

Shikshan Prasarak Mandal Mul 's
Karmavir Mahavidyalaya, Mul. Dist -Chandrapur. (M.S.) India
Organizes
One -Day International Interdisciplinary Conference
on

Changing Scenario in Higher Education
in India and Global Standards

भारतीय उच्चशिक्षणातील बदलते प्रवाह आणि जागतिक मानके

Date:20th December,2025

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Plot No. 42, Akshara Publication

Gokuldham, Wanjola Road Near Star Lone, Bhusawal, Dist.Jalgaon [M. S.] India 425201

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Abstract:

The world had been practising, as Herbert Spencer said, the idea called “survival of the fittest” (Wikipedia). He said it positively by taking into consideration the origin and development of all earth creatures, especially human beings. However, it covertly denies the right of freedom and survival to the ‘unfit’, considered as ‘minor’ or ‘marginal’. Till the deconstruction of structuralist ideology by Derrida in 1966, this view was predominant without any objection. Afterwards, people began to think about the ‘Minor’, the ‘Unfit’, and the ‘Marginalised’. Derrida’s views and the postmodernist conditions gave voice to these Minor, Unfit, Marginalised, and Subalterns. Marginalised people started writing about their experiences from their own point of view, which the people in ‘Centre’ had never considered. Throughout the long-recorded history of humanity, marginalised people have not been given proper representation. They include Indigenous Communities, Disability and Neurodivergence, Low-Income Class, LGBTQ+, Race and Ethnicity, and Women. Out of them, the Low-Income Class, women and Black writers, especially African American, have already started voicing their sufferings and substandard treatment by the so-called ‘fit’ people.

Therefore, these are the new emerging fields of study in the Humanities. These writings should be included in the curricula of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 for university students, so that they can empathise and spread awareness about these people.

Keywords: Marginalised, Subaltern, Indigenous Communities, Disability and Neurodivergence, Low-Income Class, LGBTQ+, Race and Ethnicity, and Women

Introduction:

Many studies emerged as a result of deconstruction. Most of them focus on the voices of marginalised communities. Earlier, the upper class, so-called elite people, started writing on behalf of these marginalised people. Later on, they have been writing for themselves. Their main objective behind writing their experiences are: (1) to express their agonies and suffering, (2) to assert their own existence, (3) to wipe out their negative stereotyped representation in literature, and (4) to acquaint the world with their unique identity. They received their derogatory identity from metanarratives such as *The Mahabharata*, *The Ramayana*, *The Panchatantra*, *The Paradise Lost*, and *The Iliad*. *The Mahabharata* created mis-identity of women (Draupadi, Kunti), the transgender (Shikhandini, Brihanala), disabled people (Shakuni) and indigenous people as barbarians (Ekalavya, Ghatotkacha, Hidimbi). This and other metanarratives by the elites have created a stereotyped negative image of the minors. However, this is the post-truth era, where truth is not fixed. It changes with the change of space, time, and person. Whatever was once considered universal is not applicable all the time. Therefore, many marginal communities have come forward to resist their oppression and raise their voice against the conspiracy and tactics used to subdue them.

These new voices in literature are the new arenas of literary studies. They can be included in the curricula of NEP2020. These new studies are:

Disability Studies in Literature:

After the 1960s, Disability Movement started in Europe, demanding accessibility to public places and facilities. **Disability studies** is an academic discipline that examines the meaning, nature, and consequences of disability (Wikipedia). In literature, it focuses on the inhuman treatment given to the differently abled people. It tries to reconstruct their stereotyped image. In the metanarratives, they are presented with a vicious character. “... the disabled villain is one of the most prevalent stock characters we see throughout the course of TV, Literature, Film and Stage” (Fashioneyesta). For example, Shakuni, the prince of Gandhara and maternal uncle of the Kauravas in *The Mahabharata*, is lame in one foot and blind in one eye. He is the most villainous character in the epic. Richard III by Shakespeare, Leigh Teabeing in *The Da Vinci Code*, etc, are examples of it. In Religious scriptures, disability is considered a punishment for the sin committed by the person.

The supporters of Disability Studies not only focus on the stereotyping of the disabled characters, on over-sympathetic treatment given to them, but also on the humiliating elements of language. ‘Able’ people look upon them as miserable creatures. They are more sympathetic towards the disabled than the actual requirements. In a bus, out of charity, the able-bodied offer seats to the disabled, although the latter have not demanded it. This behaviour of the abled people makes them realise the bodily defect, which they want to negate. Because of this offering, they suddenly lost their confidence and began to feel feeble. The rotten expressions like “Are you blind not to see the food on the plate?”, or “I’m not deaf not to listen to your gossiping?” unconsciously (for abled)

humiliate the conscious disabled person. Although spoken for the other persons, the disabled persons got deeply wounded in their hearts.

The fictional and non-fictional books with a theme of disability are: *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, *Being Heumann* by Judith Heumann, *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper, and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon.

Medical Humanities in Literature:

The origin of Medical Humanities lies in medical science, aiming to treat patients more humanely. Felice Aull writes, "Medical humanities is an interdisciplinary field of medicine which includes the humanities (philosophy of medicine, medical ethics and bioethics, history of medicine, literary studies and religion), social science (psychology, medical sociology, medical anthropology, cultural studies, health geography) and the arts (literature, theater, film, and visual arts) and their application to medical education and practice" (Wikipedia).

In the last few decades, doctors, surgeons, and cured patients started writing about their critical and crucial experiences. They describe how they began treating patients, how they became empathetically one with them, and how the difficult treatment left an everlasting impression on their minds. Similarly, patients, some cured and some not cured, wrote their experiences and interactions with their doctors, nurses, family members and the environment. According to K. Shaheen, "Medical Humanities in Literature explores the vital intersection between medicine and the human experience as captured through the lens of literature" (Wikipedia).

Literature, especially short stories and novels penned by doctors and patients, is the centre of focus here. They are about illness, treatment, care, and recovery or deterioration of health. This literature helps to boost the understanding of empathy, ethics in the doctor-patient relationship, and the involvement of clinical practices. It seeks a balance between medical science and ethics in the humanities.

Examples of Literary Medical Humanities are: Virginia Woolf's *On Being Ill*, and Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* (Autobiographies); Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (Fictions); and poems by John Keats or William Carlos Williams.

Life Writing Studies:

"Life writing refers to literary works that record personal memories, reflections, and experiences. It includes genres such as memoir, autobiography, diaries, letters, and personal essays" (Life Writing).

Life writing is as old as history; his story became history. However, Life writing is a new term that explores experiments in narrating a life story. Literary Medical Humanities, Dalit Writing, Indigenous Writing, etc, are the branches of Life Writing Studies. Docu-fiction (original autobiography in disguise), Auto-fiction (fictional autobiography), Bio-fiction (Fictional biography), Memoirs (one or a few events from life), Autobiography, biography, diaries, letters, digital contents, etc, are the types of Life Writing. They are mostly written by the marginal communities employing their distinctive narrative techniques. Their aim is not to earn money, but to document their sufferings. (i) Search for identity, (ii) record of good and bad memories, (iii) assertion of self, (iv) expression of place in physical and space in mind/psychology, and (v) community culture are the features of Life Writing Studies.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank, *Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela, *Outcaste* by Narendra Jadhav, *The Hare with Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, and *Notes to Self* by Emilie Pine are examples of Life Writing.

Ageism in Literature:

"As coined by authors like Robert Butler, **ageism** is a recurring theme, explored in literature and media, where older people are often viewed as fundamentally different and less valuable" (Davis). Ageism in Literature, or Literary Ageism, is a comparatively recent study in literature. It is the literature that deals with the problems and consciousness of old people. It "... refers to the negative portrayal and stereotypical representations of elderly characters, which contribute to societal prejudices against older individuals. Such portrayals often depict older characters as physically unattractive, confused, and lonely, reinforcing the idea that ageing is something to be feared or ridiculed" (Davis). Therefore, it focuses not only on the prejudices and problems of older persons, but also on the possible solutions to them. It also analyses the language being used in their regard. For instance, when they are addressed as 'grandma' or 'grandpa', they suddenly lose their confidence and begin to feel like a weak older person. If they are addressed as 'friend', 'dude', 'bro', or 'sis', they would feel strong and less aged. In this study, the treatment of them by their relatives, officials, society, and children is also a part of the discussion.

The initiatives of the government and insurance companies for caring for older people in Japan and some European countries can be a solution to ageism. But that cannot be a final solution.

Examples of books on the theme of Ageism are: *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, *Dak Munsu* by Fakir Mohan Senapati, *The Stone Angel* by Margaret Laurence, *The Coming Age* by Simone de Beauvoir, *The Golden Years: The Many Joys of Living a Good Long Life* by Ruskin Bond, etc.

Peace Studies (Anti-War) in Literature:

Peace studies in literature encompass “Antiwar literature is a genre that seeks to challenge and demystify the glorification of warfare, emphasising the profound psychological and physical toll it takes on individuals. Rather than presenting war as a noble endeavour, these works portray its brutal realities through realistic, often first-person narratives that expose the horrors of combat and its aftermath” (Lawson). It also appeals to solve all the problems in a non-violent way, advocating peace.

Traditionally, war is glorified, but in Peace Studies, it is criticised and looked down upon.

Examples of Literary Peace Studies are: *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway, *Soldier's Pay* by William Faulkner, *Redeployment* by Phil Klay, War Poetry written after the First World War, etc.

Indigenous Writings:

UNESCO records, Indigenous people are “non-dominant people groups descended from the original inhabitants of their territories, especially territories that have been colonised” (Wikipedia). Although indigenous people began writing much earlier, a sudden rise in their writing has been observed recently. Due to the lack of a script, their literature was primarily in oral format. This makes a remarkable difference between their writing and the writing of the rest. Now, literate indigenous people, as well as other non-indigenous individuals, are writing and publishing literature about their histories, traditions, cultures, religions, struggles, etc. They aim at presenting their real identity and removing the conspiracy of the WHITE people to spread the stereotyped negative image of them. The metanarratives, such as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by Homer, and *The Mahabharata* by Vyasa, represented these indigenous people in a derogatory manner. The indigenous characters, such as Ghatotkacha and Hidimbi, are described as unnatural creatures. The characters like Eklavya are treated unjustly. Later writers repeated the same stereotyped images.

Poems by Joy Harjo (USA), *Indian Horse*, a novel by Richard Wagamese (Canada), *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe (Australia), *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* by Narayan (India), and *Godhan* by Waharu Sonwane (Maharashtra, India) are examples of indigenous writings.

LGBTQ+ Studies:

The experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer persons had been prohibited from discussing or publishing by the ‘normal men’. They were socially condemned and punished for their intuitive behaviour. They faced censorship, biases, and other challenges in bringing out their experiences. But at present, the situation has changed. They began writing their lives and unbearable experiences, and achieved significant awards (Datar).

In India, the texts, *The Mahabharat*, paved the way for unjust treatment towards them. Bhishma Pitamaha, the grand-uncle of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, refused to fight Shikhandi by referring to him as a woman. Bhishma did not consider him worth fighting. They are writing to get rid of the prejudices and promote inclusiveness by uncovering their true selves.

Examples of LGBTQ+ writings: *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong, *Detransition, Baby* by Torrey Peters, *Coal*, and *A Litany for Survival* (poetry) by Audre Lorde, and *Mai Hijada... Mai Laxmi* by Laxminarayan Tripathi.

Diaspora Studies:

Diaspora Studies, like Postcolonial Writing, has already been introduced in many Indian Universities. It is a body of literature authored by writers who migrated, by their will or by force, to other countries. They explore their experiences of displacement, uprootedness, alienation, homesickness, searching for identity, and cultural hybridisation. These writers include V. S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie, Khalil Mutran, Rau Badami, Makeda Silvera, Hiromi Goto, and others.

The writers (Tenzin Tsundue, Bhuchung D. Sonam) of Tibetan refugees living in India are also writing diaspora literature as ‘Literature in Exile’ (Wikipedia).

Culture Studies:

In 1964, at the University of Birmingham, Richard Hoggart founded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which was later developed into the School of Cultural Studies. Stuart Hall assisted Hoggart by directing the CCCS.

Cultural Studies “combines political economy, communication, sociology, social theory, literary theory, media theory, film studies, cultural anthropology, philosophy, art history/ criticism etc. to study cultural phenomena in various societies. Cultural Studies researches often focus on how a particular phenomenon relates matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity, social class and gender” (Mambrol).

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini, *Homegoing* by Ghanaian-American author Yaa Gyasi, *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri, and *Cutting for Stone* by Ethiopian-born Indian-American author Abraham Verghese are some examples that reflect diverse cultures.

Race and Ethnicity Studies, and Postcolonial Studies:

Deconstruction has also given birth to the Race and Ethnicity Studies in Literature. It is a part of Postcolonial Studies. Writers under this study write to subvert Eurocentrism and the superiority of the White race. The

conspiringly accumulated knowledge about the race in books like *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe* is deconstructed here, and an original image is created with the help of newly written texts.

Postcolonial Studies, a course, has already been introduced in many universities. The postcolonial writers have been writing to deconstruct the stereotyped 'oriental' image formed by the West. Edward Said, Gayatri C. Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha are the trio who brought this discussion into practice.

Writers, such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'O, have already written against colonialism and exploitation. Other examples include *Natives: Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire* by Akala, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee, *The Bone People* by Keri Hulme, and *The Widows of Malabar Hill* by Sujata Massey.

Dalit literature:

Dalit Literature emerged in Maharashtra and spread across India. The Bhakti Movement and the works of Mahatma Phule have set the stage for Dalit Literary Movements. Dr B. R. Ambedkar, later on, inspired many Dalit writers to speak about their sufferings, agonies, and wills. Namdev Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Annabhau Sathe, Laxman Mane, Sharankumar Limbale, Manoranjan Byapari, Shivakami, Anbadavan, Arundhati Roy, and Bandi Yadagiri are some of the notable writers of Dalit Literature.

Proletariat Studies in Literature:

The Proletariats or Low-Income Class have a long tradition of writing their experiences and sufferings. Charles Dickens and others have written about the Low-Income Class even before the writings of Karl Marx. Now, this writing is known as Marxist Literature. Russian literature is abounded in works representing the proletariat class.

Women's Studies:

With LGBTQ Studies, Women's Studies is now considered a branch of Gender Studies. However, Women's Studies began with feminist writing by Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*), Sarah Margaret Fuller (*Woman in the Nineteenth Century*), Tarabai Shinde (*A Comparison between Women and Men*), and J.S. Mill ("The Subjection of Women"). It marched ahead in four successive waves with advanced motives, and writing themes and styles. From the second wave, the Feminist Literary Movement has become more productive and assertive.

Zoopoetics:

As a branch of Ecocriticism, Zoopoetics studies the influence of non-human animals on literature. As a part of Nature, it also comes under marginalised studies. The texts, such as *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka and *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, are examples of Zoopoetics.

Film Studies:

It is a comparatively new branch of literary studies. It includes films based on literary texts, and the scripts of non-literary films. All the above-discussed marginalised studies are present in Film Studies. It focuses on how characters from different sections are presented in the movie. Students must have a deep understanding of culture, traditions, beliefs, manners, language, semantics, syntax, photography, shooting angles, costumes, dialogues, screen time, background settings, sounds, limitations of shooting, and the director's motives to study a film.

Digital Humanities:

Digital humanities in literature involves using computational tools and digital technologies to analyse, interpret, and preserve literary works in new ways. It explores methods like text mining and data visualisation to uncover patterns in texts, and it expands the study of literature into new forms like digital archives, interactive storytelling, and AI-generated narratives (Ved 212). It is the future of literature, so the students must be taught in this new stream of writing. Although it is not a marginalised voice, it is a tool in the hands of the marginalised to write their experiences in innovative ways.

Michael Joyce's "Afternoon, a Story" and Nick Montfort's "Taroko Gorge" are examples of digital literature. Other forms include social media-based works such as Twitterature, digital poetry with kinetic elements, and multimedia projects like Will Luers's "Novelling".

Conclusions:

Disability Studies in Literature, Medical Humanities in Literature, Life Writing Studies, Ageism in Literature, Peace Studies (Anti-War) in Literature, Indigenous Writings, Gender Studies in Literature, Race, Ethnicity and Postcolonial Writings, Diaspora Studies in Literature, Cultural Studies in Literature, Dalit Literature, Proletariat Writings, Women's Studies, Zoopoetics, etc. are some voices emerged especially after 1966. Although Digital Humanities in Literature is not a voice from a marginalised group, it is the future of all studies across all streams. It will facilitate the study of all the writings and literature. In the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, curriculum designers have the opportunity to introduce these courses, especially interdisciplinary ones, to ignite empathy for marginalised communities. In the future, when these students encounter individuals from such communities, they will behave more sensibly and empathetically. These are also new areas for research.

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