

## Literature as a Vehicle for Social Regeneration

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### Abstract

*It is generally agreed that literature is a reflection of the society. It reflects the society, its good Values and ills. It also reflects the codes and conventions followed by the society in all fields of human activities. Literature also projects the plus and minus points in characterizing the values which people emulate. That is why literature is also called a mirror to the society.*

*Literature often presents a picture of what people think, say and do in society. In literature, we find stories designed to portray human life, action and behaviour through some characters who convey certain message for the purpose of education, information and entertainment. It is impossible to find a work of literature that excludes the attitudes, morale and values of society, since no writer can be brought up completely unexposed to the world around him.*

*Thus, literature is not only a reflection of the society, it also serves as a corrective mirror in which the members of the society can look at themselves and find the need for positive transformation. In fact, there exists a close relationship between literature and society.*

**Key-Words:** Literature, Human-life, Values, Reflection, Mirror, Vehicle.

### Paper

Much can be said about the importance of literature. According to Judith Leaser, an English professor at the American University of Sarjah, <sup>1</sup>Literature is thought provoking, it allows to raise questions and gives us a deeper understanding of the issues and situations

Leaser emphasises literature's role in helping the readers grasp the meaning of human conflict. She further says. "In an era of modern media, such as television and movies people are misled into thinking that every question or problem has its quick answer or solution. However, literature confirms the real complexity of human experience". This proves that literature has an important role in influencing human thought. Again, Sophie Chamas says, <sup>2</sup>Literature provides an insight into the minds of human beings; into the mind of the author and the mind of the character it is generally believed that a disregard for literature is the main component of ignorance and constituents like stereotypes, pre-conceived judgements and motions about different people and cultures. Literature teaches us to not base on appearances, because literature openly acknowledges the unreliable nature of appearances. The impact of new technology on youth is unquestionable. We are at an age of 'Videocracy' rather than illiteracy. In this age of Videocracy and today's fast speed life style, people, particularly young students have a thirst for a convenient method of seeking information or sanctify the existing social order, which may be called the social control theory.

The idea of literature reflects the idea that society is as old as Plato's conception of literature reflecting society in 'The Republic'. <sup>3</sup>systematic application of it for the first time in 1800, Madame de Stealer offered a social and historical interpretation of literature of several nations. Apparently the theory of reflection

arouse out of the spirit of nationalism throughout Europe and from the environmentalism of 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers. In general, the idea is the manifestation of a change in man's perspective, crystalized notion during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in philosophies of history, in the theory of Evolution and in the sociological conceptions of societies and their changing character through ages.

The essential function of the theory of reflection was to explain a social and historical order in individual terms, <sup>3</sup> the qualities and greatness of literature. In effect, it emphasised the social and cultural determinism.

Literature has had a major impact on the development of society. It has shaped civilizations, changed political systems and exposed injustice. Literature gives as a detailed preview of human experiences. The foundation of every state is the education of its youth. And this is possible mostly through literature. Therefore, the youth should be properly educated with regard to not only their own time and culture but that of the other countries as well.

The literature is a reflection of the society and it reflects the society in turn, in turn is reflected by it. Its good values and ills are also reflected in its corrective function, literature mirrors. The ills of the society, in a view to making the society realize its mistakes and make amends. It also projects the virtues and good values in the society for people to emulate. In fact, literature is an imitation of human action, often presents a picture of what people think, say and do in society. We human & action through some characters who, by their words, action and reaction, convey certain messages for the purpose of education, information and entertainment. It is impossible to find a work of literature that excludes the attitudes, morale and values of the

society, since no writer has been brought up completely unexposed to the world around him. What writers of literature do is to transport the real life events in their society into fiction and present it to the society as a mirror with which people can look at themselves and make amends where necessary. Thus, literature is not only a reflection of the society but also serves as a corrective mirror which they need for a positive change. This function of literature relates it very closely to society, and it is necessary to take a close look at some works of literature, in order to understand how literature actually reflects the social environment.

In most theories of the relationship of literature and society reflection, influence and socialization is emplied. Literature is thus, interpreted as reflecting norms and values, as revealing the ethos of culture, and certain types of social facts as J.H. Mueiles points out some years ago <sup>4</sup>socialogists in the United States have paid little attention to literature and art, they, like other social scientists have focused primarily on instrumental aspects of social life. Perhaps this is because practical social problems have grown so urgent. However, whatever the reason, some interest in the arts and literature has persisted and in recent years has increased, however, sporadically.

Our purpose in this paper is to examine critically some of their characteristics view points and theoretical assumptions which are:-

1. Literature reflects society and vice-versa.
2. Literature influences the shape of society
3. Literature functions socially to maintain and stabilize the social order which may be called the social control theory.

Thus, it becomes clear that society has great effects on literature, philosophy or any other

genres of art. Literature is born of social beliefs, thoughts, ideologies, society is a great river and literature is a rivulet, a tributary and literature gets lots of material, resources from society, particularly society improves at times through its greatest minds like Gorky, Tolstoy, Dickens and this has great impact on the societies. Similarly, Ayn. Rand had some impact on American Society and even on American politics. It can be safely pointed out that it is society at large that gives worth to literature, art and music.

A literary man is s 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 conscious and sometimes unconscious exponent t of his time spirit. The time-spirit is the total outcome of all the political, social, religious and scientific changes of a particular age. The historical aspect of literature is therefore, minor or unimportant, though it may be for aesthetic purpose, cannot be totally ignored. No writer can escape influence of his age.

Every man, according to Hoethe, is the citizen of his age as well as his country. Again Renan remarked, one belongs to one's country and race even when on reacts against them. Thus, literature always expresses the thoughts and sentiments to human mind which are closely connected with and conditioned by the age. The reflection of the age depends on the quality of the mind in which it is reflected. Literature means something that is written for refreshing & inspiring the minds it attracts in two ways- through its matter and through its manner. While the matter must be such that those who read it are interested in some way, the manner must be such s would be pleasing to the reader and adds to is fund of knowledge. We live in a society where these are relations & inter-relations between men who live in the society. We would like to hear about the

fellow men that live in society, their thoughts & feelings, their likes and dislikes. Naturally, if we have the power of languages to express the feelings, then we can create more literature. The poet expresses his feelings and we who read his poetry are interested and share his feelings. After all, society is this bound of relationship between man and man through communication. If literature expresses social sympathies, naturally it is bound to exercise some positive influence on our mind and attitude. An inspiring poem rouses our feelings and enthusiasm for general welfare of the society. For instance Miss Stowe's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' was directly responsible for a movement against slavery in literatures and life in the USA of those days. The novels of Dickens had n indirect influence in creating a feeling for removing social evils. Sharad Chandra's novels have gone a long way in breaking conservatism as regards women in Indian Society. Therefore, the influence of literature on society is felt directly or indirectly, and if we are interested in literature, its influence is bound to move us amply.

Literature is made out of the love of life no doubt the realistic artists brings to a focus the oddities and crude aspects of life but to know life fully not only the bright side of it but also the seamy and dark side of life is to be known. It is an admitted fact that if the work of a writer mainly reflects the spirit of his times, it cannot be a great literature. But only a very useful piece of valuable material for the sociologist and the historian, the literature of Greeks may not appeal to an Indian or a German mind if its historical factor is taken into consideration. Similarly, Shakespeare may be regarded as great dramatist, if he simply & purely reflects the Elizabethan age. The essence of literature lies in the Individual approach of the author, his personality which will dominate over other influences. A great

man of letters is the creature as well as creator of the age in which he exists. Thus, we talk of the age of Kalidasa, the age of Shakespeare, The age of Dryden, The age of Pope and so on. For example, Milton's 'Paradise lost' was a great challenge to the age of Milton which was the age of Cynicism, low morals and satirical literature.

In conclusion, there is an element of objectivity in our appreciation of the beautiful. Tolstoy defines art and literature as <sup>5</sup> the communication of emotions. Literature as a whole grows and changes from generation to generation. It is not static but dynamic; it means that each age has its own particular point of interest and way of thinking and feeling about things. So, the literature which it produces is governed by certain prevailing tastes. The tastes of one age are sure to differ enormously from those of another. Similarly the Elizabethan period was the age of immense enthusiasm for the Greek and Latin classics. Thus, one of the main forces behind the English literature of Elizabethan era was the immense enthusiasm for these classics.

Therefore, literature is one of the many channels in which the energy of an age discharges itself, in its political movements, religions thoughts, and philosophical speculation, art, we have the same energy overflowing into other poems of expression. Thus, literature is simply a criticism of life, a reproduction and obviously a social document which helps us to interpret the prevailing circumstances in society and brings a change in human attitudes.

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