



## REVISITING THE MORAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF FICTION

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### Abstract

A significant strand in the view of literature has always has been the moral approach. It became translated in literary evaluation in the West from Plato's virtue-based conception of life and Aristotle's 'high intention' and finding affirmation by writers like Matthew Arnold, D. H. Lawrence and their view that poetry that is indifferent to moral ideas is indifferent to life, and critics of the stature of F.R. Leavis with his argument of the moral force of literature. The moral imperative has not become altogether eclipsed as evident from the works of postmodern writer Nobel Laureate, Gabriel Marquez though magic and imagination attract the most attention in his books. In terms of scholarship on the same subject, Nora Hamalainen's book *Literature and Moral Theory* (2015) establishes why we need literature, and how moral vision is still alive in contemporary thinking.

The term literature in this paper is used to mean broadly fiction that includes novels, short stories, plays, poetry, and creative non-fiction. The moral approach entails focusing on human values and how they shape the vision of imaginative writers.

It is hoped that adopting the 'moral approach' to examining literature will provide insights not only into the form and shape of literary works but also provide answers to the deep fissures in society, what is popularly called 'crisis in values' in modern life. In the field of literature, the confusion, unfortunately, has been aggravated by fashionable, unstable literary theories, in particular, postmodernism, that was supposed to bring new energy to the study of literature but instead ended up befuddling the minds of readers with its convoluted language and indifference to human 'virtues' 'high intention' and any stable view of truth. Consequently, there is already an announcement of the 'end of theory'. Therefore, the proposal to reconsider the moral approach to evaluating literature is, in fact, going back to the basic principle or the foundation of creativity. In the way the moral approach has gradually lost its eminence should reveal to us the root cause of the current crisis, and how truth and fundamental values can re-affirm themselves in this era of an absence of direction and consequent moral chaos.

**Keywords:** values, moral, truth

## Introduction

### The Moral Function of Literature

Morality in literature pertains to the principles concerning discrimination of good and bad behaviour, right or wrong actions as directed by the ancient wisdom. Aesthetics, on the other hand, deals with artistic taste and beauty in a work of art. Plato, the great disciple of Socrates, was the first critic and the moral philosopher who rejected poetry on the ground of truth and morality. He strongly advocated the pious role of art in inducing values through the medium of art. He wanted to banish poets from his ideal city. He writes in his *The Republic*, "the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth." (Nabergoj 54) Thus he felt that the lying poets must leave. His yardstick of judging poetry was morality, not aesthetics. Plato, in his book III, elaborates on the role of poetry in grooming souls "... because omissions and the failure of beauty in things badly made or grown would be most quickly perceived by one who was properly educated in music, and so, feeling distaste rightly, he would praise beautiful things and take delight in them and receive them into his soul to foster its growth and become himself beautiful and good." (Plato 3.401e) Plato believed that a thing of beauty could inspire souls and help them elevate themselves. The disciple, Aristotle, owing to his sense of logic and common sense, held a different view that esthetics and morality are two separate entities. Though Aristotle speaks about the serious purpose of poetry, it was a slight deviation from the moral sense of the master, who was more inspired than logically equipped. Perhaps this was the time when morality parted its ways from aesthetics. Separating aesthetics from morality perhaps means that morality has no beauty. This separation gives rise to a fundamental question- If aesthetics appeals to the senses, then what does morality appeal to? It raises questions on Aristotle's belief regarding his grounds on which he segregates both morality and aesthetics. As a new concept, it was accepted by many critics and theoreticians, and they played on his ideas in myriad ways. If Aristotle meant with aesthetics as something that appeals to the senses, morality, on the other hand, pertains to

the soul, which is believed to be pure inner driving energy of human life. It implies that poetry has a dual role to play- in appealing the senses and appealing the soul. It is perhaps the beginning of drifting away from the original idea that there is aesthetics in morality and vice versa. Keats reminds of this inseparable connection in 'Ode to Grecian Urn', beauty is truth, truth beauty." (Keats 116)

Aristotle's views on poetry as a serious affair was later taken up by Matthew Arnold. He asserts that the real greatness of poetry lies in seriousness and truth as a subject matter and grand style. In his *On Translating Homer*, he says, "Let us try, however, what can be said, controlling what we say by examples. I think it will be found that the grand style arises in poetry, when a noble nature, poetically gifted treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject." (Arnold, *On Translating Homer* 138) It is not just nobility that makes a poetry grand, but besides this, the subject also must be serious and sublime dealing with the higher truths of life.

Arnold strongly believed that tradition had laid the foundation of contemporary literature, and it will continue to inspire the posterity as well. He draws attention to the spiritual hollowness of the age and the implications of the scientific progress, which led to materialism and self-interest. Therefore, the great and noble characters abound in Classical literature are rarely seen. Arnold urged modern poets to look out to the past for inspiration with regards to moral depth and simplicity, whereas, modern themes owing to spiritual emptiness, are hollow and lack that sublimity and seriousness. He condemns the way, Romantics, in order to bring the so-called variety and newness, overlooked the Classical writers. But Shelley, a Romantic poet advocated the moral function of poetry. Shelley, in his *A Defence of Poetry*, states, "The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause." (Enright and Chickera 137)

Leo Tolstoy, Like Plato, also advocates banishing Shakespeare, Moliere, Dante, and Beethoven, who could not create true art. Art, according to Tolstoy, "either evokes in men those

feelings which, through love of God and of one's neighbour, draw them to greater and ever greater union, and make them ready for and capable of such union; or evokes in them those feelings which show them that they are already united in the joys and sorrows of life." (Tolstoy, *What is Art?* 166)

Contrary to the aestheticians, D. H. Lawrence believed that art and life are not separate entities; art is a medium to express life. For him, art comes out of life, and it should not be the only aim of a novelist. According to him, the man who lives and the man who creates are not different. Art is just serving a higher purpose of life in a way to foreground its wholeness, aiming at the penultimate goal of life. In this way, the word 'aesthetics', as used by Eliot, becomes meaningless. As Lawrence puts it, "The essential function of art is moral. Not aesthetic, not decorative, not pastime and recreation. But moral. The essential function of art is moral. But a passionate, implicit morality not didactic. A morality which changes the blood, rather than the mind. Changes the blood first. The mind follows later, in the wake." (Lawrence 184) Lawrence believed that morality is integral to life and so is discovered not infused. Discovery implies here that morality can be discovered through reading though it can not be infused as a deliberate attempt on the part of the writer. This idea will be explored in the latter part of this article.

In *The Great Tradition*, Leavis attempted to establish a relation between art and life. It was highly discussed in the critical world, but he did not budge on his stance on this matter. In *The Great Tradition*, F. R. Leavis speaks about Jane Austen and says: "her interest in 'composition' is not something to be put over against her interest in life; nor does she offer an 'aesthetic' value that is separable from moral significance. The principle of organisation, and the principle of development, in her work, is an intense moral interest of her own in life that is in the first place a preoccupation with certain problems that life compels on her as personal ones." (Leavis 16) The statement is true in the sense that life cannot be separated from art as it is a mere representation of life.

Leavis also draws attention to Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare*. Shakespeare, according to Johnson, "sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings, indeed, a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance." (Johnson 473) Thus, in all ages, the critics have drawn the attention of the literary world to the significance of a moral approach to literature.

The voices for consonance of art and life have not died down even in the Postmodern Age. These are rather required to be voiced more prominently, keeping the plight of the age in perspective. A recent book *Literature and Moral Theory* (2015) by Nora Hamalainen, discusses how literature brought about change in the Anglo-American Philosophical scenario. The book stresses the need for the benefit of philosophy about morality. She says, "literary works have their own ways of developing moral and theoretical generalizations that need to be taken into account when considering the moral impact of a literary work." (qtd in Dotterman 242) Thus, there are critics in the contemporary literary circles who advocate the vital role of literature to the moral fabric of a nation.

Many other prominent critical voices from the contemporary literary world have highlighted the role of literature in moral upliftment of mankind. James Farrel states, "literature ...presents material for the judgement of life...it makes the reader more intensely conscious of the problems of life, of the predicaments of people, the possibilities and the limitations in the living, the diversities in human experience, and some of the meanings, potential and actual, in this human experience... it is thus one of the instruments that work toward moulding and remoulding the human consciousness." (qtd. in McKean 13) Bhate states, "As per all the didactic theories available, literature is not a light-hearted

activity meant only to enthrall and entertain with mere play of words but it is a serious and significant activity with direct impact on individual and society through its deep-seated values." (Bhate 126). This supports the role of morality in grooming souls. On determining the value of art, Walter Pater says, "The distinction between great art and good art [depends] immediately, as regards literature at all events, not on its form but on the matter...good art...[is] devoted further to the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed, on the enlargement of our sympathies with each other, or to such presentation of new or old truth about ourselves..." (Pater 38)

Literature undoubtedly teaches us many things about life and ourselves, but it may not always be motivated by a desire to impart instruction. A writer may not deliberately and directly aim at moralising through his work. But, as a human being living in the society to which he belongs, he cannot help portraying his own experiences through his characters. He, sometimes, unconsciously makes his characters pass through the experiences he himself might have lived. Thus, literature may not be directly preoccupied with the task of imparting moral values. Instead, it is subtly engaged in realigning the moral matters of life. It offers a philosophical analysis of the moral concerns of life, without being explicitly 'didactic'. The transformation happens when both writers and readers are proactive in this attempt. Now the discussion intends to deliberate on the role of writers and readers in this regard.

With the ever-increasing complexity of the modern age, when material pursuits have gained prominence over spiritual matters, it has become essential to focus on the fundamental truths that ensure a peaceful life. No doubt, man is growing in information and knowledge, but his approach has become so confined to the body that he has completely neglected the soul aspect. In this struggle, man has completely forgotten the fundamental values which sustain life. True values are eternal and do not belong to any particular age, country, caste, creed, or religion. These basic tenets have been guiding man from times immemorial. Man is an embodiment of these values; purity is man's true nature. People from every age seek

peace and fulfilment from these eternal verities. Values are not the brainchild of any philosopher, saint, preacher, or creative writer; values are primordial, beyond time and age.

Restricting the study of values to a particular age and genre would not be appropriate, as a deviation from values has been a matter of concern for all ages. In all the ages, we find that writers have been talking directly or indirectly about some kind of reform. Every age in history has been afflicted with some kind of value crisis, though it varies in intensity from age to age. The solution to all these issues lies in individual transformation. Values do not change with time; only people change concerning their adherence to these eternal values. Experiences do teach a lot of such lessons, but the most effective and easy way to learn the art of living a happy and purposeful life is through the wisdom gained from literature. Thus, keeping in mind the state of affairs in terms of values in modern times, literature needs to play an important role in reestablishing forgotten values.

Real-life incidents and people inspire literature. It, no doubt, has an artistic value. But, its moralistic value is no less significant. McKean says, "Literature is important because it can serve as a guide to the good life." (McKean 14) For a seeker, literature is a reservoir of moral wisdom and a handy manual to lead a happy and meaningful life. He further puts it, "...what most distinguishes literature from the other arts, is its moral quality...they seem to be as relevant to literature as they are to life itself. (McKean 11) This way of learning is the easiest of all the ways discussed earlier as we empathise with the characters by living their lives in our imagination. We laugh; we cry; we learn with them, and, as a result, we grow. This way of learning values is not as hard as learning through our own pain or that of our kith and kin. In this way, literature can be a great instrument of individual and social transformation.

This paper begins with highlighting the crisis of values in this age of Post-Truth and the role of literature, particularly fiction, in transforming individuals and thereby society. The discussion moves on to how a writer's moral vision and his intentions contribute to this cause. There is a

discussion on readers' moral perception irrespective of the intentional didacticism of the writer. Finally, there is a discussion on the role of fiction and the process of transfusion of values.

### **Why this study matters?**

Before proceeding further in understanding the role of literature in reestablishing values, it becomes imperative to discuss the gravity of the situation in terms of the deterioration of values in modern times.

Unlike the olden age, when life was humble and healthy, the modern age is into a mad race of desires and unbridled aspirations. Material success has become a major driving force of man, which subsequently has relegated the pursuit of peace and harmony to the background. A typical feature of this age is the disparity between 'The Truth' and 'My Truth'. 'The Truth' is the conglomeration of the fundamental principles of life as preached by our ancient seers and sages through scriptures that ensure peace and harmony in man's personal as well as social life. 'My truth', on the other hand, is one's own version of 'The Truth' altered conveniently to meet selfish ends. As a result, man has moved far away from the eternal values losing his peace and harmony. It means that the truth that ensures peace and happiness for humankind at large has been deliberately tampered with or misunderstood to cater to one's own egocentricity, thus replacing 'The Truth' with our own version of the truth, i.e. 'my truth'. This digression from 'The Truth' to 'my truth' is the hallmark of this age of Post-Truth. Selfishness has led to a situation where man has turned a blind eye to the eternal verities taught by the saints and sages across the world in all ages and thus resorts to all kinds of ill practices. It is not just an individual, but the nations also show a similar character. The very moral fabric, right from an individual, society to the nation, is disturbed, and this moral character is visible in the way they behave and act. There are numerous examples where nations fabricate literature or tamper with history to glorify or justify their stances. Literature is thus created in order to influence a particular section of society. For example, the Quran, which is a sacred book of Islam, has been rewritten or misinterpreted to exercise a

forcible indoctrination by inducing the idea of the superiority of Islam over the other religions. Thus, the scriptures, loaded with wisdom and truth, are now being meddled with, in the name of creativity. And with an underlying motive of catering to the senses and satisfying vested interests. The corporate world, in a mad race for profits, goes to any extent in faking information to promote their spurious products.

The real purpose of life is to see the reality that pervades the universe, which points at the basics of life that ensure lasting happiness. For this, man needs a clear vision that can either be achieved by a spirit of constant enquiry or by reading literature, which can provide a vision of 'The truth'. The fact must be understood that truth is not something that can be invented; it is something that is realised. A lie is something that can be created. If literature can become a tool in the hands of the dictators, immoral businessmen and other avaricious bodies, then why can't it be a tool in shaping mankind in terms of values. The literature is being produced for various reasons and many a time for the targeted audiences. Not all literature serves the purpose of upholding the values, but the perception of reading literature can be changed or developed in order to help a reader extract from it the best recipe for life.

### **Writer's approach to values**

In modern times the prime responsibility of writers is to bring humankind back to the fundamental truths of life in order to reestablish values in the world. It is not that the writers in the past have not done it; in fact, the early literature was primarily preoccupied with the moral concerns of literature. The literature, in every age, has been serving the moral purpose of the upliftment of mankind. The writers preached directly, highlighting the moral downsides in individuals and society. This kind of direct didacticism is no more in vogue owing to a steep downfall in the moral standards of society. There is a belief supported by many literary critics that direct preaching kills the aesthetics of literary art. They have a reason to think so as values, according to some, should not be directly infused because it may invite an instant indifference. Once

the mind is wayward, the direct approach may seem too blunt and ineffective at times. If the packaging of values is executed with story, style, and aesthetics as bait, the recipe works. That is the reason why moral preaching in literature is most effective when it is imparted in the form of a story, parable, or a fable. Small children easily pick up values through stories. The same approach can be employed for grownups and stubborn minds. In this way, a novel can prove to be the best medium through which a subtle but effective moral message is communicated to the readers.

Later, the realistic portrayal of society with all the details and accuracy, showing a mirror to the society, replaced direct didacticism. Shakespeare, in his plays, explores human nature with such depth and precision that it gives us a profound moral message. His plays cannot be called didactic at the surface level. They delve into a deep understanding of human nature, its growth with time and experience, and allow the readers to identify themselves with the characters and situations using their powers of discrimination. His plays expound the complexities of life in order to measure the core values of life. Humour, too, has been a tool to satirise the profanity in society. In this way, some writers merely present life as it is, and nothing seems to come out in terms of a moral message, but they still communicate a lot through the story. The characters that live in a novel are more or less real individuals. They have some strengths and weaknesses, like people in the real world. The reader tends to connect himself with some of these characters and finds similarities between his life and that of the characters. As people, in general, no character is completely bad or good. A character is an amalgamation of different shades. The good is always rewarded at the end, while the bad suffers. The moral sensitivity of the reader comes to the surface when he sees the virtuous suffering and the bad thriving at the end. Gardner, in *On Moral Fiction*, "...a man writes a novel to find out what he can honestly maintain, not just with his head but with all his nature. He gives it to readers not only to delight them and instruct them but also to support them if they are the right kind of people already, and stir doubts if they're not." (qtd. in Tanner 1)

Some writers only followed the sensorial approach to literature as well. They sensationalise the epics, abounded with truth and morality, and downgrade the sublime purpose of literature. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* and his other novels based on the story of Ramayana and other epic subjects are examples of such attempts. Chetan Bhagat, for instance, garnishes its content with lurid stuff to attract young readers. Here, we see a purely commercial approach to literature where sales matter more than social responsibility. The innocent and ignorant readers fall prey to such catchpenny literature, which may be addictive and detrimental. Much effort is required to pull the readers from such a feast and train them to discriminate between good and bad literature. The honest reviews of critics, highlighting the fatal impact of such cheap content on the psyche of young and tender minds, can help. An aware reader can extract worth learning even from this kind of literature, but the tribe of such readers is on the verge of extinction.

#### **The Reader's approach to morality in literature-**

In the middle of a variety of literature available, it becomes imperative to align the readers' perspective to approach literature. It depends on the reader whether, after reading, he throws the book in the bin or preserves it in his library for posterity. The approach matters here. If a reader has the eye for good and moral, every kind of literature becomes a source of moral and ethical training. The fiction of the twentieth century is, perhaps, the most widely read and most morally complex to understand. A discerning criticism is much needed to guide readers through the moral chaos of the contemporary novel. Behind every character in fiction is a certain world-view. The reader can be trained to deduce 'The truth'.

The ideal way to train readers is to guide them to select good literature. The role of reviewers becomes essential at this juncture. Thus, constant exposure to good literature can sensitise readers and make them resistant to negativity. A mild orientation on the back cover can add a moral dimension to their reading. It is crucial, thus, to understand the way a reader imbibes the lessons in 'the truth'.

**Infusion of Values- The Process**

In order to infuse values through literature, it is crucial to deliberate on how a reader may imbibe values. The first requirement is the reader's open-eyed approach to the moral messages ingrained in literature. These messages can be direct, as well as subtle. Direct messages do not involve much effort, whereas the deep-seated do require some alertness on the part of a reader. The reader establishes a connection with the characters and the situations, paying attention to their personality and actions. A novel, for example, is a realm of good- flawed characters, who suffer or thrive at the end. Their distance from 'the truth' determines the level of their sufferings. Such an approach to reading triggers a sense of enquiry in the reader. This enquiry directs the reader to find the truth, which eventually leads him to find the answer in philosophy. Thus, a mental diagnostic process starts, which makes a reader think and mentally find the solutions to the characters' sufferings and find the right way of living or dealing with the situation. The solution is already present in the scriptures and holy teachings of great saints and sages which one rarely looks at. Literature can lead a reader to these reservoirs of truth and eternal reality, which is the source of all the happiness in life. Empathy also plays a vital role in connecting the reader to the situations a character passes through. Thus, the reader starts mentally living with the character as a fellow sufferer or a counsellor. The reader begins learning from it irrespective of the poetic justice done at the end. The discussion further moves to understand the cord between literature and philosophy.

**Literature and Philosophy**

Literature cannot be seen in isolation, as its scope extends to many other related fields such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and so on. Philosophy is meant to be practised in life, and literature is about life only. R. K Narayan on the interrelation of literature and philosophy, says, "Everything is interrelated. Stories, scriptures, ethics, philosophy, grammar, astrology, astronomy, semantics, mysticism, and moral codes— each forms part and parcel of a total life and is indispensable for the attainment of a four-square understanding of

existence. Literature is not a branch of study to be placed in a separate compartment, for the edification only of scholars, but a comprehensive and artistic medium of expression to benefit the literate and the illiterate alike." (Narayan 4) Philosophy is a guiding principle of behaviour; it talks about reality, existence, and the fundamental nature of knowledge. Values are our guiding principles of conduct. Adherence to values decides the quality of life one is going to lead. The purpose of our life is to realise the eternal truth. To realise this truth is true wisdom. The life depicted in Literature cannot be different from real life. Literature is only an image or re-presentation of real life. Real-life is the basis of imagination. The imaginary world in fiction is a world conceived by the author for his characters. It can be said that philosophy is lived in literature by the characters. Psychology is a study of the human mind and its functioning and, thus, it affects the behaviour of human beings. Moral development falls somewhere at the intersection of ethics, psychology, and philosophy.

**Fiction and the Values**

A novelist is a man living among men, fascinated and moved by their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, actions, and passions. He has his own set of experiences, moral growth, and maturity. He is alert and alive to the complexities of life and must have been, like other men, through the moral trials and tribulations of life. His experiences, in the form of a moral vision, permeate through his novels and, consequently, his vision and message are reflected in a subtle way through the characters and incidents. A writer need not take a didactic line to convey his experiences. A mere representation of life in literature brings the element of morality in it. The moral aspect of fiction is concerned with questions of right and wrong. Life is neither black nor white but a permutation and combination of these two shades. An earnest novelist captures life truly. Moreover, any true portrayal of life will reveal the centrality of moral law. Thus, paradoxically, a novel focusing on negativity, can also reveal ethical truths of life. In a complex age, with intricate relationships and emotions, it is not easy to identify the values. Nevertheless, these values are very much present in the form of a subtle moral fragrance, which can be

sensed by a sensitive reader through a thorough moral reading.

The twentieth-century novelist H. G Wells says:

“... the novel is to be the social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination, the parade of morals and the exchange of manners, the factory of customs, the criticism of laws and institutions and of social dogmas and ideas. It is to be the home confessional, the initiator of knowledge, the seed of fruitful self-questioning...The novel is not a new sort of pulpit; humanity is passing out of the phase when men sit under preachers and dogmatic influences. But the novelist is going to be the most potent of artists, because he is going to present conduct, devise beautiful conduct, discuss conduct, analyse conduct, suggest conduct, illuminate it through and through. He will not teach but discuss, point out, plead, and display.” (qtd. in Hammond 29)

### **Characters: The Vehicle of Values**

The growth of a character in a novel is inevitable in the absence of the writer’s intervention—the stock characters in a novel act as instruments for the development of the main characters. The static characters also highlight the growth of the major characters by contrast. Stock characters help round characters to evolve. It is interesting to see that the stock characters also are endowed with certain values. The only difference is that they do not transform themselves.

A character in a novel grows at his own pace if at all he grows. In this way, fiction presents the journey of the characters’ all-round growth – moral and spiritual. While interpreting a character, we also need to study the intentions and motives of the character behind his actions. One can find by a careful reading of the novel and interpreting the speech and action of a character. It has to be seen whether there is unity in thought, word, and deed in character. There are three ‘I’s of man, according to Sathya Sai Baba, “The one you think you are, the one others think you are, and the one you really are.”

(qtd. In Gokak 32) The third one is the most critical aspect of a character for this study, i.e., ‘the one you really are’.

A character’s behaviour depends on the values he cherishes. A character is not a puppet in the hands of the writer. However, a novelist’s ethical beliefs, opinions, and prejudices may obliquely reflect through the characters, actions, and thoughts in his novels. The moral critic encodes aesthetic signals into ethical statements, which is the primary job of an honest reader.

Values make life simple. This aspect can also be a yardstick to evaluate characters. A simple life is always considered a happy life. The characters who deviate from the path of values complicate their lives. Broadly, the novelist, in whose works a majority of the characters live a simple life, has more of values content in his fiction.

Values learnt through the hard way, shape the personality more permanently. In a novel, one can trace the growth of a character in terms of all the buffs and blows he suffers and the way he deals with them. Most of the time, the growth in the character is noticed in terms of moral values. The novelist makes his characters go through the same trials and tribulations he himself went through to impart the lessons of life that he himself discovered the hard way. Consequently, the novel is a reflection of the novelist’s own moral view of life. Sometimes, the novelist places his characters in imaginary circumstances to make them grow the way he wanted himself to learn what he could not.

The novelist uses all the supporting characters and situations, fate, and chance to bring about a visible moral growth. This moral growth is not restricted to the protagonist. As the novel progresses, all the so-called minor but round characters also develop at the same time. The difference is that the spotlight falls, most of the time, on the protagonist.

### **Conclusion**

The expanding gap between ‘The Truth’ and ‘my truth’ is the reason behind the fast deterioration of values in the modern age. Literature can be both diagnostic as well as therapeutic in understanding

and restoring the lost values. It can lead man from his own understanding of truth to 'The Truth' which is the eternal and ultimate source of peace and happiness. Literature can trigger introspection and set one on the path of transformation. Fiction, in this regard, can play a prominent role. The novelist may not be conscious of the moral purpose of his writing, but the reader is usually aware of and receptive to moral inferences. This awareness, undoubtedly, requires a certain amount of orientation concerning the perception of the reader so that he may read fiction, keeping an upright angle in focus. While aesthetics contributes to the charm of reading, the lasting impact of aesthetics may not be assured. On the other hand, when the reader explores the eternal verities in literature, it bestows him with spiritual maturity and resultant lasting happiness.

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