

**III BA ENGLISH**  
**INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM – BEN53**  
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**UNIT I**  
**1. PLATO**

**Age and Works:**

Plato (born 428/427 BCE, Athens, Greece—died 348/347, Athens) is an ancient Greek Philosopher, student of Socrates (c. 470–399 BCE), teacher of Aristotle (384–322 BCE), and founder of the Academy, best known as the author of philosophical works of unparalleled influence.

Plato was not a professed critic of literature and his critical observations are not embodied in any single work. His chief interest was philosophical investigation, which forms the subject of his great work, the *Dialogues*, so called because each question, that interested Plato, is discussed there in question and answer form by a number of interlocutors, the chief of who is Socrates.

Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus are portrayed as interlocutors in Plato's masterpiece the *Republic*, and his half-brother Antiphon figures in the *Parmenides*. Plato's family was aristocratic and distinguished: his father's side claimed descent from the god Poseidon, and his mother's side was related to the lawgiver Solon (c. 630–560 BCE). Less creditably, his mother's close relatives Critias and Charmides were among the Thirty Tyrants who seized power in Athens and ruled briefly until the restoration of democracy in 403.

Plato as a young man was a member of the circle around Socrates. Since the latter wrote nothing, what is known of his characteristic activity of engaging his fellow citizens (and the occasional itinerant celebrity) in conversation derives wholly from the writings of others, most notably Plato himself. The works of Plato commonly referred to as "Socratic" represent the sort of thing the historical Socrates was doing. He would challenge men who supposedly had expertise about some facet of human excellence to give accounts of these matters—variously of courage, piety, and so on, or at times of the whole of "virtue"—and they typically failed to maintain their position. Resentment against Socrates grew, leading ultimately to his trial and execution on charges of impiety and corrupting the youth in 399. Plato was profoundly affected by both the life and the death of Socrates. The activity of the older man provided the starting point of Plato's philosophizing. Moreover, if Plato's Seventh Letter is to be believed (its authorship is disputed), the treatment of Socrates by both the oligarchy and the democracy made Plato wary of entering public life, as someone of his background would normally have done.

After the death of Socrates, Plato may have traveled extensively in Greece, Italy, and Egypt, though on such particulars the evidence is uncertain. The followers of Pythagoras (c. 580–c. 500 BCE) seem to have influenced his philosophical program (they are criticized in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* but receive respectful mention in the *Philebus*). It is thought that his three trips to Syracuse in Sicily (many of the Letters concern these, though their authenticity is controversial) led to a deep personal attachment to Dion (408–354 BCE),

brother-in-law of Dionysius the Elder (430–367 BCE), the tyrant of Syracuse. Plato, at Dion's urging, apparently undertook to put into practice the ideal of the "philosopher-king" (described in the *Republic*) by educating Dionysius the Younger; the project was not a success, and in the ensuing instability Dion was murdered.

Plato's Academy, founded in the 380s, was the ultimate ancestor of the modern university (hence the English term academic); an influential centre of research and learning, it attracted many men of outstanding ability. The great mathematicians Theaetetus (417–369 BCE) and Eudoxus of Cnidus (c. 395–c. 342 BCE) were associated with it. Although Plato was not a research mathematician, he was aware of the results of those who were, and he made use of them in his own work. For 20 years Aristotle was also a member of the Academy. He started his own school, the Lyceum, only after Plato's death, when he was passed over as Plato's successor at the Academy, probably because of his connections to the court of Macedonia.

Because Aristotle often discusses issues by contrasting his views with those of his teacher, it is easy to be impressed by the ways in which they diverge. Thus, whereas for Plato the crown of ethics is the good in general, or Goodness itself (the Good), for Aristotle it is the good for human beings; and whereas for Plato the genus to which a thing belongs possesses a greater reality than the thing itself, for Aristotle the opposite is true. Plato's emphasis on the ideal, and Aristotle's on the worldly, informs Raphael's depiction of the two philosophers in the *School of Athens* (1508–11). But if one considers the two philosophers not just in relation to each other but in the context of the whole of Western philosophy, it is clear how much Aristotle's program is continuous with that of his teacher. (Indeed, the painting may be said to represent this continuity by showing the two men conversing amicably). In any case, the Academy did not impose a dogmatic orthodoxy and in fact seems to have fostered a spirit of independent inquiry; at a later time, it took on a sceptical orientation.

Plato once delivered a public lecture, "On the Good," in which he mystified his audience by announcing, "the Good is one." He better gauged his readers in his dialogues, many of which are accessible, entertaining, and inviting. Although Plato is well known for his negative remarks about much great literature, in the *Symposium* he depicts literature and philosophy as the offspring of lovers, who gain a more lasting posterity than do parents of mortal children. His own literary and philosophical gifts ensure that something of Plato will live on for as long as readers engage with his works.

### **Plato's View of Art**

As literature is an art, like painting, sculpture, and others, what Plato thought of art in general deserves the first consideration. It is intimately bound up with what is called his Theory of Ideas. Ideas, he says in the *Republic*, are the ultimate reality. Things are conceived as ideas before they take practical shape as things. A tree, thus, is nothing more than concrete embodiment of its image in idea. The idea of everything therefore is its original pattern, and the thing itself its copy. As the copy ever falls short of the original, it is once removed from reality. Now art--literature painting, sculpture reproduces but things 'as mere pastime', the first in words, the next in colours, and the last in stone. So it merely copies a copy: it is twice removed from reality. Things themselves being imperfect copies of the ideas

from which they spring, their reproductions in art must be more imperfect still. They take men away from reality rather than towards it. At best, they are but partial images of it. So the productions of art helped neither to mould character nor to promote the well-being of the state-the two things by which Plato judged all human endeavour. That it had charm and allured people he readily admitted but this made it all the more dangerous to the individual and society. He was not, however unaware of its potentialities for good. Rightly pursued, it could inculcate a love for beauty and for whatever is noble in character and life.

### **His Attack on Poetry**

The same concern for the good of the individual and the state marks Plato's pronouncements on poetry. Judging by these twin standards, he finds more in it to condemn than to approve. 'The first ground of his condemnation of it has already been stated above: its incapacity, as an art, to get to the root of things, being concerned with only a semblance of them, twice removed from reality. The following three are his other grounds of condemnation:

#### **(1) Poetic Inspiration**

The poet writes not because he has thought long over what he has to say but because he is inspired'. The Muse suddenly fills him and makes him sing. Can such a sudden outpouring of the soul be a reliable substitute for truths based on reason? Often, no doubt, the poet's utterances contain a profound truth, but this appears only when they have been subjected to a further test the test of reason. By themselves they are not safe guides. Poetry therefore cannot take the place of philosophy. Guided chiefly by the impulse of the moment instead of cool deliberation, like philosophy, it cannot be relied upon to make the individual better citizen and the state a better organization. There were therefore to be no poets in the ideal commonwealth envisaged in the Republic, unless they happened to be those who composed 'hymns to the gods and panegyrics on famous men'.

#### **(2) The Emotional Appeal of Poetry**

Plato's next charge against poetry arises from its appeal to the emotions. Being a product of inspiration, it affects the emotions rather than reason, the heart rather than the intellect. As an art, too, with beauty of form added to the original inspiration, it does the same. Its pictures of life therefore- of characters, scenes, or situations-overpower the emotions and hold the reason prisoner. Now emotions, being just impulses of the moment like the poetic inspiration mentioned above, cannot be such safe guides as reason, which considers everything coolly before allowing itself to move in any direction. Plato illustrates this with reference to the tragic poetry of his age, in which weeping and wailing were indulged to the full to move the hearts of the spectators. Only a few, he complains in the *Republic*, can sense of pity realise the baneful effects of this: 'for if we let our own grow strong by feeding upon the griefs of others, it is not easy to restrain it in the case of our own sufferings.' So, finally, poetry 'fed and watered the passions instead of drying them up, and let them rule instead of ruling them as they ought to be ruled, with a view to the happiness and virtue of mankind.'

#### **(3) Its Non-Moral Character**

Finally, Plato indicts poetry for its lack of concern with morality. In its treatment of life it treats both virtue and vice alike, sometimes making the one and sometimes the other triumph indifferently, without regard for moral considerations. It pained Plato to see virtue often coming to grief in the literature esteemed in his day-the epics of Homer, the narrative verse

of Hesiod, the odes of Pindar, and the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. In his own words from the Republic, 'they give us to understand that many evil livers are happy and many righteous men unhappy; and that wrong-doing, if it be undetected, is profitable, while honest dealing is beneficial to one's neighbour, but damaging to one's self.' Their portraits of gods and heroes are equally objectionable; both are often represented in the most unfavourable light: gods as unjust or revengeful, or guilty of other vices, and heroes under the sway of uncontrollable passion of all kinds pride, anger, grief, and so on. Such literature corrupted both the citizen and the state.

### **The Function of Poetry**

This naturally leads Plato to consider the function of poetry. Although it pleases, mere pleasure, he says, cannot be its object. He cannot conceive truth as of art as divorced from morals. Everywhere therefore he suggests the test of poetry: what contribution it makes to the knowledge of virtue. Only in this way it could mould character and promote the interests of the state. Pleasure, even of the highest kind, ranks low in Plato's scale of values. A poet is good artist only in so far as he is a good teacher. In a famous passage in the Republic he says, 'We must look for artists who are able out of the goodness of their own natures of the nature to trace the nature of beauty and perfection, that so our young men. like persons who live in a healthy place, may be perpetually influenced for good.' Poetic truth must be the highest truth--ideal forms of justice, goodness, beauty, and the like.

### **His Comments on Drama**

All the observations of Plato, given which formed but a branch so far, apply equally to dramatic of poetry. The writing representations of drama are as much removed from reality, as much a product of inspiration, as much emotional in appeal, and as much unconcerned with of poetry. But there are a few more things that Plato morality, as those art in particular which deserve separate notice. says of the dramatic art in particular which deserve separate notice.

#### **(1) Its Appeal to Baser Instincts**

Unlike poetry, drama is meant to be staged. Its approval or disapproval therefore depends upon a heterogeneous multitude. In order to please them all, the dramatist often introduces what they like, such as quarrels and lamentations in tragedy, and imitation of thunder and cries of beasts in comedy. All this arouses their baser instincts, of which they themselves will be ashamed in normal life. It leads to bad taste and laxity in discipline. Such plays therefore Plato will have ruthlessly censored.

#### **(2) Effects of Impersonation**

Sometimes drama reacts unfavourably on the actors themselves. By constantly impersonating evil characters like cowards, knaves, and criminals, they let these evil qualities enter into their own nature, to the detriment of their natural self. Nor is acting, even of the innocent sort, a healthy exercise. It represses individuality and leads to the enfeeblement of character. Plato admits, however, that where the characters impersonated represent the cream of humanity, such as men of courage, wisdom, or virtue, the actor stands to gain. By the force of habit, again, the same qualities are stimulated in him. Those tragedies therefore that represent the best and noblest in life are of positive benefit to the community and deserve to be encouraged.

### (3) Tragic and Comic Pleasure

Plato has a word to say, too, on the pleasure aroused by tragedy and comedy. The question, 'what is it in a painful scene that causes pleasure?' which baffles psychologists even today, had occurred to him, too, though his explanation of it is not fully convincing. Human nature, he says, is a mixture of heterogeneous feelings-anger, envy, fear, grief, and others which are no doubt, painful by themselves but afford pleasure when indulged in excess. It pleases a man to lose his temper or to go on weeping. otherwise he would not do so. In comedy, of which Plato knew only the satirical kind, the pleasure takes the form of laughter at what we see on the stage: a coward behaving as a brave man, a fool as a wise man, a cheat as an honest man, and so on. The source of the laughter is the incongruity between what he is and what he pretends to be. Such a pleasure is malicious in that it arises from the weakness of a fellow-man, who should rather be the object of our pity. Such a man should be one, too, whom we love, so that his weakness may put us into good humour. If he is one whom we hate, this weakness in him will arouse not laughter but contempt. Here Plato hits upon a profound truth: no character can be comic unless he is lovable. But Plato warns against too frequent indulgence in laughter, as it affects seriousness of conduct required to do great deeds.

#### **His Observations on Style**

Since Plato lived in an age of oratory, which does with the spoken word what a writer does with the written, he lays down a few principles of good speech in Phaedrus, which apply equally to good writing. They cover practically the whole range of style. The first essential of a good speech, he says, is a thorough knowledge of the subject one is to speak on. He must be sure of what he has to say. But this alone will not make him a successful speaker. A speech has to impress the hearers as a written work has to impress the readers. So he should, next, know the art of speaking. For this, as for any other art, is needed a natural gift, knowledge of its rules, and constant practice in the subject. These must follow each other in work. Thirdly, his thoughts upon first, the middle ones natural sequence-the first things in the middle and the last ones last-, so that all together may form an organic whole, each part just fit where it should be. By this means he can communicate himself best to his hearers. But this does not mark the end of his labours. His hearers are also men like himself, with their own whims and prejudices, likes and dislikes, ideas and attitudes. So his last care should be to have knowledge of human psychology to get into his hearer's heart and soul. A writer, to succeed in his vocation, has to do nothing more, for the principles of the spoken and the written word are the same.

## 2. Aristotle

### His Critical Works and their Nature

Aristotle lived from 384 B.C. to 322 B.C. He was the most distinguished disciple of Plato. To Indians he is also known as the tutor of Alexander the Great, who overran north-western India in 326 B.C. He is believed to have written nearly half a dozen critical treatises, of which only two are extant—*Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, the former dealing with the art of poetry and the latter with the art of speaking. *Poetics*, however, deals with many more problems of literature than *Rhetoric*, and has therefore attracted greater attention than the latter.

Aristotle leaves the reader in no doubt as to the nature and purpose of *Poetics*. It is not a mere enunciation of the principles of the poetic art. Its conclusions are firmly rooted in the Greek literature, till then known, and are actually illustrated from it. Its approach, therefore, is the scientific one of observation and analysis. Taking the whole body of extant Greek literature, Aristotle deduces conclusions from it that in varying degrees produced later and in other countries. There is considerable force apply to literature as a whole. So they do not Dryden's statement concerning the necessarily cover literature in purpose of tragedy that, had Aristotle seen English tragedies, he might have changed his mind'. This is not to deny that many of Aristotle's conclusions on the nature of poetry and drama are of general application and are as true today as they were in his own day. His purpose in writing *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* was to sort out those principles from established practice that made for a good poet and a good orator.

### The Plan of *Poetics*

*Poetics* is a treatise of about fifty pages, containing twenty six small chapters. It gives the impression of being a summary of his lectures to his pupils, written either by them or by him-self. It is believed to have had a second part, which is lost. For as it is. it is incomplete and omits some of the important questions he himself raises (e.g. discussion of comedy and catharsis ), which were reserved for a fuller treatment in the second part. The first four chapters and the twenty-fifth are devoted to poetry, the fifth in a general way to comedy, epic, and tragedy, the following fourteen exclusively to tragedy, the next three to poetic diction, the next two to epic poetry, and the last to a comparison of epic poetry and tragedy. Aristotle's main concern, thus, appears to be tragedy, which in his day was considered to be the most developed form of poetry. Poetry, comedy, and epic come in for consideration because a discussion of tragedy would be incomplete without some reference to its parent and sister forms. The lyric (song) is mentioned only in so far as it forms a constituent part of tragedy.

### His Observations on Poetry

#### (1) Its Nature

Aristotle first considers the nature of the poetic art. Following Plato, he calls the poet an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, who imitates one of three objects – 'things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things they ought to be': in other words what is past or present, what is commonly believed, and what is ideal. Like Plato he believes that there is a natural pleasure in imitation", which is inborn instinct in man, constituting the one difference between him and the lower animals. It is this pleasure in imitation that enables the child to learn his earliest lessons in speech and conduct from those around him. They are imitated by him because there is a pleasure in doing so, A poet or an

artist is just a grown-up child indulging in imitation for the pleasure it affords. There is also another natural instinct hoping to make him a poet, the instinct for harmony and rhythm, manifesting itself in metrical composition. It is no less pleasing than the first. But the poet's imitations of pictures of life are not unreal – 'twice removed from reality' – as Plato believed. On the contrary, they reveal truths of a permanent or universal kind. To prove this Aristotle institutes a comparison between poetry and history. 'It is not the function of the poet,' he says, 'to relate what has happened, but what may happen, - what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not in writing in verse or in prose.... The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and higher thing than history; for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity.' History records particular persons, places, of things: poetry infuses a universal appeal into them by stressing what they have in common with all persons, all places, or all things in the same set of circumstances. The pictures of poetry therefore are not mere reproductions of facts but truths embedded in those facts that apply to all places and times. This is the meaning Aristotle gives to imitation, thereby answering Plato's severest charge against poetry.

## (2) Its Function

From what Aristotle says above it is clear that he envisages pleasure as the end of poetry. It is true that he makes no categorical statement to this effect anywhere in Poetics but, the implication everywhere is that the function of poetry, as of the other fine arts, is to please. The very two instincts, of imitation and of harmony and rhythm, from which it springs, are indulged in for the pleasure they give. Their outcome, poetry, should be pleasing likewise - pleasing both to the poet and to the reader. Negatively, Aristotle nowhere states, like Plato, that the function of poetry and of the other sister arts is to teach. Teaching, however, is not ruled out if it is incidental to the pleasure it gives. Such pleasure should even be regarded as superior to all others, because it serves a dual purpose that of itself and of civic morality. For, 'from the Aristotelian and Greek point of view art is an element in the higher life of the community; the pleasure it affords is an enduring pleasure, an aesthetic enjoyment which is not divorced from civic ends?' Here Aristotle partly agrees and partly disagrees with Plato who, as we have seen, had no use for any other art than the one that satisfied the requirements of morality.

## (3) Its Emotional Appeal

Aristotle also sees, like Plato, that poetry makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. Taking tragedy as the highest form of poetry, he says that it arouses the emotions of pity and fear at the undeserved sufferings of the hero and fear of the worst that may befall him. Plato, as has been seen, considered them as baneful to the healthy growth of the mind. 'If we let our own sense of pity grow strong' he says, 'by feeding upon the griefs of others, it is not easy to restrain it in the case of our own sufferings'. Aristotle has no such fear. These emotions, he says, are aroused with view to their purgation or catharsis. Everybody has occasions of fear and pity in life. If they go on accumulating, they become an alien matter in the soul, as Plato feared, by exceeding their normal proportions. In tragedy (or for that matter, in any other kind of poetry) where the sufferings we witness are not our own, these emotions find a full and free outlet, relieving the soul of their excess. By showering them, too, on persons other than ourselves we are lifted out of ourselves - our petty self-interests - and emerge nobler than

before. It is this that pleases in a tragic tale, which normally be painful. Viewed in this light, tragedy is an art that transmutes disturbing emotions into what Milton calls 'calm of mind, all passion spent'. So the emotional appeal of poetry is not harmful, as Plato believed but health giving and artistically satisfying.

## **Observations on Tragedy**

### (1) Its Origin

Poetry being an imitative: it can imitate two kinds of actions: the noble actions of good men or the mean actions of bad men. From the former War born the epic and from the latter the satire. The graver spirits imitated noble actions, and the actions of good men. The more trivial sort imitated the actions of meaner persons, at first composing satires, as the former did hymns to the gods and the praises of famous men.' From these in turn arose tragedy and comedy, the graver sort practising the former and the satirists the latter. For tragedy bears the same relation to the epic comedy to the satire. It follows therefore that the epic and tragedy (being imitations of the noble actions of good men) are superior to the satire and comedy, which concern themselves with the mean actions of low men. Between themselves, tragedy, according to Aristotle, is superior to the epic having, as we shall see<sup>4</sup>, all the epic elements in a shorter compass, with moreover music and spectacular effects which the epic does not have. And being more compact in design. Hence the big space devoted to it in *Poetics*

### (2) Its Characteristics

'Tragedy,' says Aristotle, 'is an imitation of an action that is serious complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play: in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.' Of these, pity and fear and their purgation have been discussed above in connection with the emotional appeal of poetry. The rest need to be explained. By serious action Aristotle means a tale of suffering exciting pity and fear. Action comprises all human activities, including deeds, thoughts, and feelings. It should be complete or self-contained, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that before which the audience or the reader does not need to be told anything to understand the story. If something more is required to understand the story than the beginning gives, the beginning is unsatisfactory. From it follow events that would not follow otherwise and that constitute the middle. In their turn they lead to those other events that cannot but issue from them and that lead to none others after them. They form the end. If in any play the beginning can be put in the middle or at the end, or the middle at the beginning or the end, or the end at the beginning or in the middle, the action or plot is not complete or one whole (i.e. well-knit) but haphazard or loose. Completeness implies organic unity or a natural sequence of events that cannot be disturbed. Such a plot should have, further, certain magnitude or a reasonable length, such as the mind may comprehend fully in one view or within the required time. A reasonable length or size is an essential condition of beauty. A beautiful creature or object is neither too long nor too short but just in proportion. The same is true of the plot. It is of the right proportion in itself and in all its parts. If it is too short, the mind will miss many things in it to comprehend it fully; and if too long the mind, with its limited perspective, cannot take in all the events within the time required by the story. In Aristotle's own words, it should be of 'a length which can be easily embraced by the memory'. But it should have length enough to unfold its sequence of event -the beginning, the middle, and the end-



naturally and fully, The remaining two characteristics -artistic ornament and form of action- are easily explained. By the former are meant 'rhythm, harmony, and song', which are employed not all together but as occasion demands. Rhythm and harmony (i.e. verse), thus, may be used to develop some parts, and song some others. They are all designed to enrich the language of the play to make it as effective in its purpose as possible. The form of which tragedy assumes, distinguishes it from narrative verse. While in the latter the narrator of the story is the poet, in tragedy the tale is told with the help of living and moving characters. The actions make the tale. In the narrative the poet is free to speak in his own person or in the likeness of someone else, but in tragedy the dramatist is nowhere seen, to all is done by his characters. It is literature intended to be acted as well as read, whereas the narrative is intended only to be read.

### (3) Its Constituent Parts

Aristotle finds six constituent parts in tragedy; plot, character, and thought, which are the objects it imitates or represents; diction and song, which are the medium it employs to imitate these objects; and spectacle which is its manner of imitating them. Their importance vis-a-vis one another is in the order in which they are mentioned above; plot comes first, character next, thought third, diction fourth, song fifth, and spectacle last. The plot or 'the arrangement of the incidents' is the, chief part of tragedy. 'For tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action.' To the question whether plot makes a tragedy or character, Aristotle replies that 'without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character.' It is an intricate question, no doubt, for the actions themselves issue from characters. But Aristotle has no doubts whatever on this score. 'Character', he says, 'determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Tragedy is written not merely to imitate men but to imitate men in action. It is by their deeds, performed before our very eyes, that we know them rather than by what the poet, as in the epic, tells of them. Hence it is these deeds (or incidents woven into plot) that matter more than their character. Since, however, deeds issue from character, character is next only in importance to plot. Then follows thought or what a character thinks or feels during his career in the play. It reveals itself in speech. As plot imitates action, and character men, so thought imitates men's mental and emotional reactions to the Circumstances in which they find themselves. All these three constitute the poet's objects of imitation in a tragedy. To accomplish them he employs the medium of diction or words 'embellished with each kind of artistic ornament' or which song is one. It is by their means that he expresses the thought of his characters and the meaning of his play in general. Here the literary part of his work is over. For spectacle or stage representation, the last of the six parts, is connected least with the art of poetry', being in fact the work of the stage mechanic. But it constitutes the manner in which tragedy is presented to the public. It is important, however, to note that 'the power of tragedy is felt even apart from representation and actors'. Like the epic it serves its purpose even when read and not acted at all.

### (4) The Structure of the Plot

The plot being 'the soul of a tragedy', the artistic arrangement of its incidents is of the prime importance. It should have, first, unity of action or only those actions, and not all, in the life of the hero which are intimately connected with one another and appear together as one whole, 'the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or

removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed'. There may be many more actions in the life of the hero - there are in every man's life but unless they have something to do with the tragedy that befalls him. They are not relevant to the plot and will all have to be kept out. 'For a thing where presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole.' It follows therefore that the events comprising the plot will concern only one man and not more. For if they concern more than one man there will be no necessary connection between them, as the actions of one man cannot be put down to another. Their introduction in the same story must therefore disturb its unity. When all the actions of the same man cannot be included in the plot, what sense can there be in including the actions of other men, between which and the former ones there can be no inevitable link even if there were similarity? For the same reason the episodic plots are the worst, i.e. those in which episodes or events follow one another in mere chronological order 'without probable or necessary sequence. Casually and only once Aristotle mentions what has come to be called the unity of time (i.e. conformity between the time taken by the events of the play and that taken in their representation on the stage). 'Tragedy, he says, endeavours, as far as possible, to confine itself to single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit; whereas the epic action has no limits of time.'

From this the older critics were led to believe that for a good tragic plot it was necessary to select an event or its events that happened within twenty four hours or so in life. So that when represented in about one-fourth of that time on the stage they may not appear unnatural, as they would if the plot-time were longer. But Aristotle nowhere insists on this as a condition of good plot. He merely states the prevailing practice but is not unaware of the fact that, in this particular matter, at first the same freedom was admitted in tragedy as in epic poetry'. The unity of place (i.e. conformity between the scene of the tragic event or events and the time taken by them to happen) which was deduced as a corollary from the so-called unity of time, is not mentioned at all. So much was made of these two unities in the centuries following the Renaissance that it is important to mention here that they do not appear among the essentials of a good plot mentioned by Aristotle. It is necessary, however, for: good tragic plot to arouse the emotions of pity and fear in the spectator or the reader pity, as has been said, for the undeserved sufferings of the hero and fear of the worst that may happen to him. "The change of fortune,' therefore, 'should be not from bad to good, but, reversely, from good to bad.'" The unhappy ending is the only right ending, for it is the most tragic in its effect. A happy ending' may please us more but it will not afford the true tragic pleasure--that aroused by the emotions of pity and fear' There are two ways in which these emotions may be aroused--by spectacular means or mere theatrical effects, such as physical torture, piteous lamentation, beggarly appearance, and so on: and by the inner structure of the plot, such as a brother unknowingly killing: brother and discovering the fact later, or intending good and doing evil, or a little error visited by a too heavy punishment, and so on. It is this latter mode that indicates constructed superior poet. 'For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place.'

The Plot, finally, is divisible into two parts complication, and its unravelling or denouement. The former ties the events into a tangled knot, the latter unties it. The complication includes all the action from the beginning to the point where it takes a turn for good or ill; the

denouement extends from the turning-point to the end. The first is commonly called rising action and the second falling action.

#### (5) Simple and Complex Plot

The plot may be simple or complex. In a simple plot there are no puzzling situations that enter into a complex plot, in particular peripeteia and anagnorisis. Peripeteia is generally explained as 'reversal of the situation' and anagnorisis as 'recognition' or 'discovery'. By a 'reversal of the situation' is meant very nearly 'a reversal of intention, a deed done in blindness defeating its own purpose': move to kill an enemy recoiling on one's own head, the effort to save turning into just its opposite, killing an enemy and discovering him to be a kinsman. The discovery of these false moves, taken in ignorance, is anagnorisis - 'a change from ignorance to knowledge'. Both peripeteia and anagnorisis please because there is the element of surprise in them. A plot that makes use of them is complex, and 'a perfect tragedy should be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan.'

#### (6) Tragic Hero

Since tragedy aims at exciting pity and fear, its choice of a hero is limited to one whose actions most produce this effect in the spectators. He cannot be an eminently good man, hurled from prosperity into adversity, because his wholly undeserved suffering arouses, not pity and fear, but a feeling of shock or revolt: that such a thing should ever be! Nor can he be a bad man, raised from adversity to prosperity", because by his very badness he can neither excite our pity and fear, nor deserve the good fortune that comes to him. Nor, again, can he be an utter villain, because his fall is a matter for gratification rather than for pity and fear. There remains but one kind of character who can best satisfy this requirement: 'a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. His misfortune excites pity because it is out of all proportion to his error of judgement, and his overall goodness excites fear for his doom. No other character answers the tragic purpose so well.

#### **Sources and References**

*An Introduction to English Criticism* by B. Prasad