

Literature and society:

Most of the critics have written about the relation between literature and society. According to Aristotle it is an imitation of life. In other words, the writers express in their writings what they see in life. Not only an imitation, it is a criticism of life. The word 'art for art's sake' has become outdated as literature must have some social values. No doubt the moral or message in literature is always hidden and indirect. There is a deep rooted alliance between literature and society as it reflects all levels of ages.

The relation between literature and society is highly complex and it is very difficult to determine which element of society has exerted. In each period in the history of a nation, a certain social situation is brought into elements of that social situation which selects those elements of social situation which have managed to produce an impact on him, and weaves them into a pattern which is compatible with his own stands of art and his view of human life.

All of us have our moods, fates and fancies, likes and dislikes and the society is a stage on which this drama of life is played. This stage has given birth to noble souls like Jesus Christ and the evil characters like Judas. Moreover, such modals in literature highlight the plus and the minus points. They do not hail from a one country but they belong to every nation. As Derek Walcott says: "I have no nation, but imagination".

It is correctly said that writers are the surgeons of the society and they have a weapon of this alchemy to turn ^{paralela} gross ^{waste of impure matter} into twenty four carat pure gold by ^{disease} pox ^{smallpox} making the face of the society with the powder and cream of imagination. Literature takes men and women to a new world where flowers never fade, love and their sweet hearts are never separated even in the times of adverse suffering and misery. It is the duty of literature to feed people on 'aerial kisses' and lollipops of rosy dreams and let them relax by having a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Literature not only beautifies society but keeps its hand on the pulse of the ailing by making them aware about every aspect of life. It teaches the women.

"Sigh no more women, sigh no more
Men were deceivers ever
One foot in ocean, one on shore,
One thing constant never."

It tells people that this money minded society is full of false promises and oaths. It is the duty of literature to make the society a heaven on earth with good men and women and innocent children.

No writer can escape the influence and impact of his age, as every literary man is the citizen and the child of his country. However, it is not only the age which influences the writer; contrary to it, the writers also influence the age in which they breathe. Who can forget the influence of Karl Marx, who through his philosophy changed the face of the twentieth century by propagating the concept of socialism? On the other hand writers like Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, and Dr. Johnson do not belong to one age but all ages. E.g. The stories of Chekov reveal the true picture of the society by criticising it ironically. They seem to be good *in appearance but are not good in reality*. Likewise many writers almost *write about some area or section of the society*. Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Blake, Shelley, Byron and Keats paint the society which is *full of bad values and principles*. William Blake, in his one of the popular poem 'London' describes how every person has some problem. He finds in *the eyes of the poor*;

"in every cry of every man
In every voice; in every ban."

Shelley in "Song to the Men of England" describes the painful plight of the poor working class. He also advises them to fight for their rights.

"Men of England why thou plough
For those who keep you low"

Wordsworth in the poem "The World is too Much with us" ironically attacks on the so called man who has turned his face away from the beauty of nature. From morning to evening they run after money and worldly glories. In this mad race they have become dead to the morals

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and values of life. The poet considers it a decline in the society. There have been such writers who remain devoid from the calls and claims of the people. They are rejected as no writers. After all writers are about the people and the society is made of them. The writers also stand by the people in their bad times. When the people were confused in the Victorian times, Tennyson wrote the poems consoling and healing their problems. 'In Memoriam' he proved a balm for the hopeless and helpless people. It gave the message of hope that keeps on changing.

"o' yet we trust that god shall fall."

The novels of Thomas Hardy tell us that the man is a mere puppet in the hands of destiny. He takes in the bias of the people. The society put pure persons like Tess to suffer. Moreover, human life is a tragedy. In his own words, Happiness is but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain". The novels and plays of Galsworthy deal with a very vital questions. It is that there is no justice in the world. There are two laws. One is for the rich and the other is for the poor. In 'Justice' Galsworthy tries to convince that the innocent persons do not get any justice. .

As outlined above literature has been an integral part of the society. The writers find, observe and rectify what is worth and willing. Moreover it is said that man is a social animal. Only the beasts or the mad can live without it. However the witters afford to live without it by ignoring its values. As we know Styam Shivam Sundram traits are the part and parcel of every society and all these values have a great concern to literature?

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Various Genres of Literature:

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Literature is sweet slice of life flavoured with many juicy elements since literature is the child of life and holds a mirror to it. As life is full of rainbow colour, so is literature. It presents life through various genres like, poetry, drama, novel, short story, biography, autobiography, essay and journalism. All these are different windows through which a man of literature sees different facts of life. The writer of all times has given their impressions through these genres. In simple given terms literature can be defined as a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form or content. Literature is pallet in which different colours of these genres are mingled together to create an effect.

a portable platform

Poetry, is one of such colour which has its' origin in the distant past. Poetry has been the epicentre of all the genres as it exceeds all. Poetry is a lyrical expression of the seething and surging thoughts in the heart. It supplies a beautiful garb and puts them in a literary capsule with rhyme and rhythm, suitable diction and imagery. Who can forget the lines?

"Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney sweepers come to dust."

Or

"If winter comes
Can spring be far behind"?

Another genre of literature is drama. Drama is a literary form designed for the theatre, where actors take role of characters; perform the indicated action and good characters, situations, dashes and conflicts, dance and music. A good drama is bound to create good (crispy) dialogues by making the spell on the audience.

Then there is novel which is also known as mini theatre. It is an extended narrative, where reality and romance shake hands altogether. The novelist takes a slice and serves it with the help of a plot, setting, several situations, and characters. The novel is not played on the stage but on the screen of the mind of the readers. A good novel is very engaging, who can forget Tess, The Wuthering Heights, Pride and Prejudice and Animal Farm?

Like the novel, a short story is also an important genre of literature. It is an age of hustle and hurry. People have no time to read poetry, long poems, long plays or novels. They want short cuts. They want to read a short story during a journey and finish it. Chekov, Russian writer, is known as the master of short stories. On other hand Maupassant, French, is also considered to be one of the wonderful short story writer. The Diamond Necklace, Grief, Three Sundays, The Castaway are some of the famous short stories. In a short story the focus of the writer is on the course and the outcome of events. The central incident is selected as much as possible of the totality of the protagonist's life and details are devised to carry maximum effect and significance.

Prose being another important genre of literature is also called other harmony. A good piece of prose is far better than a prosaic poetry. It is a sustained use of a language as we ordinary speak it, as distinguished from the language patterned into recurrent units of meter, which we call verse. Writers like Gardiner, Robert Lynd, and Charles Lamb wrote prose with a high order.

Apart from these genres there is travelogue, biography and essay. All of them dish out lot of information to the readers on various men and manners, customs and traditions of a country and the living style of the people. Then there are nursery rhymes such as Twinkle, twinkle little Star or Jack and Jill went up the hill. All are called genres of literature. They provide lot of mental, physical; and moral food to the readers. Thus like looks like a happy bride with the help of these genres of literature. We can end up with these lines, " keep trying always. It is only from the valley that the mountains seam high."

What is Literature?

"Literature is not a substitute for Philosophy, Theology or Religion. As its function is not intellectual, it cannot be defined in intellect"
T.S Eliot

Literature is one of the branches like Philosophy, Science or Religion and all of them try to understand life in totality. Goethe calls it "the humanization of world". Another famous critic, Emerson is of the view that literature is a record of best thoughts. It is an artistic way to sew life through the needle of imagination and visualization by expressing the emotions of love, fear and anger. It has its own achievements as well as limitations. Above all, it has its marked field, Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist, says in his one of the most popular play 'Hamlet' "life is a riddle which cannot be understood". There are many things in heaven and earth which are not even known to philosophy or religion.

Literature is an autobiography of life which is fresh, everlasting and evergreen because it gives strange but beautiful turns and twists to it. It invites men and women who are sick of complexities of life by giving a cosy lap in the times of suffering and misery. It is rightly said that literature is a child of life as it is that slice which is served in the form of lollipops to suck the drops of romance, beauty and enchantment. There is a permanent alliance between literature and the life of woe and weal, stress and strain, laughter and tears. It is a capsule which is filled with sweet and bitter memories, experiences and recollections. Literature always embraces life because it presents photogenic face of human beings and the society.

In simple given terms, it can be classified into two categories being 'literature of power' and 'literature of knowledge.' The literature of power takes us to the heights of Hemingway's novel "The Old Man and the Sea" where the story shows the human courage, bravery and strength and even the contrary times. The story is of a human being who wishes to achieve something extraordinary in life. Apposite to

it, the essays of Bacon are fine examples of literature of knowledge aiming at to teach us what life is made of and how should we live it?

It gives us a varnished look and painted appearance of life by accepting or presenting it like a gay bride. Literature takes facts from life and transforms and transmutes into a lovely colour to give an added attraction to the hard reality of life. A man of literature takes us away from fever and fret to the charmed magic casements of songs of Skylark and the Nightingale.

Literature tries to know and understand the riddles of life. In fact, the man has been battling the basic questions of life for centuries. The scientists, the philosophers, the saints and the writers play their own role in understanding life. Science deals with the factual but is silent about the actual of human life whereas literature deals with the actual. It has its own world, value, truth but nothing can be said about it finally or mathematically.

Shelley, a leading romantic poet calls writers, 'the histories of the heart'. They write, they see and they observe. Matthew Arnold considers literature, 'criticism of life'. The writers give in their writing what they receive in life. It can also be called the expression of personality. Most of the romantic poets like Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats think that literature is a powerful flow of our feelings. But T.S. Eliot rejects this concept. In brief literature is too vast to be defined. More over to define it, is to confine it.

A Great literature can be studied in every age and in every country because it has a universal appeal. Works like Hamlet does not deal with a single man rather they try to sort out the problems like "to be or not to be" or all that glitters is not gold. Literature is a willing suspension of disbelief where the reader does not read for the possibilities but for the notion that it is not impossible.