

Overview of Literature Education in India

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ABSTRACT:

Literature has always endowed an identity to life, either in the form of creating it or in the form of interpreting it. Time to time, manifold endeavors to find the position of literature in human life always has proved its windfall effects. Literature has always been a medium to bring back the puzzlements of life in order. In such a condition, literature's agreement with education is a welcome gesture. Literature, with its alluring form has always appealed readers for social, moral or individual edification. Void of tolerance and rise of conflicts in the multicultural societies urgently demand an enduring solution. Literature, being a vital means of conveying universal values rationalizes its significant place to this end. The study proposes to discuss how literature, synthesized in education can achieve the goal of orienting the young mind towards the concept of 'cultural diversity' and 'multiculturalism.'

KEYWORDS: Literature, Ramayana, Mahabharata, National Curriculum Framework (NCF), Education

I. INTRODUCTION:

Literature education in India has been a tradition from ancient time to till date. One of the oldest literatures of the world, Indian literature has unbroken continuity of its literary tradition over a period of five thousand years. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are grandmother's tales emblazoned in children's mind from generation to generation. Vishnu

Sharma in the *Panchatantra* used Literature to teach the princes the practices of sociology and governance. In recent time, erudition of children is still bonded with the literary pedagogy. A child, before start the schooling is nurtured by listening to the folk-tales or fairy-tales and fables. This might become their first interaction with literature. Literature has always been treated as essential part of the social machinery. In Indian tradition transmission of norms and morals are found be possible through literature.

In EFL classroom, Literature, as effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other languages, enjoys a renewal for teaching the functional use of language. Literature in language classroom has a long history, but gradually intermingled with language teaching in recent past as the demand of learning English language is raised at global level. According to Maley (2001), central role of literature was carried over into TESL/TEFL in the early part of the twentieth century in many parts of the world, such as India, it remains integral to the teaching of the language to this day” (p. 180). English syllabus for secondary and higher secondary levels by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 represents twofold purpose: first is the language growth that includes attainment of a basic proficiency, and the development of language as an instrument for basic interpersonal communication and second is that the themes/sub-themes of English literature courses should have accordance with the learners’ immediate environment-physical, social and cultural. NCF also recommends that teaching of English literature should lead to an understanding "and practice of the values enshrined in the Constitution of India, including the Fundamental Rights and Duties. The various sub-themes to be included are personal relationships, the neighborhood, the larger community, the nation, the world, etc. (p. 150). University Grants Commission Curriculum Development Committee in English and Other Western Languages (2001) recommends that teaching of English language and literature should agree with teaching language skills, critical understanding and human values derived from it for future lives and careers of the learners.

The place of English literature in the curriculum of school education or college and university education ensures academic, social, value orientation, and aesthetic purpose of teaching it.

Either as a part of language course or as a special literature course, the position of literature education has secured a prominence place in India. The obvious meaning of literature education suggests the purpose of appreciating richness of life expressed through the literary texts.

II. CULTURE AND LITERATURE IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

Back in 1874, Tylor described culture in wide ethnographic sense which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. More recently, in 2002, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization described culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Nehru's thought on culture defines it as the widening of the mind and of the spirit. Be it a western definition or eastern (oriental), culture as a whole is profoundly a multidisciplinary and multivocal concept that includes orbit of society, community, way of life, value system, morals, education, literature, and artifacts.

The study of 'culture' has been a traditional. Part of every educational system. Palkhiwala (1994) agrees on that, culture is what remains after you have forgotten all that you set out to learn (p.242). Kneller (1971) sees a relationship shared by education and culture is in the following way, "Education is the means by which society provides for the transmission or advancement of its culture, for without a viable culture there is no common life by which men are associated (p. 50). The apparent reasons for teaching of culture may vary but its intention carries profound grounds and implications. A report on Integration of Culture Education in the School Curriculum by Committee of Central Advisory Board of Education Ministry of Human Resource Development Government of India, 2005 makes a clear concept of integrating culture in education system. The committee's primary reasons are to concern about the diminishing moral values and the growing intolerance among communities, castes and declining awareness among children about their own cultural backgrounds. Another cause for concern is the fact that education is looked upon by marginalized sections of the

society to get 'cultured' in order to 'get out of the rut'. The committee also looked upon to inculcating the cultural values and enhancing the quality of cultural awareness among school going children. Every education system is concerned with the idea of imparting each individual a comprehensive insight into one's own culture, for this gives her self-confidence, pride, and a sense of belonging. In this respect, literature can fill the gaps of ignorance. Educationists are very keen that the young members of a society should not lapse into prejudice and ignorance as the complexity of cultural diversity has developed into a kaleidoscopic patterns. In the large spectrum, culture in education draws out certain implications for the country like India, which is a macrocosm of cultural, religious, ethnic and lingual diversity. Cross-cultural discourse, cultural awareness, and respect for ethno-cultural diversity stand among the bunch of learning of culture.

What form of education that engages the learning of culture is answered when we integrate culture with literature? Both draw a reciprocal relationship; one complements the other? Literature is enjoying kudos as an instrument to transmit the humanist values and as an access system to cultures. It is claimed that studying literature enables us to understand the foreign culture more clearly (McKay, 1986). All the modes of literature are the representation of culture by portraying values, morals, people's life, and an inductive way towards life. The ancient texts like, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* or *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, they are not just the giant literary documents but prolific picture of cultures and values. Literature, according to Carter and Long (1991) encapsulates the accumulated wisdom, the best that has been thought and felt within a culture, so we can use the texts that best show this to enhance the understanding of the culture (p. 89). Among the approaches of teaching literature, the cultural model of teaching literature reveals that literature not only shows the universality of thoughts and ideas but encourage learners to understand different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own.

Literature in cultural development along with other forms of education provides young minds aesthetic, intellectual and moral values. To generate among learners' new ideas and critical

thinking towards life prove to be the chief purpose of English language and literature textbooks in India.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Review of related literature works as a funnel where thinking process advances to precise and coherent knowledge. It is significant to review previous studies to get acquaintance with the varied aspects of the field selected by the researcher. Close review of the related writings has helped the researcher in developing the problem and conceptualizing framework of the study. The review categorized into five segments:

- Multiculturalism
- Education
- Education for Multiculturalism
- Literature
- Literature Education

Multiculturalism

Watson (2002) defines the concept of multiculturalism and analyzes its correlated areas namely nationalism, education, religion, media, cultural diversity, global uniformity, and multiculturalism in historical perspective. According to Watson, multiculturalism can be theorized and critically described in the modern states in different political and historical circumstances. The term multiculturalism is derived from the adjective 'multicultural', and used in the phrases like 'multicultural curriculum', 'multicultural education' and 'multicultural' society'. The writer categorized multiculturalism in two types: 'soft' multiculturalism and 'critical' multiculturalism. Watson shifts focus on soft' multiculturalism, which is concerned with the practice of multicultural elements. In discussion of education and multiculturalism relationship, Watson describes that a model of practicing soft multiculturalism is to include the experience of all pupils into the delivery of the syllabus of school subjects. As described in The Swann report (1985) entitled 'Education for all commissioned by British government, if the schools make good pedagogical use of

materials that include every child's routines ranging from religion to cuisine, the awareness of this could facilitate learning and thus a positive learning environment is formed to which pupils become more responsive. It is also discussed that parents, teaching attempts, and conscious efforts foster the multicultural and minority understanding to pupils. The chairman Lord Swann in the report expresses that "...multiculturalism, as a principle to be acted upon, a passion for equality, and an ability to recognize our familiar selves in the strangeness of others."

Caldeira (2004) in *Multiculturalism and the Marginalised Psyche* introspects multiculturalism and marginalized psyche reflected in some Canadian literary texts. The author notes in various work that acculturation, social distance, culture shock effects human mind and behavior. The representations of the writers show the displacement of their own indigenous, ethnic communities from the mainstream cultures of Canada. The writer critically examined the thematic, structural and stylistic levels of the works reveal that the feeling of alienation and rootlessness are the often-observed effects of being marginalized in multicultural society. Caldeira finds out that the indigenous writers witness inter-ethnic conflicts. Writings from the described writers reveal immigrant psyche and marginalized sensibility. The picture of what happens to immigrants facing an unfamiliar ground displaced in the work of writers. To show this more precisely Caldeira has mentioned poem titled "Tara's Mother-in-law" by Uma Parmeshwaran that illustrates the question of culture shock and culture adaptation. The poem illustrates the point:

What kind of place you've brought me to, son?
Where the windows are always closed.
And the front door it is always locked?
And no rangoli designs on porch steps,
To say, please come in?

The writer has clearly shown the situation of multicultural society, expressed through their literature unfolding the inner feeling of alienation and cultural shock.

Dhawan and Pabby (2005) in *Multiculturalism: Canada and India* depict areas like immigrant literature, native writing and cross-cultural studies of contemporary Canadian writing. The writings in the book present the sight of multicultural Canada. The works also show that Canada and India have similarity in their cultural scenario. Dhawan and Pabby have observed cultural trends and multiculturalism effects in Canadian and Indian literary works. Various articles in the book present the facts that both countries are similar in rich diversity of cultures, languages and religions. Indian and Canadian literature has been enduring a cultural metamorphosis with the mix of second races and people from all over the world. Dhawan and Pabby identify that “the issue of multiculturalism has acquired impotence and urgency in view of the problems inherent in a mix of people with different ethnicities and religions, living together” (p. 48). This brings into the knowledge that major population of both countries consist of cultural diversity, sharing the problem and tensions at the cultural and social level. Dhawan and Pabby cite works of Margret Atwood, Robert Kroetsch, Margret Laurence, Ruby, Wiebe to confirm that the quest for national identity from all the possible angles. Analysis of the described articles shows that regional diversity and multicultural society are the features of India and Canada.

Sondhi (2005) in the article ‘Different Strokes: Multiculturalism and Civil Society in Canada and India’, analyzes the site of civil society and multiculturalism in India and Canada. The writer makes a point that discussion of civil society in both countries is quite a contrast. In India, it has focused on individual rights, especially the right to participate in the political process. While in Canada, discussion addresses the issues of civil society without actually referring to it. The writer finds that future of Canada depends on strengthening capacity to bring together people with many differences, Canada’s approach to diversity based on accepting and respecting everyone and this will enable more harmonious and more creative society. While discussing about India, the writer expresses that the power of participating in a democracy enables citizens’ strength but still for Indian citizens, more rights in political and social aspects are important. Multiculturalism, in a sense is a good example of the multiculturalism ethos that “recognizes both individual human dignity and the social dimension of human existence.

Education for Multiculturalism

Mukhorpadhyay (2003) mentions education as the key to interfaith understanding in *Education for a Global Society: Inter-Faith Dimensions*. The researcher has reviewed articles related to the topic interfaith education, education for teaching values and education for global society from the book. Rajput (2003) draws attention towards the importance of 'Values' in the 21st century as included in the context of school education in India. To start the discussion, the author describes the diversities in India. It has been discussed in depth that efforts to established inter-faith dialogue to make people live together are not bearing much visible fruits. The author has considered recommendation of NCERT, 2000 in show the need of value education. The report suggests that school could develop as the nurseries for value inculcation, value development and value nurturance. The author has also reminds the perceptions on the need, nature and necessity of value education in schools drawn from the National Policy on Education, 1986. It takes note that education is universally accepted as a forceful tool for cultivation of social, ethical, moral and humanistic values. For the context of India, the author considers that the prime objectives of education are to achieve social cohesion, national integrity and learning to live together. Reviews of the situation and needs for value education in India made the author to point out some approaches in value education. The points are as follows:

1. Curriculum development in direction of value enrichment.
2. Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, which develop broader attitudes and approaches towards life.
3. Utilization of available folklore, national monuments, forms of folk cultures.
4. Providing interaction opportunities to meet the persons whose mere Presence motivates students.
5. Visits to museums, institutions.

In the article titled, 'School Curriculum for Global Peace' Rudolph (2003) reflects his views over taking action for providing novel educational methods that promote world peace. The

author emphasis on enriching the syllabus and to create an enhanced curriculum, based on the NCERT Curriculum Framework Guidelines which include elements of a peace-based syllabus.

Sharma (2003), in his article, 'Multi-cultures in Education and Collaborative Inter-faith Education Programmes' has observed the current scenario of multiculturalism and the circumstances like conflicts, violence caused by it. The author considers that the conflicts are caused by lack of proper understanding of others. Proper education is a vehicle to prevent the conflicts and violence, as pointed out by the author, a proper education can help in building goodwill among different cultural groups" (p. 175). Improper interpretation or biased presentation can cause misunderstanding for other cultures. The author's key purpose in the article is to suggest that properly instructed and taught literature can help increasing multicultural and inter-faith dimension.

Malekar (2003) throws light on the concept of national integration through education. The author mentions that living with diversity is one of the greatest challenge facing societies in which our children are growing up. (p. 181) According to the author, education can help in achieving success in creating sense of integration. The author involves spiritual knowledge, human right education, value based education, environmental values, and inter-faith organizations should be the divisions of education. The main purpose of this article is to emphasis on the importance and role of education in succeeding in forming national integration.

Stone and DeNevi's (1971) main concern is present the method to make school experiences more meaningful for students whose racial, ethnic, religious, social backgrounds are different. Here, Teacher's responsibility to get information on various minorities is emphasized so that the multicultural experiences become smoother for minority students in the school. Therefore, its main idea is to make teachers more skillful with multi-cultural students. The book is to make known the American minorities in a way that it becomes helpful for teachers and teachers-to-be. The book deals with the wide distinctions among America's cultural minorities. It can function as an information sources for American educators. The main task of the book is to provide knowledge of the large ethnic minority groups of America so that those are understood as being unique people with unique

characteristics, contribution and concerns. To make this purpose viable the book presents five selected essays, incorporating the ethnic minorities namely black, Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, American Indian, and Asian-American. Both the editors feel that viewing cultural diversity in its entirety can help to gain a true multiculturalism in today's schools. The book is formed with a hope that the essays could help teachers in utilizing the rich cultural heritages of America's varied ethnic groups.

Literature

Weston (2001) presents new interpretation of the elements of literature, which concerns reflection on, and choices about, what it constitutes to good life. It has made open to the knowledge that the significance of literature with philosophy is grappled since Plato. Michael Weston examines these relationships and role of literature as it has been addressed by both the analytic and continental traditions. Here he glorifies the philosophical, moral and religious significance of literature. Weston quotes Plato, who announced the importance of poetry in the Phaedrus when he says that poetry "by adoring countless deeds of the ancients educated later generations" (p. xi). Weston remarked that "Literature on this account plays an essential cultural role in the transmission of values, showing us patterns of excellence..." (p. xi). Literature as a creative form of language doesn't produce concepts to apply to the world, but rather 'aesthetic ideas', images and symbols which provoke us to reflection on transcendent things without a determinate thought corresponding to them. Deshpande (2003) introspects the relationship between literature and morality.

To begin, the author links literature Deshpande (2003) introspects the relationship between literature and morality. To begin, the author links literature with religion and morality. To define the strength of literature, she puts it as, "while a part of any religious text is connected to the divine and to our relationship to divine, its good portion of it lays down rules which are intended to make it possible for humans to live together, to grease the wheels of living in a community" (p. 101). The author takes note of the novelists like Dickens, Hardy, Prem chandra, and Tagore who have always carried tradition of linking morality and literature. According to her, the writer gives expression to the ideas of human life. Literature in a way enables all humans to be aware of this area of their lives. By raising the question - 'what

writer writes for?’ Deshpande gives a straight answer that the writer is a rebel and a social reformer (p. 104). Further, she discusses about the literature as a good therapy that works as a cathartic manner. The author quotes John Gardner’s view on literature, “True art is moral. It seeks to improve life, not debase it” (p. 106). Going deep into the relationship of literature and morality, the author mentions Arthur Miller’s answer of the question - whether art is founded on morality. In Arthur Miller’s words “it is not founded on, but linked to morality” (as cited in Deshpande, p.106). Discussion by Deshpande conveys that literature can put us on the height of morality and communicates the way of life. A moral vision is certainly a core of all great literature.

Bilan (1979) presents F. R. Leavis’s idea of literature, as a moral activity and the work with moral concerns. Leavis’s basic concepts of novel criticism is concern with moral interest in the novel. Bilan points out that, ‘at centre of Leavis’s thinking about the novel are two firmly held ideas: first, that there is a particularly close connection between the novel and morality; secondly, that great novels represent an affirmation of life’ (p. 115). The study by Bilan on Leavis acknowledges that the Leavis’s thinking about the moral dimension of, fiction is linked with number of related ideas. For Leavis, an explicit concept of form in fiction is the concepts of the novel as moral fable and dramatic poem, and a notion of moral enactment and moral exploration. Leavis’s central argument is that great novelists show an intense moral interest in life and that this moral interest determines and conditions the nature of their preoccupation with form in fiction. According to Balin, Leavis’s criticism involves his concern with moral interest in the novel, with ‘moral pattern’ and the ‘moral fable’ and his examination of novelists in term of their awareness of the ‘possibilities of life’. Balin notices in Leavis’s formulation moral aspect comes prior to the formal and it is more important. Leavis appreciates the art that relates both form and moral. In Leavis’s view as explained in *The Great Tradition* that Conrad is a greater Novelist than Flaubert because the work of Conrad serves the proper relation between form and moral interest. Leavis’s concept of ‘enactment’ is explained by Balin ; “ Leavis’s concept of ‘enactment’ is closely related to his insistence that literature is an ‘exploration’ of values. At times he seems to prize literature primarily for the search for values it embodies, for creative questioning and exploration” (p.

124-25). In this aspect of criticism - The Novel as an Affirmation of Life, Leavis describes literature not just as an exploration of life or values, but also more characteristically as an affirmation of the possibilities of life. Leavis discusses Tolstoy's Anna Karenina as a "...decidedly a positive creative misadventure, it affects us as an exploratory effort towards the definition of a norm" (p. 125).

Literature Education

Brumfit and Carter (1986) in Literature and Language Teaching illustrate interaction between language, literature, and education. It has been pointed out that 'close reading' of a literary texts attempts to locate intuitive responses to the meanings and effects released by the text in the structure of the language used. This simply marks that intuitive responses to a text are central to the process of reading and re-reading literature. The meaning of this explanation is that reading of literary texts grant us the intuitive responses. In the third section 'Literature, language and discourse', Brumfit and Carter cites Widdowson's claim about literature that literature can encourages students the ability to infer meanings by interacting with the text. Importance given to literary competence and reading literature throw light on the point that selectively chosen literary texts by the teachers can provide knowledge of cultural values and beliefs which students can learn. Further, the author draws our attention towards sensitizing students. The author states about literary competence as, "...competence' is an interesting combination of linguistic, socio-cultural, historical, and semantic awareness" (p.18). The author notes that there are major three aims of teaching literature: 1. To assist the development of competence in the language, 2. including literary texts in the syllabus to teach 'culture', as it is claimed that studying literature enables us to understand foreign culture more clearly, 3. using literary texts for nonliterary purpose. It is clearly defined that literature teaching and reading can be an educational and value-changing activity.

Burke and Brumfit (1986) in the article 'Is Literature Language? or Is Language Literature ?', categorize the aims of literature and language teaching. They divide the aims into three parts :

1. The promotion of skills

- Literacy and oracy
- Critical and analytical ability
- Social skills 'poise'

IV CONCLUSION:

The study of literature is important because it, at its most basic, improves reading skills. From this involved reading of quality literature a student then develops their writing skills, as the two go hand in hand (the best writers are avid readers, typically). Beyond these basic benefits is the development of critical thinking and analysis skills through the study of literature.

The study of literature also helps students see the world - people, places, things, events - through different eyes and by way of a different viewpoint. This contributes to a student forming and developing their own belief set, opinions, views, and such.

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