

**B.A(H) -PART III
PAPER-V
HISTORY OF LITERARY CRITICISM
LECTURE-I**

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Literary theory, literary criticism, and literary history are interrelated and interdependent, and co-exist in the field of literary studies as bound by their major and common object of study, which is the literary work. Their interrelationship and interdependence form a permanent circular movement from the historically placed literary practice to literary criticism, from literary criticism to literary theory and from literary theory back to criticism. The text - either produced recently or representing an earlier period in literary history - is subject to literary criticism whose concluding reflections (the necessary outcome of literary criticism), if generally accepted and proved valid in connection to other thematically and structurally similar literary texts, emerge into the domain of literary theory, become its general principles of approach to literature, and are applicable to the study of literature in general.

Literary criticism uses them in practical matters of research whenever the study of particular literary works is required,

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adding to the objective theory the critic's individual response to the text, and the expected result is, on one hand, the development of new or alternative theoretical perspectives, and, on the other hand, the change, promotion, discouragement, revival or in some other ways the influence upon the literary practice of its own historical period, and the influence upon the literary attitude of the reading audience concerning the contemporary and past literary tradition.

Literary criticism is thus not to be regarded as just the analysis or evaluation of particular literary works but also as the formulation of general principles of approach to such works. Co-existing in the field of literary studies with literary history and literary theory, literary criticism combines the theoretical/scientific and practical levels of literary analysis. Criticism as science follows and applies the general principles and methods of research from literary theory, but it also reveals an artistic aspect when the critic personalizes the discourse by his/her own

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opinions.

These theories, trends and schools represent the twentieth century and the contemporary scientific, objective, and methodological literary theory and criticism. The process of development of world literary theory and criticism has its origins in ancient period, whereas concerning the rise and development of the theoretical and critical discourse on literature in Britain, one should consider Renaissance and its subsequent periods until the rise of the formal approach to literature at the beginning of the twentieth century. All the way through the periods, including twentieth century, the field of literary theory and criticism reveals a threefold perspective of development. First, one may argue that the development of literary criticism is dependent on literary genres and movements that are dominant in different periods.

In most general terms, with focus on art and in this respect on literature as one of the arts, it is art criticism that provides the analysis, study, and evaluation of individual works of art, as well as the formulation of general principles

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for the examination of such works. M. H. Abrams, in his celebrated *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953), has pointed out that all critical theories, as different as they could be, concentrate around four constituents, or major elements, that represent "the total situation of a work of art". These are (1) the work, that is, the artist product, the thing made by the maker; (2) the artist, that is, the creator of the work; (3) the universe, that is, the nature which is imitated, and, if art is viewed as imitation, the materials of the real world or the world of ideas which become the substance of the work and out of which the work may be thought to take its subjects; and (4) the audience, that is, the addressee, to whom the work is addressed. According to Abrams, the concern with one of these four elements results in a special critical theory on art.

In the Western tradition, the first expounders of the critical theories on literature were the ancient scholars Aristotle, Plato, Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch, and Lucian

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among the Greeks; and Horace, Cicero, Seneca, Petronius, Quintilian, and Macrobius among the Romans. Among them all, paving the way for the future systemic studies on literature, the foremost and highly influential were Aristotle, Plato, and Horace.

*In ancient period, the literary criticism emerged when first verbal artworks of imaginative invention originally performed orally were encoded in written texts, which occurred in classical Greece in the sixth to fourth centuries BCE. The verbal works of art became literature, and this led to coming into being of literary criticism, says the critic Andrea Nightingale. Concerning the first critical voices raising questions about the value of literary texts, and apart from the fourth century BCE Athenian philosopher Plato and his pupil Aristotle, there were the Greek critics named *kritai* ('judges') emerging in the same fourth century BCE.*

In the Greek world, the fourth century

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Poetics by Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was the first important critical treatise on literature and for centuries to come has proved to be the most influential one, especially starting with Renaissance due to the revival of ancient classical tradition in that period. It is said that Aristotle also wrote a critical treatise on Homer's epic, which has not survived. In *Poetics*, applying a scientific method of analysis to literature, the ancient Greek philosopher discusses epic in relation to tragedy, as well as poetry, which Aristotle treats as the idealised representation of human action.

The main focus is on tragedy, and Aristotle discriminates a number of major elements, such as tragic character and related to its status *peripeteia* ('reversal of fortune'), *anagnorisis* ('recognition of an unknown person or fact'), and *hamartia* ('tragic mistake'). Aristotle also discusses the unity of action in the genre of tragedy, for which a

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unified and complete structure with a beginning, middle and end is required, and which is represented by literary mimesis ('imitation').

*The most important term in Aristotle's theory of literary imitation is catharsis ('purgation' or 'purification'). Unlike poetry, tragic literature is a serious representation or imitation of some human actions or experiences of universal, mythic relevance for human condition. The tragic projection of human life arouses a set of emotions - namely fear and pity for the tragic hero's experience consisting of a reversal of fortune, a fall into misery - leading the audience to the pleasurable and, at the same time, healthy experience of *catharsis*.*

Different from Aristotle is Plato (ca. 427-347 BCE), whose perhaps most difficult concept is 'idealism', naming the doctrine of an eternal realm of perpetual Forms that shape the material and changeable world of the humans.

Literature is viewed by Plato in relation to the physical, material, human realm of appearance, and, in discussing literature and writers, Plato introduces the concept of

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mimesis, which proved to be his major contribution to the rise of the discipline of literary criticism.