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Indian Literature : A Reflection of Life, Culture and Society

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ABSTRACT

Literature is a form of human expression for the overall human emotions and ideas and thoughts which ranging from poetry to prose, drama to plays. The literature of any nation is the image that reflects the sincere ideas, so we can call it the mirror of life which reflects writers' thought about life and the real situation of the world around. According to Salman Rushdie's view about literature it is the tool that we can know everything in the society's life with real interpretation.

"Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart."

Literature is the mirror of the society, but this statement does not mean that the writer is the photographer of the society and its purpose is to portray the social distortions, shortcomings, defects, superstitions and beliefs accurately. The writer has been called Brahma. He also creates a new society. It also satirizes the vulnerabilities of the present society and also tells what kind of society interests him. Despite being of literary age and society, it also presents a sketch of what can be the form of the most beautiful society by honouring the epoch-making values of life. In this way, because of upholding the eternal values of life, the writer is a national but universal.

Keywords : Human Expression, Hope, Social Distortions, Society, Satire

Introduction

Literature is the reflection of mind; the mirror of life study of both war and peace external and internal. It reflects the nature of both nature and man. The broad definition incorporation everything that has been written down in some form or another i.e. all the written manifestations of a culture. The broad explanation is difficult as it does not really enable communication about the topic. Furthermore, this concept neglects the fact that in many cultures in the past and for a number of original people today, literature has not been arrested in written media but has been passed down in a long oral tradition of myth, storytelling, ritual speeches, etc.,

Sanskrit theatre was considered as the first performance of Indian theatre; the commencement of this theatre was at second century BC. It illustrated the aristocratic and religious Indian enthusiasm, the origin of it as the consequence of religious custom. So; the Sanskrit theatre continued popular till the 17th century. Wide extending themes are dealt with in Indian writing in English. In Indian literature, there is reflection of Indian culture and their tradition. The Indian contact of contemporary Literature had an important relation with the social and political history of the mid- nineteenth century. The first half of the nineteenth century saw gradual improvement of English education in India.

The works of modern Indian writers reflected the Indianite English, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor and Amitav Ghosh. After Independence, India was faced with a number of crises including social, political and economic. Contemporary Indian English writers were conscious about their own culture and traditions. While some of the authors pen in English, most of them continue to write regional languages. Most of the modern writers have been successful enough to maintain the unique flavor of their region in their works. Indian writers in English have made the significant influence to the novel. The rich and the wonderful legacy of India was the strength of the Indian English novel is predominantly.

The first novel written in Bengali was Alaler Gharer Dalal's Spolit Sort of a Rich Family, which was published in 1858. It also gives nice picture of its changing situation in the post colonial era.

Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayana: the founding fathers of Indian English literature were mainly concerned with the downtrodden of the society, Indian middle-class life and the expression of the traditional and cultural ethos of India. The Indian authors have touched each and every aspect of Indian life. They have portrayed the beautiful picture of India through their writings and because of it the culture, tradition and values of our country

got such a high recognition in the world context. Poets of modern times did a great job of filling consciousness in the hearts of the depressed and desperate Indians.

Literature is the mere imitation of life. There is high correlation between literature and real life. Life gives the means through which literature develops in an artistic form. Plato was the first one to give the thought of literature in relation to the real world. Although, he referred mainly to poetry but what he has said about poetry can be easily applied to whole literature.

Good literature doesn't explain, because that means telling the reader. Good literature shows. It illustrates. It makes something resonate with a reader. A good writer observes people. The writer conveys characters that are life-like in essence. It doesn't matter if the setting is an alternate universe, and the species is Klingon. Something about the character makes the reader remember the human experience.

Literature can explain the lives of others through example. However, we don't read literature to solve puzzles about people, but to meet them in conflictual circumstances to see what they do. A plot can be a puzzle with a character as part of the solution, but that isn't the same as explaining people. Instead, people are there, making us accept the story as believable because we have either seen something like this before, or we accept that we could see it because people behave like what we are reading.

Literature might help you understand certain aspects of human behaviour, but you would do better in sitting on a bench and watching people walk by. Literature always acted as a mirror to society. Ancient authors had portrayed the picture of an ancient India through their writings. For e.g. Munshi Premchandra showed the actual Indian society and the conditions that existed that time. The time when India was almost completely a rural place. He showed the true pain and agony of the farmer and the poor. In *Kafan*, the poor farmer family had no money to cremate the body of a dead woman.

As with the passage of time our Indian society developed, we see a gradual development in our culture and literature also. One of the important themes of our great Indian authors is the portrayal of Indian common man and woman. The portrayal of the image of women by Indian authors is not uniform. It differs from time to time, from novel to novel, and writer to writer. Overall three aspects of women's have been depicted by the authors. Firstly, of that time when they were exploited and forced to obey the traditions and cultures of their society. The best example of it we can see in the writings of RabindraNath Tagore. He wrote broadly on women. Some of the famous female protagonists of his stories are Bimla, Binodini, Chandalika, Shyama etc. secondly, when their identity is transforming, they began to raise their voice for their rights. Like in the poems of Kamla Das, we always see a rebellion against male-dominated society.

*My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role. Don't play
pretending games.*

Through her works, she advocated for the equal rights and liberty for women. Lastly through the writings of Kiran Desai, JhumpaLehrai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee we see a new avatar of a new woman who is confident and makes her own decisions. As rightly said by Shashi Deshpande :

"Women without men, I realized then, are totally different creatures."

Just as the artist paints a picture of the country and the nation with the touch of a brush, so a literary worker tries to portray a general subject in the language of literature. That literature is the real reflection of the individual, family, society and the state. They write valuable words on national values, ethics, culture-subculture, decency, service, loyalty, justice-injustice, brotherhood, empathy, compassion, etc.

The composer not only tries to solve all the problems including innate intellect, rhythmic sentences, creativity, choice of ideas and words, ability to apply, presentation of information technology, ability to choose sentences, analogies. A writer may have moral character and moral decay in his personal life but his literature awakens humanity and sense of humanity.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) peeps into the lives of villagers of Manomajra, a border village. Jugga and Noora's love story and Jugga's sacrifice to get Noora to cross the border in a train to Pakistan is depicted well. The train is the ghost of violence and partition atrocities hounded on human beings.

That is why it is said that a writer can be abandoned but his literature cannot be abandoned. Through literature, art, beauty, craftsmanship, beautiful ideas are expressed. Literary people are worshipers of beauty. There are no special rules or customs in literature. There is no standard of education.

Salman Rushdie makes use of magic realism in his novel *Midnight's Children* (1981). It explores the struggle of children born on the stroke of midnight on 14th August 1947.

Anita Rau Badami's *Can you Hear the Night Bird's Call* (2007) reflects the anxiety and fear of being a woman during Partition and being a Sikh during Hindu-Sikh riots after Indira Gandhi's Assassination in 1984.

Chance brings lives together in unexpected ways and breaks them apart with equal randomness." (90)

It also explores the problems of the Canadian diaspora and increasing demands of a separate state for Sikhs and Operation Blue Star etc. Gulzar's *Two* (2019) is deeply rooted in the places. It narrates the partition of people into two who were one before the division of the subcontinent. The characters travelling in a Kafila spread over the places and their stories are weaved beautifully from various historical socio-political events in India from partition to the Kargil war.

VikramSeth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) was on the high water marks of the Indian Literary scene of the early nineties. The design of *A Suitable Boy* is charmingly simple. Seth's *A Suitable Boy* seems to suggest an important trend in fiction today, and this is not necessarily confined to Indian-English genre. This is the tendency of the inflated blurb and monstrous media hype making advance claims before actual evaluation. As RukunAdvani has rightly noted:

“The media’s publicity clouds darken the qualitative worth of a book beneath breath taking façade of quantification crores of rupees, millions of words, hundreds of pages: ergo, the book is bound to be as those statistics”(1993: 172).

Shashi Tharoor is another great Indian novelist. His *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is one of the greatest achievements of Indian English fiction. A biting commentary on the Political history of Modern India, the novel has been regarded as a masterpiece of post-modernism. Tharoor’s novel may not be really greater truly Indian, but it has made the point that it wanted to make. It has also displayed a mistrust of interpreting the past and has countered the crushing burden of tradition and history. According to Gunter Grass, “Literature must refresh memory,” (26) and Tharoor’s novel ably does it.

Democracy, Ganapathi, is perhaps the most arrogant of all forms of government, because only democrats presume to represent an entire people: monarchs and oligarchs have no such pretensions. But democracies that turn authoritarian go a step beyond arrogance; they claim to represent a people subjugating themselves. India was now the laboratory of this strange political experiment. Our people would be the first in the world to vote on their own subjugation.

The White Tiger Is a novel by Indian author Aravind Adiga. It was published in 2008 and won the 40th Booker Prize the same year. The novel provides a darkly humorous perspective of India’s class struggle in a globalized world as told through a retrospective narration from Balram Halwai, a village boy. The novel examines issues of the Hindu religion, caste, loyalty, corruption and poverty in India.

In a nutshell, literature is the brain of humanity. Just as in the individual, the brain preserves the record of his previous sensations, of his experience, and of the acquired knowledge, and it is in the light of this record that he interprets every fresh sensation and experience.; so the race at large has a record of its past in literature and it is in the light record alone that its present condition and circumstances can be understood. The message of the senses is indistinct and valueless to the individual without the cooperation of the brain; that life of the race would be degraded to a mere animal “existence without the accumulated stores of previous experience which literature places at its disposal.”

A literary man is as much, a product of his society as his art is the product of his own reaction to life. Even the greatest of artists is sometimes a conscious, sometimes an unconscious exponent of his time spirit. The time spirit is the total outcome, the quintessential accretion of all the political, social, religious, and scientific changes of a particular age. The historical aspect of literature, therefore, minor or unimportant thought, it may be for aesthetic purpose, cannot be totally ignored. According to Hudson, “A nation’s life has its moods of exultation and depression; its epochs a strong faith erroneous idealism, now of doubt, struggle and disillusion, now of unbelief and flippant disregard for the sanctities of existence; and while the manner of expression will vary greatly with the individuality of each writer, the dominant spirit of the hour, whatever they may be, will directly or indirectly reveal itself in his work.”

Thus literature reflects the time spirit. No, writer can escape influence of his age. Every man according to Goethe’s statement, is the citizen of his age as well as his country. Renan remarked: “One belongs to one’s century and race, even when one reacts against one’s century and race.” Thus, literature always expresses the thoughts and sentiments of human mind, which are closely connected with and conditioned by the age. The influence of the age on human mind is due to the fact that the later is constantly influenced by the spirit of the age and reacts to it vividly and vigorously. The reflection of the age depends on the quality of the mind in which it is reflected. If a work of literature is to be judged by the quality of this reflection, it is apparent that it depends on the quality and nature of the reflecting mind. A sensitive mind will be able to render back the slightest shades and nuances and its creation are characterized by delicacy, subtlety and depth.

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