

**MEHMOOD GAMI: An Iconic Figure of Kashmiri Poetry**

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**Abstract:**

Mehmood Gami, often known as the 19<sup>th</sup> century poet of Kashmir from the south of Kashmir, is well recognized for his poetic compositions. He is well known to have introduced various forms of poetry of literary genres such as Masnavis, Gazals and Vatchuns. His life mostly revolves around his lamentations and longings for “Love”. Often remembered for such passionate poems, filled with an exemplary symbolism and imagery, his gazals and vatchuns speak volumes about the long – last desirous love.

**Key words:** Masnavis, Gazals, Vatchuns, exemplary, symbolism and imagery.

Mehmood Gami is the most prominent poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, romantic cult poetry. For not only that his verses encompass the beauty and grandeur of all past vastchun poetry but he also shaped and heralded the new form of poetry by giving it unique thematic and syntactical implications. He set a new example of modern poetry. His style and form became so strong that hardly any poet could have transcended it. In the vast history of Kashmiri poetry, Mehmood Gami is the only poet after Nund Reshi whose works have been preserved with much faith and fervor and is available in hundreds of versions. His own contemporary poet Wali-ul-allah Mattoo tributes him in the following verses;

*Khosusan keashran manz marde naami*  
*Chui kam kyah aey zama mahmood gami*  
*Mai kornem tem seatha shah baad dilshaad*  
*Soa eos keashran manz mardei ustaad*

**Much in fervor and regard among Kashmir’s  
 Mehmood is not less a none.  
 Presence of Shahabad regaled my heart.  
 He was alchemy among us.**

He took birth in 1765 A.D. at Adwadar (currently Mehmood Abad), Dooru Shahabad in South Kashmir's Anantnag district. He belonged to a scholastic family and in line with tradition,

he was given early lessons in Arabic and Persian. At an early phase of life, he perused Saadi, Hafiz, Nizami and Moulana Rumi deeply. They proved to be an alchemy in Mehmood's, life and inspired him to the deepest core which made him compose verses in Persian first. An antique manuscript exhibits that he first followed the line of poetry of Jami and composed verses in Persian about the Prophet. During this phase of Persian compilation, Mehmood was driven by overflow of emotions and happen to say some verses, of Kashmiri Naat. He liked his new creation of verses with much intensity and persisted to write poetry in Kashmiri language. It brought him overnight success and prestige which resolved Mehmood to continue his journey of poetry in his vernacular. But it does not mean, he renounced composing poetry in Persian altogether. His manuscripts of Naatiya Kalaam are dated back to early 19th century but it does not signify that all of them could have been compiled in a single year. In one of these antique manuscripts of Persian naats, the following given few couplets are included;

*Dar roazei mehshar banni gobras wanni yeonov meol*

*Tami doah hemmat karri ummat chaadi mohammad (SAW)*

*Yes baari gunnah aasi soa dazzi naari jahmam*

*Noor deed heath yeai lari tas tattt khaari mohammad (SAW)*

**On resurrection, the father, his sapling would be poles apart.  
Mohammad PBUH would still seek his ummah  
sinner would delve into the realms of hell  
Muhammad (PBUH) with gleaming eyes would be their savior.**

Mehmood used "Gami" as his pen name as it resembled with the names of Jami and Nizami whom he admired much.

*Chean tareef karaan nizami*

*Chean tawzeef padaan jaami*

*Vanni kyah van mahmood gaami*

*Ya rasool salaam alika*

**You had been subject of praise to Nazami  
Your character was revealed by Jami  
What else could write Mehmood Gami.  
I present my greetings to your divinity.**

Mehmood attained fame and prominence across the state during his own life time. It is believed that he himself sang songs. He had access to Srinagar as well and was highly esteemed at social gatherings .He has great sense of humor and many charts are attributed to him. Among his contemporary guild of poets, he had great affiliation and affinity with Wali-ul-Ullah Mattoo. When Wali-ul-Ullah's younger brother expired, Mehmood compiled an elegy in his grief. This elegy has been included in Wali-ul-Ullah Mattoo's Mathnavi named "Hemal Nagri" By profession, Mehmood was a school teacher and during his old age he was considered as a spiritual guide by many of his disciples. He had great interest in calligraphy. Many calligraphers of his contemporary age made calligraphies of his verses and loved to share them among their Kiths and Kins and many of their friends. Since the immemorial times many of the Kashmiri singers have sung his vatsun .At the age of ninety (90), Mehmood left for the heavenly abode in 1885 A.D. He was laid to rest at Adwadar and his shrine is still in a good condition. In the name of Mehmood Gami Adwadar was renamed as Mehmood Aabad. There is also a park named after him, Mehmood Gami Park. Mehmood Gami spent fifty four (54) years of his life in Afghan period, Twenty Seven (27) years in Sikh period and Nine (9) years in Dogra period. At the core, Mehmood was a great song writer. All his works are much known for their musical notes and melody. Vatchun which had lost its popularity among the audience after Habba Khatoon had been restored and revived to its climax by none other than Mehmood Gami .This revival gave it a boast and it was highly appreciated and followed by innumerable poets. He had another feather to his cap that most number of vatchens were created by Mehmood than any other poet.

*Astey astey baagi baber wathraav vass tey*

*Kong kostear mushkei kofoor tan nav vass tey*

*Mith ro beathum cheatri boanen hawawas tey*

*Shethri gealon mat kar tam chess bei kas tey*

**I will adorn him basil with gradual pace  
Will apply musk and camphor to him  
Oh bonny one! Sit and recreate the chinar breeze  
Don't pass foe's insinuations to patron less**

*Roashey valo posh hou bei laagey*

*Goash thavtham vanni yeo zear*

*Ven demmey ven ba demmey*

*Loali baagas ven hou ba demmey*

**Came at a leisurely place, will adorn flowers for you.**

**Be hearkened, I am going to plead my please**

**Will look for you, will always be looking for you**

**I am going to stare you at the garden of love.**

Love and passion revealed in Mehmood's poetry is both human and divine. He is an iconic figure of Sufi poetry who did not poetry without love, passion and emotional relevance. A huge collection of his poems are among the best laconic poems of Kashmiri literature like as Tamseel-e-Adam, Posh-e- Bahaar, Dardistan, Khawab Dar Khawab, Sheen Nana etc. Mehmood's naatiya kalaam is also of high excellence. On account of the great perusal of Persian Naatiya Kalaam Mehmood brought laurels to Kashmiri Naatiya Kalaam. No doubt Naat had been introduced to Kashmiri literature by Nund Reshi but Mehmood gave it a form and perfect genre. Mehmood is one of those few Naatiya poets who have exhibited their grandeur and class to it and took it to the apex of the graph of the Naatiya poetry. He had not only praised the physical beauty of Prophet's personality but also revealed his spiritual highness and grace.

*Kadman daarey shaan lolo  
Az yei Mohammad (SAW) paano lolo  
Soar geachen heoran eos tamanah  
Assi shin voshmot Mohammad (SAW) zanh*

**I would lay flat underneath your feet  
Today Mohammad (SAW) will come himself  
The fairies of the heaven had a desire  
We have never beheld Mohammad (SAW)**

Mehmood is also at the top of the list of the Kashmiri masnavi bards. There were traces of masnavi compositions arrival but Mehmood's Shereen Khusroo is the first Masnavi of Kashmiri poetry in its full glamour and perfect form. He had composed eleven (11) Mathnawi's in total and they all are based on Persian source and form. Mehmood had borrowed all the plots for his masnavi's from Persian literature but whatever he brought he made it his own. So the charges of plagiarism would be baseless and in genuine.

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