

**“A LITERATURE IS A MIRROR OF SOCIETY”**

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**Received:** 26/11/2016**Revised:** 02/12/2016**Accepted:** 6/12/2016**ABSTRACT:-**

Literature is the root *litteratura/litteratura* derived itself from *littera*; letter or handwriting was used to refer to all written accounts, though contemporary definitions extend the term to include texts that are spoken or sung or oral literature. Literature can be classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction and whether it is poetry or prose; it can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama; and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence certain aesthetic features or expectations. The concept has changed meaning over time; nowadays it can broaden to have non-written verbal art forms, and thus it is difficult to agree on its origin, which can be paired with that of language or writing itself. Developments in print technology have allowed an ever-growing distribution and proliferation of written works, culminating in electronic literature. Literature has varied over time; it is a culturally relative definition. In Western Europe prior to the eighteenth century, literature as a term indicated all books and writing. A more restricted sense of the term emerged during the Romantic period, in which it began to demarcate imaginative literature. Contemporary debates over what constitutes literature can be seen as returning to the older, more inclusive notion of what constitutes literature. Cultural studies, for instance, takes as its subject of analysis both popular and minority genres, in addition to works. The value judgment definition of literature considers it to cover exclusively those writings that possess high quality or distinction, forming part of the so-called *belles-lettres* fine writing tradition. This sort of definition is that used when it classifies literature as the best expression of the best thought reduced to writing. Problematic in this view is that there is no objective definition of what constitutes literature; anything can be literature, and anything which is universally regarded as literature has the potential to be excluded, since value judgments can change over time.

**Keywords:** - Aesthetic features, Expectations, Proliferation, Historical periods, Culminating, Broaden, Constitutes, Exclusive, Imaginative.

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The formalist definition is that literature foregrounds poetic effects; it is the literariness or poetic of literature that distinguishes it from ordinary speech or other kinds of writing. Jim Meyer considers this a useful characteristic in explaining the use of the term to mean published material in a particular field, as such writing must use language according to particular standards. The problem with the formalist definition is that in order to say that literature deviates from ordinary uses of language, those uses must first be identified; this is difficult because ordinary language is an unstable category, differing according to social categories and across history. Etymologically, the term derives from Latin literature / litteratura learning, writing, grammar, originally writing formed with letters, from litera / littera letter. In every part of the world, literature has been more or less, mirror of society. At the earliest stage, literature invariably takes the form of poetry, while prose is a much later creation, because prose develops with matured age. Poetry is out and out a product of imagination, while prose is the fruit of intellect. The earlier form of poetry is the epic. In Italian, Greek, German, English or Indian epic we can find a clear reflection of the ancient social history of the countries. Mark closely the contents of the Beowulf, the Illiad, the Odyssey, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and you will find in them a picture of the ancient life and society of the countries concerned. Even in the much later epics of England, Germany or India, you can find a similar picture of ways of life of the peoples or more recent times of those countries. Of course, poetry has more of the element of imagination than of reality, and therefore, it is not likely to be as much a faithful mirror of society as prose, or even as the drama. The drama is another mirror of society. The drama is partly a creation of imagination and partly of real life. The earlier dramas in every country are a more faithful picture of society than the later dramas, probably because the creator of poetry or drama at an earlier state of human history is far more imaginative than at the later stages which are marked by the production of prose literature such as the story, the novel, the tale and other. Of course, the essay probably the only form of prose literature which is the least faithful mirror of society although some of the essayists like Charles Lamb, Stevenson, Charlyle, Huxley, Churchill and other more modern writers of prose have reflected much of their contemporary life in their works. Biographies and histories are particularly intended to serve as the mirror of society.

The plays of Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, Goethe, Aeschylus, Plautus, Seneca, Kalidas, Shaw and others are more or less reflections of their own times and peoples, although there is quite a good element of imagination in every one of the works. The drama is a tale of action put upon the stage, and naturally, it must contain some elements of real life. Leaving aside the historical dramas, most of the other dramas in every country throw considerable light upon

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the social, political, moral and even economic life of the time and the people. The play of Shakuntala of our country or the plays of Shaw are to a great extent a mirror of the society of the ancient and modern times of India and England. But the most realistic forms of literature are the stories and the novels. The stories and the novels which deal particularly with the problem of social, economic and political life of a country are bound to reflect contemporary history, while those of other which deal with psychological problems are comparatively more imaginary and less real. A few of the stories and novels deal exclusively with historical themes, and such works are essentially realistic and serve as the correct picture of society. The novels of Scott, Galsworthy, Bankim Chandra, Sarat Chandra, Prem Chand, Chekov, Turgenev, and Maupassant are of this type. Most of the modern stories and novels of Russia and India are realistic and they do reflect the society of the times of their countries. The stories and novels of America or France or even of England have still in them a great element of imagination, and therefore, they, are the best mirror of society. As literature is mostly intended to serve as an escape from life, it should contain a great element of imagination, because imagination is a great means of escape from the realities of life. The function of literature being two-fold, namely, to instruct as well as to recreate it should contain both the elements of imagination and reality. If literature contained the element of reality, it would have been extremely boring to the reader, because very few of us would like to go to the theatre or to the screen or even to read such dramas, stories or novels which give us vivid and correct picture of human life and character. Nobody wants to see a repetition of the same joys and sorrows, the same cares and anxieties, the same smiles and tears, the same problems of life, the same human characters upon the stage or on the screen in print that one comes across daily in one's life. Everybody wants to live in a world of imagination or fiction and not of reality, because everybody in his daily round passes through the same world, the same human existence, and the same human nature or character either in himself or in others. Therefore, everybody wants some kind of beautification or glorification of things which one experiences in one's own life and which are comparatively either ugly or colorless. It is imagination that makes things colorful, while it is reality that makes things rather charmless and even unpleasant. So it is the works of the imaginative writers that provide food for recreation to the readers because they allow the readers to have a temporary escape from the realities of life; while the works of realistic writers serve as the mirror of society and contemporary life and times. Since literature reflects or is the mirror of the society, it has a very important place right from the history. It is basically a reflection of human action in that particular society and therefore, one would be able to clearly understand one's own weakness and strengths. Every action is captured in literature. Actions like, what people think, say, act and so on. Great writers have given wonderful literature to read and they have presented every character of their writing

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with so much perfection that the reader would feel the presence of drama, romance, betrayal, humor and almost all other feelings that we go through in life or see around us. Stories or acts are carefully and beautifully crafted based on life's of people surrounding us, and it is then just edited here and there without taking of the actual concept or reflection of the story.

If literature is the true reflection of a society, it does very well influence the younger generations and it would help the younger ones to realize where and how their forefather went wrong and how they could rectify it and forward. A way, in which society could guide their younger generations for tomorrow is what literature does. Literature has helped in shaping civilizations and changing political systems. However, there are certain drawbacks too. Since literature reflects the society, it also depends on the writer what he or she portrays. Since writing has great impact, there have been situations where the writers have even portrayed very badly the society thereby leaving a negative impact on the readers of their work. That should not be the motive or agenda. One should try bringing out the actual myths and facts in its original forms, rather than bending it as the writer's choice.

## CONCLUSION:-

We need to realize that Literature is definitely the mode of communication of bringing the past and present for the future to understand the flaws that has happened and to rectify it accordingly. In the era of fast gadgets like television and internet, reading has become at snail pace. However, there is nothing as good as knowledge and information that you acquire through reading and hence we need to read literatures of various places to deeply understand what and how the people of that place are. Development of the habit of reading in young children and help them get to read literature work, as they are the future and they needs to make sure to go ahead, taking corrective measures at places where their fore fathers failed. 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.

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