

Structuring of Psychological Space and Establishing Hegemony: A Study of Literary and Non-Literary Discourses

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Abstract

This paper looks into how various discourses came into being, how linguistic structures started dominating social as well as individual life and how psychological space is created, which is enlarging continuously. It also deals with the question - how language and literature are used as technology to shape the human psyche? At the surface level, there seems to be no use of technology in language and literature, except in printing and production through audio-visual means. However, the reality is very different. All discourses and other forms of art are technological productions because the arrangement of words, utterances, symbols, expressions and various other things require technical skill. A writer or artist produces his works like a technician who produces machines. That is why there is no doubt that humankind has always made use of language and literature to structure the psyche of people. It manifests itself in the processes how a person agrees to become human bomb, why a person self-immolates for some abstract cause, how soldiers are persuaded to fight for the nation, how people are divided into various social classes, and why they give consent for self-exploitation? Advertisers, politicians, and journalists are aware of the reality more than common masses and therefore they use language in an effective way to get desired response from the masses.

Keywords: Hegemony, Human Sensibility, Ideologies, Linguistic Structures, Psychological Space, Socio-economic Conditions, Technological Productions

1. Introduction

This paper looks into how various discourses came into being, how linguistic structures started dominating social as well as individual life and how psychological space is created, which is enlarging continuously. It also deals with the question - how language and literature are used as technology to shape the human psyche?

1.1 Literature as Psycho-Technology

At the surface level, there seems to be no use of technology in language and literature, except in printing

and production through audio-visual means. However, the reality is very different. All discourses and other forms of art are technological productions because the arrangement of words, utterances, symbols, expressions and various other things require technical skill. A writer or artist produces his works like a technician who produces machines. That is why there is no doubt that humankind has always made use of language and literature to structure the psyche of people. It manifests itself in the processes how a person agrees to become human bomb, why a person self-immolates for some abstract cause, how soldiers are persuaded to fight for the nation, how people

are divided into various social classes, and why they give consent for self-exploitation? Advertisers, politicians, and journalists are aware of the reality more than common masses and therefore they use language in an effective way to get desired response from the masses. In short, it is psycho-technology with no visible technology. It is present in all societies irrespective of caste colour, race, and sex. However, people generally do not agree with this assumption. W.H. Auden in his "In the Memory of W. B. Yeats" doubts the capability of a poet to change the world when he says:

For poetry makes nothing happen: It survives
In the valley of its saying where executives
Would never want to tamper: . . . (W. H. Auden:
82).

He means to say that literature can do nothing to change the lives of people. However, it is difficult to agree with him and others who think in the same manner. Though apparently it seems that various discourses do not influence the lives of people directly but anyone with a deep insight can find that almost every aspect of human life is determined by the dominant discourses. In his article "The Problem of Punjab's language and script," Bhagat Singh highlights the role of literature, a linguistic product, in shaping the history when he points out that, "Garibaldi could not have succeeded in mobilizing the army with such ease if Mazzini had not invested his thirty years in his mission of cultural and literary renaissance" (Shiv Kumar: 57-58). Similarly he says "The French revolution would have been impossible without the literature of Rousseau and Voltaire", he adds that, "Had Tolstoy, Karl Marx and Maxim Gorky not invested years of their lives in the creation of new literature, leave alone the propagation and practice of communism." (Shiv Kumar: 57-58).

1.2 Naturalization of Ideologies

If one looks into Indian society the sensibility of people especially Hindus is shaped by three literary masterpieces - Ramayana, Mahabharata and Manusamriti. These three books are written by poets using poetic language. Dramatic performances based on these works had great impact on the audience. When these dramas were performed in cities, villages and even streets, the ideologies ingrained in their linguistic structures were injected into the psyche of masses. These ideologies once infused into psyche started

affecting people's social as well as personal behaviour. If one starts preparing a list of this type of events, it is going to be an unending affair.

Thinking process of people is determined by various ideologies to the extent that even the material realities are perceived under their influence. For example if you tell a highly vegetarian and religious minded person that the food he/she has eaten contained non-vegetarian things, the person will start vomiting though the food was vegetarian and contained nothing that can cause vomiting. It shows that ideologies can even influence the hardware i.e. physiology of human beings. This example leaves no room to doubt the argument that ideologies can control the psyche of people and through this, it can control all other aspects of human life. Highly rigid class structure found in the society was once found only in some highly influential texts. Untouchability, poor condition of women, caste-structures and many other practices were first introduced through written or oral discourses and then became material reality. When these practices were confirmed and reconfirmed through literary works and other discourses, they are naturalized to such an extent that people now take them as natural as breathing, eating, or any other natural phenomena.

1.3 The Hegemony of Ideology

To establish dominance over others is the most powerful instinct of the animal world. All other animals except human beings use only physical means to establish their hegemony. But human beings (the highly developed animals) which were called by Althusser "ideological animals by nature" (Althusser: 84) and by Aristotle as "political animal" (Aristotle: 201), use both physical as well as intellectual weapons (language, literature and other arts) to establish hegemony over other members of their species. In the world of human beings, the intellectual methods have proved more potent and long lasting. Althusser establishes a relationship between Repressive States Apparatus and the Ideological States Apparatus when he says, "The former works explicitly in terms of violence, (including the police and armed forces) whereas the latter works through ideology. One is primarily public; the other may be largely private, including ideas such as the family." (Mark Robson and Peter Stockwell: 9). Ideological states apparatus works through language

and literature. It establishes hegemony without shedding blood. It compels people internally to accept the dominant ideologies. Whenever the privileged classes desire to execute something, they employ writers. These writers, with the help of language, infuse the desired ideologies into psyche and as a result large chunks of people behave accordingly.

1.4 Establishment of Power Relations

A literary artist takes certain raw material – language, other literary texts and ways of perceiving the world and transforms them by using certain techniques into the product. However, he never reveals the forces responsible for the production of the text. He hides them behind the concept of divine inspiration. This mystification of literary production lends it power. According to Terry Eagleton the power of a text lies in the fact that:

The text does not allow the reader to see how the facts it contains were selected, what was excluded, why these facts were organized in this particular way, what assumptions governed this process, ... Part of the power of such texts thus lies in their suppression of what might be called their modes of production ... (Terry Eagleton, 1996: 147-148)

By hiding the modes of production, the writer attains a God like stature as James Joyce's Character Stephen Dedalus puts it, "The artist, like the God of the creation remains behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence indifferent, paring his fingernails" (James Joyce: 336). This mystification on the part of the writer compels the reader to accept the text as the ultimate truth. The reader perceives inherent ideology as natural phenomena.

The process of production is mystified because the text is always directed towards the reader as Roland Barthes says: "The reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any of them being lost, all the citations out of which a writing is made; the unity of text is not in its origin but its destination,..." (Mark Robson and Peter Stockwell: 85). Thus, text is always reader oriented and its aim is to indoctrinate the institutionally created truth. That is why in all ages all writers and artists who posed a challenge to the privileged classes were punished

directly or indirectly. In this way in any historical context language and literature act as the most potent means of cultural politics and for establishing hegemony. It is so because human psyche, which consists of physical drives along with beliefs, values and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive and with the help of which they explain, what they take to be reality, is largely if not wholly shaped by the ideas transfused through language and literature. However, these ideas ingrained in literature are not neutral because they are the product of the position and interests of the dominate classes. If they help in the establishment of power relations that are tilted towards their propagators, they are rewarded and canonized otherwise they are punished and marginalized. These ideas operate to form and position the users of language as the subject in discourse. In this way, people are subjected and subordinated to the ideological interests of the ruling class. Therefore, the traditions and values, which literary texts recommend as standard, are always the traditions and values that the ruling class seeks to impose upon the society for its own benefit. This imposition is executed by creating imaginary relationship between the rulers and ruled.

1.5 Why Literature?

Now when it is almost clear that literature is not something neutral, it always serves the ends of the privileged classes and its hidden aim is to establish hegemony of one class over others or to challenge the same. One may ask why the literature is written and why people read it. They read it because language and literature distinguish human being from animals. Societies are constituted by joining people to each other through language whose organized form is known as literature. It also constitutes a collective psychological space, which helps them in responding to various natural as well as social problems.

Furthermore, as almost whole of the collective as well as personal psychological space is constituted by language and literature, meaning of life can only be known through it. Wallace Stevens in his poem "Anecdote of the Jar" highlights the role of literature by using the image of a reflecting jar, when he says: "The wilderness rose up to it,/And sprawled around, no longer wild." (Wallace Stevens: 76). It implies that the wilderness or unknown is reflected by the jar; it loses its wilderness and is shaped

into something well-ordered and known. In other words, there was wilderness or chaos when there was no jar but now when it is reflected through the jar, it is no longer wild. When the same principle is applied in the field of human life, it becomes clear that there were no values, truths, meaning, traditions etc. in the absence of literature and other discourses. It is only through literature that these things are confirmed and reconfirmed.

Literature acts like a mirror and reflects life and people come to know of life only through this reflection. It can be compared to a simple mirror that reflects one's face and makes him aware how he looks like. However, suppose if there is some change in the nature of the mirror then the person will come to know of himself/herself differently. In other words, people are able to recognize themselves as human beings only through ideology, which can only be found in literature and other discourses. Therefore, ideology is not false perception but perception itself. Wallace Stevens further confirms this idea in his "The Idea of Order at Key West" when he takes the artist as the sole creator of reality and says:

She was the single artificer of the world
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song. (Wallace Stevens: 129)

1.6 Literature as Medium of Persuasion

Literary artists construct the virtual world with the help of language and the world whatever reality it has, attains the reality imposed upon it by them. Therefore, the virtual world created through literature is not virtual but real because there is no other way to know reality. In other words, it is the artist who creates the world, the world which is perceived by human beings, as Wallace Stevens says: "As we beheld her striding there alone, /knew that there never was a world for her/ Except the one she sang and, singing made." (Wallace Stevens: 129-130). In other words, literature is the medium through which modes of perceiving world came into existence. Various artists perceived the world differently and projected different pictures of the world. Every mode has its own point of view and ideology. When these modes enter into the collective psychological space they captivate individual minds and compel them to perceive the world accordingly.

That is why there are diverse sometimes opposite modes of perceiving the reality that sometimes challenge each other through people who adopt them to seek reality. Various ideologies picked up by individuals through linguistic structures affect their lives directly or indirectly.

Raymond Williams revealed how even the human sensibility, which is considered to be independent, is structured by external forces. Even people are not free to feel; in other words, what will be felt by a person on a certain occasion is not decided by that person. Various ideologies incorporated by him through language decide what he will feel under given circumstances. For example in Christian, Muslim, South Indian Hindu and various other societies where people can marry their cousins they view this relationship with marriage perspective. However, in North Indian Hindu society where cousins are considered no less than real brothers and sisters, people have different outlook towards these relationships. In this way, intellectual life to full extent and physical life to some extent are ruled by ideologies.

Even the ancient masters were also aware of the technological use of literature. Plato in his *Gorgias* criticized the use of rhetoric because its purpose is to persuade and because rhetoricians need only concern themselves with what is effective. Every writer wants to do something through his work. However, it cannot happen in isolation. Any discourse or literary work can manifest inherent ideology only through its reader.

The work through the beauty of its language and structural perfection mesmerizes the reader. In this way, it captivates the individual mind and persuades him/her to act accordingly. As the readership of the work increases, the inherent ideology spreads far and wide by captivating the minds of more and more people. At this point when certain ideology becomes dominant, it is given the name of high culture. Under such circumstance, it is considered the duty of intellectuals to ensure maximum diffusion of this ideology into the collective psychological space. Matthew Arnold calls such persons as great men and defines them in the following words: "The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time;"(Matthew Arnold:70). The writers through their

works persuade their readers that the knowledge, ideas, and the values they have adopted from these texts are best in the world and it is their (reader's) duty to spread them everywhere.

1.7 Literature as Socio-Cultural Agent

Once the minds of people are fully captivated, they set out to teach these values. As this phenomenon takes place simultaneously in all cultures, therefore one can see various cultures at strife. This strife in an organized form started with the invention of language because it is the language that joins as well as separates people. These works persuade people to take up assigned tasks. In this way, power relations are established by dividing the society into various classes. In other words, intra-cultural human relations are also shaped by various social discourses including literary works.

Literature is such a potent weapon for structuring the sensibility of people because it gives pleasure. While enjoying literature people take up the ideologies ingrained in it. The concept of "art for art's sake" has lost its validity, as it is now established that literature is not something neutral. Production of literature is not an independent activity. It does not simply exist in all cultures; it is made up along with other products, practices and discourses of a given culture. There is a definite correlation between the socio-economic conditions and the aesthetic works produced. Literature is both the product and producer of socio-economic conditions. The ideology, class and economic substructure influence literature and art directly and indirectly, however simultaneously art and literature also influence all these structures directly and indirectly.

Literature is closely related to society. It reflects as well as shapes the complex ways in which ideas and material conditions interact. Undoubtedly, literature is a product of history, but one should not forget that the course of history has always been determined by literature produced during that era. There are sufficient instances when a particular work changed the dimension of history. Literature has always been used to give specific directions to the social, economic and cultural conditions in a society.

To understand the role played by literature, it is necessary to look into the struggle that goes on in a society. People struggle and many a times murder each other purely for physical survival. However, in a civil society all this go on even on a larger scale and there are many other reasons behind it other than mere physical survival. Therefore, "It is much harder", as Terry Eagleton, says, "to grasp how they may come to do so in the name of something as apparently abstract as ideas. Yet ideas are what men and women live by and occasionally die for" (Terry Eagleton: XIII). It implies that along with biological or genetic set up and physical needs, abstract ideas also play an important role in determining the behaviour of people.

In a civil society where needs of animal self are repressed under the cover of civilization, ideas are more important. The things people hold dear such as family, love of a person, a deity, a nation, and so on, their likes, dislikes, prejudices etc. are more than just the product of an instinct. All such ideas are fostered, sustained and strengthened through and by language and literature. The various discourses provide people with various values, which help them to interpret the world and provide them with the terms of reference for their decisions.

Since the ancient times the dominant classes have been using various techniques provided by psychological knowledge to produce the kind of people they need. At the same time, they also produce the structures through which this reproduction of subjects is accomplished. The institutionally created realities are concretized through confirmation and reconfirmation. In her *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir reveals how "A woman is not born, but rather becomes a woman...it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature" (Simone de Beauvoir: 295) with the help of techniques and tools related to Psychology, sociology, economy and language.

1.8 Literature Fosters Differences and Acceptance

First, the concept of womanhood is created keeping in mind the requirements of dominant male world and then it is incorporated into works of art including literature, musical compositions and other discourses. In this way

ideology is sugar coated to enable it to diffuse deeper and deeper into the human psyche. Concept of womanhood is already present in the society before the birth of girl child. As a girl child enters the society she is bound to learn the role already cut for her and in this way, she becomes a girl socially. In other words, the concept of womanhood is not determined by woman's biological structure; rather it is determined by society. However, her transformation from a human being to woman is naturalized with the help of art and literature. In this way, the hegemonic and exploitative system is projected as neutral, enlightening, and natural.

Intellectuals play a very important role in this process of naturalization. An invisible system of ideas is installed, which compels people internally to give their consent for whatever is done to them. In this way, a more subtle form of control is established that makes the ruled to accept things as they are. On a particular moment in the history the existing discourses determine what is at time accounted knowledge and truth, as well what is considered to be normal against what is considered to be abnormal.

1.9 Digitalization of Literature

There has been a continuous development in the means of spreading discourses. Now a days there are print media (literature, newspapers, magazines etc.) and audio-visual media (Radio, cinema, T.V, internet etc.) through which ideas flow vertically (most of the time from top to bottom sometimes vice-versa) and horizontally among common people. Literature is just only one component through which ideas travel far and wide.

In the contemporary world, audio-visual media, which is nothing but a highly technologized form of dramatic presentation is replacing traditional literature. The most effective use of language and literature as a technology can be seen in T.V serials, movies, news channels, radio programmes and internet where everything is structured to influence maximum number of people. News channels select and structure news with a clear intention to structure and alter the public opinion and direct the attention of masses towards the issues that suit the ruling classes.

2. Conclusion

As it is clear that human psyche is structured by ideologies, now question arises from where these forces come. It must not be forgotten that human mind also has creative power. Though like a computer, it imbibes the already prevalent structures, it has the capability to interpret them on its own. New ideologies and new linguistic structures are also produced by human mind. That is why there have always been reactions against the dominant ideologies. The ideologies as well as reaction against them both originate in individual minds and then spread far and wide and make a place for themselves in the collective psychological space because as Derek Attridge says "creativity falters if it remains wholly private. The product of creativity needs to be accommodated within the surrounding culture if it is to be perceived and valued: it then becomes an invention, publicly recognized and available for interpretation" (Mark Robson and Peter Stockwell: 22). It means that if any ideology wants to survive it must become part of discourses. Since the time of establishment of human society, many ideologies surfaced and became part of culture but at the same time, counter ideologies appeared and they also became part of culture. However, this activity has never been automatic. There have always been conscious efforts behind the production and spread of both ideologies and counter ideologies. However, it has helped and still helping in the development of human civilization by expanding both the personal psychological space and hence collective psychological space.

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