

AMIN KAMIL: WIZARD OF KASHMIRI GHAZAL

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ABSTRACT

Amin Kamil proved to be one of the defining litterateurs of Kashmiri language. Born on 3rd August 1924, he passed away on 30th October 2014, leaving behind a legacy of literary brilliance. Kamil brought a fresh life to Kashmiri poetry with his allegory, Metaphor, allusion, and suggestiveness. Today, he remains one of the most popular and influential masters of the Kashmiri language; he is known simply as Kamil and his art and technique in Kashmiri poetry *Tarhe Kamil* (Kamil's Method). Amin Kamil was not only a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award but he was also conferred with Padma Shri Award for reflecting his immense contribution to the world of literature.

Keywords: Litterateurs, Kashmiri, Legacy, Allegory, Allusion, Suggestiveness, Conferred, Recipient, Immense, Contribution.

Amin Kamil is the premier poet and critique of modern Kashmiri poetry; he inspired a brilliant generation of writers and attracted the patronage of progressive men among common masses. Kamil was pre-eminently responsible for importing art and philosophy of Alama Iqbal and R.N Tagore in his early stage of poetry. Emerson's famous words, 'whosoever is a great man is a non-conformist' fits so well to Amin Kamil. A prolific and multidimensional writer, Amin Kamil proved to be one of the defining litterateurs of Kashmiri language. This major voice in Kashmir poetry and one of the chief exponents of modern Ghazal, whose influence is widely accepted by his contemporaries and later generations, Kamil took the concept of ghazals and changed them from an expression of anguish in love to philosophies of life. His legacy has come to be widely celebrated, particularly his mastery of the Kashmiri ghazal.

Born on 3rd August 1924, he passed away on 30th October 2014, leaving behind a legacy of literary brilliance. Amin Kamil was not only a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award (for his collection of 58 poems titled "*Lave Ta Prava*") but also a Padma Shri Awardee (2005), reflecting his immense contribution to the world of literature. Translations of Amin Kamil Ghazals, *Lave Ta Prava* (Dew and Sunbeams) which appeared in the anthology were also part of an international workshop held at Chicago, sponsored by University of Chicago. Prof. Shafi Shauq and Najji Munawar, while commenting on Kamil's this book of poems, (Dew and Sunbeams), put on record that "the book laid foundation of a fresh and unprecedented way of expression. Today, he remains one of the most popular and influential masters of the Kashmiri language; he is known simply as Kamil and his art and technique in Kashmiri poetry *Tarhe Kamil* (Kamil's Method). Many has tried to approximate his diction, but he stands tall and alone. This is in part due to his poetic concerns that are deeply humanistic, his rich vocabulary which is informed by his upbringing as well as a deep study of tradition, and his literary rectitude. "His eminence in the ghazal is however undeniably epoch making." Dinanath Nadim called Kamil as Ameer-e-Ghazal (The Master of ghazal).

Kamil brought a fresh life to Kashmiri poetry with his allegory, allusion, and suggestiveness, beginning with his poem *Nethanen Maanay* (Naked Thoughts) which was first read in Koshur Bazm in 1961. Akhtar Mohiuddin, an unmatched Kashmiri short-story writer, then commented on this poem: "We all were held back by this thought that whether there was a way ahead. We either resorted to obscurity or ran towards romanticism; this poem paves a healthy way with the introduction of allusion." Kamil had initiated a new trend of allusion and suggestiveness in Kashmiri poetry. By

appearance and communication, Kamil gave the strong feeling of the traditional warmth of a Kashmiri host. He was a man of culture, tradition and sharp wit. Affable, educated and well read. He had a heart that was full of cheerfulness and sincerity.

***Raavaai ta tche nieshi zanie khudda neab me neiryaa,
Raavukh ta gatchhukh myaanie be putchh seena baraamadh..***

If I am lost, God knows,
if some clue at all shall emerge from you
To know my Whereabouts.
But for sue, if you are misplaced,
You shall be recovered close to this mistrusted heart of mine.

Amin Kamil was a man of the moment. Not for him were the imagined glories of the past and singing praises of the life of the elites. Kamil's world was the one about everyday struggles with its attendant sufferings and failures. His poetry is shorn of sentimentality and high-faulting expressions. He chose to write about themes that were shunned by the highbrow and elitist poets of his time. His poetry is peopled by, farmers, pimps, merchants, Sufis, villagers who come to cities to eke out a living, street hawkers, robbers, nomads, and kite-fliers. More importantly, Kamil chose simple Kashmiri instead of highbrow Persianized Kashmiri and wrote in a language that was simple and spontaneous. "If there is a best poet ever produced by Kashmir after the legendary Rasool Mir, its Amin Kamil," points out Prof. Marghoob Banihali. "He gave a new direction to Kashmiri Ghazal. He gave a contemporary touch to his ghazal unlike past where ghazal was associated with love and beauty." The following stanzas give one a sense of the richness of Kamil's oeuvre. Kamils' poetic genius is on display here. Even if one cannot understand the meaning of every word, one can still enjoy the class of the poetry and delight in the beauty of its earthy phrases.

***Dil maag rooh maag ta souruy zamaane maag
Vushnaavi kuss ya sheen kamis vanizee jam di...***

This heart, soul and this surrounding world is cold and frozen
O heart! Who shall warm up this frozen ice? To whom should we look for wine?
(Maag is coldest month in Kashmir)

***Ager me jaani manas aav zanh khudda ratchhienumm
Ye kaainaat karan chaakh pannie naaliek paeth***

God forbids! If I am driven to agony,
I shall sever this Universe Like my shirt.

Bekhabar paeth baag travithh tcholhamo,

Haai tanha daag travithh tcholhamo

Without my knowledge, you left my garden

Now a wound of severance is left for my fate.

“A thought-provoking intellectual who would challenge all the forms and styles in prose and poetry, and focused himself on Kashmir specific research”, is how Faruq Masudi, a writer, and a film maker, describes his un-conventional way of doing. Kamil would value and respond to all forms of literature – new and old with equal interest and treatment. His unprejudiced outlook on all genres and styles culminated in the popularity of *Shiraza* among a cross section of Kashmiri writers. Kamil was instrumental in fashioning Kashmiri Ghazal into an entity distinct from its Urdu and Persian counterparts. His poetry is marked by freshness of sensibility, maturity of expression and striking technical innovation which together give him a diction uniquely his own.

Ninder chi tosi katan wajnaen paemitch

kar taam

Yinder chu toti nachaan intizaar

paghuk kar

Wheel spinners have long slept

But the wheel will continue to move on,

Wait for tomorrow.

Kamil employs subtle humour and satire with devastating effect in his poetry. Through it he mirrors contemporary life and makes a social comment on his milieu. His satire or humour, however, does not bruise, but heals.

*“Yeti chu soroei fiza Karamaech hund ,
Yeti chi prath mehkamus chalawaan laash*

With us miracles are quite common,
everywhere the dead rule the living.

Tickete laagith bandh lifafan manz

Be patta khat chei Daak-Khaaneik aies.

Duly stamped and sealed

We are like postal envelopes with no address.

Despite his great academic knowledge, he has never fallen prey to the transplantation of an alien metaphor, borrowing of a foreign concept or trend in literature. His use of language is exceptional in the literary history of Kashmir. A great lover of Kashmiri language Kamil’s dictum, “*Kashri saeten Kashir sair*” (Kashmiris are because of Kashmiri language) remained close to his heart all his life.

Can we just be ourselves, pledge not to copy whether in thought or diction, and reap the benefits of this rich language', he was often quoted as saying.

*Naerow, Manzil Chi warah door paek,
Yemi chi sayri kochi bay gul nor paek*

let us move, the goal is yet too far,
All these lanes are devoid of flowers, move on

Kamil like many great writers world over believed humour and satire as “effective weapons for social change”.

Prof. Hamidi Kashmiri, the former vice-chancellor of Kashmir University and tallest critic Kashmir has ever produced, summed up Kamil's outstanding creative ability in various literary forms: “Kamil has the Moses hand in his sleeve. He is not an ordinary person. Truly, he has the Moses hand in his sleeve, a gift from God.” Prof. Hamidi was alluding to Kamil's success across different literary genres. Like Moses' hand, Kamil lit up every genre of literature his hands touched.

Sahitya Academy Award winners, Shafi Shauq and Kamil's lifelong friend and biographer Naji Munawar, write about him in their book “*Kashir Zaban ta Adbuk Tawaryiekh*”, “Amin Kamil is an epoch-making poet of the twentieth century whose influence swayed all his contemporary poets; the sway is still un-abating. Kamil has contributed considerably to every form of literature: Ghazal, Nazm, opera, short story, novel, drama, literary research and literary criticism.

Kamil's poetry has progressively shown colours like a rainbow. He rejected the mysticism and romanticism of Kashmiri poetry, and also the symbolism and classicism of Urdu-Persian ghazal. He refreshed Kashmiri poetry with modern sensibility by bringing it close to his time and land. Kamil published more collections of poems than any of his contemporaries, and frequently too – *Mas Malar* (Waves of Wine, 1955), *Lava ta Prava* (Dew and Sunbeams, 1965), *Beyi Suy Paan* (Again the Same Self, 1967), *Padis Pod Tshay* (A Foot Shadowing the Other, 1972) and *Yim Myane Sokhan* (These, My Words, 2009). Each of these five collections of poems introduced new themes and new ways of expression. In “Naked Thoughts” he writes:

*Sonchik paymanay gayi tang
Beyi maa Sanaa kenh qaalib drayi*

*(Old goblets are too small for thought —
I wish some better form were found.)*

In one of his last compositions, he prays:

*Zuvi zuvi praanaan praanaan gos
Kentsha navirich rash ditam*

*(I have turned old with persistent living
Allow me rather a refreshing treasure.)*

Kamil has also given us some memorable poems in the Nazm form. He edited the independent journal *Neab* for some time. As a critic he has acquired wide recognition. He also helped to create the modified alphabet presently used for Kashmiri language. Kamil has also contributed to the field of translation. His translation of Tagore's *Dak Ghar*, as also the poetry of the Urdu poet Iqbal has been significant additions to the corpus of translated literature available in Kashmiri.

A legend in his time, he came to be seen by friends and contemporaries as the genius. Despite everything, Kamil can be regarded as a groundbreaking and, at his best, a powerful poet of lasting influence. His idea of poetry remains the standard by which others in the Kashmiri sphere are tried.

His work has provided evidence of the constant ferment and vitality of his artistic sprit. Writing in the Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature, Ghulam Nabi Gawhar sums up Kamil thus: "He is a master of Kashmiri Ghazal and has to his credit poems of eternal value."

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