
The Aspects of Liberal Humanism

Liberal humanism is one of the earliest literary theory. It is the traditional approach of literary criticism which did not appear suddenly. The concept of liberal humanism come to site as a piecemeal of progressing English literature. The history of English study influenced liberal humanism. However, English was not introduced as a subject till 19th century because it was not considered as a significant subject. In the middle age in England there were only two universities Cambridge and Oxford to serve the purpose of education but, they did not offer English as a subject till 19th century. Moreover, the universities were not open for all. Education was only limited for the Anglican churches and only for the Anglican peoples. Correspondingly, there were other norms which were perform religiously as a tradition of renaissance.

The other races like Methodist, Catholics or general peoples were not allowed to get the education. Dissatisfaction arise and the authority felt the necessity to open the university for all to remove disparity. So, for the first time in 1826, A University College was found in London which offered degrees to man of all races. Consequently, in 1828 English was offered as a subject for all. In 1831, another college was established known as King's College, which introduced English literature as a subject for the first time. In 1840, a very prolific literary person called F.D. Maurice was appointed as professor in that specific college. Maurice was aware about the situations of that time like how peoples were dissatisfied, and they were alienated and detached from the country, rulers, upper classes, etc. The persisting situation was observed by Maurice. Thus, he proposed that the English study should be introduced. Meanwhile, He delivered a profound lecture on English literature and according to Peters Barry this lecture has been considered as the foundation of liberal humanism.

Apart from that, Peters Barry in his book 'Beginning Theory' states that the real foundation of English studies has been established in Cambridge University when the three pioneers of English literature I.A. Richards, William Empson and F.R. Leavis was there. Initially, I.A. Richards in the year 1929, published a book named 'Practical Criticism' where he gave a method of practical criticism. The method says to focus on the text and to perceive the meaning based on its structure and close-reading. Likewise, F.R. Leavis in 20th century developed the close-reading method. He successfully expanded the ways of close-reading methods from poetry to novels, passages, essays etc. This close-reading method gave a new dimension to interpret and from this liberal humanism evoked. Liberal Humanism was popular at the beginning of 1900's and it was considered as a philosophical orientation which valued the worth of human as an individual. Well, Liberal Humanism can be enumerated as a scholarly development where man and his potential are the focal and of principal concern. Liberal humanism considers human being as free agents and therefore, literary texts is also free from its contexts and surroundings. Liberal humanism deals with universal theme and does not categorize anything under any aspect.

Formalism

The word Formalism comes from the word form. Formalism basically means to look at the formal devices and formal structure of the text and then try to understand its meaning. Formalism is a literary theory based on the philosophy of Liberal Humanism which came around

in 1920's and started in the European countries like Russia and America and United Kingdom. This literary theory in Russia was termed as Russian formalism which is the counterpart of the Anglo-American criticism. So, what was happening in Russia at that time somewhat similar was also happening in America and United Kingdom. In Britain and America, it was termed as Practical criticism and New criticism. Before Formalism and New criticism were adopted by the European countries the literary texts were interpreted through historical or through socio-economical lenses. Whereas, formalism focused on the texts only without considering authors biography or without considering socio-economic status of the society when the text was written. However, there are some slight difference between Russian Formalism and New criticism. For instance, geographical location was different that is Russian formalism is the Russian literary movement and New criticism is the American literary movement. Other than that, there are stylistic difference too that is New Criticism focuses on the close-reading of the text along with form and content hence the meaning is generated through the text. Whereas, Russian formalism focuses on the form and the way the literary piece has been written on the basis of structure, style and symbol.

In Russia, there were two major groups of Formalism one was Moscow Linguistics Society and the other was Prague Linguistic Society. Roman Jakobson was the leader of Moscow linguistic group and Viktor Shklovsky was the leader of Prague Linguistic Society. The formalist came up with the Defamiliarizing theory in order to separate the language from the ordinary language. It works well enough in case of poetry. Besides, in 1921 Jakobson introduced literariness which makes the literary text different from journalistic report. Along with that in 1925, Boris Tomashevski juxtaposed two concepts that is Fabula (straight-forward account) and Syuzhet (presentation or manipulation to create effect). These cause the defamiliarizing effect in prose.

Structuralism

Structuralism talks about the structure. Everything in a structure can be understood only in a relation to the other thing which is a part of same structure. For instance, to understand a novel we have to understand the sentence and to understand the sentence we have to understand the words. On this contrary, Ferdinand De Saussure have a theory known as semiotics. Semiotics is basically the study of sign. A word or an image itself is a sign. Hence, sign is made up of two things signifier and signified. Signifier is the word and signified is the concept that comes in our mind when we look at the word or image. The relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary.