

## LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

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### Abstract

*The present paper examines the various perspectives of Language, Literature and Society and defines their apt relevance. The notion of language is being considered somewhat similar to life. Likewise life, to define language adequately is rather an awkward exercise. Language is a natural human growth; to some extent mental as well as physical. It remains changing incessantly; hence the nature of language is dynamic. It always undergoes a process of development. Language is human in its characteristics since only human possess it. Though, animals possess a system of communication, but it is not developed accurately. A child learns the language of the society which he lives in. The entire frame of culture and civilization fully depends upon language. Language is the means of communication among human beings through which human community grows and develops in this globe. The society cannot be thought of without language. It defines the approach of human behaviour. Language generates the thoughts and leads the entire frame of culture and civilization. All human beings are blessed with this precious gift. The history of human development justifies the importance of language. It has brought the gradual development of human life from Stone Age to Modern Era. In a literal sense, the word literature means 'things made from letters'. Literature is the source of human knowledge and the documentation of human experience. Literature helps to understand the world around us and preserves the morals of people. Some of the great literary works like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bible are considered the treasure houses which provide society with the guiding principles of life. Literature and society are closely related to each other since literature is the mirror of society. Sometimes literature and society inspire and even influence to each other. The philosophical or social movements illustrated through narratives add deep insight into human knowledge. The literary works reflects the nature and spirit of particular time. While surveying history, one finds that the religious facets are incorporated in Medieval literature, whereas Renaissance reveals the advancement in the fields of art and science. Similarly, the Romantic Movement concentrated on the importance and creativity of the individual and Modernist literature represents the place of individual in an era of industrialization and the menace of nuclear annihilation.*

**Keywords:** *Language, literature, society, dynamic, human development, communication, knowledge, culture, civilization*



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incessantly; hence the nature of language is dynamic. It always undergoes a process of development. Language is human in its characteristics since only human possess it in a systematic form. Though, animals possess a system of communication, but it is not developed accurately. A child learns the language of the society which he lives in. The entire frame of culture and civilization fully depends upon language. Language is the means of communication among human beings through which human community grows and develops in this globe. The society cannot be thought of without language. It defines the approach of human behaviour. Language generates thoughts and leads the entire frame of culture and civilization. All human beings are blessed with this precious gift. The history of human development validates the importance of language. It has brought the gradual development of human life from Stone Age to Modern Era.

Literature is the created through language. In a literal sense, the word literature means 'things made from letters'. Literature is the source of human knowledge and the documentation of human experience. Literature helps to understand the world around us and preserves the morals of people. Some of the great literary works like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bible* are considered the treasure houses which provide society with the guiding principles of life. Literature and society are closely related to each other since literature is the mirror of society. Sometimes literature and society inspire and even influence to each other. The philosophical or social movements illustrated through narratives add deep insight into human knowledge. The literary works reflects the nature and spirit of particular time. While surveying history, one finds that the religious facets are incorporated in medieval literature, whereas Renaissance reveals the advancement in the fields of art and science. Similarly, the Romantic Movement concentrated on the importance and creativity of the individual and Modernist literature represents the place of individual in an era of industrialization and the menace of nuclear annihilation.

### **The significance of Language:**

Language is one of the most important achievements of human community. To express their feelings and thoughts, animals too have some specific sound system but it cannot be considered 'language' in a systematic form since it has neither distinct nor any purposeful meaning like human speech. The bird like parrot can articulate some words similar to human beings if taught or trained, but proper and effective communication is not possible because it has certain limited sounds which cannot express the feelings or thoughts like human beings.

The speech of parrot remains mere imitation of a few words. In the course of development of human language, the formation of human body and its features remain very supportive. It has been viewed that man achieved the high-straight movement at the initial stage and started using hands in place of mouth to catch the things. Thereafter human could produce various sounds. It has also been thought that when man would have started living family life together, the need to express individual feelings and thoughts became essential, and out of which human language born. The arbitrary sound produced by human being is a distinctive system through which the social communication is made possible. Language is considered a social phenomenon.

### **Indian Languages:**

Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattejir appreciates the status of Indian Languages as:

Our Aryan speech is one of our greatest heritages in India. India is a land of many races and many speeches, and the diverse elements which go to make up the conglomeration of the Indian People and Indian Culture received their tone and their common bond of union in the Aryan language and the mentality behind it....As Sanskrit and as Pali, as the ancient North-Western Prakrit and Ardha-Magadhi, and as Apabhramsa, and later as Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Bengali, and Nepali, and the rest, the Aryan Language came to be indissolubly linked with the Culture of India at various epochs and in various areas. The history of the Aryan Language in India shows an uninterrupted progress for some three thousand and five hundred years within India itself, and its pre-Indian history can be dimly perceived in Iran, in Iraq and Eastern Asia Minor for about a thousand years more; and even prior to that, we can draw from existing linguistic material fairly probable conclusions for another five hundred or even thousand years.....No other speech-group can show such a long and continuous history as the Aryan in India....(Vyas 12).

The Languages are classified as per the similarities in meaning and sound-elements among various languages as well as their geographical attachment. Such classifications are named as traditional, ancestral or historical. The similarities in the languages of the regions geographically placed nearby and their similar meaning-elements are considered the languages of one family or lineage. Indian languages are categorized in two family/groups: 1-Indo-European languages: Vedic and Sanskrit, Ancient Irani, Avestan, Ancient Greek,

Ancient Latin, Germanic, Slovakian etc. and some languages originated from these languages :English of Europe, French, Italian etc. and Modern Indian languages like: Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi and Bangali. 2- Dravidi Languages: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannad, Gondi and Brahui.

### **Gujarati Language:**

Dr. K. B. Vyas observes in *Gujarati Bhasha- Udgam, Vikas ane Swaroop* that Gujarati, the language of Gurjars, is originated and developed gradually from Apabhramsh constructed by Hemchandracharya. The first reference of name - “Gurjar Bhasha” is available from *Nalakhyan* and *Dashamskandh* written by Bhalan (Bhalan 326-1, 326-15). Though, the references of Gujarat region are also accessible since ancient time. The literary texts like Palhan’s *Aburas* (vikram samvat 1289), Prabhachandasuri’s *Prabhavakcharitra* (vikram samvat 1334) and Devprabhaganina’s *Kumarpalras* (15<sup>th</sup> century) often mention the name *Gurjardesh*. Dr. Devdatta Bhandarkar and A.M.T. Jackson have observed many important things in their research regarding the arrival of Gurjar in Hind and their residence in this region. Surveying their study, it seems that the Gurjar community of Shaka family arrived in 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century A. D. in Hind and passing through Southern- Punjab it settled in Rajaputana. Bhinnamal was the capital of Rajputana and thereafter this strong kingdom extended towards Kanoj in the east and Kathiyavad in the south. The eminent Gujarati scholar Narsinhav Divetia divides the development of Gujarati language in six eras: 1- Apabhramsh- till 11<sup>th</sup> century -Vikaram Samvat, 2-Madhya Apabhramsh- till 13<sup>th</sup> century- Vikaram Samvat, 3- Ancient Western Rajasthani- From 13<sup>th</sup> century to 1550- Vikram Samvat, 4-Ancient Gujarati- 1550 to 1650- Vikram Samvat, 5-Medieval Gujarati- 1650 to 1750-Vikram Samvat, 6-Modern Gujarati- after 1750- Vikram Samvat (Vyas 103-105)

### **Hindi Language:**

*Hindi Sahityaka Itihas* elucidates the entire frame of growth and development of Hindi language. It has been viewed that the origin of Hindi language is believed from Khadi Boli. If it is viewed as one of the languages form the eight dialects of Western and Eastern Hindi, its birth can be considered from Shaurseni Apabhramsa. The period of origin of Hindi language is estimated 1000 A.D. approximately. The scholars of Hindi language observe the source and development of this language since the time of Vedic Sanskrit. Some of the Hindi words are also found in Pali and Prakrit languages. The entire period of development of Hindi language is divided into three categories: 1- Ancient Period (1000 to 1500 A.D.) 2 Middle

Period (1500 to 1800 A.D.) and 3 Modern Period (1800 A.D. to present time). The ancient period is considered undeveloped from historical point of view wherein the accepted language of Stone-inscription (*Shilalekh*) or Copper-sheet (*Tamrapatra*) was Sanskrit or Prakrit language and the use of Hindi seems insignificant at this stage. During this period two languages are available: Padvarti Apabhramsa or Avahatta and Native language or Dingal-Pingal. The eminent poet Vidyapati wrote *Kirtilata* and *Kirtipataka* in Avahatta and *Rasokavya* in Dingal-Pingal. The middle period of Hindi language started as a golden era for the further advancement of Hindi dialects. A number of texts were written in Avadhi and Vrajabhasa. The great sage Tulsidas wrote *Ramacharitmanas* (1574) in Avadhi language and Surdas as well as Nandadas wrote in Vrajabhasa. Vrajabhasa received the large acknowledgment as literary form of language during this time. Even literary creation was also conducted in Khadi Boli. Hindi was unchained from the influence of Apabhramsh and the use of Sanskrit vocabulary in dialects was also practiced in the middle period. The phase of eighteenth century is considered an era of 'ruin of Vrajabhasa', henceforth Khadi Boli (Urdu) remained the centre of attention and acquired its importance among Muslims. The British conducted experiments in the prose form of Khadi Boli for Hindus at the beginning of eighteenth century. The writers like Bharatendu and Dayananda were the chief propagandists and this period is recognized as 'Harishchandri Hindi' owing to which the art of printing invented. Due to the varying factors like time and place, Hindi language received various forms in the course of time: Magahi, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Kannoji, Badhelkhandi, Bundelkhandi, Vraj, Khadiboli, Bangaru, Mevati, Hadauti, Marvadi, Mevadi, Malvi, Bhili, Khandeshi, etc. The literature written in all these forms is also called Hindi literature. Hindi literature has also been classified under various names. For example, Siddha Literature, Jain Literature, Nath Literature, Raso Literature, Laukik Literature and Prose Literature. The Hindi literature depicts social, political, religious, cultural and literary background of diverse times and the spirit of its people. The states where Hindi language is used are: Himachal Pradesh, some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttarpradesh, Madhyapadesh and Bihar. There are five sub-languages and ten dialects in the entire field of this language (Dr. Nagendra 6-17).

### **English Language:**

Likewise Hindi, English language has also become the official language in some states of India and has been considered a *lingua franca* in the country. It has acquired its prestigious

status and has become one of the Indian languages. The tradition of Indian Writing in English initiated during the period of the British rule in India. It has been developed into a new form of Indian culture reflecting Indian customs and traditions, social values along with Indian History in the course of time. M. K. Naik in *A History of Indian English Literature* notes that “Indian English Literature began as interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India...it may be defined as literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality...is not a part of English literature, any more than American literature can be said to be a branch of British literature. It is legitimately a part of Indian literature, since its differentia is the expression in it of an Indian ethos” (Naik 1-4).

The appearance of foremost trio- Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao- on literary scene is considered to be the most significant event in the history of Indian English literature during 1930s. With the publication of Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) the novel in English may be said to have come of age. Thereafter, a number of novelists offered their best to enrich this form of literature. Besides, Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, the novelists like Bhamini Bhattacharya (*Shadow From Ladakh: 1966*), Manohar Malgonkar (*The Princes:1963*), Khushvantsinh (*Train to Pakistan:1956*), Balachandra Rajan (*The Dark Dancer:1959*), Kamala Markandaya (*Nectar in a Sieve:1954*) and Anita Desai (*Bye-bye Blackbird:1971*) have considerably enriched the Indian English novel.

In the recent years, Indian fiction writers have received worldwide readership. The Indian Diaspora has attempted to bring astonishing realities located in the Indian rural culture. The eminent personalities in this field are: Vikram Seth (*The Golden Gate 1986, A Suitable Boy 1993*), Shashi Tharoor (*The Great Indian Novel 1989*), Amitav Ghosh (*The Shadow Lines 1988*) and Rohinton Mistry (*Such a Long Journey 1991*). Some of them have been honored prestigious literary status or nominated for such honour. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) brought unpredicted changes. The prejudiced Western attitude towards Indian literary talent started changing when Rushdie ushered in a new writing trend by using hybrid language. His *Midnight’s Children* received the Booker prize in 1981, Booker of Bookers in 1992 and Best of the Bookers in 2008. Women writers like Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri have focused on women’s predicament and condemned the female exploitation in their novels. Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*

(1997) received ample critical attention and honoured with Booker Prize. Likewise Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) obtained Booker prize. Chetan Bhagat, known as the icon of youth, is the most recent energetic writer whose creativity has offered a new image to Indian English Fiction.

Hence, in spite of its late beginning, novel in Indian Writing in English has proved its worth. Looking to its entire frame, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand are considered its founding figures and the novelists like Malgonkar, Bhamini Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande stood as its designers while V. S. Naipaul, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, etc. have authenticated to be the consolidators of this literary form. While appreciating its stature, Rushdie very aptly remarks that the novelists "are in a position to conquer English Literature" (qtd. in Iyer ii).

### **Indian Literature:**

Umashankar Joshi, the stalwart of Gujarati literature scrutinizes the idea of Indian literature as: "Indianness is rather an ongoing search for, a vision of, a pattern of Indian literature and culture to which the literature and culture in every part of the country is more or less converges". He is of the view that we (Indian) shall always be viewing the composite identity of Indian literature within the parameters of the composite culture of India and ... true Indianness transcends India and genuine Indianisation is a synonym for humanization (qtd. in Satchidanandan 268). Hence, Joshi observes the Indian ethos as one of the synthesis rather than exclusiveness. E.V Ramkrishnan considers the relocating of Indian literature in contexts of caste, gender, region, religion, etc., where issues of everyday struggles for subsistence in a living society find their expression ... and views that "literature is shaped by the material condition of society" (Ramkrishnan 18).

Broadly speaking, Indian literature consist everything which can be defined under the term 'literature'. It covers up religious and mundane, epic, lyric, dramatic and didactic prose as well as oral poetry and song. Sisir Kumar Das observes its historical formation in a chapter on 'The Vision of India' that along with novel *Gora*, the song 'Bharat Tirtha' and national anthem composed by Tagore in 1911 offered a vision which guided the struggle for independence and gave people its identity. Das further analyses the disputed vision of India wherein Gandhi's vision of India, like Tagore's, was also pluralistic. Despite its multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society, a strong Hindu component resisted it occasionally. For instance, Tilak and Aurobindo gave Indian nationalism a religious hue,

while Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, the two powerful leaders, strengthened that tradition (Das 351-352). As Tilak translated the *Bhagavad-Gita* and favoured the Ganpati festival to generate religious identity while Aurobindo sang the philosophy located in the Vedic culture to strengthen the magnificence of Indian civilization. Indian Literature is the mirror of Indian culture and its rich ancient tradition. India has a woven tradition of storytelling. The various sources of stories like *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesh*, *Jatakas* and *Katha-Sarit-Sagar* are found as witnesses to such rich heritage in Indian literature. Likewise dramas, poetry and epics have existed for centuries in India. The *Ramayana* by Sage Valmiki and the *Mahabharata* by Vyas are sung and enjoyed by many people since Vedic periods. Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and Bhasa are considered its champions in conceptualizing the theatrical representation of ancient mythology. The overall picture of Indian literature promotes the idea of attaining the four *purusharthas*: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. It has been observed that regional literature in Hindu culture was first traced in Sanskrit literature in India. Hindi literature followed the same tradition directed by Sanskrit scholars. Regional literature is thought of its vital and indissoluble body of writings. Though long, yet the journey of regional literature in India is very rich which reveals the tale of changing tradition of India. The Regional identities as Das remarks have always been dominant features of the Indian cultural matrix, and every Indian has multiple identities with regard to language, religion, caste and education (Das 386-87).

Rene Wellek in *Theory of Literature* explains the relationship between literature and society that 'Literature is a social institution....it represents 'life' and 'life' is, in large measure, a social reality'. The poet himself is a member or say part and parcel of society. Wellek views that a large majority of the questions raised by literary study are, at least ultimately or by implication, social questions: questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols and myths. The artist conveys truth and necessarily, also historical and social truth. Literature is really not a reflection of the social process, but the essence, the abridgement and summary of all history. De Bonald states that "literature is an expression of society" (Rene Wellek 94-95).

Literature echoes existing social scenario of the society. It illustrates the narratives representing the communities, biographies, human relation, ethics, virtues, vices, etc. Hence, literature remains varying in the course of time in accordance with the taste, philosophy and feeling of its people.

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