

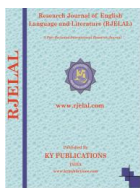


INTRODUCING SKILLS THROUGH LITERATURE: A SOFT SKILLS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Literature generates the knowledge of human experience, enriching our lives. Some of the dominant Indian English writers have come forward to use the medium of literature for the representation of skills which can be used in day-to-day life. These skills can be referred to as survival or ordeal management skills. Reading such text adds a new dimension to approach a literary text as an art for survival's sake. The selected works of authors introduce the various skills used by the characters that prevent them from annihilation. Hence, this research paper throws light on the use of literature which can be useful to impart skills among the youth in the higher academia.

Key words: Literature, Soft skills, Novel, Critical thinking, Theme, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

To attain success in life and career, soft skills are the requirement of the Modern-day. The importance of hard skills is usually estimated by using soft skills. To put simply, "soft skills are an umbrella term for skills, under three key functional elements: people skills, social skills, and personal career attributes" (web). As the famous British writer C.S. Lewis quotes, "Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides: and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become." Hence, we can say, literature is connected to life and generates knowledge of human experience in the reader. Critical thinking is the medium which can be taken to reach out such experiences. Skills are part of the human experience can be explored through critical point of view. Hence, the study of literature to locate skills will be interesting approach to encourage students for self-development.

As considering skills as one of the major ingredients of human experience, the present research emphasizes upon the use of literature to introduce skills in the classroom context. These skills have universal appeal and can easily motivate a learner to apply them in real life situation. In the realm of literature, these skills are also labelled as survival or ordeal management skills, facilitating the therapeutic value. With support of this view, the researcher aims at using a few novels of Indian English and Indian origin writers to introduce skills at school and college level students. A close study of the selected novels has been carried on. A few soft skills can be categorized in the following way:

Soft skills- Social: Positive attitude, Communication skills, Interpersonal skills, Values

Soft skills- Thinking: Creativity, Problem-solving, Decision-making

Soft skills- Negotiating: Coping with emotion, Coping with stress, Coping with time, Teamwork

CRITICAL THINKING:**COMPROMISE**

Compromise offers a middle coursing to balance feeling and desire. Good compromise will always help to nurture relations and fosters confidence, security and reliability. It helps to settle discords. However, every person is not able to make compromises, it takes a good sense and courage to choose this skill to grow, learn and improve. "If one opts for life, one must compromise like Sita in *Where Shall We Go this Summer* (1975)" is a statement by Anita Desai who gives emphasize on compromise for the renewal of the fallen ties. Sita, the female protagonist of her novel compromises with life and situation. Realizing "life must be continued, and all its business' (Desai 138) shows her ability to make compromise based on reason. Gopal N.R. remarks about Sita that compromise provides her the new vision to live life and to accept reality. The learner understands how compromise helps one to minimize the conflicts and approach life with more matured outlook. It makes a person to become active and involved with life.

DETERMINATION

Determination is an action which takes you to your goal. It is a positive and powerful force which makes one to keep moving forward even in the face of crisis. "I can think of hundreds of things to do instead. I won't marry....I won't. I shall never leave Baba and Raja and Mira-masi...I shall work-I shall do things...I shall earn my own living- and look after Mira-masi and Bbaba and... and be independent. There will be so many things to do- when we are grown up- when all this is over" (Desai 221). The words are put by Bimla, the heroine in the novel *Clear Light of the Day* (1980) by Desai. Facing ordeals of unloved childhood, betrayal of siblings and unfavourable surrounding, Bimla decides to confront life's with all its ups and downs. She tackles family business, looks after her retarded brother and fulfils her ambition to become a confident person like Joan of Arc or Florence Nightingale. One should surely get inspired and learn a spirit of boldness and courage from Bimla.

ADJUSTMENT/ADAPATABILITY

Longing for healthier life and fine employment takes people across the world. Diaspora is the name given to them. Issues related to place, food, cloth, nostalgia, identity and loneliness are faced by them. Adjustment becomes mandatory if one craves to continue to live on in the entirely different environment. When we adapt or adjust, life becomes easier. We perceive life with the positive attitude and maximize the chances of learning and discovering new things for us. "I didn't know a thing back then" (Lahiri 285) is spoken by Ashima, an Indian Bengali woman from Calcutta in *The Namesake* (2003) who initially rejects adjustment in America but gradually adjusts herself and evolves with the course of the narrative. The positive side of such attitude benefits Ashima, later life making her independent. She is able to understand the need of her Americanized children. Taking part in celebrations with the host land festivals and also keeping ties with own community depicts her skill of maintaining balance. Batra states that the first generation story is about adaptation and discovering new things about themselves. Lahiri's Ashima stands very much true the statement (Batra 50).

ADOPTION/ ACCEPTANCE

Which culture is superior? is an unsolved phenomenon in today's world. Adoption or acceptance of more than one culture is always advantageous. It makes us culturally awake. We learn the importance of knowing diverse cultures. Knowing cultural differences alert us culturally to negotiate with differences and protect our identity. Lahiri in the novel *The Namesake* (2003) responds spreading positive message over the cultural dilemma and identity crisis resulting from it. She is in favour of adoption of diverse cultures. It enriches one's personality. Identity crisis can be solved acknowledging that human being can be made of more than one culture. There is no question of confining identity into one specific theoretical concept. Gogol, the character who seeks his identity undergoing through cultural dilemmas, dawns with a realization at the end of the novel with the self-knowledge. He evolves as Kaur states: "Gogol

(Nikhil), though having passed through many emotional setbacks because of his 'biculture' identity is shown to be feeling dejected, distressed, displaced and lonely in the end not knowing what to do after the thwarting of his dreams, his father's death, his wife's desertion and his mother's impending departure to India, but his desire to settle a home, have a family and a son and rise professionally in other country hint at his request for the new 'route' which will dawn on him after his reflections in the company of the stories by his namesake, Nikholai Gogol- gifted to him by his father" (Kaur 42).

DECISION-MAKING

Making decision about career and life is a serious matter for any youth. Sometimes, it is difficult to make choice because of chaotic circumstances. But, acknowledging the facts of the situation and what is better for self, making choice and moving forward is always wise man's way. Subhash in *The Lowland* (2013) is a good model of a youth during the time of making essential decision of his life during the adulthood. "He was proud to have come alone to America. To learn it as he once must have learned to stay and walk and speak. He'd wanted so much to leave Calcutta not only for the sake of his education but also he could admit this to himself now to take a step Udayan never could" (Lahiri 40). Subhash takes decision of moving to America for better prospect than living in the violent surrounding of Calcutta. Lahiri wants to teach that for asserting own independence and freedom from others, one should acts on own will.

TOLERANCE

Living in the society which is especially a multicultural, the skill of tolerance should be adopted. "Subhash was the only foreigner. No student from other parts of Asia was there. It was nothing like the demonstrations that erupted now in Calcutta. Disorganized mobs, representing rival communist parties, running helter-skelter though the streets. Chanting, unrelenting. They were demonstrations that almost always turned violent." (Lahiri 36). Richard, Professor Narsimha and Holly are the people whom Subhash encountered at the early phase of his life in America and shows immense

tolerance towards their beliefs, opinions and attitudes. He keeps patience and accepts them despite of having troubled by own ethnic and cultural prejudices. One can easily learn how to guard oneself from harms of unwanted quarrels and accept differences in beliefs, values and opinions. We can keep harmony knowing the use of tolerance.

ACCOMODATION

The dictionary of Merriam Webster defines the verb accommodate as "to make fit, suitable, or congruous". To put simple, to accommodate means to adapt oneself. In *The Golden Gate* (1980), Vikram Seth has portrayed the cosmopolitan problem of romantic love and relationships. How young people try to overcome their sadness or loneliness through the romantic notion of being in love or to be loved is the major focus of the novel. Seth narrates the story of John Brown, the successful handsome young lad who remains unsuccessful in making connections with others due to his inability to accommodate others views and beliefs. He suffers pain and loss throughout the novel, however, emerges a victorious soul with a deeper understanding that life is all about accommodating oneself with others. He overcomes his prejudices and narrow-mindedness and ready to accept others as they are.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, literature including various genres of literary forms like novels, provide a good platform to instruct skills among students in the higher academia as coping strategy to manage anxiety, anguish and psychological crisis.

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