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STRATEGIZING RESEARCH IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Conducting research in any field involves a set and defined process. Any research must be specific and goal oriented in nature. Research in Humanities is totally different from the research in sciences. Despite multitudes of articles on methodology, techniques and methods to pursue research in Humanities, the research procedures to be involved in performing research in English literature remain confounding and obscure. This paper chases down the accurate processes entailed in carrying out research in English literature. The research in English Literature relies more on observing, comparing and producing results than on collecting data and arriving at inferences. Literary review is vital before outlining anything concrete. Besides, a firm grounding in theories that have been showing up in the studies of literature of late is thoroughly essential. This paper will build up the exact course that must be followed to administer research in English veraciously.

Keywords: Meaning Of Research, Literature Review, Theoretical Perspective, Proper Tools, Interdisciplinarity

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Research is the consequence of human beings' intense desire to quell their craving for knowledge. The term research is derived from the French term "rechercher" which means to keep on exploring. Research is prying after knowledge about this world, particularly in a contemplated area of erudition:

Research should be able to generate in the university a centre of human consciousness, perception, knowledge, judgment and responsibility. Research has to be thought of in relation to the whole idea of university. It must aim at establishing a creative front and doing creative work on the contemporary intellectual frontier. (Leavis 22)

Research implies going about something repeatedly. It assists in garnering knowledge from experience and deals with perplexing and complicated problems. It is a systematic, careful and critical investigation, which aims at the discovery of new facts and theories supported with reliable piece of information. Research can also encompass application of a certain theory or law on some portion of writing. It is a process that involves reviewing the existing and accepted theories by equipping those with a fresh and a proven idea and vision. In simple terms research stands for an answer to some unresolved problems. It is

undertaken so as to be of help and assistance to others. Research supposes scrutinizing a problem and sufficing answers to the views what others have had previously held. According to New Standard Encyclopedia, research is “a systematic investigation for the purpose of gaining new knowledge. In a broad sense, research is any study that leads to new knowledge for the person doing the research.” The intent of this paper is to examine, concretize and bring to surface the process and techniques involved in executing research in English.

Research carried out in English is altogether different from the way it is carried on in other disciplines in humanities and non-humanities. The common rudiment guiding any kind of research whether a science research or a social science research is that it must be thoroughly logical, backed by reason and proof. An intense range of contrast underlines the nature of research with respect to different subjects. Each area of study owns its peculiar ways and processes to conduct research. Research in English, in its full magnitude, is totally dissimilar to research processed in natural sciences and social sciences. Natural sciences study natural phenomenon whereas social sciences’ area of inquiry is behavior of man in society. The test in sciences can be reassumed but when it comes to social sciences and humanities they cannot be reiterated, single out psychology and linguistics.

Literature is creativity’s offspring. Literary research emphasizes and brings in together both the author and his piece. These two aspects are inseparable. The author cannot be ducked when reading texts, in the similar vein the author cannot be studied if segregated from his works. Literary researches are autonomous that work on their differently identified methods, tools and analysis.

Every research has its own self contained purposes and objectives. Literary research too is arrived at with some predetermined and preconceived aims. It seeks to enhance and extend the parameters of knowledge. It strives to step up the critical sight. It calls for the appropriate and rational engagement with literature. It brings up the sense of the member joined community in the researcher. Since literature pops out of culture, literary research also furnishes a critical assessment of culture:

... The most common elements in research are: the context in which the research takes place, the themes or issues addressed in the research; the approaches or methodologies adopted. (Raman, Anantanarayanan and Jayashree Nimmagadda 17)

In contemporary times, literary research has diversified its boundaries. Now it is not only associated with pure literary pieces, but also with its outstretched arms, it affiliates itself with several other interdisciplinary methodologies. Now literature ensures on a single platform films, regional writings, culture pieces, translation studies, and has become enviably exhaustive in its prospect. This expansion of boundaries has initiated novelty and opened up new arenas of research in literature.

There are varied kinds of research within different disciplines. Social sciences and natural sciences have two kinds of research, basic research and applied research. Literary research can be accomplished by either of four defined categories of research: bibliography and textual criticism, biographical, theoretical, and interpretive. Textual criticism brings forth the corrected editions of the past works building the supremacy of the text. Biographical research provides an insight into author’s mind. It involves a close study of author’s life, his published and non-published works, laying more emphasis on the literary side by establishing threads between the important events of author’s life and time and his works, systematically, chronologically, and interestingly. The aim of theoretical research is to propose a theory of literature or alter and improvise the established ones. It can be equated with basic research of natural science. Interpretive research has its share of commonality with applied researches in science. It takes recourse into a particular theory and its application on the chosen texts. It envelops the finding out of symbols, or the pattern of myths, or it could simply study the author’s style. Though there are four distinct types of research in literary studies yet all four kinds are crucial in unique way. Interpretive research has affiliations with the theoretical research. The editor of a text must be able to interpret the text; otherwise he cannot put forward the required alterations. A biographer is at once the editor and the critic rolled into one. In short literary research is a combined whole and a researcher must know all its aspects.

Literary research requires a profound and deep grounding into the background knowledge of literature. It also demands the suited aptitude to carry out the research efficiently. It demands a focused dedication to erudition and knowledge, an excellent command over language to be articulate, and this combined with a sense of prying skepticism. A resolute understanding of canonized literature, variegated movements in literature and mythology is a fixed essentiality. The researchers in literature must envision an interdisciplinary approach. Firm rootedness in literature must be supplemented with the sufficing ideas of other disciplines like psychology, philosophy, sociology, history, linguistics as well:

Armed with the elementary knowledge of these subjects, the researcher is in a better position to analyze the literary texts, understand the different critical theories and define his critical stance while writing his thesis. (Sinha 22)

Literary research like any other scientific research has a logical visage, bearing in mind universality, non-subjectivity and systematization. It uses its own specified materials and tools for conducting research and adding on to the pile of information by reaching at a concretized theory or a reasoned inference. Materials in literary research would include manuscripts, printed books, journals, letters, diaries, memoirs, reviews, critical comments, essays and criticism:

As far as research in India is concerned, The British Council Library run by British High Commission in the important cities of the country provide comprehensive bibliographies like the MHRA which is revised at regular intervals... while the British High Commission Library caters to the needs of scholars working on British authors, the American Studies Research Centre Hyderabad, provides material for American literature... in case of Indian Writing in English, besides the important university libraries in the country, rich material is also to be found in the SCILET library in American College, Madurai, C.D. Narasimhiah's collection in Mysore and Scott Christian Library in Nagercoil. (Rengachari S. and S. Sulochana Rengachari 6)

Whereas tools in literary research like in scientific research would be sedulous contemplation and experimentation. Distinctly the perceived literary tools are the tools of bibliography, textual criticism, media tools like films and documentaries, and scientific tools like tape recorder, television etc, and the note system which may incorporate lecture notes or text notes. With immense advancement made in the field of literary theories criticism in the twentieth century, the various theories give them as effective tools of literary research.

In Indian context, the general assumption with regard to literary research is to work out critical reassessment of author's works. No heed is attributed to either biographical criticism or bibliographical and textual criticism or literary criticism. The singular focus on critical interpretation and mixing of two or three approaches to literature makes the overall viewpoint vague and blurred. Biographical researches enumerates the impartial study of author's life and his perception, harmonizes the linkage between the literary work and life, gives way to the distinction between fact and fiction and maintains most importantly a secular point of view to analyze the positive and negative aspects of the author. Bibliographical and textual criticism establish the authentic text and help the literary critic analyze and interpret it better. They make the stronghold on which the tower of literary history and delving is laid. "Editing, chronology, authenticity, attribution and source influence are the main aspects of bibliography and textual criticism." (Sinha 53) Biographical and bibliographical and textual criticisms are the strategies for working out research in the field of literary history.

Literary criticism and theories assist rightfully in the interpretation and evaluation of the works of a writer. Drill in literary criticism allows a research student to read a text independently and make distinction between a good work of art and a bad work of art. In the twentieth century the advancement in the field of literary theories has been enormous and exorbitant. It has become imperative for the scholars to possess an in-depth grounding in these theories of and approaches to literature. If one knows after having been through a literary text what all he has to say then he must subscribe to a particular approach to shape his conception. The complete spectrum of theories that began to take shape after the dawn of the twentieth century can be fit and adjusted into five broad frames: the moral avenue, the psychological path, the sociological passage, the formalistic route, the linguistic way, and the archetypal approach. These literary theories are the main tools of

conducting the research in English. They provide defined perspectives to look at and read particular writers and their works, and deduce a novel facet to the elementary study.

Seasoned and furnished with the tools and methods of research, the next stage encompasses the selection of the topic. It may tend to become burdensome if the investigation is inadequate. Cognizance of the total body of an author's works and considering a few critical studies on the chosen author can do a lot in arriving at a particular topic. The selection of a topic assumes certain criteria. Visiting libraries, consulting journals and attending seminars may guide in the selection of topic. The scholar is expected to have interest in the topic he chooses, and the topic chosen should be a mint and a fresh arena of examination. Unearthing becomes feasible only for a person who feels that there is something to be brought to limelight, and who has a trained mind to accomplish it. Polemical topics, those in which the research scholar has a difference of opinion or prejudiced pre defined notions must be abstained from. The topic must be believable and the scholar has to be very strong in his views, and like a bigot, must hold on firmly to his chosen topic and opinion.

After the selection of topic, the next stage is planning the research programme. The total programme must be planned in an order so as to be completed within the allotted time limit. It must be conceived of in stages. A tentative outline of the main topics would be of humongous usefulness, for it embraces hassle-free add-ons, revision, re-drafting to befit one's condition. A working outline or scratch outline enables the scholar to concentrate on the relevant topics. Outlining must be in synchronization with time allotment. Each topic must be assigned a defined time for completion. Classification and draw-up ensure the systematic and orderly manner of going about the thesis.

Every thesis has a beginning, middle and end, and this calls attention to the exact organization of the thesis. The literary research like any other research must show the development of idea in successive stages. Generally in recognized order, a thesis has pages of preface, acknowledgements, table of contents, introduction, the main body including subsequent chapters, conclusion, appendix, and a work-cited page. This pattern elucidates in a sequential and logical way the purpose of research, its usefulness and the methods adopted for inquiry. The mastery of thesis writing is arrived at by trials. The research paper or thesis ought to have objectivity, balanced views, exact reference to sources and display of facts. Hence, it is pertinent to put proper documentation and citation; an utmost care must be given to keep plagiarism at bay. A sincere attention must also be allocated to the mechanics of writing.

English is the very essence and the soul of the society. It critically delves into society and its various uniting forces. Research in English must be planned and conceived scientifically with an avowed aim to add to the knowledge of society. Research in English, in the vogue times, is no more confined to the old methods of locating themes, symbols, imageries or a pattern in one particular author or in selected number of texts. It is now more comprehensive in its approach. It accommodates movies, cultural texts, regional writings across globe, a study in translations, myths, culture studies. It could also amalgamate study across disciplines, like literature and psychology, literature and philosophy, literature and history, literature and linguistics, literature and sociology and studies and so on. The firmament of literature has widened. This brings forth far greater possibilities of making experiments and explorations, and broadening the scope for researches in literary fields.

Conclusion

What stands as a desperate requisite for literary research is critical insight and cadence. One must champion the application of theories to literature and populate the disciple with the creation of fresh knowledge. The driving force must be to bring out something new that cannot be disposed off as hackneyed. It must adopt a definitive strategy. First and foremost thing should be to identify the area of interest, and thereafter narrowing it to a single issue. Then right decision upon the theory, perspective, or the angle that it needs to be studied and deconstructed with. Having resolved thus, it must be tracked by selection the topic. Afterwards it must adhere to extensive reading, collecting materials, recognizing resources. At the end would be writing of the thesis after having worked upon multiple drafts. Amidst all strategizing, the most pertinent of all is see that the area chosen for study is contributing to the whole sole gamut of knowledge in the newest and the most innovative way possible, because bringing up something new is the ultimate mark of a true

scholar. Research in English processed in a right way can serve as the window to the understanding of the world around us, which can further the flow of knowledge and learning.

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