

## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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### **Abstract**

*The nature of comparative literature, its current position and perception, the advantages and disadvantages of the study, and the usual theoretical and practical faults made while comparing texts are some of the topics that are explored in this research effort. The concept of "literature" has been the subject of a great deal of debate ever since the time of the Greek and Latin civilizations till the present day. A large number of literary canons have been created, discussed, and evaluated. These canons cover a vast variety of philosophical perspectives, literary discourses, poetry, tragedy, stories, novels, and other types of writing. It is because of the reciprocal influences of writers that a large body of writing that is referred to as "world literature" has formed. These influences have moved from the East to the West and from the North to the South. It was a requirement for a scientific framework within which to analyze and theorize books from other national literatures that led to the development of the phrase "comparative literature." This area flourished in the nineteenth century as a result of comparative techniques, relationships, and interests in these texts. In this post, I would like to shift the focus away from the roots of the discipline of comparative literature as an academic study of literature from various countries, cultures, or languages and instead bring attention to several misconceptions about contemporary comparative literature.*

**Keywords:** Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies, World Literature, Theory, Practice

### **Introduction**

The study of literary works that were produced in a variety of languages is the essence of comparative literature, according to its most fundamental definition. Within the scope of this study, the cultural, linguistic, and idiomatic characteristics of these writings are investigated. According to René Wellek, the term "comparative literature" has undergone significant changes and rapid

evolutions since its introduction in the early 19th century to the present day. Furthermore, the definition of "comparative literature" as the study of links between two or more literatures has been construed in a manner that is both wildly inaccurate and wildly inaccurate. In his work titled "From Comparative Literature Today toward Comparative Cultural Studies," Totosy de Zepetnek makes the argument that "comparative cultural studies" has appropriated certain aspects (theories and methods) from comparative literature, and that comparative literature has come to accept this trend. He defines "Comparative Cultural Studies" as an approach that draws from three areas of theory: 1) studying literature (text and/or literary system) in relation to culture and cultural studies; 2) studying literature within cultural studies using theories and methods from comparative literature; and 3) studying culture and its composite parts and aspects using the proposed "comparative cultural studies" approach rather than the current dominant single-language approach that deals with a topic in relation to its nature and problems in one culture only.

The objective of comparative literature, as a subject of study, is to gain an understanding of "other's literatures, languages, and cultures;" The fields of literary criticism and theory, literary history, translation, area studies, and global studies as a whole can all benefit greatly from the application of literary studies that adopt a comparative cultural perspective to different cultures, languages, and literatures. This is due to the fact that literature is contextualized and interacts with literature from other places. Comparative literature students and professors should widen their attention this semester to encompass literature and culture from a number of languages and cultures. This will allow them to better understand the wider world. If, on the other hand, a scholar is just interested in the literature, literary works, or writers of a single nation, then that scholar will not be doing a comparative study inquiry.

If one were to investigate or compare the writers of just that nation's literature (for instance, the poets of modern Turkish literature), this would be considered literary history or research on the literature of that country. It is possible to gain knowledge about the literary ideals of a country as well as its growth or development by diving into the literature, language, and culture of that country. On the other hand, a comparative research will be carried out when the author investigates writings emanating from a variety of languages, civilizations, or literary traditions (for example, modern Turkish and English poets). It is only in the most recent few decades that comparative literature has been officially acknowledged as a distinct subject of study. This is the fundamental principle of comparativism, which states that a single piece of art cannot exist in isolation from other works of art. Each and every piece of art can be traced back to its roots and the influences that shaped it. There is a significant impact that the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, two of the most well-known epics in India, have on

the way people live their lives in India. The most significant thing that has occurred throughout the history of literature is what we call influence. Influences serve as necessary nodes within a network of works that are interconnected with one another. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, the transcendental literature of the United States was significantly influenced by the philosophical and religious concepts of Indian sources. The American trade with the East India Company may be considered a "media" that was responsible for the introduction of Indian ideas to the United States. In their own works, Emerson, Alcott, and Thoreau all demonstrated a significant reliance on Hindu philosophical notions.

## **Objective**

### **Beginning of Comparative Literature**

According to experts in the area, the term "comparative literature" was first used in the French anthology *Course de littérature compare*, which was published in the year 1816. Beginning in the year 1854, Germany has been making use of comparative literature. In the year 1818, Mathew Arnold was the one who initially put up the concept of comparative literature in English. In light of this, it may be deduced that the concept of comparative literature began to acquire popularity in the 1800s. This is the time when the practice of reading broadly across a variety of fields is first established. An additional point to consider is that this should not be confused with a literary movement. The number of university departments that are dedicated to comparative literature has increased, which has resulted in an increase in the number of lectures, seminars, and discussions. These discoveries shed light on the nature of comparative literature, which was previously unknown.

Comparative studies were not recognized as a separate topic until 1903, when Benedetto Croce made this decision. His inability to differentiate between pure literary history and comparative literature was something that he failed to recognize. In the 1920s, Layne Cooper expressed his disapproval of comparative literature, referring to it as a "Bogus Term" that is devoid of both syntax and meaning. Regarding the study of influence, Sahman Jeune believed that it was the most important aspect of comparative literature (Reference: Awadhesh Kumar Singh's 'The future of comparative literary studies' collected in *New Direction in comparative Intercourse*).

### **Meaning and Nature of Comparative Literature**

When I think about comparative literature, the first thing that comes to my mind is the question, "What exactly is it supposed to be?" In the event that you could suggest any works that take a comparative approach, I would greatly appreciate it. Does comparative literature, on the other hand, contain works by certain authors? In accordance with this view, the very first thing that should be kept in mind is that "comparative literature is nothing in itself." This simply means that authors always generate original works of literature and never engage in comparative literature.

When we talk about "comparative literature," we are referring to an examination of different pieces of literature in respect to one another. A method that is comparative is the foundation of our study. We concentrate on that. There is a minority of members of the academic community who are of the opinion that all literary analysis is intrinsically comparative. Comparing a notion to anything else is the only way for us to fully understand it. If we do not compare Kalidas and Shakespeare, IA Richards and Ramchandra Shukla, or anyone else, we would not be able to understand what it is that makes them comparable or different from one another.

These days, the study of comparative literature is becoming increasingly recognized as a distinct academic discipline at a number of universities in India and around the world. In the year 1818, the English poet Matthew Arnold wrote a letter to G.W.E. Russell in which he used the word "Comparative Literature" for the first time (Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1995, 18). In the beginning, there was a controversy regarding the specific definition of literature. This was due to the fact that literature is fundamentally incomparable because it is the output of the imaginative and creative processes of individual authors (such as storytellers, poets, and everyone else).

### **Constructivist effects**

The mind is considered as an active entity eager to fulfill its inquisitiveness and find solutions to difficult problems, according to the constructivist perspective, which is thought to view the mind as something similar to a vessel that is waiting to be filled. The constructivist theory can be divided into two distinct classifications, which are as follows: To begin, cognitive constructivists such as Piaget believe that infants develop their own knowledge by virtue of their interactions with the social and physical environments in which they find themselves. The second basic tenet of social constructivism is the notion that students construct their own knowledge through activities that involve interaction with their classmates. Within the framework of social constructivism, the co-construction of meaning within a social action is given a significant amount of

importance, and the theory is more concerned with meaning than it is with structure. Moreover, it is asserted that the development of thinking occurs within social situations.

### **Cultural effects**

Language is a result of the learning process, where it helps to both generate meaning and understand the intentions of others through communication, according to socio-cultural theory. Language is a product of the learning process. Language and culture are linked through the socio-cultural framework, which provides a linkage between the two. In their definition of culture, Wardhaugh and Janet (2014) differentiate it from high culture, which includes the appreciation of music, literature, the arts, and other forms of artistic expression. They define culture as the "knowledge that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living; for language use, this is similar to the concept of communicative competence."

Bayyurt (2006) identifies two primary points of view regarding culture that are relevant to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). There is a viewpoint that advocates for a curriculum that is devoid of any cultural influences, while another viewpoint asserts that culture and language are intertwined and that, as a consequence, culture must to be acknowledged as an essential component of language education. Alptekin (2002) stated that the existing paradigm of communicative competence is incorrect because it presumes that non-native speakers must adhere closely to native speaker standards. He used English as an example of intercultural communication to illustrate his point. Additionally, Alptekin (2002) called for the replacement of the conventional and unattainable concept of communicative competence with the concept of intercultural communicative competence. Students would be able to develop a knowledge of many cultures and improve their ability to converse with speakers from a variety of backgrounds if they utilized this opportunity.

### **Effects on performance**

The term "L2 performance" refers to the degree to which an individual is able to communicate or comprehend words and phrases in a second language (L2). Performance is defined as "how a person uses this knowledge in producing and understanding sentences" when speaking or writing a language. Competency, on the other hand, refers to simply knowing the language. Those who are learning a second language should strive to achieve a level of competency that allows them to make effective use of the language in situations that are relevant to their everyday lives.

**Effects on affective states**

According to Scovel (1978), affect is a catch-all word that incorporates a wide variety of distinct actions and notions related to human conduct. The affective elements and states of the student are centered on the student's feelings and the things that motivate them. Krashen investigated the influence that emotional states have on the process of learning a second language through the use of his Affective Filter Hypothesis. The study conducted by Krashen (1981) suggests that there is a connection between emotional elements and the acquisition of a second language. Individuals who are learning and have attitudes that are less than ideal will have a more difficult time making progress. Several further research have provided further evidence that distinct emotional states are significant.

An example of this would be the assertion that concern is an emotional state that is beneficial to the process of learning a new language. Dornyei (1998) emphasized motivation as an extra affective state that plays a key part in the process of acquiring a second language. Motivation influences both the rate at which the process is completed and the level of success that it achieves. The concept of demonization is also put forward as an affective condition. There are a number of different emotional states that have been reported in previous studies that are connected with the process of language learning. These moods include fear, confidence, and stress.

This is the first time that Gayatri Spivak has used the phrase "Comparitivism in Extremis" in the English language. Rethinking (615) asserts that this "comparitivism in extremis" is a rallying cry to put an end to tyranny and acknowledge equivalence on the part of the ideologically dominant other. Nevertheless, a response is not forthcoming in response to this political gesture. When there is linguistic parity, the preference for one language over another is eliminated as a consequence of this. Specifically, "Rethinking" by Spivak, page 616. First, it is possible to argue that a "rethinking of comparitivism...by admitting that languages are equivalent" is required. Secondly, within this framework of equivalence, "the comparativists should undertake a serious and continuous undoing of national languages-based reading." That is the argument that may be made. Spivak's "Rethinking" is cited in 613.

As stated by Spivak, "Europe and the extracurricular Orient" appear to be the key focal points of comparative literature studies in the United States (Spivak, Death 6). It is her contention that languages that are taught less often, also known as subaltern languages, ought to be included in the standard curriculum. In order to accomplish this objective, she proposes the establishment of a program for the languages that are taught the least anywhere in the world. This program would consist of faculty development seminars, post-doctoral

fellowships, new and extensive recruitment procedures, the formation of national professional associations, and a consortium for language learning through distance education (614). Comparative literature has also made great progress thanks to translation, which has been a breakthrough. Contemporary academics have shifted their perspective on translation from that of a passive activity to that of an active process. This provides the most customized reading experience possible for the purpose of a comparative study.

In his work titled "What is World Literature," which was published in 2003, author David Damrosch makes the statement that "World literature is an elliptical refraction of national literatures" (Damrosch 281). In his opinion, the book "Wunderliterature" written by Goethe was the last chapter in the history of national literature. The long-held assumption that works of world literature can only be found in a particular region of the world, specifically Europe, is being called into question and questioned by a growing number of individuals. By virtue of globalization, literary works acquire a new significance for readers who reside outside of national borders. This is due to the fact that they are no longer regarded as isolated pieces within the context of a national setting. It is his primary argument that literature from all around the world "gains in translation" (Damrosch 288) from one language to another.

There are certain postmodern cultural and literary thinkers who believe that objectivity is not only unavoidable but also difficult to avoid. When Chomsky and Foucault were having their discussion in the Netherlands in 1971, Chomsky held the view that humans have a "innate nature" that is associated with our mental structures. Foucault, on the other hand, maintained that our understanding of our own nature is subjective and fallible, and that there is no such thing as human nature at all. According to P. Mohanty, who expands on Chomsky's ideas and argues that values "often refer to deeper features of human nature, our species-wide needs and capacities" (914), "Our evaluations can be objective, I suggest, because they are often about features of human nature that are independent of our own socially shaped judgments and attitudes" (Mohanty 814). As a result, our evaluations can be objective.

In his book *Why Compare*, Radhakrishnan poses the question, "Is it possible to cultivate one's location a-centrally, pluri-centrally, or eccentrically?" He also makes a comparison between the concept of centrism and the concept of a family. This is what is stated in Radhakrishna 463. Prior to initiating a comparison, it is essential to start at a single point without claiming that point to be the center of the comparison. When the other is there, it is absolutely necessary to make a concentrated effort to de-familiarize oneself and conduct an evaluation of oneself.

His argument is that comparisons are inherently biased and cannot be objective because of their intrinsic nature. They will always be aggressive and competitive because they have a hunger for power and information, which guarantees all of this. In his assertion that comparisons are worthless if we do not learn anything from one another, he makes a point that is well-founded. "There should be a want to learn from 'other' experience that is not one's own rather than to hierarchize difference in name of a dominant 'superior' identity" (Radhakrishnan around forty-five).

The person who makes the comparison, the things that are at risk in the comparison, and the people who stand to benefit from the comparison should all be taken into consideration. Regarding the issue of ethical correctness, he poses the question of "why the Eastern and the Western self, the colonizer self and the colonized self, cannot disinvest from their present history of binary recognition and invest their common accountability" (Radhakrishnan 465). This comes up in relation to the problem of ethical correctness. The learning that comes from contrasting things must take place at a different frequency and not on the basis of comparison. In addition, he digs into the subject of how philology and translation studies frequently categorize language families as Indo-European, Semitic, or Slavic, based on the degree to which they are related to one another or are far from one another (467). The fact that they are two different languages does not change the fact that they have a shared familial identity. According to his argument, comparisons are worthless if they do not include the additional "we" that they imply. Although we are required to compare, we must exercise caution so as not to engage in epistemic violence; this is an unavoidable catch-22 situation. From the words of Radhakrishnan,

## **Conclusion**

Recent advancements in comparative literature, as detailed by Mohanty, Spivak, and Radhakrishnan, have called into question the concept of ethnocentrism, advanced research into subaltern languages and translation studies, and explained how this type of study may assist one in thinking in a more objective and ethical manner. According to Mohanty, in order to be called ethical, one must take into consideration whether their political leanings or their cultural and social experiences influence the decisions that they make (Can Our). Despite the fact that Gayatri Spivak believes that seeking for diverse sorts of sameness is an empty promise of equality (Rethinking), Radhakrishnan believes that a "we" must be constructed by the two of them. The "we" will be located regardless of the geographical, vocational, and social differences that exist (Why Compare?). This is true regardless of our final destination. There is a requirement for "we-ness" as well as a sophisticated paradigm that requires the identification of links in a variety of languages and cultures. After Radhakrishnan's example, I



would like to suggest that, in this moral dilemma, we compare at a location that is not owned by anyone save ourselves. Furthermore, according to these literary theorists, the study of literature is the means by which a healthy multi-cultural community might achieve this objective and non-ethnocentric approach. According to Radhakrishnan (465), it is of the utmost importance that every individual accepts responsibility for their acts in reference to the Big O, which is a symbol that establishes ethical norms.

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