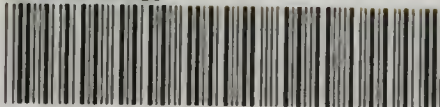


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**THE PROBLEM OF ARTS AND
LITERATURE IN PAKISTAN**

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THE
PROBLEM
OF
ARTS
AND
LITERATURE
IN
PAKISTAN

SHEIKH AHMED

**THE PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF ARTS & DESIGN
73 N BLOCK 6 PECHS KARACHI.**

THE PROBLEMS OF ARTS AND LITERATURE IN PAKISTAN

What is the relation between art and life? This is a question that people ask so often. Man's social life is the source of all arts and literature; and all artistic creations are the reflection of life. Therefore art cannot be divorced from life. Since life according to the Quran has a purpose, which is the development of personality through knowledge on the path of creativity for service to mankind, all arts and literature must serve this goal in one way or another. Any art that fails to serve life is not art but fraud.

This Quranic goal of life is distorted by many people. Somehow they have fallen prey to the capitalistic trap of calling art a self-expression of the individual. This self-expression, they claim, is free from any consideration for life and its goal. This trap is laid to free art from all its ideological and sociological implications. Life reflected in artistic and literary works should be of greater reality and intensity. It should be nearer to life's goal and more universal. It cannot be purely subjective because it is the result of artist's selection and contemplation on life around him.

Since life is the source of art and literature, and art and literature spring from life, as spritual entities they are on a much higher plane than life as we live it. Their function is to give life greater significance or at least urge it on towards a higher achievement. Both art and literature should serve life in its various facets. They should serve the masses as aids to the educational process, and help them develop what is best in each individual. The task of artists and writers is to share the lives of the masses. Being in their midst must help them mould their character and ideology through personal contact and creative efforts. Thus the masses can be helped in developing their personalities on the path of creativity for service to others. They can learn much by following the life of Omar the Great whose life serves as an example in this direction.

The capitalistic art is divorced from collective life. As an art it seeks to present the subjective mediocrity of artists and writers who in fact are tools in the hands of forces working against the people as a whole. Their arts, sculptures and writings serve a special audience ; not the workers but only the exploiters. They instead of serving the cultural tradition of our country are helping the interest of the Exploiters International United. Naturally their art and literature follow the feudal reactionary pattern against the spirit of the Quranic goal of life. Their art, being ambiguous, reflects the feudal mentality through ambiguity, thus hiding its vicious character that seeks the exploitation of the masses for the benefit of the exploiters. Islam is against this

exploitation. If there is anything good in ambiguous abstract art, Islam is in favour of absorbing the vital from it. The Prophet has said, "Take that which is vital and shun the rest." From the art of the exploiters, we must take only that which is vital and throw away their feudal dross. Tradition should be analyzed from the point of view of the goal of life and be given its proper place in history. Islam never favors cutting ties with history or with any foreign tradition that follows the path of creativity for service to mankind. By following this precept of the Prophet we can achieve our ideal of expediting Pakistani culture.

Art and literature are not the same as sciences that study the laws of nature. Art and literature portray the lives, thoughts and emotions of the people. They cannot help being imbued with national flavour. Since art and literature portray the lives, thoughts and emotions of the people they cannot help presenting national integrity. Whatever new and extraordinary is created in these fields must reflect the spirit of our people. It must constitute a unique national contribution to the sum total of human culture.

These problems of arts and literature are most fundamental. They must be faced and solved systematically and dialectically. Since the last eighteen years, little thought has been given to the problems of arts and literature, our intellectuals have fallen victims of the Exploiters International United, who trapped them in the web of abstract art alien to our character. Since some

of these intellectuals control press they try to spread this foreign fraud in the fields of arts and literature. People are made to believe that abstract art has something vital to offer to mankind.

To create the art of Pakistan involves integration of the old with the new. Art and literature do not drop from the heavens, they are the result of efforts thought, contemplation, as well as the blending of theory with practice. Only by solving the vital problems of art and literature can we create an art form compatible with our goal of life. Art and literature reflect the aspirations of the masses. They provide incentive to workers to do their jobs in a manner worthy of their stature. Moreover, arts and literature must help the masses towards the development of their personality through knowledge.

The artists and writers of the so-called "free world" today are sunk in mental despair that results from their abstract art. This despair is being infused by the foreign capitalists into the life of the less developed nations like ourselves by patronizing the local abstract painters and abstract art critics. Few among us realize that abstract art is worthless from the ideological and educational view point. Abstract creations in no way inspire the masses to achieve their goal of life, to rise and transform the world, or help them make their world a better place for themselves and for those coming after them.

Islam makes no distinction between religion and politics. The purpose of art and literature in an Islamic

state is to use them as instruments for educating the people, politically, socially and culturally. Once we depart from this goal of life, no matter under what flag, we lose our bearings and degenerate politically, culturally and socially. Our task, as writers and artists is to build Pakistan at the quickest possible pace into a strong socialistic state as envisaged by Omar the Great, taking into consideration the demands of the times and our own country.

It is the task of writers and artists to create and preserve for posterity the images of men of genius, who from time to time gave to others their lives and their creations, thus presenting examples worth emulating. These images of men of pen, men of sword and men of science can be created in plays, paintings, films and in other forms of art. Arts and literature can serve the cause of the people only when the artists and the writers have a genuine love for the toiling masses. Also when they take part and pleasure in their productive labour. To make art and literature attractive a blend of realism and romanticism can be very useful educationally and morally.

Realism in art implies, the truth of detail, the truth of typical character and, the truth of circumstances. Let us look further into typical character and typical circumstances. Realism in art means representing such progressive forces that in each age gave birth to men of genius. The detail of circumstances means the struggle of these men against the forces that were trying to keep their progressive characters down. It has always been the

tendency of capitalism and feudalism to fight against the rising forces of creative intellectualism. Feudal lords like Sultan Mahmood Gaznavi hated the intellectual freedom of men like Abu Ali Sina. He wanted him to be his courtier, something Abu Ali Sina hated most. Naturally, he refused Sultan Mahmood's offer. The consequences of refusing a powerful Sultan were that Abu Ali Sina had to flee for his life. He, with many camel load of books, roamed from place to place for years seeking refuge.

Ideologically Abu Ali Sina differed from Sultan Mahmood. Sultan Mahmood believed in 'humanistic spirit', while Abu Sina believed in 'human rights'. As a courtier to Sultan, Abu Sina limited his ability to serve and cure a narrow circle : king and his courtiers. While as an independent physician, he could help without consideration whether the patient was a prince or a pauper. Thus Abu Sina's belief in 'human right' stood opposed to 'the rights of king'. Abu Sina held that broad human relationships and human sympathies and comradeship count more than any narrow individual relationship. Because, individual relationship amounts to placing the interest of an individual above the interest of the masses. He saw most clearly the conflicting interest of the Sultan and his subject. It was conflict between individualism and human rights. It seems Abu sina had greater love of mankind than any other great men of his age. He saw in Sultan Mahmood the oppressor of the oppressed, while many of his contemporaries failed to see it.

The job of the artists and writers today is to adopt the right attitude towards such historical happenings, and paint for the benefit of the people the true pictures. To adopt a negative attitude towards such incidents, amounts to adopting a negative attitude towards just causes. For example the war of aggression that India forced upon us was a war for self-preservation. Not all wars are wicked and dirty, as many of our friends would like us to believe. They give a gloomy tragic picture to the war we fought against aggression. But it was a just war. They dwell in great detail on all the cruelty and horrors of wars as "truth of the trenches". They describe their own war against Fascism as the war of liberation and independence and each year keep alive its memory.

Can one believe that their war against Fascism and Hitler was a noble war, and the war we fought to save our existence was ignoble or "merely a plaything". By considering our inevitable sacrifice in war as a thing of little consequence they minimize the great role of our heroes who fought for the happiness of others. By magnifying the cruelty of war they are trying to emphasize, the psychology of despair and the tragic fate of our heroes. They bring out only the sentimentalism and pessimism of war, as if war has no other aspect. The purpose behind this attitude is to underrate the indomitable spirit of our people, their resolute fortitude, and heroic contempt for our enemy's ignoble aggression.

The task that lies before our artists and writers is to bring out the truth that people's noble qualities can

conquer horror and death. These qualities can overcome the factionary arrogance of the enemies. In such wars as we were forced to wage, much blood is shed. We suffered losses to give enemy a death blow, Anyone can see the sacrifice of individuals for the freedom of the masses of Pakistan, as well as to win social and historical happiness for our people as a whole. It is this conviction that impelled our people to go bravely to fight for their country and gave the mothers of our heroes the strength to look upon their death as something to be proud of, rather than to weep.

Since the birth of Pakistan we have tried to see the truth of arts and literature in the light of aspiration of the masses. Compared with the demands of our country and the times, what we have achieved is far from adequate. We have no cause to be smug and contented. Many aspects of our people's rich experiences in their present fight against aggression and in the task of construction have received no appreciation either from the artists or the writers of Pakistan. Our enemies have tried to divert our attention from the path of realism on to the path of abstraction, with the specific purpose of undermining our achievements as well as our spirit to fight against all odds. For they know that without appreciation, human spirit can go so far and no further. They know that by indulging in abstraction the gap between the writers, artists and the workers can be widened so much that any hope of bridging it might result in failure.

Sheikh Ahmed

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