
Language V/S Literature A Relevant Debate

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INTRODUCTION

Language and Literature are two words that appear similar in their purport but strictly speaking they are not so. Language is the fundamental unit of literature. In other words it can be said that language makes literature.

Literature is produced by the creation of works in a particular language by the writers of the language. A language on the other hand is a mode of expression of thought by means of articulate sounds. This is the main difference between language and literature. There can be as many literatures as there are languages.

A language comprises of sounds, words and sentences. The manner in which the words combine to form sentences is important in any language. On the other hand literature is made up of the thoughts expressed in any given language.

Thus it can be said that literature has several forms. Each of these forms is called a literary form. The various literary forms are poetry, prose, drama, epic, free verse, short story, novel and the like. Each of these literary forms is laden with the language in which it is written. In short it can be said that the entire literature is constructed by the language in which it is written.

LANGUAGE

Language is the method of expression whereas literature is the collection of such expressions in the said forms or the forms foretold. Any literature can be said to be rich or poor depending upon the correctness of the language in which the particular

literature is created. For example a piece of poetry created with thoughtful expressions in English language enhances the quality of English literature by leaps and bounds.

In our daily speech we generally take language and literature as a same thing. For us both of them have the same meaning. If we go deep into the meaning of the words, language and literature, we find a great difference between them. We also find that language is primary and literature is secondary. The Free Encyclopedia defines language as - the human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication.” (Wikipedia , the free encyclopedia).

If a language is dead, automatically, its literature is also dead. It has been rightly said that if you want to kill and destroy a community, first kill its language, the community will automatically be killed and vanished. Since there are many languages are spoken in all over the world so, different literature came into existence. The literature of a language is rich because of the correct use of the language by the writers of that language.

LITERATURE

English literature is a path to knowledge. As with all world literature, the English literature has been a key for understanding the world and a means of inspiring and supporting cultural and social movements.

Inspired by folklore, this literature continue to transmit from one generation to the others, messages of cultural awareness, of beliefs, spiritual growth, ideals and many manifestations of the human spirit. All over

the world myths and legends similarly explained life and universe.

The English literature served as a model for European and American literature but it has also taken its part of inspiration from these. The novels of Modernism and Postmodernism sought to find a way to explain the trauma of the modern individual, given the reality of the dramatic World Wars, to understand the alienation of the individual.

We will have to form opinions and convictions of our own and the reading of English literature can aid us in the process. Third, English literature also makes us think, as we might not necessarily agree.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

LANGUAGES are more to us than systems of thought-transference. They are invisible garments that drape themselves about our spirit and give a predetermined form to all its symbolic expression. When the expression is of unusual significance, we call it literature. Art is so personal an expression that we do not like to feel that it is bound to predetermined form of any sort. The possibilities of individual expression are infinite, language in particular is the most fluid of mediums. Yet some limitation there must be to this freedom, some resistance of the medium. In great art there is the illusion of absolute freedom.

Language is the medium of literature as marble or bronze or clay is the material of the sculptor. Since every language has its distinctive peculiarities, the innate formal limitations - and possibilities - of one literature are never quite the same as those of another.

Nevertheless, human expression being what it is, the greatest - or shall we say the most satisfying - literary artist, the Shakespeare is one who has no effect of strain.

Literary language is that language which is used in literary criticism and general discussion on some literary works. English has been used as a literary language in countries that were ruled by the British Empire such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nigeria etc. where English is official language even today. Before the 18th century the language of literature was totally different from the language which was used by the common man in spoken or written. Literature was far away from the reach of the common people. Shakespeare's language was not easy to understand for common Elizabethans. Similarly Samuel Johnson's prose was not easy to understand. It was only Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) who wrote the major works of literature in the ordinary English language. Since then the language of literature has changed a lot. In the modern time we find literature written in the languages which are really used by common people in their daily life. This is the reason why literature has become popular in our time. Now every literate person can enjoy the reading of literature of his or her choice because it is written in the language which he or she uses in daily life. So now a day literature has become close to the people and so its readership has increased. On the part of writers it has now become a style to write in ordinary and common language.

DEFINITION OF LITERATURE

Everyone has his own definition of literature based on his understanding of literature. But it is a universally accepted fact that literature is the mirror of our lives in which we see the reflections of our lives. Literature, in its most comprehensive meaning, includes all the activities of human soul in general, or within particular sphere, period, country, or a language. Literature is that form of writing which arouses our feelings of the beautiful by the perfection of form or excellence of ideas or by both.

SCOPE OF LITERATURE



The scope of literature is very wide. It can cover everything which is on the earth. Literature has the capacity to incorporate within itself the entire universe of discourses. It includes everything from Mathematics to Philosophy and to the other intricate sciences. Since literature reflects life, so the scope of literature covers the whole life of every man. It can be best understood in the context of what Leo-Tolstoy, the Russian writer said while defining literature. He said that literature fails if it cannot answer the two fundamental questions: who we are and how shall we live. Tolstoy believes that these two questions drive all literature and should be guiding principles upon which all literature is based.

MEANING OF LANGUAGE

Language is not only a collection of words in an unabridged dictionary but the individual and social passion of human beings. With the development of human race, the language also developed and kept on changing. A number of languages emerged and died after some times. The languages which are no more in use are called dead languages. But a number of languages are still used by a lot of people. They are called modern languages. We have also seen that the language which is used in literature is different from the language used by the ordinary people. These languages are called the Literary Language. The literary language contains symbols, metaphor, hyperbole, etc, to express the writer's views effectively. We understand more clearly now that what is effective and beautiful in one language is a vice in another.

Whatever be the sounds, accents and forms of a language, however these lay hands on the shape of its literature, there is a subtle law of compensations that gives the artist space. If he is squeezed a bit here, he can swing a free arm there. And generally he has rope enough to hang himself with, if he must. It is not strange that this should be so.

Language is itself the collective art of expression, a summary of thousands upon thousands of individual intuitions. The individual goes lost in the collective creation, but his personal expression has left some trace in a certain give and flexibility that are inherent in all collective works of the human spirit. The language is ready, or can be quickly made ready, to define the artist's individuality. If no literary artist appears, it is not essentially because the language is too weak an instrument, it is because the culture of the people is not favorable to the growth of such personality as seeks a truly individual verbal expression.

Language, in fact, is the most distinctive of human activities. It is highly complex and as such it can be considered as a code to the extent that it is a symbolization of the phenomena of existence and imagination. It is more than a code because it is capable of change to meet new circumstances and to express variations of individual personality.

When a particular group of individuals share particular ways of speaking, the group uses a dialect and dialects are mutually intelligible. It is also a fact that no two speakers speak exactly the same dialect.

In the 15th century England there were many regional dialects. However, with the passage of time and with the rise of the modern state, a standard language came into being. Standard language is also known as a standard dialect supported by government and other established institutions. There may be many standard dialects associated with a single language. For example, we have standard British English, standard American English, standard Indian English, standard Australian English and standard Philippine English.

CONCLUSION

Thus Language is a means through which we express our thoughts. Without means we cannot express our thoughts. On the other



hand, literature is the thought which is expressed with the help of language. Language is the fundamental unit of literature. It can be said that literature has several forms which are called literary forms like prose, poetry, drama, novel, epic, short stories etc. All these literary forms are laden with language in which it is written. Any literature can be said to be rich or poor depending upon the correctness of the language in which it is created. A language comprises of sounds, words and sentences. While literature is made up of the thoughts expressed in any given language and literature is produced by the creation of works in a particular language by the writer of the language. There can be as many literatures as there are languages. We may conclude this paper with the following quotation of William J. Long in English Literature which summarizes our discussion:

Literature is the expression of life in words of truth and beauty; it is the

written record of man's spirit, of his thoughts, emotions, aspirations; it is the history, and the only history, of the human soul. It is characterized by its artistic, its suggestive, its permanent qualities. Its object, aside from the delight it gives, is to know man, that is, the soul of man rather than his actions; and since it preserves to the race the ideals upon which all our civilization is founded, it is one of the most important and delightful subjects that can occupy the human mind.

WORKS CITED :

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- [2.]Oxford English Dictionary.
- [3.]William J. Long (2005), English Literature, Kalyani Publisher, New Delhi.