

# **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ART OF LETTER- WRITING IN THE ART OF NOVEL WRITING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JANE AUSTEN’S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE**

*Dr. T.S. Tamil Selvi,*

*Head Dept. Of English,P.M. Thevar College,*

*Vsilampatti,*

*Tamilnadu*

## ***Introduction***

A few centuries ago, letter-writing was the only means of communication of people who live in far away places and different countries. If we look into the ancient history of literature, letter-writing plays a major role in communicating people. Although diary writing is another mode of expression one’s experiences, it is not for communication. Diary is about self and it is a record of the important events that took place in the life of an individual.

Letter-writing varies in its kind. There are personal letter, official letter and business letter. These letters express different matters ,experience, needs and aim of life. The pattern or the method of writing too differs from one type of letter to another type of letter. Personal letter is written to the known person in an informal manner whereas the official and business letters are more formal. They are written to the people who are not known or who are officially known. Whatever the letter is, Letter-writing is a part of literature. It requires a command over language and fluency in it. A good letter comes out of one’s good language and writing skills.

A language is used for communication. It can be divided into two parts such as spoken language and written language. Spoken language may be colloquial; it is just for communication. Knowledge and perfect grammar are not necessary for the spoken language as the body language conveys more informations to the listeners. whereas perfect grammar is necessary for a written language. Thus a writer whether he writes a letter, diary, essay or novel must have a perfect knowledge in a language. A writer reveals not only what is in his heart and mind but also what others have in their heart and mind. Stalin Joseph (1879-1953) says, "Writers are the engineers of human souls".

Spoken language can be used in various ways such as dialogue, conversation, group discussion, monologue, stage speech, speech through telephone, etc. whereas written language has only one way which is considered as unique way that is writing with one's own handwriting; but now in modern time typing is discovered and computer E-mail has been in use. Only spoken language and oral literature existed in the world in pre-historic period. When the writing scripts were invented and alphabets were introduced, written language took its birth. It started having its merit and importance as it remains for a long time and it is not easily destroyable. Every society has its own literature and it is recorded with the help of languages.

## **LITERATURE**

What is literature? It is a mirror of society. Literature is a tool that reveals the social activities of a particular linguistic and cultural community. Literature consists of Prose, Poetry, Drama and Novel. All these genres express the history/dealings of the certain society.

A reader can learn the period the prose or poetry belong to, when he reads them. For example, Robert Frost's poem **stopping by woods on a snowy evening** – a line, "The darkest evening of the year" shows that the time is winter. In the same way if the literary

work expresses that people worshipped only the sun they were afraid of thunder, lived in hut and used oil lamp, the reader will understand that the work was written in the most ancient time. It reveals that the society was not scientifically developed. If the characters in the novel uses mobile phone, speaks about helicopter and plane, it means that the literary works were written in the present modern time. Further, the reader can understand the economical condition of the period in which the work of art is made.

When an essay expresses that black men are the servants in the white men's house and they do not have right to study equally with the white men in educational institutions, have food with them in the restaurant or live with them, it is clear that the works belong to the previous centuries when the human rights were unknown. When a novel or a work of art denotes that the black characters get equal opportunities in education, profession and live with the white characters, the work says that it belongs to the present 20<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted that Koffi Annan was given the highest position of the UNO and Serena Williams and Venus Williams (BLACK WOMEN) have been shining as Tennis stars receiving world awards at the present time for more than 20 years.

Although there prevails racism, white people have now become more civilized and they live with black people. The best example to prove it is Mr. Barack Obama (HIS FATHER WAS A BLACKMAN) who has been selected as the president of United States of America.

As the literary genres express the sociological, political, cultural perspectives of the particular period, letters also express the same. In short, I would like to say that letters do not merely play the role of communication but also deals with the historical and scientific ideas. It reveals sociological, political, cultural ideas that a novel reveals. Thus I say in short' that letter reveals all the major issues of the particular society.

***Aim of writing this article***

In this article, I would like to bring out the importance of writing letters and explain the role of letters in the novel -**Pride and Prejudice** written by Jane Austen. I shall prove with evidence how the letters discuss the various issues of the society. I also point out the effect of letters written by the characters in the story and discuss on why should the novelist- Jane Austen use the art of letter writing as one of the techniques in the art of novel writing.

I recollect the famous story -*The voyage of Sindbad, the sailor and other stories*. It is written in the first person narration and Sindbad himself narrates his voyage and experiences. In that story, letter writing takes place in the sixth voyage of Sindbad. The king of Sevendid gave a gift to Sindbad with a letter for the commander to assure him of his friendship. It was written on the skin of a certain animal. It was of a yellowish colour.

If we look into the history of letters, palm-leaves were used for writing for a long time. Most of the genres of ancient Indian literature were written in palm-leaves. Birds were used to send the messages written in soft clothes. It would be tied up with the feet of the birds in ancient India.

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, letters do not take place but in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* letters play an important role. Cassius writes many letters ill of Julius Caesar in different hand-writings and throws them in the house of Brutus through the window. The letters changed the mind of Brutus against Caesar. He thought that they were the letters of common people and they expressed their anger on Caesar. Thus the letter writing played an important role in the play. Although they were not perfect letters, they revealed the feelings through some written scripts with a brief explanation. It is important to note that the written brief letters changed Brutus who was the intimate friend of Caesar. This is the power of letter writing. Some people even now who donot want to express certain ideas directly to the other persons choose the art of letter writing.

## Origin of letter

As I discussed above, although messages were sent during the Pre 1653, and letters were written, they were not recognized as “letters”. They were strategic communications between high ranking officials.

For example, Romans and Egyptians have passed messages in this manner. In 1653 Frenchman, Devalayer established a postal system in Paris. He setup mail boxes and delivered any letters placed in them if they used envelopes that only he sold.

Later, a school master from England Rowland Hill invented the adhesive postage stamp in 1837; through his efforts the first stamp in the world was issued in England in 1840. Hill created the first uniform postage rates that were based on weight, rather than size. Hill’s stamps made the prepayment of postage both possible and practical.

Since then, letters were sent from different parts of England and then it was used in all the countries which were ruled by the Britishers, little by little all nations accepted this method and started following this.

Letter writing is not just for exchanging information. It is the expression of one’s language, emotion, intelligence. It is a mode of revealing the social, cultural and individual’s activities in society. Furthermore it is a part of literature.

The art of letter writing provided a new avenue for the development of literature. It particularly paved a way for the birth of a novel. What is a novel? E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* cites the definition of a fiction as “a fiction in prose of a certain extent as over 50,000 words”.

The novel comes out of the emotion and the intention to depict and interpret human character. The readers are entertained as well as guided in a deeper perception of the problems of life. A novel places more emphasis on character than a plot and stresses

realism. It is a report of human life. The word 'novel' is an English transliteration of the Italian word 'novella' – it is used to describe a short, compact, broadly realistic tale.

### **Brief history of the novel**

Homer wrote in the eighth century (8<sup>th</sup> century) BC is the one that fascinates us because it is a fiction. Archaeologists doubt that any Trojan War began. In this way, there arose tales, stories and various episodes. Short stories have been developed as novel. Although there were novels in early period, there was a demand for the novel only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the expansion of the middle class in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more English people were interested in reading novel and they had money to spend on reading literary works. There was a high interest in writing autobiography, biography, history, journals, diaries etc.

Alexander Pope's dictum that the proper study of mankind is the human character. The early English novel departs from the allegory and the romance with its vigorous attempt at verisimilitude and it was very much associated with the middle class, their morality, their dealings in the society, their pragmatism.

Although there were novels in ancient times, it is widely accepted that Samuel Richardson's 'Pamela' which was written in I 1740 – and II 1741. It can be taken as the first fully-realized English novel.

The story of **Pamela** or **Virtue rewarded** is told through a series of letters.

More than 30 letters are seen in the novel-Pamela. They express various issues of that society in which the author Henry Fielding lived. Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** (1719) and **Moll Flanders** (1722) were also novels but Samuel Richardson's novel is a novel of character. Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) both contain essays constituting the primary English attempt to define and explain the novel as a literary genre.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jane Austen emerged as a popular writer. Her novels are satirical she is known as the greatest English novelist of manners. **Pride and Prejudice** was the best example of her satirical novel.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century or the Victorian period, George Eliot, Charles Dickens etc arose as intellectual writers. George Eliot's *Adam Bede* consists of several letters I have discussed about the letters in detail in my article under the title of 'Narrative technique of George Eliot with special reference to Adam Bede'.

In Leo Tolstoy's **War and Peace** main ideas are expressed through letters. Pejugav's letter to make Piarie as the legitimate heir of his wealth. Nicolas Andrewich the army general who lives in the estate with his wife and daughter received letters for his daughter and warns her that he would read the letters after two more letters. His daughter read the letter and it was written by Julie whom she met in dinner. Julie had written mainly about the war of Moscow. Thus the letters do not only express the personal feelings/dealings of the individuals but also describe the social activities and political situations of the particular society. In this way novel writing and letter writing were interconnected in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This pattern was continued in the Victorian period too.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century hand written letters have been disappeared not only in the English speaking Western Society, in all the countries of the world. The art of letter writing has been declining due to the modern technological developments and the invention of Mobile phone, SMS, Television, Computer and E-mail. Therefore in the novels the narrative technique too changed. Letters disappeared but stream of consciousness and symbolism take place for example. Virginia Woolf's **Mrs. Dalloway, to the Lighthouse, The Rainbow of D.H. Lawrence** etc.

Letters in the novels are in two types. One type is letters( written by the characters) are shown to the readers to read and the other type is the author tells briefly about the

content of the letter(written by the characters). It is known as Showing and Telling methods.

### **Advantages**

Handwritten letter touches one's heart as the receiver receives not only the matter and message but also see the writer through his handwriting. Mostly personal letters take place in the novels.

Jane Austen is not a feminist. She criticizes her society that wanted the young women to get married which she thinks would prevent women's progress and dignified role in the society. She feels that married life of women affect the growth, individuality and achievement of woman.

Letter writing although was in practice in her period, if we search for women's letters, very few women would have written letters. They were expected to work in the kitchen, look after all the members of her family which would never permit her to write or read for herself. Through the letters of women characters like Jane, Elizabeth and their aunt, Jane Austen wants the women of her society to write letters which would be the record of their knowledge, communication and relationship on the whole their life on earth itself.

### **About the Author/Novelist**

Jane Austen was born on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1775 and was the seventh child of her parents. She was a brilliant conversationalist and a prodigious letter-writer. She began writing at the age of 14 for the amusement of her family. At the age of twenty she began a novel **First Impression** later the title was altered and rewritten to appear as **Pride and Prejudice**. She wrote six novels and they all were the most precious books in English Literature. Her novels are straight forward love stories with high regard for domestic virtues. They are the works of genius and they express subtle with and psychology of the characters.

Her other novels are **Sense and Sensibility, Mansfield Park, Emma, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion.**

**Pride and Prejudice** is her most popular novel. The names of the characters are memorable. The second daughter of the Bennets, Elizabeth Bennet was one of the most delightful heroines ever depicted would be sufficient to make *Pride and Prejudice* as one of the most outstanding English novels. Through her stories Jane Austen criticizes the English country folk of her period. She comments on the foibles of human nature. She wants to reform the English society of her period. She remained unmarried and criticizes the convention of the society that woman should certainly get married. she proves that since he remained unmarried she was able to write. Thus she made an achievement as a successful writer.

#### **The role of Letters in *Pride and Prejudice***

There are many letters written by different characters in ***Pride and Prejudice***. Many letters are shown and some letters are told. The letters shown are as follows. The first letter takes place in chapter – 7 page 24. It was written to Jane by Caroline Bingley who is the sister of the young man of fortune Mr. Bingley. Jane was the first daughter of the Bennets.

The sister of Mr. Bingley invites Jane for dinner. It expresses that quickness in the action is necessary. She writes as , *come as soon as you can on the receipt of this. My brother and the gentlemen are to dine with the officers.* It was an undated letter. It shows the love and regard of Caroline Bingley for Jane who is the eldest daughter of Mr. Bennet.

The second letter takes place in the same chapter in p. 25. Jane writes to her sister Elizabeth expressing that she was sick and so she would not be able to come back home. The author shows the letter to the readers. The letter shows the weather It must be the rainy time. In chapter 10, Mr. Darcy writes a letter. It is not shown. The author tells that Darcy writes. The novelist discusses about letter writing in this chapter in detail in p. 39.

Next letter is shown. It is written by William Collins. It is a friendly letter to Mr. Bennet. It appears with date and place. Hansford, near Westerham, Kent, 15<sup>th</sup> October. It shows that he wants to visit Mr. Bennett's family on Monday November 18<sup>th</sup> by 4 o'clock. In p. 127 Jane writes a brief letter to her sister informing her about their safe arrival in London. Here, the novelist describes the content of the letter. In p.128, Jane writes again to Elizabeth. This letter is shown to the readers. Jane writes again to her sister when she has seen Miss. Bingley. It shows that Jane was not happy about the manner of Miss. Bingley because she singled out Jane without paying much attention to her. It expresses Jane's feeling.

*"I confers myself ... Miss. Bingley's regard for me"*. This letter reveals the painful experiences of Jane and the powerful letter gave the same pain to the receiver- Elizabeth.

In chapter 35 an important letter of the novel takes place. It is written by Fitzwilliam Darcy to Elizabeth Bennett. This letter is shown to the readers. It is a very big letter. It speaks of his personal life, his sister, aunt and explained how his father helped Wickham. He explained how his father educated Wickham whom Lydia loved. He revealed the entire history of Wickham's life and his intention of marrying Lydia. Darcy further explained how he solved all the problems. This letter serves as a barrier of messages and history of families. It is not just a letter of communication. Through this letter the novelist builds up the story. This letter informs Elizabeth about Bingley's attention to her sister *"Bingley's attention to your sister had given rise to a general expectation of their marriage"*.

Another letter shown is in chapter 47 which was written by Lydia Bennett, one of the younger daughters of Mr. Bennett. Through this letter, Jane Austen creates some sense of humor to the readers who read the novel seriously. Lydia writes to Harriet, that she loves Wickham and that she was going to Gretna Green. Elizabeth read and was shocked and she said, *"thoughtless thoughtless. She was much annoyed and cried,*

*“What kind of letter is that”*

Unwise letter creates problems too many people. Lydia’s letter is that kind. Her mother fell sick. The whole family is in confusion by the information given by Lydia through her letter.

Mr. Bennet received a letter from Mr. Collins. Jane opened the letter and read. It is also shown to the readers.

*“Let me advise you then my dear sir, to console yourself as much as possibly to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own offence.*

Gardiner writes a letter which Bennett asked Elizabeth to read it aloud. It is dated August 2, “Grace church street, Monday. He says that Mr. Wickham and Lydia are not married. Mr. Wickham’s circumstances are not as hopeless as they are generally believed.

As soon as the letter was read Bennett says that Wickham is not so undeserving. Mr. Gardiner soon writes again to Mr. Bennett. The Principal purpose of this letter is to inform them that Mr. Wickham had resolved on quitting the Militia. Lydia is well and begs to be dutifully ... her mother.

In chapter 51, p. 276, the line shows that Elizabeth had written a letter to her aunt requesting an explanation of what Lydia had dropped. It is a telling method. The letter is not shown to the readers as the author might have thought that there is nothing important for the reader to learn except the matter. Therefore, she tells what the letter was about.

Elizabeth’s aunt immediately replies her in detail. Her letter was shown to the readers. Her aunt starts, *“My dear Niece, I have just received your letter”*, It shows that Eliza’s Aunt immediately replies. She says in her letter *“On the very day of my coming home from Long bourn your uncle had an unexpected visitor Mr. Darcy called on and was shut up with him several hours. It was all over before I arrived, He came to tell Mr. Gardiner that he*

*had found out where your sister and Mr. Wickham were and that he had seen and talked with them both, Wickham and Lydia..."*

The letter plays an important role. Lydia is persuaded to quit her present disgraceful situation and return. But she reveals that Lydia absolutely resolved on remaining where she was. She would not like to leave Wickham and she was sure that they should be married sometime or other.

She says that Elizabeth's letter gave her uncle more pleasure this morning. After sometime Lydia came to her house and Wickham started visiting her.

'Jane's letter last Wednesday' tells that Jane has written to her aunt. Finally the letter ends with asking forgiveness. The message of the letter threw Eliza into a flutter of spirits and she could not find pleasure or pain completely.

When Darcy asks about his letter to Elizabeth, she explained that the effect was good and so all her former prejudices have been removed. He hopes that she might have destroyed the letter.

In p.320 the importance of the letter has been explained in detail. It started in one mood and ended in different mood. It is clear in the answer of Darcy, who explains his different feelings while writing letter to Elizabeth. He says to her, *the letter perhaps, began in bitterness, but it did not end so. The feelings of the person who wrote and the person who received it are now so widely different from what they were then, that every unpleasant circumstance attending it, ought to be forgotten*". The letter while reading in future should give pleasure and realities to the readers, about the past.

Another letter takes place in p. 328 chapter 59. It is written by Mr. Collins to Darcy. It is just a letter of telling. "He then recollected her embarrassment a few days before, on his reading Mr. Collin's letter.

In p. 332 Elizabeth writes to her uncle and aunt expressing her happiness. She concludes it inviting them to Pemberley for Christmas.

Immediately, Jane Austen introduces another letter which is written to Lady Catherine by Mr. Darcy. It is not shown. The novelist tells the readers that it is a letter of different style.

It is different from the letter of Mr. Bennett to Mr. Collins. It is a reply letter. It is shown to the readers. Mr. Bennett begins as,

Dear Sir,

I must trouble you once more for congratulations. Elizabeth will soon be the wife of Mr. Darcy. Console Lady Catherine.

Yours sincerely

.....

In the same chapter in p.333 Miss. Bingley congratulates and writes to Jane to express her delight.

In p.335, chapter – 61, Lydia's congratulatory letter to Elizabeth on her marriage. This letter was shown to the readers. Finally, there is a reply letter of Lady Catherine who uses abusive language. She is extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew. Elizabeth takes more efforts and persuades Darcy to take steps for reconciliation with Lady Catherine. With this the letter – writing in the novel comes to an end.

### **Conclusion**

Some letters express happiness and the other express pain, sorrow and anger according to the development of the story. When Miss. Caroline Bingley writes to invite Jane for Dinner, there was happiness from both sides. Caroline writes happily and Jane receives with the happy spirit as the content of the letter brings honor to her.

Characterization is an important aspect of a novel. This is revealed in the novel through the letters. Lydia and Wickhams characters are described in the letters of Mr. Darcy, Mr. Gardiner and also some other letters.

Characterization is defined as “the art of creating characters which seem to have real life and have a role to play in the development of the novel”. In the novel, letter shows life, behaviour, and biography of the characters. Letters can give the historical, scientific, social, educational, religious, commercial, political and economical informations. As novels exhibit the social activities of particular society, letters too express the individual’s role in the society.

The aim of novel writing is to point out the evils of the society and reform the society. The aim of letter writing is to express an individual’s interest, good and bad. The collection of various kinds of letters written in the particular period provide informations of the society which helps the researchers to discover how people lived in the certain period.

Realism and imagination take place in the novel to please and entertain the readers while giving the serious information about the society. There is no such entertainment item in the letters. It is just realism. Thus, novel is the combination and collection of imagination and experiences of personal affairs.

Thus, Letter-writing and Novel writing have close connection with each other. The combination pleases as well as enlightens the audience about the important issues of the society such as evils, draw backs, poverty of the society in order to drive them out. Letter generally expresses personal emotion on various issues of an individual when it is written by a person to another person whereas when the letters take place in the novel, they could give more messages to reform the whole society.

Since letter writing during 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was the only tool of communication among people who live in different places, the novelist has used the technique of letter writing in the art of novel writing to make the story realistic as well as successful.

Even in the modern life, we should continue to write letters to one another as it gives freedom for the receiver to read when he finds time. Further the receiver can read the letter as many times as he wishes.

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