Simplification of Literary Theories

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M.A, Ph.D SET

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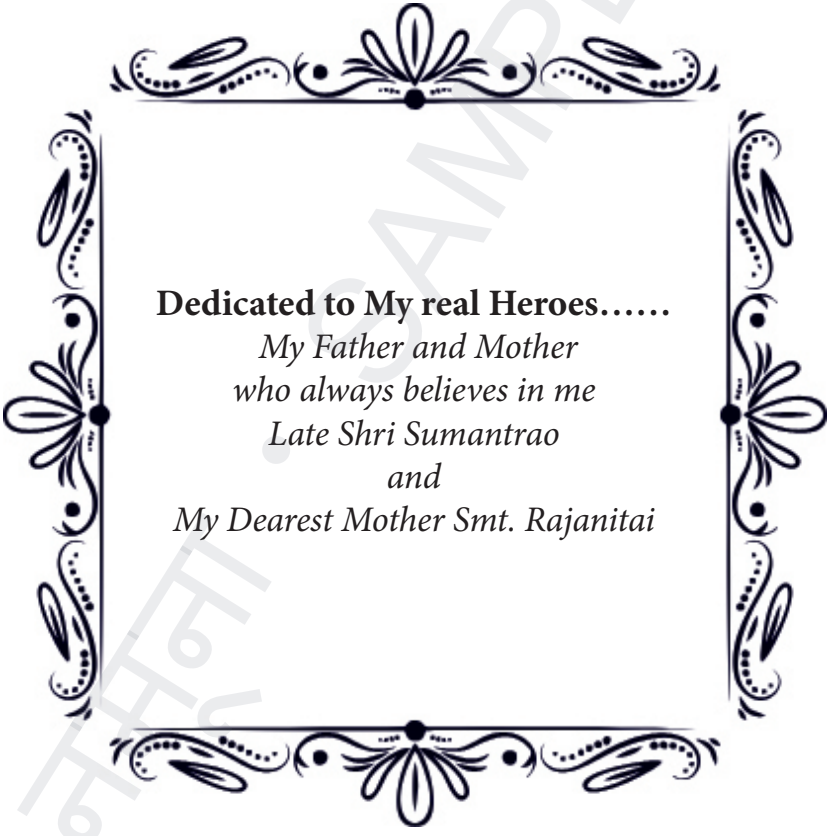
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Dedicated to My real Heroes……

My Father and Mother
who always believes in me
Late Shri Sumantrao
and
My Dearest Mother Smt. Rajanitai

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DR. MURLIDHAR CHANDEKAR
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MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to know that Dr. Yogesh S. Kashikar, Head of English Department, Shriram Kala Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Dhamangaon Rly, Amravati has taken up a Hercules task of simplifying the most difficult area in English Literary Criticism in hand. The topic i.e. simplification of different Literary Theories is the need of time. It is very encouraging to note that the theoretical part of literary criticism, a very difficult and obscure for Indian students, is simplified in a very lucid, clear and simple language in the book. Generally English criticism is assumed to be the most difficult area for students. But this volume containing articles on different unexplored areas by the experienced professors of different universities and colleges of India and abroad definitely helpful to the undergraduate and postgraduate students and the lovers of English language and literature.

I congratulate the editor and all contributors for this task and extend my best wishes for the success of academic project.

(Dr.Murlidhar Chandekar)

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FOREWORD

A study of literary theory is an important and necessary subject in the annals of the history of literature. It is often considered as obscure and difficult and hence the students of English Literature and the common readers as well prefer to keep themselves away from it. There is always a need of someone who can simplify the concepts and ideas propounded by the prominent critics and theorists to provide the learners of literature a simplified form of these concepts enabling them to study and enjoy literature. Under such circumstances the role of the teachers and the scholars like ***Dr. Yogesh S. Kashikar***, who interprets the minute intricacies of various literary theories, becomes significant in the study of literature. ***Dr. Yogesh S. Kashikar***, Head, Department of English, Shriram Kala Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Dhamangaon Rly., Dist. Amravati (M.S.) has taken up this significant task of simplifying the difficult area in English Literary Criticism. This volume contains articles by experienced teachers of the Universities and Colleges across India and abroad on varied unexplored areas. The Lucidity thought, clarity of expression and simplicity of language are the salient features of these articles. Needless to say that this work by eminent persons will be of great help to the students at undergraduate and post graduate level and to others, who show keen interest in English Language and Literature.

English literary criticism and critical theory is a very vast and all-inclusive subject included in the syllabus of all universities. Theory in literary studies is not only an account of the nature of literature or methods for its study but it's also a body of thinking and writing, whose limits are exceedingly hard to define. Therefore, this book will help the students in understanding the complexities and the basic assumptions of the subject. The present book is the outcome of the in-depth study and teaching by dedicated teachers who have collaborated in the discussion of important and difficult concepts and practices in the subject.

Dr. Yogesh S. Kashikar deserves special appreciation for his excellent initiative and editorship of the present book. I wish this endeavor, a great success.

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Preface

This book is designed for the students of undergraduate and postgraduate levels of English literature and language. It helps the students to understand the complex and obscure theoretical framework of different critical literary theories. It is expected that the book will provide a deep and clear understanding to them and make them familiar with theories.

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Acknowledgement

The book is aimed at students unacquainted with theory –undergraduates and postgraduates especially, and also for instructors or teachers who need a refresher approach and handy material on the subject. The main focus of the book is to simplify the fundamental concepts and the most prominent and influential theoretical movements.

It gives me immense pleasure to express my deep sense of regards to *Hon. Vice Chancellor Dr. Murlidhar Chandekar, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati* for his constant encouragement and support which opened a new space for my literary development. I take this opportunity to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks and indebtedness to him. I also owe my deep gratitude to Hon. *Dr. Rajeshji Jaypurkar, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati* for his motivation, support and inspiration. I also record with pleasure my sincere thanks to *Hon. Dr. Ajay Deshmukh, Registrar of Mumbai University, Mumbai* for his help, appreciation and encouragement for the academic project.

The contributors had been very careful at every step to provide clear and concise descriptions and explanations with an aim of simplification. At times, the complexities that are inevitable in theory could not be avoided, but they have tried whenever possible to leaven complexities. Indeed, it gives me immense pleasure to express my deep sense of regards to all contributors and experts from different colleges and universities.

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I am highly indebted to mentors who have made me to stand in my academic life Dr. *Kuldeepsingh K. Mohadikar, Prof. M.D. Deshpande, Prof. Farrouqueullah, Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Jahagirdar, Principal Dr. Aradhana Vaidhya and Dr. Avinash Mohril Dean, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati* University Amravati for their suggestions and timely help.

I have no words to express my sense of gratitude towards my loving wife *Sonal* for her whole-hearted co-operation, high inspiration and constant help at each and every stage during editing the book and also record my most special note of sweet love to my beloved son, *Srivatsa* for sacrificing the pleasure of my love during this work. Without their constant encouragement and support, this project would not have been possible.

Publishing academic books can be difficult even under the best of circumstances, but I am happy to say that the people at *Akhand Publishing House, New Delhi* have consistently created an environment in which difficulties are minimized and support for authors is readily given. I want to thank *Virendra Kumar Yadav, the publisher at Akhand Publishing House, New Delhi* who gave me the opportunity to write this book. His guidance at an early stage of composition was tremendously important.

I owe a profound debt to the innumerable people who help in preparing this book. I hope that this book will inspire students to take a deep dive in the literary ocean to understand writers, critics and see for themselves the richness and diversity of literary theory.

Dr. Yogesh S. Kashikar

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Introduction

The practice and popularity of literary theory become wide spread in the 20th century, but its historical roots have gone as far back as ancient Greece (Aristotle's Poetics is an often-cited early example), ancient India (Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra), ancient Rome (Longinus's On the Sublime). The ideas that these great critics have presented in their seminal works are the real backbone of literary criticism. They had developed a sense of aesthetic beauty and the way of appreciation of the work of art. The aesthetic theories of philosophers from ancient centuries are important influences on current literary study. The theory and criticism of literature are, of course, also closely tied to the history of literature.

In the most general terms, the previous and subsequent to Matthew Arnold periods have developed in the field of literary studies three major perspectives of approach to literature, three directions offering theoretical and practical possibilities to study and understand literature, and which are commonly referred to as critical, theoretical, and historical. The three approaches to literature – literary theory (the theory of literature), literary criticism, and literary history (the history of literature) – despite the huge debates over their functions and even necessity, represent three distinct scientific disciplines having their own definitions, characteristics, terminology, objects of study, and methodologies; they are interconnected, having obvious points of identification and separation.

Critical theory has become a necessary element of advanced study in the arts, the humanities and the social sciences. Most of the time, a common question can be raised to understand the basic nature and definition of Theory. The multiple views and definitions

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can be found out. At the same time, its conceptual framework and the difficult terminology may tend to be very obscure and uncomprehensive. Here an attempt is made to simplify it. Theory in literary studies is not an account of the nature of literature or methods for its study. It's a body of thinking and writing whose limits are exceedingly hard to define. A very basic way of thinking about literary theory is that these ideas act as different lenses critics use to view and talk about art, literature, and even culture. These different lenses allow critics to consider works of art based on certain assumptions within that school of theory. The different lenses also allow critics to focus on particular aspects of a work they consider important. Therefore, it is interdisciplinary – discourse with effects outside an original discipline. Theory is analytical and speculative. As a critique of common sense and exploration of alternative conceptions, theory involves a questioning of the most basic assumptions of literary study. Theory offers striking 'moves' that people can use in thinking about other topics. It involves speculative practice: accounts of desire, language, and so on, that challenge received ideas. It makes you to rethink the categories with which you may be reflecting on literature. Theory is reflexive, thinking about thinking, enquiry into the categories we use in making sense of things, in literature and in other discursive practices.

Literary theory, literary criticism, and literary history are interrelated and interdependent, and co-exist in the field of literary studies as bound by their major and common object of study, which is the literary work. Their interrelationship and interdependence form a permanent circular movement from the historically placed literary practice to literary criticism, from literary criticism to literary theory and from literary theory back to criticism. The text – either produced recently or representing an earlier period in literary history – is subject to literary criticism whose concluding reflections (the necessary outcome of literary criticism), if generally accepted and proved valid in connection to other thematically and structurally similar literary texts, emerge into the domain of literary theory, become its general principles of approach to literature, and are applicable to the study of literature in general.

Every literary work represents a text, the product of an author, known to us or anonymous; the literary work addresses a reader; its material is language; it is produced in relation to a certain social background; and it always exists in relation to other texts that represent previous literary traditions or the contemporary to the given literary work period. The literary work in itself and the different relations between the text and other elements of the literary system gave birth to different theories, trends and schools in modern literary theory and criticism.

Concerning the most important critical theories, trends and schools, in the field of literary theory and criticism the 'author' is the matter of concern of literary scholarship and biography; 'text' is studied by formalism, linguistics, linguistic criticism, and stylistics; 'performer' by acting theory; 'reader' by phenomenology, hermeneutics, reception theory, reader-oriented and reader-response theory, as well as by psychoanalysis, feminism, and post-structuralism; 'society' by Marxist theories, cultural materialism, new historicism, and feminism; 'texts' by structuralism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction; and corresponding to 'language' are the theories of linguistics and stylistics. Literature on the whole and the particular elements of the literary system are also the matters of critical concern of rhetoric, semiotics, Bakhtinian criticism, archetypal and myth criticism, ethnic literary studies, racial studies, colonial, postcolonial and transnational studies, cultural studies, environmentalism and ecocriticism, and other contemporary trends and schools in humanities and in literary theory and criticism. The greatness of theory lies in its open-ended commitment, it leaves you in a position where there are always important things you don't know. So, its complexity and confusing nature increases. To put it in the words of Jonathan Culler: -

"You hope that theoretical reading will give you the concepts to organize and understand the phenomena that concern you. But theory makes mastery impossible, not only because there is always more to know, but, more specifically and more painfully, because theory is itself the questioning of presumed results and the

assumptions on which they are based. The nature of theory is to undo, through a contesting of premisses and postulates, what you thought you knew, so the effects of theory are not predictable. You have not become master, but neither are you where you were before. You reflect on your reading in new ways. You have different questions to ask and a better sense of the implications of the questions you put to works you read." (Culler Jonathan, Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction, 2000 Page 16).

Therefore, here an attempt is made to simplify the theoretical framework of various theories so that the students may understand the basic key concepts and assumptions at the same time the main critics and their stances. It should be useful to a more general reader or anyone concerned with the theoretical and practical consideration and understanding of literature in general, and of the students of English literary criticism, in particular. This book is an attempt to make modern literary theory intelligible and attractive to as wide a readership as possible.

Dr. Yogesh S. Kashikar

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