



## IMPACT OF MEDIA ON LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT



Media and literature are two inseparable cogs, yet discretely and strikingly distinguishable, complementing each-other, purported to bring about the same result in different ways. In the present times, media has become an umbrella term for all the channels of communication and information whether social media, T. V. or internet. Once Mathew Arnold said that media is literature in a hurry. But now we find that the opposite of it has also become true. Today whatever comes through media becomes the basis of what people think, feel and say and conversely it is the duty of media to express people's feelings, emotions and reactions. No field is insignificant for media. Its gamut is humongous. One cannot deny its power in bringing about a quick change in the society as media is always current. On the other hand, literature too is metamorphosing and brings about a change at the root level as it touches the heart and soul of people. But today literature is being treated as a machine. People are playing with it on social media platforms.

**Keywords:** *Media, literature, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram*

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“Media is literature in a hurry.”

– Mathew Arnold

What Mathew Arnold said about media holds true even today but with literature things have undergone a tremendous change. Today it has become a part of media and extended its limits in different dimensions. But to quote Francesca Baker's words, “Literature itself is media, a tool for messaging, communication and art.” Therefore we don't need any other media for literature but the lightning fast speed of social media and the influence it has on the mass has relegated literature to a secondary position. Today literature itself is in a hurry; hurry of getting accomplished and then published, and for that matter social media has proved to be a boon.

To talk about media in general, before 19<sup>th</sup> century Press was the only source of communicating any kind of information to public. At that time Press and media were synonymous to each-other but today with the deluge of sources of information the amplitude of the term media has expanded to include the modern sources of information. Today media whether electronic or print touches our lives at every turn and now it's not limited to informing us but it has moved a step further to entertain us. Today whatever comes through media becomes the basis of what people think, feel and say and conversely it is the duty of media to express people's feelings, emotions and reactions. No field is insignificant for media. Something that touches the lives of a large number of people is as important as anything. The gamut of media is humongous; any event taking place anywhere can form news, from as serious as war to as frolicsome as fashion. Media is preoccupied with eminent personalities. Everything they do make news, even as trifle as sneezing, coughing etc. All the big personalities of the world stand so tall and towering only due to media. There are many journalists who have turned to writing novels and books.

Writing for media is like brewing instant coffee or tea as it holds no place for reflections and is responsible only for conveying facts. It cashes in on even the pettiest of things by making mountain out

of a molehill i.e. sensationalizing issues. But one cannot deny its power in bringing about a quick change in the society as media is always current. It reports the present so it has the power to move people up to action. In the present times, electronic and social media has become so dominant that news and information spread within the blink of an eye. It can cause fast and impulsive reactions, mass protests and picketings whereas literature goes deep within. It may take a long time for literature to spread the message that it contains but when it does happen, it remains there for a long time. Literature is metamorphosing and brings about a change at the root level as it touches the heart and soul of people.

Marshal McLuhan, who is considered the father of media studies said that “medium is the message.” Friedrich Kittler a German literary theorist said that literature is the sub-genre of media. It is only a mode of data production.

The advancement in technology has radically reframed and is continuously reframing the relationship between media and literature thereby foregrounding the necessity of new literary practices.

In the light of the above statement, it can be said that literature on social media is one such practice and it has not only killed print literature but it has killed literature in total. It does not favour the creation of the classics by default and one basic reason behind that is paucity of time. It requires a long time, leisure and a lot of mental exercise to hatch a classic. Today's fast and mechanical life style cannot afford to enjoy long pieces of work but it also cannot do without literature and the kind of literature it finds affinity with is made available on social media platform.

In the days of yore when there was no script, people enjoyed oral literature i.e. folklores and folksongs. They sang, recited and narrated. With the passage of time, we developed scripts and thus found a way to pen down human emotions and feelings. Since the invention of script, we have recorded all those events and happenings that have affected us,



inspired us and led us ahead, resulting in making them legends and unforgettable inspirational stories.

Today with technological advancement and with the emergence of plethora of media platforms, literature has acquired a new form. Today we have more writers and readers than perhaps we ever had in the past, the reason being easy availability of literature and tools to express one's flow of emotions. In the ancient times education was available to only a privileged few; only they could read and write so the literature of those times propagated only through oral means, from one to the other and to the other. In this process it would get altered, modified and sometimes degenerated into something worthless. To go by the statistics, 2.2 million books are published each year and apart from these books in print we have on-line literature in the form of PDF, blogs, vlogs, FB, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube etc.

The literature of modern times is much faster than the literature of old times. Faster in terms of propagation and creation. It has crossed all barriers of time. Everyday we see thousands of new creations which are circulated through different on-line platforms and thus it reaches the audience in a jiffy and the writers also get instant responses from their fans in the form of likes, shares and comments. Thus the social media literature has become literature of instant gratification. In today's fast-paced life when it is difficult to manage time to meet friends and relatives, the social media provides a good platform to bring forth the Shakespeare within you by driving you to outpour your creative spurt of feelings. Thus social media has proved to be a launch pad for many writers. Today everybody has access to all the knowledge of the world; you can get material on-line even check and rectify it if you know how to use the on-line tools so writing a 3-4 line post is not a big deal for those who have had a proper formal education. To quote it on a positive note, these platforms tempt those who can write but would not like to involve professionally into it and also the people who have no literary instinct at all.

An important quality of such literature is, it is quite effective. It acts as a rabble-rouser. Most of such literature is on current issues and so people instantly feel connected to them. People react to them effusively and the posts become viral. Knowing the power and efficacy of these posts, people post fake things to serve their interests, especially to vilify someone or to run a hostile propaganda against some party or organization. Also, these platforms offer experimental literature. People write in whatever way they can. There is no restriction of form or style. It is totally informal. People are free to express their thoughts and ideas the way they like without any fear of editing or criticism. They can write poetry, drama, fiction etc. and share it with the world.

Since the onset of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the internet has become two-way, a change and advancement from the earlier phase when it was only a knowledge provider. Now we can not only receive but also give back in a certain way. The internet is open to assimilate. Today we can not only share our views but also edit, co-edit, author, co-author the digital content. The role of user has also changed from being a mere consumer to an active producer. The technological advances have revolutionized the whole process in which the literature is generated on the web. The user can access as well as contribute at his own liberty in real time.

Among the most prominent features of web 2.0, we have Twitter, a social networking and micro blogging site which allows its user to express himself in the limit of 140 words which was later extended to 280 words. The posts or tweets (as it is called) are dished out among the users through mails, messages or web. Though it was started as a medium of communication, today the users have stretched its limits and they are using it to write novels. Thus it has become a good and acceptable platform for literature. The first published book entirely composed on Twitter was John Roderick (musician)'s Electric Aphorisms which he composed in individual tweets between December 2008 and May 2009. Later it was deleted by the publication studio on the publication of the book. Today the micro-blogging



feature of Twitter has a separate identity as Twitterature, (a portmanteau term) which comprises various genres such as aphorisms, poetry and fiction written by individuals or collaboratively. In poetry Haiku is suited to Twitter and we can find examples of # Haiku. In 140 character stories there are @asmallfiction, @veryshortstories, @Arjunbasu etc. There are twitter accounts for character in films, TV series and books which is called Fan Fiction. We also see literary classics and legends being retold on twitter through characters or otherwise. In 2010 a group of Rabbis tweeted The Exodus with #Tweet The Exodus. In 2011 the Royal Shakespeare Company and the English Game Company Mudlack tweeted Romeo & Juliet. Twitter novel extends to hundreds of tweets and can go over to weeks and months. One such example is Executive Severance. It is Book 1 of the Twistery Twilogy and the first live tweeted twitter comic mystery.

Another noteworthy work in this genre is Epic Retold. The Mahabharata was narrated in 2628 tweets between July 2009 to October 2014 by Chindu Sreedharan. Later it was published as a full length book by Harper Collins, India. There are collaborative works as well on twitter. Neil Gaiman coined the term "Twitter Twovel" which was an attempt to collaborate with his followers in writing a novel. The result was published as an audio book under the title, Heart, Keys & Puppetry. There is something weird about Twitter as well and that is Weird Twitter. It is a loose genre of internet humour which publishes humour material but is unorganized.

Like Twitter, Facebook is also a social media platform with 2.6 billion active users every month. It was founded in 2004 with an idea of connecting the students of Harvard University. Later on it was extended to other colleges including Ivy League. But today it can be used by anybody who claims to be above 13. The features on this app are conducive to people in giving vent to their sudden rush of emotions and feelings. It also provides the facility of creating groups so that people can share their views with the like-minded community. There are hundreds of groups on FB for each and every type of people. As far as writing and literature is concerned, there are

groups for all kinds of literature lovers facilitating there access to different genres. These groups succour the users to publish their stories, fork out guidance to those who are earnestly looking for it and pep them up with positive comments. On one hand, it proves to be a great platform for amateur writers to flaunt their skills and on the other, the professionals use them to advertise and promote their works and also to provide auspices to the budding writers. Moreover, it being a huge platform, whatever you post is available to all your FB friends and to anybody who wants to take a sneak peek into your profile unless you have made certain privacy settings. Therefore, to avoid becoming everybody's fool people bend over backwards to pen down something correct and acceptable. In fact FB must be given the credit for producing writers in legion and also for espousing and propagating literary activity.

Instagram, another such social networking app, allows the users to share their stories. It was launched in October 2010 and today it has more than 1 billion active users. It offers great opportunity to grow the following as the users are very active on instagram. One can connect with people who follow the same genre. The authors keep their fans updated about their work from jotting down their ideas, to the publication of their work. Some famous writers such as Paulo Coelho have followers up to 2.2 millions. Reddit, Pinterest and VK are also such media apps which provide the authors an avenue for their creative outbursts.

The present age has witnessed a quantum leap in technology providing us with plethora of social media apps among other things which have metamorphosed literature making it short, compact, formless and wayward, not unlike the present society. Today, thanks to education, there are more number of people who can read and write so as a result more is being written and more is being read. Though, of course, there are long pieces of writing such as novels, essays, story collections yet the literature available on social media is rather short and terse. There are people who write for pleasure and their writings are generally short, either they



don't have time or they don't have patience and the same is the case with the readers on social media.

Most of the writings on social media are a sudden reaction to something that they have seen or read or heard and writing comes as a tool of catharsis. Moreover, the stimulus given by social media is as strong as anything as there are no restrictions of space, time, form, meter or anything. The thoughts come pell-mell and they are expressed in a free flow. In print, it is a herculean task to get massive readership and even if you get, it may take a long time. But social media affords the favourability of you being read anywhere in the world by anybody who cares to be on these apps. With the changing times, there are new trends setting in such as long drawn sentences and detailed descriptions of landscape are now a thing of past. The techno-savvy generation has neither time nor patience to pore over ponderous novels so they have changed the face of literature. Today we have fictional works of extreme brevity which are called Flash Fiction. They are always open for further development of plot and character. They include six word story, 280 word story, Dribble which is a 50 word story also known as Minisaga, Drabble which is a 100 word story also known as Micro-fiction, Sudden fiction which is 750 word story and similarly there is 1000 word story.

The purist and the classicist, of course, don't conform to the new trends. According to them, these emerging trends are destroying the beauty of literature which lies in elaborate picturesque descriptions, charm and grace in the sentences, mystery in the plot etc. and these can be employed only in a long piece of work.

Literature cannot and should not be treated as a machine but to the disappointment of the purists, it is now in everybody's hand and as it is a well-known fact that too many cooks spoil the broth, that's what is happening to literature at this time. People are twisting and turning it to favour their whims and fancies; coining different names and new genres. Interestingly, it is done by those who are good at language. The result is a lot of urban words, slangs and colloquial language have found place in

the modern day literature. The changing trends in literature have set in a new era which has been hailed whole-heartedly by masses. Today even the celebrated writers have taken to social media platforms e.g. Neil Gaiman, Paulo Coelho, Margaret Atwood, Teju Cole etc. Therefore it goes without saying that literature, in the current times, has been engulfed by social media as it has much greater and much faster impact on people and its domain is much broader than literature. In fact literature is nothing without social media.

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