

Literature and Society: A Reflection

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1. Introduction

In whatever situation a man living in a society, there is some kind of thought flowing over him. Although man is at the center of the social entity, he receives ideological lessons from childhood. After becoming wise, this sociable human follows some particular ideological system or goes ahead to represent it on the stage. Food, clothing and shelter are the means of material survival in any society, while different schools of thought form the ideological meeting of people. While thinking about literature and society, a bridge is created between literature and society. On this bridge, a social man is sometimes seen as zealous towards the nation through nationalist literature, sometimes as a Marxist who fights for his economic rights, and sometimes as a historian who proves historical principles through historical facts! Ultimately, man appears to be a social animal who gains scientific vision through the conflict between science and religion.

Sociological review of literature

Since ancient times literature has been influenced by two factors namely religion and philosophy. So the society continued to move under the cover of the ideology of these two principles. But due to the scientific and technological progress of the modern world, the society is succeeding in achieving a scientific vision somewhere. Hence the motto of today's society is 'Let's move towards scientific approach'. Therefore, literature is now communicating between religion and science on the basis of conscience. Modern society is seen to be abandoning fundamentalism and accepting humanism. Leaving the basis of narrow ideological attitude and using rationalism. Human is becoming an ideological social animal asking questions without being heard or read by anyone. All this is happening through literature.

The impact of literature on the society is projected in the beginning, and then gradually its impact is realized in the functional way. That is why, literature is called the mirror of society. Literary people live in the society; they are familiar with the customs and beliefs of the society. The social, cultural and political conditions of their time deeply affect them. The arrogance of the rich and the suffering and struggle of the poor constantly touch their heart. Events such as current of thought, war, power, revolution in their time shake them. Further, the influence of all these things can be seen in their literature.

Literature is the greatest resource of our contemporary times. For example, Ramayana and Mahabharata portray the culture and civilization of the *Aryas* of that time. Plays of

Kalidasa and Shakespeare reflect the society of their times. During the medieval period, the Crusades depict the struggle between the power of religion and the power of the state. Literature exerts its influence on all aspects of society. But at the same time, the communication of different ideological thought streams continues in the society. This dialogue is going on non - stop by preserving the historical material based on geographical conditions of time, place etc.

Literature has had a unique importance in India since ancient times. After the independence of the country, the change in the society remained alive in the mirror of literature, though dimly. A radical change took place in our society through literature. Therefore, the relationship between literature and society is already unbreakable. The real need for literature is the young generations who have missed the opportunity of education due to the social conditions and financial troubles. Through literature one can easily face any situation. From the literature, the ideologies of the intellectual and prudent people in the society of that time were of unique importance. In every war zone and country some people are born with a certain intelligence, foundation and art or sensibility. Such people have a special power to know and understand the trends in nature around them. In that case, the personality of these people takes the form of literature. Therefore literature is the repository of scholars. Literature is an important part of our society. So literature and society can never be separated.

Literature works to project society as a whole. Constitution and governance are important in the development of society, but literature is equally important. Literary writing is promoted through newspapers, books, columns, speeches, dialogues etc. Literature is a social institution. Socially constructed language is its medium. Social, physical, cultural, religious and historical elements of society are depicted through literature. There is no objection to calling the linguistic expression of the above elements as literature. All these illustrations are done by notation of words. Although a person who follows the ideology of these words is moving in an independent stream, there are many challenges of vocabulary under the stream of thought.

Sociological Definition of Literature

It is important to understand the origin of the literary word before the flow of literary words. The English word 'literature' is commonly used synonymously in Marathi with '*sahitya*' and '*wangmay*'. The word 'literature' is derived from the original Latin word '*Littera*'. The term *Littera* is ancient and means letter or letters of the alphabet. In the course of time, many writers, critics, literary historians, etc. gave the

term literature various meanings and shades by considering the comprehensive and limited meaning of literature. Through them, the meaning of the term expanded and became multi - faceted and broad, which is written, i. e. all written texts, is literature. "¹

Before the term literature did not exist, in the seventeenth century any written composition was known as poetry or rhetoric. Even in the Spanish Golden Age, works of various kinds were called poems, whether they were written as poetry, prose, or dramatic compositions.

The term literature gradually became commonplace and gained acceptance after the development of modern English literature.

Louis de Bonald writes while defining literature critically, "Literature is an expression of society as speech is the expression of man. "² Therefore, just like a person is an element living in a society, literature is also constantly influencing the people living in the society through different streams of thought.

Critic Prof. Keshav Shirwadkar while defining literature says, "Literature is the report of changes in social conditions. Similarly, the world of literature is not a pleasant island cut off from the world. A complete separation of art and time is not possible. Also it is not possible to present such a simple, straightforward equation. " The results of the literature are more than expected. Although its design seems plain and simple, it has been given a special place in the society. The sociality of literature is essentially inseparably linked with the overall elements of society.

There is no doubt in my mind that while evaluating literature in the language of Prof. G. B. Sardar, literary criteria should be applied first. Once a literary work comes into existence, it becomes an integral part of social life, so it is orderly to treat it independently. Therefore, whether it is rebellious literature, religious literature or nationalist literature, they complement the society because people of all castes, religions, languages, etc. live in the society.

In fact, what is printed has become a way of defining literature as literature. Therefore, many ideological literatures have been produced today. Edwin Greenlaw says about cultural literature, "When trying to understand a period or a culture, it is not limited to fine prose and printed or manuscript documents. Our work is likely to contribute to cultural history. We should look at our work keeping that in mind. "³

Literature not only creates social awareness or ideological meeting but at the same time it is constantly striving to make the society sustainable. Therefore, it is orderly to take the elements (thinkers) who contribute through literature to a place of honor in the society.

When "artists begin to feel a hopeless conflict between their goals and the goals of society, artists become staunch opponents of society and their hope of changing society is completely destroyed. At that time, the principle of 'art for art's sake' is emphasized. "⁴ As the scope of this ideological

framework expands, Marxism, Capitalism and Nationalism along with many other literary currents are making their impact on the society.

Literature should be subjective. Of course, Artists argued that it automatically benefits the society. Hence, the innovation 'art for art or art for life' was born. "Literature is subjective, not ideological. According to him, the activity of creating literature is self - interested and self - pleasing. Literature production, on the other hand, is considered to be personal but social once produced. Shankuntala in *Shakuntalam* and Hamlet in *Hamlet* are examples in this regard. According to the artists, Shankuntala is not a representation of an ordinary woman, nor is Hamlet an ordinary citizen of Denmark. From this, the person depicted in the literature is not representative of the general society. Artists believe that it is exceptional, while biographers believe that these characters are related to their art and are influenced by the surrounding circumstances. "⁵ Although this argument is ideological, both sides gain ideological status in the society and thus help the development of the society.

Reflections on Society through Nationalist Literary Writings

The modern world was created through nationalist literature. In the 20th century, many nations became independent due to the force of nationalism. The legacy of this nationalist literature can be seen through the literature of Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesque Serra respectively through the social contract, *Candide's* true spirit of law, *Encyclopaedia* etc. Their nationalist literature did the historical work of integrating the society into a nation.

Reflections on society through Marxist literature

So far the society was not ready to deal with the elements of religion and philosophy. A society capable of literary interpretation was unable to break out of this ideological cycle. But Marxist literature played an important role in breaking out the closed society. In the 20th century, although the capitalist ideology was responsible for the material progress of the nation, the thought of Karl Marx and the book *Communist Manifesto* made the middle class society aware of its economic rights. Today more than one crore members are working in the International Labor Organization. "Marxist critics do not stop at studying the relationship between literature and society, but their concepts of how this relationship should be in the existing society and in the future classless society are very clear. They adopt an evaluative and critical approach based on extra - literary political and moral criteria. "⁶ Karl Marx presented the two concepts of 'Haves and Have nots' and made a historical arrangement of economic principles. Thus, the society of the time was able to make itself intellectually independent through this ideological literature.

Reflection of society through historical literature

Historical facts are a constant communication in the society. But what kind of communication the historian allows the society to hear is important. If these facts are biased and presented to the society in a fragmented way, it does not take long for misunderstanding. Therefore, it becomes very necessary to write historical literature responsibly. History

was created after religion and philosophy was established in the world. Today, historical literature covers all the disciplines of social sciences. Yesterday's incident becomes today's history. Historical biographies, heritage, religion, philosophy, culture, tradition etc. factors provide real strength to the society through literature.

Thinking about society through scientific literature

Francis Bacon said, "History is the branch that makes man wise." ⁷ Just as science is capable of providing material happiness to man, so history is capable of providing intellectual conscience to man. The scientific revolution has shaken the world today. In the medieval period, if anyone has done the work of challenging the established state power and religious authority by combining religion and science, science and history, it is Francis Bacon. Bacon worked to unite the society in Europe with his scientific literature. Full credit goes to Bacon for creating a scientific vision in the society through literature.

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