

# **“A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF AMIR KHUSRAU AS A GHAZAL-WRITER”**

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There is at least one aspect of Persian poetry which make it unique throughout the world poetry, and that is ghazal. The oriental poetry is undoubtedly replete with lyrical and romantic ideas but no other form of poetry in any language of the world possesses all the qualities enjoyed by Persian ghazal it is under the inspiration of Persian ghazal that Urdu, Turkish and some other languages of Asia have developed this delicate form of poetry.

Whatever might have been the original reason for calling this form of Persian poetry and ghazal, It has never been confined to ‘talking about women or talking to women’. Again, much against the general belief, Persian ghazal has always existed as an independent form of poetry and was not cut off from the qasida to accord it an independent entity. Rudaki, the foremost Persian poet before whom Persian poetry was almost in tit-bits is said to have composed such ghazals that poets like Unsuri envied him for this accomplishment.

Persian qasida caused the greatest damage to the moral and spiritual values of humanity but it was rectified to a great extent by ghazal. Qasida is the ceremonial expression of art. Here the poet is compelled to sing the tune that was liked or dictated by his patron, much against his own feelings and beliefs. It is a show of controlled smiles and perforce sorrows. The entire reality of life is hidden behind the painted masks and masquerades. That is why a qasida-writer always struggles to overawe his audience by rhetorical devices and bombastic phraseology. At the most, he may be called a literary gymnast rather than a poet.

Ghazal, on the other hand is the sheer expression of feelings and sentiments. It would be fallacious to say that ghazal is a purely subjective form of poetry where the poet has little to do with the realities of life. It may be true of imitation ghazal. But the supreme ghazal-writers like Hafi, Maulana Rum, Sa’di, ‘Iraqi Khusrau, Bedil, Ghalib and Iqbal have probably made the most sensitive assessment of the humanity in their ghazals. Moreover, feeling and sentiments are the ultimate result of social encounters. A person living in absolute isolation may become a saint or an angel but he will miss the throbs of life that keeps the humanity alive. The human awareness of the ghazal-writer is more deeprooted and durable than that of a descriptive poet of qasida or mathnavi.

Ghazal is the essence of artistic expression. Here each couplet carries its independent significance. That is why the poet is very cautious not to employ any such

word which misfits in the miniature art of ghazal. The diction of ghazal is soft, delicate, sweet and effective. It is difficult to define and ascertain this diction. Incidentally no thorough vocabulary of Persian ghazal has been compiled so far. The compilation of such vocabulary will not only give us a rich store of lyrical imagery but will also give us a clear idea of the evolution of Persian language.

The heated war against ghazal has almost faded both in Persian and Urdu. The re-emergence of ghazal in Iran and the sub-continent has re-assured the unshaken status of ghazal. The symbolic diction of ghazal makes it both universal and eternal, times have changed and so did the circumstances in which, for instance, Hafiz composed his ghazals. But even today his ghazal is as modern as any contemporary piece of poetry.

The supreme art of ghazal can be successfully employed only by a super artist. The ghazal-writer is concerned only with the essence of human feelings, and in order to get to this essence, he has to pass through all the stages of human experiences. That is why in the long history of Persian ghazal, the number of supreme ghazal-writers is a very few.

Amir Khusrau Dehlavi is undoubtedly one of the supreme ghazal-writers of Persian, whose unique contribution to Persian ghazal is universally acknowledged.

An attempt has been made in this paper to critically examine the qualities which make the ghazals of Amir Khusrau an immortal sources of human inspiration.

Like his great contemporary Shaikh Sa'di, Amir Khusrau was also a very prolific writer. But while Sa'di's greatness rests upon his supreme creation, the Gulistan, the unique specimen of Persian prose, Amir Khusrau reaches the pinnacle of excellence in ghazals, although the honorific title of the "Prophet of ghazal" was given to Sa'di. If Khusrau had put in his entire poetic and artistic faculty in writing ghazal and would have dedicated himself entirely to this delicate form of Persian poetry he would have been probably the greatest ghazal-writer. But Khusrau seems to have been carried away by his creative urge and occasionally by a strange competitive spirit at external motives. Thus, instead of concentrating his entire creative faculty on ghazal, he diversified his literary activities. It was probably under this urge that he composed the five mathnavis (khamasa) at the pattern of those of Nizami, and that, too, in the shortest possible period. We justify the act of Khusrau by saying that his Khamasa is next only to that of Nizami, but that makes Khusrau more an imitator than an original poet. Other works like Qiran-us-Sa'dain or Khazain-ul Futuh do not add to the greatness of Khusrau. As a matter of fact, the above works might have been lost in the vast treasure-house of Persian literature, and they not been composed by the great Khusrau.

The art of ghazal demands absolute dedication on the part of the ghazal-writer. It does not allow its master to embrace other form of poetry. The supremacy of Hafiz, the greatest ghazal-writer, lies in this very fact that he gave away his entire self to

ghazal. Amir Khusrau could have achieved the highest supremacy if he had confined himself to the ghazal only. However, Amir Khusrau still remains the greatest ghazal-writer of India. We should also bear in that Persian was not the mother-tongue of Khusrau, his father being a Turk and his mother an Indian Hindu. Another great ghazal-writer of India, Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil was likewise of Turkish parentage. So was Ghalib. The intricate and complex of Sabk-e-Hindi. It is an interesting question to ask why none of the hundreds of the Iranian poets who migrated to India, attained supreme excellence in ghazal like Khusrau or Bedil.

Ghazal is not simply an expression of one's inner feelings, it rather carries in its suggestive imageries a veiled reflection of the society in which the ghazal-writer lives. Since ghazal is not descriptive in nature like mathnavi or qasida, it may not be called a mirror of the society. However, ghazal is so suggestive and comprehensive that it can reflect any human society with similar circumstanceness. This lends universalism to ghazal and elevates it above the limitations of time and spece.

Khurau's ghazals if studied against his social and cultureal background, give us an idea of his environments and his reactions to his surroundings.

We know that Khusrau belonged to the elite class and led the life of nobility. He enjoyed an honourable position in the courts of several successive kings who had ascended to the throne after crossing a river of blood and who usually did away with the nobles and officials of the previous regime. The life of our poet was apparently ideal and full of bliss, yet his ghazals betray his inner agony. The following ghazal, for instance, depict vividly the torments of our poet :

جانم از بند غم ازاد نبود	دلم از بخت گهی شاد نبود
کان ہم صنایع و برباد شهود	یکدم از عمر گرامی فگذشت
گوییا بیچگه اباد نبود	گر بیینی دل ویران مرا
شهر اسلام مرا داد نبود	کافری رخت دم غارت کرد

This ideal elite life had its own dark shadows. The royal court of the day, ask the power centres of today, were the hotbeds of conspiracies and counter-conspiracies where no scruple was ever observed. The only goal of life was to achieve one's ambition by hook or by crook. And there was no death of the hooks and crooks in the society. Kaiqubad the youn king marched from Delhi to fight against his own father. 'Alauddin Khalji ascended the royal throne after murdering his uncle who was also his father-in-law. And then Kaiqubad asked Khusrau to describe his deceptive peace with his father as "the Conjunction of two Auspicious Stars" (Qiran-us-Sa'dain). 'Alauddin wanted his exploits in the Deccan to be recorded as "The Treasure Store of Victories" (Khazain-ul Futuh). Khusrau, the courtier, apparently submits to the royal wish and produces literary masterpieces hiding the bitter facts in sugar-coated phraseology, but

once he resorts to ghazal, his spirit pours itself out and we are able to visualize real Khusrau in his ghazals like this :

ز سرکوی توام باد صبائی نرسید	سانها شد که ز تولوی وقائی نرسید
دست امید به دامان قیائی نرسید	چاک شد پیرهن هجر بصد تومیدی
کرد پا آبله عمری و بجائی نرسید	دریبابان کلب بخت پریشان کردم
چه توان کرد اگر بخش گدائی نرسید	هم عالم ترجمال تو نصیبی بگرفت

However, in spite of the spiritual and mental agony through which Khusrau had to pass as a courtier, he could not give up his past and start a free-lance life. The struggle between his heart and mind continued throughout the greater part of his life and the resultant agony provided an inspiration for him to look back to the precious moments which he had missed, along with so many nears and dears who were sacrificed at the alter of the despotic rule. The following ghazal for instance, is an echo of such a desolated feeling :

دل نیست بدستم سخن جان بکه گویم	یارب غم آن سر و خرامان بکه گویم
کین سدختگی غم هجران بکه گویم	آه از دل پر درد بر آرم هم سب آه
ز اندک نبود برد فراوان بکه گویم	افسانه من تا خوش و کس محرم آن نیست
احوال جگر خوردن پنهان بکه گویم	خونابه پید هم بینند خود از چشم
بیدرد چوباور نکند آن بکه گویم	دردی ست درین سینه که همدرد و شناسد
وندین شنوم از که و چندان بکه گویم	دشنام دور دشمن و تشنیع دهد دوست

The only solace which Khusrau could find during these moments of agony was the company of the great Chishti Saint Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d.725/1225). We know that the saint never had cordial relations with the royal courts of the day. On the other hand, Kaiqubad, Mubarak Shah and Ghayasuddin Tughlaq hated the Shaikh and wanted to turn him out of Delhi. However, Khusrau maintained his perfect relations with Shaikh Nizamuddin in spite of his honourable position at the court. As a matter of fact, it was due to the absolute intergrity of Khusrau, that he was equally liked and respected in both the camps which were ideologically poles apart.

Many ghazals of Khusrau clearly indicate that the beloved of the ghazal is Nizamuddin Auliya who enjoyed the title of Muhibub-i-Ilahi (Beloved of God) and Sultan-ul-Auliya (King of the Saints). We are told that Khusrau wrote his ghazals for some time under the pen-name of Sultani. Note the following ghazal which suggests that Khusrau enjoyed the privte company of the Shaikh at such times when no other disciple was permitted. Probably at such occasions, he narrated such things as pleased the great mystic:

درویش جماش ما' سلطان دل ما او	آن کیست که می آید صد شکر دل با او
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من گویم داد خندد' تنها من و تنها او  
لب بر لب ورو براد' اوبامن و من با او  
یارب چه خیال است این' اینجامن و آتجا او  
دیوانه چرا نبوم' ماه من شیدا او  
دیباچه' دلہامن' آئینہ جانہا او

بی صبح شبی خواہم کورا غم دل گویم  
مہتاب چه خوش بودی کو بودی و من تنها  
ہستم بخیال خود سن با او واو بامن  
گویند چرا آخر دیونگیت جوشد  
من خسرو واو زیبا یارب کہ چه شکل ست این

Symbolism is the greatest beauty of ghazal. The art of ghazal is so delicate that it does not bear plain talking. That is why the ghazal-writer takes recourse to suggestive and symbolic dictionary and imagery. This quality lends universalism to ghazal and takes it beyond the limits of time and space. Most of the verses that have become almost proverbial in Persian, belong to ghazal, because they contain the human experience in its ultimate form. That is the reason why a ghazal is ten interpreted both as a piece of mystic expression and of purely material or sensuous romanticism.

Love is the eternal source of inspiration for ghazal. However if this sentiment does not spring up from the depth of the heart and the poet simply makes a show of love, his ghazal is reduced to mere imitation. Here the mystic poet is far ahead of the mundane poet because the mystic's love is real.

A mystic cannot make a show of love. He is deeply ----- owned in love, and all his acts and words are controlled by his passion for the beloved, the Divine and eternal Beloved. That is why mystical love poetry is more appealing and penetrating. Its worth and sincerity immediately touches our heart even when it lacks apparently the sophistication of diction. The ghazals of Maulana Rum, in spite of their not sophisticated diction, are the finest example of such appeal.

We know that Khusrau was in deep love with Nizamuddin Auliya. He was a true mystic completely given to his spiritual urge. His ghazal is the sincere expression of his real sentiments and genuine feelings. And the beloved here may be equally the fairy one or Nizamuddin Auliya, the Mahbub-e-Ilahi. The following ghazal, like many others, is a case in example :

در شہر بہ بدنامی افسانہ کنند مارا	بیم است کہ سوادیت دیوانہ کند مارا
ترسم کہ غمت از جان بیگانہ کند مارا	بہر تو ز عقل و دین بیگانہ شدم' آری
زان پیش کہ زنجیرت دیوانہ کند مارا	زان سلسلہ گیو نشور نجاتم دہ
امروز بیک ساغر مستانہ کند مارا	من بی زدہ دوشم شاید کہ خیال تو
پر آتش روی تو پروانہ کند مارا	چون شمع تہان گشتی پیش آی کہ تا خسرو

In addition to these passionate love ghazals, we come across the flashes of supreme mystical thoughts in the ghazal of Khusrau. Here he seems to have achieved the highest spiritual elevation the ultimate goal of the human being :

رسید دوش ندائی ازین بلند رواق	که ای مقیم زوایای شهر بند فراق
درین حفیض چرا گشته ای چنین محبوس	گذر چو طایر قدسی زواج این نه طاق
مناقق اندوریائی جمیع اول بشر	بیابه صحبت یاران پی ریا و نفاق
ترابه روز ازل با حبیب عهدی بود	چه آندست که فراموش کرده ای میشاق
مرد بقول مخالف بهر زه راه حجاز	اگر نه راه نیابی یه پرده عشاق
کسیکه مسکن اصلیش عالم علوی است	چه می کند به خراسان' چه می رود به عراق
ز خویش بگذر و باز آی سوی ماخسر	که نیست خوشتر از ینجای در همه آفاق

A mystic is the most universal person. He crosses all the barriers and limitations that separate man from man. The history of Islam shows that it was because of the sufis that Islam appealed to the non-Muslims, otherwise the Mullas or the rulers were more concerned in driving away the people than embracing them. The Chishti saints of India, among whom Nizamuddin liberal and human approach. Khusrau also drank deep at the source of universalism and humanism. He sings the song of the unity of man and the family sharing the same sorrows or joys, in spite of their diverse and contradictory belief. The india of Khusrau was faced with a deep ideological and cultural crisis, as the Muslims had newly established their political dominance in a country where the majority were non-Muslim who did not regard their religion or culture or language inferior to Islam and its culture. The new rulers were naturally intoxicated with power and they must have held their subjects in slight. Against this background, Nizamuddin Aulia, instead of developing relations with the Muslim elite and nobility, dedicated himself to the down-trodden masses- both them. For him a human being was more valuable than a ruler or noble of high stock. Khusrau was also deeply inspired by the human and universal attitude of his spiritual guide. His talk of love, symbolic as it is may be interpreted as his love for humanity :

مبصران که مزاج جهان شناخته اند	دو روزه برگ اقامت در آن نساخته اند
خراب گرد داین و ربرپرندهم	نواز نان که در و عندلیب و فاخته اند
سری که زیر زمین شد نهفته شایان را	حنان سری ست که بر آسمان قراخته اند
تمهنتان که بیک تیر چرخ می شکتند	ز بهر چیست که شمشیر و خنجر آخته اند
نگابانی جوهر چونیست در حد کس	چه سود از آنکه هم دزد را شناخته اند
منان نفس نده خسروا به طینت خویش	که عاقلان نرس اندر دحل نتاخته اند

Khusrau travelled far and wide in the sub-continent. He visited Samana, Bengal, Multan, Awadh and other places. Sometimes his visit lasted for several months or years. These travels provided an opportunity to our poet to see the different cultures. They also exposed him to the hard realities of life. In Multan, he was captured by the Mongols and his patron Prince Mohammad was slain by the invading hordes. These experiences, some of them very tragic, widened and deepened the vision of Khusrau. He could look at life from the observatory of realities and not the glass-house of fancy and imagination. The immense appeal that the ghazals of Khusrau have, is probably due to the fact that our poets has actually passed through the experiences about which the speaks. One of such agonizing moments of life was separation from the near and dear ones while going on a long arduous journey. Khusrau has given us the best ghazals in Persian.

رفتیم ماودل بیکی کو گذاشتیم	جان خراب نیز بیک سو گذاشتیم
مائیم دراه دور بمابازکی رسد	جان و دلی که برسر آن کو گذاشتیم
بگذاشتیم روی عزیزى که سالها	عمر عزیز خویش برآن رو گذاشتیم
آن بخت کو که برسر باز و کشیم باز	آن گرزنى که از خم بازو گذاشتیم
هر بار گفته ای که زپهلوی من برو	رفتیم انیک از تو و پهلوی گذاشتیم
زین پس وفای عمر نخواهیم خسروا	چون روی دوستان وقاجو گذاشتیم

In the following ghazal the dear ones are themselves going away:

سفر کردند یارازن جان ماهم	بسی بیگانگان و آشناهم
زما یکباره برکند ند دل را	ز صحبت خیمه مهرو وفاهم
چتاب از ریه ره آن نازنین را	که راهش دردل و دیده است جاہم
دوبوسی یادگاری داد مارا	رومی داد عیس از دو دیده ماہم

In some of these Firaqia ghazals, Khusrau describes the painful scene against purely Indian settings:

ابر می بارد و من می شوم از یار جدا	چون کنم دل بچنین روز زدلدار جدا
ابر باران و من و یار ستاده بوداع	من جدا گریه کنان' بسر جدا' یار جدا
سبزه نوخیز و هواخرم دبستان سرسبز	بلبل روی سیه مانده زگلزار جدا
دیده ام بهر تو خونبار شدی مردم چشم	مردمی کن مشوا دیده خونبار جدا
نعمت دیده نخواهم که یماند پس ازین	مانده چون دیده ازین نعمت دیدار جدا

The first two couplets of the above ghazal give a very lively description of the Indian rainy season and are probably unique in the entire treasure of Persian ghazal.

During these long arduous journeys, Khusrau was constantly reminded of his near and dear ones in Delhi. The lush green convass of Bengal and the North Indian plains or the dreary desol deserts of Multan could not mitigate his deep attachment to Delhi or Patiali where his sweet-heart lived. Mark, for instance, the following ghazals:

خبری بمن ای باد که جانان چونست	آن گل تازه و آن غنچه و خندان چونست
باکه می میخورد آن ظالم و در خوردن می	آن رخ پرخوی و آن زلف پریشان چونست
روزها شد که دلم رفت و در آن زلف بلند	یارب آن یوسف گم گشته بزندان چونست
گل به رعنائی و ناز است به مجلس باری	مال آن بلبل بیچاره به بستان چونست
هم بجان و سر جانان که کم و بیش بگویی	گوهمین یک سخن راست که جانان چونست
خشک سالی است درین عهد وفارا ای اشک	زان حوالی که تومی آئی باران چونست

The last line, again depicts a very pathetic situation, Khusrau says that the country where he has been living is struck with the famine of love and affection. He asks the new comer if the rains of love have favoured the country from where he is coming.

Khusrau is, however, not a master of Firaqia ghazals only. He has also composed some of the best romantic ghazals suggesting the precious moments of unknown joy and happiness enjoyed in the sweet company of the beloved. The following is, for example, one of such happy ghazals:

ساقیا باده ده امروز که جانان اینجاست	سرگلزار نداریم که سلطان اینجاست
چه کنم نقل و شراب ارنبود کمتر گیر	گریه تلخ و شکر خنده پنهان اینجاست
تاله چندین کمن ای فاخته امشب در باغ	باگلی ساز که آن سر و خرامان اینجاست
خواهی ای جان برور خواه همی باش که من	مردنی نیستم امروز که جانان اینجاست

As stated earlier, these symbolic ghazlas of Khusrau can be interpreted both in a mystic and the mundane way, and the Sultan here might indicate the Sultan-ul-Aulia or Mahbub-e-Ilahi. Khusrau was often torn between the two opposite camps – the royal court and the spiritual abode of Nizamuddin Aulia. The former demanded a ruthless and callous attitude to life while the latter place led one to the inexplicable solace of mind and soul. It was all devotion and dedication, sincerity and sacrifice that mattered in the Khanqah while the court life was characterized by deception and deceit, sychopancy and intrigues. Khusrau, the noble, might have lived at the Court physically, but Khusrau, the poet, was always present spiritually at the Khanqah of Nizamuddin Aulia. Khusrau discarded the show of imitation courtly life and embraced the simple and sincere mode of living at the Kahnqah :

زین پس سرآن نیست که من زهد فروشم      ساقی قد حی ده که بروی تو بنوشم

جائی کہ نیرزد بجوی دین در ستم	این توبہ صدجای شکستہ نفروشم
بس پیر خرابات کہ مردم بی شفاعت	تا بز گشایند درا میکده دوشم
بوده است ز هوش و سرم اندیشه تیمار	المنۃ لله کہ نہ سرماند و نہ ہوشم

Khurau is said to be a music genius. It might be because of this special factor that his ghazals are extremely musical. Due to their unusual rhythm, these ghazals are often sung by the qawwals of the sub-continent as a result of which many ghazals of Khusrau are remembered by heart. In addition to musicality, such ghazals are also characterised by their chaste diction and symbolic suggestiveness, as well as the depth of emotion. Note the following ghazal:

دلم در عاشقی آوارہ شد آوارہ مترباد	تم از بیدلی بیچارہ شد بیچارہ تر بادا
رخت تازہ ست ببرمرون خود تازہ ترخواہم	دلنت خارہ است بہر کشتن من خارہ تر بادا
گرای ز اہد دعای خیرمی خواہ مرا این گو	کہ آن آوارہ کوی بتان آوارہ تر بادا
دل من پارہ گشت از غم نہ زانگونہ کہ بہ گردد	اگر جانان بدین شادست یارب پارہ تر بادا
ہم گویند کز خونخواریش خلقی بجان آند	من این گویم کہ بہر جان من خونخوارہ تر بادا

The ghazals in short meters specially abound in musical resonance, and here the diction reaches its climax and the emotion touches the core of the heart. Such a ghazal is quoted here, which might have been read by every average student of Persian :

جان زتن بردی و درجانی ہنوز	دردہا دادی و درمانی ہنوز
ملک دل کردی خراب از شیخ ناز	و ندرین و پرانہ سلطانی ہنوز
ہر دو عالم قیمت خود گفتہ ای	نرخ بالا کن کہ ارزانی ہنوز
جان زبند کالبد آزاد گشت	دل بی گیسوی تو زندانی ہنوز
پیری و شاہد پرستی ناخوش ست	خسروا تاکی پریشانی ہنوز