LIBERAL HUMANISM

Introduction

Liberal humanism is a modern literary theory to do approach in literary texts. Every literary theory has its origin and its inters-irrelativeness with other theories. It is based on the nature of man and its defects on the society. After the advent of psychology and interdisciplinary studies came into existence the new form humanism in psychology, humanism is entirely based on the nature of man and the rights bestowed for him. Liberal humanism came into existence from a long time back in the history of literary criticism. Its main focus on literature and the study of man is the speciality of liberal humanism.

To talk about pioneers of this critical theory, it goes to F.D. Mauris, in 1840: gave the importance of language through literature. He holds the view that the language is the purpose to get from literature and the real motive behind in it is to know about or to implement liberal humanism in a society. Another critic, I.A. Richards, in is critical treatise “Practical Criticism (1929)” gave more importance to a close precise reading of a text without the important of history. After him F.R. Leavis, Q.D. Roch developed their models very independent from language studies historical facts and philosophical and psychological intentions. In 1960’s the theory had taken a new turn to re-establish connection between literary studies and these fields. Hence, liberal humanism came into a theory in the field of literary criticism.

Theorising Liberal Humanism

Aristotle

As per the words of Socrates “Who am I”, Aristotle spent his life in a critical manner. He investigated every part of life, a staunch critic who gave importance to aesthetic sense and morality. His theories gave more importance to the delivering of ideas sublime from it.

In English critical tradition there are some eminent critics who put the place for liberal humanism. There are many among them particularly to say Dr. Johnson, Arnold, Eliot and F.R. Leavis.

Dr. Johnson

Dr. Johnson is a critic. In this “Preface to Shakespeare” gave more importance to moral ideas. Hence the idea of liberal humanism was being the chief concept in the works of him.

Arnold

Arnold is a supporter of morals. His words reflect very noble ideas. In his critical treatise “Touchstone Method” focuses on the quality of the famous works to judge the quality of the present works. It shows the importance of the past virtues followed by the ancients which are very important to follow it in present time. Hence one can understand the idea is to get a pure and disinterested knowledge to evaluate the literary text.

Eliot

Eliot is also a moralist who used literature as a canon to teach morality and the morale. His works like “Tradition and Individual Talent”, ”The Waste Land” and “The Hollow Man” are some important works that deals with moral sense and spiritual evaluation. Thus he has made literature is a form to know man and to reform impunities.

F.R Leavis

As mostly known as a critic, F.R. Leavis companioned Johnson’s morality combined with Arnold’s social vision and anti-theoretical practice.
Ten Tenets of Liberal Humanism

In studying the theory of Liberal Humanism these ten tenants are very vital to understand.

Before the professors from Cambridge University, what exactly is that people learnt of with English literature? They learnt about specific books and authors and they absorbed some values and attitudes, which are the distilled essence of learning English literature. The essences are as follows:

Their attitude towards literature was that it transcends time. It does not have any limitation. As Ben Jonson said, “It is not for an age but for all time”.

The literary text has a context with in itself and it need not be placed in the socio-political, literary-historical and autobiographical contexts.

To understand the texts we need a close verbal analysis of the text without any preconceived notions.

Human nature is essentially unchanging, passions and emotions are repeated again and again. Therefore, literature is a continuous process and not more of innovation.

Individuality is our unique essence. It cannot be transformed by the environment and society. It should not be like the change in the mind of the character that changes at the end of the story.

The purpose of literature is to enhance life and to promote human values.

Form and content in literature must be sincerity. Sincerity should be seen in the language of the literature. It can be seen in the avoidance of cliché and in the ways of description.

‘Silent showing’ is important in literature rather than explaining it. An act should be represented silently and not through detailed explanation.

The job of criticism is to interpret the text to mediate between it and the reader.

Conclusion

Thus, the theory came into practice to the vital need in understanding a text completely in the view of humanism.