

## Overview of the Critical concepts of Aristotle (Reference to Urdu and Punjabi)

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### **Abstract:**

Aristotle's *Poetics* is a foundational text in literary theory. It primarily focuses on tragedy, analyzing its elements and purpose. He defines tragedy as an imitation of a serious action, complete and of a certain magnitude, with language embellished by various artistic ornaments, presented through action, not narration, and evoking pity

and fear to achieve catharsis. Other dramatic forms like comedy and epic poetry are also discussed. The work's emphasis on plot, character, and thought as essential elements of drama has had a profound influence on literary criticism and playwriting. In this article, effort is made to analyze the key concepts of Aristotle, presented in his famous book *Poetics*.

**Key Words:** Literature, Aristotle, *Poetics*, Rhetoric, Tragedy, Catharsis, Drama, Plot, Character, Plato, Critical theory

In the world of science and literature, Aristotle is one of the geniuses who have had a profound impact on science and literature. He gave a coherent system of thought to all problems. No doubt, a study of Aristotle's life makes it clear that he had a scientific and logical mind. With this point of view, he studied literature. His "*Poetics*" is a clear proof of this, in which he examined ancient and contemporary literature and derived principles in the same way that scientists study material things and derive principles.

Aristotle was born in Macedonia 384 years before the birth of Jesus. His father was a doctor, on whose wish he got acquainted with the knowledge of medicine in his childhood. He got competence by remaining busy with his father in researching and experimenting on medicines. When he was eighteen years old, he went to Athens and became a student of Plato. This process continued for eight years. When his popularity reached to the king of that time, he appointed him as his son's tutor. According to Dr. Jameel Jalbi and Ali Abbas Jalalpuri, the age of Alexander, the son of King Philip of Macedonia, was thirteen years. Some researchers say, he was almost twelve years. Irrespective of what his exact age was, Alexander could not fully benefit from Aristotle due to his temperamental nature, but he had immense respect for Aristotle in his heart. When he succeeded to the imperial throne, he also honored his teacher.

Aristotle had a special passion for zoology. Due to this passion, he wrote "Kitab al-Haywan". He was fond of books and spent a lot of money to establish a rare library. In that library, valuable books on science and arts were available. According to Ali Abbas Jalalpuri's book "Ravayat-e-Falsfa" he also established a teaching school "Lyceum", in which, on the contrary to the Plato's Academy, emphasis was placed on teaching physical sciences, zoology, political science and theology. Basically, this institution was a scientific one, where along with natural science, students were also taught knowledge and literature. When Alexander the Greek left this world in 323 BC, after that, people openly opposed Aristotle. The famous orator Demosthenes started spewing venom against Aristotle in his speeches. As a result of which he was forced to leave Athens. The very next year in 322 BC, Aristotle's breath was broken, and he left a very rich academic and literary head as an inheritance for the time to come. According to Ali Abbas Jalal Puri, He compiled more or less five hundred magazines and books, including those dialogues in which the minutes of philosophy are written in common language. His books on various topics like Political Science, Ethics, Philosophy, literature and Medicine have raised the flag of his fame.

Aristotle is also called the first teacher because of his academic excellence and lofty intelligence. Aristotle is the first person who based criticism on the analytical study of literature and considered critical analysis to be objective. Aristotle is not convinced to argue that "what should literature be?" Rather, he argues that "what is literature?" Unlike Plato, he is a supporter of finding philosophical truth in literature rather than in beauty. And thus he begins the study of the aesthetic aspect of literature which was missing in a systematic form before. If seen carefully, it is known that Aristotle gave a coherent system of thought to all these problems which were pointed out by Plato in several places. Two works of Aristotle are very important in this regard. A "Poetics" whose original text is missing, even in modern age. In this work, he has made an excellent discussion on the purpose and nature of poetry, which opened new doors of thought for later critics. The second one is "Rhetoric" which is based on the principles of eloquence.

The literary and poetic tradition of the West was born from the heart of the first-mentioned work, while the latter work had a deep impact on the Arabic and Persian poetry tradition. The effect of this work is felt even today.

If seen in the context of the critical concepts of literature, the ideas of "Poetics" are important, but at the same time, they also give a new direction to the critical process. Despite the composition, mysterious terms and words obscure text of this book. Although, "Poetics" is a comprehensive overview of the art of poetry but it has many mistakes and shortcomings as well. One of the reasons for the shortcomings of "Poetics" may be that its original text is not available and The present "Poetics" has come down to us by the translations of other languages. The oldest non-Greek version is the Arabic translation by Abu Nasr, which Shams-ur-Rahman Farooqi believes to be a translation of a Syriac translation. In the opinion of Dr. Jameel Jalbi, it can be said with certainty that "Poetics" in its current form is Aristotle's own work or it is a summary of the original Aristotelian work. Jalbi writes in his book "Arastoo Say Eliot Tak":

“۱۳۹۸ء میں ”جیورجیولا“ نے عربی سے اس کا ترجمہ لاطینی زبان میں کیا لیکن یونانی زبان کا اصل متن پہلی بار ۱۵۰۸ء میں شائع ہوا۔ اس وقت ارسطو کی وفات کو تقریباً ایک ہزار آٹھ سو سال کا عرصہ گزر چکا تھا.....“ بوطیقا ”کا پہلا باقاعدہ ایڈیشن“ روبرٹیلی نے ۱۵۴۸ء میں مرتب و شائع کیا“ (1)

A profound study of "Poetics" shows that it is not a long book. It consists of total, twenty-six chapters. The first five chapters are devoted to the introduction of the topic. After these five chapters, the next fourteen chapters cover the discussion of tragedy. The next three chapters include a discussion of poetic language and The last four chapters contain Epic poetry and critics. If "Potics" is examined keenly, it is clear that Aristotle, who compiles the poetic laws, sees them flowing in human nature. The group, he wishes to study, he first explores its constituent properties. The characteristic common to all the constituents he recognizes as the reality or 'essence' of that thing and thus 'what exists'. 'Analyzes it', and does not discuss

'what it should be'. This approach implies analytical, scientific and inductive thinking.

Aristotle did not directly criticize Plato in the "Poetics", but presented a justification for poetry that undermines all the theories of the absence of poets in Plato's "Republica". Plato and the Greek mind of this period understood the arts as Imitation. Moreover, in Plato's view, poets are disturbed by the heavenly intuition and do not fit into any system due to their madness. They fail as moral teachers and as Scholars are also unable to give accurate knowledge because Plato believed that at the time of poetry they are not able to correctly estimate anything. Plato discussed the purpose of poetry and its nature, the universality of poetry and the problem of imitation in art, Aristotle reviewed the literature and poets with his logical and reasoning mind and then started literary criticism.

Aristotle gave a reasonable answer to the theory that literature is actually a kind of imitation, which cannot create a reality, but can only present a reflection of the fixed reality. He relates this art to human nature. And what distinguishes man from other creatures is that he is more imitative than all other creatures. On top of that, he has the instinct to be happy with what has come into being through this imitation. The things that we see in our daily life cause discomfort and pain, when their "imitation" is presented through art, we cannot live without enjoying this "imitation". The beauty and skill with which that "imitation" is presented will be equally gratifying. When an artist creates something, he ignores its specific aspects and captures the essence or eternal aspects of the object in art, which brings it closer to reality, not away from it. Expressing his views on this specific idea, Ali Abbas Jalal Puri writes in "Rawayat-e-Filsafa" as:

"ارسطو کے خیال میں ایک مصور کسی شے کے محسوس و مرئی پہلوؤں کی نقالی نہیں کرتا بلکہ اس مثل یا ہیئت یا فارم کی نقالی کرتا ہے جو اس شے کا اصل جوہر ہے۔ آرٹ فطرت میں انہی امثال کی تلاش کرتا ہے اور اشیاء میں جو آفاقی اور ازلی عنصر ہوتا ہے اس کی نقالی کرتا ہے۔" (2)

Now, it is obvious that imitating the universal and eternal element of things can bring you closer to the reality, but not far away. The poet searches for the subject from the world of events and creates a new thing from the events and facts and thus this process is a creative insight. He presents phenomena and events in such a way as they should be in the eyes of the artist, which reinforces the sense of beauty, which in Plato's opinion would fall under falsehood, but considers Aristotelian original creation. And thus, according to Aristotle, the act of imitation becomes synonymous with re-creation. If analyzed, it will be known that the poet selects a few incidents in his daily life and introduces them to an organized and disciplined entity that encompasses the permanent, universal features of life.

Aristotle undermined Plato's view that poetry exerts an immoral influence on the masses and suppresses the serious intellectual element by evoking the irrational and emotional side of human nature. Anarchic conditions arise in emotions and human character gradually degenerates. Aristotle responded to Plato's objection by equating "catharsis" with tragedy in the medical term. Keep in mind that Aristotle was the son of a physician and himself was fond of Greek medicine, that is why he used the medical term for this purpose.

If we look at Greek medicine, the human body is made up of four compounds. In Aristotle's opinion, tragedy can help the reader or viewer to change the balance of the mixture of those compounds. In this way, Aristotle took both physical and psychological functions from tragedy. Dr. Jameel Jalbi, a famous researcher of Urdu literature, has presented a similar idea in his book in relation to "catharsis". See the quote:

" یہ عمل انسان کے اندر اسی طرح ہوتا ہے جیسے یونانی طریقہ علاج میں منضج کے ذریعہ پہلے بیماری کو ابھارا جاتا ہے اور پھر مسہل کے ذریعہ اس کو توازن و اعتدال پہ لایا جاتا ہے" (3)

Aristotle has highlighted the importance of tragedy by defining the interaction of "catharsis" as physical and psychological. In this regard, Shams ur Rahman Farooqi pays tribute to Aristotle in the preface of his translation of Poetics:

"ارسطو کا کمال یہ ہے کہ اس نے علم طب سے ایک اصطلاح مستعار لے کر اس میں نفسیاتی علاج (Psychiatry)، تحلیل نفسی (Psychoanalysis) اور اخلاقیات تینوں اکٹھا کر دیے اور افلاطون کے اعتراض کا شافی جواب فراہم کر دیا۔" (4)

In fact, from the above discussion, Aristotle wants to make it clear that just as medical treatment has an effect on the human body, tragedy has the same effect on the human soul and creates an emotional balance that is not only joyful for the human being but also comforting peaceful as well. Under the same purpose, Aristotle divides poetry into different categories to find out its characteristics and laws. He has divided poetry into these categories.

1. Tragedy
2. Comedy
3. Epic
4. Lyrical Poetry

In poetics, three types have been discussed in detail but lyrical poetry has been discussed briefly. Among all types of genres, tragedy is one that Aristotle discusses in detail.

"المیہ ایک ایسے عمل کی نمائندگی ہے جو سنجیدہ، توجہ کے لائق بذاتِ خود مکمل اور ایک خاص حجم کا حامل ہو، اس کی زبان ہر طرح کے صنائع بدائع سے مزین ہوتی ہے جو ڈرامے کے مختلف حصوں میں ان کی مناسبت سے استعمال ہوتے ہیں۔ اس کی ہیئت بیانیہ نہیں بلکہ عملیہ ہوتی ہے اور یہ خوف اور درمندی کے ذریعے ان جذبات کی اصلاح اور مناسب تنقید کرتا ہے۔" (5)

After bringing the tragedy under discussion, Aristotle discusses the elements from which its composition takes place and the tragedy continues to record its effects on the viewer and the reader. Aristotle has mentioned six of them:

1. Plot 2. Character. 3. Content. 4. Language and Expression 5. Song and Music  
6. Scene or Stage

Dr. Sajjad Baqir Rizvi has divided these elements of the tragedy into objective imitation, means of imitation and style of imitation. He discusses the tragedy in his book "Magharbi Tanqeed kay Usool" as:

تین عناصر جن کا تعلق معروض تقلید سے ہے پلاٹ، کردار اور خیال ہیں۔ دو عناصر جن کا تعلق وسیلہ  
تقلید سے ہے، زبان، نغمگی و آہنگ ہیں۔ چھٹا عنصر منظر ہے جس کا تعلق طرزِ تقلید سے ہے (6)

Among all these elements, according to Aristotle, the most important is plot is in which there must be unity. All the events that must be linked with the plot, should be logically connected, every event that happens, is the effect of the previous event and the first event is the cause of the next event and thus all the events are inseparable from each other. In order to establish the element of unity, he further writes that it has a beginning, middle and end. It has a specific length, in which the action presented gradually progresses to its climax. During the discussion, Aristotle highlights the simple composition, single and double plots. In this context, he defines the meaning of these terms by discussing the Peripety, Discovery or Recognition, Development and Solution.

After a lengthy discussion of plot, he discusses character. According to Aristotle, the internal state that brings about an action is called character. He attributes certain moral qualities to the people who act. That is, if the purpose of the actions is good, then the character will be good, otherwise it will be considered bad. Abed Siddique in his book "Study of Western Criticism, from Plato to Eliot" has written that Aristotle's character Enumerates four basic requirements:

1. Character must be relatively good
2. Must be appropriate
3. Must be typical



According to Aristotle, the third attribute of tragedy is thought, which means to say what is appropriate and possible on a particular occasion. Thought will appear when a character tells something wrong or right or someone To express the general opinion. Dr. Syed Abdullah writes in this regard in "Isharat-e-Tanqeed":

فکر کا مطلب وہ سب کچھ کہنے کی قوت ہے جو کہا جا سکتا ہے، جو اس موقع کے لیے مناسب ہے۔ جب  
کردار کسی خاص بات یا عمومی حقیقت کو ثابت کرنے کی کوشش کرتے ہیں تو انہیں فکر سے کام لینا پڑتا  
ہے۔" (8)

After discussing the intellectual content, Aristotle expresses his views on language, choice of words, emotions and feelings. In this regard, he writes in the sixth chapter of "Poetics" that the fourth number among the elements of tragedy is word building. It means to express one's meaning through words. Its essence is the same in both poetry and prose. Unfamiliar words can be used under poetic necessity, because in his opinion, the embellishment of language is one of the sources that creates a special charm in it. The discussion in this regard is found in his other book "Rhetoric". He rarely discusses the other two components, music and the stage, and considers music to be superior to the stage, which he considers to be a happy and auspicious factor. Furthermore, he condemns the inclusion of songs unrelated to the action of the tragedy.

Regarding the stage, he believes that feelings of pity and fear can be created from the scenes presented on it, but it is better that these effects and events are created by proper organization. Because producing such effects through the stage is an inartistic process and would require expensive and abundant equipment.

After discussing Tragedy in detail, he also expresses his views on Epic. The description of the battle is shorter than that of the tragedy. According to Aristotle, the principles of tragedy can be applied to the plot of a drama with minor modifications as needed. Analyzing Aristotle's discussion of drama, it is clear that drama has less unity of action than tragedy. In epic, the narration is presented through words. While in tragedy, it takes place through actions. In the same way, the length of the story in epic is increased due to secondary events and more

supernatural forces can be added freely. In this regard, Aristotle says that an element in Tragedy is also the surprising performance of supernatural forces but its scope is more in martial arts because it is impossible to show such an impossible wonderful surprise in it. This process is not performed before our eyes. In a narrative poem, all this does not seem absurd. Similarly, there is a difference in the choice of material in epic and Tragedy. The poet of the battle has a wider field than the poet of the tragedy. Aristotle, while missing the merits of the battle and the tragedy, still gives the decision in favor of the tragedy. In this regard, see the words of Dr. Jameel Jalbi:

"ٹریجڈی میں وہ سب کچھ ہوتا ہے جو اپیک میں ہوتا ہے۔ اور اس میں اپیک کی بحر بھی استعمال ہو سکتی ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ وہ منظر اور موسیقی سے بھی اثر پیدا کرتی ہے جو لطف اندوزی کا ذریعہ ہے۔ جو چیز زیادہ مختصر ہوتی ہے وہ طویل چیز کے مقابلے میں زیادہ لطف اندوز ہوتی ہے۔" (9)

In view of the above discussion, we can confidently say that Aristotle is the first critic whose judgments were in accordance with the principles of art, who made a successful attempt to present art in a specific human process. He analyzed the literature intelligently above the moral and political biases. All the defects of "Poetics" are in their place, but the way in which Aristotle gave importance to the subject and content of the literary work of art. He is not only worthy but also admirable. He made poetry a source of universal concepts and an expression of truth and thus protected it from moral prejudices. Aristotle established an essential relationship between nature and art and proved that art is related to nature by defining the element of organic unity as essential for art. He presented the theory of "catharsis" and highlighted the concept that the demands and requirements of human nature are hidden in poetry. Because the desire to purify the human soul is an essential part of the human soul. Aristotle placed the basis of poetry on the subject and content, instead of form and words, under which we still understand that the essence of poetry is in the ideas that are expressed through poetry. The efforts that have been made indicate the critical views of Aristotle. Aristotle not only influenced the literature of his time with his critical ideas, but later critics could

not save themselves. The most influential critics after Aristotle, from Horace, Philip Sidney, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, Henry Jameson and Christopher Cardwell and T. S. Eliot, appear to have been influenced in one form or another by Aristotle's teachings. It will not be wrong to say that Aristotle is the "father of literary criticism" because even today, in one way or another, there is a need to use Aristotle's critical ideas to analyze the literature.

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