

Shaukat Pradesi: Thoughts and Art

(In the perspectives of 'Saaze Naghmabar',
'Mizrab-e-Sukhan', 'Mazameene Shaukat' and
'Tohfae Atfaal')

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Abstract: In the annals of Urdu literature, there have been numerous writers who have significantly contributed to the growth of the language, exploring its many genres and forms. These contributions have enabled Urdu to rise to prominence and achieve global recognition as a language rich in cultural heritage, known for its deep emotional resonance and poetic appeal. The libraries of the world proudly display the works of Urdu writers, underscoring the language's literary worth.

Urdu authors, poets, and scholars played an integral role not only in India's independence movement but also in shaping the intellectual landscape of post-independence India. These writers upheld high standards in their works, refraining from indulging in lowly or commercialized writing. Instead, they remained committed to producing valuable, insightful literature. The tradition of creating meaningful works

continues, with Urdu writers and poets carrying forward the legacy of high principles, ethical values, and literary excellence.

Among these luminaries is Shaukat Pradesi, a poet whose full name was Muhammad Irfan. Though plagued by financial hardships throughout his life, his writings are rich in depth, portraying the myriad complexities of human life. Despite having to relocate frequently in search of a livelihood, Pradesi remained committed to his craft, composing profound literary works. Unfortunately, due to his constant displacements, a significant portion of his writings was lost. However, thanks to the efforts of his son, Nadeem Ahmad Jonpuri, many of his writings were collected and published in anthologies such as Tohfae Atfaal, Mazameen-e-Shaukat, Mizrabe Sukhan, and Naghmae Saazbar. With the scholarly prefaces of eminent critics, these collections have been well-received and have further cemented Pradesi's legacy in Urdu literature.

This study undertakes a critical examination of the motivations and inspirations that led Shaukat Pradesi from obscurity to the heights of literary fame, exploring his distinctive thoughts and artistic expressions.

Critical Study of Shaukat Pradesi's Thoughts and Art:

Art, creativity, watchfulness, and judgment are unique gifts that certain individuals possess, but such qualities also require rigorous effort, experience, and sustained perseverance. Only through a lifelong dedication to one's craft can an artist or poet attain greatness.

Every poet is a product of their time, and their writings often encapsulate the social psyche and prevailing issues of their era. A poet not only reflects on the challenges and needs of the time but also provides solutions through the medium of poetry. The role of poets, writers, and thinkers is essential to the construction and progression of society. They serve as architects of culture, nurturing future generations and preserving the ideologies and histories of their respective periods. Their works often become valuable reference materials for historians, researchers, and later scholars.

Shaukat Pradesi, who initially adopted the title 'Jonpuri' before becoming widely known as 'Pradesi,' is one such poet. Born in Malaysia in 1924, he lived there until the age of twelve. Circumstances, particularly the onset of World War I, prevented his family from returning to Malaysia, resulting in financial difficulties. After spending a temporary two-year stay in Lucknow, the family settled in Jonpur, Uttar Pradesh, where Shaukat's hardships intensified following his father's death.

In search of livelihood, Pradesi moved to Bombay, a cultural hub for poets, writers, and scholars during that time. There, he formed connections with literary figures such as Sanjar Azimabadi, Janisar

Akhtar, Saghar Nizami, Majaz Lucknowi, and others. Through correspondence, he also established intellectual exchanges with editors like Raees Amrohvi and Mahirul Qadri, which significantly honed his craft and secured his place in Urdu literature.

During his eight-year stay in Mumbai, Shaukat Pradesi penned several songs for films, starting with the 1952 film Khubsurat, whose song “Mohabbat Mein Kashish Hogi” was a major success, which was sung by Talat Mahmood and music was given by Madan Mohan. The song was:

Mohabbat men kashish hogi to ek din tum ko palenge
Isi dunya men rah kar dusari dunya basa lenge

محبت میں کشش ہوگی تو اک دن تم کو پالیں گے
اسی دنیا میں رہ کر دوسری دنیا بسالیں گے

After the success of this song, Shaukat Pradesi wrote other songs and dialogues for the film ‘Ghulam, Begum, Badshah’ which was appreciated by the viewers too. During his stay in Mumbai, Shaukat Pradesi experienced many facets of life and suffered a lot from the passing away of his loved ones. These individual sufferings got reflected in his poetry giving it much ethos, intensity and depth. Due to unevenness of the circumstances in his personal life, major part of his works misplaced and could not be preserved. His literary works which remained safe in magazines, cassettes and recorders were compiled later by his son, Nadeem Ahmad Jonpuri and Dr. Tabish Mehdi in the anthologies ‘Mizrabe Sukhan-2012’ (Ghazals, Qata’at, Robaeeyat), ‘Saaze Naghmabar-2015’ (Nazms, Geets, Qaseedas), ‘Tohfae Atfaal’ (Nazms for children). All the anthologies were published by Bestword Publication, Mumbai.

Majority of the Nazms, Qata'at and Rubaiyat included in 'Mizrabe Sukhan' are influenced by romanticism. In this context, Dr. Tabish Mehdi writes: “Nazms in 'Mirabe Sukhan' are on different topics and themes but the overall atmosphere of these Nazms is primarily influenced by romanticism. These are manifestation of Shaukat Pradesi's aesthetic sense and his elevated thoughts. His Nazms are parallel to the Nazms of Akhtar Shirani in this genre even Shaukat Pradesi surpassed Akhtar Shirani in several of his Nazms.”

Though romanticism was a trend of the Urdu poetry at that time but Shaukat Pradesi was not absolutely influenced with the trend, he focused on other elements as well which is evident in his poetry. Dr. Tabish Mehdi has also expressed the same thoughts, he says:

“Shaukat Pradesi has used romanticism and aestheticism artistically in his poetry. Basically, his love exploration is manifestation of pious and sacred thoughts and feelings.”

Shaukat Pradesi witnessed the degradation of values, thoughts and human relationships and was unhappy with the degradation of cherished ethics and morals. He expressed it all in the following Ghazal:

Na dekh unchi emarton ko unhen gira ne se faida kiya
Khud apni pasti ka jaeza lo, khud apne ko asman
banado

نہ دیکھ اونچی عمارتوں کو انہیں گرانے سے فائدہ کیا
خود اپنی پستی کا جائزہ لو، خود اپنے کو آسماں بنا دو

Ghalat ke usko badal ky dunya dilon ko asudgi mile gi

Tum apna andaaze fikr badlo tum apni uftadagi mitado

غلط کے اس کو بدل کی دنیا کو آسودگی ملے گی
تم اپنا انداز فکر بدلو تم اپنی افتادگی مٹادو

Tamam shahr ko loot line ka faisala bhi ghalat hai yaro
Na raas aega yeh taghayyur, na aisi tahreek ko hawa
do

تمام شہر کو لوٹ لینے کا فیصلہ بھی غلط ہے یارو
نہ راس آئیگا یہ تغیر، نہ ایسی تحریک کو ہوادو

It is the expression of newly emerged agony in the era (Now the noose has fully tightened around our neck). Anti social outfits were active and their activities were being encouraged by anti national forces and outsiders. Shaukat Pradsi voiced for brotherhood and national integrity through his poetry. A symbolic expression of the situation is his Nazm 'Kaali surat'. Apparently it is expression of the feelings of a dark skinned young girl but actually it is symbolization of hatred and aversion. See the Nazm:

Meri sirat ke khaddo khal koi kiyun dekhe
Shiddate ghum se hun pamaal koi kiyun dekhe
Zulmate shab ko baharhaal koi kiyun dekhe

Maahe taban ki tarah jab nahin aali surat
Kon dekhega zamane men yeh kaali surat

Mere ehsaas ka matam hai jawani meri
Sakht arzaan hai zamane men girani meri
Piyar se hogi na mausame kahani meri

Tana-zan mujh pe hai khud meri niralı surat
Kon dekhega zamane men yeh kaali surat

Dil pe gira hai mere kohe alam raat gaye
 Soochti hun men jo maan baap ka ghum raat gaye
 Khushk palken meri ho jati hen raat gaye

Aah ban jati hai mere liye kaali surat
 Kon dekhega zamane men yeh kaali surat

میری سیرت کے خدوخال کوئی کیوں دیکھے
 شدت غم سے ہم پامال کوئی کیوں دیکھے
 ظلمت شب کو بہر حال کوئی کیوں دیکھے

ماہ تاباں کی طرح جب نہیں عالی صورت
 کون دیکھے گا زمانے میں یہ کالی صورت

میرے احساس کا ماتم ہے جوانی میری
 سخت ارزاں ہے زمانے میں گرانی میری
 پیار سے ہوگی نہ معصوم کہانی میری

طعنہ زن مجھ پے ہے خود میری نرالی صورت
 کون دیکھے گا زمانے میں یہ کالی صورت

دل پہ گرا ہے میرے کو ہے الم رات گئے
 سوچتی ہوں میں جو ماں باپ کا غم رات گئے
 خشک پلکیں میری ہو جاتی ہیں رات گئے

آہ بن جاتی ہے میرے لئے کالی صورت
 کون دیکھے گا زمانے میں یہ کالی صورت

These stanzas of the Nazm show the agony of the girl and her psychic discomfort. Her mental sufferings and stress is caused due to her dark skin colour which is created by the creator and she had no say in it. Dr. Tabish Mehdi writes:

“Nazm ‘Kaali surat’ by Shaukat Pradesi

is full expression of his inside sorrow. There are several other such Nazms of Shaukat Pradesi which show his human love and affection and his leaning towards downtrodden.”

All the anthologies have been compiled traditionally having Hamd and Naat first followed by Nazms and then Ghazals as they are considered superior to Nazms and Ghazals due to their orientations.

Nazms written by Shaukat Pradesi have sweetness of Ghazal. For instance see the Nazm ‘Tum bhi hansdo’ which he has written addressing his wife and was published in monthly magazine ‘Baanu’ in 1976. Here are few stanzas of the Nazm:

Tum samajhti ho mere fikre giran ka haal
Mere ehsas ki tauhin gawara na karo
Ek bachchi jo basad shoq koi baat kahe
Apne alfaz ki shahtir se mara na karo
Haan yeh bachchi ke jo masoom bhi hai kam sin bhi
Us ko maalon hi kiya gardishe dauran kiya hai
Kaise haalat hen, haalat kise kahte hen
Shiddate dard hai, shozishe pinhan kiya hai
(Mizrabe Sukhan: Page- 156)

تم سمجھتی ہو میرے فکر گراں کا حال
میرے احساس کی توہین گوارا نہ کرو
ایک بچی جو بصد شوق کوئی بات کہے
اپنے الفاظ کی شہتیر سے مارا نہ کرو
ہاں یہ بچی کہ جو معصوم بھی ہے، کم سن بھی
اس کو معلوم ہی کیا گردشِ دوراں کیا ہے
کیسے حالات ہیں، حالات کسے کہتے ہیں
شدتِ درد ہے، سوزشِ پنہاں کیا ہے

In the following two stanzas, Shaukat Pradesi has expressed his thoughts and feelings in the Ghazal flavor and completed the Nazm.

Shaukat Pradesi's 'Tohfae Atfal' is a gift to Urdu readers in which all the Nazms have been written for children. It is a worthy contribution to child literature. It has been appreciated by the readers and critiques since its publication and it keeps attracting more and more readers even today. It has Nazms like 'Jago jagao', 'Khilone wala', 'Rubi', 'Mehnat', 'Roti', 'Jahil Miththu', 'Alu ki barfi', 'Akru Khan', 'Murghi', '15 August', 'Khilta huwa gulab', '26 January', 'Jashne bahar', 'Imtehan se pahle, intehan ke baad', 'Main pass hogaya hun', 'Modern shikwa', 'Rubi ki gurya', 'Bachcha aur chand' and 'Naya saal' which children love to read. These Nazms show Shaukat Pradesi's affection for children and even express his own childish temptations putting light on his childhood. These Nazms nurture the young minds, harness their thoughts and enhance their linguistic abilities.

Conclusion:

Shaukat Pradesi's poetry is a testament to the profound potential of literature to both reflect and challenge societal norms. His works, filled with a blend of aesthetic beauty, deep humanism, and social awareness, resonate with readers of all ages and backgrounds. While romanticism forms the core of many of his compositions, his art transcends mere emotionality to touch upon themes of social justice, human suffering, and moral integrity. His ability to navigate multiple genres, from ghazals and nazms to children's literature, demonstrates the breadth and versatility of his literary talents.

Though he faced tremendous personal and financial hardships throughout his life, Pradesi's commitment to his craft remained unwavering. His poems continue to enlighten and inspire readers, ensuring his place in the canon of Urdu literature. The enduring appeal of his works lies in their timeless exploration of human emotions, societal concerns, and the complexities of life.

As future generations discover his writings, they will undoubtedly find in Shaukat Pradesi a poet whose art and thought speak to universal truths and whose literary contributions will remain a source of inspiration for years to come. Whether through the romantic allure of his ghazals or the symbolic depth of his nazms, Pradesi's poetry will continue to captivate readers, offering solace, reflection, and insight into the human condition. Indeed, Shaukat Pradesi is not just a poet of his time, but an institution unto himself, whose legacy will shine brightly for generations to come.

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