

LONGINUS: SOURCES OF SUBLIMITY

INTRODUCTION: Longinus is one of the greatest Greek critics. His position is only next to Aristotle. His 'On the Sublime' is an immortal critical document of great worth and significance. It deals with the principle of sublimity in the world of writing. Here Longinus discusses the meaning, the nature and the sources of sublime. He distinguishes the true sublime from the false sublime. He advises how to overcome the vices of sublime. His suggestions are of permanent and paramount value.

WHAT IS SUBLIMITY: Sublimity is a certain loftiness, distinction and consummation of excellence in language, expression and composition. It is the echo of a great soul. It raises style above the ordinary. Some persons are of the view that sublimity is a gift of nature. They think that it has nothing to do with art. But one should not forget that nature needs the help of art to control its wild impulses. In fact, both nature and art contribute to sublimity in literature. According to Longinus, 'Art is perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature hits the mark when she contains art hidden within her'.

Longinus identifies pitfalls that one should avoid in the quest for sublimity:

- 1) Bombastic Words: - Use of pompous Language removes the true beauty of work. It is as great an evil as swellings of the body. It is drier than dropsy. Use of grand words for trivial object will be ridiculous.
- 2) Childishness: - If a writer or poet uses immature and childish themes, his work will arise false sublime.
- 3) Lack of Passion: - The false sublime results when there is a cheap display of passion and when the passion is not justified by the occasion.
- 4) Defect of Style: - The Use of bombastic words and the far- fetched ideas make the style defective.

THE SOURCES OF THE SUBLIME: According to Longinus there are five principal sources of the sublime. These sources are -