The Role of Comparative Literature in World Peace

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This paper aims to demonstrate how comparative literature can contribute towards world co-existence and peace. Ferdinand Brunetiere (1849-1906), a member of the French Academy of Science, says,” We cannot know ourselves if we know only ourselves.” This statement enumerates the very essence of the discipline of Comparative Literature. Since its inception at the end of the 19th century in France, the definition of comparative literature has evolved; however, its basic definition has been preserved. Despite the fact that this academic discipline has been misunderstood in many countries including Iran, the tem “comparison” is not the aim of this discipline but only a means. In other words, the comparison of different national literatures opens a new window for us to know other literatures and cultures. The fundamental function of comparison is not “to compare” but to have a deeper and better “understanding” of the other. Understanding always leads to friendship, respect and tolerance among different nations and cultures. This is why many scholars believe that comparatists are, in fact, cultural ambassadors of the United Nations. In its traditional context, comparative literature focuses on the commonalities of humanities throughout the world. Undoubtedly, differences also exist among different cultures. However, comparative literature is a discipline of tolerance and respect. Unfortunately, the Iranian higher education policy makers have so far ignored the cultural importance of this discipline and there is no such department in our universities to this date. The promulgation and establishment of this academic discipline in the Iranian universities can further reinforce the peace-seeking nature of the Islamic culture of Iran. In today’s world, more than any other time in the past, human beings need intellectual open-mindedness and mutual interactions. This is the task of Comparative Literature.

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