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(5th Semester)

ELECTIVE ENGLISH

Paper No. : ELENG-501

(**Literary Criticism**)

KEY ANSWERS FOR SHORT QUESTIONS

1. (a) Aristotle is the disciple of Plato. Following Plato, he calls the poet an 'imitator'. Like Plato, he believes that there is a 'natural pleasure in imitation', which is an inborn instinct in man.

Plato makes serious charges against poetry. According to him, while imitating, a poet is 'twice removed from reality', hence poetry and fine arts cannot contribute to the moral upliftment of citizens in society. Aristotle, on the other hand believes that 'imitation or picture of life are not unreal'. On the contrary, they reveal truths of a permanent or universal kind.

- (b) Quintilian's theory of style mainly concerns the art of speaking. He saw no difference between speaking well and writing well. He disagreed with those, who arguing that speaking or writing was purely a gift of nature. Like Horace, he asserts that style is the product of both nature and art. Following Aristotle and Horace he observes that style consists of two things—words and their

arrangement. Unless the speaker (or the writer) chooses the one carefully he cannot hope to succeed with the other. His first care should be the right choice of words, he has to pick up some and drop others. As for the arrangement of words, to convey its meaning to the best advantage, it should have clearness, ornamental grace, 'artistic structure', rhythmical case ...

How to achieve clearness and beauty or ornamental effect was Quintilian's question ...

This is done, he says, by placing words in the best possible order ...

- (c) Wordsworth while writing about the universal nature of poetry compares poetic works with science. According to him, both the poet and the scientist endeavour to seek pleasure in the search of knowledge. The knowledge of 'truth' the scientist realises is particular and personal. This truth comes to him slowly, and cannot be shared by mankind in general. But the poet sings for the whole of humanity. All human beings share his joys, the 'truth' uttered by the poet is of universal nature. The dry and dull facts of science are made full of life and substance with the help of poetry.
- (d) According to Wordsworth the true object of poetry "is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative : not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive with the heart of passion, truth which is its own testimony, which gives confidence and competence to the tribunal to which it appeals

and receives from the same tribunal; poetry is the image of man and nature”.

- (e) In the ‘Preface’ of 1853, Arnold alluded to the superiority of the grand style of the Greeks over the colourful style of the English. In the lectures ‘On Translating Homer’, he considered Americanism as a term signifying meanness of spirit. The grand style arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject, which indicates towards ‘sublimity’ in poetry ...

According to Arnold the three masters of grand style are Homer, Milton and Dante ...

- (f) The ‘personal estimate’ (i.e., the critic’s own likes and dislikes in his judgement of literature) as Arnold says, sways away the critic’s estimate of the work of art. It makes him attach more importance to it on poetry than in itself it really is. A real estimate of poetry should rise above personal predilections and prejudices.

The ‘historic estimate’ may again give more importance to the work as poetry than in itself it really is, or the critic may be led to overrate it in proportion to the pains he has taken to collect all the informations. The time which should be given to the author, to the judgement of the best in him, is spent on what is relatively less important. So the historic estimate is also misleading, despite the value attached to it by Dr. Johnson.
