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A Study on Indian Literature Reflecting Life

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Abstract:

The understanding of life and literature appears to be quiet simple, but if you start looking at it closely then a large number of windows open up to give you questions, to give you issues to consider. For instance, what does life mean in the context of literature and vice a versa? Life has many faces like; human life, social life, political life, life in education, professional life, and personal life. Then we also have ideological life, cultural life, religious life, spiritual life, and life in villages, life in cities, life of a student, life of a girl student, life of a boy student, life in the hostel and other large areas of life. We always confront this type of life. I always feel what I am to do with this life that I am confronting. Literature is a composition in words or phenomena that happens in the mind of the author. The mind starts taking pictures from life and those pictures are reconstructed by the writer on the page by pen or typed in the computer. Then some script is written and that script is suppose to tell us who did it. This is what happens in life. There are certain writers who have given more to aesthetics, more to the pleasure aspect then the purpose aspect. They want to paint their experience through words and extract pleasure from it. Literature has to choose what it has to show. The write is free to show what he/she wants to share with the reader. We have literature in the form of books, in the form of oral kind of practice. We have some tellers of tales; in fact the word tale means it is told by somebody as in folk literatures. These literatures are basically meant to make the readers and viewers relaxed. Imagination is the most important element of literature. Through imagination one goes away from day to day humdrum routine of life. For this reason some people take literature lightly. In small villages I could see many homes without the literary knowledge. A certain pandit or swami delivers his speeches or some holy *katha* with some loose papers in his hand to the villagers. This is also a kind of literature.

Key words: *Literature, Social Life, Political Life, Education, Tales*

Literature, a Reflection of Life:

Literature, no doubt is the reflection of life but imagination is all that makes a lot of difference. Literature is very useful for life. Without literature life becomes boring and monotonous. Literature is not only about relaxation but it is also about facing our reality. There is a question that comes to my mind, whether we live in life of imagination or life of reality? The answer I find is imagination and realities are two faces of life and literature. In fact imagination is also reality and it too comes from life. The next question is, whether literature changes along with life? Yes, if life changes then literature also changes and sometimes life learns lessons from literature and changes accordingly. If this thing happens then we have done our job and we two are interconnected. For instance, there were large number of illiterate Indian poets in 14th c, 15th c, 16th c, 17th c, 18th c, 19th c, they never went to school, they never did any formal training in writing, and these people had imbibed the taste for literature through the oral practice that happened in that time. People sang songs. Those songs had words and these illiterate poets they would imbibe the matter, they would start composing poems directly and in 15th c and later we had *saint poets* in India and these saint poets were singing songs, they could not write because there was no formal schooling, therefore they merely sing, so just imagine, human beings composed literature at that time which were given to them because songs were available, they must have heard songs from others and composed their own songs and what would their songs tell? These songs popularized the idea that god is one, god has made human beings and we ourselves divide our society into separate categories and religions and this is all wrong, so becomes the critic of different religions and starts saying god created us as human beings. This must had been the issue of that point of time. *Kabir* had noticed that in field of world there is no distinction between one and another. In fact *Kabir* looked at women sympathetically and said, what is the difference between a man and a woman? And he would say it in the form of songs. The point that *Kabir* is raising at that time is religious tolerance, peace and harmony. He is in fact talking about love like, getting together, sitting together, discussing together same things and taking good decisions. Such was the case with 15th and 16th c saints. So life was of that kind, there was no education, people were mostly living in villages. The language of *Kabir* tells us that he must had been to Punjab, Kashmir, Bihar or even to south because his language is from all these places in the form of words. He is also a great wanderer and he had a message to give. *Kabir* liked that his songs to be understood by people. So literature became a means at that time to make people to think about one another and live harmoniously. Literature has played a vital role in getting the society into unity, gave a sense of bonding, social bonding, human bonding, cultural bonding, and this is the role that literature play. We see this role of literature in the songs of *Meera*, *Kabir*, *Lal Dev*, a Kashmiri poet, *Sur Das*, *Tulsi Das* and a large number of southern poets like *Basaveshwara*, *Allamaprabhu*, *Akkamahadevi* and others.

There are people who also wrote epics. *Tulsi Das* himself wrote a famous epic called “*RAMCHARITA MANAS*”, and he in this work has talked about a dynasty, a king being

replaced by another king, from Dashrath to Ram to Bharat and again to Ram. This entire period is covered by the epic. There are a large number of tales woven into the fabric of the epic and thus it became a reflection of life in India in that matter of time.

To speak about Indian novel, the novel starts describing what the young man left, he went away from village, he left his home, he left his parents, he left his friends and he came to the city. When he left those people who looked after him they might in the mean time grow old, they might require help, when he came to the city he struck relationship with new people, he would also love them, maybe he also marry them in the town, when he has children he completely forgets about the village he left. This is the kind of problem occurs always and novels talk about these. In 19th c this novel became a major literary form; the second thing that I would like to mention is that 19th c is not the period that the people would sing songs, singing and enjoying or enjoyed singing. Therefore in hindi and urdu writing there is a literary form called *Gazal*, that particular form also showed the problems of that time. *Gazal* was basically to talk about beauty, about love, about harmony, with reference to sweetness. But in the 19th c people started to raise questions in *gazals*, particularly the *gazals* of Galib always raised question like:

“Dil e naadan tujhe hua kya hai? Aakhir is dard ki dawa kya hai?”

Here he is calling his heart helpless, he is asking his own mind, to his heart what has happened to you. And later he says, *“Aakhir is dard ki dawa kya hai?”*, means there is a pain inside and he wants some remedy for his pain. Why is he thinking of pain, why is he thinking of medicine? This was not at all in *gazals* and this person is raising questions into the spirit and nature of *gazal*. We can feel that something in 19th c compelled these writers to express in the form of question. In the concept of life and literature Galib is expressing his pain and this is the 19th c reality that Galib faced. Literature in India during 20th c is talking about patriotism, talking about anti imperialism, talking about economic policy, talking about British regime, talking about freedom, talking about swaraj, talking about reform in India, modernity, and these are the words which we never heard in the context of literature. These words became common in the 20th c literature of India. Again these words are coming from life. The writers started talking about a violent protest against British rule. An Indian poet writing in 20th c in English he talks about native problems. Literature became so large in the 20th c because it is an outcome from the sense of resistance, the sense of revolt; they spoke against the evils and ills of the Indian society. They opposed violently imperialism. Literature during imperialism became so effective that writers were arrested and sent to jail, on one side its very inhuman and cruel and the other side it is very heroic for the writer who is writing. Sometimes it is a threat to great writers like Subramanya Bharati which made him to run away from his own place and he ran away to Pondicherry which was under the control of French. This is the significance of the writing. Society and life have given empowerment to the writer to express his ideas. The point I am making here is, literature is not merely about entertainment, about sweetness, it is

also an important social factor which affects life, gives us the urge to take up things and seriously analyse them.

The Indian novel struck its roots in 19th c and became a dominant form in 20th c. The major fiction writers were in 20th c and took the literary world by storm. Rabindranath Tagore is one example writing in 19th c and flowered into 20th c. The writer Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, who wrote '*Devadas*', '*Charitraheen*', and is second only to Tagore. Then we have in India Munsii Premchand, a great writer, a household name till today and we have large number of writers in all languages in India during 20th c. Novel actually played a very important role in the Indian context. It offered descriptions of different parts of India to a readership which would then think India as a country. That political role novel used to play. It does not mean that other literary forms became completely secondary, there were even good poems and some elements of novel were adopted in tales also. A great poetess Subhadra Kumari Chauhan's poem is an historical account of Jhansi Rani's chivalry of 1857 revolt. She wrote "*Khub ladi mardani waha to Jhansi wali Rani thi...*" So novel and poetry came together in this sense. There are some poets in hindi, for instance, Maithili Sharan Gupt who writes epics in hindi and these epics are of different sort than the epics earlier and they tell stories. He wrote an epic called '*Saket*'. It is a kind of replica of Ayodhya in that poem. It goes into 9-10 cantos and it's a big book with some 400 pages. This epic raises two important questions about Ram looking after Ayodhya and Urmila, who is always deprived of her husband Laxmana (9th canto). He is able to mix the story of Ramayana into some kind of verse as well as description and speaks about unattended areas of womanhood. Even drama was also quiet popular during 20th c of India, one of the modern hindi writers Bharatendu Harishchandra took to drama writing. But the problem with drama writing is, if in India we take political message through drama to the stage then it becomes such a threat that a state will come down heavily on it. Therefore the state would never allow the drama to prosper in India. In the national movement it really became a matter of fire and explodes you at any time. So drama was not given a kind of a chance but yes, there were dramatists in India and nationalist drama was written in hindi, Jaishankar Prasad is one example and he used a very fine trick in his dramas, he did not take up the contemporary social themes. He went back to history and he started talking about old kings and queens. His famous play is '*Chandragupt*'. Drama was there but it was not encouraged by the regime.

This kind of process is common to literature elsewhere in the world and there was a time for instance, in English literature when there was no drama, there were only religious pieces till the 16th c in England. And there was suddenly drama in the later half part of the 16th c, a great crop of writers yielded the writings with their wonderful imagination and invention, and the peak of these writers was Shakespeare. All his life, he has been writing dramas; his dramas were written not to be read but to be staged. He never took care to publish his plays. People must have compiled his plays later. Shakespeare was a political writer, there are even books

published with title “POLITICAL SHAKESPEARE”. It means that literature plays its part very well through capturing the ethos and the mood of the masses and the upper classes at a particular time and holds a mirror up to life.

Conclusion:

I would conclude my article with the words that the literature produced by Shakespeare lead other great writers to write THE PARADISE LOST, a great crop of novel came out in 18th c England unlike in India it was seen only during 19th c and that educated the masses in culture, in morality, later focused on economic exploitation in the novels of Charles Dickens. In brief, literature and life cannot be separated, the problems of life taken up in literature in a very serious form and literary works and writers read with great interest and keenness it is also read by the society which learns a large number of lessons from the literature.

