

Teaching Literatures: A Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

Humanist approach to literature teaching had been an academic custom and convention in almost all cultures ever since literature studies in modern languages and literatures were institutionalized in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Though the genesis of this two millennium old approach is traced back to Plato's *Academy* and Aristotle's *Lyceum*, it was further scaffolded with advanced arguments and methods in the Anglo-American world at the hands of Mathew Arnold in the second half the 19th century and New Critics in the early 20th century. It advocates the inculcation of ethical and aesthetic values in students (readers) of literary studies. This approach was, however, challenged for the first time in history in 1950s and 1960s by structuralist approach but it was short-lived since John Hopkins University's international seminar on structuralism paved the way for the advent of poststructuralist approach to literature teaching. Poststructuralist approach to literature teaching became anti-humanist and anti-structuralist. It emphasizes the importance of theories of reading since poststructuralist thought has enormously influenced human interpretive capacity of the practitioners of human sciences to the extent that it has facilitated professionalization of the literary academia around the world. This paper examines the paradigm shift in approaches to literature reading, understanding, interpreting, teaching, and researching from humanist perceptions to poststructuralist assertions through structuralist recommendations, to know how poststructuralist approach enables literature academics around the world to create literary-critical scholarship, and how English literary academia in India is lagging far behind the rest of the world since it is inadvertently stuck in the colonial mire of humanist approaches.

Keywords: Humanism, structuralism, poststructuralism, literary theories, critical theories, reading theories, applied poststructuralism

1. Introduction

The genesis and mission of English literature departments in India can be dated back to 1857 when three Indian universities were started. Their mission was to inculcate among the Indians of socially forward and economically affordable classes, who could spare time and money, humanistic-aesthetic values of (re-) forming a “class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.” (Macaulay’s *Minute*) English literature curriculum was also designed with a view to “making natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars.” The index of a good English scholar is that Indians should refine their literary-aesthetic sensibilities on the model of British literary-critical, artistic-aesthetic sensibilities. Colonial amateur educationists (Anglicists) were of the opinion that the teaching of Indian literature “tend(ed) not to accelerate the progress of truth but to delay the natural death of expiring errors.” Moreover, they thought that the teaching of Indian languages and literatures “waste(d) the best years of life in learning what procures for them neither bread nor respect. These colonial perceptions have been deeply ingrained in the Indian mind to the extent that the much-avowed postcolonial project of ‘decolonizing’ the Indian mind appears to be an impossible project.

As a consequence, English departments are not in a position to deconstruct/ decolonize the purpose, contents, teaching-learning, and testing of English literature courses. On the other hand, departments of Indian languages and literatures design their curriculum on the models provided by English departments. English literary academics have not even started contesting the nomenclature ‘English literature’ in favour of ‘Literatures in English.’ As the old adage goes, ‘the proof of the pudding is eating,’ English literature curriculum as approved or appreciated by the University Grants Commission, highest tertiary-level policy-making Indian authority, has retained not only the nomenclature of the academic programme, but also the British canonical-literary contents as the unshakeable foundation of both undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in terms of teaching, learning, testing, and researching. Of course, it has recommended a few add-on courses from other national and regional literatures in translation. However, classroom inputs, learning experiences, and testing and evaluation patterns and methods attest the proof that the blueprint designed by Macaulay has been faithfully kept without any minor alteration. It is humanist. However, this humanist approach to the teaching of English literature was contested in the West in 1970s and even the nomenclature of literary studies has been changed into ‘cultural studies.’

2. Humanist Approaches to Teaching Literature

The most fundamental premise of humanist approaches to reading, interpreting, teaching, and testing literature is its subscription to the concept of representation. Humanist literary approaches to literature teaching were predominant in the Anglo-American academia until 1970s when they were challenged by structuralist theories first and poststructuralist theories next. They entertained certain fundamental assumptions about what literature was, how readers should interact with it, and why literature should be studied. They had also taken several ideas about life for granted. Humanists include Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Sidney, Bacon, Addison, Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Poe, Arnold and all new critics.

The term 'humanities' meant the study of art and literature. It is the opposite of divinities that deals with religious texts and doctrines. Humanism is a world-view or perspective that does not accept explanation for existing phenomena if it is based on anything supernatural. It does not perceive the world as being monitored and governed by some sort of divine being who is believed to be the source of and reason for everything that happens in this world. Instead, humanism argues that what humans can observe with their senses can be explained by investigation and thought by exercising the mind that is the defining feature of humans. This perspective laid a very strong foundation of the concept of science in the West. In other words, humanists believed that observation and deduction were adequate tools for understanding and analyzing why and how things happened in the world without reference to any kind of divine or extra-human power. They strongly believed that human mind was the supreme power of knowledge and creation. For this reason, it is sometimes labeled 'secular humanism.'

Humanists believe that everyone should 'study' literature because it makes them better human beings, puts them in touch with human values and dilemmas, and helps them understand the human condition. For them, literature is a representation of reality/life or reflection of life, and life/reality is an objective and outside phenomenon in the world. Since it reflects the unchanging human nature, it is also construed as universal. It is based on their perception of language as a tool of communication. They also believe that literature is the expression of the soul of the extraordinarily-gifted individuals who are worthy of reverence that normally characterizes the celestial creatures or creators!

For them, the study of literature means close, careful, critical, and comprehensive reading and interpreting, and analyzing a literary text, arguing about its themes and aims from authorial point of view, and writing essays about it that have a clear thesis and strong supporting evidence. As an academic discipline, the

method of study was made more rigorous by the contributions of what are commonly known as new critics in America, practical critics in Britain, modernists in Europe, and formalists in Russia. While all traditional moralistic-philosophical, historical-biographical, and psychological approaches view a literary text contextually, new critical traditions divorced the text from all contexts and reading and interpreting the text in favour of intrinsic properties of the text. They also rejected the tradition of hunting authorial intentions and meanings ('intentional fallacy') and textual impact on readers ('affective fallacy'). Plato's and Aristotle's theories of literature have had immense impact on the traditional humanist approaches to the teaching-learning of literature within the academia. Paul de Man sums up the humanists' anxiety to resist poststructuralist perception of literature which they believe are hostile toward ethical and aesthetic values in literature: "It is better to fail in teaching what should not be taught than to succeed in teaching what is not true." ("Resistance to Theory") Traditional literature classroom teaching is thus characterized by the following assumptions:

- 2.1 Language is an unproblematic tool of communication. It is representational. There is nothing that cannot be represented in and through language. Consequently, literature is a verbal art in the sense that it is written in language that represents real life. It should therefore be read without any prior ideological assumptions. It reveals the constants, the universal truths about human nature which is constant and unchanging.
- 2.2 Literature is a transcendental signifier in the sense that it appeals to all generations of readers of all periods and of all cultures. R.J. Rees lists the following characteristics of (English) literature: permanence, originality, craftsmanship, and moral consciousness. The first and the last are emphasized in teaching and researching of literary texts within the academia. In the words of Shakespeare, literature 'holds the mirror up to nature.' Matthew Arnold asserts that it serves as a "criticism of life." It is summed up in the words of Ben Jonson about Shakespeare in his "To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare": "He was not of an age, but for all time!" Ezra Pound defines literature as "News that STAY news" (29) meaning that it is "language charged with meaning."
- 2.3 Meanings of literary texts do not depend on socio-political contexts or literary-historical influences or not even autobiographical facts. Individuals can go beyond society, experience and language.
- 2.4 Literature is universal because it deals with the human nature that is unchanging. Its purpose is to spread human values and to enhance life though

it accomplishes it not in a programmatic way. However, readers do not willingly suspect its intension by attributing any motive as they do in the case of sermons. John Keats in his *Letters* warns that “we distrust literature which has a palpable design upon us.” The uniqueness of literature is that it silently shows or demonstrates concrete representation of thought instead of saying or explaining it.

- 2.5 Writers achieve organic unity between form (the how of literature) and content (the what of literature) by their sincerity and sincerity consists of truth to human experience, integrity towards themselves, and their capacity for human empathy and compassion. These qualities reside in the language that they use.

3. Structuralist Assumptions & Approaches

Structuralism is a twentieth century movement of thought that influenced literary criticism as much as anthropology and philosophy. It divides the world into two units: observable (surface structure) and invisible (deep structure). The invisible world has the structures that organize the visible world. These structures are generated by the human mind. Any order/reality that humans see in this world is in fact imposed by the human mind. It is the human mind/consciousness that generates concepts to organize reality.

It is structuralists who first seriously challenged humanist thinking and assumptions. They accused humanists of subjectivity and impressionism and they promised that they could offer objective and scientific modes of investigation. Thus, structuralists instantly became popular. They were basically influenced by scientific methods of modern linguistics. Some of the basic features of structuralist assumptions are:

- 3.1 Literature is a signifying system without any source of origin. Writers are not the source. Instead, they merely inhabit structures (langue) already existing and this occupation enables them to produce individual texts (parole). This idea challenges the humanist notion that the author is the originator of the text. Consequently, they are not determinants of meaning of the text.
- 3.2 Language not just passively represents reality, but actively produces reality. They claim that thinking is impossible outside language and that humans think only through language and perception and comprehension of reality are made possible by the structure of language.
- 3.3 Humans do not speak language. Conversely, it is language that speaks through humans. Language is not produced by individuals’ mind and free will. Writers do not determine what they write and what texts mean. It is language that

expresses the core essentials of individuals. Meaning is not the writer's experience but comes from the system that decides what any writer can do within it.

- 3.4 Structuralists counter the humanists' perception that each human being has a self that is both unique to the individual and at the same time universal. The self is the core of one's identity that is predetermined. According to them, the self (individual identity) is the product of the structure of language.

4. Poststructuralist Approaches to Teaching Literature

Poststructuralism signals a paradigm shift in human thinking that challenged both humanist and structuralist thinking on every idea that human beings take for granted. It means a group of approaches to the human issues that are motivated by some common understandings. However, these understandings are not shared by every practitioner of poststructuralism. It is manifested in different readings and critical practices in different disciplines. Within literary academia, it is known as literary theory. However, Julian Wolfreys insists on the usage of 'literary theories' instead of 'literary theory' since the term refers to 'analytical practices' in different disciplines differently. It is also sometimes referred to theories of reading and interpreting and it is composed of different strands that form "theoretical approaches to literature." Julian Wolfreys defines reading thus:

Not just reading in the narrow sense of picking up a novel and gleaning the story from it; rather 'reading' suggests *a manner of interpreting our world and the texts which comprise that world*. No one single manner of reading will do, so heterogenous is the world, so diverse are its peoples and cultures, so different are the texts, whether literary, cultural or symbolic by which we tell ourselves and others about ourselves, and by which others speak to us about their differences from us, whether from the present, from some other culture, or from or from the past, from whatever we may think of as our own culture. *Reading thus becomes a heavily encrypted, if not haunted, word.* (2001, p.4) (Italics mine)

While structuralist assumptions had not entered the literary academia for the purpose of teaching and researching, they were challenged by a group of academics-intellectuals-philosophers-psychoanalysts-linguists through presentation of their research papers at an international conference on Structuralism at John Hopkins University, Baltimore, US in 1966. They are Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and Lucien Goldman among others. Poststructuralist assumptions revolutionized human thinking in all disciplines including natural sciences. Its pedagogical value in literature is so immense that literature studies had to be

reoriented and redefined. It paved the way for the emergence of what is now popularly known and resisted as literary theories, new multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches to teaching literature.

Poststructuralists carry forward structuralists' preoccupation with language but with a difference. For them, language is always uncontrollable. Though they accept structuralists' argument that individuals are the products of linguistic and cultural structures that are already in place, poststructuralists insist on these structures being inherently unstable and on this stability being mere appearance. Humans are unstable as language since both have no centre. When there is no centre, there is no structure as well. They are made up of conflicting fragments.

Poststructuralists deconstruct (dismantle) parts of literary texts (by decentring the privileged terms) not to discover any meaning (signified) as in the case of structuralists and new critics, but to reveal their inconsistencies and inner contradictions. They expose unwarranted privileging in all texts including literature. They question the 'structuralists' / new critics' notion of literature as a discourse that refers to vital, unchanging truths and values. Instead, they assert that literature can do no such thing. Literary texts are always subject to the effects of 'differance.' Solid and stable meaning does not stay hidden waiting to be discovered from behind the structures of texts when readers study. In the process of interaction between text and reader, fleeting, different moments of meaning are produced.

4.1 Implications for Practitioners of English Studies

Twenty first century teachers of English literature cannot afford to read, interpret, and teach literary texts the way they were taught to do in the second half or last decades of the twentieth century. Twenty first century readers and researchers of literature are being influenced by poststructuralist thinking in all spheres of life. They should not therefore be forcibly stuck in humanist thinking about reading and interpreting texts while they are interpreting the world poststructurally. Moreover, as long as they are taught to read texts from humanist points of view, they cannot enhance their critical and creative thinking skills. They should be taught to deconstruct (dismantle) texts and the world so that they can see readily the ways in which their (human) experience is determined by ideologies which they are unaware because ideologies are built into language. Only through poststructuralist approaches, students can use all applied versions of poststructuralism as tools as such as Feminism, Post-Althuseerian Marxism, New historicism, Cultural Materialism, Postcolonialism, and Postmodernism. A text can be read from different manners of reading, reflecting, and interpreting. For instance, "In Memoriam A.H.H." can be read from point of view of Cultural Materialism and New Historicism. *The Tempest* can be

read from the angle of cultural materialism, new historicism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, and psychoanalytic criticism.

4.2 Poststructuralist Assumptions

The following are the some of the basic assumptions of poststructuralist thinking that influence or are bound to influence teaching and researching literary texts which comprise the world and experience:

- 4.2.1 Notions of identity, gender and nationality are not fixed and stable. Instead, they are fluid and unstable. They are socially and culturally constructed. Identity is no longer seen as a stable predetermined core self. It is not a fixed and unitary phenomenon. In a globalized, poststructuralist, postmodern world, it is considered to be fluid, multiple, diverse, varied, shifting, contradicting and subject to change dimensions of a person.
- 4.2.2 The concept of man as developed by enlightenment thought and idealist philosophy as sacred, separate and intact and their mind as the true realm of meaning and value is dismissed by poststructuralists. On the other hand, they have invented a new term that characterizes man as a social, cultural, discursal construct. The term is 'subject.' People are material subjects and social in their very origin. They are subject to material practices and structures of society. They are created through cultural meanings and practices.
- 4.2.3 There is nothing objective since one's past experiences, beliefs, ideologies always influence what humans think and do.
- 4.2.4 Language is the most important factor in shaping our perceptions and conceptions of life, the world, and literary texts. Reality is what is structured and created by language. Language is an unreliable medium for communicating even simple truths because of its rhetorical or figural component. It is non-referential in the sense that it neither refers to things in the world nor concepts of things in the world, but to the play of signifiers of which language consists. It is not a reliable tool of communication and it is made to carry hundreds of ideologies, and literature that is made of language carries the same. It is the medium for propagation of ideologies and it is through language humans conceive and perceive the world and themselves. In a nutshell, language is no longer seen as a product of human experience; rather, it produces experiences.
- 4.2.5 Meaning is not definitive and absolute but relative and multiple. Meaning in any literary text is ambiguous, fluid, and multiple or what Derrida says 'play.' Literary texts are as dynamic, ambiguous, unstable as language of which it is

composed. Readers are not passive consumers of meaning for they no longer uncover it from text. It does not reside in a stable manner in text. On the other hand, it is created by reader in the act of reading and interpreting. Hence, it is not stable, there is no final interpretation. Instead, there are only moments of meaning since it is fleeting and flitting. Moreover, all meaning is textual and intertextual. In the words of Derrida, “there is nothing outside of the text.” Everything humans can know is constructed through signs and governed by the rules of discourse for that area of knowledge. Every text exists only in relation to other texts.

4.2.6 Poststructuralists’ radical views of literature are

- i. It is a representation without an original that it copies (simulacrum). It is an unimaginably postmodernist radical view.
- ii. It is a linguistic world that projects a fictional world.
- iii. It is intertextual in the sense that a work is made possible by prior works that it takes up, repeats, challenge, and transform. In other words, it has meaning only in relation to other discourses.
- iv. It is an ideological instrument meaning that a set of stories “seduce readers into accepting the hierarchical arrangements.” It can be any domain: culture, religion, education, law & order.

4.2.7 Reality is seen as much more fragmented, diverse, tenuous, culture-specific than does structuralism.

4.2.8 Discourse is a material practice. In other words, subjects are rooted in historicity and live through the body. Poststructuralists prefer the term ‘historicity’ to ‘history’ since ‘historicity’ implies that what subjects conceive of as history is tentative, situated, and contingent; whereas ‘history’ suggests a reality that exists independent of subjects and that it is cognitively available. Foucault claims that the production of discourse is (the way subjects know their world) is controlled, selected, organized and distributed through certain well-defined procedures. Discourses do not hide the truth but constitute its temporary façade. They strongly contend that what happens is mainly due to chance and that there is no evolution of history.

4.2.9 Texts are marked by a surplus of meaning. It leads to a position that different readings are possible and therefore inevitable. It is the polysemous nature of language that causes the surplus. Language is what the human sense of reality is linguistically constructed.

4.2.10 A text comes into existence as it is read and reading is formed and informed through certain mediating factors.

4.3 Versions of Applied Poststructuralism

Students and teachers of English literature do have confusion in understanding the relationship between poststructuralist thinking and literary theories and its pedagogical relevance. Such uncertainty entails the non-integration of literary theories and poststructuralist assertions for teaching, reading, and researching literature. Of course, if they continue to subscribe to (false) humanist notion of literature, they would also consciously avoid the company of poststructuralist thinkers and literary theorists.

All literary theories are the different versions of poststructuralist assertions. It is often claimed or complained that literary theories have radically changed the very nature of literary studies or changed the nomenclature 'literary studies' into 'cultural studies.' Literary academics assume that there is too much of discussion on non-literary matters in the name of theories which have very little connection with the study of canonical literary texts. This charge cannot be validated. It arises out of the simple fact that the contents of theories are works of anthropology, art history, film studies, gender studies, linguistics, philosophy, political theory, psychoanalysis, science studies, social and intellectual history, and sociology. They are intertextual, self-reflexive, provocative, theoretical, and critical. They always contest what has been taken for granted from time immemorial. They enable literature readers to be(come) responsible citizens and critical thinkers. They liberate readers from being epistemologically dependent to become knowledge producers. They do not merely encourage readers to appreciate literature but to suspect hidden ideologies in the texts and to resist them since all ideologies have a debilitating effect readers. The following are some of the theories of reading (literary theories) which are the different versions of applied poststructuralism:

4.3.1 *Deconstructive readings*

- i. 'Reading against the grains' or 'reading against the text itself.'
- ii. Deconstructive reading uncovers the unconscious dimensions of the text. Interpretation is not the repetition of what is stated in the text.
- iii. Deconstructionists aim at unmasking internal contradictions or inconsistencies in the text and at demonstrating disunity that is hidden under its apparent unity. Hence, this practice is called 'textual harassment' or 'oppositional reading.'

4.3.2 *Postmodernist readings*

- i. It places a new emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity: how readers see rather than what they see.

- ii. It celebrates fragmentation as exhilarating, liberating, escape from fixed system of beliefs.
- iii. It disdains the modernist asceticism and believes in excess.
- iv. It questions grand narratives.

4.3.3 *Psychoanalytic readings*

- i. It applies psychoanalytic principles to the interpretation of literary texts. Thoughts and actions are not consciously determined by people, but are driven by unconscious forces which they can barely fathom.
- ii. Literature is the expression of wish fulfillment and gratifying projections of the ego of the writer.
- iii. It treats a literary text like the unconscious and therefore it cannot speak directly and explicitly, but through images, symbols, emblems, and metaphors.
- iv. It examines the motives of writers, of readers, and of fictional characters, relates the text to features of the writer's biography, such as childhood memories, relationship to parents; analyses the nature of the creative process, probes the psychology of readers' response to literary texts, interprets symbols in texts, unearths latent meanings, examines gender roles and unconscious.

4.3.4 *Feminist readings*

- i. It recovers the texts written by women.
- ii. It revalues women's experiences.
- iii. It examines representations of women in literary texts by men and women.
- iv. It challenges representation of women as 'Other.'
- v. It examines power relations in text and in life.
- vi. It explores if female language is available to men.

4.3.5 *Marxist readings*

- i. Since Marxism is a materialist philosophy, it tries to explain the world of observable facts through concrete, scientific, logical explanations. It is opposed to idealist philosophy that believes in the existence of a spiritual world.
- ii. While other philosophies seek to understand the world whereas Marxist readings seek to change it.
- iii. It treats writers not as autonomous inspired individuals but as formed by their social contexts though they may not usually admit.

4.3.6 *New historicist readings*

- i. Writing history is a matter of interpretation, not facts. Hence, all historical accounts are narratives that can be analyzed with the tools used by literary critics.

- ii. Power is not confined to a single person, but it circulates through exchange of material goods, of human beings, of ideas through discourses.
- iii. Personal identity is shaped by and shapes the culture in which it emerges. Literary texts were shaped by and shaped the discourses that were circulating at the time of texts' production. Likewise, readers' interpretations shape and are shaped by the culture in which they live.
- iv. All historical analysis is inevitably subjective. Literary texts are interpretations of history.
- v. It does not treat literary texts as transcendental signifiers since subjects who produce them cannot transcend time and space. Hence, they are time-bound and space-bound.
- vi. It seeks the parallel study of literary and non-literary texts since truth is not absolute.
- vii. It examines how history is represented and recorded in written documents, history-as-text (historical events are irrecoverably lost). The word of the past replaces the world of the past!
- viii. It treats historical documents as co-texts and not as subordinated to contexts.

4.3.7 Cultural materialist readings

- i. It allows the literary text to recover its histories.
- ii. Culture means all forms of culture. Materialism is the opposite of idealism: Idealist believes that high culture represents the free and independent play of the talented individual mind; whereas the materialist belief is that culture cannot transcend the material forces and relations of production.
- iii. It treats meanings and values as they are lived and felt. This is what Raymond Williams' 'structures of feeling' means.
- iv. 'Structures of feeling' oppose the status quo. It contains the seeds of resistance to the dominant ideology and therefore literature is seen as a source of oppositional values.
- v. It uses the past to read the present.

4.3.8 Postcolonial readings

- i. It dismisses the claims of universalism.
- ii. It examines the representation of other cultures in literature as a way of achieving this end.
- iii. It shows how such literature is often evasive or silent on matters concerning colonization and imperialism.
- iv. It foregrounds questions of cultural difference and diversity.
- v. It celebrates hybridity and cultural polyvalency.

- vi. It encourages the project of decolonization.

4.3.9 *Eco-critical Readings*

- i. It rejects the notion that everything is socially or linguistically constructed. Nature is an objective, independent entity.
- ii. It switches critical attention from inner to outer. In other words, setting is brought from the critical margins to the critical centre. No aspect of nature can be treated as metaphors.
- iii. It reads literary works from an ecocentric perspectives (Ruskin's 'pathetic fallacy') and not anthropocentric (Man is the measure of all things), (Pope's 'The proper study of mankind is man').
- iv. It stresses 'factual writing' such as reflective topographical materials such as essays, travel writing, memoirs, and regional literature.
- v. It emphasizes ecocentric values of careful observation, collective ethical sense and the claims of the world beyond human beings.

4.4 **Benefits of Poststructuralist Thinking**

Poststructuralism empowers readers with many advantages. They are very much needed for students to become responsible, democratic citizens with a high sense of participation for creation of an egalitarian, civil society.

1. It de-emotionalizes, intellectualizes, objectifies, interrogates, contextualizes, and professionalizes English literary studies.
2. It foregrounds the value of reading and researching tools.
3. It helps readers revisit concepts like writer, reader, text, culture, self, power, reality, relationship between world and word, and shift from literature to literatures.
4. It uproots and unsettles ideologies in the sense that it questions aesthetic-mimetic tradition and humanism, hegemony of canonical literature, and borderlines between the literary and the non-literary.
5. It ensures a controlled reflection to reading and therefore compatible with the teaching of literature.
6. It encourages readers in contemporary studies like subaltern studies, cultural studies, gender studies. Anyone who resists or skips poststructuralist thinking can be constructed as one who resists or skips methodologies of reading.
7. It has questioned ideals of liberal education in postmodern times where knowledge gained through is not good if it is for its own sake. Rather, in postmodern society, knowledge becomes functional in the sense that humans learn things not to know them but to use that knowledge. For instance, educational policy around the world stresses skills and training rather than vague humanist ideals of education.

8. It treats mere appreciation of literature as a diversionary tactic from questioning ideologies that are hidden in the text.

5. Conclusion

While the English academia in the West has incorporated poststructuralist approaches into teaching and researching literary texts, Indian English academics and scholars continue to treat these approaches as optional and not as mandatory, interpretive and research tools. Outside the academia, everyone is influenced by and influences poststructuralist philosophy. Hence, there is an urgent need to adopt literary theories/poststructuralist ideas for reading and interpreting literary texts for critical scholarship production and not mere appreciation of texts so that the 21st century readers can hone their critical thinking skills that are identified as part of the 21st century skills. Moreover, Indian critical scholarship can be made globally visible and if not superior to, comparable to western literary-critical scholarship that could be published and publicized in the journals indexed in well-known databases.

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