

Q 1. Consider Matthew Arnold as a great literary critic.

Introduction :-

Matthew Arnold, the greatest name among the Victorian critics, is a very ^{curious, blending} merits and ^{of strength and weakness of great} demerits. A modern literary critic, T.S. Eliot calls Arnold a propagandist, a salesman, a clever advertiser rather than a great critic. According to Eliot, "Arnold's flights are short flights or circular flights", another modern critic P.R. Leavis, too, accuses Arnold of "high pamphleteering". Another critic Herbert Paul goes to the extent of saying that Arnold didn't merely criticise books, he taught others to criticise books. In my opinion, Arnold is a praise-worthy critic because his criticism is more thought provoking than that of any other critics.

Arnold's Achievements :-

Arnold is the most imposing figure in Victorian criticism. After him the cries for years are, "Arnold has said so." A popular literary critic ^{R.A.} ~~and~~ Scott James says about Arnold, "For half a century Arnold's position in this century was comparable with that of the venerable Greek in respect of the wide influence Arnold exercised, the mark he impressed upon criticism and the blind faith with which he was trusted by his votaries".

In some spheres in criticism; Arnold is superior to Aristotle. He was a limited critic of his own choice. He repudiated

The idea that the Critic should be an abstract law giver. It is seen that Aristotle shows us the Critic in relation to the public. Aristotle dissects a work of art. Arnold dissects a critic. The one gives us the principles by which they govern the making of a poem and the other principles by which the best poems should be selected and made known. Arnold discussed and defined more clearly than any other writer before him. The relation of the Critic of literature to the Society in which he lives here in lies his distinctive contribution to the study of Critic principles. Arnold's Criticism. The most insistent and profession of Non-Conformists" is of great historical importance. According to George Watson, "Arnold is the great gain sayer Criticism. The most insistent and profession of Non-Conformists". His Essay in Criticism first series, Essay in Criticism Second Series, Culture and Anarchy and literature and Dogma are his famous literary works".

Arnold's touch-stone method of criticism:-

Arnold introduces a very practical device to detect the order of excellent in a given poem. "He calls it touch-stone method of criticism". Arnold further says about it. "It is an infallible touchstone method for detecting the presence or absence of high quality in all other poetry which we may ^{praise} plays beside them". There are some sublime passages of the highest order and they are Arnolds touch-stones which we find in his critical literary masterpiece of criticism The Study of poetry. According to Arnold Homer, Dante

Virgil, Sophocles among the ancients and Goethe, John Milton and Shakespeare among the moderns are the best models. The ancients poets are much safer than the modern models. Milton is better than Shakespeare because of the grand style. Chaucer, Gray, Wordsworth and Keats are according to Arnold, partial classics but Spenser, Donne, Dryden, Pope, Shelley and Byron are no poetical classics at all.

His Comparative method of Criticism :-

Arnold's comparative method of Criticism is closely related with his Touch-Stone method. It is his view that a great critic can't confine himself to anyone literature. He recommends that he should be conversant with many literatures and besides his own literature. He must be a master of at least one more literature. He further says that the function of a critic is to know and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world. Such type of function can never be the monopoly of anyone nation of language. Arnold opines that the comparative method of Criticism must be adopted. An English critic must have a good knowledge of the French, German, Italian and Spanish literature. He says about the English Critic of literature, "The English Critic of literature must dwell much on foreign thought, and with particular heed on any part of it, which, while significant and fruitful in itself is for any reason specially likely to escape him. George Saintsbury says paying high tributes to Arnold, "Arnold was the very

first critic to urge the importance, the necessity of the Comparative criticism of different literatures. He was its first preacher with us, and he was one of its most accomplished practitioners".

Arnold's limitation as a critic: -

Arnold is not quite free from some very obvious short-comings and limitations. We find various contradictions, fallacies and inconsistencies. His definition of poetry is very limited when he says that great poetry must have high seriousness he rules out much of lyrical and comic poetry from the range of excellence. He says that Chaucer is not a great classic poet because his poetry hasn't high seriousness. Arnold's theory of disinterestedness is fallacious. His touch stone method can't be accepted without reservation. It is his view that we must judge a poem by the total impression.

Conclusion: -

Arnold was a preceptivist and an actual craftsman. He had not the robustness of Johnson and the supreme critical reason of Coleridge. His range was far wider than Lamb's and his scholarship and his delicacy were superior to those of Hazlitt.