Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard are high priests of the 'postmodern' school.

The term 'postmodernism' was first used in the 1930s of the twentieth century, but it gained currency only with the publication of Lyotard's work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979). According to him, 'postmodernism' simply means 'incredulity towards metanarratives'. As such, the best we can hope for is a series of 'mini-narratives, which are provisional, temporary, and meant for particular local circumstances. In this sense, 'postmodernism' is a project liberating humanity. Hence, cartoons, pop art, and television became acceptable for 'postmodernist' artistic expression.

Jean Baudrillard a French writer made his entry into 'postmodernism' by his work *Simulations*. For him, it is composed 'of disparate fragmentary experiences and images that

constantly bombard the individual in music, video, television, advertising, and other forms of electronic media. The speed and ease of reproduction of these images mean that they exist only as images, devoid of depth, coherence, and originality'. To simplify, the 'postmodern' world is not a real but rather a virtual one. The distinctions between real and imagined, reality and illusion, surface and depth, are blurred. The result is a culture of 'hyperreality'. The outward sign is no longer an index of inward reality. Nothing is pure and absolute. Everything is in a state of flux. Disneyland appears to be the perfect metaphor for the 'postmodern' condition. This situation is marked by what Fredric Jameson called 'depthlessness'. Surface and depth, inside and outside, even being related, are not in full coordination. Everything is simply an image without depth. The distinction between real and simulated collapsed.

Fredric Jameson distinguishes between parody and pastiche to characterize the postmodern condition. Both depend on the imitation of earlier texts or objects. In parody, there is an impulse to ridicule by exaggerating the distance of the original text from normal discourse. In a pastiche, there is no single model or impulse. It is a radical mixing of forms, genres, conventions, and media, dissolving boundaries between high and low art, between serious and ludicrous. Postmodern art and life are eclectic. They drew upon indefinite centres, making none central. All centres seem equally important. There is only multiplicity and dispersal of centres and points of origin. There is nothing pure on the basis of which representation may be accomplished.

Jacques Derrida, a noted French philosopher and thinker, challenged entire Western philosophy and its modus operandi. He is generally known as the originator and founder of 'deconstructive' reading and practice. But his way of thinking and reasoning brought radical changes and paved the way for a number of theories and critical schools. He vehemently discredited any kind of faith in purity, fixity, stability, unity, truth, knowledge, or identity. To him, only God is perfect if he exists. In fact, he rationalized his way of thinking. Nothing is an island. He showed inherent conflicting potential in everything. To him, everything is an imperfect and unfinished project. We only look for traces and feel happy. Derrida writes of imperfection as the defining character of anything. Postmodernists reject any claim to universality, truth, reason, and stability. Postmodernists think globally but act locally.

Gilles Deleuze challenges and extends Baudrillard's notion of simulacra in *Difference and Repetition* (1994). According to him, the dichotomy between real and virtual is false because

the original copy is itself a copy. Deleuze, like Plato, argues that there exists a true model of which we are all copies. Actual, or real, has the potential to become virtual. This potential is inherent in everything and can become something else. Thus, he denied any possibility of making a distinction between the real and the virtual, the original and the copy. Simulacrum has the inherent potential to become virtual.

14.3 Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) has been one of the most influential and controversial thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century. He was so influential that contemporary and forthcoming thinkers and philosophers changed their associations and followed Derridean philosophy. He was an Algerian-born French philosopher. He was often called ‘no man’s fool’ or ‘silver-haired philosopher’ during his time. He had almost single-handedly revolutionized the thinking patterns of the whole world. He wrote many influential essays in almost every field of the human sciences, such as literature, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and anthropology. He is hailed unanimously as the father of a school popularly known as *Deconstruction*. He evolved the strategy of deconstruction to ‘resist all forms of metaphysical thought’ (Das & Mohanty), drawing on insights from Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, and Sigmund Freud. Deconstruction is a poststructuralist theory and practice of reading that critiques many assumptions of the structuralist approach, such as that ‘the system of language provides adequate scope to ascertain the meaning of a text’. This approach sets out to show the inherent conflicting property of the text that destroys any possibility of reaching a final or decidable conclusion or meaning. This approach sets the seeming definiteness of structure and meaning loose in an indefinite array of possibilities. Poststructuralist critics accept the cheerful indeterminacy of meaning.

Poststructuralism is ‘post’ in the temporal sense (that is, it came into practice after ‘structuralism’), and it extended structuralist theory and practice, taking it in a just direction. However, it was not the aim of Derrida to show off mere short-comings of structuralism; instead, it was to demolish the whole system of Western thinking since Plato because he believed that it had led astray its blameable failure to grasp the meaning and nature of language. Derrida put forth his fundamental assumptions in his three books, titled *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Speech and Phenomena*, all published in 1967.

To validate his deconstructive point of view, he brought out a number of works wherein he reiterated, expanded, and applied them.

Derrida based his arguments on the linguistic analysis of Saussure, which required, according to him, correction and proper direction. Saussure's idealism holds that language does not create meanings; rather, it reveals them, thereby implying that meanings exist prior to their expression. In other words, there is no conflict between signifier and signified in achieving the final meaning. For Derrida, it is sheer nonsensical observation. According to him, there can be no meaning outside of the language. We are only left with signifiers. Derrida claims that the whole of Western culture is "logocentric" (that is, it pins its faith in what Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher, has termed "the metaphysics of presence") and "phonocentric" because it gives precedence to speech over writing. To simplify, the tendency to privilege speech over writing presumes that the speaker has the idea or thought already present in his or her mind to be communicated.

We think of our mental and physical lives as centred on an "I". This desire for a centre is termed by Derrida 'logocentrism'. It is derived from the Greek word 'logos' which means word, truth, reason, and law. The ancient Greeks thought of 'logos' as a cosmic principle hidden deep within human beings, within speech, and within the natural universe. If someone is 'logocentric', he or she is supposed to believe that the truth is the voice, the word, or the expression of a central, original, and absolute cause or origin. A spoken word that is believed to have come from a living body is closer to an originating thought than a written word. Derrida calls it 'phonocentrism', which is the classic feature of 'logocentrism'.

To the contrary, Derrida proposes that "there is nothing outside the text" (*Of Grammatology*), gives primacy to writing, and claims that the realization of final meaning is always postponed under the impression that a text is to be re-read and re-interpreted in the future. What one finds in writing is "the interplay of absence and presence". Actually, it was the deeply rooted phono-centrism of Western thought that gave undeserved primacy to speech. On the basis of "system" and "difference," Derrida developed his concept of "archi-writing," of which spoken and written signs are two forms. Archi-writing contains both graphic and non-graphic expressions. Thus, writing is the name of any structure that carries a trace. It can be anything like a portrait, a wall post, a proper name, a gesture, a spoken word, or a written word that sets the awareness unstable. Thus, the concepts of "archi-writing",

“trace”, “difference,” and “free play” function to suggest the unstable and differential nature of signs and their objectivity.

For Saussure, linguistic sign is differential, and being part of the sign system, it has no value. To simplify, Derrida accepts Saussure’s notion that language is self-referential and that meaning is generated by the virtue of differences between linguistic signs. Differential virtue of each sign, Derrida made his key point and extended its implications. Each sign present carries traces of signs absent as well. Thus, the present sign is always contaminated by the signs that are absent. And moreover, the present sign is erased by the absence sign. A sign is nothing by itself. Derrida says that it is the virtue of interactivity that allows a sign to become a sign. If a sign takes place only once, it will not be a sign. No island is an island. Every sign contains a ‘trace’ of signs other than itself. It is the inherent potential of signhood. One sign always leads to another in the process of interpretation, which is interminable.

The endless referral process, which Derrida termed “difference,” With this new coinage, he attempted to combine the senses of ‘differing’ and ‘deferring’. Each sign definitely differs from other signs adjoining it, but its meaning is always deferred or delayed by the referral process, which is from one sign to another and another to another endlessly, and the ultimate never gets said. We say more than we intend to say. Actually, the meaning of any sign is indeterminable because of the linguistic forces operating within it. In this way, there can be no escape from the sign system. Derrida thinks that every signifier is also a signified in turn, and so on ad infinitum. It is what Derrida termed ‘free play’ to suggest that writing is only a play of differences without any center. The absence of any transcendental signified extends the play of signification infinitely (*writing and difference*). The numerous possible meanings of any sign lead to contradictions and ultimately to the dissemination of meaning itself.

The poststructuralists contend that a text not only contradicts structuralist accounts but itself as well. The concept of “difference” evolved from Derrida to “deconstruct” Western philosophy. He argues that Western philosophy is founded on a theory of “presence,” in which metaphysical notions such as truth, being, and reality are determined ontologically, that is, in their relation to an ontological centre, essence, origin (arche), or end (telos) that represses absence and difference for the sake of metaphysical stability. Thus, Western metaphysics is the historical repression of difference through a philosophical vocabulary that favours presence in the form of voice, consciousness, and subjectivity.

Derrida finds people in Western culture having beliefs in *binary oppositions*. They tend to express their thoughts using binary oppositions such as strong/weak, rich/poor, speech/writing, truth/error, light/dark, male/female, etc. By using binary oppositions, Derrida claims that they create hierarchies. In each binary opposition, the first stands for a positive trait, whereas the second stands for some negative aspect. Derrida showed how the second term in the hierarchy bears the trace of the first and goes ahead to destabilize both terms, leaving them in the condition of undecidability. The deconstructive reading scatters the provisional meanings in the form of indefinite significations that bear "aporia," or undecidability. Each text deconstructs itself by undermining its own supposed grounds.

Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist, was at first a classic structuralist, but later, under the influence of Jacques Derrida, he became a poststructuralist. Barthes, in his works *S/Z*, *Mythologies*, and *The Pleasure of the Text*, celebrates the heterogeneity and productive potential of a text. In the essay "The Death of the Author" (1968), Barthes points out that the unity of the text is in the text itself, not in the intention of its author. The birth of the reader happens at the expense of the death of the writer. Barthes, in his *S/Z* (1970), suggested two kinds of texts: readerly (*lisible*) and writerly (*scriptible*). By 'readerly text', he meant a book, say a novel, whose interpretation is easier and more predictable. It does not require the reader's active involvement. The reader simply accepts the meaning of the text. By 'writerly text', he meant a text that needs the reader's active participation in creating multiple meanings. It tends to be self-conscious. It makes the reader a producer of the text. It is a dynamic process of interpretation. Barthes believes that the reader is not a passive consumer of the text. A reader may approach a text either with a readerly lens or with a writerly lens. The reading method depends on the reader. Texts that are 'readerly' restrict readers' participation, whereas 'writerly text' encourages and even demands co-creative involvement and the effort of the reader.

The Anglo-American school of deconstruction that flourished at Yale University includes Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, and Barbara Johnson. Paul de Man, in his works, particularly *Blindness and Insight* (1971) and *Allegories of Reading* (1979), went on to demonstrate how literary meaning deconstructs its own meaning. The grammatical aspect of language constantly attempts to determine the structure, but it is dislocated by its rhetorical aspect only to open multiple possibilities. A literary text says something but implies something else.

Like Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller also believes that language is essentially figural—words are metaphors. The referentiality of any word is never completely absent, and it is the referentiality that is deconstructed. It means that referentiality is available in the language. Both Miller and Paul de Man believe that literal and figural meanings co-exist in diametrical opposition, making any final meaning to be conveyed impossible. For Miller, deconstruction is a good approach to reading. A sign marks not only the presence of an object but also its absence. All the world is a text wherein one can have only interpretations and no facts or truths; hence, any good reading is necessarily a misreading.

Harold Bloom, in his 1973 work *The Anxiety of Influence*, focused on the crisis poems of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Tennyson to evolve his critical trajectory. To him, every text is intertext, which shows how a poet misreads the works of his predecessor. Bloom explained the relationship between a writer and his or her predecessor in a Freudian manner. According to him, every poet suffers from a guilt of hatred towards his predecessor, and unless he murders his poetic predecessor, he cannot express himself. Thus, every new work is the result of a purposeful misreading of the preceding work.

Deconstruction requires vigilant reading to explore textual rupture. It has liberated the text from the fixity of meaning by giving it the status of interpretation. It is, to a great extent, a language game. There are no facts, only interpretations. Deconstructive reading does not have an iota of respect for the wholeness or integrity of any work. It detests relating any part to the whole. For Derrida, everything is a text. A text is an open domain that the reader develops, whereas a book is a closed entity known by its cover and the name of the author. A text is endlessly created in the process of reading. Every fact or piece of knowledge is textual. Every human product can be looked at as a text, and every text reflects and shapes the world we perceive. It is language that expresses us and our world. All reality is linguistic. Deconstructive reading has nothing to do with dismantling. It is only interested in displaying the building blocks of all texts.

14.4 Let Us Sum Up

At the end of this unit, it has become very clear ‘postmodernism’ and ‘deconstruction’ as schools of non-traditional thinking and approach prepared a solid background to think about all things that are of human origin in a new way. These schools revolutionized thinking methods and changed the outlook. Language, literature, art, philosophy, architecture,

painting, fashion, technology, media, cinema, and so forth became part of the study. These trajectories of thoughts successfully brought in plurality and multiplicity. Postmodernists visit the past equipped with the tool of irony. They emphasize intertextual elements in literature such as parody, pastiche, and illusion. In a sense, both schools (postmodernism and deconstruction) showed unstableness as the common condition of everything. Both sometimes seem intertwined in their operation and mission. Both are anti-essentialist for their emphasis on culture, surface, and difference.

14.5 Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 Define modernism.

Ans. Study carefully section no. 14.2.

Q. 2 How does modernism differ from postmodernism?

Ans. See section no. 14.2.

Q. 3 What is simulacrum?

Ans. Read section no. 14.3.

Q. 4 What is metanarrative?

Ans. Go through section no. 14.3.

Q. 5 Discuss 'deconstruction is not destruction'.

Ans. See section no. 14.3.

Q. 6 What is 'difference'?

Ans. Read section no. 14.3.

Q. 7 Show difference between readerly and writerly text.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 14.3.

14.6 Further Reading

Butler, Christopher. *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Belsey, Catherine. *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* London: Routledge, 3rd edition, 2003.

Ward, Glen. *Postmodernism*. London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd. (teach yourself), 2009.

Woods, Tim. *Beginning Postmodernism*. New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2010.

Unit 15 Psychoanalysis and Gender Studies

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Psychoanalysis
- 15.3 Gender Studies
- 15.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.5 Model Questions and Their Answers
- 15.6 Further Reading

15.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we shall be doing a study on the psychoanalytic approach and gender theory. Unconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires of the human psyche definitely play a very important role in what we aspire, do, say, and feel in the background, generally unnoticed. This unit will focus on the structure and workings of the human psyche and how unconscious or repressed wishes affect imaginative or creative pieces of work. The second aspect of this unit will focus on gender as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

15.1 Introduction

How the human mind works has always vexed sensitive people. To study the human psyche scientifically, an Austrian neurologist practicing in Vienna developed a method to treat individual neuroses known as the ‘talking cure’. The patient under treatment undergoes one-on-one sessions for many hours with a psychoanalyst to explore the root cause of the problem. Unconscious materials of one type or another are central to the psychoanalysts. For Freud, it is the loose content of the psyche; for Carl Jung, it is collective mass; and for Lacan, it is well-structured.

The second concern of this *unit* is about gender studies. Unlike feminists (who exclusively focus on femininity), gender theorists take into account both femininity and masculinity. Masculinity is integrated into gender studies. Gender critics see gender as a categorizing device that is quite insufficient.

After having studied the *unit* thoroughly, you are suggested to read a few more critical books suggested in the section *Further Reading*.

15.2 Psychoanalysis

The psychoanalytic approach adopts a method of reading to interpret texts. It argues that literary texts like dreams express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author. A literary work is the manifestation of the author's unconscious or repressed desires. One may do a psychoanalysis of a particular character within a literary work, but it is usually assumed that all such characters are projections of the author's psyche. The object of psychoanalytic literary criticism, at its simplest, can be the psychoanalysis of the author or of a particularly interesting character.

In 1896, Freud coined the term "psychoanalysis" to characterize "the talking cure", a therapeutic method for recovering repressed materials from the unconscious. In 1920, psychoanalytic criticism came into existence, whose procedures were suggested and established by Freud. It looks at a piece of work as an expression of the unconscious. According to Freud, the unconscious impulses and the conscious mind give birth to a piece of art. Great writers, in their imaginative works, find a safe outlet to express their repressed erotic feelings and wishes in a transformed version.

To Freud, literature and other arts are like dreams and neurotic symptoms made of imagined or fantasied wishes denied and prohibited by social-moral constraints and propriety. The libidinal or sexual wishes are snubbed and repressed by the "censor" (an internalized representative of the social standards within every individual). The "censor" allows only fantasied satisfaction, but in disguise. The mechanisms that make possible the disguises of unconscious motives are "condensation" (it refers to the omission of certain contents of the unconscious and the fusion of many elements of the unconscious into a single entity), "displacement" (it refers to the process of substitution, that is, the unconscious material of desire is substituted by one that is acceptable to the conscious mind), and "symbolism" (it refers to the process of representing sexual objects of desire by non-sexual objects). The disguised fantasies available in the conscious mind are manifest contents, and the repressed wishes that find a semblance of satisfaction in a distorted version are latent contents. Great artists ably sublimate their repressed feelings into something noble and great, making the most inaccessible accessible.

According to Freud, the human psyche is composed of three functional aspects: “Id” (it incorporates sexual and other desires), “Superego” (the standards of morality and propriety stay therein), and “Ego” (it tries to its level best to negotiate between *Id* and *Superego* to make gratification possible). Thus, we see and feel that Freud was deeply interested in the unconscious content of the psyche. He was less interested in formal aspects like style or technique of expression. Thus, according to Freud and Freudians, unconscious or repressed desires float in the human psyche chaotically and are hence indefinable.

Kate Millett, in her book *Sexual Politics* (1969), condemns Freud and points out that he perpetuated a patriarchal attitude. But in later years, he was defended by Juliet Mitchell in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), especially regarding the distinction between sex and gender. Mitchell argues that Freud does not present femininity as something natural. Likewise, female sexuality is also formed by early experiences. It is thus constructed.

Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss physician, psychiatrist, and philosopher who was once one of the most devoted disciples of Freud, eventually broke with his mentor over Freud’s special emphasis on sexuality and came forward with his own concept of the ‘collective unconscious’. For Freud, the unconscious of every individual is quite unlike that of others. But for Jung, some of our unconscious is commonly shared by other fellows. Keeping this insight in mind, Jung suggested that the human psyche is composed of three aspects: the *personal conscious*, the *personal unconscious*, and the *collective unconscious*. Personal consciousness denotes an individual’s awareness of the present moment, and as it becomes a matter of the past, it becomes part of the personal unconscious. In between the personal conscious and the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious exists, which is the storehouse of knowledge, experiences, and images of the human race. It is actually ancestral memory that often gets expression through literature, dreams, myths, festivals, and rituals. For Jungians, “a great work of literature is not a disguised expression of its author’s repressed wishes; rather, it is a manifestation of desires once held by the whole human race (but that are now repressed because of the advent of civilization).” (Murfin & Ray). The collective unconscious is not directly approachable. It is approached through universal images, that is, archetypes, which repeat themselves in the course of history.

According to Jung, human consciousness, or self, is composed of three powerful archetypes: the shadow, anima, and persona. The shadow is the darker aspect of our personality that nobody wants to bring to others’ notice, for instance, a villain, Satan, or devil. Anima is the

driving force. It prepares someone for some action. The masculine form of this force is called 'anima' and the feminine form of it is 'animus'. The human psyche has both forces, which we realize through the technique of projection or in dreams. We present ourselves for public notice through our persona. It is a mask for facing the outside world in an acceptable manner. In a sense, both the anima and the persona are the contrasting aspects of the ego—the conscious personality.

Jacques Marie Emile Lacan, the most controversial French psychoanalyst and once the great admirer of Freud, evolved his own theory that the unconscious is not chaotic. It is orderly and well structured. For his theory, Lacan took hints from Saussure and Roman Jakobson. He pronounced in an article titled "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious" that 'unconscious is structured like language'. For Lacan, the unconscious is an orderly network as complex as the structure of language. It is the nucleus of our being. Language is the medium for understanding the unconscious. According to Lacan, the unconscious is structured around irreducible signifiers. Unconsciousness manifests itself where words fail to work. Pramod Nayar makes a very pertinent observation: "Language, therefore, is always connected with the loss of the object and the desire. Language itself is about lack, since signifiers do not lead to a final meaning but more signifiers. With this move, Lacan links language with desire and the unconscious. In the unconscious, desire is structured like language: the name or signifier ('Mother') as opposed to the signified (the object, Mother) that the child will never get" (Nayar 77). Jane Gallop, in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1982), continues the rehabilitation of psychoanalysis in the manner of Lacan.

Harold Bloom developed his theory of influence in his works *A Map of Misreading* (1975), *Agon* (1983), and *The Anxiety of Influence* (1984). In these works, he finds that all poets at the outset of their careers feel the overpowering influence of preceding poets. And therefore, there develops anxiety syndrome. This kind of anxiety is a father-daughter threat. To get over this threat, misreading as a psychic defence begins. Thus, every poem is a kind of misinterpretation of a parent poem. It is a deliberate act. Bloom even suggested six revisionary modes by which anxiety of father-threat is handled. These are irony, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole, metaphor, and transumption.

Norman Holland, a noted reader-response critic, in *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (1968) concentrated upon the role of the reader in the process of reading a text. He feels that readers, while reading a particular piece of writing, incorporate their own experiences and

psychic structures. Readers who are bored of reading a literary text satisfy their fantasies. The reader's response is actually determined by his or her lifestyle, character, identity, or personality. His approach is predicated on psychoanalysis.

15.3 Gender Studies

Gender as a category of analysis has been part of feminist, gender, gay, and lesbian studies. Feminist criticism is often considered to be a type of gender criticism. Feminist literary criticism flourished in the 1970s, whereas gender criticism thrived in the 1980s. With the increasing number of male thinkers working on gender problems, 'gender studies' arose. Gender critics for sure heavily drew upon feminist thinking, but, on many issues, they opposed it. Sex, sexuality, gender, and language are the key concerns within feminist, gender, and queer studies.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her seminal work *The Second Sex* (1949), made the pronouncement that 'one is not born a woman; one becomes one'. This statement sums up the idea that the inferiority of women, as had been supposed, is not natural or biological; it is rather created by our society. Women's liberation depends on freeing women from the social construct of 'the eternal feminine' which has reduced them to a position of social and economic inferiority, but it does not depend on the denial of man and woman as biologically distinct categories. Thus, she hinted at the socialization or conditioning of women's lives, experiences, and expectations. It is social policy that designs a woman, not nature.

Gender critics were mostly influenced by Michel Foucault, a French historian. Foucault, in his epoch-making work *The History of Sexuality* (1976), focused on the distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality. He separated sexuality from sex. He called the former 'technology of sex'. This technology is developed and designed for political purposes to satisfy the expectations of the dominant class. Sexuality is completely constructed in society. Homosexuality gained currency in the 19th century to refer to same-gender relationships. For many queer theorists, the binary of homosexuality and heterosexuality is as cultural as masculine and feminine. These critics are critical of heterosexual normativity. They take all forms of sexuality other than heterosexuality into account. Sexuality cannot be restricted to homosexuality and heterosexuality alone.

In general, 'gender' is used as a synonym for 'sex'. Definitely, both are related to each other, but both cannot be synonyms or substitutes. In the 1970s, second-wave feminists began focusing on the issue of gender. They questioned such assumptions. Identities like man, woman, masculine, and feminine are social constructions. Some gender critics use the term 'gender' to mean various sexualities such as homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, etc.

Sherry Ortner, an American anthropologist, wrote an essay in 1974 titled "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" wherein she provided a framework to separate 'gender' from 'sex'. In this essay, she arrives at the conclusion that gender is to culture as sex is to nature. Gender is a social expression. It is not natural or essential. Sex is related to the physiognomy of males and females, whereas gender is entirely a socio-cultural projection. Gender is conceived to be the product of existing mores, expectations, and stereotypes of a particular culture. In socially assigned or expected duties, behaviors, and roles in a particular setting, males and females are supposed to perform them separately. In this socializing process, gender as a construct develops. Hence, gender critics categorically reject the view that gender is innate. It is rather the product of a particular language, culture, and its various institutions and machines.

Likewise, gender critics also consider sexuality a social phenomenon. Many of them question assumptions about the sexuality of only two forms: homosexuality and heterosexuality. Sexuality is not a fixed set of homosexuality and heterosexuality. There are, of course, many other kinds of sexual orientations existing in societies across the world. However, some gender critics, especially gay and lesbian critics, disagree on the point that sexuality is cultural. They think homosexuals and heterosexuals are innately different.

Naomi Schor, in her essay "Feminist and Gender Studies" (1992), writes that 1985 is the year of the publication of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's famous work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, and it is the year when gender criticism began to go ahead with a feminist approach. This book has influenced gender critics in general and gay and lesbian critics in particular. Gender critics acknowledge the interrelatedness of sex and gender, but at the same time, they emphasize the differences between sex and gender. Sedgwick, in another work titled *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991), emphasizes that sex should be differentiated from gender. The feminists of the 1970s didn't see any difference between sex and gender, and that's why they looked upon sexual differences and gender differences as the same. Theresa de Lauretis, who is said to have used the term 'queer theory',

also like Sedgwick, attempted to keep sex and gender apart. Sedgwick keeps gender separate from sex and sexuality.

Judith Butler, in her work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), further complicated the sex-gender debate by introducing the theory of the *performativity of gender*. For her, all sexual differences except purely physiognomic differences are culturally produced. Sex, for Butler, is as much a cultural construct as gender. Notions about sex are developed as a by-product of the cultural construction of gender. She writes that “gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or a ‘natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘prediscursive’, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts. This is the construction of sex as the radically unconstructed”.

It is actually gender performativity that determines our apprehension of sexed bodies. “A man is not what one is but something one does, a condition one enacts. Your gender is created by your acts, in the way that a promise is created by the act of promising” (Culler). But it does not mean that gender is a choice or role one can put on because it would suggest there is an ungendered subject prior to gender. In the regime of gender, nothing is left outside the gender mantle. Gendered subjects are supposed to perform gendered norms repeatedly to approximate gender ideals or norms, which creates a gap for resistance and subversion.

Those critics who hold essentialist views believe simply that women are naturally different from men and that no amount of human labour can change the nature of a woman. By contrast, those who hold constructionist views believe that most of the differences between men and women are characteristic features not of male and female (nature) but rather of the masculine and feminine genders (nurture). Extreme constructionists like Butler, Sedgwick, and Schor, who are sometimes called postfeminists, believe that there is nothing outside or before culture. For such critics, nature is also subjected to enculturation.

Constructionist gender critics oppose vehemently essentialists, especially French feminists like Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous, and Luce Irigaray, who stress the need for the application of the female body into writing for the sake of special feminine language, writing, and style. Unlike them, constructionists attribute differences in language, writing, tone, and style to cultural forces, not to biological differences between male and female bodies. By the same yardstick, they opposed North American feminists such as Nancy K. Miller and Toril Moi,

who have identified sex with text. These essentialists, under the influence of French feminists, argue that women are different and have a special style of writing. Nancy Miller asserts in her work *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing* (1988) that no man can write exactly 'female desire, anger, and selfhood'.

Many feminist, gay, and lesbian critics adhere to an essentialist point of view. Essentialist feminists believe that men and women possess different inherent instincts, and hence they are different. Gays and lesbians who adhere to the essentialist position hold that homosexuals and heterosexuals are different by nature. Some feminists, like gender critics, advocate a constructionist view of gender. Similarly, some queer theorists hold a constructionist point of view, especially when they critique the dichotomy of homo and heterosexuality. They believe that the normativity of heterosexuality is entirely social and cultural.

Postmodernists and poststructuralists are anti-essentialist because they stress culture over nature, surface over depth, and difference over sameness. They criticize feminists who claim that women's oppression is a common condition across the world, ignoring other determinants like race, class, and situation.

15.4 Let Us Sum Up

To conclude, it has become clear that all psychoanalysts are more interested in latent or hidden content that manifests. Actually, they were interested in exploring the catalytic reasons working in the background to the work brought to public notice. It is the repression of certain feelings, especially sexual, or feelings of inferiority on the face of the father or senior writer's achievements that leads to the emergence of a work of art. Besides, it is also emphasized that readers' get an opportunity or space to satisfy their repressed feelings out of reading a particular work of art.

Gender critics, though, were feminists in the beginning, but they later contested with feminists on the issue of the gender and sex dichotomy. Some gender critics held a constructionist point of view, but some were essentialist. By constructionists' stand point, gender is a socio-cultural and political construct. It is ideology that frames gender. It is entirely man-made. By contrast, essentialists see almost no difference between sex and gender and use them synonymously. They promote essential differences to develop a distinct aesthetic. Some of the constructionists look at gender and sexuality as social constructions.

Like gender, sexuality is also affected, moderated, and guided as per the expectations of socio-political needs. Sexuality critics invalidate the normativity of heterosexuality in view of the many kinds of sexual choices, orientations, and practices found in the world, so sexuality cannot be restricted to heterosexuality as the only valid type.

15.5 Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 What is psychoanalysis?

Ans. Study carefully section no. 15.2.

Q. 2 Discuss Freud's model of human psyche.

Ans. See section no. 15.2.

Q. 3 What is displacement?

Ans. Read section no. 15.2.

Q. 4 Unconscious is structured like language. Justify.

Ans. Go through section no. 15.2.

Q. 5 What is 'collective unconscious' according to Jung?

Ans. See section no. 15.2.

Q. 6 Differentiate between sex and gender.

Ans. Read section no. 15.3.

Q. 7 Evaluate Judith Butler's theory of performativity.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 15.3.

Q. 8 Differentiate between constructionist and essentialist point of views on gender.

Ans. Go through section no. 15.3

15.6 Further Reading

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory* (Indian edition). Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999.

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* Delhi: Pearson, 2011.

Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice*. London: Methuen, 1984.

Unit 16 Ecocriticism and Diaspora Studies

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Ecocriticism
- 16.3 Diaspora Studies
- 16.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.5 Model Questions and Their Answers
- 16.6 Further Reading

16.0 Objectives

In this *unit*, we will be trying to familiarize you with ecocriticism and diaspora studies. It is true that any critical school of thought emerges with specific goals and targets to bring about fundamental positive changes. In this *unit*, we shall discuss ecocriticism as a critical school, its sub-types, and the contributions of various critics to this field of study. Likewise, we shall focus on the origin and growth of diaspora studies as a school. What characteristics and qualifications do diasporics have will be explained comprehensively.

16.1 Introduction

Ecocriticism as a critical school was the long-felt need from the quarters of literary studies. Seeing frequent environmental crises across the world, men of letters (the most sensitive people) took the responsibility to sensitize people in general towards nature. Ecocriticism as a school evaluates prevailing perceptions of people in general and perceptions found in social, cultural, economic, political, religious, scientific, and technological writings in particular. Besides, it attempts to guide such disciplines to go along with nature.

Similarly, diaspora studies arose to take into account the challenges and difficulties faced by particular communities living across the political border of their nations of origin. This kind of study is exclusively focused on communities dispersed across the world. Members of such communities are well-settled in their host or adopted country, yet they get subjected to certain forms of marginalization in the name of race and ethnicity. In order to familiarize world

leaders with their problems, diasporics did a wonderful job, leading to the emergence of diaspora as a discourse as well as a discipline.

After having studied the *unit* thoroughly, you are suggested to read a few more critical books given in the section titled *Further Reading*.

16.2 Ecocriticism

Environmental disturbances have become quite frequent across the world. In a sense, it can be said that ecological trouble has become the trouble of the 21st century very soon. Jonathan Bate writes, shedding light on the grimness of ecological troubles, that “carbon dioxide produced by the burning of fossil fuels is trapping the heat of the sun, causing the planet to become warmer. Glaciers and permafrost are melting, forests are shrinking, and fresh water is becoming scarcer. The diversity of species on the planet is diminishing” (Bate 24). The human sense of superiority has subjected nature to myriad types of exploitation. As a result, no sphere of the dominion of nature could remain like nature in the twenty-first century.

Ecocriticism as a literary approach attempts to look at cultural and literary texts to analyze references and occasions in nature. It compares and contrasts depictions of natural sights and landscapes with people’s attitudes and attentions towards nature. It works as a link between literature and ecology. Ecocriticism has been burgeoning since the 1990s in Europe and America, chiefly. However, seeds of it were sown around four decades ago in Raymond Williams’ book *The Country and the City* (1973) and Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land* (1975).

Cheryll Glotfelty defines ‘ecocriticism’ as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment... takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies (Glotfelty xviii). American critic William Rueckert’s essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” (1978) popularized the term ‘ecocriticism’ in cultural and literary studies. By ‘ecocriticism’ he meant the application of ecology and ecological concepts into the study of literature. Bate, the first British eco-critic, sees 'ecocriticism' as a two-fold approach. The first explores human attitudes towards nature, and the second explores the relation between man and nature as portrayed in various literary and cultural writings.

The term 'ecology' is made of 'eco' and 'logy'. The head word 'eco' by the Greek root 'oikos' means 'home'. And the word 'logy' is related to 'study'. *The Oxford English Dictionary* in 1876 first quoted the German word 'Oecologie' as the genesis of 'ecology'. Ecology is the branch of biology that deals with the mutual relationship between a living organism and its environment. Ecology studies the interrelatedness of everything in the cosmos. It regards the environment as a whole of infinite elements. Each element is unique but cannot be evaluated in isolation from other concerning elements. Jonathan Bate finds ecocritical impulse in Wordsworth's book *The Excursion* that 'Everything is linked to the natural environment' (Bate 66). By Greek roots, 'ecology' is the study of the house. Ecocriticism, then, is the criticism of the house, that is, the environment as represented in literature.

Joseph W. Meeker used the term 'literary ecology' to address themes within discourses of environment and biology in his 1974 book *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*. He writes, "Human beings are the earth's only literary creature. "If the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behaviour and the natural environment—to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us. Is it an activity that adapts us better to the world or one that estranges us from it?" (Meeker 3-4)

Ecocritics insist on the inclusion of race, class, gender, and colonial discourses in the ecocritical assessment of cultural and literary texts. It is argued that white races have always been unfriendly to the environment. Statistical surveys show that most environmentally unfriendly appliances are sold and bought by white hands. Poor nations are relatively less vulnerable to eco-hazards.

As far as gender discourses are concerned, ecocritics emphasize female roles in the safety of the environment. Women are more sensitive to plants and flowers and are engaged in agricultural activities; by contrast, males are more involved in industrial activities than females. Sherry B. Ortner is to say that 'woman is closer to nature'. This is technically called 'ecofeminism'. Colonialism was capitalist in its modus operandi. Colonialists subordinated wildlife, landscapes, mountains, hills, rivers, and seas and subjected them to structural abuse. They represented these spheres in various discourses as empty, wild, and virgin, to be penetrated and exploited. They made colonized spaces ideologically of no use. This is 'eco-

colonization'. Colonialists always and ever warranted industrialization and the application of scientific approaches in all walks of life. In fact, colonialism happened for the exploitation of nature.

Alfred Crosby coined the term 'eco-imperialism' in his 1986 book *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900*. For Crosby, colonization was a form of ecological terrorism. Countless trees were felled and exported to Britain. They introduced the undisciplined application of pesticides and fertilizers. Colonials taught the art of grafting. Original plants, they replace them with grafted plants. In the agriculture sector, too many changes came to light. Traditional crops and grains were replaced with new hybrid ones. Many diseases spread as a result of this process.

Bill McKibben, in *The End of Nature* (1990), argues that natural wilderness is land that has never been altered by human activities, but global warming made the change quite possible and threatened the pristine state of nature. Bill desperately bemoans, "We have changed the atmosphere, and thus we are changing the weather. By changing the weather, we make every spot on the earth man-made and artificial. We have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature's independence is its meaning; without it, there is nothing but us (Bill 54).

Greg Garrard a 'deep ecologist' (the phrase 'deep ecology' was first conceived by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher) in his book *Ecocriticism* (2004) identifies pastoral, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and the earth as the literary spheres of the environment. Deep ecologists recognize independent value of non-human world. Hence human beings have no right to destroy it except to mete out vital needs. It asks for drastic changes in consumption habits not only for averting catastrophes but also for spiritual and moral awakening. To 'deep ecologists', mountains, rivers, hills, animals, trees, etc. deserve due respect. Of course, the future of our generation will be safe as much safe as we keep safe our nature.

16.3 Diaspora Studies

The term 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek verb 'speiro' (to sow or scatter) and the Greek preposition 'dia' (over or through). It was first used to refer to the dispersal of the Jews following the demolition of the first temple in around 586 BC, and the exile was imposed on

Babylonians. By the 1970s AD, Babylonians had spread over Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, in its 1989 edition, defined the term 'diaspora' as 'dispersion of the Jews among the gentile nations outside the biblical land of Israel'. But in its 1993 edition, it extended to 'any person or group of people living outside the traditional homeland'. Braziel Mannur and Anita Mannur write that the term "diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries" (Braziel and Mannur 1).

The term 'diaspora' is 'polythetic' by nature. Robin Cohen describes 'diasporas as communities of people living together in one country...'. He classified the world-wide diasporas into six categories in his book *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997), alongside their divergent contexts and histories, which the term carries with itself. These are: victim diasporas, labour diasporas, imperial diasporas, trade diasporas, homeland diasporas, and cultural diasporas. He sees a common chord that unites them: that they (diaspora people) are forced inhabitants of their 'natal (or imagined natal) territories' and approve that their traditional homelands are reflected in the languages they speak, cultures they practice, and religions they adopt (Cohen ix).

Justin D. Edwards does not agree with Cohen, for to the former it seems that to the latter the term "is on the verge of becoming overdetermined because it runs the risk of being too inclusive and thus simultaneously meaning everything and nothing" (Edwards 150). Sudesh Mishra, in his book *Diaspora Criticism* (2006), divides diasporic movements into two distinct movements: voluntary (attracted to the hostland for the sake of professional or academic purposes, especially in the USA, UK, Germany, France, and other European nations) and involuntary (expelled from the homeland due to slavery, indentured labour to Fiji or the Caribbean countries). Sudesh Mishra divided whole diasporic scholarship into three scenes: 'dual territoriality', 'situational laterality', and the last, 'archival specificity'.

William Safran suggests six major characteristics of diasporics: dispersal from the original homeland of them or their ancestors; retention of collective memory, vision or myth of the original homeland along with its physical location, history and achievements; partial (never complete) absorption in the hostlands and concomitantly to believe that they cannot be fully accepted by their lost homeland and hence they feel alienation and humiliation; romanticized desire to return to original homeland (as true and ideal) when the conditions are viable and suitable; desirable commitment or responsibility to the restoration or maintenance of

homeland, its safety and prosperity; and continually renewed linkages whether personally or vicariously with homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship (Safran 83-84).

The last feature of diaspora, what Vijay Mishra calls 'diasporic imaginary', is more telling and relevant. Sudesh Mishra recognizes Safran and Cohen as exemplars of 'dual territoriality'. It relies on the homeland/hostland binary and stable entities. He criticizes this approach because it cannot do full justice to the shifting nature of identities and modes of subjectivity, as well as cross-subject alliances determined by class, gender, education, religion, sexual preferences, accent, and language.

Diasporics are quite diverse and dynamic because they all come from different backgrounds and for different reasons and aspirations. And therefore, they should be taken into account differently. As Jana Mannur and Anita Mannur argue:

Theorizing diaspora offers critical spaces for thinking about the discordant movements of modernity—the massive migrations that have defined this century—from the late colonial period through the decolonization era to the twenty-first century. Theorizations of diaspora need not, and should not, be divorced from historical and cultural specificity. Diasporic traversals question the rigidities of identity itself—religious, ethnic, gendered, national—yet this diasporic movement marks not a postmodern turn from history but a nomadic turn in which the parameters of specific historical moments are embodied and, as the diaspora itself suggests, are scattered and regrouped into new points of becoming (Brazier and Mannur 3).

In this way, diaspora theorists are well aware of the heterogeneity of migrant communities. Justin Edwards writes: "After all, diasporic communities develop their own particular forms of hybridity and heterogeneity in specific cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and national contexts" (Edwards 156). In fact, diasporics made cultural scholars and theorists revisit centre-periphery relationships and identities. They even challenged their prevailing notions and concepts of nation-states. Rey Chow, in her book *Writing Diaspora*, argues that 'in the face of contemporary globalization, the centre-periphery relationship is now under threat'. 'The native is no longer available as the pure, unadulterated object of Orientalist inquiry; she is contaminated by the West and dangerously unotherable' (Gandhi 127).

The term diaspora conjures up the idea of a journey. Diasporic journeys are about settling down and putting roots, or 'staying put' elsewhere (Brah 182). Home is central to the thinking of Avtar Brah about the diaspora. Brah writes in her *Cartographies of Diaspora*, "Home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin" (Brah 192). According to James Clifford, diasporics commonly share "a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship" (Clifford 305).

In all cases, the concept of diaspora carries a sense of translocation and displacement. Diasporics migrate to a 'new world' not only physically and geographically but with their cultural artifacts and home consciousness as well. Diaspora studies are basically a narrative of displacement, which includes feelings of homelessness, alienation, memory or remembrances, and romantic longings for an eventual return caused either by voluntary displacement or involuntary displacement. According to James Procter, "diaspora" can appear both as naming a geographical phenomenon—the traversal of physical terrain by an individual or a group—as well as a theoretical concept: a way of thinking or of representing the world" (McLeod 151). The latter part of the definition is more interesting and implies, of course, the diasporization of the world. Leela Gandhi writes:

Postcolonialism is generally concerned with the idea of cultural dislocation. While diaspora is generally invoked as a theoretical device for the interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism, Diasporic thought betrays its poststructuralist origins by contesting all claims to the stability of meaning and identity. In its postcolonial incarnation, such thought reviews the colonial encounter for its disruption of native/domestic space (Gandhi 131-32).

Like other critical theories, 'diaspora critical theory' too seeks to provide a fair framework for evaluating or examining dispersed communities along with their social, cultural, political, and economic specifics. The term 'diaspora' has now widened its scope of meanings. It is extensively used to denote political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, expellees, asylum-seekers, knowledge-seekers, guest workers, and racial and ethnic minorities who still strongly feel and maintain emotional relationships with their land of origin through various cultural practices and ways of life. If you say otherwise, it primarily refers to the permanently displaced and relocated groups having or sharing a common national and/or ethnic identity.

16.4 Let Us Sum Up

Diaspora literature more often than not involves a history of displacement, remembrances of the homeland (from where the dispersal occurred), feelings of alienation in the adopted country, and a romantic desire for return (which is possibly impossible). Basically, 'diaspora' is a minority community living in exile. Due to social exclusion and marginalization, diasporics retain the country they were once part of in their consciousness as a marker of distinctiveness and difference. Even empirically, the majority of diasporics worldwide constitute minority groups in their host countries and therefore remain unprivileged and embattled.

Both 'ecocriticism' and 'diaspora' are global in their respective dimension, concern and context. Both work for the restoration of balance and harmony in the given context.

16.5 Model Questions and Their Answers

Q. 1 What is 'eco-imperialism'?

Ans. Go through section no. 16.2.

Q. 2 What is 'deep ecology'?

Ans. Read section no. 16.2.

Q. 3 What is diaspora?

Ans. Read section no. 16.3 and write your answer in your own words.

Q. 4 Whom do you call diasporic?

Ans. Read carefully section no. 16.3

Q. 5 Discuss play of 'home' 'host' in diasporic sensibility.

Ans. See section no. 16.3 and 16.4.

16.6 Further Reading

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