

EPISTOLARY NOVELS IN PRESENT CONTEXT

VIPIN BEHARI GOYAL

President, English Literary Association, JNV University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT

Epistolary became a popular genre all over Europe during 18 Century. Henry Fielding wrote a pamphlet anonymously "An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews" (1741) to ridicule the Pamela. His most famous work "The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams" begins as burlesque, but soon takes a form of "comic epic poem in prose". This is supposed to be first authentic novel of English, despite the work of Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift and Richardson. Walter Scott called Henry Fielding the "Father of The English Novels" due to the theories given by Fielding in the forward of his novels Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones and Amelia.

KEYWORDS: Epistolary, Forms, English Literature, Contemporary Literature

INTRODUCTION

Epistolary novels is a novel written as a series of documents. The documents may be letters, diary entries, newspaper clipping, doctor's note, ship's Log, telegrams or e-documents such as messages, emails, blogs, graphics, emoticons etc.

Letter writing has become obsolete. Blogs have replaced diaries. Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded is an epistolary novel by Samuel Richardson in 1740. Epistolary novels is a novel written as a series of documents. The documents may be letters, diary entries, newspaper clipping, doctor's note, ship's Log, telegrams or e documents such as messages, emails, blogs, graphics, emoticons etc

Third person omniscient point of view narration in which the narrator knows everything like God, the future course of events and even what is going on in the mind of every character. The narrator has the option to be objective or subjective. If he chooses to comment and evaluate the action and motives of the character, he is an intrusive narrator. This form has remained popular amongst all the great novelists such as Fielding, Austen, Dickens, Hardy and Dostoevsky.

Even before Samuel Richardson published Pamela, Aphra Behn a British Playwright published three volumes of "Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister" in the year 1685. It was based on a scandalous affair between Lord Ford and his Sister in Law, Henrietta.

Epistolary became a popular genre all over Europe during 18 Century. Henry Fielding wrote a pamphlet anonymously "An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews" (1741) to ridicule the Pamela. His most famous work "The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams" begins as burlesque, but soon takes a form of "comic epic poem in prose". This is supposed to be first authentic novel of English, despite the work of Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift and Richardson. Walter Scott called Henry Fielding the "Father of The English Novels" due to the theories given by Fielding in the forward of his novels Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones and Amelia.

Samuel Richardson learned the art of epistolary in his boyhood. He was often employed by less educated working girls to write love letters for them. Richardson had a natural talent of letter writing, and heard the sentiments of cupid stricken girls with great awe and admiration. The experience helped him in writing first famous book "Pamela". It became so popular in England that this novel was found in the bag of every school and college going girl to pose that they too are virtuous like Pamela, have high morals and do not come under temptation.

Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker in their novels "Frankstein" and "Dracula" have made successful use of the epistolary form with wider applicability. "The Diary of a Young Girl" by Anne Frank was published posthumously, by her father. It is not a work of imagination. It is the true story of the sufferings of Anne Frank a Jewish girl victim of holocaust.

Saul Bellow's "Herzog" and Stephan Chbosky's "The Perks of Being a wallflower" are most admired modern fiction. In "Color Purple" Alice Walker and, "The White Tiger" by Arvind Adiga are highly acclaimed by critics. Epistolary has a history of glorious three hundred years. It seems that this genre would never be obsolete in literature lovers.

It is a unique experience of direct, intimate relationship between reader and protagonist. The faith and trust generated by bondage help the protagonist in revealing 'step by step' the inner most secret thoughts. Readers devour it like stolen apple since the letters are mostly not addressed to him. He finds pleasure in peeping into other's lives. The diary is also a personal document where a writer can take full liberty in expressing his views creating an illusion of realism. The reader is tickled by a curiosity which is an impure form of imagination.

Since the authority of the author is lacking due to his choice of remaining unintrusive, the reader is free to make his own interpretation of the situation and action taking place in the novel. The moral conclusion, if any are to be drawn by the reader himself.

It is not necessary that letters would be posted. They may be a tool to keep the memories alive of a deceased person, or a past relationship. One could be honest and introspective in such letters. If letters are to be delivered to the person they are addressed, the narration may camouflage the emotions and events. Letters are expanded communication, to say something which you primarily could not communicate.

If the diary writer observed a chronology and on many days, nothing worth mention happened, later when publishing the diary comes to know about something happened during that time, or when publishing wants to retrospectively comment on the occurrence of events on a particular date has a poetic liberty to do so.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the authority of the author is lacking due to his choice of remaining unintrusive, the reader is free to make his own interpretation of the situation and action taking place in the novel

REFERENCES

1. BBC Radio 4's "15 March 2007 edition of 'In Our Times'" edition on Epistolary Literature. Hosted by Melvyn Bragg.
2. The Heroin Diaries the Heroin Diaries: A Year in the Life of a Shattered Rock Star.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Vipin Behari Goyal is an Indian author with distinctive style of writing. His love for books is unparalleled making him an avid reader as well as a prolific writer.

His debut English novel "Tall man small shadow" based on existentialism was published in July 2013.

His novels "Maya in search of Tantric father" and "The old man and the nymph" are also published in paperback.

He has also dabbled in documentary film making and is the maker of award-winning short film "Mines are Mine".

He is indie publisher of his ebooks "Burn me naked", "Apsara", "Untouchable's Daughter" and "Empty Cocoon".

