



Pedagogy of Culture and Literature

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Abstract

Literature is one of the significant mediums to preserve culture. The writers look into it from various angles. Culture is the foundation of the well-nourished personality and established society. Indian people consider culture from integral, spiritual and moral point of view. Culture consists of arts, morals, laws, customs, belief and knowledge. It is also the product of action and effect upon further action. It includes tradition, ideas and values. Culture is the true civilization and a way of right action. It is a living entity and self-realization. Literature, art and music are the substances of culture. One culture respects other culture and permeates to grow and spread in its own ways. India has a basic cultural unity. We find multifaceted presentation of the cultural identity in Indo-Anglian fiction. The Indian writers have given different shades of colour to the culture in their writings. Fictions of Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Rama Mehta are full of cultural implications. The events which are taking place in the life of characters, their way of life and attitudes are governed and directed by the culture. The characters have powerful impact of culture upon them.

Keywords: *pedagogy, culture, literature, self-realization*

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Introduction

It is an era of globalization and Western materialism overcomes the minds of the youth, which results into the loss of culture and creation of anarchy. Hence it needs to preserve and project culture through literature because literature is a mirror of the society. The writers in Western countries as well as in India ceaselessly have been attempting to look at and understand culture from various angles. Truly speaking culture is the sound base of an individual personality and the well-established society. In the absence of it the life of the person and the society dangerously ruins. It is obligatory to know what culture is before going to discuss various literatures in the light of culture produced by the writers.

Definition of culture

Dictionary meaning of culture is tillage; training of the mind; refinement of taste. The Western and the Indian thinkers concentrating on culture take efforts to define it. The Western thinkers consider culture from social, material and objective point of view and the Indians look at the culture as integral, spiritual and moral. The word 'culture' is derived from the Latin word 'cultura' which means to cultivate. The Sanskrit writers use word 'Sanskrit'. It has equivalence to the English word 'culture'. According to Joseph Pieper Culture is the "quintessence of all the natural goods of the world and of those gifts and qualities which, while belonging to man, lie beyond the immediate sphere of his needs and wants" (1963:17)

Focusing on the culture, Taylor, E. B. in his book '*The Origin of Culture*' says, culture is a complex whole, which "includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1958:1) Kluckhohn studies culture as a behavioral scientist. He views; it is the product of action and effect upon further action. The essential "core of culture consists of traditional ideas and specially their attached values" (1962:73)

There are some Indian thinkers who have given definitions of culture. The first Prime Minister of Independent India says "Culture is not "Loud" "it is quiet, it restrained, and it is tolerant". (Chatterjee, 1987:62) According to Mahatma Gandhi, "Culture is true "Civilization". "Civilization", he said, "is the mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty". (Bande, 2012:189) Radha Krishanan's views regarding culture are prominently Indian and they are fertilized by Western thoughts. From his point of view "Culture is a living entity without Moksha or self-realization as its goal" (2012:189)

Nature and scope of Culture

Civilization does not mean what type of clothes you wear? What type of food do you eat? Or Do you travel by horse, bus, train or an airplane? Literature, music and art are the basic substances of culture. Dr. Radhakrishnan says, 'Literature is the channel between spiritual vision and human beings'. 'Through poetry and drama' he said, "Man reveals himself" (Bande, 2012:189) Literature entertains and instructs human being in all walks of life. When he sings a song his heart fills with pleasure. When he sings songs, his rhythm of words makes others happy. When he reads a book like '*Hamlet*' he learns a lesson 'To be or not to be is the question before me.' The beautiful scene of the daffodils makes him to find relief from a pensive mood.

All round human development is given more and more importance. Now a days as we see development in all the fields of life. We witness tremendous progress in science, technology, commerce, agriculture and trade. Even though the modernity tries to establish power of wealth no one neglects human beings essential aspects like spirituality, morality, ethics, aesthetics and physical nature. They are treated as the direction to the human beings to decide what is right and wrong. The freedom of spirit is the root of the culture. People should be fearless, free for thinking, and at the same time they must have freedom of education and express themselves freely. If it is done they will surely have hope of future.

Use of effective words is a source of one to become master of words. He can be very clear in his thought presentation. If people are full of doubts and fear they are unable to express themselves freely though they are right in their thoughts and ways of thinking. Because of this the audience will lose an opportunity to listen the good thoughts of the great personalities. So the speaker must be courageous to say what he wants before the listeners and he must have hope of the future to do something from which others will be benefited.

A strong liking for sound knowledge assumes to be divine and idealistic. Working of social life and aim of person are correctly illustrated by dharma. What is dharma? 'Dharma is that which sustains- 'dharyate iti darmah'. It is the science of harmony and supreme order'. (Bande, 2012:190) Truth (sarya), Righteousness (Dharma), peace (shanty) and love (prem) are the four pillars of dharma. Dharma contributes human beings to know life from its base. He must have deep faith in our rich past four pillars otherwise there will be conflict. Suspicious mind, uneasy feelings and avarice are the causes of dislike and destruction. Failure in the human life leads him to the thought of destruction.

Peace and non-violence the basic principles of Dharma always influence personal life and conduct of a person in society. Culture teaches a way how to respect each other. If social and political structure has a base of peace and non-violence the

culture pleads respect and understanding. Nobody claims that particular kind of culture is perfect one or has approached to its goal. On the other hand, every culture is attempting to approach towards the door of perfection. If somebody wishes to protect his culture it does not mean he hates other's culture. One culture respects other cultures and permeates to grow and spread in its own way.

In the modern time, we notice religion has been greatly transformed into materialism by fast and steady growth and development in the science and technology. Religion is the root of human being's life and it sets rules for conduct. Morality and spiritual thinking brings man dignity.

The way we talk and behave with the people around us, fellow comrades, and relatives show our culture. Science and religion are embedded with truth, purpose and meaning. The intention of religion is not only to change opinions of the people but to bring change in their lives. Religion significantly is requirement to make human life civilized. We need science to play a role of a doorkeeper where spirituality and science putting the heads together to add something good and positive to each other. When the strength of science and discoveries and strong faith in religion begins to work together their will be arrival of the new civilization that is the new world. Science is the only way out that will bring to our notice the astonishing wonders and richness of the world.

Culture and literature

The religious life and the social concerns are highlighted by Raja Rao in '*Kanthapura*' (1938). The village Kanthapura has its own stable social structure, a culture and an unchanging pattern of life. The people are blessed by the life giving waters of the Himvathy and the goddess Kenchamma has protected them against natural calamity. A Folk song describes role of Kenchamma in the life of the villages:

'Kenchamma, Kenchamma, Goddess benign and bounteous, mother of earth, blood of life. Harvest queen, rain crowned, Kenchamma, Kenchamma: Goddess benign and bounteous.' (Rao, 1938:4)

Kanthapura has kept alive the flame of religion and spirituality through its rituals, poojas, Harikathas and cycles of festivals. The lighting of Kartik lamps is a symbolic act by which Kanthapura society reassures the presence of an eternal light which would save them from the darker powers. Moorthy underlines the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene not as a political event but as a religious experience in the tradition of the Hindu Avatars. The political or spiritual movements have Religion as the nucleus of social regeneration in Kanthapura. The social reformers also have religious base.

The various shades of culture are witnessed in the novels of R. K. Narayan through relationships and behavior of characters in the domestic life and in the society. The novel *The English Teacher* (1945) is confined to the husband wife relationship which does not exist only in life, but also in 'life after death.' (Biswal, 1987:38) Krishnan is represented as a cultured husband who cares for his wife's feelings. There is a sense of happiness and mutual understanding between them. "He is so devoted to his wife that even the tragic and untimely departure of his wife does not keep him apart from his wife." (Singh 2002:138)

Even though, Susila loses in the flesh, Krishnan fetches her from the heaven to stay with him forever on account of platonic love. Krishnan's way of communication helps him to maintain his health. Body and mind are the related concepts which remind of Swami Vivekananda dictum 'sound mind in the sound body.' Krishnan's reunion with his wife achieves his spiritual rebirth, which is strongly believed by the Indians. 'Krishnan's real development takes place in the spiritual world where he communicates with Susila psychically'. (Mishra, 2010:22-23)

Susila is the replica of a devotional Hindu wife. She loves her husband sincerely and often awaits his arrival from the college after 4.30. She is called the cash-keeper of Krishnan and draws up monthly budget with a remarkable accuracy. "In her hands, a hundred rupees seemed to do the work of two hundred, and all through the month she was able to give me money when I asked". (Narayan, 1945:39) They do not interrogate individuality, pride and ego. Their lofty nature mirrors their energetic relationship. Susila realizes that a girl is a liability for the parents of the Hindu society and their worry is her marriage. She saves money for their daughter's marriage and she does not want to trouble other people in their old age. Susila, representing every mother of the Indian society, worries for the wedding of her daughter, Leela.

Narayan represents Krishnan as a careful and loving father. He symbolizes typical Indian fatherhood. Everything is looked at from the point of view of little Leela. The greatest worry of Krishnan is to take down the child from the train in time. When they are in search of a rented house, the main focus is that their daughter Leela should have plenty of room for play. Seeing that the houses look alike, Susila comments: "The child will lose her way not knowing which her house is?" (Narayan, 1945:30) All these instances reflect that a 'parent-child' relationship is prominently observed in Indian families.

Krishnan's daughter, Leela in '*The English Teacher*' grows under the care of her father, Krishnan after her mother's death. The motherless child, Leela forces Krishnan to join the headmaster's 'Leave Them Alone School' and enjoy pleasure in the midst of the children, who seems to play the catalyst in the life of Krishnan. Leela is the only source of stability for Krishnan since the death of his wife, who

teaches him, even corrects him. She behaves like an adult and lives up to the truth of the epigram: The child is father of the man.

Krishnan's mother and his mother-in-law represent various manners of South Indian Hindu community. Both of them are ardent followers of Indian culture, traditions, and customs. The decoration of the threshold with green mango leaves and the floor and doorway with white flour designs by Krishnan's mother shows how Susila is given a warm welcome in a typical Hindu style. Before permitting them to get down from the carriage she moves a pan of vermilion in circles in front of Susila and her daughter Leela. The mother in law of Krishnan in order to show respect for a son-in-law does not present herself before him and speak. It reflects old tradition of Hindu family where the parents from the daughter's side always display obedient and polite conduct. The mother of the girl covers her face with saree while moving around in the son-in-law's house, which indicates respect for son-in-law.

Raju in '*The Guide*' (1958) has enjoyed love of parents. A deciding influence of father in Raju's life is witnessed in sending him to the school despite his discomfort. It is again the father who asks him to mind the shop. It shows Indian village where Raju grows under the father's discipline and mother's love in the traditional Malgudi. Raju's father is presented as the strong supporter of Hinduism. Hence, he does not like to send his son to Albert Mission School fearing that it may convert Raju into a Christian. Raju's father is moderate in his approach to education that his son is stripped of a good learning. Hence, he sends Raju to Pyol School.

The mother tells Raju a story of 'Devka' in the evening. Her intention is to let Raju realize importance of tradition, culture and moral aspects of life. It seems to be mother encouraging the son for the role of a saint. The stories are Indian and they have positive concern. Hence Raju's learning of first lesson begins at home with his first teacher, the mother. It reflects evening atmosphere of every home in India. Raju, a son of a middle class family grows under the care of his mother, a tradition bound old woman (Girila, 1984:49) and of father a small shopkeeper, a strict guardianship in the traditional atmosphere of Malgudi. As a child Raju seems to have enjoyed love of his parents. "The father in particular, seems to have a deciding influence in every sphere of the young boy's life." (Dnyate, 1996:44)

Relationship between man and woman in '*The Guide*' reflects influence of culture. After the death of father, Raju's looking after the railway shop and playing the role of adult underlines the end of Raju's innocent life and beginning of the life of experience. Raju cannot be left alone because he is felt to be naturally a public character. Whatever Raju does for them, he does with certain detachment, not for any private gain, but simply because they ask him. Anything that interests his clients is also his own interest. The question of his own interest is secondary. He

learns as he earns. Indeed, throughout his career he shows an amazing understanding of human psychology. With Raju's support, Rosie succeeds in developing her art of dancing and gains recognition. Rosie perceives Raju's contribution regarding Bharat Natyam in the words, "even if I have seven births I won't be able to repay my debt to you". (Narayan, 1958:104)

The timeless and unchanging values of the Hindu way of life are delineated by Jagan in *'The Vendor of Sweets'* (1967). Being religious, Jagan the protagonist performs prayers to the Goddess Lakshmi in the morning and recites *'Bhagvad Gita'* every day. Indian culture and tradition for Jagan are the powerful sources of his actual strength of life. After the death of his wife, Ambika Jagan takes care of his son, Mali. Like a true Indian father Jagan wishes his son's bright educational career and looks forward to his winning big prizes and enormous fame. He is very affectionate to his son even though his main interest is in money and its acquisition. When Mali threatens to leave home he like a typical Hindu father asks his cousin, 'As my good cousin, please try and stop him. I don't know how I can live in that house without him.' (Narayan, 1967:54-55)

Mali's determination to go to America for studying the art of novel writing propagates Gandhian philosophy and thoughts. Tendering often honour to the Indian culture and tradition, Jagan's patriotic feelings arouse in him and he thinks of *'The Ramayana'* written by Valmiki in the *'Dandka Forest.'* R.K. Narayan presents Jagan as a typical Indian father in welcoming Mali's decision to go to America. When Mali returns from America Jagan decides to leave responsibility of domestic affairs and business to his son, Mali and go for experience of sanyasa in the forest. Realizing that sanyasa is only a way of escape from the rules of society Jagan does not leave the home. It reveals that Jagan does not want to be free from the attachment to his son.

Rama Mehta's *'Inside the Haveli'* (1977) is a novel of tradition and culture of the small Oswal community of Udaipur. Gita, educated girl from Bombay, marries Ajay Singh the only son of Mewar. Gita's mother in law, however, is determined to mould her according to the traditions of the family, "Binniji", she said gently but firmly, "keep your face covered; by now you should be able to move about without uncovering your face." After a brief pause, as if to give emphasis to her words, she said, "Do not talk too much to your young cousins-in-law, it's not becoming. You know, the women are critical because you are still clumsy." As Gita finds no way out, she begins to accept the situation in which her parents have placed her. Nevertheless, Gita tries to adjust with the family tradition and laws of the Haveli. Instead of feeling disappointed, Gita is surprised to find herself strangely relieved.

Conclusion:

One can underline an intimate relationship between culture and literature as the skin of the palm. The way human beings talk and behave with the people show his culture. Culture teaches a way how to respect each other. Life of the human being is governed by culture. It brings harmony not only in the domestic life but also on the society. Consequently peace and non-violence, the principles which are preached by Mahatma Gandhi would save the individual and the society from arrival of disaster like destruction.

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