

## LITERATURE AND SOCIETY: A PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT:** Literature is nothing, but a mouthpiece of society. Literature is a process by which an individual can earn the socialization process. Therefore it is correctly said that literature is the mirror of society. From Geoffrey Chaucer to Albert Camus all are like prophets who considered literature as the only medium of reformation either it was individual or social. In Assamese Literature prominent figure like Lakshminath Bezborua developed the concept of social reformation ( contemporary Assamese society) through his satirical short stories. He took humour and farce as his weapons to eliminate social vice and follies from contemporary Assamese society. From my compact knowledge I can firmly said that the sole purpose of literature is to provide watchful eyes to society or guidance to society. Fall of Adam and Eve was the very first process of socialization and this particular process was written as literature. Literature is a social commentary of human life. Law, medicine, technology these are noble pursuits, but literature is written because we are members of human race. Love, pain, anger , jealousy , frailty these are characteristics of human race and literatures are their outer expressions.

**KEY WORDS-** Procrastination, Implied humour, Sociological, Practical humour, sheer verbalism etc.

**INTRODUCTION:** When Shakespeare wrote plays for English audiences, I think he went through a deep sociological study but the study was not only for his age, but for all ages. Shakespeare's audiences were quite interested in the tragedies of noble personalities like price, king, Moorish etc. Laymen's lives were full of obstacles ,

so they were interested in watching noble men's tragedies. Othello's jealousy, Hamlet's procrastination, Lear's pride all are traits of common human being. Perhaps Shakespeare's plays were collective studies of human emotions and passions. Shakespeare's characters are subjects of psychological excellence or turmoil. Therefore his plays are maxim of both sociological and psychological phenomenon e.g. critics like Ernest Jones in his path breaking work "Hamlet and Oedipus" fantastically portrayed Hamlet's repressed emotions somehow it is applicable for whole human race too.

Perhaps Shakespeare created a society through his plays where he took examples of all type of human psyche, there his plays were symbolic to human race.

Arthur Miller, the American dramatist, started writing his plays e.g. 'Death of a Salesman' opposing Shakespeare, he devoted himself to create different human society with different human problems. He wrote for modern audiences/ readers.

Miller realizes that Laymen's lives are full of complexities, peoples of his age were self-centered, so it was not the time of noble men's tragedy rather common man's tragedy. So he choose Willy Lowman, the character who represents all modern men. A man whose life is full of tragedies, a man with small job, a man of self respect, a complete representations of modern laymen. Miller argues in his 'Preface to Collected Plays' that he fulfils the demand of modern societies. Though he opposed Aristotle and Shakespeare's tragic vision but their purpose was same – the purpose to write for the sake of society.

I think, sex is common social desire. In ancient literature, sex was portrayed as moral illness but the same subject was frankly treated in the novels like 'Sons and Lovers'- characters like Paul Morel and Gertrude represents the repressed desire in us. The idea of sex perhaps got legitimate in our society through this novel. It is only through the medium of literature the idea of sex, gender, gay, lesbian find its implications in our society.

Literature , the weapon of social reformation- perhaps the idea of social reformation through literature found its root from the writings of John Milton, his ‘ Areopagatica’ was the first formal document of social reformation for its urged for freedom of expression.

Alexander Pope also tried to do a reformist act with the publication of ‘ The Rape of the Lock’- through the characters of Balinda and Baron he satirized the contemporary so called aristocracy , culture , fops and dandies of contemporary English society.

In Victorian age , poets like Matthew Arnold adopted literature as the tool of reformation- the Victorian age was the age of doubt and faith, it was the age shaken faith, values and morals were in melting pot. When Darwin’s ‘Origin of Species’ was published, it shook the faith of Victorians. Totally dissatisfied with his age , Arnold turns toward Greek culture and literature, he found solace in it. He started to give touchtone his own original works to old classics and produce it as the guide for the shaken Victorian faith.

George Bernard Shaw was an iconoclast and social reformist. He established his legacy with the help of literature. Shaw wanted to establish a new world according to his own revolutionary ideas. Shavian dramas are drama of ideas, he was more propagandist rather than dramatis. His Major Barbara, Candiada, Pygmalion, Chocolate cream soldier, Morel etc, all are social critique in some way .He questioned very rooted ideas of war, romantic love, corruption, education in his own way. Thus, he created his own society to replace the society full of follies.

Here , I want to the cite the example of prominent Assamese reformist Lakshminath Bezborua, he was humourist, satirist, and what not. His medium also literature. According to my perceptions his short stories were social critique rather than a piece of literature. His prominent tools were farce, sheer verbalism ,implied humour. Perhaps Sir Bezborua was influenced by the mock- heroic technique of Alexander Pope. Sir was from the era of British colonialism. He was the silent looker of the hollowness of contemporary of Assamese peoples. Prevailing caste system, opium eating habit, lazy behaviour of youths in contemporary society disturbed him. Short stories like “Dhowakhowa”, he criticized the habit of opium eating , in “ Fatema Bibi” he satirized the so called caste system. Bezborua also influenced by the

reformist and renaissance thoughts of Ram Mohan Roy and Vidya Sagar. In the short story “ Laokhowa” he criticized traditional religious beliefs and the caste system popularized by Brahmins. He was socialist and practical humourist.

World war Literature , were the genuine documents of during war and post-war society. Most of the war literature were depicting the horrors of the wars or post war mindset of European society. In this regard T.S Eliot’s ‘The Wasteland’ provided the harsh picture of shaken mindset of our societies. The condition between the poem and the historical context of modern era reveals that the poem is metaphorically illustrates the actual condition of modern Europe after World War I . Eliots uses the dialect of analogies to metaphorically depict the condition of post –war European society demonstrating the disillusionment of a generation.

The crisis of Europe during the modern era was the breakdown of its mindset.Eliot created a communication between the mind of poet and the mind of society. The meaninglessness of relationship in the wasteland, the futility of sexual desire, the communication gaps, lack of religious values all are the part and parcel of the Wasteland.

‘ The Wasteland’ is not only the poem of Europe but for whole universe, it is a social document, the poem goes beyond Europe and deals with universal dilemma. It represents the spiritual emptiness of whole world after the Great war.

‘ God is dead and we have killed him’- this philosophy of Nietzsche perhaps demonstrated by Samuel Beckett in his “ Waiting for Godot”- Vladimir and Estragon , two fellows hopelessly waiting for Mr. Godot, who never arrives.These two were perhaps represent the meaninglessness of existence in post war society. They were involved in meaningless acts, but the were mentally suffers from solitude , the minds were full of psychological turmoil. There religious faith were gone. They were unaware of their activities. The other characters Pozzo and Lucky were the symbols of capitalist class and working class respectively. Lucky was continuously exploited by Pozzo. The boy in the play perhaps represents flicker of hope in their

lives, which is seldom. The writer himself did not clarify, who the Godot is...perhaps he is nowhere, symbolizes nothingness- 'nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful.'

Literature also has educative power, the philosophy of 'Natural education' pioneered by Rousseau was applied by William Wordsworth in his nature poetry.

According to Rousseau, - 'Nature, human and physical environment are the sources of education. Learning by doing and getting experiences is the best learning.....'

Above philosophy of Rousseau was deeply rooted in Wordsworth's 'Lucy Poems'. Lucy, the true child of nature, she was born and brought up with nature. She finds solace in nature. Nature educated her, mother nature taught her humanity, tolerance and the life's lesson. In the five poems Wordsworth fascinatingly described Lucy's journey along with nature. In the final poem our poet shows his pain, that Lucy is no more 'Slumber did my Spirit Seal'- Lucy is dead, in a grief-stricken situation the poet concludes that- Lucy was the pure child of nature, and nature took her away.

Rousseau's back to nature was practically implied by Wordsworth in his 'Lucy Poems'.

Charles Dickens in his autobiographical novel 'David Copperfield' – superbly portrayed the contemporary education system in England, he criticizes the motto- 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. Dickens was the representative novelist of Victorian England. His novels were social commentary.

As Ezra Pound said "Poetry is about as much a criticism of life, as red-hot iron as criticism of fire."

I think, there is no good literature or bad literature- literature is produced by the society, for the society.

Literature is an art to reform society it can be for art sake or for life sake. We can conclude that we are members of human race, therefore literature is the perfect way to make a mark on all characteristics of human race.

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