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1971

Classical  
18th  
19th

Class. B.A Part III (Hons)  
English Paper with 21/11

Q. Write a note on the  
Three Unities with special  
reference to the views  
of Sidney and Dryden  
✓ OR ✓

Consider the measure of  
Dryden's greatness as a critic  
in his discussion of the  
Unities.

Ans. The rule of ~~neo-classical~~  
the Three Unities was  
created by the neo-  
classicists of the 18th  
century who gave the  
impression that it was  
Aristotle who set forth  
the rule in his poetic.  
It was the duty of  
every playwright to observe

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Three Unities: of Time, Place and above all Action.

Unity of Time meant that the duration of action or story of the drama was to be confined to one day or no more.

Unity of Place required that the scene or locality in which the incidents of drama are said to take place, must not be changed it must be the same throughout the ~~place~~ play.

Unity of Action meant that there should be no interweaving of stories and no subordinate incident or episodes.

The Greek and Roman playwrights followed these rules and in England the early attempts of the regular drama was fashioned with these canons.

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Dryden's Essay was written chiefly to vindicate the honour of our English writer from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them.

The first example of his vindication is to be found in Dryden's approach to the question of unity. He showed scant respect either for the Unity of Place or the Unity of Time.

In the Essay, Critics says:

The Unity of Time they comprehend in twenty-four hours, the compass of the natural day, or as near as can be contrived, and the reason of it is obvious to everyone — that the time of feigned action, or fable of the

play, should be proportioned as near as can be to the duration of the time in which it is represented; since therefore all plays are acted on the theatre in the space of time much within the compass of twenty-four hours.

Critics goes on to argue that the first Unity, which is that of time, has been well observed by the ancients in their plays.

By the unity of place the ~~the~~ ancients meant that the scene ought to be continued through the play, in the same place where as it was said in the beginning, for the stage on which it is represented being those far distant from one another.

As far as the third unity, namely the unity of Action, the ancient meant by it one great and complete action, to the carrying of which, all things in the play, even the very obstacles are to be sub-servient. For two actions equally laboured and driven on by the writer would destroy the unity of the poem.

Even Johnson has observed in his Discoveries that there may be many actions in the play but they must all be sub-servient to the great one, which the English playwrights express in the name of under plots.

To be continued further

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