



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

Volume 10, Issue 3, March 2023



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

Impact Factor: 7.580



+91 99405 72462



+9163819 07438



ijmrsetm@gmail.com



www.ijmrsetm.com



Religion and Literature: A Brief Review

HIMANI

Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak, India

ABSTRACT: Religion and literature have a deep and complex relationship that has influenced human thought, behaviour, and societies throughout history. Religious texts and literary works have influenced and inspired each other, and both offer frameworks for understanding the world, fostering community and identity, and promoting critical thinking and personal growth. Moreover, they have played significant roles in shaping social and political movements, and have often been used to challenge and transform oppressive systems of power. As such, religion and literature have significant cultural, social, and personal significance, and continue to shape human culture and society today. This paper explored the Religion and literature along with Relation, History and significance in brief.

KEYWORDS: Religion, literature, History of Religion

I. INTRODUCTION

Religion and literature are two intertwined aspects of human culture that have played significant roles in shaping human thought, behaviour, and societies for thousands of years. Religion refers to the set of beliefs, practices, and values that are based on a supernatural or divine entity or entities, and that are aimed at providing answers to questions of meaning, purpose, and morality. Religion often involves sacred texts, rituals, and institutions that help to transmit and maintain the beliefs and practices of a particular community. Literature, on the other hand, refers to written or spoken works of artistic expression that use language to evoke emotions, convey ideas, and explore human experiences. (Haddon, 2014) Literature can take many forms, including novels, poems, plays, and essays, and can serve various purposes, such as entertainment, education, or social critique. Religion and literature have been intertwined since the earliest known human civilizations. Many religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have produced sacred texts that are considered to be some of the greatest works of literature in human history. These texts have not only served as a source of religious guidance and inspiration but have also influenced literature and culture more broadly. (Aune, 2009) Moreover, literature has often been used to explore religious themes, such as the nature of God, the meaning of life, and the afterlife. Many literary works, from ancient epics like the Iliad and the Odyssey to modern novels like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, have dealt with religious ideas and beliefs, sometimes critically, and other times, in a devotional manner. In religion and literature are two vital aspects of human culture that have shaped human thought, behaviour, and societies for thousands of years. Together, they have influenced human values, beliefs, and understanding of the world, and continue to be sources of inspiration and contemplation for people all over the world. (Bloom, 2011)

II. RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND LITERATURE

Religion and literature have a deep and complex relationship that is rooted in the way that both attempt to express and explore fundamental human concerns, such as the meaning of life, the nature of God, and the relationship between humanity and the divine. Religious texts, such as the Bible, the Quran, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Tao Te Ching, are some of the most important and influential works of literature in human history. They not only convey the teachings and beliefs of their respective religions but also use literary devices, such as metaphor, allegory, and symbolism, to convey complex ideas and provide insight into the human condition. Literature has also been used to explore religious themes and ideas, either through direct engagement with religious texts or through the creation of works that draw on religious traditions and symbols. (Kellman, 2015) For example, Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a complex work that draws heavily on Christian theology and uses the journey of its protagonist through the afterlife to explore themes such as sin, redemption, and the nature of God. In addition to exploring religious themes, literature has also been used to critique and challenge religious beliefs and practices. Writers such as Voltaire, Nietzsche, and Salman Rushdie have used literature to criticize religious institutions, question the existence of God, and challenge traditional religious beliefs. Overall, the relationship between religion and literature is complex and multifaceted, with both influencing and



being influenced by each other in various ways. They both attempt to provide insight into the human condition and to explore the fundamental questions that have preoccupied human beings for centuries. (Wood, 2007)

III. HISTORY OF RELIGION AND LITERATURE

The history of religion and literature is as old as human civilization itself. Throughout history, religion and literature have been intertwined, with religious texts and literary works influencing and inspiring each other. In ancient times, oral storytelling played a vital role in religious practices and beliefs. For example, the Vedas, the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism, were initially transmitted orally before being written down. Similarly, the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, were initially composed as epic poems that were recited orally. As writing systems developed, religious texts were written down, and literary works emerged that drew on religious themes and symbols. The Bible, the Quran, the Torah, and the Bhagavad Gita are examples of sacred texts that are also considered to be great works of literature. In the medieval period, religious institutions played a significant role in shaping literary culture. Many literary works, such as Dante's Divine Comedy, Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, and the plays of William Shakespeare, drew heavily on religious themes and symbols. Moreover, religious institutions, such as monasteries and universities, served as centres of literary production and preservation. During the Enlightenment, literature was used to challenge traditional religious beliefs and practices. Writers such as Voltaire, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant criticized the dogmatism and superstition of traditional religion and championed reason and scientific inquiry. In the modern era, literature has continued to engage with religious themes, often in new and challenging ways. For example, the works of Salman Rushdie, such as *The Satanic Verses* and *Midnight's Children*, have explored the intersection of religion, politics, and identity in a globalized world. (Leitch, 2013) Overall, the history of religion and literature is a long and complex one, with each influencing and being influenced by the other in various ways. Both continue to play vital roles in shaping human thought, behaviour, and societies.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION AND LITERATURE

Religion and literature have significant cultural, social, and personal significance. Below are some of the ways in which they are significant:

Provide meaning and guidance: Religion and literature offer frameworks for understanding and navigating the world. They provide answers to fundamental questions about the nature of existence, the purpose of life, and the role of humanity in the universe. (Martz, 2010)

Foster community and identity: Religion and literature provide a sense of community and belonging. Religious institutions and literary communities bring people together around shared beliefs, values, and interests. (Seeger, 2016)

Inspire creativity and imagination: Literature and religious texts are sources of inspiration for artists, writers, and musicians. They provide a rich and diverse pool of themes, characters, and symbols that can be drawn upon to create new works of art.

Promote critical thinking: Literature and religion can challenge and expand our perspectives. They encourage critical thinking and questioning of assumptions, and provide opportunities for personal growth and development.

Influence social and political movements: Religious and literary texts have played significant roles in shaping social and political movements throughout history. For example, religious texts have been used to justify social and political changes, such as the civil rights movement in the United States, while literary works have often been used to critique and challenge oppressive systems of power. (Martindale, 2012)

Overall, religion and literature are significant aspects of human culture that provide meaning, guidance, and inspiration. They offer frameworks for understanding the world, foster community and identity, and can promote critical thinking and personal growth. (Myers, 2008)



V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, religion and literature have a long and complex relationship that has shaped human thought, behaviour, and societies throughout history. They have significant cultural, social, and personal significance, offering frameworks for understanding the world, fostering community and identity, and inspiring creativity and imagination. Moreover, they can promote critical thinking and personal growth, and have often been used to challenge and transform oppressive systems of power. As such, religion and literature continue to play vital roles in shaping human culture and society, and will likely continue to do so for many years to come.

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