

Aristotle's Theory of Imitation

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Abstract:

Aristotle's "Poetics" is an important landmark in the history of literary criticism. The art of Criticism, more or less originated with it. It is in reply to Plato's views a of poets and poetry as expressed in his works 'Dialogues' and 'Republic'. The concept of imitation , according to Aristotle, unites poetry and all other fine arts. Arts, however imitates not merely the appearance or the externals of this world. The significance to the terms 'imitation' This imitation is not more slavish copying. It is not more representation of the outward appearance. This imitation is of the deeper reality, or the very basic elements of human nature. It is in this sense that a poet communicates his emotions by 'imitation' or recreating life. It is a presentation of the inner feelings and moods and emotions of human nature. so poetry is an imitation of deep inner feelings and ideas of man.

Keywords - Imitation, Universal, Slavish, Recreating

Introduction:-

Aristotle's term 'imitation' plato was the frist to use the word in relation to poetry, but Aristotle in a specific sense breathed again. Imitation is no longer considered poetic imitation, but is considered an act of imaginative creation in which the poet drew his material from the world of phenomena, it is something new. In the opinion of Aristotle, the principle of imitaiton linking poetry with other arts and is the common basis of all the arts. It is different to the category of fine arts from the other arts. Although plato equates poetry with painting , Aristotle compares with the music. It is not a representation of slaves

in the appearance of things , but is becomes a representation of the passions and emotions of men who are imitated by the music. Aristotle and his theory expended the reach of imitation.

Thoery of Imitation :-

The term 'imitation' was not used for the first time by Aristotle. The term had already been used by Plato in his Republic. But Aristotle's use of the term is fraught with new dimensions. Plato's Republic, had no place for poets and poetry, which he called the mother of all lies. Yet, one should remember that Plato's rather severe indictment against poetry and poets was made in a particular context-

that of building an ideal state with disciplined citizens and statesmen. Poetry is nearer to music than to painting, as well. The linking of poetry and music is significant, as it suggests that poetry is something above mere mimicry. Poetry itself is of different kinds, differing from each other in their manner of 'imitation' or in their object of 'imitation'. The next aspects of the three-fold classification propounded by Aristotle, is that of the object of 'imitation'. The objects of poetic imitation are men in action'. These men may be either better than or lower than the average man in real life: "Men as they were or are or as they ought to be." Thus 'imitation' in poetry is clearly distinct from photographic presentation. It is a process involving the creative imagination and the intellectual faculty of the poet. Tragedy and epic deal with men better than in real life. Comedy and Satire imitate men worse than they are in real life. Aristotle does not give much importance to those that present men exactly as they are found in real life. In the connection it would be necessary to resolve the slight confusion that arises because of what Aristotle said elsewhere, namely that "Art imitates Nature". At first sight, this seems to be at variance with what he says in the poetics, that, "the objects of imitation are men in action". But the ambiguity is easily resolved. When Aristotle

talks of nature, he does not mean the visible created things of nature. He is referring to the process, not to the object, of imitation. The poet according to his theory, imitated the creative processes of nature; but his subject matter was man, and the object of poetic 'imitation' was human life in all its manifestation. He means the "creative force" the productive principle of the universe", when he is talking of Nature being imitated in art. Art seeks to reproduce an inward process, a physical energy working outwards; deeds, incidents, events, situation, being under it so far as these spring from an inward act of will or elicit activity of thought or feeling, as Butcher observes 'Men in action' includes their thought, feelings, will motive and emotions. Poetry is an imitation of human life. Action involves the inward life of man as well, not merely the outward events, which in any case, are the result of inward motives. Aristotle, in observing that poetry is concerned with men in action excludes from the sphere of poetry, the 'physical' world containing landscape and animals. Thus the whole universe is not considered a material for poetry. The poet is concerned with human being and their actions. But in this imitation is involved the effort of creative imagination. Aristotle gives the example in narrative, and now in act of imitation is that in which the whole story is

represented in the form of an action carried out by several persons, as in real life. It is, of course, is the dramatic mode of poetry. Abercrombie rightly remarks ;" Within the scope Aristotle has assigned at his subject, all poems maybe classified either as narrative or dramatic .

Thus poems which resemble each other in the object (imitation of human life) may differ in the manner of imitation, and the other way round. Sophocles as a tragic poet might be classed with Homer, but as a dramatic poet with Aristophanes."The poet could take "things as they ought to be". He could, in other words, deal with facts past or present, with established beliefs, or with ideal unrealized. In each instance, a process of transformation was implied. For all practical purposes, as Atkins remarks, Aristotle considered "imitation" to be nothing else but 're-creation'. It is this concept of 'creative imitation' that is the basic of the other concept of Aristotle, namely his conception of poetry as a revelation of the permanent and universal characteristics of human life and thought. Poetry is no mere transcript of life, but is also something more than pure illusion. 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 very much different from history. Poetry thus becomes more

philosophical than history. Poetry is concerned with the universal , not with the particular. Aristotle makes clear what he means by the terms 'universal'. It implies "how a certain type or nature will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity". As Butcher observes. Aristotle's theory encompasses for poetic imitation , the characteristic moral qualities, the permanent disposition of the mind, the passing emotions and feeling, which are all actions, and so the proper objects of imitation.

Conclusion :

Poetry is thus a creative process . It tells us what 'Man ought to be according to the law of probability and necessity'. The poet selects and reorders his material and in this way recreates reality. The purely irrational and accidental are eliminated and the attention is focused on the permanent or the universal In other words poetry is the purified form of reality which is the object of imitation poetry is concerned with the particular poetic truth, therefore is higher than Historical truth. Total conclude with the words which have become famous."Poetry us more philosophical than philosophy itself"

Thus Aristotle successful refutes the charge Plato that poetry ;' Is the mother of all lies'. Aristotle added a new dimension



and a definite meaning to the concept of imitation.

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