

# The Element of Faith in Literature

*Mrs. Lakshmi Kumari*  
*Asst Professor,*  
*Dept of English*  
*Patrician College of Arts and Science*

**Abstract:** Faith is an important concept in Literature. Most of the works of literature has realistically, time and again, reinstated faith in humanity, God, goodness and Cosmopolitanism. Faith is an important element in the modern chaos. Only literature seems to beckon the call of faith in all truth. The paper seeks to impart how literature talks more of faith with realistic portrayal of lives and its essence through literary genres, whether poetry, prose or fiction, both ancient and modern.

Index Terms: Faith, literature, philosophy, truth

One of the finer elements that literature is capable of is elevate the faith or belief-system of the reader. This aspect of faith comes out of the intimacy that the literature provides to its passionate reader. Sometimes, literature becomes a mentor like Socrates was to Plato. Literature seeks to amplify or strengthen the belief-system of each and every reader. Perhaps, it is this quality that gives literature its classicism. More than take the world forward, it helps retrace the path to the core of our very lives, which we may have lost through modernism, capitalism, anarchy and the like.

That we are living in perilous times is not without reason. The world, by its own standards, would not agree either that its steps are essentially leading it forward. Each individual in this rat-race of life and survival secretly wishes to go back if only they could. Over the decades, several movements have tried to revolutionize people into adapting different lifestyles in their urge to go back to the roots. But literature, like the proverbial tortoise, has been trying to prove just the same but has been the last to be found by the world.

Man needs, more than anything, faith – faith to carry on the business called life. Man loves those soul journeys into the kind of life that his weakened Spirit yearns for him to experience. These lessons of life, tutored by literature, are often the only survival lessons he has had all his life. Why literature does take this so deified a place? I think it is because it has a certain energy, a fiery passion, and a genuineness about it. Not only its genuineness but the affirmation that all emotions in this world are not limited to time and space but are universal makes it appealing to all people across all nations and across all phases of time. When writers across so vast a universe ruminate on the same lines, what does literature give other than an implicit child-like faith on the values expressed. Secondly, literature is a more popular tool than other available tools because it doesn't compel you into thinking but slowly leads you to the "Pierian spring"[ Pope, 12]. Thirdly, literature gives that affirmation that their beliefs are not weird subjective experiences but realistic soul-searches towards a definite end.

This paper seeks to put forth the position that "faith" in literature is a way to prepare to the great dance of life. Dance, because the rhythms of it are set and man is given the freedom to will it into action that promotes the rhythm. Reading Dante's *Inferno* puts you on the neat purpose of life that man has a life to live, not just exist, but live responsibly. Existing for existence sake gets a stern reproach in the classical literary piece *Inferno*. Through the mouthpiece of Charon, the ferryman to the Underworld rebukes Beatrice for having made "a very foolish wager" with the gift called life. {Dante, Canto II, 167}. Literature moves with such conviction on the core of life and its principles. What can beautify the journey of the soul and its radiance other than deeply-carved and eternally-etched words of literature? The topic that Dante espoused was of the gravest one but it speaks with such passion and such depth that it evokes pity and our deep sympathies .

What of Frogs by Aristophanes? The deep logic storms the reader by surprise. There is no unfairness in judgment. There is no evil in this world except the evil that the mind has composed. Herakles in conversation with the demi-god Dionysius asks:

"Herakles [the god] : Which [way to Hades] will you try? Dionysos : The way you went yourself. {Frogs, ll 138 – 139}

The evil that man is surrounded by is the evil path that he set for himself.

At the same time, it is not true to say that the more modern ones lack depth. All literature is a product of the heart. It is a product of pain or of enlightenment, or a product of faith and compassion for the world to know. Take for example, the modern ones. The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini. The story was weaved during the most tumultuous times of the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. The lies, the faked truths, the distortions, the eccentricities have robbed innocent lives of their childhood. What can express so deep a pain, so poignant a memory than the work of literature of this kind? Amir, with deep pain and a sense of betrayal bellows "There is only one sin. and that is theft... when you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth." When he meets his half-brother's son Sohrab, he knew there were more people than him silently suffering the terrible angst of life without understanding why. The moral failure of Amir and the need to find a way to be good again are some of the urgings of literature. It eggs us on to hope, to faith. This faith that literature envisages is the forgotten moral stand of literature. This papers seeks to imply this very fact.

Yet another aspect of literature is that it presents the worldview in its sincerest form. It doesn't connect itself to any form of religion, pantheism, or monotheism or polytheism. Nor does it deify or decry any cultural standpoint or shared set of values. Every expression comes from conscience and the adherence to true liberty and advancement of civilization. Man is considered on literature as one generic being, not Hispanic, Sub-Altern, Asian, Turk, Celtic, Nordic or Jewish. Literature is see as mankind and womankind and there exists no other form of classification.

To conclude, one is reminded of the great American thinker and writer F Scott Fitzgerald's words to his wife Sheilo, "Sheilo, that is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong." {Graham, 196} The said quote is no further from the truth that all emotions are universal, all relationships are universal and all humankind is under one order, one hierarchical rung, under one Omnipotence. There is no escape to that. That inescapable thought is reinstated by literature. Literature is not ashamed of its positional principle. Nor is it shy of boldly exclaiming it. That's what literature is. It's the people who went before us, tapping out messages from the past, from beyond the grave, trying to tell us about life and death! Listen to them! –Passage, Connie Willis

### Works cited:

Graham, Sheila and Frank, Gerald, *Beloved Infidel: The Education of a Woman*. New York: Holt (1958) p 196

Hosseini, Khaled, *The Kite Runner*, USA: Riverhead Books, 2003. pp35 – 254

Aristophanes. *Frogs*. Translated by Stephen Halliwell. [ A New Translation] Oxford: OUP, 2017

Dante, Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dnate, Alighieri*. The Italian Text with a Translation in English by Courtney Langdon. {Cambridge: Harverd University Press, 1918}

Pope, Alexander. *An Essay on Criticism*. Oxford: OUP, 1711 pg 1 - 34