



ARISTOTLE'S SIX ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY

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ABSTRACT

Criticism is an important aspect of literature. The fourth century B.C. was an age of critical inquiry and analysis. Plato and Aristotle are two major philosophers and critics of this era. Both tried to express their views on literature. Plato and Aristotle had complete different views of poetry. But the major contribution of Aristotle as a critic is on the concept of Tragedy. Present Paper deals with Aristotle's concept of Tragedy.

Introduction:

Aristotle has written the book on criticism entitled as 'Poetics'. Aristotle was a Greek philosopher. He is one of the greatest philosophers of all time. He was a pupil of the philosopher Plato. He studied under Plato in Athens for 20 years. Aristotle taught Alexander, the great, for six years. So, he is remembered as the tutor of Alexander, the great. He is often called the 'Father of Logic'. Aristotle studied and wrote about every subject known to the Greeks. He wrote about physics, astronomy, politics, ethics, literature and aesthetics. He was one of the first writers of literary criticism.

Aristotle's 'Poetics' is chiefly concerned with tragedy. Aristotle regarded as the highest form. He has worked out the theory of tragedy with deep insight and comprehension. Aristotle says that the epic and tragedy are the outcome of the imitations of the noble actions and good men. And the satire and comedy are the outcome of the mean actions of bad men. He says that the tragedy is superior to all types of literature.

Tragedy: Its Characteristics:

Aristotle defines Tragedy as "The imitation of an action, serious, complete and of certain magnitude, in a language beautified in all different parts with different kinds of embellishments through action and not narration, and through scene of pity and fear bringing about the 'Catharsis' of these emotions".

This definition has **Two Parts**.

- A) **First Part:** The first part is concerned with tragedy as one of the imitative art, and points out its medium, objects, and manner of imitation.
- B) **Second Part:** The second part is concerned with the function and emotional effect of Tragedy.

By serious action Aristotle means a tale of suffering exciting pity and fear. He adds, the action should complete, whole and well-knit. It means there should be organic unity, or a natural sequence of events that cannot be disturbed. In short, there should be the well beginning, the middle and the end. The plot of a tragedy should have a certain magnitude as below:

- A) It should be of a reasonable length.
- B) It should not be too long or too short.
- C) It should be just in proportion.

The artistic ornament and form of action are two more characteristics of tragedy. By artistic ornament means use of rhythm, harmony and song and by form of action means in tragedy the tale is told with the help of living and moving characters. The speeches and actions make the tale.

Tragedy: Its constituent parts:

According to Aristotle, there are six formative or constituent parts of tragedy. They are Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song and Spectacle as shown in below table:

Plot	Character	Thought	Diction	Song	Spectacles
Theme	Man in Action	Feelings and Emotions	Arrangement of artistic language	Harmony and melody	audience

Thus, these elements of tragedy have importance in the order which they are mentioned above. The Plot or the arrangement of the incidents is the chief part of tragedy because; the tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and life. Aristotle gives more importance to Action than to Character. He adds without action there cannot be a tragedy, there may be



without Character, because, tragedy is written not merely to imitate men but to imitate men in action. So, Character is next only in importance to Plot. Then follows Thought or what a Character thinks or feels during his part played in the play. Thought is the intellectual element in a tragedy. It is expressed through the speech of a character. The next element of tragedy is Diction or Language in a tragedy.

Conclusion:

Thus, Aristotle has explained his views on tragedy and its five important elements. It is the Language which gives us the thoughts and feeling of various Dramatic Persons i.e. Characters. It is through speech that their character is revealed. Song or the Lyrical element is to be found in the choric parts of a tragedy. It is one of the sources of the pleasure of tragedy. The Spectacle or the scenic effects have more to do with stagecraft. Aristotle is of the view that the dramatist must depend for his effects on his own powers rather than on Spectacles.

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