

Satirical Novel

Satire is a literary art of diminishing or derogating someone by making it ridiculous. In fact, it is a technique employed by writers to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or society by using humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule. It differs from comic in the sense that the sole aim of comedy is to evoke laughter; while the aim of satire is to ridicule. Satire occurs in many forms: there are satirical novels, poems, essays, satirical films, shows, cartoons, etc. Though humour is always present in satire, it uses laughter as a weapon. In other words, most satires are humorous, ironic, and exaggerated, but they only have to be one of these things to be called as satire:

1. It makes fun of a person, idea, or institution
2. Its purpose is not just to entertain, but also to inform or make people think.

Satire is an entertaining form of social commentary. Many people cannot openly comment on the injustices and problems in their society. Hence comedy becomes an easy alternative to express their dissent or criticism on a particular issue. By laughing at something, we can acknowledge its reality. For example, Ben Johnson's *Volpone* is a satire on the type of person whose cleverness or stupidity is put at the service of his greed. In the play *The Dead Departure*, the playwright satirises the age-old traditions and rituals regarding death and death rites in Hindu religion.

Principal aim of Satire is to correct human vices and follies rather than the individual. It limits its ridicule to rectified faults and excludes those for which a person is not responsible. For example, Alexander Pope remarks about the value of satire, "those who are ashamed of nothing else are so of being ridiculous." Jonathan Swift in his "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" says:

Yet malice never was his aim
He lashed the vice, but spared the name...
His satire points at no defect,

But what all mortals may correct...

The novels which use satire to expose the follies of an individual, or a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation, or even the entire human race are called satirical novels. The satirical novels get people's attention to social issues when they might otherwise ignore them. For example, in the novel *Animal Farm* George Orwell satirises totalitarian government developed under Stalin. The plot ridicules the way the Soviet government perverted the original principles of communism. For example, the animals begin with the basic belief that "All animals are equal." But towards the end of the book, they change the slogan as: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal."

Many a times within many novels whose entire mode is not satiric, the scope of satire is limited. It occurs in a certain character or situation, or in a passage comprising ironical commentary or some human aspect or contemporary conditions of a society. While in some novels the chief aim of satire attempts to diminish an entity by ridicule. For example, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* satirises the idea of slavery, human nature, and many other issues. Likewise Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* relentlessly satirises politics, religion and Western culture.

Types of Satire:

a) Formal / Direct Satire: In this kind of satire the persona speaks in the first person. The "I" may address either the reader or a character within the work itself. The aim is to elicit and add credibility to the satiric speaker's comments. The formal satire is of two types and they are taken after the great Roman satirists – Horace and Juvenal. **Horatian satire** is amusing and witty and the speaker gently ridicules human follies. Its primary goal is to entertain readers and offer them useful insights into their own behaviour. Generally it is not written to bring about a social change. For example, Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* gently mocks the English upper class for its vanity and dim-wittedness. While **Juvenal satire** is contemptuous and being a serious moralist, the Juvenal satirist

attacks the vice and errors to expose hypocrisy and moral misbehaviour. For example, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* seriously ridicules Russian Communist government for its lack of equality.

b) Indirect Satire: In indirect satire the object of the satire are characters who make themselves and their opinions ridiculous or obnoxious by what they think, say, and do. Sometimes they are made more ridiculous by the author's comments and narrative style.

Example of Satirical Novels in English:

- Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*: Satire on prominent vices and corruptions in England of his time.
- George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: A satire on politicians, specifically their rhetoric, ability to manipulate others and their insatiable lust for power.
- Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* : Satire on the hypocrisy of the knight-errant.
- Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: Satire on love, class and the women's position in eighteenth century England.

