

FUTURE OF LITERATURE: THE GLOBAL ART-MALADY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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The present paper seeks to explore the myriad problems with writing and reading literature in general and tries to diagnose the reasons for them. This is not a conventional research as such done on the analysis of the primary and secondary sources. It is rather an expository piece which focuses on the current state of affairs faced by the ongoing literary trend and sheds new light on the future of literary pursuits. The study is not a dispassionate one based on cool and clinical objectivity. But it is sure thought-provoking as it tries to develop a gripping theme by plausible speculations and reflections. The blend of formal and informal words and jargons in the essay is to create an effect of immediacy and directness.

Dominance of Electronic Media:

Although there lies a whole lot of debate as to when precisely the golden age of World literature existed, one thing is sure: the current world literary trend is at the farthest from its heyday. With the printing media's coming under the powerful

influence of its electronic sister, pieces of classic literature are having to survive on the whims of electronic media. As a result, they are falling easy prey to cynical manipulation at the hands of the soap opera makers. Maybe, they are saving them from sinking into oblivion, but they are taking a heavy toll on this. Increasing public interest in audio-visual media has given rise to serious misgivings about the consequence of literature. The existence of Shakespeare's plays or Dickens's novels owes more to the celluloid versions of the film-makers than to the old printed texts which are only gathering dust on the library shelves. As a matter of fact, people by and large are losing interest in the act of reading itself. It appears as if reading is a wearying task in itself. Back at home after a long day's work, people, tired and exhausted, tend to fall back upon the electronic media for easy and effortless entertainment. The habit of reading for pleasure is alarmingly on the wane. It is a big hurdle standing in the way of literary pursuits in general.

Spectre of Commercialization: On top of these, the ghost of commercialization has befallen it as a trouble on a trouble. The writers of money spinners are rampant across the globe. Prompted by mercantile interests, they and their publishers are jointly doing a roaring business in 'literature'. Books with high demand and high supply have a greater market value and are considered as valuable books. They are deemed to be popular authors whose books sell well. The larger the sales, the greater the authors. The publishers are investing heavily in this 'literary merchandising'. They kneel in supplication to those popular authors by giving them colossal advances against royalties. The book is advertised as a 'marvelous' read. But the 'great' authors may have not yet even conceived of it. So what? That is not at all worth caring about. Such writers are superstars and possessed of light-speed in writing. One fine day, they step into the luxury suites of the five-star hotels and whip up a complete manuscript. Some of the writers have beaten records by writing full-length novels overnight. Books are produced sharply on deadlines with colorful dust-jackets and then go on sale with post-publication advertisements in newspapers and televisions. Sales shoot up. Business is brisk and thriving. Both the authors and publishers make a quick profit,

and go for further attempts. They have learnt what the market wants and have mastered the craft of quickly dashing off the manuscripts. They have long back sold their soul to Mammon and learnt to sacrifice real literary values and moral considerations on the altar of profit..

Production of commercialization:

What do these commercial authors contribute to our literature? Delicious trash! They are writing tacky novels, tawdry stories and dirty doggerels which might give heaps of immediate kicks and bring the authors cheap popularity. These mercenary writers tend to play to the gallery and have a field day with the vulgar taste of the general public. But what they write is virtually dull and uninspiring. The authors are very careful to spare their readers' feelings. Things that readers are fond of must be on no account overlooked. The likes and dislikes of the readers, their conventions, stereotypes and biases are carefully manufactured and nurtured by these authors. The audience's literary taste is thus held hostage by such authorial gimmicks and tricks, and the readers learn to dance to the tune of their favorite authors. This literature is similar to the pulp literature which began to appear in the West during World War 1 and remained popular in the 1930s. Pulp

literature was what Aldous Huxley termed as “inconceivable twaddle”. However popular it may prove immediately, it cannot survive longer due to the absence of true literary merit.

Malady and its Outbreak:

What we call commercial literature is mushrooming double quick across the globe. This is an art-malady caused by an explosion of junk called literature. The whole spectrum of recent global literary scenario is laden with this junk. There are telltale signs of decadence of literature. This sort of literature is intended for profit only, without regard to quality. Although it may taste sweet, it is not worthy of being served at the same table with quality literature. It may be called 'disposable literature' for, it is to be read once and then tossed away. We may use it a second time, not as reading materials but as trash.

Impact on Genuine Art:

Since this stream of literature is gaining wide currency, the flow of true literature is on the wane. The soft glow of genuine art is being overshadowed by the dazzling lights of the fakers and imposters. If anybody comes forward with a genuine work of literature, he will not find a publisher. If he publishes by himself, he will not survive the cut-throat competition with the get-rich-quick writers, the

publishing establishment and their high-selling junk. The outwardly unimpressive books of the helpless writers are failing to catch the readers' attention and are therefore, falling headlong into the ditch of monetary loss. Naturally they feel demoralized and do not want to take any identical attempt. Nor does any publisher want to take the risk of publishing the new authors' books which in turn discourages the advent of fresh talent. Small wonder that some good writers are also turning to commercial works. Although they sometimes write good pieces to slave their conscience, they are often alive to the possible dangers of unpopularity and trim their sails accordingly. Therefore, they too apply themselves to keeping their readers well supplied with the 'delicious trash'. The more the demand grows, the more the supply increases and the busier the market assumes. On the basis of demand, the supply is primed and the price is fixed. From this view-point, this sort of literature may be called 'open market literature', which has grown as an offshoot of what we call 'open market economy'. Literature capable of meeting the needs of the open market is surviving and the one failing to do it is getting extinct. This is how, commercial literature, its unprincipled practitioners and mercenary allies are growing in the dumping ground of

commercialization.

Dire Consequences:

The world literature today is more or less damaged by this spectre of commercialization. To fulfill the limitless demands of the open market, these writers are tirelessly producing tons of trashy stuff and the general readers are being made to swallow this with lip-smacking relish. This is a kind of literary exploitation, very crafty and cunning tricks of the trade. The tools of this exploitation are the commercial authors and their unprincipled publishers. As a result, the possibility of an ensuing plague is looming large. A deep sense of foreboding is lurking. The future of literature is getting bleaker.

Possible Remedy:

How can this acute literary malady be combated? There is no easy cure. Some possible remedies may be prescribed to treat it. A large-scale literary and cultural awareness among the writers, the readers, and the connoisseurs of art and literature may lead to an aesthetic change. Scales from the readers' eyes should be removed.

The consciousness emanating from this rude awakening may help develop the sensibility and artistic bent for the writers and the readers. This may also help separate the sheep from the goats and rid true literature of the false one. We ought to give a pitiless farewell to this fake literature and a warm welcome to the genuine one. Although it is easier said than done, it is not impossible.
