

The Role of Soft Skills in Literature: Addressing Challenges of the 21st Century

¹**Tanveer Gulab**

Research Scholar, PG Department of English & Research Centre. Yeshwant Mahavidyalaya, Nanded.

²**Dr. L.V. Padmarani Rao**

Research Supervisor, Professor and Head, PG Department of Research Yeshwant Mahavidyalaya, Nanded.

Article Received: 21/11/2025

Article Accepted: 22/12/2025

Published Online: 23/12/2025

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.12.363

Abstract:

Human being usually has considered as the wisest animal on the Earth but sometimes 'the wise human' can also cause greater harm if used unwisely. Thus the life cannot be one sided, even if human beings are on the path of progress they must not cross the natural limits and should work under the domain of moral barriers. As the globe is asymmetrically progressing with rapid pace, evolution and modification in the technology becomes the cake walk for this 21st century. The world has witnessed rapid growth and sharp use of human mind, with all these limitless progress and tie-oriented path of prosperity or morality, human minds need to balance.

But as a human being which is the most dynamic, aggressive and wise-minded specie on the Earth has versatile mindset, sudden change, behavior change, emotions and change in the feelings can also be seen in a short span of time. Thus as a moral guide there must be something that can led human to understand their role in all possible ways. Thus, this paper tries to understand the soft skills driven literature, and 21st century's issues and their possible solutions, what to derive and learn.

Keywords: 21st Century Issues, Soft Skills, Human-centered development, Morality vs Prosperity, Moral guide

Introduction:

Society, culture and region are very diverse in nature. Each of them has their own characteristics. All these are dynamic, evolving and changes with time. As a human being while surviving in the society human interact with different, diverse and multiple situations it could be good or bad, best or worst. Thus the role of human is not static but very dynamic in

nature. At present in the 21st century **technology, climate change, social reality, Artificial Intelligence-driven world (AI-driven world), and Environment** became the major area of concern. And at the center of all these 21st century's major area of concerns, the human or the individual has become cornerstone.

Here the technology has very wider meaning from individual's everyday useful machines to the machines present in the factories etc. can come under this domain of technology such as from calculator, electric devices to plants handling/operating machine etc. On the other hand climate change is one of the striking areas of concerns that the 21st century is suffering the most. From the degradation of the soil on the Earth's surface to the Ozone hole in the Stratosphere region has adversely impacted human life, this is those area of concerns where the human eye has already reached and worked upon, still there are possibilities that in the core of the Earth or outside of the galaxy of Akash Ganga (Milky Way) something wrong might be going on. Thus climate change has wider impact on all forms of life, as to bring this life-souring change on this planet, human was the most responsible species that this Planet Earth had. Thus its outcomes can be seen in positive connotations such as CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), Carbon Emission Certificates, Environmental stewardship, Green Transition, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Net Zero Emissions, Climate Adaptation program etc.

Social reality shows how individual life has grappled in the hate-culture, honor-killing, abuse against women, LGBTQ community issues, gap in communication, mental health issues, miscommunication, politics, crimes and violence which is going on in the society. Thus society is also facing the striking issues where the need of the time is to think about them, understand them comprehensively and respond effectively to sustain and nurture human life. With it AI-driven world, the life is also facing structural, complex issues, in which human mind is creating the technology, innovating it, but at the same time depending on it heavily. The suicidal aspect of it can kill human creativity. As every human, each day, gets positive energy to do something creative like the way the Earth receives the fresh sunlight every single day. And hence this every day's creative energy of human has been killed heavily by the AI driven life. And thus positive balance is required the way Buddha's *Madhyam Marg (Theory of Middle Path)* shows the middle path without being extreme on any of the side. Furthermore at who's center, the life exists, is the environment which has to be addressed. As the rush-driven busy life has led human to be a little careless about the health and work more. This tendency has brought social isolation, separation from culture and mental issues. Environmental issues might look broader, static and limited to a specific area or the field but in reality environment is actually the life of human and their surrounding as from our breathing to peaceful sleep at night has deeply depend on the environment.

Thus, as a human being, a unique species on this planet, cannot survive while neglecting any of these issues. All of them have deeper impacts on life of all forms either

animal, insects or microorganisms etc. no one can stay without facing the cruel side of these issue without any proper solution. And thus here the role of soft skills driven literature comes, as each literary piece gives deeper understanding of human behavior and the behavior of human is directly linked with soft skills. Thus soft skills are the efficient device to strengthen the efforts, put life in the actions, brings thought in reality, changes and transform the minds, nature and lives of individuals. And they can address all these issues with unity, considering all the aspects and possibilities. Thus soft skills backup by literature can efficiently become supportive, progressive guide for human actions.

Role of Soft Skills in Literature:

The role of soft skills in literature is broader and based on understanding, presentation skills of the author. As the intension of the author can vary on different grounds such as society, culture, region etc. with different purposes. And despite all of these varieties w.r.t. literary work one might feel soft skills might vary. But that is not the reality actually as soft skills are behavior driven, personal qualities and the world as well as human also recognizes the difference between good and bad hence the moral dilemma fades away. Hence the role of soft skills in the literature is wider and comprehensive hence learning of soft skills from literature brings energy and greater outcomes.

As soft skills are personal qualities and attributes one might have or can be developed and learnt. Soft skills are personal traits one might shows while behaving in the society. They are related to intra-behavior of human. They can be learnt, improved and with time one can easily achieve expertise in it. Soft skills are different from hard skills as soft skills are:

- Non-technical
- Behavior oriented
- No time boundary to learn them
- They are neutral as anyone can acquire them
- They are qualitative
- They are job oriented as they help to get the job and sustain it
- They can be best practiced in the society
- They depends on person to person
- The depth of soft skills learning, its understanding varies from person to person
- They are soft in nature
- At a time more than one soft skills can be acquire
- They are evolving in nature
- With time soft skills can change w.r.t. its wider interpretation
- They are dynamic in nature
- There are several soft skills such as communication skills, Emotional intelligence skills, personality development skills, teamwork, time management skills etc.
- At any age, in any profession by anyone soft skills can be learned.

Thus it is clear that soft skills are wider and broader in nature and open to interpretation. And they are different from hard skills as the nature, purpose and area of application of soft skills varies. Hard skills are technical, profession oriented, goal-specific and can be learnt in a specific environment such as computer course to handle Accounts related jobs etc.

As there are many soft skills some of the most important are Communication skills, Leadership skills, Emotional Intelligence skills, Confidence Building skills, Personality Development skills, Teamwork, Time Management skills, Conflict resolution skills etc. all of them help at individual level and in public life as well. The learning and inculcation of soft skills can vary but to make the learning and inculcation of soft skills more practical, easier and long lasting it is essential to have some of the best methods or tools. And here comes the role of literature, as literature gives imaginative visual experience and hence learning becomes more engaging and impactful. Literature is considered as 'the criticism of life' and soft skills are related to life and human behavior. Hence learning of soft skills can actually provide more fruitful grounds to make the learning and understanding more engaging, interesting and impactful.

Moreover the concept 'soft skills driven literature' highlights the learning of soft skills from literature. Understanding how characters have played and performed the roles, how they behaved in certain situations, what made them realize their issues and problems at their ends.

As literature contains any artistic or literary piece, which can be divided into different genres such as novel, poetry, drama etc. It can be a mix of reality and imagination or it can be non-fictional or imaginative. And hence one easily derives soft skills from the literary piece such as by the poem *The Road Not Taken (1915)* by Robert Frost actually presents leadership qualities and shows the way to develop it, similarly:

- Emotional Intelligence skills can be learnt via *My Financial Career (1910)*, a short story written by Stephen Leacock.
- Personality Development skills can be learnt via *The Beggar (1887)*, a short story, written by Anton Chekov.
- Stress Management can be learnt via Mahesh Dattani's play *Final Solutions (2005)*.
- Communication skills can be understood and learnt via Jane Austen's well known novel, *Pride and Prejudice (1813)*.

Thus this paper tries to examine the role of soft skills driven literature in addressing the 21st century's issues and contributing in finding the possible solutions, further it also highlights what are the key learnings one should derive and learn to make life more safer, peaceful and progressive across existence.

The 21st Century's Striking Issues:

The 21st century has marked the most significant development in all spheres of life. The world before 21st century is the world of continuity, needs-based innovations, workers-

supportive technological progress, growth and understanding based relations, human development oriented urban development, people-cum-growth centric networking across the globe, students centric learning oriented institutions, sustainable peace and prosperity oriented national growth, communal harmony and prosperous religious ties. But the world after 21st century marked the rapid, unhealthy, imbalanced growth across the spheres.

The century witnessed the broken and hate oriented isolated world in continuity for the sake of name; the needs based innovation replaced by profit based innovative models; the technological progress has replaced human labor and mechanized world becoming the reality; relations were founded on the basis of monetary gains, societal expectations; urban areas turned into business model of metros and perfect imbalance becomes visible in the standards of living; individual profit centric networking became the worldwide phenomenon; values driven educational institutions became economic and psychological burden for aspirants; the nations which were initially people centric became the head centric and started walking towards unhealthy benefits, propaganda oriented; peace, progress and prosperity became the individual term remain person centric by removing societal connotations which were initially attached to it; communal harmony turned into communal violence due to the benefits of a few; religious coexistence turned into religious threats and degradation.

And the century which called 'global village' after globalization turned into fragmented, imbalanced, violence driven and fake culture oriented world. The global community tried to show their support against wrong doers but got submerged under the fragmented piece of voice of commons. And the individual at any corner of the world became more isolated, suspicious and narrow minded in some aspects. After the home, an individual learned about the world either in the school or in the society and became the wise human or a potential resource for the society but in the 21st century the same individual is becoming the resource of own profit and the product of destruction for the society and hence this social stratification of home, school, society or broadly culture hotspot needs be revive again.

Prosperity cannot be the individual connotation it belongs to social group, it highlights social nature it review societal values it uses natural resources and hence its benefits cannot restricted to one human. And hence the cognitive understanding of societal prosperity is wholesome in nature and broad. And from here the change starts at individual pace. Here's the role of literature especially w.r.t. soft skills come in reality. As 'literature is the mirror of the society', it's 'a criticism of life'. And hence understanding about human actions and their role is significant via literature. As in the domain of literature, the soft skills work as cornerstone of change, transformation and the agent of positive attitude. As soft skills reinforces positive attitude and the understanding of human behavior. Soft skills such as communication skills, personality development, emotional intelligence, team-spirited work culture etc. hence from different angles the wider area soft skills can cover. And thus to effectively handle the 21st century's issues literature can bring new energy.

Role of Literature along with soft skills in addressing 21st Century's issues:

It is said that 'unity is in diversity', 'united we rise, divided we fall', these connotations actually fits for literature too, as one of the purpose of literature is to make people united; let them aware about common issue that were going in the society. Apart from these all literature can also shows the transformation in the society, it makes people to imagine the future consequences too, and in general in enhances language skills as well. As if anything happens in the society people raise their voice they use slogans, mottos and catchy lines and all these are the part of literature. Thus there is no doubt to say that literature can create wider impacts, it unites people on common grounds. To address 21st century's challenges the role of soft skills broadly in literature can be seen as

- Nowadays people gathering together to raise their voice against **climate change** and **environmental degradation** here using literature as a device one can make visual presentations and show how this issue can be addressed. Here good communication skills one can learn from characters, one can understand how characters convey their points to others. The literary work of **William Shakespeare i.e. the poem *Lines Written in Early Spring*** shows responsibility, environmental awareness, sustainable living, ecological consciousness and protection of nature, all these highlights how literature can make people aware about their actions.
- Even literature stands firm on the grounds of human values and morality and the soft skills such as **emotional intelligence** tries to balance between the human values and morality. In *My financial Career* written by **Stephen Leacock** and, one can understand the man who visited the bank to deposit his money, encounters with his own hesitance and unable to accomplish his task otherwise as a moral duty many people led it possible for him to finish his task in the bank.
- Literature teaches character development via different scenes of characters, lines of the poem and via various situations that is what the soft skills – **Personality development** occur. In reality also individuals learn from their mistakes but if they start reading the literature of watching audio-visual short clips of certain behavior, that has greater impact on individuals and they will remember the situation and actions of the characters and in real life they avoid such issues. Even the issues revolving in **Artificial Intelligence** can be solved via these skills. Thus soft skills are one of the best devices to learn the life skills in reality via literature.
- **Communication skills** i.e. the part of soft skills has wider representation across the field. Communication skills are the backbone of human understanding, culture and growth. Hence literature can provide the better understanding via characters such as in *Pride And Prejudice*, **Elizabeth Bennet**, protagonist of the novel, in the first meeting, considers Darcy, the male protagonist of the novel, as proud, wealthy, arrogant man, and they misunderstood each other, throughout the novel due to lack of communication and misunderstanding the hate, problem between them increases.

Later towards the end of the novel Darcy communicates via letters and resolves the issue between them this shows the gap in communication can leads to greater misunderstanding, suffering and hate, thus the effective communication is required, to resolve the issues in life and it also shows social reality.

- Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change, Environment, Social Reality, and Technology all these are very significant and are need of the time, but human being with their wisest brains started exploiting these life savior innovations but unfortunately all are became threat to human life. Sometimes one cannot teach and preach others by words but actions becomes louder and hence with the help of literature, short slips of important scenes or impactful lines can create the difference hence one can curtail this nuance via literature and soft skills.

Thus one can stand against wrong that is going across the globe. In a simple place one can understand the role of soft skills via literature in addressing 21st century's issues, such as:

The 21 st century's issues	Soft Skills & Literary Work	Addressing devices	Practical Work
Artificial Intelligence	Personality Development via <i>The Beggar</i> by Anton Chekhov	Human value, Ethical thinking, personality development by character's study, moral responsibility	→At laboratory one can of consequences; →Impactful lines from li →A short course for pra developers in their field.
Environment	Sensitivity, emotional Intelligence via <i>Lines Written in Early Spring</i> by William Shakespeare.	Environmental Awareness, responsibility, and harmony with nature	→ Poster presentation; → Use of social media; →Short slips on such literature by students institutions
Climate Change	Leadership Skills via <i>The Road Not Taken</i> by Robert Frost	Sustainable living, Dare to take the stands, faith in decisions, ecological consciousness and protection of nature	→ Power point, presentat → Grass root level collab executive branches of go → Street plays by stud collaboration with head heads and district heads
Social Reality	Communication Skills via <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen	Effective communication, Reduction in hate, attentive listening, Use of different medium of communication	→Respect to others opin level, at workplace; →Feeling of everyone heard; →Shows short misunderstanding in no etc.

Technology	Emotional Intelligence via <i>My financial Career</i> written by Stephen Leacock	Right use of technology, Common benefits oriented use of technology, human control over machines	→Show access to techn right use is moral respon via poster presentations; →Use of adds by aut different social media increase awareness
-------------------	---	---	--

Fig1: Role of soft skills via literature in addressing 21st century's issues

Thus 21st century's issues are wider in nature, have wider consequences still one can resolve them by showing unity, integrity and common intensions by all, at different level hence learning can become easy via literature as it has visual backup ones anyone reads it, greater memory retention, and deeper understanding. Thus in addressing the 21st century's issues literature can become one of the best device.

And turn it into one of the biggest achievement cooperation of all at all level in all spheres is required, it could be executive branch of the government or the institutions or legislative branch, or the different institutions working at various level. As it said 'one hand demands support of others, one society attracts others, others can attract the globe and the entire globe makes the universe sustainable living object.

Reference:

- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Penguin Classics, 2002.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by B. Mangalam, Worldview Publications, 1999.
- Baron, Naomi S. "Redefining Reading: The Impact of Digital Communication Media." *PMLA*, vol. 128, no. 1, Jan. 2013, pp. 193-200.
- Chavan, S. N., and L. V. Padmarani Rao. "Themes of Mahesh Dattani." *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, vol. 2, no. 10, 2015.
- Chekhov, Anton. "The Beggar." *The Beggar and Other Stories of Anton Chekhov*, edited by Jerome Irving Rodale, Story Classics, 1949.
- Dattani, Mahesh. *Final Solutions: A Stage Play*. Penguin, 2013.
- Frost, Robert. "The Road Not Taken." *The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems*, edited by Edward Connery Lathem, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969, pp. 105-106.
- Hall, Edward T. *The Silent Language*. Fawcett, 1959. (A classic study on non-verbal communication and cultural contexts).
- Homans, George C. "Social Behaviour as Exchange." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.

-
- 63, no. 6, May 1958, pp. 597–606. (Foundational for Social Exchange Theory in communication).
- Leacock, Stephen. "My Financial Career." *My Financial Career and Other Follies*, McClelland & Stewart, 2010.
- Rao, L. V. Padmarani. "Ancient Indian Classics: A Perennial Source of Soft Skills to the Students of Indian Universities." *International Journal of Applied Management and Humanities*, 29 Sept. 2017.
- Rao, L. V. Padmarani. "National Educational Policies in India." *Sumedha Journal of Management*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2022, pp. 56-62.
- "Soft skills." *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 9th ed., Oxford UP, 2015.
- "Soft Skills." *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Oxford
- Wordsworth, William. "Lines Written in Early Spring." *Lyrical Ballads*, edited by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Anonymous, J. & A. Arch, 1798, pp. 60-61.
- Wallace-Wells, David. *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. Tim Duggan Books, 2019.