

Literature for Spiritual and Moral Development



Roshni Bharilya

Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Education,
Jiwaji University,
Gwalior, M.P.



Devendra Pathak

Teacher,
Deptt. of Education,
M.S. Setkhedi, M.P.

Abstract

Literature is the some total of ultimate aspirations and imaginative outpourings of a class of people or society. Literature enables people to see through the lenses of others therefore it becomes a looking glass into the world as others view it. The study of literature allows people to develop new ideas and ethical standpoints and can help individuals to present themselves. Literature continues to transmit from one generation to the others messages of cultural awareness, of beliefs, spiritual growth, ideals and manifestations of the human spirit.

For many centuries in the known western world, the Bible was the book. The wisdom and moral instruction in the old and new Testament was the sole template to measure one's life and account for life's troubles, with the discovery of printing, the wider role of literature in moral education was praised.

In this paper our aim is to know the importance of literature and its contribution in spiritual and moral development of the individual, moral development through literature, spiritualism and how it differs from religion, spiritual benefits of literature, spiritual experiences of the Eastern and Western writers in their writings and its role in uplifting man morally and spiritually.

The study of literature takes us beyond our limited experience of life to show us the lives of other people. It stirs us intellectually and emotionally and deepens our understanding about morality and spirituality.

Keywords: Spiritual Development and Moral Development.

Introduction

Literature is the sum-total of the ultimate aspirations and imaginative outpourings of a class of people or society. Among all the arts, literature invades time and space like a monarch. Literature unfolds before the reader an inexhaustible fund of knowledge. It can bid us our reason to follow a patient analysis of cause and effect.

English literature allows us to understand the philosophical movements and ideas that permeated a particular culture at a particular time. As with all world literature the English literature has been a key for understanding the world and a means of inspiring and supporting cultural and social movements. Inspired by folklore this literature continue to transmit from one generation to the others messages of cultural awareness, of beliefs, spiritual growth, ideals and manifestations of the human spirit.

“Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it, it enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become.” – C.S. Lewis, a British scholar and Novelist.

Literature and Moral Education

For many centuries in the known western world, the Bible was the book. The wisdom and moral instruction in the old and new Testament was the sole template to measure one's life and account for life's troubles, with the discovery of printing, the wider role of literature in moral education was praised. Understanding of literature is essential in developing the self and in understanding how moral struggles are met by characters in a variety of situations. In secular education these works of literature stand in for sacred texts. They provide a base of narratives from which to draw inspiration, ideas and moral standards; furthermore, they often address spiritual concerns head on.

Throughout the canon of English Literature issues of morality, moral crisis, and moral identity are frequently addressed in profound ways. From the very beginnings of the English Literacy tradition to contemporary literature we see the glimpses of this:

Shows the transformation of a privileged prince into a grieving figure questioning his own moral identity through the moral struggle of death, wavering through various philosophical options and reactions. Thus, the reader is left to undergo the moral transformation that the play's title character, Hamlet, cannot.

The Holy Sonnets of John Donne are frequently used to show one's struggle to understand death through a Christian lens. Holy sonnet x and xiv are the most frequently read because they deal directly and in sophisticated ways, with the human struggle with death and salvation. The complexity of this moral journey and sophistication make it prime example of the more moral development.

Shows a struggle to understand our ability to fulfill our vocations under the constant threat of our morality, while his great epic **Paradise Lost** deals with humanity's fallen nature. Many of his poems seek to answer the call to God's vocation and moral demands in an individualized personal way.

In the 18th century, Alexander pope and Jonathan swift presented responses to the era's crisis of morality.

Shows the foolishness of vanity. In the span of his work, the moral and autonomous self struggles against the greater systems that would oppress it. Jonathan swift in a similar light seeks to put all of humanity under the same moral guidelines. These works underline the importance of creating an independent moral.

Nineteenth-century American Literature is full of moral texts that call the reader to an elevated moral state. Placed against the struggle to abolish slavery, many texts mainly Uncle Tom's cabin, seek to portray slavery as a corrupt institution oppressing thoroughly moral slaves who want nothing more than what they own by God's creation. The text shows the struggle of an individual's morality against a corrupting system.

Into the 20th century, texts like "**Twelve Angry Men**" and '**To kill a Mockingbird**' highlight a similar individualized moral struggle against society. The 20th century text, so concerned with the struggle for individual identity, is full of self-defining moral crises. Moral crises and the struggles to resolve them are the centerpieces of texts and relate to the development of spirituality and morality as the greatest way to respond to a greater system in which we all live.

Spiritual Experiences of the Writers for Spiritual Development

Sri **Aurobindo** engaged himself for forty five years in the practice of Yoga, and developed a philosophy of complete affirmation, affirming the reality of the world from the ultimate standpoint and the meaningfulness of socio-political action from the spiritual standpoint. According to him India has been always in man, the individual a soul, a portion of the divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in nature of the universal self and spirit. **Aurobindo** has his real interest in a higher stage, which according to him is spiritual or supra mental education. This does not imply the annihilation of the individual but his enrichment through contact with the Absolute. The spiritual stage transcends the mental and the psychic stage. The spiritual consciousness

goes beyond time and space and is identification with the infinite and the eternal. In the spiritual life there is no sense of separate self. In the **Evolution** he says about his own experience:

**A might no human will or force could gain,
A knowledge seated in eternity,
A joy beyond our struggle and our pain
Is this earth-hampered creature's destiny.**

Rabindra Nath Tagore

Rabindra Nath Tagore, a man of versatile genius and achievements was also the spiritual writer. **Gitanjali** is his magnum opus in which he spiritualized his sorrow. It is an immortal work of art and prayer of God. It consists of poems which are offering of the finite to infinite. The theme of **Gitanjali** is the realization of God through self-purification, love, constant prayer and devotion surrender to God through service of humanity. In the **Gitanjali** there is a wide variety of love-love for fellow beings, love for God, love for humanity, for nature, for country, for beauty and truth. Tagore has a comprehensive view of life. By describing spiritual experience he says that one morning he was gazing upon the rising sun when all of a sudden "**a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and is found the world batched in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. The radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart and flooded it with universal light.**"

Other poems of Tagore, **Punasca, Bicitrita, Bithika, Ses Saptak** and **Ses Lakha** are intensely spiritual.

John Bunyan

John Bunyan's **pilgrim's progress** is the book which shows the spiritual journey of a person (Christian). It shows the process of spiritual development. According to his own account, John Bunyan led a dissolute and reckless life in his years of early youth. His sense of sinfulness subsequently plunged him into a chronic despondency. He began to be afflicted by a strange spiritual conflict. There was a continual struggle in his mind between faith and doubt. Ultimately the impulse for self reform became so strong that he made up his mind to give up all worldly pleasures. The pilgrim's progress is not merely that of a Christian soul and its earthly journey towards eternity but is also the story of the pilgrimage of Bunyan himself. Bunyan, through a dream, relates his own spiritual adventures, temptations, and dangers. All these spiritual experiences help us to quest spirituality.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson was called in his own day, "**the sage of concord**" is "**the father of American Transcendentalism**". He is the founder of the "Transcendental club" in concord. His small prose-poem 'Nature' has been called "**the Bible of Transcendentalism**" and his influence has been profound and far reaching. 'Transcendent' means 'beyond' and 'above' hence a transcendentalist is one who believes in the existence of the divine world, beyond and above the world of senses. The divine can not be known by reason or rational analysis, but it can be felt and experienced by the spirit through intuition. The divine is referred to as 'the over soul' by

Emerson and it was referred to as the “**Soul of all the worlds**” by Wordsworth. The external world is but the raiment or outer-covering of the divine. Man can know the divine and ultimately become one with it through the agency of nature which speaks to the soul and not to the reasoning faculty. The transcendentalists stressed the worth of the individual, the dignity of the human soul. They taught man to rely on himself, on his own intuition, natural instincts and impulses, and not on any authority outside himself.

Spiritual Benefits of Literature

There are mainly four spiritual benefits of reading literature:

It Increases Our Capacity to Identify and Resist Evil

A passive mind seduced by endless entertainment is a mind vulnerable to seduction and deception because it is a mind that has almost no will of its own. We cannot expect to resist evil without an active commitment to embrace the good. There are many instances in scripture where we are reminded that we should be as serious about identifying the good as we are about avoiding the bad.

We Assist in the Ongoing Restoration of All Things

That is a bold statement, but revelation often hinges on our mind's capacity to ask a new question and new questions arise with new information and new context. This is only provided by the great literature. We would assist the work of lord with a commitment to seek new information and to check our contextual understandings to make sure they are sufficient to make good judgments.

It Teaches Compassion, Not Identification

On this point, C.S. Lewis quotes incomparable and most appropriate: “**Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality. There are mass emotions which heal the wound; but they destroy the privilege. In them our separate selves are pooled and we sink back into sub individuality. But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like a night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad of eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in Worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend my self; and am never more myself than when I do**”. (an experiment in criticism, 137-8).

It Enhances Critical Distance and Facilitates Critical Thinking

If we are eager to be corrected, to see the world in a new and better way, then literature can

provide the means by which we come to see ourselves and others in proper context. We are, by nature, world-makers. We live inside an idea of the world that we have generated by habit, culture, upbringing, and a myriad of external influences. What a pity would be to spend our lives in petty issues. Literature puts us in a position from where we can gain enough distance from our biology and upbringing and habitual perceptions and thoughts to gain a margin of freedom to change.

Conclusion

Thus, we can say that the aim of literature is not only to amuse the readers but it has its unique importance and higher purpose also. Various writers, Eastern and Western, have expressed their internal experiences, in the form of philosophy, in their writings which are benefiting the readers in their moral and spiritual development. The intellectualized form of man and society which we see today is only because of the contribution of those writers and their writings. Teaching and preaching of those writers enhance one's awareness, knowledge, spiritual and moral potential that is necessary to live better and elegant life.

At last, we can say that without opening the door of literature it is impossible to see the world of all kinds of knowledge.

Reference

1. Emerson, R., The American Scholar,
2. Laurence James C.(2010); Educational Thoughts, Rajat publications ,New Delhi,p.n.98,256
3. Lall, R. (1995); The pilgrim's Progress,Rama Brothers educational publishers,New Delhi,p.n.1-2,34.
4. Tiwari, Banerjee & Tripathi; A background in the history of English Literature, Garg Publishing House, Ghaziabad, p.n.1-2.
5. Verma K. K. (1974); Educational and Philosophic Thought, the associated publisher, amballa cantt, p.n.265.
6. ELT Quarterly; Vol.15, issue 1, June 2013.
7. ELT Quarterly; Vol.14, issue 1-4, March 2013.
8. Pariprakshya, Shaikshik Yojana aur Prashasan ka Samajik Arthik Sambandh; year13, issue2, August 2006, p.n.112-114.
9. Pariprakshya, Shaikshik Yojana aur Prashasan ka Samajik Arthik Sambandh;year8,issue1-2, August 2001, p.n.123-126.
10. www.enlightened-spirituality.org
11. www.mental health.org.uk
12. exhumator.com:literature, moral development.in