MEG - 05
Literary Criticism & Theory
ASSIGNMENT
2026-2027
Based on Blocks (1 – 8)

Max. Marks: 100

Answer all questions.

1. Discuss Aristotle's theory of tragedy with particular reference to his concepts of plot and catharsis. **20**

2. Examine T.S. Eliot's concepts of 'tradition' and the 'impersonal theory of poetry' as set out in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". **20**

3. Write short notes on the following: **4 × 5 = 20**
    a) Dhvani
    b) Vakrokti
    c) Intertextuality
    d) Patriarchy

4. What is deconstruction? Discuss with reference to Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". **20**

5. Discuss Elaine Showalter's concept of 'gynocriticism' and the phases she identifies in the tradition of women's writing. **20**

1. Discuss Aristotle’s theory of tragedy with particular reference to his concepts of plot and catharsis. 20

Answer

Aristotle’s theory of tragedy is mainly presented in the Poetics. He studies tragedy not as mere entertainment but as a serious artistic form with its own structure, purpose and emotional effect. For him, tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude. It is presented dramatically rather than simply narrated, and through pity and fear it brings about catharsis of such emotions. This definition connects the form of tragedy with its effect on the audience. Among the six elements Aristotle identifies - plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle - he gives the highest importance to plot.

Plot as the organising principle

Aristotle calls plot, or mythos, the soul of tragedy because tragedy is primarily an imitation of action. Characters matter greatly, but they become tragic through what they do, the choices they make and the sequence of events that follows. A strong tragedy therefore depends on a carefully organised action rather than on a collection of impressive speeches or personalities. The plot should form an organic whole: it must have a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning starts the action without necessarily depending on an earlier event; the middle grows naturally from what has come before and leads to what follows; and the end completes the action in a convincing way.

Unity of action is equally important. Aristotle does not mean that only one incident can occur. He means that all significant incidents should contribute to one complete action. If an episode can be removed without changing the total structure, it is not an essential part of the plot. The connection between events should follow probability or necessity. In other words, what happens should seem possible within the world of the play and should arise meaningfully from earlier events. This produces a sense that the tragic outcome is not accidental, even when chance appears at the surface.

Simple and complex plots