

FICTION AND HUMAN PSYCHE

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ABSTRACT

It is said that reading fiction can increase people's compassion and empathy. Many people around the globe is spending their time reading books out of love and also as a distraction. It is true that there are plenty of things to do in the present time to keep aside boredom, and also for the serious things like depression (technologies) ; and even at this time most of the people still love reading during their leisure time or also finds time for this, out of there busy schedules. Even though it helps us to enrich our vocabulary and improve our writing skills it also help us to have a peaceful mind and also help to mould our character even without knowing. All these things show a connection between Fiction and human psyche. Even in literature there's a genre called psychological fiction which is also called psychological realism which has a rich past in the 17th and 18th century. In a Fiction, the characters they hook us into the story. When we are in a bad situation we may not be able to think clearly when it's on us to take a decision but while we are reading a story it gives us time to think why the character are doing so , why they are reacting to things that way and what would we do if we are in that situation. Earlier Aristotle said that when we watch a Tragedy two feelings overcomes us; pity for the character, fear for ourselves. So that's when the question rises in our mind: Does Fiction have any effect on us?

Keywords: Reading, Psychological Fiction, Connection between Fiction and Human Psyche

INTRODUCTION

Its Human nature or tendency to know what others feel, predict what they think. Curiosity is part of our life, and it in fact is the reason why one wants to know more about the things they do not know about. So in one way we can say half of the knowledge we attained till know is because of our curiosity. And literature is one of the means to know human nature. Poets, writers, psychologists are the one who has great interest in this area. They observe, they learn, they analyse and open a door to another unknown world to us which not only invoke feelings and emotion in us but also teach us about life and existence. Psychology has an important place in the analysis of literary works, and each field puts the individual at the centre of their research and analyses. In this context, it is necessary to draw the reader's attention to the Psychological novel, "which is for the most part concerned with the spiritual, emotional and mental lives of the characters and with the analysis of character rather than with the plot and the action" . In the psychological approach, the author's perceptions, dreams, conscious or unconscious mind, the differences between the personality of the author and the author in the text are also taken into consideration. For example, "I am Madame

Bovary” says Flaubert . Majority of our youth is suffering from many problems like depression , existential crisis , doesn’t know what to do with their life. To a large extent all of this is because the world they know is very small. It’s a matter of a person knowledge , there perspective , there way of accepting things. As William Blake said in his work, *“To see a World in a Grain of Sand And a Heaven in a Wild Flower, Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand And Eternity in an hour”*. It's all about a person’s imagination, vision, seeing a bigger picture from a small thing, which may help us to make impossible possible. With this we learn to accept the small things we have, achieve what we can , complain less because that’s when we learn to live and enjoy every bit of our life. And Fiction enables individuals to know and question their identities by raising consciousness and also awareness. That’s when a question arises, What is Fiction ? Everything can be considered as fiction; the books we read , the films and series we see, even the small short stories we scribble .Its pure imagination but based on history, philosophy, psychology. All time favourite of children are Fantasy, which also comes under fiction. Fantasy is a key term both in psychology and in art and artifice of the humanity. The things we make including our stories reflect , serve and often shape our needs and desires . We see this everywhere from fairy tale to myth , from Cinderella to Alice in Wonderland to Superman, from building a fort as a child to building an ideal planned cities as whole societies. Fantasy in ways both entertaining and practical serves our persistent needs and desires and illuminates the human mind. Fantasy expresses itself in many ways from the comfort we feel and the godlike powers of a fairy godmother to Dracula. From a practical viewpoint of all the fictional forms that fantasy takes ; the science fiction , from Frankenstein to Avatar is the most important in our world . It is the only kind that explicitly recognizes the profound ways in which science and technology works. Those key products of the human mind shaped not only our world but also they also gave hope and also fears.

Reading of Fiction

Every day more than one million books are sold in the US , like that in many countries. Reading is considered as a form of entertainment, and what we read is based on their personal taste and also to an extent it can define our character. Reading increases your intelligence. That explains why some IQ tests include vocabulary words, which generally serve as a representation of how clever you are. In a fiction ,events are shown from others perspective, the situations where they have to suffer , the mistakes they make, the decisions they have to make which not only hurt themselves but also others. All these make the core of literary education. From the time one learns alphabets then words, we all are learning stories. Parents or grandparents put their kids to sleep by reading them stories .Each story gives at least one life lesson. One of the example is the novel *“Diary of a young girl”* written by Anne Frank. The whole story wasn’t just about the historical events but also about the fear of a child, her concerns for herself and her family, the way things change while one grows up. Taking example of another novel by Paulo Coelho, *“ Veronika Decides to Die”* which talks about a girl who tries to suicide because of anxiety and her monotonous life but later on in this journey she discovers her true self and the meaning of life. There are also novels which doesn’t help us much like Dan Brown’s *“The Da Vinci Code”*. So a child growing with a habit of reading may know how to live in a society and how to handle a situation than other kids. But some kids won’t be having a life like that due to their family situations or because of poverty. If we don’t read much , we won’t be getting the benefits of knowing more about the society, experiences, world outside of our own. It will help us to see a bigger picture of

everything. Our mind will be broader than narrowed otherwise, when other people talk about their experiences we won't believe that but at the same time we will expect them to believe us. One thing we all need to know is that there's a fine line between fiction and reality. Just like Neil Gaiman said "*Fiction is a lie which tells the truth*". Fiction is pure imagination but with a pinch of experiences, history and societal norms when reality is a whole different thing we will never know what is waiting for us. Yet it does have similarities.

DOES FICTION HAVE ANY EFFECT ON US?

So coming back to the question; To find this there were many research and tests. That's when a new thing was found; Theory of mind. It is true that a good novel can hook us up to the plot, but to follow the plot we need to know what the character knows, how they feel, how they think. For this, one needs to have a skill known as Theory of mind. It is also said that if one can read the character's thought, areas of the brain linked with theory of mind are activated. Hence it was found that readers of Fiction have a heightened brain activity especially in the region of visualisation and understanding of language than the non-fiction readers or people who doesn't read at all. It is like when we are reading a book we get engrossed into it to that level where we can take on the emotions the characters are feeling. There was also a test which helped in finding a link between reading and empathy. And with that it was understood that the way things are narrated in the fiction is the key, as readers of fiction scored well in this test. Fiction writing can teach us a lot about society and humanity. As said by Sidley, reading fiction contributes to a person's moral psychological development and their ability to have empathy or understanding. It enhances our ability to connect with each other. It makes us a little bit more aware and informed.

Conclusion

Emily Dickinson said over a century ago that "*There is no frigate like a book to take us lands away*" and it is true, when we pick up a book, turn on the TV, or watch a movie, we are carried away down the currents of story into a world of imagination and when we land, on a shore that is both new and familiar, something strange happens. Stepping on to the shore, we have changed. We don't retrace the footsteps of the authors or characters we followed here. Instead we walk a long way in their shoes. Researchers in psychology, neuroscience, child development and biology are finally starting to gain scientific evidence, showing what writers and readers have always known: that the stories have a unique ability to change a person's point of view and also that stories shape culture. One example of such novel is Samuel Richardson's "*Pamela*" which is an epistolary novel of 18th century. So before describing what the novel was all about, let's talk about how everything has changed with the pace of the time, all the ideologies which were there for centuries. Think about the time when people were judged by their class, women were considered just as an object and when marriage for love was merely a story in novel while in reality it was nothing but a miserable phase. So all these things were the content in Richardson's 'Pamela', it is about a fifteen year old maidservant whose employer, the wealthy landowner, makes inappropriate approaches after the death of his mother and the difficulties she has to face. Yet the story had a happy ending with Pamela getting married to a noble person but Richardson makes it clear that Pamela will always be the lower-class, poor woman. So all he has done was describing how society worked during those times. But later on many writers started to modify the way of writing. Books became a teacher as life lessons were taught through that. But in this journey we

should also keep in our mind that the terrains have changed. We need to change along with the time, and the old ideologies and visions have to be improved. So now we need to change the way we see book worms, we think they are always into books because they don't know how to deal with people. In fact these people are the one who actually knows about reality and human beings better than others.

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