

## The Intersectionality of Literature Law Culture and Society

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### ABSTRACT

*Literature expresses the thoughts and feelings of human mind which are intimately connected with and conditioned by new ideas, new experiences while law as the regime that orders human activities and relations through systematic application of the force of politically organized society, or through social pressure, backed by force in such a society. Like literature law is ubiquitous. If literature expresses social sympathies, naturally it is bound to exercise some positive influence on our mind and attitude. Society reacts to literature in a living way. An inspiring poem creates general influence on society. It rouses our feelings;-it may be imaginative at human ways of enthusiasm for welfare. Shelly has called poets the unacknowledged legislators of mankind. Here we have it in a nutshell. The function of legislator is to lay down the law, a settled course of action that people may follow. Poetry and literature generally do this in a quite unobtrusive way. Law brings a culture of discipline and safety to the society. Similarly, culture being a social distinction which makes a person takes secret pride in his/her intellectual pursuits, perhaps it inspires him/her to bring new law through legislation for the betterment of society. On the backdrop of this intertwined quartet, this paper touches upon some very theoretical perspectives pertaining to their transactional relationship. It discusses the fundamentals of literature, law, culture and society in general and importance of literature in the study of law and culture in particular. It further highlights how literature often finds its way into court rooms, extensively used by judges and lawyers.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Law and literature, society & literature, judges & literature, culture & society, place of literature in education.*

### How Law Is Defined-Meaning of Law

Law, in common parlance, means provisions which regulate the conduct of society, primarily generated by the legislative branch of government. Dictionary meaning of law is perplexedly enormous. In this connection let me tell you how different dictionaries define the word "Law".

Black's dictionary defines law as the regime that orders human activities and relations through systematic application of the force of politically organized society, or through social pressure, backed by force, in such a society. It also means the legal system, respect and obey the law. It further says the aggregate of legislation, judicial precedents, and accepted legal principles; the body of authoritative grounds of judicial and administrative action; esp., the body of rules, standards, and principles that the courts of a particular jurisdiction apply in deciding controversies brought before them.

"Some twenty years ago Roscoe Pound pointed out that two ideas are running through definitions of law: one an imperative idea, an idea of a rule laid down by the law making organ

of a politically organized society, deriving its force from the authority of the sovereign; and the other a rational or ethical idea, an idea of a rule of right and justice deriving its authority from its intrinsic reasonableness or conformity to ideals of right and merely recognized, not made, by the sovereign." Roscoe Pound, "More About the Nature of Law," in *Legal Essays in Tribute to Orrin Kip McMurray* at 513, 515 (1935).

"All law is the law of a group of individuals or of groups made of individuals. No one can make a law purely for himself. He may form a resolution, frame an ambition, or adopt a rule, but these are private prescriptions, not laws." Tony Honoré, *Making Law Bind: Essays Legal and Philosophical* 33 (1987).

"It will help to distinguish three senses of the word 'law.' The first is law as a distinctive social institution; that is the sense invoked when we ask whether primitive law is really law. The second is law as a collection of sets of propositions — the sets we refer to as antitrust law, the law of torts, the Statute of Frauds, and so on. The third is law as a source of rights, duties, and powers, as in the sentence 'The law forbids the murdering heir to inherit.'" Richard A. Posner, *The Problems of Jurisprudence* 220–21 (1990).

Section 2(h), States Reorganisation Act, 1956 says that law includes any enactment, ordinance, regulation, order, bye-law, rule, scheme, notification or other instrument having force of law in the whole or in any part of the territory of India.

A.K. Roy v. of Union of India, (1982) I SCC 271: 1982 SCC 3. (Per Ray, C.J.) 'Law' in Art. 21 means State-made law and includes both substantive and procedural law. Law must have some firmness; Bhagwati, J.) "Law" within its meaning must be a valid law and not only must it be the legislative competence of the Legislature enacting it but must also not be repugnant to any of the fundamental rights. In the case of *ADM Jabalpur v. Shivakant Shukla*, (1976), 2 SCC 521, 578. The word "law" in the expression "procedure established by law" (in Art. 21) means a law which is right, just and fair and not arbitrary fanciful or oppressive. In *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*, (1978) 1 SCC 248: 1979 SCC (Cri) 155, it was observed that the word, "Law" as used in this Part has different shades of meaning but in no other Article it appears to bear the indefinite meaning of natural justice.

A rule in the form of a command; a rule of action imposed on people by some authority that enforces obedience. "Strictly speaking, it is not possible to say that imperative law is a command in the ordinary sense of the word. A 'command' in the ordinary meaning of the word is an expression of a wish by a person or body as to the conduct of another person, communicated to that other person.

## LAW AND LITERATURE

Traditionally, the study of how lawyers and legal institutions are depicted in literature especially, the examination of law-related fiction as sociological evidence of how a given culture, at a given time, views law. In modern times, law and literature connote the application of literary theory to legal texts, focusing esp. on lawyers' rhetoric, logic, and style, as well as legal syntax and semantics. Some even term law as literature.

The connection between literature and life is intimate and vital. Literature is the expression of individual and social life thought. While the subject matter and treatment must be such as are of general human interest, the expression must be emotive: the form must yield aesthetic satisfaction. Literature appeals to men and women, so it must not be confounded with sociology, philosophy, religion or psychology, though these give substance and depth to literature. It may or may not impart knowledge, or religious or moral instruction. Its theme may be social problem or political revolution or religious movement; but it may confer, with equal justification, an individual's passion, problem or fantasy. But the- object is not so much to teach as to delight. Such delight comes: chiefly from a sense of life. No theme can make literature unless it is impassionate with life. Books are literature when they bring us into some relation with life. Herein lies its power and universal appeal. While there are some who take perfection of form to be the chief preoccupation of literature, many more are inclined to the view that the primary value of literature is its human significance. Its value depends upon the depth and comprehensiveness of the life that it embodies.

### **Literature Reflects the Truth of Life**

It used to be believed at one time that the deepest things in life are those that deal with what were called the eternal variabilities of life. The idea of God, for example, or of certain moral virtues were supposed to be eternal. But experience and a wider knowledge of the changing conditions of social life have shaken man's faith in the unchangableness of such concepts. It is found that ideas are deeply rooted in the material conditions of life, and, they change with those conditions which are never static. Thus different peoples have 'different ideas of the Godhead. The vengeful Jehovah of the Israelites is far different from the benignant deity whom, for example, the Vaishnavas worship. The God of a nomadic desert people cannot be the same as the God peaceful agricultural community. There are many who believe in a personal God; others worship an all-pervasive Presence in this Universe. The laws of the morality again undergo changes from country to country and from age to age. Chastity has been valued differently at different times and among different peoples. Hence in modern times, our conception the depth and profundity of literature is not related to this doctrine of eternal truths. We try rather to understand the forces behind these social changes; we try to the nature of these changes, and we understand them as the replacement of the old order by the new. Therefore with regard to literature, our idea of its value depends on the extent to which it has been able to express the changing conditions of social life; the emergent truths that supersede the discredited hoods of the past. Great literature always grasps and reflects these truths of life that emerge triumphant out of the wreckage of the past. Indeed, literature at its deepest has a revolutionary content, and is violently condemned by unreasoning hostility of contemporary orthodoxy.

### **Literature Deals with Society**

Literature is great -also -in proportion to its universality, to its power to supersede the narrow interests of a class in favour of humanity as a whole. It does not deal with the particular society of a particular community, but with society as a whole. For this reason, the literature that appealed to the people through the spoken word had a greater appeal than that which appeals through the written word —which may not reach all men. recited epics of Homer, the acted plays of Shakespeare, the chanted song' of Chandidas had a more extended appeal than our modern poets and novelists who express only segments of social life and direct their appeal to particular

social classes. Poetry that expresses intensely individual stand points, novels that depict the manners of a limited class or community, or deal with highly specialised problems, cannot surely be of the same level as are Tulsidas's or Krittibas's Ramayana which had and still have a mass appeal. This led Aristotle to affirm that the proper subject of poetry is action—human action, for the appeal of this is universal. But thought, or even emotion, may serve only a localised or limited area of human mind. What we do, interests everybody; what we feel or think may not do so.

### **Literature Must Have Social Function**

The restricted appeal of modern literature resulted from the dependence of writers on the patronage of high-born individuals necessarily such writers had to produce work that would appeal to their patrons primarily. As a result, their range became limited. But a compensation was offered by the delicacy and refinement of their work. The contrast between Chaucer and the balladists. Chaucer is the richer artist; his insight into life is also found; but he lacks the spontaneity, the range, the popular appeal of the ballad-writers. Such also is the difference between Bharat Chandra of Bengal and the anonymous poets of the Mymensingh ballads. Modern writers, depending on the patronage of educated and public, have developed a flair for expressing and situations that are subtle and complex in language that on the idiosyncratic. Wordsworth realised this when he made the revolutionary statement that poetry should use the language of common speech. The more literature is freed from its class limitations and becomes the expression of the thoughts and feelings of the common man, the community of working people, the more it will tend to conform to the Words Worthian doctrine, as the poet himself affirmed.

Literature must have a social function. It is only the class of social parasites living upon the people, who hold and practise the theory that literature is without any purpose, that the creation of a literary or artistic masterpiece is an end in itself. Great literature must always serve the needs of the people and it can discharge this function in two ways. For one thing, it must voice their inmost desires, their noblest aspirations. In the second place, by drawing the attention of the people to the emerging truths of life, the truths that come to the surface as a result of social struggles and conflicts, and lead the people forward to a higher plane of life and thought—it helps the people to come out of the shell of habits and traditions, and feel the vital energy of new ideas. That's what Walt Whitman meant when he said that the object of literature was "to free, amuse and dilate the human mind." Literature, in this sense, must emancipate the mind from its limitations, arouse it to a consciousness of the dynamic urge of life, and dilate its range so that it may not be encased within a limited sphere, but may feel powerful sympathy with universal man.

### **Place of Literature in Education**

There was a time when the study of literature and philosophy formed the basis of education. They proved the stable foundation upon which the superstructure of culture could be securely raised, But as time went on, what used to be considered so solid and secure was found to be somewhat shaky and unstable before the challenge of reality, Hence it was natural that their supremacy in the educational world should come to be seriously challenged, as science by its achievements began to engage the attention of man and to play a dominant part in human life. Knowledge of science gradually became indispensable in man's daily life. The question then

arose should literature continue to occupy its privileged position in our schools and universities? Or should the place of honour now go to science?

There is no doubt that in the modern world we cannot think of doing without science. Scientific knowledge is essential for all because we depend on scientific appliances every moment of our existence. No one therefore, would object to giving to science a place of importance in our curricula of studies. But that should in no way affect the position of literature. The aim and object of literature may be entirely different those of science. But it is something as important, and there is not, and need not, be any inherent antagonism between the two.

Literature deals imaginatively with the stuff of which life is made. The study of what the men of letters have thought felt has permanent interest for man. Literature gives us the unique experience of being in contact with a distinct which itself through some 'familiar matter of, real life or some strange fantasy. Science on the other hand deals with impersonal generalization of universal principles. If literature studies the objective facts of life, it is from a personal human point of view. It humanises every fact of life.

Literature, by bringing us into contact with the deepest reactions of the human mind elevates our minds. By expressing the profoundest emotions that have moved mankind through the ages, it helps to refine and sharpen our feelings. By presenting life in new aspects, or new facts of it, it brings us into contact or conflict with new experiences. The study of literature ends in an improvement of sensibility, and a certain depth of perception. Its best gifts are freedom of the spirit and an enlargement of the mind. It may thus be said 'to free, arouse and dilate the human mind'.

But exclusive preoccupation with literature may not be altogether wholesome. It may make one fanciful, sentimental and unrealistic in one's habits of thought. It thus promotes an escapist tendency, a desire to withdraw oneself from the realities of life and take refuge in dreams and fancies. But these effects, we must remember, are seen only when literature creates own special world, 'the land of one's heart's desire' with no basis in reality. Such literature is often the refuge of frustrated minds when increasing social contradictions leave one stranded in an unreal world. It may well be a harmful drug that paralyses the power to think.

In the medieval Universities of Europe the study of objects literature was classed under what were called 'the humanities'. Its object was the development of the human personality. Man is a complex entity; he has reason, feelings, aspirations and dreams. These elements of his nature need to be developed harmoniously. Literature was supposed 'to bring about this harmonious development of the human mind, to create a balanced personality. There is a tendency these days to make education utilitarian in character. The tendency is not to be discouraged by any means. Only its evils must be corrected and they may be corrected if the role of literature be properly appreciated and amply provided for in our educational system.

It is significant that in the most technically advanced country in the world, the U.S.A. the study of the 'humanities', as it is called, is compulsory in the science and technological institutes. If the aim of education is the creation of a balanced personality, the study of literature is bound to play an important part.

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## CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Culture is a word as much used as it is abused, because, on the whole, we are somewhat unclear as to what it actually a sense of standing on a higher pedestal by reason of one's accomplishment in something special. It is regarded as a social distinction, and with the crumbling of man's faith in the distinctions that birth and breeding one conferred, it is taken to be its equivalent and substitute in so far as its possession gave a consciousness of excellence as against their fellowmen. It is thus the counterpart of 'aristocratic' distinction under democratic conditions. At its best it makes a man take secret pride in his intellectual or aesthetic accomplishments. At its worst, it transforms one into a prig or a high-brow looking down the rest of mankind.

That, of course, is a very false and vulgar conception of culture. A modern writer has called it 'jackdaw culture'—a collection of charming misconceptions, undigested enthusiasms. It is the device of an unlearned member of an upper class to plume himself with borrowed feathers. It is born of vanity and its object is to deceive—the two things that true culture will always repudiate. It is mere outward varnish and veneer, and, as Emerson said, 'Culture is one thing, and varnish another.' It is a pose and, culture always disdains poses and pretences.

What is then is culture? Perhaps 'the best word that defines it is the Greek word *Euphuia* which means 'a finely tempered nature'. Human nature is a complex thing made of many elements: culture implies that these elements must be properly disciplined, brought to a proper consistency or stability, so as to produce a balanced temperament, with all excesses subdued and angularities straightened. Hamlet expressed it admirably when he told Horatio, 'Give me the man that -is not passion's slave : one must not be the slave but the master of one's passions'. That, properly speaking, answers to the Greek ideal of perfection. Mathew Arnold said. "Culture' is then properly described as having its origin in the love of perfection: it is a study of perfection." The man of culture, therefore, is one who makes it his chief business in life to study perfection and to make it prevail in the affairs of life.

It is, of course, not easy to make this one's s primary concern in life. -It can be done however, as Arnold said, by habitual association with 'the best that has been thought and said in this world. As Swinburne said, "To have read the greatest work of any great poet, to ' have beheld or heard the greatest works of any great painter or musician, is a possession added to the best things of life?" By such constant association, one's mind is permeated with nobleness, with genial thoughts and feelings, one fills one's' life with 'sweetness and light', just as, the bee fills its hive. Cultivation of a sweetness of temper and acquirement of the light' of understanding may therefore be defined ns the aim of one who desires to represent culture in personal life. And one keeps oneself in constant association with best that man has said and done i.e., with literature and philosophy, history and sociology, one experiences an enlargement mind, a sublimation of one's thoughts and ideas, and a habit surveying the affairs of life, 'calm of mind, all passions spent.' such a person, fanaticism, one-sidedness, intellectual obstinacy and sweeping judgment live all equally impossible.

So far about the meaning of culture and its place in one's personal life. But if culture meant only the graces and ornaments that confer on individuals a kind of social distinction, its value and influence would indeed be limited. Hitherto, it is true; culture has been treated as a distinction peculiar to a select body of individuals who have had the means of acquiring it by virtue of their

privileged position, for example, their membership of a University or of an educated community. But the modern age is tending to a gradual removal separation between man and man, as well as between class and class and therefore culture has come to acquire a value and significance in social life not contemplated in the past. If culture means pursuit of perfection, it is obvious that the more widely it is spread among the people at large, the better it would be for the community.

Now the pursuit of culture depends on certain basic conditions, the foremost of which are \_education and leisure.. In bourgeois these were regarded more or less as privileges confined to certain sections from which others were intentionally or unintentionally excluded. Thus the Germans, regarding themselves as God's elect, looked upon their 'Kultur' as a hall-mark of national superiority, entitling them to dominate the rest of the world. A common failing of primitive peoples like the Indo-Aryans, the Semitic tribes or the Hellenes, in modern times it was claimed by the Germans and the Japanese with 'disastrous consequences for the world, But this exclusiveness is the very antithesis of the view of culture that is regarded as a study of perfection. Or again, the aristocracy with all the material resources that placed leisure at their command, tried to acquire the culture that was in their view a mark of social distinction establishing their superiority over less-favoured members of society, this also was certainly not the culture upon as a pursuit of sweetness and light. It comes to this, whatever encourages separatism, exclusiveness, or a feeling of class superiority is, by its nature, antagonistic to culture in the right sense of the word.

If therefore culture is a desirable condition of life, it should be available to all alike and any claim to exclusiveness at once a negation of its right to be so designated. For this purpose it is necessary, first, to create a condition in which education is made free all stages for all members of society, irrespective of caste, creed or and secondly, to ensure leisure to every worker to enable him to enjoy the privileges of culture, the privilege of getting to know the best that has been said or done in human life. Constant association with high thoughts and ennobling sentiments will permeate a society and fill it with sweetness and light. The man of culture will consider every idea dispassionately; participate in all ennobling movements in a spirit of disinterestedness. He will, by the light that is in him, help the dissemination of new ideas and consider all things without obstinacy or prejudice He will, by the sweetness that is in him create a genial atmosphere where such consideration may be possible without creating heat or rousing passion.

## **EXTENSIVE USE OF LITERATURE BY JUDGES**

Recently former Chief Justice of Pakistan Mr Asif Saeed Khosa while addressing a literary festival talked at length about the relationship between law and literature spoke briefly in Urdu in which he told the audience that he studied English Literature and then law, using the word *adab* in different ways. He argued that it's difficult to define literature but generally it's understood to be a piece of writing having an artistic or intellectual value or merit. "Literature is that communication which deploys words or language in a manner which pleases the ear, heart or mind or tickles the finer sensibilities in a person and assumes the status of art. It is sometimes for art's sake but on other occasions it's employed as a tool or technique while speaking or writing about a mundane or a professional subject."

Mr Khosa said that judges in some parts of the world quoted literature to embellish or decorate their judgments; referred to literary masterpieces to emphasize a point or even created literature through the use of prose of artistic merit or expressions of high literary merit while composing their judgments.

In this regard, he cited many examples from judgments from different parts of the world in which works of prose and poetry were used. He also spoke of the times when “literature comes in handy” when judges can’t say things themselves. Many judges on various occasions expressed how reading literature provided them with tremendous opportunities.

As Judge Horne’s prose beautifully demonstrates, judicial opinions are themselves works of literature with rich hyper textual potential. Most obviously, these texts cite the legal opinions that came before them, what we know as “precedent.” But the judges who pen down these decisions also draw on their own literary experiences as they write the law. The authors they most frequently cite are predictable: the likes of Shakespeare, Kafka, and Melville, writers who explicitly tackle legal themes and whose works are enshrined in the Western canon. Predictably, female authors are largely ignored in legal decisions. All of the references to Toni Morrison, Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton, Amy Tan, and Margaret Atwood combined come nowhere close to the number of direct citations to Charles Dickens, not to mention un-cited allusions to the best and worst of times. But a few women have broken through. Apart from J.K. Rowling, who appears in a number of judicial decisions because of her own litigiousness, the most-cited female authors include Harper Lee, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen.

Since the first published citation to *Emma* in 1978, Jane Austen’s works have been invoked 27 times in American legal decisions, including references to *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey*, and, of course, *Pride and Prejudice*. In many decisions, Jane Austen herself is mentioned apart from any specific text. She has appeared in municipal, state, and federal court opinions. And she is equally cited by male and female judges. Like so many other aspects of contemporary American culture, from the Romantic comedy to tragic play, Jane Austen has influenced the court. But what does she mean to the judges who read her? May be , judges cite Austen as a shorthand for erudition and sophistication, to demarcate who is a part of high society (often, lawyers) and who is not (often, defendants), reflecting the novelist’s popular reception. Half of the published legal opinions that cite Jane Austen don’t engage with her work beyond the first line of *Pride and Prejudice*: “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife.” Sometimes the glib citation to the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* is simply to add literary flair to judicial prose, as in a 2008 opinion from the United States Tax Court: “it is a truth universally acknowledged that a recently widowed woman in possession of a good fortune must be in want of an estate planner.”

## CONCLUSION

I cannot do better, than conclude by quoting the wise words of Goethe: "Men are so inclined to content themselves with what is commonest; the spirit and the senses so easily grow dead to the impressions of the beautiful and perfect, that everyone should study, by all methods, nourish in his mind the faculty of feeling these things. For this reason, one ought every day at least to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words." For "the soul is plastic, and the person who every day looks upon a beautiful

picture, reads a page from -some good book, and hears a beautiful piece of music, he will surely become a transformed person--one born again". Culture therefore may ensure a true renaissance, the rebirth of a people dedicated to the study and pursuit of perfection of life. Literature conditions the thoughts and feelings of human mind which are closely linked with formulation of new ideas; new experiences while law protects and ensures human activities and transactional values through methodical application of the force of politically organized society. Similarly, literature expresses social sympathies, and positive influence on our mind and attitude. It is observed that society responds to literature with vigour and vitality to make sure that the function of legislator, judges and lawyers is ably guided and effectively supported. No doubt, the law brings a culture of discipline and safety to the society. Similarly, culture being a social distinction which makes a person intellectually complete to face real challenges in life.

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