

I am unabashedly fond of Khushwant Singh's writing. His interests are varied; liquor and women have obviously their places. He is also fond of Urdu. The language has a literary heritage of love, the beloved and wine. The imagery of the passion and pains of love in Ghalib's poems draws enthusiastic followers for Urdu. Khushwant is a modern day fellow traveller of Ghalib. Both of them are absorbing in the brilliance of their unbound mind. Ghalib's passion and pride even take on the world with his lofty expression 'Chorunga main na us but-e-kafir ka poojna/Chore na khalq go mujhe kafir kahe baghair' (I will not relent from worshipping the image of my beloved / and the world will not leave me alone without calling me a heretic).

The elegance and the enlightenment of the Mughal court found its way into the language of Urdu. And it is in northern India that Urdu found permanence. It may not be the state language of India but Urdu language has many admirers and practitioners in its northern half. Urdu is associated with courteous manners and cultural enlightenment. The use of few lines of a 'sher' (love couplet) is widely applauded, be it in a public meeting or in a film. Even a typical Bangali leader Mamata Banerjee found it handy to quote few lines of an Urdu poem to enthuse the crowd speaking with flourish, 'Raushni Chand se hoti hai/ Sitaro se nahi/ Mohabbat ek se hoti hai/ hazaro se nahi. Brightness comes from moonlight/ not from the stars/ True love can be with one and only beloved/ Not with thousands of them. The flourish is much spectacular when late Raj Kumar in his inimitable voice utters with great histrionics the first two lines of a poem by Jigar Moradabadi, Hamko mita sake ye zamane me dam nahi/ humse zamana khud hai zamane se hum nahi' (The times do not have the heart to destroy me/ the times we behold are my subjects and I am not among their servitors).

It was during the declining times of the Mughal rule, Urdu developed into eminence. The last Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah II was himself a keen Urdu poet. He used the 'takhallus' or pen name Zafar. Unlike Ghalib, Bahadur Shah Zafar cultivated Urdu within the bounds of social standard. Neither did he drift in matters of principle. When it came to judging a righteous man he was upright to the point of saying, Zafar aadmi usko na jaaneyee gaa, ho woh kitna sahib-e-fehm-zakaa; Jisye eish mein yaad-e-Khuda na rahee, jise teish mein khaof-e-Khuda na rahaa' (Zafar, no matter how smart and witty one may be, he is not a man / who in good times forget God, and who in anger did not fear Him) It is

# The Literary Heritage of Urdu

*More than a language of love and the beloved*

SYED MAQSUD JAMIL



Ghalib, the romantic Urdu poet.

however the mournful contemplation of his tragic fate in exile that lives in the grieving hearts of people all over the sub-continent. We grieve to listen to his wailing heart as we read his epitaph: 'Lagta nahi hai jii mera ugray dayar mein/ kis kii bani hai aalam-e-na-payedar mein// kah do in hasraton se kahin awr jaa base/ itnii jagah kahan hai dil-e-daaghdhaar mein// umr-e-daraaz maang ke laaye the chaar din/ do aarzu mein kat gaye do intizar mein // hai kitna badnasib Zafar dafn ke liye / do gaz zamin bhi na mili ku-i-yaar mein' (My heart is not happy in this despoiled land/ who has ever felt fulfilled in this transient world/ tell these emotions to go dwell elsewhere / where is there space for them in this savagely scarred (bloodied) heart/ I prayed for a long life but got a life of four days/ two passed away in aspiring to be, and two in waiting / how unlucky is Zafar! For burial / even two yards of land were not be had, in the land (of the) beloved).

Zauq or Ibrahim Zauq (1789-1854 A.D.) was the tutor of Bahadur Shah Zafar in the style of poet laureate. He indulged in philosophy and had a melancholy outlook on life. The tutor's mental make up influenced the poems of his student. The unjust nature of life saddened Zauq. He spoke of the ironies of life and death by: 'Laai Hayaat to aaye qaza le chali chaley/ apni khushi na aaye, na apni khushi chaley'. (I was given life so I came, and eternity is here to take me away, so I go / I did not come of my choice neither am I going of my own will).

Meer Taqi Meer (1723-1810) contributed considerably in developing Urdu into a language of public use. This celebrated predecessor of Ghalib and Zauq can be called the builder of Urdu in its formative

years. His language was based in the indigenous expression of local dialect and he blended it with the imagery and idioms of Persian language. Meer's Urdu was simple, natural and at the same time elegant. He was born in Agra but was raised at Delhi. It was savaged by Ahmad Shah Abdali of Persia and Meer left for Lucknow. There he took the patronage of Asafuddowla of Lucknow. One typical Meer poem was one he recited to counter the bantering of the elites of Lucknow mocking his battered condition: 'Kiya bood u baash poocho ho poorab kai saakino / hum ko gareeb jaan kai huns huns pukaar kai / Dilli jo aik shahar tha aalam mai intikhaab / rahtay thay hee jahaan muntakhib roozgaar kay / us ko falak nai loot kay weeraan kar diya / hum rahnay waalay hain usee ugray dayaar kai'. (Ye the residents of the east what are you mocking at to know about my where