

LITERATURE - MIRROR OF SOCIETY

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Abstract: literature teaches us how to live. Literature makes the reader visit places, experience events, meet people, listen to them, feel their joy and suffering. It takes years to acquire so much wisdom that one book of literary virtues inculcates the reader. Literature reflects society and its manners.

Keywords: literature, experience, realistic, modern society, wisdom, mirror.

Literature is important in everyday life because it connects individuals with larger truths and ideas in a society. Literature creates a way for people to record their thoughts and experiences in a way that is accessible to others, through fictionalized accounts of the experience.

Literary tradition is both oral and written. Civilizations that existed without a written language still managed to pass down their stories through oral telling. Many Native American cultures practice an oral literary tradition. The primary use of literature in ancient settings was to pass down customs, beliefs and traditions to the younger generations. In more recent centuries, literature has taken on a more comprehensive role of mirroring society in order for humans to study themselves and understand the underlying truths common to all people. For students, studying literature is a critical component in education, as it teaches students to see themselves reflected in art. This allows people to learn about life and truth. Literature also helps people to see life from the perspective of another. Identity-based literature teaches the reader what life is like.

Literature is one way for us to hear the voices of the past and work with the present. It is the way for the present to connect to the possible future. We learn about history we didn't experience. The customs we are not familiar with or that read to what we do now, it unlocks the culture of the time period, and in a way can give wisdom to the modern society about life, allow us to interpret our own life and emotions and we find ways to relate to the story so we in turn can reflect.

Literature is the most invisible with the five senses and the most visible with feelings, Literature is always realistic, it is about life. It is life when we get involved in it even it is legendary, unbelievable, and whatever it talks about, it is life because it is created and produced by people from their life. For others, helping them to be more understanding and respectful of those around them.

In *A Defense of Poetry*, P.B. Shelley wrote, "A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination."

Literature teaches us how to live. Literature makes the reader visit places, experience events, meet people, listen to them, feel their joys and sufferings. It takes years to acquire so much wisdom that a single book of literary merit instills in a reader. Literature mirrors the society and its mannerisms. Because of Charles Dickens you can experience the *Hard Times* of the Victorian England without going through a detailed historical study. The fact-based education system, the fractured human relationships, the smokey polluted towns, the ill-effects of Industrial Revolution, the misery of labourers, the mercenary instincts of men and the flawed legal system of the land....this single book will give you an entire picture of the evils of Victorian English Society. Wordsworth's poetry makes you feel his aesthetic delight at the sight of *Daffodils* and the tranquility of the song sung by a *Solitary Reaper*. Similarly, Eliot makes you pity the spiritual barrenness of the world that has turned into *Wasteland*. Wilfred Owen forces you to think about the *Insensibility* of the state and people who glorify wars. Literature is a storehouse of all knowledge and wisdom. History, Political Studies, Philosophy, Science and all other forms of learning are part of literature, as Wordsworth puts it: *Poetry (and all literature by extension) is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge...the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.*"

What is Art by the great Leo Tolstoy explains the importance of all art to human society. Here is a critical excerpt:

As, thanks to man's capacity to express thoughts by words, every man may know all that has been done for him in the realms of thought by all humanity before his day, and can in the present, thanks to this capacity to understand the thoughts of others, become a sharer in their activity and can himself hand on to his contemporaries and

descendants the thoughts he has assimilated from others, as well as those which have arisen within himself; so, thanks to man's capacity to be infected with the feelings of others by means of art, all that is being lived through by his contemporaries is accessible to him, as well as the feelings experienced by men thousands of years ago, and he has also the possibility of transmitting his own feelings to others.

If people lacked this capacity to receive the thoughts conceived by the men who preceded them and to pass on to others their own thoughts, men would be like wild beasts...

Finnish-Swede **Christer Haglund**, the director of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia, said in his opening speech that the voices and stories of ethnic minorities enrich the world of literature. He stressed that the history of the world has been shaped by migrations – people have always run from wars or tried to find better living conditions. This kind of migration is a process that we should not be afraid of, because different cultures can enrich one another.

According to **Jelena Skulskaja**, who is a Russian writer, translator and journalist living in Estonia, every writer chooses their own genre to write in based on their world view. She believes that literature does not serve the purpose of contributing to integration, but that it is a form of art to be enjoyed. Writers are part of their language and not the other way around – people's way of thinking differs from language to language depending on the structure of the language. Naturally, every author dreams of other people reading their work as well, but if people do not care about their own culture then they will never take an interest in foreign literature and culture. This is why literature is not an integration project – writers write for the whole world, but at the same time only to one person: their reader.

It took four years for **Hassan Blasim** to walk from Iraq to Finland, where he now resides as a refugee. As a child he dreamt of becoming a writer, because writing gave his life meaning. Blasim made a thought-provoking point: Iraqis consider him westernized, while at the same time he is not fully accepted by Finnish people either. This is a complicated situation that can lead you to believe you do not belong anywhere.

Finnish-Swede **Mathias Rosenlund** uses his books to address a topic that Finns find quite unpopular: poverty. He believes that people are reluctant to admit to themselves that not everyone around them is well off and that some people find it difficult to cope financially.

British writer **Mike Collier**, who lives in Latvia, has sought to encourage local Latvian writers to come forward with their previously unpublished works by participating actively in Latvian literary life and society. Satirical authors were persecuted in the 1930s and continue to be persecuted even now. Satire hurts people's feelings and people take it very seriously. The way society resonates in literature matters a lot to people.

Otto Kaarel Altoff, who studies at Tallinn Secondary School of Science, went to Lake Peipsi in order to get to know the culture of the Old Believers and to live in their homes for a few days, surrounded by their culture. Altoff stated that when it comes to strangers, national minorities are often protective of their culture in order to preserve it. In order to be able to explore a foreign culture, we have to be considerate, empathic and friendly towards it. The more aware people are of different ethnic groups, the greater the harmony in which we can all live together.

It is impossible to plan creation, because creation is like nature and always seems to have the upper hand, said **Rawdna Carita Eira**, a Sámi poet and playwright. Lapland requires people to adapt to it – you take what you are given instead of taking what you want. Rich in natural resources, Lapland is of great worth to the countries where it is located, but Sámi culture is closely intertwined with notions of land, water and air. To sing about something or someone in the Sámi language is to describe everything in its entirety. Sámi people do not live in a closed society. They welcome visitors and work together with other cultures. These people, who have historically been repressed, are now reaching out to others through different art forms so as not to be forgotten.

Poets **Chriman Karim** and **Juha Kulmala**, who participated in the Finnish Poetry Stage project, and Marja Mäenpää, the project's manager, agreed that translating poetry reveals that all poets deal with topics such as love, sadness and nature, regardless of where they live.

Azar Mahloujian was one of the supporters of the revolution in Iran. She worked in a library and was a respected member of society. When she came to Sweden in 1982 she suddenly became a nobody. Her education and work experiences seemed to mean nothing at all. It was as if she were a helpless child. But now she is free. She has proven her worth and rebuilt herself, so to speak. She now lives without censorship.

Anne-Ly Reimaa, the deputy secretary general for Cultural Diversity with the Estonian Ministry of Culture, said that common fictional characters bring people from different cultural backgrounds closer together and help them communicate with one another. This is why the Ministry of Culture supports the extensive translation of Estonian children's literature.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia organized the fourth Nordic-Baltic literature forum in cooperation with the Estonian Publishers' Association, the Estonian Writers' Union, the National Library of Estonia, Tallinn Central Library, the Estonian Librarians Association, the Finnish Institute in Estonia and the Nordic embassies in Tallinn. The literature forum also served as the opening of Tallinn Book Fair.

One of the best little summaries of the value of literature in the Christian life comes from Leland Ryken's book *Windows To the World: Literature in Christian Perspective*. Here's what Ryken writes: "Literature is life. If you want to know what, deep down, people feel and experience, you can do no better than read the stories and poems of the human race. Writers of literature have the gift of observing and then expressing in words the essential experiences of people.

The rewards of reading literature are significant. Literature helps to humanize us. It expands our range of experiences. It fosters awareness of ourselves and the world. It enlarges our compassion for people. It awakens our imaginations. It expresses our feelings and insights about God, nature, and life. It enlivens our sense of beauty. And it is a constructive form of entertainment.

Christians should neither undervalue nor overvalue literature. It is not the ultimate source of truth. But it clarifies the human situation to which the Christian faith speaks. It does not replace the need for the facts that science and economics and history give us. But it gives us an experiential knowledge of life that we need just as much as those facts.

Literature does not always lead us to the City of God. But it makes our sojourn on earth much more a thing of beauty and joy and insight and humanity." [3, p. 34]

Studying human condition is not enough. One has to feel that condition in order to gain wisdom. Literature provides for a richer life. No other form of learning brings the enrichment that reading brings. Literature is the torch-bearer that has helped civilizations to overcome the darkness of savagery. In the absence of the great Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Vedas India would not have been called the **Golden Bird** (Sone kichidiya). Similarly, what makes Greece the mother of European civilization is its great literature.

So, in the words of Tolstoy, without literature *men would be like wild beasts* because it endows an understanding, an empathy in the reader, even for someone who is much separated to him by time and distance. Literature unites mankind...

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