ARISTOTLE’S THEORY OF Imitation

SUMMARY OF THE LECTURE DELIVERED TO B.A(H) Eng. PART 3 STUDENTS GBM COLLEGE, GAYA, MU

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Who was Aristotle:

• Aristotle lived from 384-322 BC and was Plato’s disciple for several years. He was a highly learned scholar and had mastered a wide variety of subjects. Later on he built his own Academy at Lycium.

• In 342BC he was invited to Macerdomia where he became the tutor and mentor of Alexander the Great.

• Aristotle was a contemporary to Chanakya.
Aristotle’s *Poetics*:

- Aristotle’s *Poetics* is a reply to his own teacher Plato. It can be stated that Aristotle’s *Poetics* is the Bible of all literary critical arguments till date.

- It is the foundation of all the critical theories that are in form and practice. We must also understand that Aristotle had his limitations because his study was based on whatever was available at that time.
What is Criticism:

• In simple terms it is the judgement of creation.
• First comes creation then criticism. It includes a formal discussion of a work of art.
• Greek word ‘Kritikos’
• Latin word ‘Criticus’
• The formal discussion of the work of art should be unbiased and dispassionate. As Eliot has put it that criticism should elucidate of a work and correct the taste.

• Eg: films reviews- formulating an idea on whether to watch a movie or based on the review of others.
Plato’s Argument

• Aristotle refutes Plato’s theory on poetry.
• According to Plato all poets should have been banished from the Ideal State.
• Poetry according to Plato is unreal because it is twice removed from truth.
• Plato derives his theory of imitation from painting and he imposed it on poetry. For him the concept is the only reality. When the concept comes into a tangible form it is the first step away from truth.
• Then when the poet or the painter uses his medium to create the product by means of paint or words it is the 2\textsuperscript{nd} step to be removed from truth.
• Therefore it cannot be real because it is twice reasoned from the truth. It is an imitation of imitation.

• An example can be cited from a rose plant. You have the concept of the flower in your mind. Then you see a rose plant and finally you either paint the rose or write some poetic lines on it as Rossetti said ‘my love is like a red-red rose that newly spring in June’.

• While painting or writing you use your own creative power and produce something new. A New Form Takes Shape.

• Rudyard Kipling’s Jungle Book- one cannot say whether the source of inspiration was his own childhood or he developed upon some tale he had heard. But there is a perfect blending of humans and animals and the character of Mowgli is amazing. The animated version is more interesting. Now this is creativity. Something new has emerged.
Aristotle’s Answer:

• Aristotle on other hand states that in the process of imitation the poets puts his own imagination, his own creativity while imitating and finally produces a new product.

• Therefore, it is original and real. It cannot be stated as twice removed from truth. The originality in itself is now truth.

• Moving further with his argument Aristotle states that the poet puts his passion into it and the imitation becomes a higher reality. Unlike the painter the poet imitates through language, rhythm and harmony. The manner of poet too differs. Epic is narrative in manner and Drama constitutes action.

• While recreating reality the poet brings order out of chaos. He imitates as men ought to be according to the laws of probability & necessity.