



Ziya Paşa

(1829-1880)

A translation of Ziya Paşa's essay "Poetry and Prose," with a brief introduction and the transliteration of the Ottoman original.

By: Mehtap Ozdemir

Ziya Paşa (1829-1880)

Ziya Paşa was one of the most important figures of what is conventionally known as the Ottoman *Tanzimat* period. He was an intellectual, author, translator, and statesman. Educated in one of the newly established schools of the Tanzimat reform, Ziya Paşa rose in the state service, becoming the third secretary to Sultan Abdülmecid I in 1859. His professional progress was however halted mainly because of his involvement in the Young Ottomans movement. After being exiled to Cyprus in 1867, Ziya Paşa had to flee Istanbul to spend some years initially in Paris and then in London. Abroad, together with Namık Kemal, he published *Muhbir (The Correspondent)* and *Hürriyet (Liberty)* to voice their concerns and criticisms about what they saw as problematic in the political status quo, pushing for more structural reforms that would combine monarchy with representational government. In exile, Ziya Paşa also wrote *Zafername (The Book of Victory)* in 1870, a political satire on the general corrupt bureaucratization of the Sublime Port, specifically targeting the grand vizier Ali Pasha. Later, along with other Young Ottomans in exile, he was pardoned by the palace and returned to Istanbul in 1871. Until his death, he occupied several governor positions. Along with civil service, Ziya Paşa also carried out an active literary career. He translated from French Rousseau's *Émile*, Molière's *Tartuffe*, and Louis Viardot's *Historiées des Arabes et des Mores d'Espagne*. Perhaps most importantly, he published a poetry anthology, *Harabat (The Tavern, 1874-75)*, a three-volume anthology of Ottoman trilingual poetry, which is of great significance for its larger literary implications as well as for its role in starting a debate with Namık Kemal, who criticized the anthology in two separate responses. Ziya Paşa published the article translated here, "Şiir ve İnşa," in *Hürriyet* in 1868. In the spirit of the emerging discourse on new literature, he argued for linguistic reforms like simplification and standardization. Most importantly, he claimed that "national poetry" should include popular poetry and poetry written in the language of common people. So, ideologically, the article stands in contrast to the anthology, since the latter suggests an idea of Ottoman literature that is cosmopolitan and multilingual. Together, Ziya Paşa's works provide

great insight into the multiplicity of opinions on the problem of language and the meaning of literature in the late Ottoman Empire.

Translated by Mehtap Ozdemir

Poetry and Prose

Since the product of education in our country is limited to works of poetry and prose, it doesn't hurt to say a couple of words on these forms. Poetry is generally defined as speech in verse; that is, lines that have words with parallel patterns of voweled and unvoweled letters. Indeed, rhyming only came into existence among modern nations. Ancient Greeks adhered to meter, but they did not consider rhyming necessary. Poetry comes naturally to every nation. All nations and peoples that have emerged on this earth have had their own poetry. One then wonders, what constitutes Ottoman poetry? Does it include the *kasâyyid* (odes), *gazeliyât* (ghazal/lyric poetry), *kitaat* (stanzas), and *mesneviyât* (masnavi/rhyming couplets) that we find in the divans (poetry collections) of Necatî, Bakî, and Nef'î—poems cut short (*mahbun*) and confined (*muhbis*) in meters like *bahr-i ramal* ("trotting" meter) and *hazaj* ("trilling" meter)?¹ Or does it refer to songs by Nedim and Vasîf, which are set to melodies by our composers, like Hâce and İtrî? No, none of these is the Ottoman poetry. For it is evident that in these verses Ottoman poets produced something hybrid by imitating Persian poets, who in turn imitated Arab poets. And this imitation was not limited to versification; it extended to ideas and meanings. For our past poets, the cultured thing was to try to imitate Arabs and Persians as closely as possible in style, expression, imagery, and content, without giving any regard to whether the nation we belonged to had a language and a poetry of our own and, if so, whether it was possible to reform it.

¹ Literally, *bahr* means sea; it is also used to refer to a meter category. *Bahr-i ramal* is a meter of verse that is likened to a horse trotting, formed with the measure of *fâilâtün*; *hezej/hazaj* is another meter that has three equal feet in each hemistich of the measure *mafâ'ilun*.

As for *inşa*—that is, prose—it is in a similar state. If we look at such prose works as *Münşeat-ı Feridun*, *Asar-ı Veysi*, *Nergisî*, and other notable examples, we find that less than a third of their vocabulary is Turkish. In order to show off their eloquence, these writers mixed the sciences of embellishment and elucidation to such a degree that their writing comprises a succession of convoluted phrases. Without the help of dictionaries like *al-Qamus* and *Farhang*, it is impossible to deduce the meaning of these works, even for someone with a sufficient grasp of the science of meaning and other fields of Arabic *ādāb* (linguistic sciences) who has spent a great deal of time contemplating them as if studying for a lesson. Today, official writing issued by the Port and other state offices, while not as abstruse as old prose, is still full of rhymed phrases whose meanings are obscure and contentious, since the scribes at the Sublime Port, while not on par with past men of letters, are still illegitimate children of those former generations. Past prose works, despite their incorporation of Arabic vocabulary and fabricated phraseology, made some sense. But now, because our time is one of refinement and ideas and politics are subtle, we come across certain phrases—in sultanic edicts, official letters issued from the Grand Vizierate, and other official reports or notes—whose true meaning is impossible to understand even though all the words are familiar. Strangely enough, prose in this fashion is considered good or beautiful writing. For instance, let's suppose that a letter containing two to three hundred lines about a matter like the *timar* system (land tenure) or tithes, after circulating through the finance ministry, the office of accounts, and the supreme/high council, is issued by the grand vizier and that this letter reaches a man who has knowledge of the matter; if we ask this man to read the letter and rephrase it in his own words, then we will perceive more clearly the poor state of our prose writing, as well as the low level of our scribes.

Without a doubt, this current age did not cause the declining state of our poetry and prose. Just as Persians modeled their poetry and prose on Arabic literature after they accepted Islam and began studying the language to learn religious sciences, so did we make the mistake of imitating the Persian style and education at the cost of our own language, since there was a need for Persian scholars in the early days of establishing the Sublime [Ottoman] State. And this negligence and failure is an unforgivable mistake on the part of the scholars of Rum. For it is

language that enables the mutual exchange of opinion among humans. If a nation's language is not recorded and is bent to the will of anyone with a pen in hand, it loses its natural state, which corrupts that nation's means of communication. Today, what is the use of reading official edicts and orders aloud to common people? Are these official writings intended only for those skilled in language and composition, or are they written so that common people can understand what the state says? When asked, a countryman from Anatolia or Rumelia would say that they had no knowledge of the state's financial plan or of edicts and orders about tithe bids and sales, tax allocations, or other matters. As a result, since they do not know what *Tanzimat* is all about and what kinds of reforms the new order has produced, these poor people still suffer at the hands of this country's nobles, cruel governors, and officials, crushed by the ways of oppression and injustice that were in place before the *Tanzimat*, and they have no means of expressing their complaints. In contrast, in France or England, if an official acts against the established order, even slightly, the common people immediately take the matter to court. That is because [legal] rules are written in an accessible language and duly stated.

Some years ago, the Regency of Tunisia wanted to translate *Dustür*² into Arabic and found someone in Istanbul who seemed to know Arabic and understand Turkish well enough. The translator encountered at least twenty problems every two to three pages and decided to ask others for their opinion. At a gathering, he came across a group of eight people who knew Turkish very well and were known for their skill in poetry and prose. The translator asked the group his questions, but to no avail. In fact, on some matters, these eight men had conflicting opinions. Eventually, the translator left the gathering, declaring that "what I undertook to translate is not *Dustür*, but a book of conundrums." Since he couldn't finish the translation, it was transferred to someone else, who couldn't translate it either. Ultimately, the Regency of Tunisia was not able to obtain the legal code of the state that it belonged to.

² *Dustür* is the title of the official corpus that includes laws, regulations, and other legal matters in the Ottoman Empire, which was collated in the early nineteenth century, first published by Cevdet Pasha under this name in 1863, and continued to be expanded at different intervals in the late Ottoman and early Republican years. See for more: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/dustur>

The disorderly nature of the practice of composition causes much harm to the state and the nation. While Islamic law is exempt from change, since a written record of proceedings is preferred in traditional [Islamic] courts, verdicts from other courts are written in such jumbled language that at times the verdict accords neither with the plea nor with the execution. And this confusion precipitates many wrong decisions, which are, when taken all together, misinterpreted to evidence the unjustness of the state. For instance, the penal code, which is still the principal code of law in councils and courts, is articulated in such an incomplete and tortuous manner that when councils and courts want to resolve a case by referring to one of its articles, they are forced to drag the case like a raw animal hide and end up rendering an unfair decision. If the case cannot be made to fit any of the existing articles, then the courts consider similar or approximate cases. For instance, suppose that while being questioned on grounds of debauchery, a man confesses that he entered a house by climbing a wall. Since there is no exactly relevant clause in the debauchery article, then one refers to a clause that concerns forced entry. Since the Supreme/High Council or the Council of Judicial Ordinances does not have a full grasp of the case and considers it solely in light of the written report, and since local reports are written to varying ends, it often happens that a poor man who ought to receive a three-month imprisonment is instead charged with ten years of hard labor, or a murderer who should be given ten years of hard labor instead escapes with a three-month imprisonment. The same applies to interrogations. When a person under interrogation delivers their complaint in their own language, the interrogator adds words and phrases off the cuff, complicating the diction with "being that" "being found that," "notwithstanding," and "on the basis of." If he feels generous, the interrogator then reads the account to the subject, asking "Didn't you just say this? Bring your seal or place your thumb here." The interrogated subject listens to his own account as if it were written in Arabic, understanding none of it, and signs it with his seal or thumb so as not to offend the official. So it happens that such an interrogation might result in this poor man's death sentence; perhaps, if it were written in the way he actually told it, it could bring about his rescue.

Perhaps surprisingly, for us, to be able to write is one thing, and being a scribe or writer is another. In other languages, in contrast, those who have a knowledge of composition and spelling can become scribes. Of course, in every language, becoming a man of letters requires a great deal of knowledge; yet knowing how to write is normally enough to be able to express oneself on paper. In our language, however, after having learned how to write one needs to learn a great deal more. First of all, one must have a knowledge of Turkish orthography. But this is most difficult to achieve, because there exists no dictionary exclusively based on Turkish. As different nations were integrated into the empire, Ottomans borrowed the names of new things from the languages of these other nations in a butchered, irregular form. Each scribe would write the word as he perceived its phonetics, while others arrived at different spellings. As a result, anyone attempting to learn orthography is puzzled by which of these versions to adopt. In particular, for the last twenty years, senior officials at the Sublime Port have developed a tendency to become walking dictionaries; some write by using the Arabic letter *y* [ي] as in “bildirir,” and some without it as in “b(i)ld(i)r(i)r”.³ Junior officials, since the start of their writing careers, are all perplexed by this confusion. Secondly, it is necessary that those wishing to write know Arabic and Persian orthography, which requires learning the grammar of these languages. One can master these languages’ lexical modes correctly only by studying their morphology and syntax. In addition, one must be employed in a government office for a couple of years. Without this experience, one cannot know how to turn verbal forms like “idiğüne” into “olduğuna.” This is the ultimate lesson, the archer’s secret⁴, taught to a scribe before entering the coterie of the Sublime Port scribes and becoming a writing machine. If the aspiring scribe who learns this skill after so much toil is a person of high intelligence and aptitude, he should feel not pride but disappointment in such an education. For it familiarizes him with a set of lexical structures which confine him to a limited field of expression. Of all the ideas that come to his mind, he can write only those articulable within this narrow set of structures, and he has to give up the rest, those that are more refined or unusually subtle. Because he is bound to this field, he is deprived

³ What Ziya Pasa means is that some vowel the word “bildirir” by writing the letter “i,” which is written by using the Arabic letter [ي] while others silence them.

⁴ “Kemankeş sırrı” refers to the last words that a senior archer tells a trainee right before he takes a shot to show his skills to become a master archer. It is believed that these last words refer to two verses from the Qur’an. What’s meant in this text is the tricks of the trade.

of the opportunity to exceed the level of his predecessors. It is for this reason that both our poetry and our composition have fallen behind. The wretched paradigm of our scribal practice persists to the detriment of men of letters who have shown accomplishment in their works and publications and, as a result, have generated a great revolution in literature. Yet, since these men declined to limit themselves exclusively to the circumscribed confines of the scribal pen, which repeats words like “*olmağla, bulunmağla, ecilden, hasebiyle, mebni, dolayı, derkar, aşikar,*”⁵ they were not duly employed in their offices. For instance, such talented men as Ali, Müşfik, or İsmail Paşazade Galip Bey did not receive the respect and regard their invaluable perceptiveness deserved; some of them succumbed to madness, and some were lost in overconsumption.

What a shame! Does the picture presented here mean that there exists no poetry or prose written in a language natural to our nation? The answer is no. Our natural poetry and prose live among suburban folks and the common people of Istanbul. Our poetry is folk songs scorned by classical poets for being unmetrical and verses known among bards as folk songs [*deyiş*], triolets [*üçleme*], and pastoral poems [*kayabaşı*]. And our natural prose is the style of composition adopted by the translator of *al-Qamus* [Mütercim Asım Efendi] and recently used in the newspaper *Muhbir*. Of course, this style of poetic and prose writing appears less eloquent and flowery than desired. This is because as the Ottoman nation grew, this poetic and prose style was not in demand and, therefore, did not develop enough. Once it receives attention, this style will produce many poets and writers in an astoundingly short time. A poet practicing “natural poetry” can pen forty to fifty lines upon brief consideration of a topic. And in order to cultivate national writing, literate people must be able to express themselves adequately on paper. With our poetry and prose in their current state, people must concern themselves not only with the organization of their ideas but also with the structure and composition of their vocabulary; consequently, improvisation is not possible. In other nations, poets, like our folk poets, can compose impromptu, whereas here they deliver a five-couplet ghazal in nine months. In other nations, notable people and writers do not pen their own letters or works; they generally

⁵ The first six words variously mean causation and the last two mean “clearly/evidently.”

dictate to their secretaries, who transcribe them. In fact, in our country, village leaders also dictate to imams. This is why correspondences and original composition transpire easily and swiftly in other countries. In contrast, here writing a letter requires drafting one or two rough copies before producing a clean copy. This causes delays and tardiness in our correspondences, and faults and defects in our expression. To eliminate this harmful situation, we must be guided by nature.

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Şiir ve İnşâ

Çünkü mahsûl-ı tahsîl bizim memâlike göre yalnız şiir ve inşâ cihetindedir, bunlardan bir nebze bahsedilmek fâideden hâlî değildir. Şiirin ta'rif-i umumîyesi kelâm-ı mevzundur; yani iki satır sözün her birindeki sükûn ve harekâtın müsavi olmasından ibarettir. Hatta kafiye usulü milel-i müteahhire beyinde hâdis olmuştur. Eski Yunânîler yalnız vezne riayetle kafiye iltizam etmezlerdi. Şiir her kavimde tabiidir; rûy-i arza ne kadar milel ve akvâm gelmişse cümlesinin kendilerine mahsûs şiirleri vardı. Osmanlıların şiiri acaba nedir? Necâti ve Bâkî ve Nef'i divanlarında gördüğümüz bahr-ı remel ve hezceden mahbûn ve muhbis kasâyîd ve gazeliyât ve kitaât ve mesneviyât mıdır, yoksa Hâce ve İtrî gibi musikîşinâsânın rabt-ı makamat ettikleri Nedîm ve Vâsîf şarkıları mıdır? Hayır, bunların hiçbirisi Osmanlı şiiri değildir. Zira görülüyor ki bu nazımlarda Osmanlı şâirleri şuarâ-yı İnan'a ve şuarâ-yı İnan dahi Araplara taklit ile melez bir şey yapılmıştır. Ve bu taklit üslûb-ı nazımda değil ve belki efkâr ve meâniye bile sirâyet edip bizim şuarâ-yı eslâf edâ-yı nazm u ifadede ve hayâlât ve meânide Arap ve Acem'e mümkün mertebe taklîde sa'y etmeyi maariften addetmişler ve acaba bizim mensûb olduğumuz milletin bir lisânı ve şiiri var mıdır ve bunu ıslâh kâbil midir, aslâ burasını mülâhaza etmemişlerdir.

İnşâ yolunda da hal tamamıyla böyle olmuştur. *Münşe'at-ı Feridun* ve *Âsâr-ı Veysî* ve *Nergisî* ve sâir münşeât-ı mutebere ele alınsa, içlerinde üçte bir Türkçe kelime bulunmaz. Ve bir maslahat ifade ederken bedî ve beyan fenleri karıştırılarak ibrâz-ı belâgat için öyle müşevveş mütetâbiü'l-izâfât ibâreler yazmışlardır ki *Kâmus* ve *Ferheng* beraber olmadıkça ve bir adam fenn-i meâni ve âdâb-ı Arapta kemâl-i mahareti olduktan sonra âdeta bir ders mütalâa eder gibi birçok zamanlar sarf-ı zihin etmedikçe manasını istihrâca muktedir olamaz. Hâlâ Bâbiâli ve devâir-i sâireden yazılan muharrerât-ı resmîye, gerçi eski zamanlarda gelen erbâb-ı maarif iktidârında kâtipler olmadığından evvelki münşeât derecesinde muakkad değilse de bunlar da ol babanın veled-i zinâsı olduklarından yine seci ve rabt u manası mevhûm ve meşkûk ibârât ile memlûdur. Eski inşâlarda lûgat-ı garibe ve ibârât-ı muhayyele var ise de bari zımnında iyi kötü bir mânâ dahi çıkardı. Şimdi ise asır nazikleşmiş ve efkâr ve politika incelmış olduğundan bazı fermanlar ve mektub-ı sâimler ve takrirlerde öyle ibâreler görülüyor ki lûgatlar herkesin bildiği şeyler iken

mânâ-yı sahîhi ne olduğu anlaşılacak kabil olmuyor. Garibi şurası ki böyle anlaşılacak ibâre yazabilmek hüsn-i kitâbetten addolunuyor. Meselâ Maliye aklâmı ve Divan-ı Muhasebât ve Meclis-i Vâlâ'yı dolaşır nihayet emirnâme-i sâmi yazılmak icâp ettirmiş timar veya âşâr maddesine dâir mufassal bir mektub-ı sadâret-penâhi—ki iki üç yüz satır sözdür—bu yolda melekesi olan en marûf bir zâtın eline verilsin, okutulsun, hitâmında “şu okuduğunuz maddeyi lisânen takrîr ediniz” denilsin, o vakit kitâbetimiz ne kitabet ve kâtibimiz ne kâtiptir meydana çıkar.

Vakia şiiir ve inşânın bu hale girmesi bu asrın yapması değildir. Acemler kabûl-i İslamiyet'ten sonra, ulûm-ı şeriyeyi tahsîl için lisân-ı Arab'ın tahsîline düştükleri sırada kendi lisânlarının şiiir ve inşâsını dahi ona taklit ettikleri gibi, biz de bidâyet-i teessüs-i Devlet-i Aliyye'de İran ulemâsını celbe muhtaç olduğumuzdan onların terbiyesi üzre kendi lisanımızı bırakıp Acem şivesine taklit hatasına düşmüşüzdür. Ve ulemâ-yı Rûm'un bu hususta ettikleri ihmal ve kusur affolunmaz bir hatadır. Zira benî âdem arasında medâr-ı teât-i efkâr lisandır. Bir milletin lisanı kavâid-i mazbûta altında olmayıp her eline kalem alan kimsenin keyfine mutabaât eder ve hâl-i tabîîsinden çıkarsa ol millet beyninde vâsita-i muâmelât bozulmuş demek olur. Elyevm resmen ilân olunan fermanlar ve emirnâmeler ahad-ı nâs huzûrunda okutuldukta bir şey istifâde ediliyor mu? Ya bu muharrerât yalnız kitâbette melekesi olanlara mı muhsûstur yoksa avâm-ı nâs devletin emrini anlamak için midir? Anadolu'da ve Rumeli'nde ahad-ı nâstan her şahsa, devletin bir ticâret nizâmı var mıdır ve âşârın sûret-i müzâyede ve ihalesine ve tevzî-i vergiye ve şuna buna dair fermanlar ve emir-nâmeleri vardır diye sorulsun; görülür ki, biçârelerin birinden haberi yoktur. Bu sebeptendir ki hâlâ bizim memalikte Tanzimat nedir ve nizam-ı cedide ne türlü ıslahât hâsıl etmiştir, ahâlî bilmediklerinden, ekser mahallerde müteayyinân-ı memleket ve zaleme-i vülât ve memûrîn ellerinde âdeta kable't Tanzimat cereyan eden usûl-i zulm ü i'tisâf altında ezilir ve kimseye dertlerini anlatamazlar. Ama Fransa ve İngiltere memâlikinden birinde memurun birisi nizâmât-ı mevcûde hilâfında cüzi bir hareket edecek olsa avâm-ı nâs derhal davacı olur. Zira nizâmat halkın anladığı lisanda yazılmış ve lâyıkiyla tebliğ edilmiştir.

Tunus vilâyeti bundan birkaç sene evvel *Düstûr*'un Arabîye tercümesi arzu ederek bu hizmeti İstanbul'da güzelce Arabî bilir ve Türkçe anlar bir zâta havale eder. O zât iki üç sahifede bir, yirmi

kadar müşkile tesadüf ederek, müracaat için bir meclise gelir. Orada Türkçe lisanında vukûf-ı tam, şiir ve inşâda mahâret-i kâmile ile ma'ruf yedi sekiz kişiye tesadüf eder. Müşkilâtını onlardan sual eder, hiçbiri halle muktedir olamaz ve hatta mesailin bazılarında sekizinin içtihadı birbirine mugayir çıkar. Mütercim biçaresi "meğer bizim *Düstûr* diye tercümesine başladığımız şey muamma risâlesi imiş" diyerek çıkar gider. Nihâyet tercümeyle bitiremez, sonra başka bir zâta havale olunur, o da yapamaz. Hâsılı Tunus vilayeti mensup olduğu devletin kanunnamesine mâlik olamaz.

Usûl-i inşânın bu vechile yolsuz olması mülk ve milletçe daha pek çok fenâlıkları müeddî olmaktadır. Yalnız mehâkim-i şer'iyede usûl-i sakk muteber olduğundan ahkâm-ı şeriye tagayyürden masûn olup, ancak sâir mahkemelerden verilen ilâmlar ol derece müşevveşü'l-ibâredir ki hükmün kâh davâya ve kâh icrâya bile mutabakat etmediği vuku bulur. Bundan ne kadar haksız hükümler zuhura gelir ki cümlesi devletin adaletsizliğine hamlolunur. Mecâlis ve mehâkimde hâlâ düstûr-ı amel olan ceza kanunnâmesi öyle nâkîsü'l-ifade ve ol surette müşevveşü'l-ibâredir ki meclisler ve mahkemeler gördükleri davayı onun bendlerinden birine tatbik ile hükmetmek için davayı yaş deri gibi çekiştirmeğe ve ekseriya nahak hükmetmeğe mecbur olurlar. Ama suret-i dava bendin hiçbirine uydurulamaz ise yalnız ibârece vech-i münasebet kifâyet eder. Mesela bir adam zamparalıkta tutulup istintak edilirken bir bend-i sarîh olunmadığından mücerred haneye girmek hakkında olan bende tatbik olunur gider. Meclis yahut Divân-ı Ahkâm ise mahallinde davanın suret-i vukuuna vâkîf olmayıp gelen mazbata üzerine hükmü tasdik ettiğinden ve mahallî mazbatalar ise agrâz-ı gûnâgûn üzerine yazıldığından, mesela hakikatte üç ay kifayet edecek bir biçarenin on sene küreğe konulduğu ve on sene küreğe gidecek bir caninin üç ay hapis ile kurtarıldığı kesîr-ü'l-vukudur. Kezalik istintaklarda dahi hal böyledir. İstintak olunan biçare derdini bildiği lisanla söylerken müstantik efendi "olduğundan" lafzına aşağıda bir de "bulunduğundan" ve "olmağla" ve "bulunmağla" gibi bir râbîta düşürüp ötekinin hiç lisanından sudûr etmeyen ibâreleri cebinden yazar. Sonra mürüvvet ederse bir kere de yüzüne karşı okur ve "bunu sen söylemedin mi, getir mührünü ve yok ise parmağını bas" der. İstintak olunan adam okunan şeyi Arapça gibi dinleyip bir şey anlamadan, yalnız efendiyi gücendirmeyeyim itikadıyla mührünü ya parmağını basar. İşte bu istintaknâme gâh olur ki

biçarenin idamına sebep olur; belki onun dediği yolda yazılsa kurtulmak ihtimali bulunur. Taaccübe şâyân değil midir ki bizde yazı bilmek başka, kâtip olmak yine başkadır. Halbuki sair lisanlarda yazı ve imlâ bilen katip olur. Vâkia her lisanda edip olmak hayli malûmata tevakkuf ederse de, âdeta muradını kâğıt üzerine ifade etmek için yazı yazmak kifayet eyler. Bizde ise yazı öğrendikten mâada birçok şeyler daha bilmek lâzım gelir. Evvelâ Türkçe imlâ bilinmelidir; halbuki en güç şey budur. Zira vaktiyle Türkçeye mahsus lûgat kitabı yapılmamış ve Osmanlılar milel-i sâireyi daire-i hükûmetlerine aldıkça her birinde gördükleri yeni şeylerin isimlerini ol milletın lisanından alıp az çok bozarak kullanmış ve her kâtip bir lûgati sükûn ve harekâtının zihnince uyan bir şekli ile yazıp sairleri dahi diğer surette zapt etmiş olduklarından imlâ öğrenecek kimse evvel emirde bunların hangisine tâbi olacağında mütehayyir olur. Hele yirmi seneden beri Babıalî'de teferrüd eden büyük memurların her biri bir canlı lûgat olmak hevesine düşüp kimisi ya ile bildirir, kimisiz ya'sız bildirir. Yazmağa başlayalıdan beri küçük kâtipler ne yapacaklarını şaşırıldılar. Sâniyen Arabî ve Farisî imlâ bilmek lazımdır. Bu iki lisanın imlâsını bilmek, kavâidini tahsile mevkuf olduğundan en az sarf ve nahvi görmeyince doğru terkîb yazmak kabil olmaz. Sâlisen bunlardan sonra bir de aklâm-ı devletten birinde birkaç seneler istihdam olunmak ister. Bu olmadıkça "idiğüne"yi "olduğuna"ya rabt etmek yolu bulunamaz. Ve bu nükte kemankeş sırrı gibi kâtiplerin ders-i âhîri olduğundan, her ne zaman bu melekeyi hâsıl ederse Bâbıalî'nin kullandığı kâtipler sırasına geçebilir ve güya bir yazı makinesi olur. Lâkin bu kadar zahmetle şu melekeyi ele geçirmiş olan zât ashâb-ı karîha ve kabiliyetten ise bu tahsilinden mütelezziz olacak yerde müteessif olmalıdır. Çünkü me'lûf olduğu revâbit-ı terkîbât kendini bir dâire-i mahdûde içine sokmuştur ki zihnine tebâdü eden meâniden yalnız melekesine uyabilenleri yazıp, sâiri ki gayet nazik ve gayr-ı me'nûs-ı dekâyıktır, onları terk ve fedaya mecbur ve madem ki bu zincir içinde bağlıdır, emsali raddesinden ileri gitmekten mahrum ve mağdur olur. Bu sebeple gerek şiiimiz ve gerek kitâbetimiz ne derece geri kalmıştır. O yere geçecek usul-i kalem seyyiâtındandır ki teliflerde, matbuatta âsâr-ı marifetlerini ibrâz ile edebiyatta bir inkılâb-ı âzîm husûlüne sebep olan zevâtın ekseri "olmağla, bulunmağla, ecilden, hasebiyle, mebnî, dolayı, derkâr, âşikâr" daire-i fâsidesine inhisâra tenezzül etmedikleri için kalemlerinde lâyıkiyla müstahdem değillerdi. Yine o seyyiattandır ki Ali gibi, Müştak gibi, İsmail Paşazâde Galib Bey gibi birçok girân-kıymet, cevâhir-i

fetanet kadrlerine lâıık olan riâyeti göremeyerek, kimi cünun götürdü, kimi işretle telef-i nefse eyledi.

Vah bize, yazık bize! Bu hale göre bizim millette tabii hal üzere ne şiir ve ne de inşâ yok mu demek olur? Hayır bizim tabii olan şiir ve inşâmız taşra ahaliileri ile İstanbul ahalisinin avâmı beyinde hâlâ durmaktadır. Bizim şiirimiz hani şairlerin nâmevzûn diye beğenmedikleri avâm şarkıları ve taşralarda ve çöğür şairleri arasında deyiş ve üçleme ve kayabaşı tabir olunan nazımlardır. Ve bizim tabii inşâmız mütercim-i *Kamus*'un ve muahharen *Muhbir* gazetesinin ittihaz ettiği şive-i kitâbettir. Vâkıa bu nazım ve bu kitâbet matlub olunan derecede beliğ ve tumturaklı görünmez ise de ümmet-i Osmaniye ilerlediği sırada bunlara rağbet edilmediğinden, oldukları yerde kalmışlar, büyümemişlerdir. Hele bir kere rağbet o cihete dönsün az vakitte ne şairler ne kâtipler yetişir ki akıllara hayret verir. Velhasıl şiir-i tabii odur ki şair cüzi bir mülâhaza üzerine kalemi eline alıp irticalen kırk elli beyit nazım edebilmeli. Kitâbet-i millîye odur ki eli yazı tutan zihnindeki muradını iyi kötü kâğıt üstüne koymalı. Şimdiki şiir ve inşâmızda ise tertîb-i meâni ile beraber bir teşkîl ü terkîb-i elfâz derdi zihni işgal etmekle, ne şiir ve ne de nesirde usul-i irticâl mümkün değildir. Her milletin şairleri, hatta bizim çöğür şairlerimiz bedaheten birçok şiir söylerler. Biz ise beş beyit bir gazeli dokuz ayda doğurur gibi söyleriz. Sair milletlerde küberâ ve hatta musannifler bizzat eline kalem alıp mektup ve telifât yazmazlar, belki yanlarındaki kâtiplerine ağızdan söylerler, onlar dahi yazarlar. Nitekim bizde dahi köy ağaları imamlara söyleyip yazdırırlar. Bu sebepten gerek muhâberât ve gerek telifât onlarda süratli ve suhûletli olur ama biz mektup yazdığımızda bir iki kere tesvid ve tebyiz etmedikçe istediğimiz gibi olmadığından hem muhaberelerimizde te'ennî ve batâet ve hem de ifadelerimizde noksan ve rekâket bulunur. Bu fenaliği def için tabiata ittibâ etmeli.