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Importance of Letter Writing

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Abstract

A letter reveals the personality and character of its writer to a great extent that's why letters of great writers and poets have acquired prime importance in the commonwealth of letters. With the help of these letters one can probe into the personal and private life of the writer. These letters help us in writing biographies of great poets, scholars or literary persons.

Keywords: *Letter writing, Literature, Urdu*

Introduction

This fact can not be denied that literature and life are two such essentials that in the absence of one the other can not be considered complete. With the passage of life peoples literary tastes do change and Urdu literature is also is in favor of this change. Previous literary forms are replaced by new literary forms and letter writing is among those forms which gained fame and popularity. According to Shams Ur Rehman:

> *"The new literary sun is in its early phase of rising. But it is difficult to say that by the time it's about to set how much it would add to the Urdu literature"*[1]

Letter writing can be started among friends and relatives with whom you can share secrets without hesitation .Some times one discloses their intentions and future plans either to please their friends or to win their confidence and in this way the circle of friends keeps an expanding and some time strangers also become a part of this circle.

Letter to some extent is a very reliable way of understanding ones real love and sincerity towards literature and for this fact many literary persons shows interest in form of literature. It brings different facets of life to the surface because it doesn't have formalities like other forms .Basically it is the best way of expressing one's personal feelings and the reason being that it is more natural, simple and to the point. The purpose of writing a letter is to express your inner self without any hesitation and especially writing all that which you can not tell your reader face to face. Ghulam Rasool Maher says:

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> *"Letters are short and precise forms of writing .It does not put burden on the mind of its reader, rather it adds to the knowledge of its reader."*[2]

Letter writing is one of an extraordinary and remarkable success in the history of mankind .In the beginning it was limited to ones personal communication but later it became one of the very soft and vast form of arts Man is basically in need of such a form of writing which is soft and vast in its vocabulary and gratifying in substance and style.

Literary Importance

It is important that letter writing must have all those qualities which can be regarded necessary for any piece of writing. Keeping in view the literary importance of letters professor Khaleek Anjum expressed his view in these words:

> *"For a high quality letter, it is necessary that no matter how personal the topic of letter is, the writer should write with depth, interest, colors and flexibility, so that the reader can easily affiliate himself with it. It must be for all times and must not be regarded important because of its extraordinary themes but also because of its vigorous expression."*[3]

Letters are still read and liked by many readers because of its shortness and simplicity as compared to the other forms of prose like Novel and stories. In fact, some historical names are still known because of their letters for example the wives of *Awadh*. Similarly, Ghalib is also popular in Urdu literature because of his letters. For instance, Halli syas:

> *"As far as we can see Mirza Ghalib's popularity in India is due to the Publication of Urdu prose not due to Urdu poetry, Persian poetry and prose."*[4]

Whatever the literary standard of letter – good or bad, written by any intellectual or by any ordinary man, by any writer or poet or by any politician, having literary flavor or not – but its importance will remain forever. One of the prominent features of intellectuals' letters is that it has an ample storage of literary vocabulary in it .when ever an anthology of prominent writer is published it further heighten the place of its writer among his contemporaries. According to Mehdi Afadi:

> *"Letter is that component of literature which is not written for the purpose of publication and the writer is*

> *mostly unaware as to whether or not his letter will be published."*[5]

Biographical importance

Letters are the best source of getting first hand knowledge of writers' personal life, his family, his thinking, his ideas, his character and his personality. There are writers like Shibli and Ghalib who are still alive in urdu literature because of their letters. If Shibli's letters to Attiya Fazi had wasted, nobody would have known that the writer of book like Al-Farooq and *Seerat-un-Nabi*, has a heart full of emotions. Shibli in one of his letters has expressed his wish of teaching Persian to Attiya:

> *"So many times I really wish to teach you Persian language and poetry in such a way that you learn each and every word of it. But it is not possible because you cannot step-down from the skies and I cannot reach the height. But I am still hopeful that one day I might be to get rid of Nidwa's conflicts."*[6]

Through letters one can learn a lot about the personal and emotional life of a writer we can also learn about the time period in which the letters were written such letters are a great asset in literature. Letters expose different facets of one's personality:

> *"Artist's life is exposed in his letter more justly than in any other Form of literature. Letters are just like a mirror and x-ray they expose the inner feelings, emotions and expressions of the artist."*[7]

Letters can express any event of life very beautifully. Letters are of great help to those who are biography writers. The artist's personal life, his family relation, his values and ideas are fully exposed in his letters which help those who plan to write a biography of that artist or writer .In the words of Maulvi Abdul Haq:

> *"There is no other way except letter through which we know the Nature of any personality in a more accurate way. The letter writer while writing sometimes starts talking to himself. During this course of monologue he opens his heart on a piece of Paper and if the heart is full of Pain for humanity one can well imagine what would be the choice of words and vocabulary by the Writer to open up his heart."*[8]

The letters of wise people also help us to know about their life otherwise the story of past is not interesting at all For example the collection of letters of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad "Ghubr-e-Khatir'' has truly uncovered his experiences of political life , his personal life, etiquettes and his married life also.

The study of Urdu literature shows that letters of poets and writers help us know their personality Ghalib, Iqbal, Abul Kalam Azad and Shibli came to the forefront in detail. If their letters had not been published, their lives would have been out of our sight

> *"Those who write private letters their personalities come In front without any veil .Through these letters the personal Effect, qualities and his psychology could be studied in a Better way."*[9]

Historical Importance

Letters of all writers helped the historian as well as these letters also referred to historical events of that time .Some of the letters contain a lot of historical material. The letters of Ghalib for example maintain about 1857 freedom fight in detail .Those events which historians avoided to mention are also written in these letters .We also come to know about the history which was once a reality but now can be read in the books of history only .We also need to study these personal letters and diaries to know about the reaction of the people who were responsible for these events .we can find the expressions and views of those people in the diary of Mir Taqi Mir frequently. The deserted condition of Delhi after 1857 war, the financial problems of Taimur family and atrocities of British imperialism have been described in an effective way by Mirza Ghalib. This description also proves that the author was equally affected by these events. These authors could not raise voice against the British openly but they expressed their deep concern over the prevailing situation in their letters. Ghalib in one of his letter says:

> *"My dear, this is not that Delhi where you were born. This is not that Delhi where you got education and used to come to me for guidance in my home. This is not that Delhi where I have been living far fifty one years It is a camp now. The sons of the deposed king are also living here and they get RS.5 per month as a financial support from the British."*[10]

This letter reflects a direct dialogue between the two persons. The after effects of 1857 war are evident from this letter. This letter reflects not only the unique style of writing of Ghalib but also a historical document.

People were in miserable condition due to cruelties of the British army .the plundering of the conquerors and scenes of heinous crimes were seen by the people. Such literary letters make historical event as a part of the history which we can not deny. In this way letters prove to be very useful in order to correct the events of history .We can also compile political and social history with the help of these letters. We can obtain very useful material from the private letters of rulers and businessmen. These letters narrate those events which are ignored or not mentioned due to diplomatic reasons. Abul Kalam Azad and Husrat Mohani were imprisoned during the reign of British imperialism. They described the events of their miserable life in prison in their letters.

> *"The private and literary letters put light on the writings letters of the poet and the publication of high ranking of the poets is good from literary point of view."*[11]

We can not deny this fact that expression of thought and communication is the natural need of human society. If we look at the struggle of mutual expression as a permanent feature we can know the step by step progress of the human intelligence. In the beginning human being used sound and signals for communication. Then he progressed towards the formation of the figures and at last letters or alphabets were introduced. This development gave rise to different languages in the world. In course of time, Islamic civilization developed the art of calligraphy and no one was considered to be perfect in his field of literature and art of calligraphy.

The style of letter writing also changes with the passage of time However, simplicity, conciseness and well organized letters are considered to be a standard for a literary taste. Thus we can say that letter writing is also an important part of Urdu literature.

Notes

[1] Shamsur Rahman B.A , *Urdu Khatoot*, (Delhi: Book World Limited), p. 7
[2] Ghulam Rasool Maher, *Noquoosh Makateeb*, (Lahore: Eadara –e- farogh urdu, 1967), p. 131
[3] Khaleek Anjum, *Khatoot-e-Ghalib*, (Dehli: Ghalib institute, 1993), p. 129
[4] Altaf Hussan Halli, *Yadgar-e-Ghalib* (Lahore: Khazina Elim –o-Adab, 2002), p. 175
[5] Mrs. Mehdi Aafidi, *Makateeb Mehdi*, (Lakhnu: Urdu Academy, 1982), p. 185
[6] Hamid Hassan Quadri, *Dastan tareegh*, (Karachi: Urdu Academy, 1966), p. 75
[7] Muhammad Islam, *Jiger Ke Khatoot*, (Lakhnu Nizami Press, 1965), p.11
[8] Aal Ahmad Server, *Tanqueedi Eshare*, (Lahore Urdu Markez, 1964), p. 63
[9] Ram Lal, *Harf –e- Shereen*, (Delhi Media International, 1991), p. 21
[10] Khaleek Anjum, op.cit., p. 122
[11] Rafi-ud-Din Hashmi, *Khatoot-e-Iqbal*, (Lahore: Maktaba Khayaban Adab, 1975), p. 5