

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP- SOCIETY, CULTURE AND LITERATURE



Arts

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at examining the nature and stages of development of society, culture and literature and interpersonal relationship between them. Society and societal halo is the origin of the consciousness of writers. It also tries to find out how society and culture affects human life in general and gender role in particular which is the core of literary works of contemporary age. The classics can transcend the place and time but not society and culture. It's always directed towards social and cultural impressions and conceptions.

Society, culture and literature are intricately woven, but compatible to human life. The contribution of literature in the progress of society and culture is substantial. The focal point of literature is human being and it has an affinity with the human life. They are formed of prevalent human ethics, morality, milieu, and race and in turn they shape the life of human being. All of them are interdependent, disregard of even one, leads to splintered human life.

Society:

Human being is at the core of the society. As family structure is formed to stabilize individual's life, similarly to steady these family structures, society is shaped. The aim of society is not only the security of human beings but also shaping their attitude, values and sentiments towards each other. According to a dictionary of sociology:

Society is the total world of human beings who cannot exist independently of each other and who in their interactions develop edifices of culture, is also referred to as human society ("society").

Society is a group of people, sharing same geographical or social territory, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Society is also about companionship, association, common beliefs, interests which bring individuals together. A social relationship is considered one of the pillars of society and this relationship is based on various components like family, religion, gender roles, region, beliefs, traditions etc. The origin of society was noted when people started to come together for the first time for different reasons.

Society plays a crucial role in shaping the life of human being. As a social being man's physical, psychological, personal and social development is impossible without society and society's origin, existence and constancy is not viable without human beings. A man is born in society, and since then he is connected with it for his development and socialisation and thus all his fundamental needs of food, education, clothes and social development is done in family, neighbourhood, surroundings, and medias which are an important component of society. Socialisation teaches him the norms of behaviour and attitude to live in respective society. A socio-cultural environment develops his skills and abilities, as he or his behaviour is always scrutinised in the same context. Society is dependent on man and its existence, prosperity and deterioration is always seen in the context of man. In society people, are mutually related with each other and make rules, norms and conditions for society.

Culture:

Culture is a tradition of the mankind's prosperity and welfare. The word culture "stems from the root idea of 'kula' which is the bedrock of the home and the family"(Parmeswaran) It may also

mean behaviour, thought pattern, way of interaction, environment among a group or groups of people in the society.

The word 'culture' today, has many connotations, emerged during particular moments of its long history. Anthropologist Edward B. Taylor offered a broad definition, stating that culture is, "That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (47). Culture can be described as the collective sum total of knowledge, implicit and explicit patterns of behaviours, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religions, notions of time, roles, a group's distinctive skills, traditions, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions which are continued and socially conveyed by communication and simulated from one generation to the next by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group.

Culture is formed through behaviour and thought, adopted by people and handed over from generation to generation. It is universal, and change in society brings change in culture, similarly culture can also transform society. Culture is manmade and is based on several values made by man to maintain social system. These values are considered yardsticks to human behaviour. Apart from values, ideologies, music, literature, arts, science and religion are component of culture too. Culture plays an important role in deciding behavioural pattern in every sphere of human life. It also decides the roles of people in society.

Literature:

Human being and human life are at the core of literature, which represents several dimensions of complex, large and profound human life, hence, it is difficult to define the term literature in restricted words. In broad sense, literature means anything that is written. But in a serious sense "It is a writing which expresses thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards life" (Rees 2). Some penmen views literature as a record of human life. According to Henry Hudson:

Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in their life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which they have most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language (10).

Literature is a confluence of beauty and truth along with triple union of feelings, thought and imagination. Literature is created through the expression of feeling and imagination in sweet words. Human life being its major force, life and literature co-exist. This relationship is asserted by Mathew Arnold when he synthesised literature and life. Literature is a beautiful, artistic, wonderful, linguistic expression of the truth of life.

Relationship between Society and Culture:

Society is evolved out of the anthropoid group, and an addition of culture has incessantly been changing it. They are perceived as two sides of one coin. Culture is the matter of tradition, and study of any society and its aspects should be completed in context of its culture which gives it distinctiveness. Macionis John in *Society & the Basics* observes:

The terms culture and society are obviously similar, but their precise meanings differ. Culture is shared way of life, or social heritage; Society refers to people interacting within a limit territory guided by their culture. Neither society nor culture could exist without the other (35).

There are stages of development of progressive human society from savagery to civilization. These stages contributed for change in many matters, one of which is family and role of its members, especially man and woman. The eras of evolution of human beings as stated by Darwin from savagery, barbarism, to civilization display their particular family structures in respective societies and emergence of patriarchal system. An American anthropologist Engels writes:

The overthrow of mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude. She became the slave to his lust and a mere instrument for the production of the children (49).

With disintegration of the early primitive communism the position of woman degraded more and more. When women were deprived of their rights, man successfully enjoyed and retained his own rights. As the process of interaction among human being goes on, certain necessary functions are performed for the continuing existence of social institutions like family, marital life etc. socio-cultural change is slow but not impossible. Mutual adaption of new ideas about roles of man and woman can change the society and culture.

Relationship between Literature and Society.

Horace, Goethe, Tolstoy and many others think that literature and Society are inseparable, hence, literature is not only a fiction but an exposé of and a torchbearer to society. An artist creates a real society in which he adds his own colours and produces a work of art. But these colours are influenced by contemporary societal aspects.

A man is born in society and thrives in society, and tires to be one with social structure. A penman is also one of the beings from society who is fostered by trends, rules and regulations of society and tries to put forward the same before society from his own perspective. Hence, the life in society becomes the core idea of his work of art. Any work of art is based on life around him and thus it is called the mirror to life. Hudson says_

Literature is, then, a socially purposive discursive activity (sign practicing and organizing) that we suppose to serve some specific role within the totality of different discursive practices composing what we call society (and how society understands itself (11).

The development of human activities induces change in the society and culture. Therefore, there is a change in role of human beings as he is the part of the society. As a result literature which in turn produced by a man in society has to change or it can bring a change in society. No human society seems to be without art. The relation of literature as an art can be traced in prehistoric times where we can find expression of art in visual terms in the caves or in the dwelling of a caveman. Hence, most of the societies with writing may be said to have something that we

could call literature. Literature, philosophy, law etc. are the components of all the socio-cultural environments of all the epochs.

Language is considered social medium for interaction, and thus associated with social aspects. An artist lives in society and so his word cannot be out of societal consciousness. It is said that a man is a social animal he cannot be seen excluding his social context. Every art is born through a life of a man and every art is a true mirror to the human sensibility and agony. R. J. Rees writes: '.....the central themes of all literature – life, love and death.....'(7) and 'Literature holds a mirror up to nature'(5). A literature should be oriented to society, people, life and purpose, then only it can contribute to upliftment of a man and society. A writer can contribute through his literature to change the society and the world. Scholars like Dante, Voltaire, Rousseau's works have made people conscious and paved a way towards a revolution. Reading of *La Miserable* by Victor Hugo can acquaint us with the French Revolution and the life of the period similarly *Akhyana* of Premannad will introduce us to the life of contemporary Gujarati People, society and their outlook. In the time of the Mahabharata, the battle was prominent and so the literature of the time was about war, in the *Gandhiyugnon-violence* movement and love for nation, removal of untouchability, *Gandhism* were protuberant in literature. In English literature, poems of Mathew Arnold and Tennyson reflect the conflict between religion and science which was very conspicuous in the Victorian society. Geoffrey Chaucer's *Prologue to Canterbury Tales* called a faithful mirror to fourteenth century. Looking to the deep influence of society and culture on literature, Mathew Arnold Says that "Poet and Age react on each other" (25). A writer is not of one age but he is of all ages. He is beyond time and place. Hudson says:

A great writer is not an isolated fact. He has his affiliation with present and the past: and through these affiliations he leads us inevitably to his contemporaries and predecessors and thus at length to a sense of a national literature as developing organism having a continuous life of its own yet passing in the course of its evolution through many varying phases (13).

Human consciousness moves with innumerable social variances and it can transform human experiences in a work of art to perpetuate them. In the beginning, characters in literature belong to aristocratic family as the characters of Shakespeare's works were kings, princes or generals, but with the passing of time, people from the lower strata of the society substituted the aristocratic characters in literary works. And thus women and women predicament entered into literature.

Society and societal halo is the origin of the consciousness of the literary man. Without society an artist cannot thrive, because the source of his creativity is based on the interrelationship among human beings in society. The relationship between an artist and society is compatible. Since the dawn of civilization, literature has been instrumental in propagating and perpetuating human thoughts. Besides celebrating the paradigms of aesthetic excellence and sublimity of poetic vision, it also mirror the aesthetics of human dignity and human autonomy prevailing in society and culture. During 20th century, literature deviated from artistic chauvinism and emerged as a potent tool to represent the hegemonic practices of power-oriented mechanism directed to subdue the fate of those who were the citizen of 'areas of darkness'.

Relationship between Culture and Literature

In a comprehensive sense, human beings are considered distinct species in comparison to animals as they have a different order of intelligence. A Human being is considered social animal and therefore civilized. Man is known by society in which he lives, in isolation he is none the better than an animal. Art is a cultural

activity and thus literature is one of the valuable heritages of man. Society is an eminent component of culture and literature is the product of man living in the society hence they are closely related to each other. A caveman passing through various stages of the evolution and development finally entered from the con-natural state into cultural. Hence came the existence of the Roman culture, Greek culture etc.

Culture and human life are always seen together, which in turn attached with the social traditions. Whatever efforts are contributed towards the holistic development of the human being are included in the culture. Literature is not only one of the elements of culture, it is also considered a living history of culture of the place. The development of the human culture is more or less done through the development of literature as in the center of literature we have a human being, and his life.

Culture means the precious heritage and tradition of a human race. A literary artist evaluates these traditions and produces work of art in the backdrop of the culture and makes us aware of them. Indian culture and Greek culture are the ancient primum, which are reflected in the epitome of Indian literature like the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* or in the works of re-

nowned authors Kalidas, Bhavbhuti, Baan, Maagh, Bharavi etc. represents the great Indian Culture, whereas western culture mirrored in the works of Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw or in Samuel Butler. In Greek literature, Homer's *Iliad* acquaints us with the great Greek culture. The works of Shakespeare, Tagore, Kalidasa presents the culture and civilization. A man can enlighten his path through literature.

All the forms of literature are oriented to society and culture, but they are reflected more in the novel form. It is considered a realistic picture of life. Some of the novels are have become global and immortal and termed as 'Chronicle Novels', which reflect individual as well as social and cultural thoughts and behaviour. It means that the classics can transcend the place and time but not society and culture. It's always directed towards social and cultural impressions and conceptions. Even though, the novels including the subject of universal human sentiments and nature are restricted to the respective nation and its cherished vistas to the social process.

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