

The Theme of Transformation in *The Letter* by Dhumketu

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Introduction

Gaurishankar Govdhanram Joshi, popularly known as Dhumketu in Gujarati literature, was born on 12 December 1892 in Virpur, British India. His childhood name was Bhimdev. He is a Gujarati novelist, short story writer, thinker-critic, essayist, painter, and playwright. He has written 32 novels on short stories as well as social and historical subjects. He has written 492 short stories. In 1921, his writings on *Siddharaj Jaisingh and in 1922, Kumarpal* were published in *Sahitya* under the pseudonym *Dhumketu*. His famous novella 'Post Office' was published in the April 1923 issue of 'Sahitya' with a mention of 'Malelu', and the form of the novella became fixed in Dhumketu's mind. In 1935, he was awarded the highest award for Gujarati literature, the Ranjitram Gold Medal, but he refused it. The book was published in the US with the title "*Stories from Many Lands*", which included *The Letter* story.

Unfulfilled Hopes and Rejection: Ali's Journey to the Post Office - The short story "The Letter" begins on a dark winter night where Ali, wrapped in a blanket, walks through the city to the post office. The entire city was silent except for the barking of dogs on the road and the chirping of early birds. Ali reaches the post office, just as the future devotee is happy to see the temple, so is Ali. Hearing the sound coming from inside, Ali sits outside on the porch. Different names are heard from inside, a few times a name like Kochman Ali is heard. When Ali walks in everyone makes fun of him and Ali comes to the office disappointed without the letter.

Ali's Solitary and Cruel Life before Miriam's Departure

Ali recalls his youthful days. He was a clever hunter, just as opium needed opium, Ali did not go without hunting. As soon as Ali caught sight of a dusty pheasant, it would fall into his hands. He would not let a single bird live before his eyes. Ali was a very cruel and merciless man. Ali used to kill rabbits with eagle-like vision that even dogs could not find. But when one of his daughters, Miriam, grew up, the bride moved to Punjab with her husband, who had a job in the army. Ali used to live his life only for his daughter but after his daughter's marriage he felt the pangs of love and estrangement. Ali feels love. As long as Miriam was with him he hunted like a wicked man. But after Miriam got married, Ali's lonely life became boring. It was difficult for him to take even a single day off.

Ali's Shift to Reflection and Connection with Nature

He wandered to and fro and passed the days. Five years passed but no letter from Miriam came. He is very sad. When Ali was hunting, he was happy to see pheasant chicks running around in a frenzy and killed them. Now he is separated from his daughter and feels pain for the young pheasant. How he finds it painful and unbearable to live alone. After marrying Miriam, Ali forgot about hunting and had no interest in hunting. There is a change in his homeland, Ali, who knew nothing without hunting, now takes an interest in nature and lives a very simple life. His time is spent watching the fields and waving crops. Ali sees the fields full of crops with a steady vision and realizes, "Nature is the creation of love and the tears of hatred". That day Ali wept bitterly under the khakhra tree. This is a very beautiful scene. After that, Ali's life is different. Ali wanders in the village as a simple man, seeing him like this, the people of the village start considering him as a mad man. His clothes are tattered and Ali keeps a sack around him to keep out the cold in winter. After Miriam's departure, Ali's love for her daughter appears, otherwise her days would have been spent only in hunting. When Ali feels love for her daughter, Ali used to wait for the news of her daughter every day.

The Unyielding Wait for Miriam's Letter

Five years are spent waiting here and there but no letter from Miriam comes. Ali is very sad, he blames all this on the sin he committed in his youth. Now Ali is suffering the consequences of his sin. Ali is now in his old age. had reached He doesn't show up at the post office for a few days. After two or three days Ali comes to the post office panting and asks about Miriam's letter but that day the postmaster is in a hurry. The postmaster leaves quickly without giving any answer. Ali calms down and returns home. He leaves but once he looks back towards the post office. Ali's eyes were filled with compassion, now Ali did not even hope to live longer. He did not believe that the letter would not come, but Ali's patience had come to an end. He felt that now Miriam's letter would not come. Seeing a clerk coming towards him, Ali took out five guineas from a box kept near him and said, I don't need this anymore, you take it, your work will come and Ali tells the clerk to do one thing, if a letter from his daughter arrives, deliver it to her grave. Ali tells all this to the clerk, taking Allah as his witness. Ali is never seen again.

Atonement and Compassion: The Postmaster's Regret

One day the postmaster was worried, his daughter was sick in a distant country. The postmaster was sad because he had not received any news about his daughter. At that time the mail came and there was a knock. The postmaster is eagerly waiting for his daughter's letter, so the postmaster's son smiles and opens a letter and sees the name of coachman Ali Dosa on it. The postmaster throws away the letter as if electrocuted. Even though Ali never received a letter, he used to come and ask every day, seeing his name on the letter, he remembered it. When he learns that Ali is dead, he is transformed in moments from grief and worry, and human nature emerges. Here the poet has shown a change in another character. The post master understands Ali's pain and it is heartbreaking that despite being a father himself, he could not understand Ali's pain and the feelings of a father towards his daughter. The postmaster sees Ali's face with tears in his eyes. The postmaster shouts to Lakshmidas to whom Ali gives five guineas. Then Lakshmidas

tells the postmaster that Ali Doso is dead. The post master trembles after hearing that. The postmaster talks about Ali Dosa's letter to Laxmidas. He decides to go to Ali's grave both nights and leave a letter. After that both the postmaster and Lakshmidas put a letter on Ali's grave, but as there was no news of the postmaster's daughter yet, they decided to sit in the office that night and wait for the letter. In this verse, the poet has very beautifully described the changes in the lives of Ali and the postmaster due to the separation.

Conclusion

Ali is a skilled hunter who cannot escape any bird in front of him. But when his daughter Miriam grows up and goes to Punjab to get married. Ali cannot be alone without Miriam. He remembers the cruel things he did in life. Ali experiences the love and pain inherent in nature. Spend days looking at nature and fields. Ali reaches the post office early every morning without missing a single day for Miriam's letter. But the letter does not come. The postmaster makes fun of him but when his daughter falls ill he understands Ali's pain and relents. The postmaster is looking at the letter and after getting Ali's letter in his hand, Lakshmidas decides to put both of them on the grave. In the end, both go to Ali's grave and leave a letter to atone for their mistake.

Works Cited

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