

Relevance of Literature in Our Lives

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“Without literature, life is hell” - Charles Bukowski

Various attempts have been made to define literature. It is for example, as ‘imaginative’, writing in the sense of fiction-writing which is not literally true. 16th and 17th century English literature includes Shakespeare, Webster, Marvell and Milton-but it also stretches to the essays of Francis Bacon, the sermons of John Donne, Bunyan’s spiritual autobiography and whatever it was that Sir Thomas Browne wrote. In other words literature teaches us- *how to live?*

Literature broadens our mind. We start thinking more and more about natural phenomenon. It expands our knowledge and understanding of the world we live in. literature is the main source for the new generations to know the history of their place and parts of the world. It grips us with its stories, its characters in conflict. It also appeals to the imagination. Emily Dickenson in a poem says:

There is no Frigale like a Book
To take us Lands away
Nor any coursers like a Page
Of Prancing Poetry-
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of Toll-
How frugal is the Chariot
That bears the Human Soul-

Literature creates hope in our heart when we are depressed or sad. Emily Dickenson asserts:

Hope is a thing with feathers-
That perches in the soul-
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all

In eighteenth century England, the concept of literature was not confined as it sometimes is today to 'creative or imaginative' writing. It meant the whole body of valued writing in society such as philosophy, history, essays and letters as well as poems. What made a text 'literary' was not whether it was fictional. The 18th century was in grave doubt about whether the new form of the novel was literature at all-but whether it conformed to certain standard of 'polite letters'. The criteria of what counted as literature, in other words, were frankly ideological.

In the late 16th and early 17th century, the word 'novel' seems to have been used about both true and fictional events, and even news reports were hardly to be considered factual. Moreover, if 'literature' includes much 'factual' writing, it also excludes quite a lot of fiction. Superman comic and Mills and Boon novels are fictional but not generally regarded as literature, and certainly not as literature, if literature is creative or, imaginative writing, does this imply that history, philosophy and natural science are uncreative and imaginative?

Literature is a kind of writing which, in the words of Russian critic Roman Jakobson, represents an 'organised violence committed on ordinary speech'. Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech. Criticism should dissociate art from mystery and concern itself with how literary texts actually worked: literature was not pseudo-religion or psychology or sociology but a particular organisation of language. It had its own specific laws, structures and devices, which were to be studied themselves rather than reduced to something else. The literary work was neither a vehicle of ideas or reflection of social reality nor the incarnation of some transcendental truth: it was a

material fact, whose functioning could be analysed rather as one could examine a machine. It was made of words, not of objects or feelings, and it was a mistake to see it as the expression of author's mind.

There is no denying the fact that we always interpret literary works to some extent in the light of own concerns. In other words all literary works are rewritten. Some of the great literary works such as the Bible and Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata provide society with the guiding principles of life. Though Works by poets Homer, Plato, Horace and Virgil, Shakespeare's sonnets and dramas, poetry by W. B. Yeats, John Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson are timeless. They have always amused their readers. Pride and Prejudice, Emma, A Tale of Two Cities, James Bond's stories are some of the best-selling books of all time that have entertained several generations. While some Literary and poetic works teach lesson of life. They compel us to think something new. Some literary works are for entertainment purposes only. Many works set up a strong connection with their audience through the stories they narrate or the message they carry. Readers tend to associate themselves with the emotions portrays in these works and become emotionally involved in them.

Literature was in a sense an organic society all of its own: it was important because it was nothing less than a whole social ideology. The impact of literature on modern society is immense. Literature acts as a form of expression for each individual author. **Literature is the mirror of society** and it allows us to better understand the world we live in.

Literature is a reflection of humanity and a way for us to understand one another. Literature is important because of its purpose and in a society, which is being detached from human interaction, novels create a conversation. Jane Austen's Mansfield Park subtly dissects an education that confused self-assertion with moral and spiritual insight. Dickens' Hard Times shows how dangerous it is to rely on a utilitarian vies of human beings in the classroom while hardy' Jude The Obscure reveals the loss felt by a man who is excluded from an elite university because of his class and poverty.

A vision of man-God relationship forms the core of all arts and more particularly of literary art. Religious sensibility is stirred when the focus of vision of an artist lies on man and society. The attainment of a Guru is close to the attainment of God. Raja Rao's *Serpent and the Rope* as the title suggests is highly philosophical.

Literature is not a luxury but a life-changer. Reading literature gives one a better understanding of human nature and the complexity of the human condition. It makes one less judgemental and more sympathetic. Literature can also be more insightful than non-fiction. For example, Arvind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* gives information about the dark side of contemporary India. Literature teaches us humanity-to be sensitive and empathetic towards others. It also provides us an outlet for our thoughts emotions and imagination. Above all, literature teaches us language and the power of communication, a skill we cannot do in the 21th century.

Literature has a major impact on the development of society. It has shaped civilisation, changed political system and exposed injustice. It gives us a detailed preview of human experience, allowing us to connect on basis levels of desire and emotion. Literature helps build crucial, critical thinking skills. It helps us to develop the ability to find the hidden meaning within everyday life.

Literature is a form of human experience. Although in some literature the language employed is quite different from that spoken or used in ordinary writing. In *Defence of Poetry*, P.B. Shelley wrote:

A man who is greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of many species must become of his own.

The great instrument of moral good is the imagination. So in words of Tolstoy, without literature men would be like wild beasts because it

endows an understanding. Literature unites mankind. It has just made a better person, more humble, sensible, considerate towards others. Literature is like a ray of hope for me at present time. It is an escape from the negativity of life.

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