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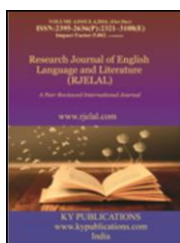
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LITERATURE TEACHING AT THE UG LEVEL: TEXT PRESENTATION BY FILM SCREENING

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ABSTRACT

Recognising the importance of the UG level where literary taste and sensibility for appropriate critical reception of the literary texts and also films based on the same are to be built up through conscious and planned teaching intervention, this paper in three interrelated sections – besides the customary introduction and conclusion – seeks to deal with the UG level literature teaching goals, teaching literature texts using films, and issues emerging out of the same exercise.

Key Words: Literature, Films, UG class, Enjoyment, Understanding

INTRODUCTION

UG level is understandably a very important stage in literature teaching. This stage has adolescent and young minds ready with zeal to take creative steps to come to terms with the world ridden with a whole host of real life problems. The education at this stage preparing them for this stupendous initiative is to bring out the best in them in terms of creative fire and critical choices about undertakings that should be geared at changing the world for the better. Literature proper to be offered at this stage thus has to reproduce for them the real world in its complex make-up and it has to present insightful approaches to them so as to leave them variously capable to analyse the nature of reality, question it in terms of its rotten and responsible constituents in correcting which there could possibly arise hope of better times and opportunities for more fulfilled life for the people around found mostly languishing in troubles created by forces of evil. This fine and effective sense of discrimination between good, useful and commendable and evil, disgusting and up-root-able is what students at this stage of their possible conscious participation in the project of transforming the present for a better future need and literature by offering them scope to

derive this sense makes itself relevant for all practical purposes. After all, what literature purports to offer on the final count is a possible and happy future achievable through conscious continuous efforts. Whereas UG literature teaching project universally converges on the acknowledged theme of widening the awareness of the adolescent and youthful students about the real world of their daily intimate interaction and occasioning scope for their definite creative conscious participation to desirably change its character and texture, methods involved in handling the text and the film as differing mediums while doing literature with students of UG level where their maturity levels demand more from the teacher in terms of having a deft understanding of their emotional needs, their social and cultural and religious and political commitments or affiliations, their practical participation in projects of transformation of their destiny and dreams need greater role to play if understanding from literature classes where films are used in a fairly big way is definitely to emerge. This paper in three interrelated sections – besides the customary introduction and conclusion – seeks to deal with the UG level literature teaching goals, teaching literature texts

using films, and issues emerging out of the same exercise.

THE UG LEVEL LITERATURE TEACHING GOALS

Why at all literature should be taught to the teen age students? What emotional development goals are to be achieved through an active dose of literature? Where is a cultural goal aligned with literature teaching? How much and how far is literature teaching poised to offer students various political and psychological or even philosophical goals they have to meet by way of overcoming identity crisis, answering politics of representation, correcting colonialism's distortions, getting various rights as they stand blatantly denied? What use has literature teaching for ending war and promoting prospects of peace? What contribution is literature to promise to help build a world on the ideals of love, sympathy, compassion and non-violence? Literature teaching at all levels and most particularly at the UG level has to answer all these suggestive questions. While most universities for their UG literature goals do have answers to the said set of searching questions, their avowed objective universally is to develop in the students a visible ability in exercise to critically receive and respond to or appreciate works of literature. Accordingly, teachers adopt a variety of methods to develop in the students an appreciable literary critical perspective. Both in traditional teacher-centred format and the now popular learner-centred classroom practices, efforts have all along been reported to be in place to bring the students reasonable command of skills that make literary communication involving prescribed texts successful – in making the message(s) of the author reach the readers, in making readers get at the theme(s) that the literary piece in hand may be built around, in making emotions and feelings buried in the decipherable contexts surface so as to generalise them taking them beyond their limited isolated complex contours of depiction, in making a discourse open up with the work of literature in question being held variously to be treated by different students or groups based on their socially shared interests and visions and expectations and experiences. Films based on such prescribed literary works are often screened in classrooms to make

students get at the communication value of those texts and films better. Though the mediums the text book and the films represent are different, the ultimate goal they seek and share is one and the same in that understanding of the works of literature to the best so that action based on that and aimed at something better could be possible through their conscious and conscientious involvement. After all, a happier and worthier future to be made possible with conscious corrective collaborative programmatic action is the gift of literature when pursued with sincerity and seriousness.

Any rough survey carried out across UG English literature syllabi would but be convincing about the fact that literary works prescribed include all the genres and the themes those works mostly deal with are of love, romance, longing, pining, separation, suffering, struggle, reunion, marriage, loss, death, debauchery, loyalty, and a host of such like things where youthful emotion is mostly sought to be offered a sumptuous feast. Besides, voices and visions, great lives, stirring issues affecting the humanity's grand destiny and higher dreams as a whole also do make up the bulk of such prescribed pieces meant to be done for the UG level students. To be more specific, drama ranging from Shakespeare to Shaw or Beckett or Pinter and novels from Daniel Defoe to Graham Greene are prescribed and students get to know a good deal about life and ways in the world that they have to so definitely confront to overcome problems and challenges of sorts that the world poses to thwart great dreams of the adolescent and young people's lives. It is seen that some of the literary classics prescribed for UG level have been made into films and classroom teaching and reception of those literary works stand richly benefitted when teachers make effective use of the same.

The goals of literature classes being both entertainment and enlightenment, literature when presented as educative works to be enjoyed as great reading experiences benefits from film presentation with a good research already in place to support the teacher in regularly and constantly returning the students to the film, and thereby of course to the text, so that important points here and there

otherwise likely to be missed are firmly focussed upon and students are able to get a storyline well developed to make them argue out their positions neatly while analysing works and responding to them or offering critical remarks and judgments on them. For illustration, AS YOU LIKE IT by William Shakespeare has been discussed here to show that understanding of this work for the UG level students is actually enhanced when film presentation is accompanied as a teaching method.

TEACHING LITERATURE TEXTS USING FILMS

To come straight away then to the UG level students' language kitty which they have constantly to fall back upon in need while confronted with taking in a lot of Shakespeare when offered as a reading text is a first great need that the teacher has to meet while taking an AS YOU LIKE IT kind of play to them to hold their interest in the unfolding theme(s) and the plot of the play. Family, friendship, love, honour, valour, royal patronage and scourge, property rights and usurpation and disinheritance, jealousy, treachery, murderous motives, dark designs, servant-master relationship, human heart's splendid workings - all this make a rich feast of facts and themes in our classroom encounter of Shakespeare. Love triangles and their contribution to complication of the plot, change of heart taking place towards the end of the play making an almost dark and gloomy atmosphere finally clearing up to allow room for the good to prevail, double roles and male-female forms interchangeably assumed to hold the plot in place despite gathering complexity are matters that students find initially baffling thus their full understanding and appreciation of the play being limited and obstructed when the text presentation is done in the traditional reading and teaching and explaining form with the teacher in various ways stitching together facts that lie scattered throughout the Acts and Scenes of the play.

When film presentation is done, students' excitement is quite high. They are all charged in the name of watching and enjoying AS YOU LIKE IT on the cinema format. They are supported on different benches by teachers who are to take note of their enjoyment and discomfort about making sense of the text in progress. Teachers are occasional and

immediate, but brief aid in cases where little gestures or feedback helps students move on. Close neighbourhoods of students are also a positive help to each other in clarifying contexts and unfolding themes as and when like in live entertainment atmospheres they are free to give vent to their feelings – now clapping, now laughing, now showing shock or dismay, now cursing – to help others keep track of things and changes through meaningful continuities.

Pre-presentation, while-presentation and post-presentation activities being put in place, understanding of the play becomes satisfactory and evaluative responses to judge levels of comprehension reached by even supposedly low achievers for making critical comments go to prove that film-presentation as a supplementary technique is a help to ensure desirable levels of student participation in making texts yield meaning to a level where students could offer evidence of the extent to which they have been at home with the text despite its otherwise well-held complexity levels due to text-structuring/narrative progression and linguistic difficulty.

ISSUES IN FILM SCREENING FOR TEXT PRESENTATION

Assumption behind film using in classroom handling of literature texts is that enjoyment would open the door to understanding the text. Audio-visual presentation of subject matter in an absorbing way with episodes and actions neatly presented in an integrated manner helps hold students' attention and facilitates in the process of their individual and co-operative, collaborative and collective consolidation of facts and events that richly enables them get their own stories developed in their independent ways. The perceptions and perspectives at exercise in the process make different student groups offer different responses when they are giving out their first-hand frank remarks on which parts they liked the most, where they were confused, what interested them the most, how otherwise perhaps the play should have gone to leave them more satisfied etc.

Comparative assessment shows that the rate of students' understanding is higher when the traditional text presentation in the reading-

explanation mode is supplemented and complemented by film presentation.

CONCLUSION

UG level classrooms because of their crucial positioning in the educational order need a better deal always because at this level students' conscious accessing of texts prescribed in their literature syllabus has directly do relate to their significant real life business in the world in all the practical spheres. Film adaptation of works of literature for purposes of classroom use has to help develop skills of critical thinking building and problem solving reasoning in students so that from the classroom and the cinema-halls they get gradually the best every time they are expected to contribute in some substantial way to transform the nature and content of the life and experience in our world. Literature's great justification for being recommended for classrooms universally and eternally derives weight from this student enablement to take the cause of life and living with dignity through struggles and perseverance for a right a life of peace, progress, prosperity and happiness. A classroom that offers students understanding of all that is prescribed for their stage actually prepares them the best to deserve happiness that life and the world have in store for them. Literature teaching embracing film-use as a subsidiary method has to have this in view to benefit students at the UG level.

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