SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR
CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Literary Criticism and Critical Appreciation
(Special English)

B. A. Part-III

(Semester-V Paper-VII

(Academic Year 2015-16 onwards)
1.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to understand –

- Plato’s theory of *Mimesis*
- Aristotle's theory of *Mimesis*
- Aristotle's theory of *Catharsis*
- Aristotle’s concept of *Hamartia*
1.1 Introduction

The critical enquiry had begun almost in the 4th century B.C. in Greece. Plato, the great disciple of Socrates, was the first critic who examined poetry as a part of his moral philosophy. Plato’s critical observations on poetry lie scattered in *The Ion, The Symposium, The Republic* and *The Laws*. In *The Ion*, he advocated poetry as a genuine piece of imaginative literature, but in *The Republic* which is a treatise on his concepts of Ideal State, he rejected poetry on moral and philosophical grounds. Plato was a great moral philosopher. He was mainly concerned with inducing moral values in the society and seeking the ultimate Truth. For him, poetry is immoral and imitative in nature.

On the other hand, Aristotle, the most distinguished disciple of Plato, was a critic, scholar, logician and practical philosopher. He is known for his critical treatises: (i) *The Poetics* and (ii) *The Rhetoric*, dealing with art of poetry and art of speaking, respectively. Aristotle examines poetry as a form of art and evaluates its constituent elements on the basis of its aesthetic beauty. Aristotle actually observed the then available forms of literature and analyzed them and codified the rules. In his work he has described the characteristics of Tragedy, Comedy and Epic in elaborate manner.

Classical criticism views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or representation of the world and human life. The primary criterion applied to a work is that of the “truth” of its representation to the subject matter that it represents, or should represent.

In his *Poetics* (fourth century B.C.), Aristotle defines poetry as an imitation (in Greek, mimesis) of human actions. The poem takes an instance of human action and represents it in a new “medium,” or material—that of words. Aristotle distinguishes poetry from other arts in terms of the artistic media, the kind of actions imitated, and in the manner of imitation (for example, dramatic or narrative). He also makes distinctions between the various poetic kinds, such as drama and epic, tragedy and comedy.

Aristotle’s *Poetics* provides a classic analysis of the form of tragedy. His analysis is based on the tragedies of Greek dramatists such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Aristotle defined tragedy as follows; Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action, that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language
embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, several kinds being found in separate parts of the play, through pity and fear effecting the proper catharsis or purgation of these emotions."

Aristotle further says that the tragic hero will evoke both pity and fear if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil but a mixture of both; and also that the tragic effect will be stronger if the hero is of higher than ordinary moral worth. Such a man suffers a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of a mistaken act, to which he is led by his hamartia—his “error of judgment”.

In this unit we are going to study the literary terms like mimesis, catharsis and hamartia used by the classical critics, Plato and Aristotle.

1.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

1.2.1 Mimesis

Mimesis is one of the most discussed terms in Aristotle’s Poetics. It was first used by Plato in Republic. Plato has used it in connection with poetry. Mimesis means copying something as it is. Plato was of the opinion that 'poetry (literature) imitates'. It is mere copying of the appearances of things, actions and behaviors of people around. Later on, Aristotle interpreted it in the Poetics and gave it a comprehensive meaning.

Plato’s Theory of Mimesis:

Plato, in his book Republic, Chapter X, has used the term 'mimesis' or ‘imitation’ for the first time. In it, he makes a difference between useful arts and 'imitative arts'. The useful arts like medicine, agriculture etc. serve our immediate needs; whereas, imitative arts like painting, dancing or poetry do not have such utility. They are called the fine arts.

Plato was of the view that all the fine arts are imitative. They are a copy, a representation of something. They copy some ideas, appearances of things in the world outside. Poetry, being a fine art also imitates such ideas. Plato considered poetry to be 'imitative', a copy of copy, a shadow of shadow. He claimed that poetry is unreal and is away from reality. It is only a replica, a blind imitation of the ideas.

While expressing such views on poetry, Plato gave the example of 'bed'. When a carpenter makes a bed out of wood, he works on the basis of the Idea of bed. It is the
idea that is real and the bed is an imitation of it. It is a copy of the original idea. Plato believed that Ideas are made by God, the Creator. When a painter paints the picture of a bed, he takes the idea from the bed made by carpenter. Thus the painted bed is the copy of a copy. It is an imitation of an imitation and it is twice removed from reality.

Plato applied the same theory to poetry (i.e. literature) also. When a poet presents the world in poetry, he takes inspiration from the outward appearance of the world. The poets' world is a copy of the world in which he lives. It is thus a replica, blind imitation, a copy of a copy. Thus, Plato declared poetry to be unreal, twice or thrice removed from reality. There is nothing creative as such but is imitative.

In this way, the theory of imitation first appeared in Plato's Republic. He considered imitation to be a photographic replica and a blind imitation. He thought that there is nothing original and creative in it. In this way, in the course of argument, Plato turned to be a critic of poetry. He declared poetry to be 'the mother of lies'; he even denied any place to the poets in his ideal state.

Such was Plato's theory of imitation. He criticized arts and even poetry on several grounds. At the same time, it must be taken into account that Plato's remarks were made in a particular context. Plato himself was a man of poetic merits. He was aware of the role of arts in human life. But he was an idealist and had a dream of moulding ideal citizens for republic. Hence, he considered poetry to be unsuitable for his purpose.

Aristotle's Theory of Mimesis:

There is no doubt that Aristotle inherited the word 'mimesis' from Plato. In the Poetics, Aristotle has expressed his theory of mimesis. It is in chapters I to IV. Aristotle added a new meaning, a new dimension to Plato’s concept. He expanded and made it comprehensive. Aristotle’s Poetics is an indirect answer to Plato. Aristotle breathed a new life, a new spirit in the theory of mimesis. He proved that poetry is not a servile copy, a blind imitation but a process of creation.

Aristotle considers mimesis/imitation to be the common principle of all fine arts. The term 'fine arts' includes poetry, comedy, tragedy, dancing, music, flute playing, painting and sculpture. All of them imitate something. Thus Aristotle agrees with Plato’s theory in principle. He agrees that imitation is the common principle of all arts. At the same time, he differs from Plato by including music in the imitative arts.
It clearly shows that Aristotle's theory of imitation is wider than that of Plato. The musician imitates not the outward form of appearances, but he presents the inward world of human feelings, passions and emotions. It is the inner life of man.

Other arts like painting, dancing etc. also imitate something. It is the common basis of all arts, but there are differences too. All the arts differ from one another in three ways. They have different 'mediums or means' of imitation. They differ in their objects of imitation. Finally, their manners or modes of imitation are also different. In this way, the mediums, the objects and the manners of imitation make differences among arts.

I) Mediums or Means of Imitation:

Some mediums of imitation are form, colour and sounds. Music uses rhythm, language and harmony. Poetry uses the medium of language.

II) The Objects of Imitation:

The objects of imitation or representation are 'human beings'. These are the men performing or experiencing something. They may be either good or bad. It means that the arts represent human beings, either better or worse than they really are. Thus, the objects of imitation are different in each art. In poetry, some poets present men better than reality or as they are. They may be presented lower than the reality. It is the basic difference between tragedy and comedy. Tragedy presents men 'better' than reality, whereas comedy presents them in the lower mode.

Thus, the objects of imitation differ in various arts. For Aristotle, imitation was not limited to outward appearance only. It was the reproduction of human nature and actions. It is a creative process.

III) The Manner of Imitation:

Different arts imitate objects in different manners. There may be three modes of it. First, the poet may use the mode of narration throughout. Secondly, he may use narration as well as dialogues by characters. We find such mode in Homer's poetry. Lastly, a poet may represent the whole story in a dramatic manner. It is in the form of action.

For Aristotle, the manner of imitation helps us to classify poetry into epic, narrative and descriptive types. The dramatic poetry is further divided in tragedy and comedy on the basis of their objects of representation. This classification prepares
the ground for further discussion of tragedy in later chapters. In this way, poetry differs from all other arts on the basis of medium, objects and manner of imitation.

IV) The Origin and Development of Poetry:

Aristotle traces the origin and development of poetry in human life. The discussion is concentrated on dramatic poetry. Aristotle considers that the origin of poetry lies in two natural instincts. First, it is the natural human impulse to imitate things. Such impulse is found even in children. Secondly, it is in the delight in recognizing and appreciating a good imitation. It helps to appreciate even ugly objects, if imitated well. Then there is the instinct of getting pleasure in harmony and rhythm. Poetry grew out of these natural instincts.

Poetry, later on, developed into two directions, according to the personal characters of the poets. Some poets with serious spirits represented noble personages and their actions. They composed panegyrics and hymns to the gods. On the other hand, poets with lighter spirits presented frivolous characters with trivial actions. These were the comedies and satires. Aristotle considers Homer to be the unique poet who shared in both the tendencies.

Imitation - a Creative Process:

Aristotle thus took the term 'mimesis' from Plato. He gave it a wider significance and a new implication. Plato considered poetry/literature merely a replica, a blind copying. For Aristotle, it was an act of creative vision. No doubt, a poet takes his material from the phenomenal in the world, but he makes something new out of it. A poet may deal with the facts from the past, from the established beliefs or with the unrealized ideals. He transforms them into some universal and permanent characteristics of human life. Poetic imitation thus involves a creative faculty. It is the transformation of material into an art. Aristotle asserts: "It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened but what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity". Poetry is thus more philosophical than history. Aristotle refuted the charge against poetry being a 'mother of lies'. He brought out the higher truth involved in it. Poetry is an act of creative vision. Imitation, to Aristotle, was none other than 're-creation'.
1.2.1.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1) Aristotle's *Poetics* was an answer to ..........
   a) Sidney's 'An Apology for Poetry'  b) Shelley's 'A Defense of Poetry'
   c) Plato's *Republic*          d) Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*

2) The *Poetics* is mainly concerned with ..........
   a) Comedy   b) Poetry
   c) Epic     d) Tragedy

3) The common principle of all fine arts is that ..........  
   a) they give us pleasure  b) they imitate something
   c) they are useful to us  d) they are of no use

4) Tragedy is an imitation of ..........
   a) action  b) people
   c) life     d) world

5) The term 'mimesis' was first used by -----  
   a) Philip Sidney  b) P. B. Shelley
   c) Plato         d) Chaucer

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1) What was Plato’s interpretation of imitation?

2) Aristotle admits that poetry is imitation. But there is something more. What is it?

3) Why did Plato banish poets from his ideal Republic?

4) Where did Plato use the term ‘mimesis’?

5) Which Greek word is represented ‘imitation’ in English?
1.2.2 Catharsis

Introduction

Aristotle's *Poetics* is a celebrated work of literary criticism. It is basically an answer to Plato’s *Republic*. The *Poetics* is about the art of poetry in general, but it mainly focuses on epic and tragedy. There are 26 chapters in all, out of which 14 are devoted to tragedy only. So it is clear that Aristotle gave much importance to tragedy in it. It is because epic and tragedy were considered to be the ideal forms of literature in the ancient age. Hence the *Poetics* concentrates on tragedy, in particular. Aristotle's views on catharsis are found in chapters VI and XIV of the *Poetics*. While defining tragedy, Aristotle uses the word ‘catharsis’ for the first time.

The Theory of Catharsis:

'Catharsis' or 'Katharsis' is perhaps the most debated term in literary criticism, all over the world. It is a word of Greek origin. Aristotle used it only once, in chapter VI of the *Poetics*. Unfortunately he himself has not explained it anywhere. Hence it gave birth to divergent interpretations and explanations. Aristotle used the term 'catharsis' while defining tragedy. He used it in connection with the emotional effect of the tragedy on the spectators. Thus for Aristotle, catharsis meant the effect or the function of tragedy.

Before studying it in detail, it is necessary to understand that Aristotelian theory of tragedy was framed to be an answer to Plato’s charge that 'poetic drama feeds and waters the passions, instead of starving them, and as such encourages anarchy (disturbance) in the soul'.

Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that poetry does not create disturbance in human mind but provides proper expression to emotions in a regulated manner. Thus poetic drama provides proper channelization of emotions. Aristotle's views on 'catharsis' are found in chapters VI and XIV of the *Poetics*.

The Place of Pity and Fear in Catharsis:

The terms pity and fear are closely associated with Aristotle's theory of *catharsis*. There are different types of fears in human life. Fear may be centered on an individual or it may be at collective or society level also. It may arise due to some vague feeling of danger, insecurity or anxiety. It may occur because of some awful,
disastrous or inexplicable event in life. It may come because of the sense of guilt due to some error committed. All these forms of fear are well expressed in a tragedy.

Pity is occasioned by some undeserved misfortune. It is a sort of pain for one who comes across some destructive evil, even if he doesn't deserve it; we pity someone who is suffering because of a misfortune. We feel pity for others, at the same time we fear for ourselves, if we are placed in those circumstances. Thus, pity and fear are closely related emotions.

**Different Interpretations of Catharsis:**

Aristotle in his famous definition of tragedy has used the term 'catharsis'. He has used it to suggest the effect or the function of tragedy. It is a Greek word and Aristotle himself has not provided any explanation of it. Naturally, it gave way to different explanations and interpretations in the world of literature. The term has been interpreted by different critics in different ways. They have different opinions regarding the exact meaning of the term. Each critic takes some aspect of it into consideration. The traditional critics have emphasized the emotional aspect of *catharsis*, whereas the modern critics analyse it from the intellectual point of view. Scholars have suggested religious, moral, medical, psychological and aesthetic interpretations of it.

There are three common interpretations of *catharsis*. They are 'purgation, purification and clarification'. Now, let us examine them in detail.

1) **The Purgation Theory:**

The purgation theory interprets *catharsis* in medical terms. It is a medical metaphor. In medical terms (especially in the older sense), purgation meant the removal of excess or unnecessary elements from body. The health of body depends upon a true balance of all elements. If they are in excess, it is suggested to provide an outlet. In the same way, the excess or unhealthy passions also need to be purged. *Catharsis* is thus a process of purgation to such unhealthy emotions. Tragedy arouses emotions of pity and fear. Then it provides an outlet. The excessive emotions are purged, removed away from mind. It helps to create an emotional balance. A calmness of mind is maintained. Purgation thus denotes the pathological effect on the mind comparable to the effect of medicine on body. This theory was advocated by critics like Milton, Twining and Barney.
Some critics interpreted *catharsis* as a homeopathic process. They thought it to be a case of 'like curing like'. A little substance of some element cures the body of an excess of the same thing. To support this, these critics refer to some passages by Aristotle in the *Politics* and the *Poetics*. These passages describe the effect of music on body and some religious frenzy, calmed down by the same things.

Neo-classical critics like Dryden interpret it in the opposite way. They consider *catharsis* in allopathic way of 'like curing unlike'. According to this method, the arousing of pity and fear was supposed to bring about the purgation of other emotions such as anger, hatred, pride etc. It is the process of feeding and watering of unhealthy emotions. Purgation is thus a major explanation of *catharsis*. Sigmund Freud, a modern psychoanalyst, also supports this theory. He said, "by helping patients to recall their painful childhood experiences, neurosis can be cured."

2) **The Purification Theory:**

Another interpretation of *catharsis* is purification. Some critics like Humphrey House rejected the purgation theory in the medical sense of the term. They criticized that 'theatre is not a hospital and the audience are not patients'. Humphrey House advocated the purification theory, which means 'moral learning, moral instructing or moral conditioning of mind'. It is the idea of cleaning or cleansing of the soul. Tragedy by arousing pity and fear brings back the soul to a balanced state. Tragedy thus trains and purifies the emotions and brings them to a balanced state. The emotions are directed towards the right objects, at the right time. In this way, we are made virtuous and good. The purification theory is related to soul as the purgation is related to body. Critics like Butcher, Corneille and Lessing have supported it.

3) **The Clarification Theory:**

It is the third interpretation of *catharsis*. It is advocated by critics like Leon Golden, O. B. Hardison and G. E. Else. They think that Aristotle was mainly concerned with the intellectual effect and not the emotional effect of tragedy. Tragedy is concerned with the spectator's understanding of the events of plot. A tragedy presents some universal truths of human life through particular events and characters. Watching a tragedy gives us joy, pleasure. It is called the aesthetic pleasure. Aristotle himself has said, "if well imitated, pictures, even of corpse and ugly creatures, give us pleasure". Thus incidents like a person blinding himself, murdering his friend or a husband killing his wife, would horrify us in routine life. If
they are presented artistically, they provide delight, a sort of pleasure. It is this pleasure that tragedy gives.

According to the clarification theory, *catharsis* becomes an indication of the function of tragedy, and not of its emotional effect on audience. It leads to an understanding of the universal law that governs the universe. *Catharsis* thus turns to be an intellectual process.

**Some Other Interpretations:**

Apart from these commonly accepted explanations, there are some other theories also. Some critics tried to give the psychological interpretation of *catharsis*. S. H. Butcher regards it as a refining process. He thinks that tragedy provides a process of reforming lower type of emotions into the refined ones.

Another critic, Herbert Read considers *catharsis* to be a safety valve that provides outlet to excess emotions. It results in the feeling of emotional relief.

I. A. Richards considers 'Pity as an emotion to approach, whereas fear is an emotion to retreat or withdraw’. Tragedy brings these opposite emotions harmoniously together. It creates a balance, an equilibrium of mind.

**Conclusion:**

As Aristotle himself has not provided any explanation of *catharsis*, critics vary in interpretations. There is no agreement as to what Aristotle really meant. The theories like purgation and purification relate *catharsis* to the psychology of the audience. The clarification theory seems to be more acceptable because it focuses on the work of art and not the audience. It is to be noted that Aristotle was writing on the art of poetry and not on psychology of the audience.

**1.2.2.1 Check Your Progress:**

A) **Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:**

1) We got to see a theatre to witness a tragedy because ---------.
   a) we want education           b) we need *catharsis*
   c) we seek entertainment       d) we look for comfort
2) Purgation is basically a .......... term.
   a) literary       b) psychological
   c) medical       d) philosophical

3) As a homeopathic term, catharsis means --------.
   a) purification   b) sublimation
   c) purgation      d) enjoyment

4) Aristotle argues that art is ------- than the reality or truth.
   a) something less  b) something more
   c) something better d) something worse

5) ----- believed that neurosis can be cured by recalling painful childhood experiences.
   a) Sigmund Freud       b) F. L. Lucas
   c) Carl Jung           d) I. A. Richards

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.
1) Why are there so many interpretations of the term ‘catharsis’?
2) Where did Aristotle use the term ‘catharsis’?
3) Why, according to psychologists, do spectators go to the theatre?
4) On what principle is the purgation theory based?
5) On what occasion were the tragedies staged in Aristotle’s times?

1.2.3 Hamartia:

Hamartia, also called tragic flaw, (hamartia from Greek hamartanein, “to err”), refers to an inherent defect or shortcoming in the hero of a tragedy, who is in other respects a superior being favoured by fortune. Aristotle introduced the term casually in The Poetics in describing the tragic hero as a man of noble rank and nature whose misfortune is not brought about by villainy but by some “error of judgment” (hamartia). This imperfection later came to be interpreted as a moral flaw, such as Othello’s jealousy or Hamlet’s irresolution, although most great tragedies defy such a simple interpretation. Most importantly, the hero’s suffering and its far-
reaching reverberations are far out of proportion to his flaw. An element of cosmic collusion among the hero’s flaw, chance, necessity, and other external forces is essential to bring about the tragic catastrophe.

In Chapter XV of the Poetics, Aristotle deals with the art of characterization on an extended scale. He lists four essentials of successful characterization.

**Four Essentials of Characterization:**

i) **The character must be good** - A character is good, if his words and actions reveal that his purpose is good. In ancient Greece, women were considered as inferior beings and slaves as worthless. But Aristotle says that, when introduced in tragedy, even women and slaves must be shown to have some good in them. Entirely wicked characters, even though assigned minor roles, are unfit for tragedy. Wickedness may be introduced only when required by the necessities of the plot. Wanton introduction of wickedness must be avoided; and when introduced even wicked characters must be made good in some respects. Wickedness must be mixed up with some good as in actual life. In other words, Aristotle prefers complex characters. Just as a successful painter makes his portrait more beautiful than the original, in the same way the poet must represent his characters better and more dignified and must still preserve the likeness to the original.

ii) **The character must be appropriate** - According to Aristotle the character must be appropriate, that is to say each character must be true to ‘type’ or ‘status’. For example, a woman must be shown as womanly and not ‘manly’; a slave must be given a character which is appropriate to his ‘status’. Manliness would not be appropriate in a woman, and dignity and nobility in a slave. If the characters are taken from some known myth or story, say the story of King Oedipus, and then they must be true to tradition. They must behave as King Oedipus is traditionally supposed to have behaved. In this respect, Aristotle had the practice of Greek dramatists in mind, who chose their tragic themes from history, myth, and other traditional sources.

iii) **Characters must have likeness** – The third essential of successful characterization is that characters must have likeness i.e. they must be like ourselves or true to life. In other words, they must have the virtues and weaknesses, joys and sorrows, loves and hatreds, likes and dislikes, of average humanity. Such likeness is essential, for we can feel pity only for one who is like ourselves, and only his
misfortunes can make us fear for ourselves. This in itself rules out perfectly good, or utterly wicked and depraved characters. Such characters will not be like us. They will be unreal and unconvincing. The characters must be of an intermediate sort, mixtures of good and evil, virtues and weaknesses like us.

iv) **The characters must be consistent** - They must be true to their own natures, and their actions must be in character. Thus a rash, impulsive person should act rashly and impulsively. There should be no sudden changes in character. If the dramatist has to represent an inconsistent person, then he must be ‘consistently inconsistent’.

Aristotle emphasizes the point further by saying that the actions of a character must be the necessary and probable outcome of his nature. He should act as we may logically expect a man of his nature to act, under the given circumstances. Just as the incidents must be casually connected with each other, so also the various actions of a character must be the necessary and probable consequences of his character, and the situation in which he is placed. They must be logically interlinked with his earlier actions, and must not contradict the impression produced earlier.

**The Ideal Tragic Hero:**

Having examined the art of characterization in general, Aristotle proceeds to examine the qualities which the ideal tragic hero must have. No passage in the *Poetics*, with the exception of the phrase *catharsis*, has attracted so much critical attention as his ideal of the tragic hero.

The function of a tragedy is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear, and Aristotle deduces the qualities of his hero from this function. He should be good, but not too good or perfect, for the fall of a perfectly good man from happiness into misery, would be odious and repellent. His fall will not arouse pity, for he is not like us and his undeserved fall would only shock and disgust. Similarly, the spectacle of an utterly wicked person passing from happiness to misery may satisfy our moral sense, but is lacking in the proper tragic qualities. Such a person is not like us, and his fall is felt to be well-deserved and in accordance with the requirement of justice. It excites neither pity nor fear. Thus, according to Aristotle, perfectly good, as well as utterly wicked persons are not suitable to be heroes of tragedies. However, Elizabethan tragedy has demonstrated that, given the necessary skill and art, even villains, like Macbeth, can serve as proper tragic heroes and their fall can arouse the
specific tragic emotions. The wreck of such power excites in us a certain tragic sympathy; we experience a sense of loss and regret over the waste or misuse of gifts so splendid.

Similarly, according to Aristotelian canon, a saint—a character perfectly good—would be unsuitable as a tragic hero. He is on the side of the moral order and not opposed to it, and hence his fall shocks and repels. However, his martyrdom is a spiritual victory and the sense of moral triumph drowns the feeling of pity for his physical suffering. The saint is self-effacing and unselfish, and so he tends to be passive and inactive. Drama, on the other hand, requires for its effectiveness a militant and combative hero. However, in quite recent times, both Bernard Shaw and T. S. Eliot have achieved outstanding success with saints as their tragic heroes. In this connection, it would be pertinent to remember that Aristotle’s conclusions are based on the Greek drama with which he was familiar. In the same manner, he is laying down the qualifications of an ideal tragic hero; he is here discussing what is the very best, and not what is good.

Having rejected perfection as well as utter depravity and villainy, Aristotle points out that the ideal tragic hero, “must be an intermediate kind of person, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgment.” The ideal tragic hero is a man who stands midway between the two extremes. He is not eminently good or just, though he inclines to the side of goodness.

The tragic hero is not depraved or vicious, but he is also not perfect, and his misfortune is brought upon him by some fault of his own. The Greek word used here is “hamartia”. The root meaning of hamartia is “missing the mark”. He falls not because of the act of some outside agency or vice or depravity, but because of Hamartia or miscalculation on his part. Hamartia is not a moral falling, and hence it is unfortunate that it has been translated rather loosely as “tragic flaw”, as has been done by Bradley. Aristotle himself distinguishes hamartia from moral falling, and makes it quite clear that he means by it some error of judgment. He writes that the cause of the hero’s fall must lie, “not in depravity, but in some error or hamartia on his part.” Butcher, Bywater, and Rostangi, all agree that hamartia is not moral state; but an error of judgment which a man makes or commits. However, as Humphrey House tells us, Aristotle does not assert or deny anything about the connection of hamartia with moral failings in the hero.
Thus, *hamartia* is an error or miscalculation, but the error may arise from any of the three ways: i) It may arise from “ignorance of some material fact or circumstance”, ii) It may be an error arising from hasty or careless view of the special case, iii) It may be an error voluntary, but not deliberate, as in the case of acts committed in anger or passion. Else and Martin Ostward, both critics interpret *hamartia* actively and say that the hero has a tendency to err, created by lack of knowledge, and he may commit a series of errors. They further say that the tendency to err characterizes the hero from the beginning—(it is a character-trait)—and that at the crisis of the play, it is complemented by the recognition scene (*anagnorisis*), which is a sudden change, “from ignorance to knowledge”.

As a matter of fact, *hamartia* is a word which admits of various shades of meaning, and hence it has been differently interpreted by different critics. However, all serious modern Aristotelian scholarship is agreed that *hamartia* is not moral imperfection – though it may be allied with moral faults – that it is an error of judgment, whether arising from ignorance of some material circumstances. It may even be a character-trait, for the hero may have a tendency to commit errors of judgment, and may commit not one, but a series of errors. This last conclusion is borne out by the play *Oedipus Tyrannus* to which Aristotle refers again and again, and which may be taken to be his ideal. In this play, the life of the hero is a chain of errors, the most fatal of all being his marriage with his mother. If King Oedipus is Aristotle’s ideal hero, we can say with Butcher that, “his conception of *hamartia* includes all the three meanings mentioned above, which in English cannot be covered by a single term.” *Hamartia* is an error, or a series of errors, “whether morally culpable or not,” committed by an otherwise noble person, and these errors drive him to his doom. The tragic irony lies in the fact that the hero may err innocently, unknowingly, without any evil intention at all, yet he is doomed no less than those who are depraved and sin consciously. He has *hamartia*; he commits error or errors, and as a result his very virtues hurry him to his ruin. Says Butcher, “Othello in the modern drama, Oedipus in the ancient, are the two most conspicuous examples of ruin wrought by characters, noble indeed, but not without defects, acting in the dark and, as it seemed, for the best.”
1.2.3.1 Check Your Progress.

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1) The root meaning of *hamartia* is ------.
   a) fixing the target  
   b) missing the mark
   c) finding fault  
   d) right choice

2) According to Bradley, *hamartia* is --------.
   a) tragic flaw  
   b) justice
   c) fortune  
   d) right decision

3) Butcher and Bywater believe that *hamartia* means --------.
   a) a missing of mark  
   b) misfortune of hero
   c) an error of judgment  
   d) all of these

4) *Hamartia* is not --------.
   a) moral falling  
   b) ideal truth
   c) universal truth  
   d) none of these

5) Aristotle used the word *hamartia* for --------.
   a) villain  
   b) ideal tragic hero
   d) heroine  
   d) none of these.

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1) How should be the tragic hero, according to Aristotle?

2) What is the root meaning of *hamartia*?

3) What is the meaning of *hamartia* according to Else and Martin Ostward?

4) What is the meaning of *anagnorisis*?

5) Who believes that *hamartia* is not moral state; but an error of judgment which a man makes or commits?
1.3 Summary:

Aristotle took the term 'mimesis' from Plato. He gave it a wider significance and a new implication. Plato considered the process of poetic creation merely a replica, blind copying. For Aristotle, it was an act of creative vision. No doubt, a poet takes his material from the phenomenal world, but he makes something new out of it. A poet may deal with facts from the past or the present, from the established beliefs or with the unrealized ideals. He transforms them into some universal and permanent characteristics of human life. Poetic imitation thus involves a creative faculty. It is the transformation of material into an art. Aristotle asserts, "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened but what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity". Poetry is thus more philosophical than history. Aristotle refuted the charge against poetry being a 'mother of lies'. He brought out the higher truth involved in it. Poetry is an act of creative vision. Imitation, to Aristotle was none other than 're-creation'.

The function of tragedy is catharsis. Aristotle himself has not provided any explanation of catharsis, so critics vary in interpretations. There is no agreement as to what Aristotle really meant. The theories like purgation and purification relate catharsis to the psychology of the audience. The clarification theory seems to be more acceptable because it focuses on the work of art and not the audience. It is to be noted that Aristotle was writing on the art of poetry and not on psychology of the audience.

Hamartia is a word which admits of various shades of meaning, and hence it has been differently interpreted by different critics. However, all serious modern Aristotelian scholarship is agreed that hamartia is not moral imperfection – though it may be allied with moral faults – that it is an error of judgment, whether arising from ignorance of some material circumstances. It may even be a character-trait, for the hero may have a tendency to commit errors of judgment, and may commit not one, but a series of errors.

1.4 Terms to Remember:

- **Mimesis**: copying something as it is
- **disciple**: student
- **treatise**: a written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject.
- **Dithyrambic**: Greek religious song sung to Dionysus, originally sung by a single person.
- **Catharsis**: a Greek word indicating the effect of tragedy.
- **anarchy**: disorder
- **magnitude**: length
- **language embellishments**: ornaments of language
- **aesthetic pleasure**: joy concerned with beauty and appreciation
- **inexplicable**: that cannot be explained
- **Hamartia**: missing the mark or tragic flaw
- **Anagnorisis**: a sudden change, “from ignorance to knowledge”.

### 1.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

#### 1.2.1.1

**A)**  
1) Plato's *Republic*  
2) Tragedy  
3) They imitate something  
4) action  
5) Plato

**B)**  
1) All art is imitation twice removed from reality.  
2) Imagination  
3) Because he thought that poetry aroused passions that darkened the reason  
5) *Mimesis*

#### 1.2.2.1

**A)**  
1) seek entertainment  
2) medical  
3) purgation
4) something more
5) Sigmund Freud

B) 1) It is because Aristotle did not explain it in *The Poetics*.
2) In the definition of tragedy.
3) The spectators go to the theatre for enjoyment and this enjoyment gives them relief from their pent up feelings or emotions.
4) On the Homeopathic principle of ‘Like cures like’.
5) During the festival of Dionysus.

1.2.3.1

A) 1) missing the mark
2) Tragic flaw
3) An error of judgment
4) Moral falling
5) Ideal tragic hero

B) 1) He should be good, but not too good or perfect, for the fall of a perfectly good man from happiness into misery, would be odious and repellent.
2) The root meaning of *hamartia* is “missing the mark”.
3) Both critics interpret *hamartia* actively and say that the hero has a tendency to err, created by lack of knowledge, and he may commit a series of errors.
4) It is a sudden change, “from ignorance to knowledge”.
5) Butcher, Bywater, and Rostangi,

1.6 Exercises:

1) Write a critical note on Aristotle's theory of *mimesis* and compare his views with those of Plato?
2) 'Poetry is not a slavish imitation but is a creative process'. Explain the remark in the context of Aristotle's theory of imitation.
3) What, according to Aristotle, is the proper pleasure of tragedy? How does tragedy achieve its ends?

4) What different theories have been advanced to explain Aristotle's concept of catharsis?

5) What are the different characteristics of an ideal tragic hero?

1.7 Further Reading:


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2.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- explain the salient features of Neo-Classical Criticism
- understand the major concepts such as reason and judgement
- understand the concept of irony
- understand the concept of satire
2.1 Introduction

Like literature, criticism has a long tradition that may refer back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. You have studied Aristotle’s theory of poetry in the earlier unit. Aristotle focused on tragedy in his *Poetics* and laid emphasis on the concepts like *mimesis*, *catharsis*, *hamartia*, etc. After the study of Classical Criticism, let us try to understand the Neo-Classical Criticism in this unit.

The English Neo-Classical movement was derived from both classical and contemporary French models. Boileau's *L'Art Poetique* (1674) and Pope's "Essay on Criticism" (1711) both provide us critical statements of Neo-Classical principles. The movement embodied a group of attitudes toward art and human existence — ideals of order, logic, accuracy, correctness, restraint, decorum, and so on. It encouraged the artists to imitate or reproduce the structures and themes of Greek or Roman originals. Neo-Classicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century.

To a certain extent Neo-Classicism represented a reaction against the Renaissance view of man as a being fundamentally good and possessed of an infinite potential for spiritual and intellectual growth. Neo-Classical theorists, by contrast, saw man as an imperfect being, inherently sinful, whose potential was limited. The Renaissance emphasized imagination, invention, experimentation, and mysticism. The Neo-Classical theorists, however, emphasized order and reason, restraint, common sense, and religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. They maintained that man himself was the most appropriate subject of art. They saw art itself as essentially pragmatic, valuable because it was somehow useful — and as something which was properly intellectual rather than emotional. Hence they gave importance to proper subject matter. They made an attempt to subordinate details to an overall design. And they employed in their work concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace.

The ‘Neo-Classical period’ in England spans the 140 years or so after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. The Neo-Classical Criticism is divided into two phases. The first phase covers the Restoration Age from 1660 to 1700 where Neo-Classicism was liberal and moderate. John Dryden was the leading figure of this age. The second phase covers the first six or seven decades of the 18th century where Neo-Classical Criticism becomes more and more narrow, slavish and stringent. Pope,
Addison and Dr Johnson were the prominent critics of this phase. Matthew Arnold called the Neo-Classical Age as ‘our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century’. Yet this school of criticism is known to us by various names. Firstly, it is called the Restoration Age because King Charles II was restored to the throne of England. Secondly, it is called the Augustan Age because the writers of the period believed that their age was the golden age of English literature like the age of Emperor Augustus whose period was the golden age of Latin literature. Thirdly, it is also called the Classical Age as the epithet ‘Classical’ refers to creative writers of outstanding works of the highest merit. The writers of this period believed that the works of the writers of Classical Antiquity (Latin writers) presented the best models and ultimate standards of literary taste. The principle of classicism is best expressed by Pope in his poetry. But the Neo-Classical Critics misunderstood and wrongly interpreted the so-called ‘rules’. Lastly, this period is named as a Pseudo-Classical or Neo-Classical Age because classicism of this period is different from the classicism of ancient Greece and Rome. The works of this period lack inspiration or emotion that differentiates true classics.

2.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter

2.2.1 Reason and Judgement

The Neo-Classical Age is also called the Age of Reason because the classical ideals of order and moderation inspired this period. This period has limited aspiration and its emphasis is on the common sense of society rather than individual imagination. All this can be characterized as rational. Reason had traditionally been assumed to be the highest mental faculty, but in this period many thinkers considered it a sufficient guide in all areas. Both religious belief and morality (judgement) were grounded on reason: revelation and grace were de-emphasized; morality consisted of acting rightly to one’s fellow beings on this earth. The most famous philosopher of the age, John Locke, analyzed logically how our minds function. He argued for religious tolerance and mentioned that government is justified not by divine right but by a ‘social contract’ that is broken if the people’s natural rights are not respected.

As reason should guide human individuals and societies, it also directs artistic creation. Neo-Classical art is not meant to seem a spontaneous outpouring of emotion or imagination. A work of art should be logically organized and should advocate rational norms.
The literature of the Neo-Classical period marked the breaking of ties with the Elizabethan literature. The spirit of the Neo-Classical literature was very much different from the spirit of the Elizabethan literature. There was gradual change in the tone of literature and in the temperaments of writers. Literature became intellectual rather than imaginative or emotional. The new spirit was all critical and analytical instead of creative and sympathetic. The merits of new school were found in its intellectual force and actuality. Thus, with the ascent of Reason and Judgement (Proportion) some of the poetic qualities of English literature disappeared.

The reason was dominant in the Neo-Classical period that emphasized correctness of rules and regulations. The writers of the age turned to the writers of ancient Greece and Rome. The imitative work of the new school was of a frigid and limited quality. Pope wrote:

Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
Are nature still, but Nature methodized.

The precept ‘follow nature’ was the very centre of the Neo-Classical creed. To the writers of the age Nature meant human nature. They were more interested in human nature than mountains, forests, streams etc. They were interested in men and manners of society. They cared more for manner than matter. They sought to paint realistic pictures of a corrupt court and society. They emphasized vices rather than virtues. Later this tendency to realism became more wholesome. It led to a keener study of the practical motives which govern human action. It focused on social events and controversies of the day in their works. Dryden’s Absalom and Achitophel and Pope’s Rape of the Lock are based on an actual incident in London society. In short, Neo-Classical writers wrote about kings and princes, lords and ladies, current fashions, fads, and controversies of the day.

The Neo-Classical Age was essentially an Age of Reason and Good Sense and of prose. The emphasis was laid on ‘correctness’, ‘reason’ and ‘good sense’. The writer should follow the rules ‘correctly’, and any exuberance of ‘fancy’ or ‘emotion’ must be controlled by reason or sense. A balance must be maintained between Fancy and Judgement. The head must predominate over the heart. The need of ‘inspiration’ was recognized but it was to be held in check by reason and good sense. Moderation was the golden rule in life and in literature. The Rational opposed extravagant or imaginary.
Judging and condemning gave birth to the spirit of satire. As a result the Restoration Age became the age of satire. It was a period of bitter political and personal contention, of easy morals and subdued enthusiasm, of sharp wit and acute discrimination. For these reasons satire acquired a new importance and sharper edge. Satire in this period attacked the old religion of Puritanism, false spiritual authorities. With this age the old poetical spirits of oppositions sprang up giving rise to political satires. We will consider satire in detail later on.

Reason was very important in the Neo-Classical era. The emphasis in this era was on formal finish and perfection rather than on content. Originality and perfection in respect of content was not possible because the universal truths were limited. In this age, the didactic function was considered more important than the aesthetic one. Much thought was given to the style and diction of poetry. Virgil was held out as the ideal to impart dignity and elevation to the diction. Common words were avoided. The use of compound words and epithets was also frequent for this very reason. As a result, there was the rise of the artificial poetic diction that Wordsworth condemned in his ‘Preface’.

Judgement of the writers of this period was different. They avoided the technical words of arts and sciences, attention to minute details and use of far-fetched imagery and conceits. They emphasized the need of decorum. It was recognized that different kinds of poetry have different styles proper to them. For example, the diction proper to satiric poetry would be improper for the epic, and a poet must use the style proper to the genre in which he was writing. There was not only difference between the diction of prose and poetry but also a difference between the diction of different kinds of poetry. The heroic measure was considered as the right measure for poetry. Literature of this period differs from the earlier Elizabethan Age in three respects – versification, diction and subject matter. The striking feature of the poetry of Dryden and Pope was its external character and its limited range of subjects. Hence, this period became the period of reason and judgement. Pope was the well-known poet as well as critic who flourished in the Neo-classical age. He was against those critics who considered only the diction, style or verse apart from the sense. He warned the critic against judging by parts rather than by whole. He was also against those critics who attached undue value to the false brilliance of flashy conceits. He condemned judgements based on popular notions and without a proper understanding of the work itself. He also condemned extreme fastidiousness in criticism:
All seems infected to the infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundic’d eye.

2.2.1.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Neo-Classical Criticism covers the period that begins from ----------
   a) 1660    b) 1700    c) 1798    d) 1680
2. Neo-Classical era is not named as------------------
   a) Restoration Age  b) Augustan Age  c) Classical Age  d) Elizabethan Age
3. ---------- had traditionally been assumed to be the highest mental faculty.
   a) Judgement    b) Reason    c) Heart    d) Emotions
4. ---------- gave birth to the spirit of satire.
   a) Feelings and emotions  b) Judging and condemning  c) Judging and appreciation  d) Seriousness and condemning

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is reason?
2. How did Matthew Arnold describe the Neo-Classical Age?
3. Why is the Neo-Classical period considered as a pseudo-classical age?
4. Who is the dominant critic of the later Neo-Classical Age?
5. How is the Neo-Classical Age different from the Elizabethan Age?

2.2.2 Irony

Irony, in its broadest sense, is a figure of speech. It is a rhetorical device or a literary technique. The concept of irony is defined variously:
1. Irony means the use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning, a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.

2. Irony is a form of deliberate mockery in which one says the opposite of what is obviously true.

3. Irony means the use of words in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. In simple words, it is a difference between the appearance and the reality.

4. Irony means ‘the expression of one’s meaning by using language that usually signifies the opposite, generally for humorous or emphatic effect.’

5. Irony indirectly presents a contradiction between an action or expression and the context in which it occurs.

6. Irony means ‘the use of words to mean or imply the opposite of what they usually mean.’

7. Irony is nothing but the use of witty language to convey insult or scorn.

The term ‘irony’ has its root in the Greek comic character called the eiron who was a dissembler. Eiron characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was. Yet he triumphed over the alazon – the self-deceiving and stupid braggart. In the use of irony, there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case, in order to deceive, to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects. The word ‘irony’ came into English as a figure of speech in the 16th century as similar to the French ironie. It derives from the Latin ironia and ultimately from the Greek eironeia. Irony is found in literature in almost all the ages.

Irony is used to bring about some added meaning to a situation. Ironical statements and situations in literature develop readers’ interest. Irony makes a work of literature more intriguing, and forces the readers to use their imagination and comprehend the underlying meaning of the texts. Moreover, real life is full of ironical expressions and situations. Therefore the use of irony brings a work of literature closer to the life. The writers make use of irony purposely. Irony inverts our expectations. It can create the unexpected twist at the end of a joke or a story that gets us laughing – or crying. Verbal irony tends to be funny; situational irony can be
funny or tragic; and dramatic irony is often tragic. Let us see some interesting examples of irony:

- The name of Britain’s biggest dog was ‘Tiny’.
- The carrot is as sweet as bitter-gourd.
- ‘Oh great! Now you have broken my new specks.
- Water, water, everywhere,
  Nor any drop to drink.
- ‘Go ask his name: if he be married.
  My grave is like to be my wedding bed.’

In real life circumstances, irony may be comical, bitter or sometimes unbearably offensive. Broadly speaking, there are different kinds of irony that we come across in literature.

**Verbal irony:**

Verbal irony is a trope in which the intended meaning of a statement differs from the meaning that the words appear to express. For example, a character stepping out into a hurricane and saying, “What a nice weather we’re having!” The ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation. Verbal irony is different from situational and dramatic irony in the sense that it is produced intentionally by speakers. For instance, a man exclaims, “I’m not upset!” but reveals an upset emotional state through his voice while trying to claim he’s not upset. In verbal irony speakers communicate implied propositions that are intentionally contradictory to the propositions contained in the words themselves. For example, Shakespeare employs verbal irony in *Julius Caesar* as:

**Cassius:** ‘tis true this god did shake’.

Here Cassius calls Caesar ‘this god’ though he knows the mortal flaws of Caesar.

Similarly Mark Antony’s speech:

‘But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man’.

appears to praise the assassins of Caesar while actually condemning them.

A more complex example of irony is the famed sentence with which Jane Austen opens *Pride and Prejudice*: ‘It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife’. Here the part of ironic implication is that a single woman is in want of a rich husband. Sometimes the use of irony by Pope and others is very complicated. For example,

‘It grieves me much’, replied the Peer again,

Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain’.

(Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*)

Ironic similes are a form of verbal irony where a speaker intends to communicate the opposite of what they mean. For instance,

- as soft as concrete
- as clear as mud
- as sweet as bitter-gourd
- as pleasant as a root canal

Many ironists are misinterpreted and sometimes get into serious trouble with the obtuse authorities. Following the intricate and shifting manoeuvres of great ironists like Plato, Swift, Austen or Henry James is a test of skill in reading between the lines.

**Dramatic Irony:**

Dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or a narrative. It is an effect produced by a narrative in which the audience knows more about present or future circumstances than a character in the story. In other words, it is a device of giving the spectator an item of information that at least one of the characters in the narrative is unaware of it. It means it places the spectator a step ahead of at least one of the characters. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows a key piece of information that a character in the play, movie or novel does not. This is the type of irony that makes us yell, ‘DON’T GO IN THERE!’ during a scary movie. It is also called situational irony which involves a contrast between reality and a character’s
intention or ideals. It describes a sharp discrepancy between the expected result and actual results in a certain situation. For example, in Sophocles’ Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, King Oedipus searches for his father’s murderer, not knowing that he himself is that man. Another famous example of situational irony is O Henry’s well-known story ‘The Gift of the Magi’. In this story, there is a young couple too poor to buy Christmas gifts for each other. The wife wants to buy a chain for her heirloom pocket watch of her husband. So she cuts off her treasured hair and sells it to a wigmaker. Her husband also sells his watch to buy a set of combs for the wife's long beautiful hair. Both have made sacrifice in order to buy gifts for one another, but the gifts are useless. The real gift is how much they are willing to give up to show their love for each other. The double irony lies in the particular way their expectations were foiled.

There are two types of irony – tragic irony and comic irony. Tragedy involves tragic irony and it is huge in Shakespeare’s tragedies. For example, his *Othello* is so powerful to read and watch because of tragic irony. We know that the handkerchief used as proof of Desdemona’s infidelity was stolen by Emilia at Iago’s behest. And we know she is innocent. But we are powerless to stop Othello who has resolved to murder his wife. Even Iago kills Roderigo before he can reveal the truth. So we are complicit with Iago’s misdeeds. We are the witnesses, and yet we can do nothing.

Comic irony occurs in Comedy. For instance, in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio struts and preens in anticipation of a good fortune that the audience knows is based on a fake letter. The dramatic irony is heightened for the audience by Malvolio’s ignorance of the presence of the hidden hoaxers, who gleefully comment on his incongruously complacent speech and actions.

**Cosmic Irony:**

Cosmic irony is also called ‘irony of fate’. It stems from the notion that a deity or any god or the fate is amusing themselves by toying with the minds of mortals with deliberate ironic intent. Like situational irony, it arises from sharp contrasts between reality and human ideals, or between human intentions and actual results. The resulting situation is poignantly contrary to what was expected or intended. This is a favourite structural device of Thomas Hardy. In *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, the heroine lost her virtue because of her innocence. She loses her happiness because of her honesty. She finds it again only by murder and having been briefly happy, is
hanged. Hardy concludes this novel: ‘The President of the Immortal, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess.’

Some critics suggest the sarcasm, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions and jocularity should all be considered the forms of irony. Irony is less direct, but no less effective. In ordinary conversation irony is often expressed by a tone of voice. For example, ‘she’s a fine example of a faithful wife’ can be spoken by stressing ‘she’s’ and ‘fine’ to mean exactly the opposite of what they seem to mean.

2.2.2.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Irony is ---------
   a) a common sense      b) a rhetorical device
   b) an educational term d) a fake concept

2. Irony indirectly presents a ----------------between an action and the context in which it occurs.
   a) similarity          b) parallelism
   c) contradiction       d) collaboration

3. ‘That’s the best idea I have heard in years!’ is an example of ---------- irony.
   a) verbal              b) dramatic
   c) cosmic              d) structural

4. ‘I, Oedipus, whom all men call great’ from Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex is an example of ----------------
   a) comic irony         b) Socratic irony
   c) cosmic irony        d) tragic irony

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is irony?

2. What is difference between tragic and comic irony?
3. Identify the irony used in the following line:
‘Sure, what the hell, it’s only cancer ….’

4. Give one example of situational irony.

5. Give one example of comic irony.

2.2.3 Satire

Satire is a verbal attack on a person or a part of society. It has mostly a reformative purpose. It is of classical origin. It lashes out follies and foibles of people. However, the satire does not have a set literary form. Certain features can be attributed to the satire:

a. The satire implies comedy.

b. It is vindictive in nature.

c. It can be mild. e.g. works of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens

d. It can be biting. e.g. works of Pope and Swift.

Satire may be defined as the expression in adequate terms of the sense of amusement or disgust by the ridiculous or unseemly behaviour provided that humour is a distinctly recognizable element in it, and that the utterance is invested with literary form, it is more clownish, jeering. Satire can be described as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation. Satire differs from the comic. It uses laughter as a weapon and against a butt that exists outside the work itself. That butt may be an individual, a class, an institution, a nation or even the entire human race.

There is direct imitation of the Roman satirists in English literature in the writings of Donne, Hall and Marston. Most of the great dramatists of the 17th century were more or less satirists. For example, Butler’s Hudibras, Dryden’s Absalom and Achitophel. The 18th century was indeed the age of satire. Pope and Dryden made poetry more satiric. Fielding and Smollett made the novel to be the vehicle of satire. Satire of Thackeray is a thoroughly British article, a little solid, a little wanting in finish, but honest, weighty and durable. The 19th century satire also witnessed eminent writers like Dickens as the keen observer of the oddities of human life, George Eliot as the critic of its emptiness, Balzac as the painter of French society or Trollop as the mirror of the middle classes of England.
Nearly everybody is a satirist in a small way. But the real satirist differs from us both in

a. the strength of his feeling and

b. having the wit and genius to express it in the novel or a poem or a play.

The satirists must have some of the qualities of the moralist or the preacher, and some of the qualities of the clown. It is because the best way of attacking wickedness and foolishness is by laughing at them. Then the question arises:

What sort of weapons does the satirist use in his attack on the wickedness and foolishness of mankind?

The simplest weapon is invective i.e. ‘a violent attack in words’, for example,

i. an angry motorist after a small accident, or

ii. excited supporters at a football match.

Another weapon is irony. Irony is less direct, but no less effective. Irony means ‘the expression of one’s meaning by language of opposite or different tendency, especially the adoption of another’s views or tone’. In ordinary conversation irony is often expressed by a tone of voice. For example, ‘she’s a fine example of a faithful wife’ can be spoken by stressing ‘she’s’ and ‘fine’ to mean exactly the opposite of what they seem to mean.

The most important weapon is the ability of the satirist to amuse and entertain the reader. Without this satire becomes merely tedious and bad tempered.

Satire is found both in prose and poetry. It has no set literary form. A verse satire might be written as an ode, an elegy, a ballad, or anything else. A satire is of classical origin. The plays of the Greek Aristophanes and Latin satirists were the models for satire in English. The two essential elements of literary satire are criticism of ridicule and humour. The satirist’s trade is not censure. He/she condemns whatever he/she does not approve. Each has had its own set of vices to ridicule. The satire holds mirror upto nature and lashes out at contemporary follies.

Critics have divided satires into two broad types:
A. **Formal or direct satire**

In formal satire the satiric persona speaks out in the *first person*. This “I” may address either the reader or else a character within the work itself. For example,

Pope’s *Moral Essays* and *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*;

Samuel Johnson’s “London”.

B. **Indirect satire**

In indirect satire, the objects of satire are characters who make themselves and their opinions ridiculous by what they think, say and do. Sometimes they are made even more ridiculous by the author’s comments and narrative style. For example,

Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*;

Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*;

Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*;

Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera*.

In short, a great satire can often do more practical good than a hundred speeches by good democratic politicians, or a thousand sermons by well meaning preachers. Poetic satire might be considered as didactic poetry because it aims at the reformation of men and manners. It is the same with prose satire.

2.2.3.1 **Check Your Progress**

A) **Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:**

1. Satire is ------ attack on a person or a part of society.
   a) positive   b) negative
   c) verbal     d) sad

2. Satire uses ------- as a weapon.
   a) laughter   b) smile
   c) knife      d) paradox

3. Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel* is an example of -------
   a) direct satire   b) indirect satire
   c) irony           d) comic satire
B) **Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.**

1. What is satire?
2. What are the two types of satire?
3. Give one example of satire.
4. What are the two essential elements of literary satire?
5. How is satire better than the hundred speeches of preachers?

**2.3 Summary:**

This unit has introduced the characteristic features of Neo-Classical Criticism with special reference to reason and judgement, irony and satire.

**2.4 Terms to Remember**

- **antiquity**: old times, esp. before the Middle Ages; great age
- **inspiration**: influence(s) arousing creative activity in literature, art, music etc.
- **aspiration**: desire
- **revelation**: making known of something secret or hidden
- **frigid**: unfriendly, without sympathy
- **devise**: think out, plan
- **conceit**: over-high opinion, witty expression
- **diction**: choice and use of words, style or manner of speaking and writing
- **dissembler**: a person who hides one’s real feelings and entertain as a joker in circus
- **braggart**: a person who boasts
- **intrigue**: to make and carry out secret plans or plots
- **hurricane**: violent windstorm (e.g. Indian cyclone)
2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.2.1.1
A) 1.  a. 1660
2. d. The Elizabethan Age
3. b. Reason
4. b. Judging and condemning
B) 1. Reason is the highest mental faculty.
2. Mathew Arnold described the Neo-Classical Age as ‘our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century’.
3. The Neo-Classical period is considered as pseudo-classical period because classicism of this period was not true and it was different from the classicism of ancient Greece and Rome.
4. Dr Johnson
5. The Neo-Classical Age is different from the Elizabethan Age in three respects – versification, diction and subject matter.

2.2.2.1
A) 1. b. a rhetorical device
2. c. contradiction
3. a. verbal
4. d. tragic irony
B) 1. Irony means ‘the use of words to mean or imply the opposite of what they usually mean.’
2. Tragic irony appears in tragedy and comic irony, in comedy.
3. Verbal irony
4. In Sophocles’ Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex, King Oedipus searches for his father’s murderer, not knowing that he himself is that man.
5. Malvolio’s act in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night.
2.2.3.1

A) 1. c. verbal
    2. a. laughter
    3. b. indirect satire

B) 1. Satire is a verbal attack on a person or a part of society.
    2. Direct satire and indirect satire
    3. Butler’s *Hudibras*
    4. The two essential elements of literary satire are criticism of ridicule and humour.
    5. Because it aims at the reformation of men and manners.

2.6 Exercises:

Answer the following questions in about 250 words each:

1. Consider ‘Neo-Classical Age as the Age of Reason and Judgement’.
2. Define irony and illustrate different types of ironies.
3. What is satire? Comment on the use of satire in literature with different examples.

2.7 Further Reading:

Unit-3
Sri Philip Sidney: 'An Apologie For Poetrie'

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3.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will be able to:
- understand Sidney’s views on poetry;
- understand the significance of Sidney’s defence of poetry;
- understand Elizabethan literary criticism; and
- Find relation between Classical criticism and Renaissance criticism
3.1 Introduction:

Literary criticism is said to have started in the earliest times when writers began to write. But the systematic study of literature, with its principles and problems, began in Greece. It began with Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Poetics* (both in 4th c. B.C.). Longinus’ *On the Sublime* (1st c. A.D.) also contributed significantly. Among the Roman critics Horace and Quintillian (both 1st c. A.D.) are noteworthy. During the medieval period (11th to 13th c.) Dante (1265-1321) was a major critic. During the Renaissance period (14th to 16th c.), one of the notable literary scholars was Sir Philip Sidney.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) lived in the glorious era of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) when England emerged as an imperial power. He was born in an aristocratic family. He was privileged to get proper education and scholarly company in which his literary and critical abilities developed. He was ‘one of the jewels’ in the court of Queen Elizabeth, an embodiment of the idea of Renaissance Gentleman, a brave warrior, a devout Christian, an admirable poet and a renowned literary scholar. His fame had spread far and wide all over Europe. At the Battle of Zutphen in 1586, he was fatally wounded and died on the battlefield. He was buried in St. Paul’s Cathedral after a magnificent public funeral. His well-known works are *Arcadia* (1580), *Astrophel and Stella* (1582) and ‘An Apologie for Poetrie’ (1595).

The Elizabethan Age was remarkable for unprecedented literary activity particularly in the realm of poetry, drama and criticism. Shakespeare, Spenser and Ben Jonson wrote during this period. While the poets and playwrights wrote poetry and plays, the critics freely discussed the merits and demerits of literary works. It was also an age of the rise of Puritans, i.e. those people who wanted to maintain purity in all walks of life including literature. These Puritans attacked poetry for its ‘harmful’ effect on morals. One of the Puritans, Stephen Gosson, attacked poetry in a treatise titled *The School of Abuse* (1579). The book was unceremoniously dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney: ‘To the right noble Gentleman, Master Philip Sidney, Esquire’. The book was described as ‘a pleasant invective against poets, pipers, jesters and such like caterpillars of commonwealth’. Gosson indicted poetry on four counts: poetry has no use; it is the mother of lies; it is the nurse of abuse; and Plato had rightly banished poets from his ideal republic. Sidney wrote a strong reply to Stephen Gosson in defence of poetry through ‘An Apology for Poetrie’. It was
probably written in 1580, but published in 1595 after his death. Since then it has remained a valuable document in Renaissance criticism. Sidney’s defence of poetry is often compared to Aristotle’s defence of poetry against Plato’s charges.

3.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter:

Sir Philip Sidney’s ‘An Apologie for Poetrie’ is a reply to Stephen Gosson’s charges against poetry made in his book *The School of Abuse* (1579). But its impact reaches beyond a reply to the charges of an individual. It emerges as a spirited defence of poetry against the whole tradition of charges made against it since Plato. In order to do this convincingly, Sidney liberally uses Classical literature, mythology and criticism. He refers to Plato, Aristotle and Horace of the Classical times and the Italian and French critics of the Renaissance period. Thus he emerges as the champion of Classicism without compromising the innovative fervour and the Romantic spirit of Elizabethan England.

Sidney’s views are presented in the following three sections: the first section presents the reasons for attaching special value to poetry; the second section presents an exposition of the nature and usefulness of poetry; and the third section discusses the contemporary objections to poetry and his remarks on the state of contemporary English poetry, on style, diction and versification.

3.2.1 Section 1:

Antiquity and Universality of Poetry:

Sidney, at the outset, feels apologetic about having to defend the noble art of poetry which he calls ‘a pitiful defence of poor poetry’. He gives a number of reasons to prove the greatness of poetry. He stresses the ancient origin of poetry and its early civilizing function. It is the ‘first light-giver to ignorance’ and ‘the first nurse’ whose milk helped feed tougher knowledges. He gives the example of Greece where poets like Homer and Hesiod lived before the manifold sciences came into being. In those days poetry was believed to have miraculous power. Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes and even beasts listened to Orpheus. In Rome Ennius (239-169 B.C.) and in Italy, Boccacio (1313-1375) and Petrarch (1304-1374) were poets before any sciences came into being. And in England Gower (1330-1408) and Chaucer (1340-1408) beautified their mother tongue.
For a long time, in Greece even the philosophers appeared under the mask of poets. Thales (624-546 B.C.), Empedocles (4th c. B.C.) and Permenides (born 513 B.C.) wrote their natural philosophy in verse. Pythagoras (6th c. B.C.) and Phocylides (6th c. B.C.) gave their moral counsel in verse. Plato himself was a poet. He wrote poetical dialogues which are ‘flowers of poesy’. Even the historians borrowed the fashion and weight of poets. Herodotus (484-424 c. B.C.) wrote history in the name of nine Muses. Historians used aspects of poetry—passionate description of emotions, particularities of battles and long orations given to great kings and captains. Without poetry neither the philosopher nor the historian could have become popular. Even in uncivilized countries such as Turkey and Ireland, poetry was respected.

**Dignified titles for Poets:**

In all the great civilizations people bestowed heavenly titles on poetry. The Romans called the poet ‘vates’ which meant ‘diviner’ or ‘prophet’. In those days, the prophesies of Delphi were in verse and the people found divine force in the words and conceits of poetry. The Hebrew poet, David, wrote ‘Psalms’—‘a heavenly poesy’. The Greeks used the word ‘poet’ which was derived from the Greek word - ‘poiein’. It meant ‘to make’. The poet, thus, was a ‘maker’. Thus the Greek gave the great title of the ‘Creator’ to the poet.

**Transcendental Nature of Poetry:**

According to Sidney, other arts and sciences are inferior to poetry. Astronomer looks upon the stars; geometrician, arithmetician, the natural and moral philosophers follow nature. The lawyer, the historian, the rhetorician and the logician keep nature in mind. The physician and the metaphysician too build on the depth of nature. Only the poet, lifted up with the vigour of his invention, ‘doth grow in effect another nature’. He makes things either better than nature or makes them anew. So the poet is not enclosed within the narrow bounds of nature’s gifts. He ranges within the limits of his own wit. Nature does not fill the earth with such richness as poets have done with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees and sweet-smelling flowers. Therefore Sidney declares, ‘Her (Nature’s) world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden’.

**The Poet as an Idealist:**

The poet is an idealist. None but the poet can portray so true a lover as Theagenes, so constant a friend as Pylades, so valiant a man as Orlando, so upright a prince as Cyrus and so excellent a man as Aeneas. Sidney believes that the skill of the poet lies
in the ‘idea or fore-conceit’ of the work because the poet has a direct contact with the Ideal. The poet manifests the Idea in a concrete form ‘by delivering them in such excellency as he hath imagined them’. Thus, Sidney directly answers Plato’s charge against poetry that it is ‘twice removed from reality’. Sidney argues that the poet presents the Ideal forms in his poetry.

**Supremacy of Imagination:**

According to Sidney, imagination is the ‘highest point of man’s wit’ and nobody can compare it with the efficiency of nature. The poet’s imagination is God’s gift. One should give due regard to ‘the heavenly Maker of the maker’, who after creating man after his own likeness, set him beyond all the other of that second nature. Therefore, the poet, with the force of divine breath, brings forth things far surpassing the nature. But the lower wits on the earth (attackers of poetry) do not understand the poet’s or God’s work.

3.2.1.1 Check Your Progress:

A) **Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:**

1. Sir Philip Sidney lived in the era of……
   - i) Queen Victoria
   - ii) Queen Elizabeth
   - iii) King John II
   - iv) Queen Mary

2. Sidney wrote ‘An Apologie for Poetrie’ in response to…
   - i) Spencer’s poetry
   - ii) Shakespeare’s plays
   - iii) Stephen Gosson’s *The School of Abuse*
   - iv) Decadence of poetry in the Elizabethan age

3. ……. called poets ‘caterpillars of commonwealth’.
   - i) Philip Sidney
   - ii) Edmund Spenser
   - iii) Plato
   - iv) Stephen Gosson

4. ……. is the ‘first light-giver’ and ‘the first nurse’ according to Sidney.
   - i) God
   - ii) science
   - iii) poetry
   - iv) philosophy
5. One of the great Greek poets is…
   i) Herodotus   ii) Plato   iii) Aristotle   iv) Homer

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence:
1. By which name did the Romans call the poet?
2. From which Greek word is the word ‘poet’ derived?
3. Who says ‘Her (nature’s) world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden’?
4. How does Sidney describe the poetical dialogues of Plato?
5. How does Sidney describe poetic imagination?

3.2.2 Section 2:
Definition and Nature of Poetry:

Sidney defines poetry as follows:

‘Poetry therefore is an art of imitation, so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth— to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture— with this end, to teach and delight’.

He borrows the word ‘imitation’ from Aristotle’s Poetics and reinterprets it in the light of his own understanding of poetic art. He does not use it in the Aristotelian sense of ‘imitation of an action’ (i.e. reality) based on the principle of probability or universality. He calls it ‘an art of imitation’. By this he means not the imitation of external reality or imitation of the mere appearance of reality. Poetry is ‘counterfeiting’ or ‘figuring forth’ another reality in order to produce ‘a speaking picture’ of that reality. That another reality is the ‘ideal’ reality which is beyond the reach of ordinary people’s imagination. It is the imitation of the Platonic Idea—the prototypical, abstract and perfect Idea of the universe—which only the poet can embody in his poetry. Sidney affirms that the poet imitates the Idea for ‘the skill of the artificer standeth in that idea or fore-conceit’ and the poet hath that idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he hath imagined them’.
Therefore the lovers, warriors, friends and princes as portrayed in poetry are better than any in the real world. Thus, Sidney answers the charges made by not only of Elizabethan Puritans, but also of Plato who said that poetic imitation is twice
removed from reality. The poet directly embodies the Ideal in his poetry. Flowers smell sweeter in the works of poets than they do in the real world.

The poet achieves this unique distinction by virtue of his creative imagination. Imagination is the ‘highest point of man’s wit’ and the poet is gifted with it in abundance so that he could ‘create’ a better world than it exists or ‘invent’ a new world altogether. This ability is the gift of ‘the heavenly Maker (God)’ bestowed on the poet in order to create and transcend the natural order of things—‘things far surpassing the nature’. Sidney observes, ‘Her nature’s) world is brazen, the poets only deliver the golden’. This justifies the word ‘maker’ which the Greeks gave to the poet.

Thus Sidney advances an important new argument and a new justification for poetry by saying that the poet is indeed a ‘maker’ and he invents new and ideal things. Invention is the distinguishing character of the poet. In this Sidney combines both the Classical and the Biblical view in the person of the poet and emphasizes the serious nature of poetic creation and its glory and splendour. As such, poetry should be valued and respected by all.

Further, Sidney describes poetry as ‘a speaking picture’, that is, it is a vivid and articulate picture of the ideal with the sole purpose ‘to teach and delight’. It is a concrete embodiment of the essence, the soul of life—which is permanent and universal—in the form of a striking image/s which the philosopher gives only through verbal description.

Mere Versification only an Ornament:

Sidney observes that there are different kinds of poetry. They are classified in accordance with their subject matter as the heroic, tragic, lyric, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral and so on. A large number of poets write in the verse form. But writing in verse in itself does not make it poetry. ‘It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet—no more than a long gown maketh an advocate’. Sidney compares mere versification to a lawyer’s long gown which is just an outward form. But the soul of poetry is the images, ‘the speaking pictures’, of virtues and vices with a view to delightful teaching which properly describes the poet. So mere versifiers cannot be called poets. Xenophon gave a portrait of a just empire in the name of Cyrus and Heliodorus (4th c. B.C.) gave a picture of love in Theagenes though they are written in prose. Poets have chosen verse as their garment not as ‘speaking
*words’ which fall from the mouth by chance. The serious poets choose each syllable of each word by ‘just proportion, according to the dignity of the subject’.*

**Function of Poetry:**

In his definition of poetry, Sidney notes that the ultimate end of poetry is ‘to teach and delight’. In this he follows the Roman poet, Horace (65 -8 c. B.C.). The poets imitate in order to teach virtue. They imitate in order to delight so that poetry moves men to goodness ‘which without delight they would flye as from a stranger’ and to teach them to be moved by goodness. The noblest goal of any learning is moral action and for poetry it is the chief goal. Therefore, Sidney says, ‘it is not the rhyming and versing… but the feigning notable images of virtues and vices… with that delightful teaching which is the right describing note to know a poet by’.

Hence, as David Daiches observes, it is the reader who imitates what the poet creates. For Sidney, the poet is the creator of a world which leads those who view it to follow virtue and shun vice. In the poet’s world the righteous always prosper and the wicked are punished. So there is poetic justice in poetry. Sidney says that since any learning purifies wit, enriches memory and enables judgement, the final end of poetry is to lead us to ‘as high a perfection of our souls’ as can be capable of. He claims that the perfection of the soul is best promoted by poetry. Thus Sidney emphasizes both the aesthetic as well as moralizing functions of poetry.

**Claims of Poetry better than Philosophy and History as Moral teacher:**

Men follow certain professions in accordance with their own inclinations. Some follow astronomy, some music and some mathematics and so on. But these people have serious limitations. Because their subjects are ‘serving sciences’. Sidney picks up two professions- philosophy and history, which were considered to be custodians of truth and virtue. He argues that philosophers define virtue in abstract terms and indulge in definitions, divisions and distinctions. The historian, on the other hand, deals with ‘old mouse-eaten records’ and bases his history on hearsay. He thinks he is better than the philosopher because he teaches by examples. The dispute between the philosopher and the historian is: ‘the one giveth the precept, and the other the example’. But the ‘peerless poet’ performs both the functions: like the philosopher he gives a perfect picture of what should be and combines it with a particular example. For instance, the image of Ulysses in the midst of Calypso presents a vision of wisdom and temperance and the readers see through all the virtues, vices and
passions. Even Jesus Christ used parables to teach mankind. Aesop’s fables are full of allegories under the tales of beasts.

Moreover, the idea of ‘poetic justice’, where virtue is rewarded and vice punished, is peculiar to poetry. In fact, poetry sets out virtue in the best colours so that everyone falls in love with it. For example, Ulysses is shown in storm and other harsh situations by the poet. But his patience and balanced state of mind are well rewarded at the end. The historian remains captive to the facts of life. He must show Socrates (469 -399 B.C.) put to death like a traitor and Pompey (106 -48 B.C.) and Cicero (106 -43 B.C.) slain for no fault of their own. But the poet rewards the good, and because of this, the poet deserves ‘the laurel crown’.

The philosopher too teaches moral virtue. But he does not ‘move’ the reader to virtue as the poet does. The philosopher shows the path to virtue in the tedious way. He scorns delight. But the poet gives a sweet prospect of the way to virtue so that it attracts men towards it. He writes with words set in delightful proportion, accompanied with enchanting music and with a tale which lures children from play and old men from chimney-corner. Poetic imitation is always delightful. Aristotle also believes that things which are horrible—cruel battles, unnatural monsters, etc. – are made delightful in poetic imitation. Those who have read *Amadis de Gaule* are moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality and courage. There are infinite proofs of the good effects of poetic invention. Hence poetry, among all sciences, is the most suitable to teach it, the most supreme as an incentive to virtue and the most princely to move towards it.

**Kinds of Poetry:**

There are different kinds of poetry. Sidney prefers them to be unmixed and pure. But some kinds of poetry such as tragical and comical, heroical and pastoral, and prose and verse are mixed. But he concedes that the combination is not hurtful. Sidney discusses several kinds of poetry with reference to their moral functions:

1. **Pastoral:** It deals with rustic life and shows the misery of the people under cruel lords. Sometimes under the guise of the tales of wolves and sheep, the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience can be taught.

2. The Elegiac, the lambic and the Satiric: The Elegiac moves the heart with pity. It bewails the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world. The
Iambic is wholesome. It makes people ashamed of villainy and wickedness. The Satiric ridicules man’s folly or weakness.

3. **The Comic:** It imitates common errors of life which the poet presents in the most scornful way.

4. **The Tragical:** Tragedy opens the greatest wounds of life. It makes kings fear to be tyrants. It teaches the uncertainty of this world and shows the futility of power and glory some people seek.

5. **The Lyric:** The lyric praises virtue with its lyre and music. It sings of moral precepts and natural problems and praise of God. In Hungary people sing songs of their ancestor’s valour to kindle courage in them. The lyric arouses men from their lethargy and inspires them to embrace warlike and noble deeds.

6. **The Heroic or Epic:** It is liked by all because it portrays the life and actions of such heroes as Achilles and Aeneas. It teaches and moves to the highest and excellent truth. It shows virtue in the most beautiful and noble form. It is the best and most accomplished kind of poetry.

### 3.2.2.1 Check Your Progress:

**A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:**

1. Sidney defines poetry as …
   - i) versification
   - ii) imitation of action
   - iii) counterfeiting or figuring forth
   - iv) divine inspiration

2. Sidney borrows the word ‘imitation’ from …
   - i) Renaissance critics
   - ii) Stephen Gosson
   - iii) Aristotle
   - iv) Plato

3. The two functions of literature according to Sidney are …
   - i) to imitate and instruct
   - ii) to teach and praise
   - iii) to imitate and delight
   - iv) to teach and delight

4. According to Sidney, the poet imitates …
   - i) the actual reality
   - ii) the world
B) **Answer the following in one word/phrase/sentence:**

1. What does Sidney compare rhyming and versing of a poet to?
2. Why does the philosopher fail to ‘move’ the reader, according to Sidney?
3. Why does Sidney call astronomy and mathematics ‘serving sciences’?
4. Which kind of poetry moves the heart with pity?
5. Which is the best and most accomplished form of poetry according to Sidney?

3.2.3 Section 3:

**Reply to the Objections to Poetry:**

According to Sidney, the poet-haters do not understand the worthiness and sacredness of poetry. Their objections to poetry are but an outcome of an itching tongue. They should be ignored. The four chief objections to poetry are: 1. There are many other more fruitful branches of knowledge than poetry; 2. Poetry is the mother of lies; 3. It is the nurse of abuse; and 4. Plato banished poets out of his Commonwealth. Sidney’s specific reply to these charges are:

1. No learning is as good as that which teaches and moves to virtue and none can teach both as poetry does. So poetry is the most fruitful branch of knowledge on earth.

2. Of all the writers under the sun, the poet is the least liar. The astronomer, physician, geometrician and historian lie because they affirm something. ‘For the poet, he affirms nothing, and therefore never lieth’. He never conjures the facts to be believed as true. He does not cite any authority in support of what he says. He writes about things allegorically and figuratively and not affirmatively.

3. Poetry-haters say that poetry abuses men’s wit - comedies teach immoral conceits; lyric is passionate; the elegy weeps for the want of a mistress; and even the heroic praises the love-God, Cupid’s deeds. Sidney’s reply is that it is man’s wit which abuses poetry. Fault is not of poetry, but of its practitioners. If
rightly used, poetry can do more good than any other kind of learning. Poetry in itself is not corrupt.

4. As for Plato’s charges against poetry, Sidney argues that Plato himself was the most poetical of the philosophers. Critics believe that as Plato was a philosopher, he was a natural enemy of poets. But this was not so. The poets have always enjoyed respect and honour. Seven cities wanted the blind Homer to be their citizen. Many Athenians saved their lives by reciting Euripides’ (480-406 B.C.) verses. Further, Sidney argues that Plato objected to the abuse of poetry and not the poetry. He objected to the poets who gave wrong opinion of the Gods by narrating merry tales about them and thus corrupting the youth. So Plato, ‘banishing the abuse, not the thing … shall be our patron and not our adversary’. Moreover, Plato attributes an inspiring divine force to poetry far above man’s wit in his dialogue Ion.

**Decay of Poetry in Contemporary England:**

For the patriot Sidney, England was the mother of excellent minds. But of late, it had developed step-motherly attitude towards poetry. In ancient times kings, emperors, senators and captains not only respected poetry, but they themselves were poets. The king of Sicily, the king of France and the king of Scotland were poets. Sidney regrets that poetry thus loved in all ages and countries was neglected and dishonoured in England. Nobody endures the pain of a pen. Sidney gives reasons for the contemporary disgrace of poetry and poets. Firstly, there is the lack of spirit in the age. Secondly, poets are inferior men who write poetry to earn money. Thirdly, poetry is a divine gift. But it can be nurtured on art, imitation and exercise. Rules of art and models of poetry are in abundance. But the poets do not exercise them rightly. Poetry has two parts—the matter to be expressed in words and words to express the matter. And in neither of the two parts, poets exercise the use of art and imitation rightly. Only a few poetic works are praiseworthy: Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Earl of Surrey’s *Lyrics* and Spenser’s *The Shepherd’s Calendar*.

According to Sidney, English tragedies and comedies do not observe the rules of the art. Only *Gorboduc*, the first tragedy written in England by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, rises to the expected height and morality. Dramatists should follow the three Unities - unity of action, unity of time and unity of place. But in England there are gross absurdities in the use of Unities. It is wiser to begin the play in the
middle of the story and use the technique of reporting the events that happen far away and long before from a vantage point. Sidney is against mixing of tragedy and comedy. It is foolish to mingle kings and clowns which is neither decency nor discretion. Tragi-comedy is unworthy of ‘chaste ears’ as they arouse loud laughter. The delight of comedy and the dignity of tragedy are compromised. English comedians think that there is no delight without laughter. Laughter gives only a scornful tickling. Therefore, the end of comical part should not be laughter, but it should be mixed with delightful teaching which is the end of poetry. In England comedy is much abused. Therefore poetry’s honesty is questioned.

Among other sorts of poetry, the lyrical kinds of songs and sonnets are written. But the poets do not apply their minds properly. Many lyrics deal with love. But they are written in the form of fiery speeches in ‘swelling phrases’ or in all coldness which fail to move. God has given us good minds and we do not sing the praise of God and the immortal beauty of his Creation. Therefore, poets miss the right use of the matter of poetry.

Diction and Versification:

The diction of English poetry is much worse. It is eloquence dressed up or disguised in a courtesan-like affectation. Poets make use of far-fetched words which are new and unfamiliar to the readers. The figures of speech are ‘winter-starved’ without beauty and substance. Poets are fond of puns, conceits and word-play of all sorts. But the use of these is merely ornamental and does not move the readers. Similes and metaphors should be used to explain and clarify and not to convince those of contrary opinion. The poets should ‘bend to the right use both of matter and manner’. English language is rich and resourceful and capable of excellent flexibility. But the poet need not be bound by the rules of grammar. The poet needs to utter the ideas sweetly and properly which is the end of speech. The art of oratory and of poetry are, therefore, closer.

There are two kinds of versification: the ancient and the modern. English language is adaptable to both the systems of versification. The ancient type is marked by the quantity of each syllable and accordingly the ancient poets framed their verse. The moderns observe only number like that of sounds of words which we call rhyme. The ancient versification is fitter for music. But the modern system with its rhyme is also musical. Both the English and the ancient versification have sweetness and
majesty and so give delight. Truly English language is better than Italian, Spanish or French because it does not have the defects of these languages. These languages have problems with certain types of rhymes.

**Conclusion:**

To sum up, poetry is full of delightfulness which is conducive to virtue. The charges brought against it are either false or feeble. It is the fault of the poets that it is not esteemed in England. The English language is fittest to honour poetry. So Sidney appeals to his readers not to laugh at poets and poetry. Aristotle valued poetry. Bembus (1470-1547) and Scaliger (1484-1558), both Italian scholars, thought that poets made men honest. God gave us all knowledge through such poets as Homer and Hesiod. Poets are beloveds of God. Poetry can make men immortal.

3.2.3.1 Check Your Progress:

**A)** Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. ..... banished poets from his Commonwealth.
   i) Socrates     ii) Plato      iii) Aristotle    iv) Sidney
2. According to Sidney, the poet does not tell lies because…
   i) he does not affirm anything    ii) he is truthful
   iii) he cites authorities        iv) others tell lies
3. Seven cities wanted … to be their citizen in ancient Greece.
   i) Herodotus    ii) Thusidides    iii) Homer      iv) Euripides
4. For Sidney, poetry could be nurtured on …
   i) divine inspiration    ii) art, imitation and exercise
   iii) contemporary literature    iv) Classical literature
5. ..... advocates the three Unities.
   i) Sidney   ii) Plato           iii) Spencer    iv) Shakespeare

**B)** Answer the following in one word/phrase/sentence:

1. Which country has developed step-motherly attitude towards poetry?
2. Which English play does Sidney praise?
3. What does Sidney oppose in dramatic art?
4. According to Sidney, which language is suitable for both the ancient and modern systems of versification?
5. Which languages have problems with rhyme?

3.3 Summary:

Sir Philip Sidney’s reply to Stephen Gosson is a precious document in the history of literary criticism. In his essay, he proves that poetry is not the creation of an idle mind for the idle readers. It is the nurse of civilization. Poetry was written in the earliest times and it was poetry which gradually enabled man to understand and create other kinds of knowledge. Poetry was respected and loved in all the nations—both in civilized and uncivilized nations. Other branches of knowledge developed in the form of poetry. Philosophers and historians appeared under the mask of poets. Poetry is universal. It lasts longer than any other kind of knowledge. The Greeks and the Romans revered poets. The Romans called them ‘vates’ which meant ‘seer’ or ‘prophet’. The Greek word for ‘poet’ meant ‘maker’ or ‘creator’. All other arts are slaves of Nature. But the poet is superior to it. Because he is endowed with the gift of imagination with the help of which he creates things either better than nature or creates anew. The poet is not tied to the laws of nature. He moves freely in the world of imagination and creates heroes, demigods, cyclopes, chimeras, furies and so on. He fills his world with beautiful flowers, trees and rivers. Nature’s world is imperfect. But the poet’s world is golden. The poet alone can create an ideal lover, an ideal warrior and an ideal friend. The poet is a prophet. The oracles of Delphi and the prophesies of Sibylla were delivered in verse. The Psalms in the Bible are songs.

According to Sidney, poetry is an art of imitation. It is representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth. It is ‘a speaking picture’ written with the purpose ‘to teach and delight’. Though Sidney uses the term ‘imitation’ in his definition of poetry, he does not use it in the Aristotelian sense. The poet imitates the ‘ideal’ reality whereby he sees the perfect Platonic Idea embodied in the external things and presents it to the world. He creates new things by drawing ‘on his wit’. Hence there is glory and splendour in poetic creation. Sidney describes poetry as ‘a speaking picture’ by which he means an elevated or striking picture of life in the new and ideal
According to Sidney, the proper function of poetry is to teach and to delight. Poetry moves men to goodness. The poet teaches by presenting an ideal world for the imitation of the reader. The readers learn the path of virtue and shun vice. In the poet’s world, the good is rewarded and the wicked is punished. Thus there is poetic justice in poetry. The philosopher teaches virtue in an abstract manner. The historian gives only examples without the idea. But the poet gives both. So the poet is the noblest of all learned men.

Sidney discusses several kinds of poetry with reference to its impact on the readers. The pastoral deals with the humble people’s lives; the satiric laughs at men’s folly; the comic ridicules common errors; the tragedy reveals the wickedness of man; and the epic portrays the heroic and moral goodness. Thus poetry does good to mankind.

Then, Sidney goes on to reply specifically to the four objections levelled against poetry: that poetry is useless; that it is the mother of lies; that it is the nurse of abuse; and that Plato banished poets from his republic. Sidney argues that poetry is more useful than other branches of knowledge. Poetry is not the mother of lies because the poet does not affirm anything to be true. For the third objection, he replies that it is not poetry which is bad, but some poets write bad poetry. So one should not find fault with poetry in general. Poetry moves men to heroic action and virtue. He gives a number of examples from literature and history to prove his point. As regards the charge that Plato had banished poets from his Commonwealth, Sidney replies that Plato was not against poetry, but against the abuse of poetry.

According to Sidney, there is general decline in the contemporary English poetry. England had developed step-motherly attitude towards poetry despite England being the mother of excellent minds. He gives several reasons for it: lack of spirit in the age, poets with money-motive and no practice in the art of poetry. Sidney praises Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Surrey’s *Lyrics* and Spenser’s *The Shepherd’s Calendar*. He thinks that English tragedies and comedies do not observe the rules of art except *Gorboduc*. He complains that the dramatists do not follow the three Unities in the plays. Comedians strive for laughter without delightful teaching.
as the end. Lyrics are also not written properly. The language of poetry is much worse. Unfamiliar words and figures of speech abound in poetry. But English language is rich and free from faults. It is suitable for both the ancient and modern systems of poetry.

3.4 Terms to Remember:

- **treatise**: a book that deals with a subject systematically
- **Antiquity**: related to the earliest times of civilization
- **wit**: used in the old sense of the word meaning genius or understanding
- **prototypical**: original
- **invention**: creation of something new
- **conceit**: an idea; concept: image
- **diction**: choice of words; the word became a literary term in 18th c.
- **versification**: writing in verse i.e. arranged in lines, each conforming to a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables
- **hearsay**: rumours; not based on facts
- **figuratively**: written with the help of imagery counterfeiting or figuring forth: representation in the form of a picture of something ideal
- **allegory**: a narrative that carries a second and important meaning along with the surface story
- **fable**: a short story that exemplifies a moral idea in which preferably animals are used as characters
- **parable**: a short story written with a view to teach a moral lesson
- **affectation**: pretension; deception
- **pun**: a play of words which are similar in sound but different in meaning
- **oratory**: the art of effective speaking
Mythical and Historical References:

Renaissance: It is a name applied to the period of European history (14th to 16th c) in which interest in Classical culture and renewal of intellectual and artistic energies took place. The term means ‘rebirth’ or ‘revival’.

- **Muses**: Greek Goddesses of Learning believed to preside over poetry, arts and sciences
- **Psalms**: religious songs or hymns
- **Homer**: Greek epic poet who wrote Iliad and Odyssey; lived in 8th c. B.C. and was blind.
- **Hesiod**: One of the earliest of Greek poets, lived probably in 7th c. B.C.
- **Classicism**: Respect and adherence to the rules and traditions of the past (Greek and Roman); the writers of Classical times were supposed to have achieved highest level of excellence in arts and literature
- **Romantic spirit**: the spirit of adventure; emphasis on freedom and imagination; opposed to rules and past traditions
- **Brazen**: imperfect (refers to the Age of Bronze the ancient people believed to have existed between The Age of Silver and that of Iron. The Age of Gold, the first era in human civilization, was supposed to be the world of perfection/ideal world)
- **Thebes**: Mythical ancient Greek Kingdom
- **Amphion**: a mythical figure supposed to have built the city of Thebes whose music of the lyre moved the stones and formed the walls
- **Orpheus**: a mythical figure said to have brought back his dead wife from the Hell with the power of his music
- **Prophecies of Delphi**: Delphi was a mythical town with the temple of God Apollo whose words were uttered in verse.
- **Prophecies of Sybilla**: the wise words of an old woman, Sybil of Cumaea
- **Theagenes**: the hero of Greek romance written by Heliodorus (4th c. B.C.)
- **Pylades**: a Greek mythical figure known for true friendship (between Orestes and Pylades)
• **Orlando**: The hero of Italian heroic poems of Ariosto (1474-1533)
• **Cyrus**: a historical figure and a hero of a political romance written by Xenophon (4th c. B.C.), the famous Greek Historian
• **Aeneas**: the hero of the great Roman poet, Virgil’s epic poem, *Aeneid*
• **Ulysses**: the hero of Homer’s epic, *Odyssey*
• **Calypso**: a nymph on the island of Ogygia. When Ulysses reached Calypso’s island, she received him lovingly and wanted him to stay with her, which he refused to do out of his love for his wife. She offered him immortality and eternal youth.
• **Amadis de Gaul**: a prose romance by Lobeira (14th c.); its hero, Amadis, is a model of virtue and chivalry.
• **Achilles**: the hero of Homer’s *Iliad*
• **Aesop**: a Greek slave who wrote fables
• **Demi-gods**: half-gods whose one parent is a God and the other a human
• **Cyclopes**: one-eyed monsters
• **Chimeras**: fire-spewing monsters with lion’s head and goat’s body
• **Furies**: three goddesses of revenge
• **Laurel crown**: In ancient Rome victorious generals were honoured with laurel crowns. Coronation of poets became common in the Renaissance period in Italy.

### 3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress:

#### 3.2.1.1 Section 1

A) 1. (ii) Queen Elizabeth
   2. (iii) Stephen Gosson’s *The School of Abuse*
   3. (iv) Stephen Gosson
   4. (iii) poetry
   5. (iv) Homer
B)  1. *Vates*
   2. ‘poiein’
   3. Sir Philip Sidney
   4. ‘flowers of poesy’
   5. ‘the highest point of man’s wit’

3.2.2.1 Section 2

A)  1. (iii) counterfeiting or figuring forth
   2. (iii) Aristotle
   3. (iv) to teach and delight
   4. (iii) Platonic Idea
   5. (i) poetry

B)  1. A long gown of an advocate
   2. The philosopher teaches virtue in a tedious way.
   3. Because astronomy and mathematics follow the order of Nature.
   4. The Elegiac poetry
   5. The heroic or epic poetry

3.2.3.1 Section 3

A)  1. (ii) Plato
   2. (i) he does not affirm anything
   3. (iii) Homer
   4. (ii) art, imitation and exercise
   5. (i) Sidney

B)  1. England
   2. *Gorboduc*
   3. mixing of tragedy and comedy
   4. English language
   5. Italian, Spanish and French
3.6 Exercises:

A) **Write short answers to the following questions (100 words):**

1. How does Sidney defend poetry with reference to its antiquity?
2. Explain Sidney’s views on versification in poetry.
3. Which are the two functions of poetry according to Sidney?
4. Explain Sidney’s claim that ‘Her (Nature’s) world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden’.
5. Discuss Sidney’s views on the diction and versification of contemporary English poetry.

B) **Write long answers (250 words each) to the following questions:**

1. Discuss Sidney’s definition and nature of poetry.
2. Examine Sidney’s views on poetry, philosophy and history.
3. Discuss Sidney’s views on different kinds of poetry.
4. Discuss the Elizabethan objections to poetry and Sidney’s defence of poetry against those objections.
5. Examine Sidney’s views on the decline of contemporary English poetry.

3.7 Further Reading:


4.0 Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to….

- understand the importance of major literary movements
- recognize the contribution of different authors in the development of literary movements
- analyze and interpret literary works in the light of different literary trends and movements
4.1 Introduction

A literary movement is a general term for the specific works of literature which share a similar pattern of writing. It simply refers to a period of time in which different authors followed similar patterns of writing or approaches. Usually these authors are a part of the ‘movement’ because they have similar ideas about a number of things ranging from style, content, philosophy, sociological concerns, art, culture, etc. Broadly defined, literary movement is a trend within literary periods in which literature is unified by shared intellectual, linguistic, religious, and artistic influences. In short, literary movement describes a collective upsurge of an ideological or critical approach to literature. The major literary movements discussed in this unit are Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Surrealism. These trends have importance in literary criticism as they represent the trends in literature. The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the literary movement, discussion of certain representative authors and works associated with the movement, and the predominant characteristics or themes of the movement. Let us consider them in detail.

4.2 Presentation of the Subject Matter

4.2.1 Realism

The term ‘Realism’ refers to any work that attempts to portray life accurately without romantic idealization. It is defined as “the science of exact presentation of many complexities, abstract and concrete factors in the work of art”. In fact, realism is an artistic or literary movement characterized by the representation of people or things as they actually are. It is most often associated with the 19th century literary movement that aimed at honest portrayal of ordinary, contemporary life. The greatest novelists, such as Balzac and Flaubert, established the novel as a major literary genre to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality. George Eliot and William Dean Howells introduced the realistic novel in England and the United States respectively. These novelists depicted life and the social world in their works realistically. In short, their novels are the best examples of "objective reality without romantic idealization". So they are regarded as the originators of realism.

In literary history, realism is usually associated with the genre of the novel because it is uniquely capable of revealing the truth of contemporary life in society. It is applied by literary critics in two diverse ways:
i) to identify a movement in the writing of the novels during the nineteenth century, and

ii) to designate a recurrent mode, in various eras and literary forms, of representing human life and experience in literature.

As a literary movement, Realism is concerned with "objective reality". It represents everyday activities, primarily among the middle or lower class society. Realistic fiction is often opposed to romantic fiction. The main difference between the realistic and romantic fiction is that while realistic fiction is said to represent life as it really is, the romantic fiction is said to present life more picturesque, fantastic, adventurous, or heroic rather than actuality. Realistic fiction is written to create the impression that it represents life and the social world as it seems to the common reader. So realism is defined as "the faithful representation of reality".

The realistic fiction represents life and the social world as it appears to the common reader. The major novelists who developed realism by representing human life and experience in literature are Balzac, Flaubert, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Daniel Defoe, Richardson, Henry Fielding, Arnold Bennett et al. These novelists attempted to represent life and society realistically in their novels. For example, Balzac’s La Peau de chagrin (1831; The Wild Ass’s Skin), Le Chef-d’oeuvre inconnu (1831; The Unknown Masterpiece), Louis Lambert (1834), and The Quest of the Absolute 1834 are the best examples of realistic novels. In all these varied works Balzac emerged as the supreme observer and reporter of contemporary French society.

In England, Samuel Richardson presented realistic fiction in the 18th century. His novel Pamela conveys realities about truth, morality, and vice. The reader learns the truth about morality and vice through the characters in Pamela. While Richardson's Pamela portrayed life of a lower middle copy mond servant in an aristocratic home, Henry Fielding started with satiric intention and penned a realistic novel, Joseph Andrews. In America, Samuel Clemens was the early pioneer of realism. Writing under the pen name Mark Twain, he was able to reproduce vernacular speech pattern and vocabulary to focus the middle and lower class characters in his novels. His The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is the best example of realistic fiction. However, the realistic novel during the Victorian period used journalistic techniques to make the novel closer to real life with facts and general
stereotypes of human nature. For example, Charles Dickens' novel *Great Expectations* was originally released weekly in newspaper publications and people enjoyed it so much that it was in high demand quickly, and eventually it was turned into one novel. The Victorian novel became popular because the characters in the Victorian novel were lifelike and connected to the middle class life and community.

The realistic novel really developed in the nineteenth century with the work of Austen, Balzac, George Eliot, Tolstoy and others. The energizing principles of George Eliot’s novels were accuracy in representation of things as they are and an honest representation of her feelings and perceptions. Her masterpieces *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Mariner* (1861) and *Middlemarch* (1871), secured George Eliot’s place high in the realistic fiction in English. Her realism extends from the external world to the world of individual consciousness like the psychological novelists. George Eliot was really committed to the faithful representation of commonplace things. Her *Adam Bede* is an early example of the realistic fiction for which she became celebrated. Eliot herself defined realism as ‘the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature.’ To her, realism did not mean a naive belief that writing can transparently represent the real world, but the conviction that writing should not falsify or romanticize it.

In short, realism was a movement that represented everyday activities in various contexts, primarily among the middle or lower class society. The major reasons for the emergence of realism in literature in the nineteenth century were the increasing rates of democracy and literacy, the rapid growth in industrialism and urbanization, a relative rise in middle-class and reader’s interest in understanding the rapid shifts in culture. The major characteristics of realism are:

a) Objectivity in presentation

b) Selective presentation of reality with an emphasis on authenticity,

c) Characters appear in their real complexity of temperament and motive,

d) The realistic novel served the interests and aspirations of an insurgent middle class.

e) Character is more important than action and plot,

f) Insistence on the experience of the commonplace
g) Avoidance of the sensational, dramatic elements of naturalistic novels.

h) Emphasis on morality

i) Diction of the realistic novel is natural vernacular, not heightened or poetic; tone is comic, satiric, or matter-of-fact.

In short, realism is a style of writing that aimed at the honest portrayal of ordinary, contemporary life. As an artistic or literary movement developed in the nineteenth century, realism attempted to depict life accurately without idealizing or romanticizing it. So it is regarded as the science of exact presentation of many complexities in the work of art.

4.2.1.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. --------- is the science of exact presentation of many complexities, abstract and concrete factors in the work of art
   a) Realism  b) Surrealism  
   c) Naturalism  d) Symbolism

2. As a literary movement, Realism is concerned with ---------.
   a) idealization of human life  b) images and symbols  
   c) objective reality  d) philosophy and culture

3. --------- introduced the realistic novel in England.
   a) Samuel Clemens  b) George Eliot  
   c) Balzac  d) Emile Zola

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What does the term ‘realism’ refer to?

2. Who established the novel as a major literary genre to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality?

3. What were the main reasons for the emergence of realism in literature in the 19th century?
4.2.2 Naturalism

The term Naturalism is generally applied to literature which attempts to reproduce details from life without selection. It was a mainly unorganized literary movement that sought to depict believable everyday reality, as opposed to Romanticism as well as Surrealism. Naturalistic writers often believed that certain factors, such as heredity, social conditions and environment had inescapable force in shaping human character. They exposed the dark harshness of life, including poverty, racism, violence, prejudice, disease, corruption, prostitution, and filth. As a result, naturalistic writers were frequently criticized for focusing too much on human vice and misery.

Naturalism was regarded as a logical outgrowth or a specialized variety of literary realism in the first half of the 19th century. However, it was more explanatory than Realism by identifying the certain causes for a person's actions or beliefs. It displayed some specific characteristics that delimited it from the contemporary realistic literature. Instead of developing plot structure, naturalistic writers focused on the social environment in their works.

Naturalism was a relatively short-lived philosophical approach. Very few writers experienced real success in the naturalistic style of writing. The major writers who developed Naturalism were Emile Zola (1840-1902), Frank Norris (1870-1902), Stephen Crane (1871-1900) and Edith Wharton (1862-1937). The works of Emile Zola and Frank Norris provided inspiration for many of the Naturalist authors. They conceived of their work as experiments in which characters were subjected to various stimuli in order to gauge reactions. For example, Emile Zola's works had frankness about sexuality along with a pervasive pessimism. His most famous contribution to Naturalism was *Les Rougon-Macquart*, a sweeping collection of 20 novels. It is believed that he sought a new idea to convince the reading public of something new and more modern in his fiction. He argued that his innovation in fiction-writing was the creation of characters and plots based on the scientific method. His concern is not with character as such, but how characters react to circumstances. His often grim subject matter is coupled with a sober and scientific narration of details. There is a clinical aspect to his craft that is echoed in his descriptions of novel-writing as a form of science. Later writers would concur, citing Zola as their major inspiration in pursuing the Naturalist aesthetics in literature.
The most potent expression of Naturalism is found in the works of Frank Norris. His chief concern was with how the civilized man overcame the brute, animal nature that still lived inside of him. His most famous novel *McTeague* (1899) is a depiction of the savage side of humanity. It tells the story of a couple’s courtship and marriage, and their subsequent descent into poverty, violence and finally murder as the result of jealousy and greed. The novel examines the idea that our actions and traits are not entirely determined by our conscious decisions. We are influenced by our actions and by a power that is larger than our existence.

One of the first truly Naturalist works of literature, and certainly the first in America, was Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. It is a story about a virtuous girl who becomes ruined by forces larger than her. Crane’s most celebrated novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, was set during the Civil War, and follows one young soldier’s experience of that war. His descriptions and scenery were inspired by war and history magazines.

Edith Wharton often produced novels that just as rightly belong in the category of Naturalism. Unlike the bulk of her contemporaries in the Naturalist vein, Wharton’s novels dealt almost exclusively with the concerns of the upper crust of society. Her novels *The House of Mirth* (1905), *The Age of Innocence*, *The Custom of the Country* etc. present the changing scene of New York City, the foibles of its fashionable elites and the ambitions of the "new people". Her characters often fall from grace through their own mistakes, miscalculation, and sometimes for no apparent reason at all.

In fact, realism and naturalism are two similar literary movements of the 19th and 20th century that deal with the real, cruel world. Realism most straightforwardly is “the truthful treatment of material.” The realistic Writers like Mark Twain, George Eliot, Dean Howells etc. focused mainly on every day, natural incidents involving ordinary people, nothing too extreme or out of the ordinary. However naturalism is based on a very different philosophy in which people are prisoners of their inheritance and social environment. In naturalism, life is viewed more as a machine; man is simply just another animal on the planet earth driven by his chemistry and environment. Spirituality has no part in this literary movement; it is all scientifically based.
The Naturalistic writers believed that the laws behind the forces that govern human lives might be studied and understood through the objective study of human beings. They studied human beings governed by their instincts and passions as well as forces of heredity and environment. The main features of naturalism or naturalistic literary works are:

a) Detached method of narration
b) Deterministic--natural and socioeconomic forces stronger than man.
c) Characters--lower socioeconomic class
d) Naturalists observe, and then write and their writing is often about the darker side of life.
e) Characters do not have free will. They are conditioned or controlled by environment, heredity, instinct or chance
f) Language is formal and style is Darwinist--survival of the fittest
g) pessimistic approach
h) surprising twist at the end of the story

In short, Naturalism was a literary movement or tendency from the 1880s to 1930s that used detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment had inescapable force in shaping human character.

4.2.3.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. The Naturalistic writers often believed that certain factors such as -------- and -------- were unavoidable determinants in one’s life
   a) frankness and sexuality  b) images and symbols
c) heredity, and social conditions  d) philosophy and culture

2. -------- was regarded as a logical outgrowth of literary realism in the 19th-century.
   a) Nihilism  b) Naturalism
c) Surrealism  d) Symbolism
3. The most potent expression of Naturalism is found in the works ---------
   a) Charles Baudelaire  b) Andre Breton
   c) Max Ernst  d) Frank Norris

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.
1. What is Naturalism?
2. Who provided inspiration to develop the naturalistic trend in literature?
3. What is the main feature of Emile Zola's works?

4.2.3 Symbolism

Symbolism is an artistic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind. It is mainly a French Movement in art and literature. It gives a writer freedom to add double levels of meanings to his work: the literal and the symbolic. The main object of symbolism was to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols and symbolized language. Symbols are endlessly suggestive. They are often images which gradually reveal a special mood, or even an intimation of something deeper than life normally reveals. In short, symbolism is ‘representation of ideas by the use of symbols’.

Etymologically, the term ‘symbolism’ is derived from the word ‘symbol’ which means a sign of recognition. It exists literally within the world of the story but which comes to have an abstract meaning beyond itself. For instance, a ‘rose’ given by one character to another may function as a symbol of their love. A ‘caged bird’ might be a symbol of the longing for freedom. The ‘conch shell’ in Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* symbolizes the rule of law; while the ‘pig’s head on a stick’ symbolizes the human impulse to savagery. In the broadest sense, a symbol is anything which signifies something. Some symbols are conventional or public. For example, ‘the Cross’, a ‘swastika’, or a ‘nation’s flag’ have meanings that are widely recognized by the concerned society or culture. Writers use conventional symbols to reinforce meanings. In short, symbol is an object, character, or action that suggests meanings, associations, and emotions beyond what is typical of its nature or function.

The symbolist movement originated in the late 19th century in France to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols.
The Symbolists believed that art should represent absolute truths that could only be described indirectly. Thus, they wrote in a very metaphorical and suggestive manner, endowing particular images or objects with symbolic meaning. Jean Moreas published the symbolist manifesto in *Le Figaro* in 1886. It names Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine as the leading poets of the Symbolist Movement. They attempted to communicate the underlying mystery of existence through a free and highly personal use of metaphors and images. Their experimental techniques greatly enriched the modern poetry of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot and the modern novel as represented by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. They also attacked the descriptive tendencies of the Realist theatre and the Naturalistic novels. So the symbolist movement is regarded as a reaction against Realism and Naturalism.

The symbolist writers were concerned with expressing various elements of the internal life of the individual. They explored the tension in their lives between the sensual love of women and the spiritual idealization of women. They also described the quests as metaphors for internal explorations into the inner consciousness of the individual. For example, Baudelaire's poem “The Voyage” describes a journey as a symbol of the quest for meaning and satisfaction in life. Many symbolists focused on subjective mental impressions, internal moods, delicate emotional states, and spiritual sentiments in reaction against objective, external and concrete realities. Charles Baudelaire’s masterpiece, *Flowers of Evil*, and his important collection of prose poetry *Little Prose Poems*, embody the central ideals of the Symbolist Movement. Paul Verlaine captured the musicality of the French language in his masterpiece, the poetry volume *Songs without Words* (1874). Stephane Mallarme who developed the literary ideals of Symbolism was interested in exploring the relationship between everyday reality and an ideal world of perfection and beauty. His *Afternoon of a Faun* is a major work of symbolist poetry. The young generation of writers who developed the Symbolist Movement regarded Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarme as the founders of the Symbolist Movement.

Symbolism was in many ways a reaction against the urbanization and materialism of the Victorian Age. It rejected the narrow representational confines of Naturalism, preferring to roam the wider fields of mysticism, idealism, romanticism and obscurantism. Philosophically, it sought the deeper truths which lay
beneath the Naturalist or Impressionist surface. The main characteristics of symbolism are as follows:

a) Symbolism was largely a reaction against Realism and Naturalism.
b) It sought to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols and the symbolized language.
c) The Symbolist poems attempt to evoke, rather than primarily to describe
d) Symbolism was against plain meanings and matter-of-fact description.
e) Symbolic imagery was used to signify the state of the poet's soul.
f) Symbolism was in many ways a reaction against the urbanization and materialism of the Victorian Age
g) The Symbolists thought that art should express more absolute truths which could only be accessed indirectly, using metaphorical imagery and suggestive forms containing symbolic meaning.
h) The symbolists wished to liberate the techniques of versification to allow greater room for free verse.
i) Symbolism was concerned with expressing various elements of the internal life of the individual.
j) The Symbolist writers describe various journeys, voyages, or quests as metaphors for internal explorations into the inner consciousness of the individual.

In short, Symbolism was a late 19th-century movement in literature and art that sought to express individual emotional experience and mystical or abstract ideas through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols.

4.2.3.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. The symbolist movement was originated in the late 19th century in ---------.
   a) France          b) India
   c) America         d) England
2. The Symbolists were interested in the -------- life of the individual.
   a) imaginative      b) social
   c) internal         d) cultural

3. Charles Baudelaire’s ----------- is an important collection of prose poetry.
   a) The Voyage         b) Flowers of Evil
   c) Afternoon of a Faun d) Little Prose Poems

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What is symbolism?
2. What is the main objective of symbolism?
3. Who provided inspiration for the development of symbolism?

4.2.4 Surrealism

Surrealism was a revolutionary movement in literature and the other fine arts. It was started as a firm and precise artistic movement in France by Andre Breton's Manifesto on Surrealism in 1924. This manifesto highlighted the importance of the dream state in art and writing. Andre Breton was explicit in his assertion that surrealism was, above all, a revolutionary movement. He defined surrealism as ‘Pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought’. The Surrealists wanted to replace conventional realism with full expression of the unconscious mind, which they considered to be more real than the ‘real world of appearances’. The expressed aim of Surrealism was a revolt against all restraints on free creativity, including logical reason, standard morality, social and artistic conventions and norms.

Surrealism developed out of the Dada activities during World War I. The most important center of the movement was Paris. Its founder and chief spokesman, Andre Breton, played an important role in Dada experiments. Dada activists reflected a sense of dissolution and uncertainty of the age. They protested with the anti-art gatherings, performances, writings and art works. However, Surrealism propounded its own coherent antidote to both nihilism and optimism.

The Surrealists believed that excessive rational thought and bourgeois values had brought the conflict of the war upon the world. Andre Breton, Louis Aragon and
Philippe Soupault started the literary journal *Literature* and began experimenting with automatic writing and published their writings, as well as accounts of dreams, in the magazine. Breton and Soupault explored deeper into automatism and wrote *The Magnetic Fields* (1920). They believed that automatism was a better tactic for societal change than the Dada attack on prevailing values. They believed that Surrealism would advocate the idea that ordinary and depictive expressions are vital and important, but that the sense of their arrangement must be open to the full range of imagination.

The Surrealist Movement was influenced by the work and research of Sigmund Freud who founded psychoanalysis. Freud had significant influence on the belief and practices of the Surrealists. Freud's work with free association, dream analysis, and the unconscious was of utmost importance to the Surrealists in developing methods to liberate imagination. They embraced idiosyncrasy, while rejecting the idea of an underlying madness. They wanted to free people from false rationality, and restrictive customs and structures. Breton proclaimed that the true aim of Surrealism was “long live the social revolution”.

The main aim of Surrealism was to change the world, partly through social revolution but more centrally through a revolution in consciousness. It proposed the release of the imagination and stood as an implicit criticism of a restrictive rationalism in society and realism in literature. Though international in scope and influence, Surrealism is more firmly rooted in France. Its major writers and artists tend to be French viz. Breton, Soupault, Eluard, Aragon, Masson, Tanguy, Delvaux and others. Its impact in England came late (1936) and was largely ineffectual. But the United States benefited from the wartime presence of some of the leading European Surrealists, and its literature and art bore the marks of this cultural transfusion. The main characteristics of Surrealism are:

a) the importance of the dream state in art and writing

b) A pure psychic automatism

c) The incorporation of chance and spontaneity

d) Free expression of the most basic drives: hunger, sexuality, anger, fear, dread, ecstasy, and so forth.
e) A sense of freedom of expression and hostility towards the horrors of World War I

f) An artistic attempt to bridge together reality and the imagination.

g) Surrealism strives to expand the reader's idea of what reality is.

In short, Surrealism used images and metaphors to compel the reader to think deeper and reveal the subconscious meaning. It laid emphasis on the mysterious, marvelous, mythological and irrational in an effort to make art ambiguous and strange. So Surrealism is defined as an artistic attempt to bridge together reality and the imagination.

4.2.4.1 Check Your Progress

A) Answer the following by choosing the correct alternative given below each question:

1. Andre Breton's *Manifesto on Surrealism* was published in
   a) 1924   b) 1914   c) 1922   d) 1941

2. Surrealism developed out of the ------- activities during World War I.
   a) creative   b) mystical   c) Dada   d) social

3. ------- had significant influence on the belief and practices of the Surrealists.
   a) Jean Moreas   b) Emile Zola   c) Sigmund Freud   d) Stephen Crane

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What, according to Andre Breton, is Surrealism?

2. What was the main objective of Surrealism?

3. Who are the leading practitioners of the Surrealist Movement?
4.3 Summary

Literary movement is a general term for the specific works of literature which share a similar pattern of writing. It simply refers to a period of time in which different authors followed similar patterns of writing or approaches. Usually these authors are considered part of a "movement" because they have similar ideas about a number of things ranging from: style, content, philosophy, sociological concerns, art, culture, etc. while studying these literary works it is necessary to have thorough knowledge of the trends in literary writing. The major literary trends such as Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism and Surrealism are very useful to analyze and interpret works of literature.

4.4 Terms to Remember

- **upsurge**: expansion
- **fantastic**: unbelievable
- **prejudice**: an unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason
- **outgrowth**: development, consequence
- **Stimuli**: a thing that arouses activity or energy in someone or something
- **to gauge**: estimate or determine the amount or level of something
- **pervasive**: all-encompassing
- **concur**: agree
- **aesthetic**: artistic, concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty
- **subtle**: delicate, fine
- **to endow**: to give
- **Manifesto**: A *manifesto* is a published verbal declaration of the intentions, motives, or views of the issuer, be it an individual, group, political party or government
- **mystery**: something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain
- **quest**: search for something
• to explore : to discover
• Materialism : a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.
• Mysticism : Mysticism is a spiritual belief stating that a connection can be obtained with God or the spirits through thought and meditation.
• obscurantism : the practice of deliberately preventing the facts or full details of something from becoming known
• to evoke : to bring to mind
• Dada activities: Dada activities included public gatherings, demonstrations, and publication of art/literary journals
• dissolution : the act or process of resolving or dissolving into parts or elements
• antidote : remedy
• nihilism: the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated
• idiosyncrasy : eccentricity, odd behavior

4.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.2.1.1 Realism:

I. 1. a) Realism
   2. c) objective reality
   3. b) George Eliot

II. 1. The term ‘Realism’ refers to any work that attempts to portray life accurately without romantic idealization.
   2. Balzac and Flaubert
   3. The main reasons for the emergence of realism in literature in the 19th century were the increasing rates of democracy and literacy, and the rapid growth in industrialism and middle-class reading public
4.2.2.1 Naturalism:

I. 1. c) heredity, and social conditions
2. b) Naturalism
3. d) Frank Norris

II. 1. Naturalism is a literary movement which attempts to reproduce the details from life without selection
2. Emile Zola and Frank Norris provided inspiration for many of the Naturalist authors to develop the naturalistic trend in literature
3. frankness about sexuality along with a pervasive pessimism.

4.2.3.1 Symbolism:

I. 1. a) France
2. c) internal
3. b) Flowers of Evil

II. 1. Symbolism is an artistic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind.
2. The main object of symbolism was to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of symbols and symbolized language.
3. Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarme provided inspiration for the development of symbolism.

4.2.4.1 Surrealism:

I. 1. a) 1924
2. c) Dada
3. c) Sigmund Freud

II. 1. According to Andre Breton, Surrealism is ‘pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought’.
2. The main aim of Surrealism was to change the world, partly through social revolution but more centrally through a revolution in consciousness.

3. Andre Breton, Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault

4.6 Exercises

Write short notes on the following:

1. Realism
2. Naturalism
3. Symbolism
4. Surrealism

4.7 Further Reading

