

Prose literature during Medinian Period of Prophet Muhammad (s.)

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Abstract

The prose literature during Medinian Period of Prophet Muhammad (s.) based upon the letters of the Prophet (s.), Orations, proverbs, legends, descriptions of the leaders in different matters, encouragement speeches of the Army generals etc. Pre-literature societies, by definition, have no much written literature, but my possess rich and varied oral traditions such as folk, folklore and folk songs that effectively constitute an oral literature. After the rise of Islam, Arabic Prose Literature got an advantage to extend itself all over the world. In this period proverbs and speeches were developed in extensive forms. The Hadith literature was not compiled during the lifetime of Prophet (s.) as because the prophet did not allow the writing of Hadith as the feared that it may be the rival of the Quran. He had allowed only it transmission. But of course there were some companions of Prophet who were permitted to record his sayings. The orations of this period were generally free from rhymes and figures of speech. Generally, speeches delivered by some of the notable persons like Prophet (PBUH), tribal chiefs, general of army etc. had a huge impact upon the Arabian people. Tafsir literature was started during the period of early Islam in the form of oral literature. Salat, Hajj were mentioned in the Holy Quran but not defines how to perform, so it needs to analyze that how to perform Salat, Hajj etc. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explains easily all the matters which related to Salat, Hajj etc. The purpose of the paper is to show the remarkable growth of Arabic Prose Literature during the Medinian Period of Prophet Muhammad (s.)

Key Words: Arabic , Literature, Prose, Medinian

Introduction

The linguistic beauty of the early Islamic (from Hijrat upto the death of Prophet) prose literature was impressive. The Holy Quran is base of Arabic Prose Literature. Without any doubt that the Holy Quran is the great source of growth of prose literature during early Islam. Hadith is the next source of growth of Arabic Prose literature. Other sources which help to grow prose literature are the letters of the Prophet (s.), Orations,

proverbs, legends, descriptions of the leaders in different matters, encouragement speeches of the Army generals etc. After the rise of Islam, Arabic Prose Literature got an advantage to extend itself all over the world. In this period proverbs and speeches were developed in extensive forms. Early Islamic prose literature was influenced by the Holy Quran. The Quran, Hadith, Speeches, Orations, letters, folk stories were the sources of growth of prose literature during the early Islamic period.

Materials and Methods

The data for the study of this topic will be collected from both the primarily and secondarily sources are available in the Arabic and English literature. The method of acquiring of data will be both directly and indirectly from various universities, colleges and from various academics or public libraries. Thus this work will be based on published works research article in addition to the internet. As to follow up the methodology to complete the proposed work both descriptive and analytical method are accepted.

The Holy Qran

The meaning of Quran is reading. Quran is derived from the Arabic root qara'a , 'to read,' and means 'reading aloud' or 'chanting'. The growth of Arabic Prose Literature during the median period of Prophet Mohammad is remarkable. During the period of Medina prophet took so many important steps to develop Arabic Literature. He announced that education is compulsory for all Muslim men and women. He also established Madrassas to spread Arabic language and literature. Especially the Holy Quran plays an important role to grow this language. This book was revealed at the hand of Prophet Muhammad (s.) from Allah within long 23 years through the Angel Jibrail, beginning from 610 A.D. and ending with 623 A.D.. The Quranic verses were revealed in different circumstances and in different places. Sometimes only one or two verses were revealed and sometimes as many as ten, when the prophet (s.) received a derive message, he recited it to such of his companions as were present and they committed it to memory partially or fully according to their retentive power. The derive message were written on skin of goat , white stone, leafless palm branches of big tree and several other objects.

Hadith

The term of 'Hadith' means all that what Prophet (s.) said or did or approved in his life. Generally Hadith means news or information. Prophet Mohammad (sm.) individual and public life deals with many important talkings with men and women with many important topics or war.

Hadith literature is the important part of Arabic Prose literature. But in reality the foundation of the Hadith literature was firmly established during the period of Khulafa-i-Rashidin. We found a huge number of Hadith collections during the early Islamic period (Median Period). Some people memorized Hadith and those who was not able to memorize, they recorded it in written form. In Medina, particularly in the tribes of Aus

and Khazraj, some Jews knew writing which they used to children. When these tribes embraced Islam, only 11 persons in Medina according to al-Baladhuri were able to write. Since to be able to write was regarded a specialty, these conversant writing, shooting and swimming were called kamil(perfect). Sad b. Ubada and Usaid b. Hudair and Abdullah b. Ubai and Aus b. Khauli had the title of Kamil. The prophet had engaged from among his companions those conversant with lettering, for writing down the Quran and the first man to commit the revelation to writing was Ubai b. Kab. In case of his being absent the Prephet asked Zaid b. Thabit to write down.

But neither all these scribes had a uniform style of writing nor they followed any set rules strictly, as a result, in many cases writing dominant, writing of letters, document and other treaties etc. as well as that of the Quran and the Sharia laws became quite imperative. According to a well known version when Umar, prior to his conversion to Islam entered the house of his sister, Khabbab b. al Arat was also present there and both of them were reciting the Quran of which they had the chapter Taha written on a parchment. Another report showing the significance of writing is indicated by the fact was the prisoners each of them to teach ten Muslims how to write. Those who fulfilled this condition were set free. The prophet also encouraged his companions to learn foreign language so that the mission of Islam could easily be spread among other linguistic areas. Zaid b. Thabit had learnt Hebrew and Syriac languages within 17 days at the inslance of the prophet as Bukhari and Ibn Sad report. Abdullah b .Amar b. Aas also knew the Syriac language. With the expansion of Islamic teritories, those converted to Islam tried to learn the Arabic language in order to understand the meaning of the Quran. Ibn Hisham and Al-Tabari reported that the prophet had given a written directive regarding the administrative policies to Amr b. Hazm when he departed to assume his office as governor of Yemen. And leter on, when department of Justice and Education were put in charge of Muadh b. Jabal and he took leave for Yeman he had also received similar directions in black and white. In spite of the fact that the majority of Arabs was illiterate and the practice of writing books was not so common, we find the early Muslims to have rendered commendable service in the events and in transmitting those onwards to posterity. It appears still more surprising to find that in comparatively civilized countries where education was common and people where familiar with writing books, not a single effort had ever been made, neither in pre-Islamic days nor afterwards , to preserve, on such a large scale, the record of doing and saying of any reformer, religious leader or even a ruler.

Letters of the Prophet(s.)

Some of modern historians of Islam, more specially the European orientlists, assert that the practice of writing was absolutely unknown to the Arabs during the early days of Islam. It is only partially true; it should not imply that the Arabs could not write even when it was necessary. We come across so many traditions of the prophet which recorded his command to his followers to write down some important rules. The prophet, for example, before Hijrah, had issued written order to Tamim Dari of Jordan, a town in

Palestine, would be treated as his Jagir whenever it comes under the Muslim rule. And during his journey to Medina, he granted written assurance of peace to Saraqa b. Malik al-Mudlaji. The prophet had also signed a covenant with the tribe of Juhainah, the text of this pact is not available to us, yet Ibn Hisham while describing the expedition of Hamza b. Abdul Muttalib says: Majd b. Amr al-Juhni came and stood between the Muslim and the Quraish since he had peace covenants with both of them. Another agreement was made with Banu Dumrah in Safar beginning with these words: "This has been written by prophet of Allah for Banu Dumrah..." During the 5th year of Hijrah, at the time of the Khandaq Battle a treaty with Banu Fazarah and Banu Ghatafan, was also drafted but it was destroyed latter on since the terms could not be agreed upon by the two parties.

The famous treaty of Hudaibiah was written during the 6th year after Hijrah and the infidels took exception to the words 'Messenger of Allah' in the document and the prophet himself replaced them with 'Son of Abdullah'. The historians also report about the Tabuk expedition that Ukaider b. Abd al-Malik b. Abd al-Jandal, had written a document showing his allegiance to Islam and the prophet had affixed his seal on the document with his nail impression. Abu Ubaid Qasim b. Sallam says: 'I have seen this document; it was written on a parchment of white leather. I had also transcribed it.....'. It was a common practice among the rulers of al-Hirah that instead of putting a stamp or thumb impression, they made a half-circle on the documents with their nails.

Some authentic texts of the letters written by the prophet to Caeser, Kisra, Muqauqas, Neggashi or other neighboring rulers are quoted by the early authorities and a few original letters have also been discovered during the later centuries. Ibn Asakr says that Abul Abbas Abdullah b. Mohammad had purchased for 300 gold coins, the original document of the treaty which the prophet had made with the citizens of Ailah city. We did also find in the early chronicles many instances of writing down the directives for provincial administrators. They were dispatched to the district officers and provincial governors, which on his death-bed, the prophet is also reported to have framed rules and regulations regarding the rates of Zakat on cattles, farms mine etc. He gave up the ghost before these rules could be dispatch to the district tax-collectors. The text of these rules is found in various historical sources like the Sunan of Dar Qatni, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Kanz al-Ummal etc.

Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri says that he had seen the text of these rules. It was under the custody of the decedents of Umar, and Umar b. Abd al-Aziz had procured a copy of it for there state records office.

A large number of written prose literatures were found during the time of Early Islam. We can see the prose literature in the form of treaty, letters, injunctions, deeds, orders etc. So this type of different writing helps to grow Arabic prose literature during that time

Proverbs, Legends & Folk stories

Proverbs was the notable one, which has a vital role to grow Arabic Prose Literature during the Early Islam (622 A.D. to 632 A.D.). In this period different people used proverbs in different ways to express their views. Prophet Mohammad (s.) also used so many proverbs during his lifetime to express his views. To encourage education Prophet (s.) declared “The ink of a learned man is purer than the blood of a martyr. Prophet said, “ The arrogant who likes to make people stand up for him in exaggerated praise shall be seated in Hell”. These proverbs are the basic source of growth of Arabic prose literature.

Legends & Folk Stories also helps to grow Arabic Prose Literature during the Early Islamic period. During the time of the Prophet (s.) folk stories were popular among the Arabians. People of the different parts of the Arab were enjoyed different types of stories. Some related to wild animals and some related to kings and queens. They loved enjoy the stories very much. Legends were very popular among the Arabians. Aged man explains some stories related to the war. Specially about some war heroes of their tribes. How they showed bravery during the battle time. All Legends & Folk stores were in prose style. At that time it helps Arabic prose literature to grow and these legends & folk stories were the essential part of Arabic oral prose literature.

Speeches and Orations

The chief features of early Islamic orations were started with praise of Allah, attestation of prophet hood and quotation from the Holy Quran. Oratory was the special art, which developed by the Arabians in a nice way during the early Islamic period. It was the effective way to attract the opposition to Islam and it was used by the leaders in the battlefield to guide the soldiers in proper way. It helps the soldiers to encourage for the battle. The orations of this period were generally free from rhymes and figures of speech. Generally, speeches delivered by the some of notable persons like prophet (s.), tribal chiefs, general of army etc.. We may mention here that prophet Mohammad (s.), Abu Bakr Siddiq (r.a.), Umar bin Khattab(r.a.) and Ali bin Abi Talib (r.a.) were the fantastic orator of that period. The important speeches of prophet Mohammad (s.), Abu Bakr Siddiq (r.a.), Umar bin Khattab(r.a.) and Ali bin Abi Talib (r.a.) were helps to grow Arabic prose literature during that period.

Tafsir Literature

Tafsir plays important role to the growth of Arabic prose literature. Tafsir also the part of Arabic prose literature and the meaning of TAFSIR is “Explanation”. There were so many hard word used in the holy Quran, it is not easy task to analyze them. Prophet(s.) explained the hard word and make it easy to understand. Tafsir literature was started during the period of early islam in the form of oral literature. Salat, Hajj were mentioned in the Holy Quran but not defines how to perform, so it needs to analyze that how to

perform Salat ,Hajj etc.. Prophet(s.) explains easily all the matters which related to Salat, Hajj etc.. In this way Tafsir got important positions during early islam. Prophet Mohammad (s.) sent learned persons to the different places to teach Holy Quran and analyze the Quranic matters. But this task was not easy to perform for general class of people.Few numbers of Sahabas were close to Prophet(s.) could explain the Quranic matters.They were high qualified people among the Arabians. Only they can perform this kind of job.

Conclusion

The growth of prose literature was increased day by day. The early Islamic prose literature was much standard than Pre-Islamic prose literature. The development of Arabic prose literature was related to different fields. The Holy Quran was the first written book in Arabic language. It was the only source of knowledge and literature of Arabians during the first part of 7th century. Especially the Holy Quran plays an important role to grow this literature. Arabic prose literature is the vital part of Arabic language and literature. In early Islamic period the Hadith literature also played a vital role in Arabic Prose Literature. After Quran Muslim people follow the Hadith. So Hadith is also very important source of Arabic Prose Literature. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was an illiterate person but his speeches were wonderful. His speech and directions were written by some of his companions. This writing also plays an important role in the growth of Arabic Prose Literature. A large number of written prose literatures in the form of treaty, letters, injunctions, deeds, orders were found during the time of Early Islam. So this type of different writing helps to grow Arabic prose literature during that time. In this period different people used proverbs in different ways to express their views. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also used so many proverbs during his lifetime to express his views. There were so many interesting stories, which was very popular during the early Islamic period. It was transformed orally by mouth to mouth. Later these stories were written and compiled and becomes the great source of growth of Arabic prose literature.

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