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Prison literature: Thoughts in internment

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Abstract

Prison literature is written while the author is confined in a place against his will, such as a prison, or house arrest. The writings can be related to prison, or mostly not connected to life in prison. It might be any literary form description, genuine, or fiction. It is mainly political inmates who devote their time in prison writing literature. Some of them are prison accounts in which they need to consume themselves in fictional construction figures as an approach to keep them enthused and to escape monotony, solitude, and depression. Some captive writers find themselves in the fortunate situation of having both the required tools like paper, table, illumination, etc. and the freedom to constitute their text. They are formally permitted to participate in their artistic mission; however, a lot of writers have to hide their work, inscribe on scraps of paper, the bark of the tree, use colors, coal, or even blood to leave their scripts, and have to sneak their works out of prison.

Keywords: Prison, strategy, monotony, loneliness, despair, scripts

Introduction

The history of world literature is a testimony to the point that several writers when confined given their abundant works in prison cells. It may have roughly to do with the loneliness in prison liberating innovative ideas. The personalities condemned to non-laborious imprisonment are involved in numerous chores - as catering, mopping, etc. - leaving them with certain phases to reproduce and introspect.

Prison literature is opulent in subjects and themes. These themes carry on to convey to the community the travail that convicts suffer. They pen accounts, versus articles, short stories, plays, and papers. Some of these sorts look in the form of chronicles, autobiographies, memoirs, reminiscences, and letters. There are countless traditional manuscripts produced by writers in imprisonment through diverse cultures, printed in different languages of the world extending from English, Urdu, Persian, French, Arabic, German, and all other major and minor languages of the world. It is called prison literature.

The captivity of writers consists of diverse reasons like religious, political, and societal. A vast literature comprising novels, autobiographies, letters, poetry, historical documents, essay, journalism, diaries, philosophical writings, and notes have been written confined to prison. Incarceration, the darkness, lacking elementary needs, and no reading and writing material, yet could not discourage them to put to pen their thoughts and moods. For writers, prison functioned as a workshop, but there are undeniably a larger number of authors who have already celebrated writers before captivity.

Prison Literature documents the tormenting practices inside dark cells. Deprived of the elementary facilities a writer is enforced to live in small cells, where they cannot even stretch suitably. Does imprisonment silence them, or enhance their power? Does it halt their pledge to the cause or make them extra dedicated. James Joyce said of such authors, "squeeze us, we are olives". Thus in prison cells where writers were pressed to produce their best.

Prison literature has stimulated a generation of readers across the world, and now it has been addressed as a genre of literature commendable for examination, education, and exploration. Because it has great concepts coming from the best deep-thinking and inventive characters.

Prison literature discovers the matters of power, providence, confrontation, witness, strain, curative, commemoration, cleansing, grief, encouragement, reminiscence, humiliation, parting, belonging, distinctiveness, hope, etc. The main motive to jail a writer is to take over his mind. When the mind is colonized, all is gone. To pen is to fight this scheme and to challenge it.

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Whether the writer is a prisoner of conscience or prisoner of war, a victim of bigotry, or the victim of religious dissent, though physically caged he remains a free person spiritually and intellectually. This freedom of soul and mind results in the most profound works

Critical issues in prison divulge concealed abuses of human rights while fighting official discourse and serving other functions in society. When these great literary gems are incarcerated, all outside communication is barred, they are not allowed to read and write. No book, magazine, or newspaper is allowed inside the prison cells. Denied pen and paper, the imprisoned writer tries to break these high prison walls and iron gates with the will to never surrender.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak penned down the entire script with pencil, of his masterly and sacred book the Bhagavad Gita while he was in jail in Mandalay, Burma. M k Gandhi was imprisoned by the Britishers, he wrote a lot of his autobiography My Experiments from Truth in Yarwada jail in Maharashtra. Jail Diary by Bhagat Singh written between 1929-1932, J Lal Nehru who described his visits to prisons as 'pilgrimages' wrote three great pieces in prison Glimpses of World History, An Autobiography, and The Discovery of India. Prolific Indian Statesmen and writer Abul Kalam Azad wrote his classic Gubhar e Khatir in prison, etc proves the fact that several prison writings are ranging in different genres.

Boethius has written a classic philosophical tract *Consolation of Philosophy* while serving his prison term and awaiting his execution. Some of the prominent writers, who were detained and incarcerated by different regimes include John Bunyan, Antonia Gramsci, Oscar Wilde, Jean Genet, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Chekov, Tolstoy, Denial Dafoe, and Abul Kalam Azad, Ezra pond, Nawal El-Saadawi, Wole Soyinka and several more. Some of the wonderful poets, who were prisoners of ethics include Richard Lovelace, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Mahmoud Darwish, Nazim Hikmet, Ahmed Fouad Negm, etc. Their voice is still echoing though they died long back.

Out of the rock bottom of prison, an excess of literature both profound and contentious has emerged. Perhaps monotony reasons prisoners to write, or maybe some inmates use literature as a device to break out the walls that restrain them. Whatever the reason, the literature that has emerged from prisons has had an enormous literary impact—from raising pro-Christian philosophical questions to the creation of erotica and books that vividly recount disturbing depravity.

Nonetheless the brutalities of prison life were not a part of every inmate's journey. English author John Cleland wrote the first section of erotica from a mortgagors' prison. A year after *Fanny Hill* was published, Cleland and the publishers were arrested for the book's "pornographic" content. But *Fanny Hill* has since coagulated its place in classic literature. It no longer lives in obscurity; you can purchase a copy in any major bookstore. Surely this book would be just as important if Cleland had written it in his own home or anywhere else. But the fact that *Fanny Hill* was written from prison validates the theory that prison writing has formed historically prominent literature.

American poet E. E. Cummings was caged in 1917 in France on doubt of espionage for his anti-war sentiments. While there he wrote an autobiographical novel called *The Enormous Room*. Cummings' novel is important because it can properly exemplify the importance of unpopular speech.

Eventually, prison writing can ask questions one could never think of talking about. What do they have to lose? They're already in prison, so the one thing that would be "free" indoors of a jail cell is thought.

The Marquis de Sade, a French author, wrote profusely during the thirty years he expended in prison and an insane asylum. His work replicates his own life of sickening depravity, obstinacy, and profanity. His name is the derivation of the word *sadism*. Did prison make Sade a writer? Perhaps not, but it did seem to have a deep effect on his writing. Richard Seaver, who translated Sade's work, said, "There is no question that de Sade would have never been a writer of any stature if he wasn't sent to prison." Sade's subjects of torment, loneliness, violence, and sexuality mirror the author's madness, a condition that prison pushed him to.

The idea of imprisoned people having an opinion outside of prison is terrifying or upsetting to many people. Though, historical literature and other innovative materials frequently come from vexatious places. "Words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality," wrote Edgar Allan Poe. I agree with Poe's statement; I believe that the "horror of their reality" contributes to why profound writing can come from prisoners.

Miguel de Cervantes served time in prison *three* times. Initially, it was a five-year stretch as a captive of the Ottoman army. Then, he was imprisoned twice in civilian life, in the years 1597 and 1602, when financial problems rendered him incapable to pay his debts. Some of these, like when his bank went bankrupt, were more so a result of misfortune than irresponsibility. However, he made decent use of his time, writing part of *Don Quixote* while waiting behind rails.

Rarely was there at once so important a lightning rod for misconduct and scandal, as well as a prison writer of the most productive rank. The Marquis de Sade began to get the attention of authorities thanks to his unceasing penchant for sexual assault and depravity, encircling the use of sex workers as well as unlawful drugs and aphrodisiacs. Subsequently much time on the run abroad, de Sade was lastly arrested in Paris and trapped in the dungeon of Vincennes where he quarreled with guards and tried to rouse a revolt. He was later sent to the Bastille. He used his locked-up time to make up the bulk of his startling and sometimes vivid body of work, counting on *Justine* and *The 120 Days of Sodom*.

Genet was an orphan and was engrossed in the underworld of petty theft and crime, with a list of violations encompassing theft, vagabondage, fake documents, and lecherous offenses. Inside prison in the 1940s, Genet commenced work on *Our Lady of the Flowers*, lettering on brown paper that prisoners were given to make paper bags. One day, a guard noticed his literary venture and destroyed the manuscript, but Genet began work again. These days that book he wrote in prison is measured as his most accomplished.

Political beliefs have been accountable for many a writer's imprisonments, comprising Fyodor Dostoevsky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and E.E. Cummings, among others. A new and prominent example is Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian political writer who lastly caught her government's notice with the launch of a feminist magazine called *Confrontation* in 1981. She was imprisoned for months and was lastly

released a month ensuing the assassination of the Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat. Of her imprisonment for writing, El Saadawi said, "Danger has been a part of my life ever since I picked up a pen and wrote. Nothing is more perilous than truth in a world that lies."

Wilde was an Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and author of short stories. Well known for his sharp wit, he became one of the most thriving playwrights of late Victorian London and one of the biggest celebrities of his generation. Numerous of his plays continue to be extensively performed, particularly *The Importance of Being Earnest*. After a widely covered series of trials, Wilde suffered a dramatic collapse and was imprisoned for two years of hard labour after being imprisoned for the offense of "gross indecency" with other people. After Wilde was free from prison he set sail for Dieppe by night ferry. He never reverted to Britain. Wilde was trapped first in Pentonville, then in Wandsworth jail in London, and lastly transferred in November to Reading Prison, around 30 miles west of London. Wilde knew the town of Reading from better-off times when boating on the Thames, and also from social call to the Palmer family, plus a tour of the famous Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory, which is quite close to the prison. Now known as prisoner C. 3.3, he was not, at first, even have paper and pen, but a later governor was more acquiescent. Wilde was supported by the reformer, Lord Haldane, who had helped transfer him and allowed him the literary release he needed. After his emancipation from prison, he also wrote the famous poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

It's inessential to accentuate those writers are not different from the rest of humanity. This also relates as much to a propensity for criminality. Commonly, writers have been imprisoned for two evils prevalent to their caste—championing drastic politics and not recompensing creditors.

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