

Literary Discourse and Human Rights in Martin Luther King's Speech: *I Have a Dream*

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Received 4 November 2019; accepted 15 December 2019
Published online 26 December 2019

Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the role of literary discourse, particularly engaged literature, in consolidating the values of human rights. It is an in-depth literary analysis of Martin Luther King's speech: "I Have a Dream" in terms of form and content. Central to this paper is an effort to find out the tremendous power of literary discourse in positively changing and shaping individuals and societies by creating public awareness regarding rights and duties. Burning issues such as human rights violations and abuses are often brought into awareness and directly tackled by literary discourse. When people are given their rights, social justice and human development become inevitable. Findings from the discussion and analysis of Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" show that literature do have a pivotal role to play in human rights promotion and social development. This role is important because literature does not exist for its own sake or in a vacuum. It is, rather, a true reflection and mirror of the mores and milieu of society. Moreover; it is a powerful expression of the sufferings, agonies and above all aspirations of the masses. The ability of human beings to articulate themselves in the form of literary discourse is the most substantial power they possess in shaping their destiny and life in general.

Key words: Human rights; Engaged literature; Development; Society; Speech; Literary discourse

Alwaqaa, M. (2019). Literary Discourse and Human Rights in Martin Luther King's Speech: *I Have a Dream*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 19(3), 19-27. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/11462>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11462>

INTRODUCTION

Literary discourse can be speech or written. It is divided into three types; poetic, expressive and transactional. Poetic discourse highlights emotions, ideas and imagination by means of rhyme, rhythm and poetic devices. Expressive discourse does not present facts or motivates people for action. It is rather a reflection of one's emotions and personal experiences couched in prose. The third category of literary discourse is transactional whose main purpose is to convey a message and motivates people for action. Transactional discourse is also called engaged literature. Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" mainly falls into this type of literary discourse. Yet it encompasses the characteristics of the other two types. Despite the fact that literary discourse has been compartmentalized and becomes an essential part of humanities, yet it is overlapping and interdisciplinary.

The European renaissance witnessed an unprecedented awakening in almost all fields of life. It was the time when the humanities came into existence as a new established branch of human knowledge so as to differentiate it from studies that concerned themselves with theology and nature. The studies on nature became the groundwork for modern science and humankind knowledge has completely been left apart. Man is the only creature who has the ability to classify and explore himself and the world around him, to invoke the past and to imagine and think of yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is also capable of constructing the imaginative models of experience which belong to the humanities. Language and literature, which are mainly verbal disciplines, occupy the central part of the humanities. Literature is an ideal record of the history and life of humankind. It is a reservoir of human experiences, processes and memory. Society or civilization without memory becomes senile and untenable.

The relationship, however, between literature and science is organic and complementary. Society cannot operate well without literature and cannot progress

without science. People seem to think that literature is different from science and this is true to a specific point. Science studies the world as it is and it is governed by laws while literature concerns itself with how to live in this world in peace, tranquility and comfort. People, however, are not aware of the fact that both science and literature demand the same mental processes. Creative imagination and genius are characteristics of an inspired poet as well as a good mathematician. Clarity, coherence, precision, a sense of fact and the capacity to reason are just as much important to the chemist as they are to the novelist. A businessman may find out that an employee with literary articulateness is more efficient than the one who lacks it. The first one has developed good verbal skills that enable him to adapt and adjust to new situations and environments. His mind is more flexible than others because of the new horizons he gained through literature. Therefore literature plays an enormous role in developing individuals as well as society. It is difficult to satisfactorily cover all different genres of literature that may contribute in such a development within the scope of this paper, yet engaged literature, namely human rights literature, is the main focus of this piece of research.

It becomes evident that the literature that mainly concerns itself with human rights issues has recently established itself as a new literary genre. This kind of literature promotes and enhances values of human rights such as the right of freedom that might ultimately lead to public awareness, social change and then a comprehensive development in all walks of life. The aim of human rights literature is to create a literary driving force so as to motivate people for action to struggle towards attaining and protecting human rights from any violation. The French writer and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, designates this literature as "Engaged Literature" because both the writer and the reader have a moral responsibility to effect a positive social change. The concept of a new genre of literature that primarily deals with human rights comes primarily from a foreword in an anthology of stories entitled *Freedom*¹ authored by many renowned writers around the world and published in Britain in 2010 with the cooperation of many international organizations including Amnesty International. This compilation of stories has been written with a driving spirit that perhaps has finally concretized the foundation principles for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

According to B. Orend, human rights are "generally moral rights claimed by everyone and held against everyone, especially against those who run social

institutions" (2002, p.37). With the establishment of the United Nations and the ensuing ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human rights in 1948, human rights issue becomes the most important one throughout the world. The United Nations Charter, adopted in 1945, was the first international document to promote and protect human rights to be implemented by individual, as well as collective states in Langley's estimation. The adoption of this charter, according to K. Smith, came as a dire necessity to halt the reoccurrence of the horrible consequences caused by the two destructive world wars which witnessed massive and flagrant violations of human rights. J. Nickel states that human rights are now widely recognized in several parts of the world and human rights violations are reported by journalists. Orend argues that the "violation of human rights is a vicious and ugly phenomenon indeed and it is something we have overriding reasons to resist and remedy" (2002, p.34).

Thus men of letters have been aware of the urgent issues and problems gnawing at the body of humanity. One of these pressing issues is human rights which has recently become the spotlight of the civil and developed world. Literature turns out as a powerful tool in consolidating civil rights and fighting human rights violations and transgressions. Throughout history social reformers, activists, preachers, politicians and leaders employ literary language in their speeches, sermons, slogans, addresses, correspondence and writings due to the fact that literature has a magical and mesmerizing effect on the masses. Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" is an excellent example in epitomizing such a tremendous effect.

Statement of the Problem

People often fail to recognize the tremendous power of literature in shaping the world and developing societies through adopting human rights agenda. Such people think that literature is solely produced for the sake of entertainment and nothing else. The matter of fact, however, is that literature plays a central role in transforming life and changing minds. It educates, informs as well as entertains public. Literature plays no lesser role than other disciplines of science in generating a comprehensive mushroom growth in all aspects of life.

Research Objectives

This paper is aimed to explore the following points:

To look into the role of literary discourse in enhancing, consolidating and promoting the values of human rights which in their turn lead to comprehensive social development.

To show the powerful and apocalyptic effects of Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" as a good literary example in mobilizing people and changing society.

Research Questions

Based on the important role of literary discourse

¹ *Freedom*— A Collection of Short Stories Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Published in association with Amnesty International. Stories by more than 30 renowned authors, including Paulo Coelho, A.L. Kennedy, Ariel Dorfman, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Helen Dunmore, James Meek and Kate Atkinson, each focusing on one right in the Declaration.

in promoting human rights values towards overall development, the following questions will be answered in the light of Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream."

- Does literary discourse play a crucial role in positively changing society towards overall development or it has just been created for its own sake (art for art's sake) not for the sake of a grand cause?

- In what ways is Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" shaped to promote human rights and how it impacted American people and people around the world?

Research Methodology

This piece of research mainly focuses on the role of literary discourse, particularly engaged literature, in consolidating and promoting human rights values which in their turn lead to human development considered as the corner stone in the process of society's development and progress. Based on this, the approach taken is analysis-oriented. It is an in-depth analysis of the important contribution of literature in maintaining and protecting human rights in the way of the constant march of a sweeping development. As a quintessential example of a piece of literature that revolves on human rights, Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" stands as a good model of engaged and effective literature. It has fully been explored and analyzed for its highly literary qualities.

Discussion and Analysis

Human rights literature is basically an engaged literature that is written with the intention of performing an act or action. This idea comes from the writing of a French writer and philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre in his seminal book, *What is Literature?* In this book, Sartre argues that ordinary people as well as thinkers, intellectuals and the elite should take a firm and definitive stance regarding all social issues, especially political conflicts. Sartre sees literature as the ideal means to disseminate ideas that may contribute in shaping people's public awareness concerning their duties and rights. Minority groups and the oppressed people can gain recognition as a result of the influence of literature by giving them a voice to reveal wrongs and injustices inflicted upon them by the governing elite. Likewise, the oppressors will definitely be influenced and moved to action when they read a novel, a poem or attend a play that end with a call for action and consciously address groups that have the capability to act. According to Sartre, literature has a double function; it plays both as an honest mirror for the unfairness of the oppressors and as a renewable source of guidance and inspiration for the downtrodden and the oppressed. The most effective committed literature is the one that works within the boundaries of real democracy and the values of universal human rights; personal freedom, freedom of expression, equal citizenship and sanctity and dignity of human beings. Any literature that embodies a specific dogma or group contradicting the common values of

human rights leads inevitably to exclusion rather than inclusion, class system, oppression and injustices within and outside the members of such a group or dogma.

Literature has a great power in changing, shaping and molding human minds. The author of *Prisoner of Tehran*, Marina Nemat, who won the first European Parliament 'Human Dignity' award, argues that:

Literature allows the victim to become a survivor and stand up to the past to ensure a better future. It is literature that carries the human experience, reaches our hearts, and makes us feel the pain of those who have been treated unjustly. Without literature and narrative, we would lose our identity as human beings and will dissolve in the darkness of time and [in] our repeated mistakes that lead us from one preventable devastation to the next (2007, p.19).

Sartre explains:

[T]he reader of the novel submits to the book before him, abandoning his worldly existence to assume a vicarious one while he reads. He lives the problem which he himself helps to create, placing himself in the most sympathetic position with relation to what the writer wishes to say (2001, p.73).

The literature concerning human rights focuses on the author's responsibility to dig deeper in his text that is not deliberately isolated from the world dilemmas, social crises and global geopolitical events. Such a kind of literature does not believe in the maxim that says literature exists for its own sake. Rather, it emphasizes messages and their effects on the readers in an artistic and aesthetic way.

The American philosopher, Professor Martha Nussbaum, in her book *Poetic Justice* contends that social sympathy is a necessary condition for equitable treatment in courts of law. Judges are short of imaginative data about the persons they must judge, and novels are one place they can look for guidance. So literature has the capacity to enlighten and guide judges while taking fatal and serious verdicts on allegedly criminal people. Vered Cohen Barzilay, in her essay "The Tremendous Power of Literature," writes:

Literature can be as powerful as life itself. It can be like our prophecy. It can inspire us to change our world and give us the comfort, hope, passion, and strength that we need in order to fight to create a better future for us, as well as all humanity. We just need to keep on reading and to allow the tremendous power of literature to enter our hearts and lead us to our own path (web).

As a matter of fact human rights literature does not compel the author to call for direct action. Rather, it is the job of the reader to seriously engage with the author (text) so as to arrive at an appropriate mutual action. The author's task comes to its end as soon as the writing process has been completed. It is the reader's imaginative response that may decide whether the literary creation is inspirational for social change and if it motivates for action or has just been created for hidden agendas.

Some critics claim that engaged literature sometimes turns out to be a mere propaganda and can be manipulated

for political purposes. It is true that perhaps some writers seem to be partisan or fanatic who align themselves to specific agendas and motives, yet the guidelines and parameters surrounding human rights values and the sacred relationship between the author and the reader definitely prevent any kind of such a derailed propaganda. It is debated that the diction of engaged literature should be simple, immediate and accessible so as to reach the masses that can be held together with the author through a common denominator while maintaining literary quality standards to a limited criteria of stimulation for action. Sartre argues that writers and social reformers have to bear in mind their audiences and readers whose mental faculties and intellectual capacities must constantly be improved and augmented. They should offer them something beyond the familiar and providing an opportunity to expand horizons.

It is argued that at the time of gigantic and apocalyptic changes, the ultimate message of the engaged literature may be distorted or aborted. Such a message appears to be useless or out of context. A great work of literature, however; transcends the restrictive boundaries of time and space. It becomes timeless and spaceless as long as it holds a communion with the generations of readers to come. Literature cannot exist in vacuum. The author of *Before We Say Goodbye*, Gabriella Ambrosio, writes: "At times, writers are afraid to know what is inevitable: that "pure" art does not exist. None of us is pure or innocent: any word carrying imaginative power produces culture, and culture produces behavior" (2010, p.28). Sartre observes that those critics who denigrate engaged literature are, in a way, revealing the old belief that writers may retreat to their own private shell and ignore burning issues shrouding them which may someday reach their lives and crack down their private shell. He argues that some writers are striving hard to isolate themselves from reality but all their efforts ultimately come to failure. These writers are collectively labeled as escapists. All novels and other literary genres, whatever else they may do, illuminate people and inevitably instruct them on all aspects of life. Reality can be seen from different angles by different readers. The writer does not give us reality in plain terms or in black and white, rather s/he allows a space for readers to move in so as to be able to find out their own version of reality.

Many serious questions are raised by critics of engaged literature in literary circles worldwide concerning the author's qualifications and competence to create a piece of literature, let it be a novel for example, that may generate social action. Can an author fully understand the ins and outs of substantial social and political issues? Is s/he aware of the complexity and risk of such issues so as not to support a false cause? Can engaged literature be written and discussed only by experts? These questions and many others are valid to be asked and to be answered. Actually, the authors of engaged literature

should have a superb knowledge, a greater talent and an unbiased and clear mind. They should follow a clear-cut strategy or framework as a guideline for their train of mind and reasoning. One good framework to be followed is embodied in the relevance and validity of human rights' values articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the wake of the fallout of the Second World War and the Holocaust. These universal principles stand as shining beacons for writers working in such a domain. These values transcend the occasion and the epoch in which they were articulated and persistently bring to the limelight critical issues that seek solutions soon. Quintessential examples of engaged literature that transcend their historical, social and geographical contexts are Martin Luther King's speech, "I Have a Dream" and Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. While these two literary pieces highlight racism as a flagrant issue in the United States of America within specific temporal and local environment, they simultaneously pinpoint to global issues of racism and discrimination in a cosmopolitan way. With their intended commitment for social and political change, these two works of engaged literature jump beyond their local contexts of the story. They both have a tremendous impact not only on American audience and readers regarding racism and discrimination but have a gigantic influence on the generations to come all around the world.

Human rights literature as a newly established type of engaged literature centers on the values of human rights as the core of its moral and social duty. It places a heavy responsibility on the shoulder of the author who should deeply delve into the process of writing that is closely and intimately associated with social crises and geopolitical changes. Human rights literature does not cherish the belief that literature and art can be produced for arts' sake. It rather calls on the authors to concretize social action and commitment by means of their literary creation and to synchronize their writings with human rights campaigns so as to enhance the close link between literature and social action. In her book, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Lynn Hunt recognizes such a relationship between literature and social action. She explores how prose narrative emerged as a new genre in the eighteenth century and the crucial role it played at that time in the conception of human rights ideas. Professor Hunt examines how the intricacies and ideas of human relationships depicted in novels and art create empathetic and sympathetic reactions and responses on the part of readers who find themselves entangled within the boundaries of the discourse. Readers are consequently compelled to revise their ideas and beliefs and to change them in a positive way.

Many literary examples can be found in English and American literature that radically change the public opinion of the masses and create a constructive public awareness concerning universal issues such as slavery,

racism, freedom, gender, terrorism, discrimination, class system, human rights violations etc. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the best-selling novel of the nineteenth century, has a deep influence on the public opinion of American people on the issue of slavery and it is considered as the one of the central triggers that instigates social reformers, activists and politicians to start a social and political movement, called the Abolitionist Movement, in the 1850s. Many other works of literature have an enormous impact on Human Rights issues and struggles; *Beloved* by Tony Morrison, *The Trial* by Franz Kafka and *Night* by Elie Wiesel are some good examples. One of the primary themes these literary works deals with is how to attain one's freedom in the maelstrom of social evils, chaos and political prejudices.

Freedom plays a crucial role in all processes of community development and it is one of human basic needs. Literature by means of imagination enhances such basic needs. Northrop Frye, a literary critic and an outstanding scholar, argues:

The literary imagination, of course, creates a world of possibilities, and these possibilities are alternative ways of seeing things. Briefly, it is the business of the humanities to nurture the capacity to articulate. Articulatness builds the human community. The surest way to destroy freedom is to destroy the capacity to articulate freely. (2007, p.748)

Human development is part and parcel of the overall development of society. This development means providing alternatives and expanding human choices that can be realized only through the concept of freedom. Human development is the most substantial and central factor towards welfare improvement and community development by means of freedom which is deemed the most effective tool in achieving such a desired progress. Based on the studies and researches (Ahmadi and Shaghghi, 2006) conducted on the crucial role of freedom in the process of development the findings disclose that freedom does not only act as a catalyst for development but can protect human beings against disasters such as drought, earthquake and flood; social problems such as illiteracy, low life expectancy and mortality; and economic problems such as low income per capita, unfair income distribution and so on. Freedom allows for more options and choices and enhances democratic relations in society. Thus it provides a calm and cozy atmosphere for an individual to use her / his mental power to its utmost and then to maximize social welfare by achieving equality, citizenship, a fair income distribution, social and political freedom and freedom of expression.

Pollack Ichou deems freedom of expression and thought as one crucial component of human rights based on the universal declaration of human rights and international covenants approved by almost all nations. Any attack against such freedoms by dictatorships or repressive regimes that attempt to silence opinions, point of views, protests or dissent is seen as flagrant and

shameful violations of basic human rights. Literature provides people a golden opportunity to express themselves well and to learn how to articulate their ideas, opinions and beliefs in a fascinating way. Literature means good articulateness and understanding that may fight oppression, destroy repressive regimes and establish, instead, a democratic and equal society. In this regard, Northrop Frye writes:

Understanding and articulateness lead to (repressive regime) destruction. This is the kind of thing that George Orwell was talking about.... The kernel of everything reactionary and tyrannical in society is the impoverishment of the means of verbal communication (2007, p.749).

Unfortunately government censorship on newspapers and publications is still practiced in many parts of the world and journalists and writers are relentlessly persecuted, harassed, threatened, imprisoned or executed. Liu Xiaobo is a Chinese writer, literary critic, professor and human rights activist who won Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. He was sentenced to eleven years imprisonment in 2009 for 'inciting subversion of state power' by publishing a manifesto calling for fair and free elections and freedom of expression and thought. Many other examples like Liu Xiaobo can be found in many countries. These writers and journalists are persecuted due to the fact that the totalitarian regimes recognize power in their writing that may impact masses and threatens these regimes' existence. The ability to articulate well is to overcome pressing issues such as racism and discrimination.

One of the most important and crucial issues tackled by engaged literature is racism which continues to be a major problem in America. After the success of American Revolution against Great Britain, the revolution leaders started to write the Declaration of Independence in which the seed of democracy, freedom and civil rights began to sprout. Although one statement in the Declaration reads: 'All men are created equal,' many prominent leaders of the revolution such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were actual slave owners. Washington later wrote a will to emancipate the slaves under his ownership and anticipated that America would never see peace, tranquility and progress unless the slavery system comes to an end. His prediction came true when President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the abolition of slavery and consequently a macabre civil war erupted between the Northern states led by Lincoln and the Southern states which opposed Lincoln's decision. Despite the fact that the civil war came to a successful conclusion with Lincoln winning the war and the formal abolition of slavery, no one could stop racism in America. Sponsored by Jim Crow, a new set of discriminatory laws came into existence in the twentieth century in the south and hence African-Americans were forced to separate from the white race. The case is the same in the North where African-Americans were forcibly ghettoized by pushing them there by means of a discriminatory policy of housing

and limited work opportunities. This persistent racism has been explored by many writers in many great literary works.

Martin Luther King addresses this dilemma in many sermons and speeches and racism was the target of his activism. He was not alone in his fight. The forties of the twentieth century witnessed a huge activism by different groups for different reasons. This activism slowly grew to an uproar in the fifties and sixties when many protests and demonstrations began on marches on American streets against the discriminatory laws and the policy of segregation. Usually civil rights marches were confronted by American government with violence, resistance, jail, water cannons and police dogs. This is the period when Dr. King rose to prominence.

King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and his birthday is now celebrated as a national holiday in America. He has great oratory skills and his voice has magnificent amounts of power, passion, empathy, anger, sadness and above all hope. His speech, "I Have a Dream," (Davis, 1973) one of the finest literary pieces in English literature, falls into the category of engaged literature or human rights literature and it has a tremendous power on the minds and psyches of American people in particular and all people around the world. King delivered this famous speech on August 28, 1963 in front of hundreds of thousands of American people who fell into the street in the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of America. He successfully managed in his speech to cover a long span of time about two centuries of American history within only seventeen minutes. He prepared in advance a written speech because the radio and TV stations attended to broadcast the event but in the course of the speech, King became inspired and went off the written script. This speech is perhaps the most oft-quoted one in American literature and it becomes a symbol of all Civil Rights Movements. One very powerful statement from the speech reads: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (par.15).

King employs many literary techniques in his speech to drive home his ultimate message. Metaphor is a common figure of speech used by King. It is a powerful rhetorical device that sprinkles nearly every paragraph in "I Have a Dream." He commences his speech with a fascinating metaphor delineating the Emancipation Proclamation as a 'light of hope to millions of Negro slaves.' In the same sentence, slavery is described as 'searing in the flames of withering injustice,' and the abolition of slavery system as a 'joyous daybreak.' King is able to salt his speech with such gripping metaphors that make it grandiloquent. Racism is compared to 'jangling' connoting the horrible sound of prison's cuffs, manacles and the jailor's keys and discrimination in the state of Mississippi is portrayed as 'the heat of oppression.' King is a great master in

couching moving and powerful metaphors. He does so to be able to keep the audience under his spell. The audience has been mesmerized by his magic words and highly crafted style. As he wraps up his speech, he brings his extended metaphor of the Highs and the Lows into a perfect compromise and reconciliation. The highest points of geography must be leveled to be in parallel with the lowest points and the lowest points must be raised to parallel the highest points.

Moreover; he uses allusion in referring to values and beliefs of the Founding Fathers who came to America to establish a new kingdom of God in which all men are free and equal. Opening his speech, King refers to a very crucial moment in American history; that is the Emancipation Proclamation. This allusion helps him puts his address in the right perspective and a larger historical context: 'Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation.' The audience must have felt the apocalyptic effect and weight of that moment as if they were witnessing history again because this time in history was remarkable as it put an end to slavery and the unbearable suffering of the black people. By making this reference, King wants to emphasize the fact that there are still numerous obstacles towards totally liberating African-Americans and the fight to achieve civil rights will carry on.

Anaphora is a structural device used in a rhetorical way when King repeats the key statement, "I have a dream," with faith and resolution. Anaphora is the sequence of repeated words in several sentences so as to make rhetorical effects and highlight some points. At the beginning of the speech, King makes a repetition of the phrase 'one hundred years later' to convey the message that the life of African-Americans along this span of time since the Emancipation Proclamation has not greatly changed and progress in the civil rights has been made slow which is depressing and heartbreaking. In paragraph six, King reiterates the phrase 'Now is the time' in four consecutive sentences. The purpose of this repetition is to urgently stress the point that change has become a must and should be done right now. The audience becomes aware of the dire necessity and the urgency of change and consequently they should take action to effect the desired change. King states:

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children. (par. 6)

Towards the end of the speech, King employs anaphora to a great effect as he mentions the importance of faith in

the civil rights struggle. The use of this anaphora holds together the winding and long sentences and allows the audience to follow with care and passion:

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day (par. 18).

King's speech has been couched in parallel structures in which sentence patterns, combinations of words or grammatical structures are repeated in identical syntax. A good example is 'to work together, to pray together, to struggle together.' The grammatical pattern is the same, yet the words are different. One may argue that the whole speech has been structured on parallelism. In the closing paragraph, another parallel structure is used so as to give the audience a chance to reflect and think over the problem under consideration. Repetition hammers the audience's minds to be positively engaged with the speaker. King says: 'And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city....' In addition to sense devices, sound devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia and rhythm are skillfully used in King's speech. This speech turns out to be a piece of music for its musical quality. It is like a good poem. King employs these devices throughout his speech to make it more graceful and mesmerizing. Alliteration, assonance and consonance are employed in paragraph fourteen when King describes Mississippi as a 'state sweltering with racism.' The same devices are used again in many sentences. The driving force of the Civil Rights Movement is called 'marvelous new militancy,' and the constant oppression of the African-Americans is delineated as a 'sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent.' The use of sound devices especially alliteration enables the speaker to drive home his message in a smooth and gliding way. It is not only those figures of speech are employed effectively; geography is manipulated in such an amazing way so as to contribute to the total effect of the speech.

Geography plays a very crucial role in bringing home King's point. He talks about 'the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire,' 'the mighty mountains of New York,' 'the Heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania,' 'the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado,' 'the curvaceous slopes of California,' 'Stone Mountain Georgia,' 'Lookout Mountain of Tennessee,' and finally 'every hill and molehill of Mississippi.' By highlighting these different geographical places, King hopes that the bell of freedom may one day ring in every part in America. Moreover, many geographical parts in the United States of America are mentioned in the speech so as to capture the unity of

the country and to attract the attention of the audience that injustice and discrimination are not only a Southern problem but a country issue. King longs that freedom, justice and equality may overwhelm every corner and nook in America. This dream of justice, equality and freedom is not only the speaker's dream; it is rather the dream of the oppressed people in almost all States of America if not the world. The first specific mention begins when King refers to 'the Negro in Mississippi... and the Negro in New York' where these Negroes have not the right to vote and have no one to vote for. King urges his audience to deeply contemplate the misery and plight of the Black People in America and to take action to change the situation especially in the mentioned places: Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, and 'the slums and Ghettos of our Northern cities.' King dreams that the descendants of slaves and slave owners in Georgia will one day be equal and 'sit down together at the table of brotherhood,' the State of Mississippi can be changed into an 'oasis of freedom and justice' and that the State of Alabama with 'vicious racists' might be transformed into a healthy place where white and black children can 'join hands' and play together.

"I Have a Dream" came at a time when American people had segregated drinking cafes, restaurants, schools, hotels and transportation. Despite the fact that this speech was a natural and logical extension to the progressive march and struggle of American people towards realizing human rights since the American Revolution, writing its constitution, President Lincoln's campaign of abolishing slavery and fighting racism and various civil rights movements; King's speech for Americans was like a thunderbolt or a futuristic bombshell. It reinterprets American history raising many serious questions: where is the promised liberty and dignity for African-Americans? Why does a disparity exist between written laws and practice? Why do African-Americans endure humiliation and suffer indignity and discrimination?

Martin Luther King vehemently voices his dream of a world free of racism which is essentially the American Dream knowing that fulfilling such a dream is not a matter of chance but a hazardous course of constant struggle and collective action. Talking about dreams usually tends to be hideously monotonous but in King's case it is totally different due to his mastery of literary language. The listener to King's speech articulating his dream has no way but to end up being absorbed, impassioned, roused and moved to action. King essentially calls for an end to legal segregation between Blacks and Whites. This goal was attained with the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 which outlaw segregation. This speech is a highly literary crafted one that has a titanic power in mobilizing people to action even today.

On the occasion of a great protest in American history, designated as 'March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,' whose main goal was to pressurize the

Washington Administration to pay more attention to civil rights and to take legal action to end segregation and discrimination, King fired the passion and zeal of the audience with his worldwide famous speech, "I Have a Dream." King begins his speech by reminding the attendance that despite the fact that slavery ended one hundred years ago, yet African-Americans are still persecuted and oppressed. The whole situation concerning human rights is shameful as King himself affirms it, 'We've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.' He describes the subhuman treatment of African-Americans by means of a check metaphor to highlight the fact that there is a wide gap between what is written in the constitution and laws regarding civil rights and what is practiced in reality. These laws are dysfunctional and useless just like a defaulted check or a check that bounces. He moves on to the crux of the problem arguing that: 'There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights.'

The message of "I Have a Dream" is clear: African-Americans are not going to stop civil rights movements and public mobilization unless total equality, freedom and all human rights are conferred upon them. He encourages people who were attacked or harassed by police or went to jail because of their participation in protests and demonstrations for their rights. He urges them not to walk alone but to sprint together. He tells them to make use of the pain of their imprisonment and the brutality of the police and to turn this suffering into creative anger. He estimates that 'unearned suffering is redemptive.' He takes this idea from Christianity as he was himself a devoted Christian. Christians believe that the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross was to redeem humanity from sin. King prompts his followers to go back to Southern States and continue their peaceful struggle in the dragon's den. He stresses that 1963 is the beginning not the end of the struggle and fight for freedom and civil rights. He portrays the Civil Rights Movements as 'the whirlwinds of revolt...shaking the foundations of our nation.' This is exactly the statement that terribly frightened the government. King, however, clarifies that their struggle will be peaceful imploring his audience to fight hatred and violence with love and peace. He calls upon the White people who attended the protest as 'white brothers' to protect civil rights movements as their own shared asset as well as their own shared destiny. King elaborates on the goals of the movement which are a propelling force to successful protests and public awareness. Some of such goals are stopping discrimination in hotels, transportation, housing, outlawing segregation, ending racist police brutality, and protecting voting rights for African-Americans. That was his dream and the dream of millions of people.

The dream section in King's speech comprises of six points; based on the words of the Declaration of Independence: 'all men are created equal.' The first point is that the sons of former slave-owners and the sons of former slaves might sit down at 'the table of brotherhood,' the second point is that the state of Mississippi will become an 'oasis of justice and freedom,' the third one is that people will be judged on the content of their character not on their skin color, the fourth issue is that the state of Alabama will declare the end of segregation in the public sector and finally the Lord will be revealed in glory and establish freedom and justice on earth. The next six consecutive paragraphs center around one theme: the vision of a utopian society characterized by equality, brotherhood and freedom for all; a vision of racial unity intertwined with coexistence and tolerance.

King closes off his speech by quoting two powerful and moving songs; 'America the Beautiful' refraining on the gripping phrase 'let freedom ring.' The second song is the African-American spiritual, 'Free At Last' wrapping up this historical and epic speech. King's "I Have a Dream" did not close the door towards improving freedom and civil rights in 1963, rather it leaves it open for a continual journey of racial development and social progress. Thus engaged literature has a tremendous power in transforming societies in a positive way and men of letters have a great responsibility to shoulder in fighting social evils and wrongs, disseminating public awareness, improving society's wellbeing and contributing in the development process.

CONCLUSION

This paper makes a contribution by highlighting the intricacies of literary discourse in promoting human rights. It shows how literature as a force in society is capable of influencing people to take good and positive action exemplified, here, in the promotion of human rights. The role of literary discourse in spreading public awareness and in bringing issues of human rights to the limelight is skeletal and pivotal in causing development in all walks of life.

Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream" did mesmerize American people at the time of its deliverance and still holds people around the world under its spell due to its magical literary style. Its impact was immediate when the American administration started to enact laws that end segregation and discrimination.

It turns out that literary discourse, when used effectively, has an immense power and influence on the minds and psyches of people. It also contributes to creating free, equal and democratic civil society through promoting and enhancing human rights values. An equal and democratic society is capable to thrive and develop

through carrying out its responsibilities and duties in a perfect and harmonious way.

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