

ABDUL AHAD AZAD (1903-1948) contributed almost to the all prevalent poetic genres and revived the quatrain and the Rubai. As a leading Kashmiri poet he revolutionised both the thought and technique. He blended revolutionary ideas with romantic ideals, patriotic sensibility with the portraiture of nature and nationalistic emotions with the aspirations of universal brotherhood. He is rightly called 'the messenger of revolution and poet of humanity'.

Azad laid the foundation of literary criticism and biographic literature in Kashmiri. His treatment of various linguistic theories about development of Kashmiri language has proved thought provoking. Azad had a wide study of Persian, Urdu and Kashmiri letters and had studied Perso-Arabic prosody with keen interest.

G.N. GAUHAR, the author is a retired District and Session Judge from J & K Judicial Service. A poet, novelist, researcher, essayist, critic and translator, he is a member of various literary committees, is a recipient of the J & K Academy Awards and also the Sahitya Akademi Award.



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# Abdul Ahad Azad

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**Abdul Ahad Azad**

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

Makers of Indian Literature

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**Abdul Ahad Azad**

by  
*G.N. Gauhar*



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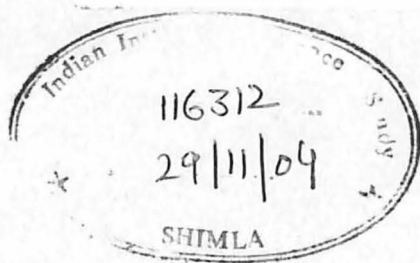
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# Contents

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| Introduction        | 1  |
| Life                | 8  |
| Azad as Poet        | 19 |
| Genius for Research | 44 |
| Biographer          | 59 |





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The prevailing situation in Kashmir caused total damage to the approved typed manuscript. It is due to the efforts of my son Shahwar Gauhar that this book could be prepared out of scattered material. He deserves my thanks.

G.N. Gauhar



## Introduction

KASHMIR has produced many great personalities dominating various fields of public life during recent times. Abdul Ahad Azad is one shining star in this constellation of personalities.

Though the rest of India came under the yoke of imperialism in the early 19th century, Kashmir faced the onslaught of slavery from A.D. 1586. Since then the people living in this paradise on earth had experienced vicissitudes, torments and treacheries of hell. The Mughal emperors took some interest in developing a few beauty spots in Kashmir but their governors let loose a reign of terror, corrupted the thinking of people and robbed them of their valour, identity and conscience. Pathans ruthlessly tortured its inhabitants and treated Kashmiris like slaves. The Sikh rule, though brief in duration, inflicted painful wound on our values. The Dogra reign proved the climax in the process of degradation and it is during this regime that after twelve months of hard work, the peasant would not even get sufficient food to sustain him for a few months. The system of *begar* (corvée) was, at its height. The only avenue of employment, the silk factory, was locked in the year A.D. 1921. Consequently, the volcano erupted in 1931 and the blood of martyrs brought the awakening. The flood gates of public resentment were opened. The urge remained unabated till potential threat was seriously posed to autocratic rule.

A long period of subjugation spread over a span of four centuries ruined the economy of Kashmir and ingrained timidity in the character of its people. A Kashmiri would look down upon his fellow Kashmiris and outsiders had dubbed him as a treacherous cheat, coward and sluggard. His history was distorted and he was made to remain content with misery and poverty. *Begar* was

the rule of the day and Kashmiri peasantry was treated as sub-human.

While on the one hand, severe tyranny was let loose by the rulers, on the other, nature too subjected the Kashmiri to hard destiny. Droughts would repeat their devastation in every decade, famine would kill thousands every year in one or the other part of the country and starvation would drag thousands towards the plains and even to remote Konkan belt. Horrifying is the tale of natural calamities which agonized the Kashmiris during the later part of the 19th century. About the floods of 1893 Sir Walter Lawrence sums up that "only in proper Kashmir 2225 houses were destroyed..." By 'proper Kashmir' he meant the capital of Kashmir.

Only one year before this calamity, Kashmir had witnessed a serious set-back due to a devastating fire which gutted several thousand houses. The same author (Sir Walter Lawrence) pointing out the devastation due to earthquakes and famines states :

Fires and floods, however, sink into insignificance when compared with earthquakes, famines and cholera. Since the fifteenth century eleven great earthquakes have occurred, all of long duration and accompanied by great loss of life. In the present century there have been four severe earthquakes and it is worthy to note that in the last two of 1885 the most violent shocks were felt in an elliptical area whose focuses were Srinagar and Barramulla.

Detailing out the horrifying results of famines and cholera the author of *The Valley of Kashmir* writes :

Native historians record nineteen great famines regarding which they give gruesome details. In the present century there have been ten epidemics of cholera among the people of Kashmir.

Summing up the terror and oppression under which Kashmiris lived during Dogra rule Arthur Brinkman precisely pin-points :

A poor Kashmiri is like a mouse trying to drink with an army of cats in the same room with him.... So reporters, bribery, treachery are all among and around them, they sometimes are afraid to speak much to each other.....<sup>1</sup>

In this background it was difficult, if not impossible, for the leadership of the freedom movement to make people conscious of their plight, spread the waves of consciousness among them and to induce them to fight against their oppressors with valour and self-respect.

Thus there was a genuine and definite need for a heart-pricking and thought-provoking message which could become the clarion call pulling the nation out of a debris of inferiority complex. Nature had destined Mehjoor (1887-1952) and his junior contemporary Azad to meet the challenge of history. Mehjoor with his sweet, chaste and melodious lyrics pulled out a common Kashmiri from the morass of self-denial in which illiterate and self-styled mystic poets had thrown him. Azad created a nucleus of elite which, for the first time, showed conscious awareness of the cultural heritage of Kashmir. Sufi poetry had given expression to the most intricate inner experiences of the human mind but, later on, the imitators of the mystic phrase and metaphor created the worst type of drowsiness and indifference to worldly affairs. This apathy perpetuated a situation of *status quo*.

A common Kashmiri was more often influenced by the so-called mystic pattern of this poetry which had contributed to a pessimistic and fatalistic approach to life. The literate Kashmiri too was averse to his cultural heritage, including his language and literature. He would look to his own identity with utmost contempt and showered comments of disgrace on his own forefathers.

All Kashmiris considered Kashmir a hell on earth though it appeared as a paradise to aliens.

In this background Mehjoor's sweet but lofty verse gave a shattering to a commoner as well as to a literate, but Azad's revolutionary and thought-provoking poems made every Kashmiri feel proud of his origin, national identity and inherent capacities bestowed upon him by nature. His poems revolutionized the mind of the same Kashmiri, who till then used to hate his place of birth and origin. Thus, a sense of love and respect for the homeland was cultivated. In the patriotic songs he made frequent references of the valiant soldiers, noble kings and eminent scholars of Kashmir thereby educating his fellow Kashmiri of his rich past. Love for homeland and pride in its heritage are pre-requisites which create a sense of sacrifice for one's motherland. Azad created a thinking in the Kashmiri mind that love for the motherland should be an article of faith with the sons of the soil.

It is here that Azad carves out a path distinct from his elder contemporary, Mehjoor. Initially, he followed him in letter and spirit but gradually widened the horizon of his creative thinking so as to rise above all interests, nationalistic, regional or religious. So, in the later part of his life, Azad defied territorial loyalties and sung for the unity of man. He devoted both thought and art to create an order universally acceptable to all for human good and oneness of man. He was, therefore, rightly called "Poet of Humanity".

In his urge to revive a sense of self-respect among Kashmiris, Azad devoted his life to collecting and collating the scattered material of Kashmir's literary heritage. The challenge was not an ordinary one in a place where there was no record either about composed verse or about its composers. Even eminent poets were lost in oblivion. He had to face the most discouraging situation as the heirs of many poets refused to meet him and even ridiculed him. He was considered either a spy or a state-agent who would just get them involved in misfortune. Some of the

kith and kin denied even their relationship with the eminent dead poets lest they should become the target of State oppression. Azad collected, against many odds, material about dozens of poets, collated the same in chronological order, giving, at the outset, biographical sketches of the poets, critical appreciation of the creative talent of each poet and finally quoted excerpts from the verses of every poet. *The Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi* has been written in Urdu and was published in three volumes, after a decade of Azad's death, by the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (hereinafter to be referred to as the State Academy). This book, for the first time, provides recorded material of the poets who lived during the last six centuries and thus preserves the verse-stock which could never be traced out but for Azad's diligence and intelligence. To trace out authentic material about those poets and to collect the correct version of their masterpieces Azad had to travel throughout the State in hilly and inaccessible terrains. He had no encouragement from any quarter whatsoever. The state had aversion against all traces of Kashmir's identity, civil servants looked down with contempt on their mother tongue while intellectuals out of their complex had lost love for their culture and language. The local rich and affluent families were agents of the autocracy. Azad was the son of a poor village family and a low-paid primary school teacher having thirteen rupees as his monthly income. In these circumstances his task was no less than an adventure and it was the miracle of his dedication, sincerity and devotion that he was crowned with success. After fifty years of his death we have not been able to make any addition to his monumental work in spite of the creation of a host of institutions for the development of language and literature during these five decades.

In this work Azad emerges as the first critic. Dealing with the history of Kashmiri verse he has made critical assessment of each individual poet. He has categorized the three main evolutionary stages of Kashmir's literary career and specifies the most important characteristics of



each literary era. He has thus applied constructive criticism to dozens of poets highlighting their merits and demerits.

As an original researcher, Azad compiled the bulk of the poetry of a great classical poet, Maqbool Shah, collected the pieces of other poets hitherto unknown or less known and collated the relevant material to acquaint the posterity with life and works of our predecessors. We had no tradition of biographic literature and no mention was made of the Kashmiri poets in earlier Persian or Sanskrit records. Baba Mishkali (d. 1580) has stated that his teacher Baba Nasib (d. 1642) would bitterly weep when he had occasion to read or hear verses of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din, (1377-1438) but he did not quote even a single verse which had such an impact upon his master<sup>2</sup>. Azad himself quotes an anecdote of Baba Daud (1521-1585) who appreciated a Kashmiri verse but quoted instead its Persian translation<sup>3</sup>. Only a few decades before the birth of Azad a great historian Peer Hassan Shah Khoihani compiled a political, geographical, social and cultural history of Kashmir in three volumes. Though he made separate discussions on the contribution of Kashmir to Persian language and literature and highlighted creative capacities of each Persian Poet from Kashmir he deliberately omitted even to mention the names of his contemporary Kashmiri poets. There are several such examples which expose our predecessor- intellectuals in Kashmir to the stigma of bias against their own being and thus reflect the complex under which the mind of our elite worked.

Prior to Baba Kamal<sup>4</sup> and Baba Khalil<sup>5</sup> no other distinguished biographer of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din even cared to quote from his poetry though till then at least a dozen of voluminous anthologies were compiled or edited.

In these circumstances, Azad had to start from zero and had to tap remote, distant and scattered sources to collect biographical material of our poets. There may be

some insignificant omissions, yet he laid the tradition with constructive and realistic endeavours. In many cases he had to sift material for his book from oral anecdotes or deep rooted traditions or folktales or even from legendary background.

For the hard work he put in collecting data from various sources Azad shall dominate the world of our letters for centuries to come. He had himself been conscious of his valuable contribution and stressing the pun in the word Azad (free) the poet, critic, literary historian, biographer, linguist and researcher Azad claims of himself :

"The whole world shall recite Azad,  
Oh, my love, I shall soon remind thee."<sup>6</sup>

#### NOTES

1. *Papers on Kashmir*, Ed. Mr. S.L. Gadro.
2. "Asrarul-Abrar", Baba Dawood Mishkaṭi (Manuscript calligraphed by Late Gh. Mohammad Muqiem in 1889).
3. *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi* Vol. I.
- 4&5. Both biographers of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din from Tsarari-Sharief died 1865 and 1882 respectively.
6. Azad's verse from a *Ghazal*. Refer *Kuliyati Azad*.

## Life

RANGER is a small backward village near the famous town Tsarari-Sharif situated to the south-west of Srinagar in the newly carved out district of Badgam. The village is presently inhabited by 1435 men and women according to the census of 1981, and was till early 70s virtually cut off from the rest of the State owing to lack of communications. Only in the late seventies a fair-weather road connecting Chadora (Tehsil Headquarters) with this village was constructed and a regular bus service from Srinagar was very recently introduced. The inhabitants of this and other adjoining villages were either landless tenants or petty land holders living on the poor yield of their uneconomic holdings of unirrigated land.

Sultan Dar,<sup>1</sup> literate small agriculturist living a pious life in this village, was closely connected with the mystics living in the adjoining areas. He was himself a member of Naqashbandi mystic order. He regularly attended mystic circles and would usually recite poetry. These habits had cultivated in him a deep appreciation of art. From the early days, sufis, sanyasis and rishis of Kashmir would devote their maximum time amidst nature. Sultan Dar was also fond of such picturesque spots and would, either in loneliness or in company of his fellow travellers of sufi cult, spend his spare time at such places.

In 1903, a second son Azad was born to Sultan Dar. He was brought up in the same poor society but in a pious, sensitive and intelligent environment. His elder brother Ali Dar learnt reading and writing and took a few lessons on therapeutics. Later on, Ali Dar adopted the profession of a village *hakim* and simultaneously opened a private *maktab* where he provided coaching to village boys. He taught his younger brother Abdul Ahad some Persian books, the holy Quran and elementary subjects

of Muslim Fiqh (Jurisprudence). Abdul Ahad had one sister for whom his father Sultan Dar had brought one young peasant boy Aziz Bhat as resident son-in-law. He was an illiterate peasant who cultivated personally the small landed estate of Sultan Dar and thus Azad and his elder brother Ghulam Ali could pay their attention to reading and writing.

Azad mentions<sup>2</sup> that his father wished him to build his career as a mystic but he had a revolutionary bent of mind and thus worked hard to study. There was no school in his village and after having elementary coaching in his brother's *maktab*, Azad was admitted in the primary School of Zowhama. Reference is made to his own statement:

"In 1973 B.S. (AD 1916) my brother Ghulam Ali opened a *maktab*. I was initially taught Urdu and Persian languages in the same institution. As I had an urge for studies, I gradually acquired some proficiency. Study of literature was always my favourite hobby"<sup>3</sup>

He acquired initial training from his father, in mysticism and started regular schooling from his eighth year. The young boy had to traverse about eight kilometres daily on rough terrain and even during rough weather to and from his school. To meet the pressures of agricultural life in his home he would also assist his parents in their fields and would tend the cattle. But in spite of all this exhaustion he would study till late in the night, complete his home task and would even attend to extra studies. His schooling was very brief but he acquired a workable knowledge of Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages, Muslim jurisprudence and history. Consequently, he got a job of a school teacher in the 13th year of his age on a meagre monthly pay of Rs.13. He was posted as the single teacher in the same government school of village Zowhama where he had received schooling. This job provided him with ample opportunity to study nature, understand the problems of his people and to add to his knowledge by unabating study of

literature. He would take his classes in the open atmosphere of this picturesque but poorest area of Kashmir. Azad was gifted with a unique intellect, sharp grasp, an inquisitive mind, a restless temperament and sensitive heart. The budding sensitive poet was attracted by the beauty around and took to composing love lyrics when he was only a teenager.

Azad was born in a poor family but his ears were tuned to the melodies of music and lofty thoughts of mystic verses. His father would convene informal meetings of local singers and a few mystic poets including Hassan Shah of Tsarari Sharif (d. 1910). Though Hassan Shah was an illiterate poet, yet he had revolutionary ideas. He had, in real sense, laid the foundation of descriptive poems in which he picturised the plight of the underprivileged. He was consciously aware of the pressures which suffocated both the feelings and expression of his fellow poets.

My contemporary poets,  
Eminent or ordinary,  
all shriek and murmur,  
under the pangs of death,  
I am similarly situated myself.<sup>4</sup>

This environment cultivated revolutionary thinking in Azad and finally he became the "Poet of Revolution".

In spite of insufficient schooling, Azad acquired scholarly aptitude through extensive studies in literature, history, religion, Marxism and other allied subjects. He had deeply studied Kashmir history, Persian poetry and in particular, he studied carefully and with devotion Persian and Urdu verses of Sir Sheikh Mohd. Iqbal (1878-1938).

He passed the Diploma examination in Persian Literature as a private candidate from the Punjab University, Lahore with distinction in 1925. He also made sufficient preparations for honours in the same subject

but could not take the examination as he was laid down with pneumonia.

In 1931, the whole of Kashmir rose against the tyranny of the Maharaja's rule and Azad was also suspected of being an activist or at least a sympathizer of this uprising. Hence, as a punishment, he was transferred from his area to a farflung area, Tral. In those days, due to the lack of communication facilities, such a posting amounted to a deterrent punishment for a poor employee.

On the occasion of this transfer his house was raided, searched and family members tortured. Azad, who was in Tral, was very anxious to know something about the members of his family but the oppressive officers refused him permission to leave the station. Finally one day he heard the sad news of the death of his only son who was only four years old. During the period of this agony, Azad would usually visit the sacred Khanquah of Shah Hamdan<sup>5</sup> at Tral and would regularly offer his prayers there. It is evident from this fact that Azad was strictly a religious minded man devoted to his faith. But the agony under which his mind was taxed by the circumstances during his stay at Tral caused a tremendous change in his thinking about religion. He did not become an atheist (as he was later dubbed) but, spiritually, came closer to Shah Hamdan's teachings.

From the village Tral he was transferred to a more inaccessible village Geru in the same area and in 1933 was selected for the normal training course. On completion of the said course in 1934, he was re-transferred to his native locality and was posted in another adjacent village Branwar where he spent one year and then he was transferred to another beautiful village Surasyar where he lived with his family till his death. His wife hailed from this village and even otherwise he had romantic attachments with it and deeply loved its natural environment.

Azad originally used 'Ahad' the second part of his name as "nom de plume" and subsequently changed it to "Janbaz". After the revolutionary change in his thinking he adopted 'Azad' as his pen name.

Azad had a feeble constitution, a darkish skin, shining teeth, sophisticated accent, inherent shyness, attractive glance and short stature. He usually wore white *salwar*, black *achkan* and a big white turban. His delicate health was a permanent feature of his life and he finally developed appendicitis which could not be diagnosed in time.

On the 30th March 1948 Azad made complaints of acute pain in his abdomen and was undergoing high fever. There was no hospital or dispensary in any village in the area. To avoid the risk of carrying the crying patient on a stretcher from that remote village to Srinagar the services of local *hakims* were utilised. They failed in their diagnosis and the pain would not subside. Hence on the special messages from his doctor friends at Srinagar, Azad was brought to the city. The doctors attending him diagnosed appendicitis and advised immediate surgery. He was shifted to SMHS hospital, Srinagar, where he was operated upon. But he did not survive and passed away on the evening of 4 April 1948. His dead body was taken to his native village Ranger where he lies buried.

His elder contemporary Mehjoor had in a poem "Plough" willed that Azad, as his successor, would carry on his mission to the posterity defending the interests of the peasantry. But destiny decided otherwise and the same Mehjoor had to compose an elegy to mourn the death of his junior.

In his early years, Azad composed either *watsun*, a local form of love lyric with a refrain after every three verse or traditional *ghazal* overburdened with simple but effective expression of feminine emotions pivoted around the desires of union and pangs of separation. It was the age of mathnavi. This poetic genre dominated both the

mind of the poet and the general public. For full winter nights, in every fourth house of a locality in a get-together of local people, the versified love stories or epics (both in *mathnavi* form) were being recited in a melodious voice by one person and the listeners would enjoy the story, its poetic narrations, musical charm and mono-acting type of gestures of the reader. This general appreciation motivated every poet of whatever stature to compose such longer poems. Azad also followed this trend. He composed two *mathnavis*, 'Tabassumi-Gul' (The Smile of the Rose) and 'Qamarzaman'. During this period he attained public fame but remained overshadowed by the stature of Mehjoor. He was himself an admirer of Mehjoor and planned to write his biography. With this aim in mind he came in contact with Mehjoor. The relationship of the two literary giants will be treated separately.

However, after 1931, both his thought and his art acquired a revolutionary fervour and consequently he attracted the attention of the elite and the intellectual class. It is during this period that he came in contact with an outstanding journalist and historian of Kashmir Mr. P.N. Bazaz. He also developed contacts with a group of Royist intellectuals and thus cultivated a sense of appreciation for the philosophy of M.N. Roy. Padam Nath Ganju, Dr. Omkar Nath, K.L. Koul, G.A. Ashai and other intellectuals become his personal friends. It is during this period that the Urdu dailies of late P.N. Bazaz reserved a column for Azad's poems. Later on he wrote a monograph justifying the title of the "Poet of Humanity" for Azad. From the preface of Mr. Bazaz's book 'Poet of Humanity' is pertinent to sum up the impact which the first meeting of Azad left upon the mind of the author. It reads :

My first meeting with Ab. Ahad Azad took place in the autumn of 1942 when both of us were present in a *mushaira* (Poetic Symposium) of Kashmiri poets in S.P. College of Srinagar. Our first meeting, though



it lasted not beyond a few minutes, provided opportunity to both of us for admiring each other . . .

Among his admirers P.N. Ganju discharged the debt of gratitude to this great friend by compiling and editing *Kuliyati Azad* for the State Academy with a comprehensive and detailed preface in Urdu. This book is now an important source for the study of Azad.

Late Mehjoor was a *patwari* and as such he had come to attend a camp of revenue officials held in the native village of Azad in 1935. Azad rushed to avail of the opportunity of meeting the distinguished poet. At the invitation of Azad his senior contemporary remained with him for some time. In these meetings the former expressed his desire to write a biography of the latter, which was readily appreciated. Besides, Azad presented his newly composed lyrics to Mehjoor, sought his comments and suggestions. The relationship continued for sometime. Later on Azad composed a poem "Complaint of Iblis" (Satan) and presented the same to Mehjoor for perusal, suggestions, improvements or amendments if any.

The latter returned the poem without any comment, but after some time informed the friends of Azad that such a composition amounted to an adventure for developing literature. Azad interpreted this summary treatment as an affront and thereafter carved out a distinguishable literary path of his own for conveying his revolutionary ideas. It is hereafter that Azad, instead of confining himself to Mehjoor's biography and critical study of his poetry changed his mind to work for a literary history of Kashmir, though with special stress on Mehjoor, Maqbool and Paramanand, the trio whom he specially appreciated.

Though Azad's *ghazals* also became popular during his own life time, his stature remained overshadowed under the towering personality of Mehjoor till the former devised a distinct and distinguishable creative role for himself as exponent of revolutionary ideas.

Azad was shy, would talk less and hear more. But whenever he would enter into a discourse or debate he would put his view point with confidence. It was against his conscience to talk ill or hear ill of others or to annoy or displease any of his friends or admirers. In spite of the fact that I was only twelve years of age when I had a chance to sit in his company as a favourite student of the late Mr. Inqilab yet I remember certain details of those few memorable days which Azad spent in our school at Tsrari Sharif with our revered teachers. Azad had every respect for Mr. Inqilab and heard keenly his Urdu and Persian verses. He also recited some of his own verses in a very low voice with all humility. Mr. Inqilab also felt moved to write in his mother tongue and on the next day recited a Kashmiri poem which he had composed during that night. The poem was too inferior to his Urdu composition and showed that he had no command over his own language. He invited comments from Azad but the latter did not damp the enthusiasm of the otherwise superiorly-qualified and positioned intellectual. He commented that the "semi-literates needed to compose in poorer Kashmiri whereas for a scholar, Mr. Inqilab, a richer language like Urdu can suit as a tool for conveying his creative genius." But it is later on that Inqilab grasped the sarcasm underlying the comment.

In spite of his personal failures Azad remained undisturbed. He had only a son who too died in his infancy while Azad was far away from his home and family. The incident instead of causing a setback to him brought radical changes in his outlook. He devised a separate path for his creativity and came openly against all extremism whether nationalistic or religious. He believed in the unity of men and sung for universal brotherhood. Projecting his revolutionary ideas and ideals he had on several occasions to criticize, in forceful language and with deep sarcastic and piercing satire, misuse of religious institutions and nationalistic slogans. This brought him to the arena of severe criticism and some labelled him as a nonbeliever. The masses enjoyed

in full the idea and sincerity behind his poems. It needs a mention that deeper study into his verse belies such insinuations.

As already stated he had, besides one brother, a sister who was married to Aziz Bhat. She gave birth to two sons and two daughters. All of them were brought up by Azad as his own children and he took keen interest, as a father would do, to impart education to his two nephews. The younger Gh. Hassan (alias Mamkalloo) was devoted to vocal music whereas the elder Ghulam Nabi Aariz proved his worthy successor. Aariz devised a particular poetic diction closer in flow, chastity and sweetness to folk poetry. Thus after the death of Mehjoor in 1951, Aariz kept the light of sweet lyricism shining till his death in 1965. In the words of Mr. Taing, an outstanding critic, "It was the courage of Aariz to face the challenges posed by the void which Mehjoor's death caused in the world of letters."

To edit *Kuliyat Aariz* (Anthology of the verse of Aariz) for the State Academy in 1972 his widow entrusted me with all his manuscripts including some letters he had received from his uncle, teacher, and guide, the late Azad. A postcard written in 1945 by Azad to Aariz shows that the former, in spite of radical changes in his poetry, remained committed to the mystic clan of his late father and used to observe a special ceremonial function on the third day of the third month of the Muslim calendar every year, in the sacred memory of Khawaja Bahud-Din Naqashbandi, the leader of Naqashbandi mystic order. The poet would celebrate a function at his home and would ask his nephew to remain present on that occasion.<sup>6</sup>

For several reasons Azad would frequently visit Tsrari Sharif. The people from adjoining villages (including the home village of Azad) all used to attend Friday prayers there. So did Azad. This town is fertile from good old days for the growth of intellect. So, to acquire guidance and assistance, Azad could either go to Srinagar or to Tsrari Sharif. The latter place was more accessible to him and

he had a sufficient number of relatives there to stay with. He got his niece married there and she is living till date. He would usually come to see her and stay with her in-laws for weeks together. In later days the poet, as a single teacher of his school, along with all the teachers of the schools of similar status in the adjoining areas, had to come to Tsrari Sharif High School to draw his salary. It was during the month of March in 1948, immediately after re-opening of educational institutions after long winter vacation, that Azad who had come to Tsrari Sharif spent many hours for several days in our school. He received a letter from the General Secretary of the ruling National Conference through special messenger in this school and was requested to join as an office bearer of the newly formed Cultural Congress, but he showed his utter reluctance. Before he could communicate his inability and invite the official wrath, death cut short his life.

Besides, his mental affinity with a number of intelligent people of Tsrari Sharif including the traditional poet Haji Ilyas, Azad had a deeper friendship with late Ghulam Mohd. Dar, *Lamberdar* of Zowhama village who was progressive in his ideas and sharp in wit.

It is unfortunate that except placing a plaque on his grave the government<sup>\*</sup> has constructed no befitting memorial so far in his memory. Even the school of Zowhama village where he was taught and where he taught for two decades, has not been named in his memory as demanded by the people. However, the people on their part have named a posh colony in the greater Srinagar as Azad Basti.

On his death Mehjoor composed a poem from which the date, month and year of Azad's death is deducted. Late Inqilab composed an elegy in Persian but unfortunately, it is so far un-published.

The void between Mehjoor and Azad was visible to their common friends and admirers sometime in 1946

when the former recited a poem at Pakharpora, the burial place of a Saint Syed Balkhi and the latter composed a parody full with sarcasm upon the said poem. Earlier the reaction shown by Mehjoor to Azad's poem "The Complaint of Satan" had caused some discomfort to the latter.

In spite of those later incidents causing some strains in the otherwise cordial and friendly relationship of the two, both showed maximum respect for each other. Azad rendered full justice as a critic and biographer to Mehjoor's contribution and personality whereas the latter sung hymns of praise for Azad.

#### NOTES

1. A beautifully scribed Persian booklet on the practices of Qadri mystic cult authoured and written by the late Sultan Dar has recently been added to my personal collection of manuscripts. It shows that he was a scholar, saint and revered personality.
2. Foreword to *Kuliyati Azad* by its compiler P.N. Ganju, State Academy.
3. Ibid.
4. 'Be-Boj Nama' (Misrule), a long poem by Hassan Shah; yet unpublished.
5. Syed Ali Hamdani, popularly known as Shah Hamdan and Ali Saani was born in Hamdan in Iran in 1300. He visited Kashmir with a considerable number of Syeds, ulemas and artisans. He has revolutionized not only religious life in Kashmir but is considered one of the founders of present Kashmiri culture. He died in 1384 near Pukhli on his return from Kashmir. Town 'Tral' has also a Khanqah in memory of the Amir.
6. Forward to *Kuliyati Aariz*, Ed. G.N. Gauhar, State Academy.

## Azad as Poet

P.N. GANJU puts Azad's literary evolution in three phases but, in my view, as the poet had swift and remarkable changes in his thought and art, we have to assess him in totality. Mr. Ganju qualifies Azad's initial poetic career from 1916 to 1931 as that of a traditionalist. From the dawn of the freedom movement in Kashmir, i.e. 1931, till the early forties he confines his verse within the narrow ambit of patriotism and his later poetry, according to Ganju, projects him as the poet of humanity.

A dispassionate study will reveal that though Azad appears strictly a committed author he does not confine himself within the narrow boundaries of commitment. The broad characteristic of his total poetic contribution appears to be a confluence of various impacts. He could not alienate himself from the deep-rooted tradition which had the features of both romantic and mystic influences. Here he appears treading a well-trodden path though he uses original metaphors, fresh similes and chaste diction couched in the sweetness of folk forms. He was brought up in the lap of natural beauty and so cannot escape its deep impact upon his thinking and expression. The dazzling charm of rose-gardens, the neglected beauty of a peasant girl, the musical lure of slinging streams and the thundering noise of waterfalls lull him in the lap of commotion. But certain pricking thorns make him cry and moan like a bewildered child horrified by some horrid dream. Pricking thorns : the vicissitudes of teeming masses, the agonies of young widows (who had lost their partners under the weight of heavy head load upon dangerous cliffs of high mountains while they were dragged for beggar) and the weeping cries of those orphaned and starving children who were deprived even of mere necessities for survival. The poet had to experience

such realities of life every day as could even upset a man of ordinary sensibility. So, while praising the naked beauty of natural sceneries around him, Azad simultaneously exposes to the public gaze the eroded human values. The fragrance of the rose charms his sensuousness, the soothing sight of milky streams dancing under his feet and the dazzling twilight persuade Azad's creative mind to sing songs in praise of this paradise. But because of the aggressive consequences which ensued in many parts of the world owing to narrow-minded chauvinistic nationalism, Azad, immediately, rather simultaneously, preaches oneness of man and supremacy of human values upon all other cults. Thus the poet is so deeply moved by all these tides that were inherent to his age and so it is practically impossible to decipher, on the basis of time, the thin and invisible boundaries of the various trends in his poetic thought. All these shades of his thinking can be ascertained with the study of a single poem e.g., *Deryaw* (The River). The deep mystic influence of his father upon the mind of the poet is the symbolic essence of the poem whereas his romantic fervor is in full swing in it like the flow of the Vitasta. Each of its stanzas reveals his ingrained love for nature. While reading this poem the reader associates himself actively with the evolution of the river Jhelum from its source Verinag to its final destination and thus the mind is gripped with the love of the land of the Vitasta, i.e. Kashmir. Here Azad unfolds himself as a patriot, committed to the love for surroundings of this great river which is the life-line of Kashmir. The moral, rather the philosophy, of the poem lies in its message that humanity, like the river, is universal, unmindful of colour, creed and descent. It brings unequal surface to a common level. The evaluation of all these facets is what my reader can genuinely demand from me. Before I make the study of his verse in relation to the influences hinted above, let me make a precise but essentially relevant reference to the literary scene at the time when Azad started writing.

Under what suffocating strains our language and literature emerged will be seen later but suffice it to mention here that had not the mystic poets expressed their intricate experiences in their mother-tongue it could probably, have remained a language without any literature.

Islam came to Kashmir through the sincere efforts of the Sufies. Tasawuf and local Shaivistic philosophy were faced with conflicting situations either of confrontation or of co-existence. Thanks to the emergence of the local mystic order called the Reshi cult, a synthesis between the two evolved and the Kashmiri language became their main tool to convey to and converse with the masses. It is thus that the writ of mystic thought dominated our poetry. Besides the thought, the language experienced a unique synthesis and it seems that Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din made conscious and deliberate efforts to this end. Words, metaphors, similes and poetic references were so aptly borrowed from Persian and used in the local language that a linguistic confrontation between the two was completely avoided and instead the colloquial ambit of Kashmiri was widened. New literary trends were also introduced. The foundation of *ghazal* and *mathnavi* are patent from the poetry of the Sheikh itself and later on its evolution became both natural and historical. Mystics gave all intrinsic traits to Kashmiri *ghazal* which are characteristic of the eminent sufi poets of Iran. Unfortunately some recent critics have arbitrarily and without any cogent reason exteined from the fold of *ghazal* the bulk of such lyrics as have the fourth verse as refrain. They club such lyrics as *watsun* which in itself is not an independent poetic genre. It means and connotes longer poems with a refrain. It is not desirable to enter into this argumentation but suffice it to say that not only our classical masters of *ghazal* but also more recently Mehjoor and Azad enjoyed the beauty of refrain in it. Even some Persian masters have, though rarely, used half a verse as refrain in their *ghazals*. Thus, from Habba Khatoon (16th century) till Mehjoor the *ghazal* had



dominated our literary scene though in between the two, with the exception of Mahmood Gami (1765-1885) and Rasul Mir (AD 1894), mystic thought remained dominant. Habba's *ghazals* unfold the ambiguities and intricacies of her personal experiences and hence it is full of pathos conveyed in simple and sweet language. It has feminine sincerity and devotion. Mahmood Gami chants melody with the urge of union and repents under the pangs of separation whereas Rasul Mir confines his poetic craft to the description of unparalleled beauty of his beloved. In spite of their distinctive secular outlook, all the three giants could not withstand the sway of mystic popularity and here and there gave vent to such ideas, though such of their expressions often do not fit in the frame of their peculiar diction.

Mehjoor inherited this legacy at the beginning of the 20th century and he himself felt proud of claiming to have acquired the influence of Rasool Mir. He sang love lyrics in a new idiom but linked them with antiquity. Azad started singing *ghazals* when surroundings around him echoed the high voice of Mehjoor. This was the situation that prevailed in our literature. The *mathnavi* genre dominated the public mind though the *ghazal* had built its impact. It was an era of the *mathnavi*. But excepting a few masterpieces in this genre all were either adaptation of foreign love stories or of the local stories, folk tales or pure translations. There was conspicuously one exception that of Akram Daradmand who versified allegorically his own failures as a lover. His *Mehro Mah* (The Sun and the Moon) *Mathnavi* is thus an autobiographical novel in verse.

This situation led Azad to a thick and virgin forest of avenues. He could have been bewildered in sifting priorities but without losing any moment he made the best use of the opportunity and contributed to as many genres as was possible in such a brief span of life.

He formed a distinguishable link in the existing tradition, created new trends in art and craft as an

exponent of romanticism, played romance with the beauty of nature around him, revolutionized the nature of thinking among his contemporaries and preached for a revolution which could establish a world order only for the human good.

### Traditionalist

A good number of his love lyrics are highly musical and thematically very rich. Boundaries of such compositions are in close vicinity with those of the *Geet* form of the old poetry. As has been said in detail, Azad opened his eyes when the whole poetry bore the significant seal of the mystic order; the versified long fictitious and epic *Mathnavi* forms were favourite pastime with the masses and Mehjoor's love songs had gained popularity. Azad did not alienate himself from this tradition. His initial poetry bears all these marks. He uses both mystic and folk phraseologies. To him 'He' is the 'Kaba' and 'He' is the temple adoring the images of paganism and it is 'He' who worships Himself in both these places of worship. Here both in content and metaphor Azad appears a prisoner of tradition which owed its origin to Nund Reshi's verses like:

Thou art the flesh, thou the butcher  
Thou the knife to cut it with

This thought of Nund Reshi seems to be an echo of Maulana Rumi's oft repeated ideas.

The same idea gets a poor repetition in Azad's earlier love lyrics. Here Azad does not bear a direct influence of Rumi but carries ahead the much-used local mystic metaphor.

The first poet who provided a new model and aptitude of love lyrics, Habba Khatoon, herself a woman, considered women the symbol of love, sincerity and faithfulness. Hence she, while portraying the agonies of love, emotions of sincerity and high claims of faithfulness depicts a woman as true lover and man with all muscular qualities

as her beloved. "He is unmindful of the agony of his fiancé, has affairs with various devoted women and hardly possesses the quality of faithfulness." It is this mode of conveyance that suited the mystic expression because the Absolute Truth has all masculine attributes whereas the seeker of the truth like a woman is sincere and faithful. In this process it had become the trait of the Kashmiri poetry to project a lover as woman and man as beloved. Mehjoor added fervour to this deep rooted tradition by diving deeper within the feminine feelings. Azad could not withstand the charm and carried this tradition ahead.

In such lyricism Azad successfully conveys subtle, cherished, simple and sincere emotions of a woman lover whom her love has ignored, deserted and hypocritically deceived. Only a few verses may suffice to illustrate my view point.

My comrade, let us rush to Thursday fair at  
Tsraar,  
My love may have come with his fresh fiancé,  
Let us snatch a moment to see him,  
The parrot may sing at the sight of Mina.  
In my dressing corner..  
Carelessly am I busy in applying costumes  
and,  
Merrily spraying perfumes on my garments.  
An electric shock shatters my feelings as I  
think of him,  
The collyrium just applied,  
Drips with bloody tears from my almond-like  
eyes.

### **Romanticism**

Only a despot can afford to be unromantic in the surroundings in which Azad lived. Though the natural beauty in his environment was dominated by the pangs of poverty, yet its every single aspect has a special attraction. Even a poor village girl dressed shabbily has a unique appeal to a sensuous mind. It was this right environment which provided background to the sensitivity

of Azad and filled his heart with the passion of love. He loved and adored both the petal and the thorn, the shining cluster in a clear sky and the multicoloured rainbow amidst the thick and black clouds. Innocence in the simplicity of a poor village girl and the presumptive gait of the city beauty, both had a unique appeal to his sense of appreciation.

Though he warns his contemporary romantic poets that they should not waste their creative capacities in immature thoughts *kham khayal*, he himself cannot restrain his idea to be led in the same direction. A deeper study in his *ghazals* will reveal that in spite of his warnings against romanticism he is basically a poet of romance. He loves both the physical beauty of a shepherd girl and the sophisticated features of a Pandit damsel. He falls in love with wild roses and sings the songs with running streams. He dances with waterfalls and is bewildered in the whispering atmosphere of thick forests. While describing the beauty of a shepherd or Pandit girl, while asking the wild rose to solve his puzzles, while making the river to sing hymns of human revolution, the author is everywhere and always a romantic genius.

### *Portraiture of Nature*

Azad depicts his natural surroundings, conveys to the posterity the eternal message of love and shares with his reader the joy which is inherent in its beauty. His affinity with the naturalists is manifestly established by his poems like *The River*, *The Pine Tree*, *The Glacier*, *The Waterfall* and *The Vitasta*.

Earlier Azad's senior contemporary, late Mehjoor, had very vividly portrayed the beauty of Kashmir in his famous poem "Anthem of Kashmir" and other similar verses. But before these two giants came to the forefront there was, in the real sense of the term, no descriptive poetry worth mention. Though a caravan of *Mathnavi* poets had described special romantic situations in verse fiction yet the same was divergent, irregular and alien. However, the

earliest sample of such verse is found in some poems of Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din which particularly portray the beauty as well as the backwardness of the *Kandi* areas. Hassan Shah Ganai who inspired Azad earlier in his career has nicely described the devastation caused by the earthquake in 1885 AD. In this background of insignificant tradition Azad made a debut with his God-gifted originality. It appears that Azad had the keenest observation, a hawkish eye and a brilliant understanding of nature. He used to take his classes in the open, either on the banks of the river Doodganga or in the fields surrounded by fir and kail trees.

With its vivid picturesque disposition the poem "The River" is philosophical in content and revolutionary in thought. In other poems like "The Waterfall", "The Wild Rose", "The Glacier", etc., the poet has made his reader perceive, realise and see with the inner vision these aspects of nature. He has made selective choice of appropriate words, phrases, metaphors and similes. Mehjoor surpasses all his contemporaries in lyricism, yet Azad stands in near equation with him.

Azad had a deeper study of the history of Kashmir and so his verses are replete with historical references making their ambit wider, universal and eternal. It cannot be overlooked that frequent use of such references impaired the literary merit and lyrical value of his verses. Wit, in spite of his humility, was Azad's personal quality with which he used to make his presence felt even in a get-together. Hence this quality coupled with deep sarcasm and original satire adds one more dimension to his verse. Ridicule was the hall mark of the administration during the Dogra regime. Excessive high-handedness of the administrative setup nourished the fertility of Azad's sarcasm and satire. "The petty forest official with unfounded pretext raids the house of the village tenant to extort bribe from him, the victim of this tyranny lodges complaint with his superior officers but they in turn declare his "genuine possession as an illicit one".

His satire dives deeper in social evils and exposes those fanatics who cause division with the pretexts of differences in the form of worship. He says, "if *pūja* and *nimaz* are meant to create division in humanity, pleasure is exclusively mine to return both the gifts to Him".

As already stated, under the Influence of Persian poetry a magnificent edifice of Kashmiri *ghazal* was raised slowly and steadily on the indigenous foundation of the local genre long syllabled love poem the *watsun*. The *ghazal* remained a favourite form for the expression of feelings of love, desire of union, pangs of separation, mystical intricacies, physical realities, meta-physical obscurities, patriotic ideas, ethical deductions, didactic devotion, progressive emancipation and expression of the modern complex sensibility.

To achieve the present distinguishable stage Kashmiri *ghazal* has witnessed various stages in its evolution and it is in the nineteenth century that definitely two different streams ran through this medium in parallel directions. On the one side mystic poets made it the most convenient tool to express complexities of their inner experiences and the romantic poets enriched this genre with the eternal touch of beauty. But a class of imitators created a worse type of stagnation till ultimately, Mehjoor and Azad brought this form again to limelight. During the early sixties some aversion for the *ghazal* was widely propagated. Yet because of its precision and accuracy, it is the only form of poetry which has successfully conveyed the complexities of an age which has a value in the erosion of values.

In the caravan of *ghazal* composers both Mehjoor and Azad may appear to us older than their antiquity due to the direct bearing in their statements, yet many of their verses appear as fresh and modern as the present-day compositions.

Owing to his commitment to a cause Azad had to contain certain direct statements in his verses which

impair greatly the lyricism of his *ghazal*. But at places when he is indirect or conveys his experience through the medium of symbols and metaphors, or in approximate idiom he retains successfully the spirit of the *ghazal* which is technically called "Taggazul", a term wider than mere lyricism.

As already stated, the lover in Kashmiri *ghazal* has always been a woman and thus its distinctive diction retained till recently the womanish simplicity, feminine faithfulness and delicate emotionalism. It seems that both Mehjoor and Azad wanted a change and, influenced by Persian poetry, they tried to project both the lover and the beloved with masculine qualities, but while doing so sometimes they inadvertently made a mess in the situation. It seems that Azad was conscious of this defect. He pin-pointed such mistakes both in his verse and in the love-lyric of Mehjoor.

At times Azad appears in the role of a propagandist, yet he does not believe in slogan-mongering as was the trait of later progressive poets. He conveyed his convictions, though often in pure statements, in such idiom and metaphor as are distinctly a part of the 'frame' of *ghazal*. Sometimes he conveys most revolutionary ideas through the medium of the *sufi* lexicon which include phrases like *Sozi Dil* (heart ailment), *Sozi Jigger* (The pain of a burning liver) *Kaba*, *Butkhana* (temple) *Deen* (faith) *Kuffar* (infidelity) *Darda Nyetstaar* (world of the melody of love) etc. it is for such distinguishable frame that, in spite of his commitment to a particular theme his *ghazal* appears neither sermon nor a slogan.

In his expression of philosophical thought, Azad's *ghazal* touches the boundaries of Persian classical *ghazal*. It has mystic overtones though he had dubbed both romantic and mystic poets "as the class of immature people". A deeper study will succinctly make it clear that through the mystic metaphors he sells the commodity peculiar to his own thinking.

In the recognition of one's 'self' lies the recognition of the Absolute Truth. This maxim is the corner-stone of mystic thought. The claim of Mansoor that "I am the Truth" (Anul Haq) is the wider connotation of the same thought, though confined in a narrower ambit. Azad uses the same maxim, rather its spirit, in mystic expression, to agitate, the human ego. It is relevant to give word-to-a-word rendering of a few verses from his *ghazal* so as to elucidate my contention:-

With cups of wine in it's hands, eagerly  
awaits the Narcissus,  
With intoxicated gaze looks upon thy path  
The daffodil and the hyacinth;  
In this spring, Oh my youth,  
Like joy and merriment of Idd.  
Alas! why at this unique moment should we  
Dream of heaven, its comforts and luxuries?  
\* \* \*

Enjoy the existing joy in physical love,  
Less reliance need to be given  
To the pleasures and anxieties of  
The so-called day of Judgement.  
\* \* \*

At times did I enjoy Kaba,  
At times I felt pleasure in the temple,  
At both the occasions I saved my heart  
Being misled by faith and infidelity.  
None can be seated  
On the thrown adorned by my friend.

*Rubayai* (quartrain) is the most difficult poetic genre which puts-forth a theory in three verses or states the genesis of some delicate thought in three verses and the fourth verse condenses the universe of such scattered claim with skill and art. It is distinguishable from the quartrain (*Qita*) in as much as the later has no specific meter restrictions whereas rules of prosody restrict the *Rubai*. Khayam's *Rubais* introduced this oriental form of poetry in the west. The *Vaakh* of Lal and Nund Reshi are very close to *Rubai*, except in the prosodic restrictions. Thus we have indigenous tradition for both *Rubai* and



Gita. Probably Azad is the first poet who after the Sheikh's era composed Rubai and Qita, though not in long numbers. He has also composed some *qitas* with five verses which in form and content are close to Sindhi genre "Panjkada". It is after the early fifties that Rubai genre flourished in our language and stalwarts like Mirza Arif and Mir G.R. Naazki bagged Sahitya Akademi and State Academy Awards for their compilations in rubai form. In the process Azad's Gita and rubai are only a basis for tradition. As such Azad has attained no other distinction in its craft. Azad has successfully introduced this form though the compositions in this genre are not many.

Assertion of truth is the pride of my faith,  
The reality in Paganism is the essence in me,  
I am the gist of the manifestation of Time  
Nobility moves with my movements.

Among the leaders of the Indian Freedom movement Azad had a special preference for Subash Chander Bose and was not moved by the *Ahinsa* of Bapuji. A quatrain sums up his reservation against that particular politics which he dubs as "Polity of the Spinning Wheel."

Azad has applied the meters of Persian prosody while assessing and evaluating the Kashmiri *ghazal*. We cannot be strictly just to Kashmiri poets in doing so. They have been bewitched by the peculiar tunes of the Kashmiri orchestra rather than confining themselves in the alien limitations. This treatment of Azad as a critic pre-supposes that he has been himself strictly observing the meters of Persian prosody. But the study even in his later *ghazal* will once again establish that in spite of the fact that he was conscious about a meter-scheme he too has remained committed to Kashmiri tradition which has adhered to its peculiar musical tunes.

Azad started composition of poetry at a time when *mathnavi* genre ruled the common taste. He could not restrain himself and had to compose two *mathnavis*. Unfortunately none is extant. It seems that the swift

change is his outlook made him to withdraw his earlier *ghazals* but as soon as he had composed those lyrics they had gone deeper in public memory, so could not be withdrawn. The poor Kashmiri was not in a position to spare a few annas at a time and was not able to purchase a big volume of lyrics. The local publishers had adopted a device of publishing pamphlets each containing at the most eight lyrics and the book did cost an anna or less. These pamphlets were being published thousands and the author would be either flattered or paid meagerly. Mahjoor's *ghazal* reached every home through this process throughout the Kashmiri speaking areas of the State and Azad followed suit. Hence after composing a few *ghazals* Azad would get them circulated through booklet series. It is, therefore, that he could not withdraw his earlier lyrics. He had been too much critical of many of his own *ghazals* (which we discuss later) and so would have destroyed them had they not gone deeper in the minds of people. Availability of such *ghazals* provides us with an ample opportunity to assess the evolution in his poetic personality and, besides, these compositions enlighten us about his time. In this context the disappearance of his two *mathnavi*'s "Khandai Gul" and "Qamaruzaman" is a great loss to our literature. But it is safely inferred that he had himself withdrawn both these publications.

To be precise and accurate, Azad's poetry is a significant landscape of our literature which has varieties to offer to us. It is a distinct mile-stone upon the path of our cultural evolution and in itself a process in the transformation of our literary values.

Azad raised the thinking of his fellow countrymen from the abyss of degradation and induced a sense of pride and valour in his mind. As stated earlier, because of continued slavery for four centuries there was no visible trace which could remind a Kashmiri of his valour and national pride. Even his folk-tales could not carry to him the anecdotes of the valour of his forefathers. The fiction in *mathnavi* was alien to him. Stories of *Laila Manju* from

the deserts of Arabia and *Shirin Farhad* of Iran had no relevance to his background. The epic of *Shahnama* had no connection, even remote, with his own past. Kashmir was nowhere there though its Kashmiri translation was a gripping piece of poetry. In this background he had believed, and perhaps logically so, that his home-land had nothing to offer him both in aesthetics and valour.

The silver crown on the head of Pir Panchal range of hills attracted Jahangir to die in these surroundings and accepting his prayer destiny confined his viscera to these hillocks; but to the landless Kashmiri peasant the same hills formed a permanent barrier between him and his source of livelihood. The streams which offered a clean breast mirror for the beauty of Noor Jehan caused frequent devastation to local peasantry. In this background an ordinary Kashmiri was justified in regarding as hell the very land which is a unique heaven on the surface of the earth. It was not an ordinary task to induce again the love of the land in the mind of Kashmiris. The leaders on political platform could, by raising slogans, rouse their conscience, yet a prophetic clarion call was the need of the hour. Azad initially joined with his senior, Mehjoor, to sing songs in praise and love of his land, but soon carved out new phases for his patriotic songs. He, therefore, composed a number of poems pivoting round this theme. Just to erase the pessimistic impressions imprinted upon the slave mind of Kashmiris, Azad highlights the natural bounties upon his home land.

The dazzling beauty of the rose and hyacinth,  
Sweetness in the melody of perching birds.  
The nightingale enlightens bewildered hearts,  
Even intoxicating the wisest soul,  
Let us join them, singing our national anthem.

In another poem entitled *My Home Land* Azad portrayed the bounty that Nature bestowed upon it:

What a beautiful land my country is ?  
My heart blossoms in its environment.

Both my body and soul crave to be sacrificed,  
 For every road and highway leading to this  
     happy land.  
 These restlessly singing streams,  
 Full of love, urge and sincerity,  
 Rush to kiss the feet of high mountains,  
 Green velvet decorating the ground, under  
     and beneath,  
 The glorious chinar, and poplar tree,  
 Amidst the meadows, pastures, fields and  
     forests,  
 The dew drops spray pearls subtly upon the  
     petals.  
 Who, in turn spray scent, perfume and  
     fragrance everywhere.

Azad praises the beauty of his land in this stanza:

Nowhere on earth does such beauty dazzle  
     eyes.  
 No garden grows flowers displaying such  
     colour and fragrance.

After making his fellow-countrymen conscious of the attractive environment in which he has taken birth and has grown up, the poet takes him to the good old days when valour and wisdom were salient traits of Kashmir.

In his poem 'Discourse Between Ishaq (love) and Aqal (wisdom)' he poses certain questions through "wisdom" to which "Ishq" is made to reply. The relevant excerpts are:

#### WISDOM

Why can't a Kashmiri mould his destiny?  
 Degradation is the stigma in his identity,  
 The wealth under his feet is uselessly buried,  
 And alas he is doomed to subjugation.

#### LOVE

The lion shall soon roar and make his  
     presence felt,  
 The children of the fertile mother:  
 Who has lulled in her lap,

Budshah<sup>1</sup>, Habba Khatoon<sup>2</sup>,  
 Gani<sup>3</sup> and Sarfi<sup>4</sup>  
 Can never die in hunger and thirst.

Reminding his fellow countrymen that a lion shall never tolerate subjugation of a jackal he concludes this poem with this line:

Sorrow and anguish is the lot of all who find,  
 The courageous lion oppressed in the clutches  
 of a coward jackal.

In those black days of oppressive autocratic rule Azad daringly dubs its ruler as a coward jackal. Though such verses may appear slogan-monoling, it was necessary to bring awakening in the masses who were in slumber for generations because of the age-old slavery and alien domination. It is in this background that his patriotic songs, lyrics and poems need to be assessed. In spite of the suffocating political situation Azad did not hesitate to reveal his inner feelings "Expressing his helplessness to express" he gives vent to centuries-old strangulated feelings and at the same time warns his countrymen:

With thy eyes closed and deaf ears  
 Thou has been driven so far,  
 In spite of your toil and hard work  
 Thy yield is agony and sorrow.

Another poem he opens with a shocking warning:

"Alas, the flames of thy valour and courage  
 have petered out."

Making an ordinary Kashmiri conscious of the fact that he is the "destiny molder" of his land and he is the asset of the rich environment, the poet in the same poem says:

"Though art the bargain in thy transactions,  
 Thou the investment and thou the profit,  
 Thou art the unifying factor in thy home,  
 Alas, the head of the family should behave  
 like a stranger."

Though he had to plead for destruction yet he had to pin-point what to be constructed and how. This mental burden was discharged by him in poems like a *Nalai Budshah* (The Lamentation of Budshah), *Shikwa Kashmir* (The complaint of Kashmir), *Sarmayt-Dari* (Capitalism) etc.

The great benevolent king of Kashmir Budshah asks through the medium of Azad's verse why the blood of Kashmiri has frozen and why the tradition of his courage and valour has eroded completely.

In his poem 'Complaint of Kashmir' the poet impresses upon his reader that all the natural resources, which were present during the rule of Budshah, (A.D. 1420-70) are the same today and yet his successors suffer in degradation and poverty.

In the poem 'Complaint of Kashmir' the poet has made references to various warriors, administrators, scholars, saints and other eminent people who have glorified our past. He then eulogises the skillful hand and intellectual originality of our heroes and then laments about the present situation in this verse :

What a bewildering situation,  
The owner is reduced to the status of a  
tenant at will.  
Heaven is in the grip of the burning flames  
of hell.

Azad was conscious of economic disparities and of the class struggle. The bulk of the land was in a few hands and the peasantry was being exploited by the money-lender under the system of the *vad*. Under such economy of exploitation the poor peasant was forced to borrow the commodities of bare necessity during the winter days from the local trader and had to pay in kind after the next harvest at arbitrary rates fixed by the trader. While liquidating such debt during autumn the petty tenant had to pay almost whole of his share from the produce to this trader class leaving only hunger and frustration in store for his bad days of winter. A precise

excerpt from Mr. Robert Thorp will provide some hints to appreciate the agony of the situation:

Of almost every thing produced by the soil, the government takes a large proportion and the numerous officials who are employed in collecting it are paid by an award so much from the share of zamindars<sup>5</sup>.

Then after giving the list of officials employed for collection of foodgrains Mr. Thorp details in the following table the distribution of 32 treks of produce (equalling about 192 seer).

|                   |   | Treks | Seer |   | Seer                     |
|-------------------|---|-------|------|---|--------------------------|
| Government Share  | — | 20    | 0    | — | 120                      |
| Officer Surgol    | — | 0     | 1.5  | — | 1.5                      |
| Tarangdar         | — | 0     | 1.5  | — | 1.5                      |
| Harkara           | — | 0     | 1.5  | — | 1.5                      |
| Patwari           | — | 0     | 1.5  | — | 1.5                      |
| Sagder            | — | 0     | 1.75 | — | 1.75                     |
| Servant of Kardar | — | 0     | 0.5  | — | 0.5                      |
|                   |   |       |      |   | 126.65 Seer <sup>6</sup> |

The average produce per acre in those days was not more than 1500 seers out of which 1010 seers would go to the State and its officials, leaving behind 510 seers for the cultivator and the bulk of which would go to the village money-lender under the system of *Vad*. The average holding per family was not more than an acre or two and the families were bigger due to joint family system which was the base of our social set up. Azad had ingrained love for his land and its people and so could not restrain himself to express his deep concern. He became terribly conscious of this situation and imparted class-consciousness in the minds of his people, coming to the forefront for the purpose, he set himself to expose the class of exploiters, the capitalists, the landlord and the

rich. In his lengthy poem "Capitalism" he attributes all the ills of the society to an unequal distribution of wealth and sources of production. It appears to the poet that it is capitalism that replaces love and amity with deadly weapons, divides humanity on the lines of faith and religion and deprives the down-trodden of courage and valour:

Valour derailed to cowardice,  
Love transformed into anger and wrath,  
Voids are created where faith is biased,  
Oh, all these ills emanate from capitalism.

\*            \*            \*

The houses of meditation promote distrust,  
The pen and office emanate cruelty,  
The sweet lipped (hypocrites) feed poison in  
their bosoms,  
Hands lovely as roses wield naked swords,  
Is that love, cruelty, highway robbery or  
Is it leadership?

The economic exploitation and monopoly of the resources in a few hands created a stir, a terrible reaction in the mind of Azad. He has exposed this situation in different ways and at different occasions. At a later stage when Azad came out from the limited boundaries of nationalism and addressed his verses to the whole humanity he says:

In its deep and warm bosom, the earth,  
Offered thee the riches in treasures,  
Thou hast to put it to collective use,<sup>7</sup>  
Alas dragons have hoarded them all.

To change the social set-up, political subjugation and economic exploitation, Azad has to convey a single message of complete revolution. He composed several poems on this subject as, *Payami Inquilab* (The Message of Revolution), *Inquilab* (The Revolution) *Inquilab*. (The Revolution, Revolution and Revolution) *Inquilab* An *Inquilab* (Bring the Revolution) etc. Let me quote a few verses from these poems.



Life has worn the coffin,  
 Shatter these shrouds,  
 And make thy being felt,  
 If they don't choose life,  
 Bury them in the debris of forgetfulness.  
 It is the massage of *Inquilab*<sup>8</sup>

\* \* \*

Life is an exalted stage of evolution,  
 It surpasses all the barriers,  
 That come in its way,  
 Even the exalted being of its Lord.  
 Retreat is unknown to it,  
 Ahead and ahead it's destination,  
 Helplessness, slavery, blind obedience,  
 Restlessness, destitution, bashfulness,  
 Fatalism, disturbed heart, perplexed mind,  
 Spiritless body has all these vices.<sup>9</sup>

In high and chaste language Azad wants to destroy the status quo and bring about a complete change not for the sake of change but for the betterment of humanity. He is for destruction of everything that has become obsolete, but has a definite conception about the future set-up based on a classless society where the natural sources are used for the benefit of the workers and where exploitation is unheard. He pleads for universal brotherhood and love for humanity. These ideas are humanistic and universal. It is for these reasons that Azad is called "The Poet of Humanity".

This practical philosophy of universalism is explicitly conveyed in his poems like *Dervaw* (The River) *Shine*, *Main*, (The Glacier) *Paan Tsadar* (The Waterfall) etc. I will give an English rendering of his poem 'the River' at the end. However, a few verses from his poem 'The Address of Stars to Humanity' need to be quoted herein.

Being the light of wisdom thou,  
 Alas! behave like the flames of hell.  
 Defamed the essence of humanity,

Unbreakable is the unity of man and the  
universe  
Why feed in thy bosom burning flames of  
duality?

The gravest challenge posed to the values of humanity came from the misuse of religious sentiments, economic exploitation and political subjugation. The latter two evils can be put to an end by a sincere struggle but it requires the unity of the downtrodden and the oppressed. However, such unity is always shattered by the policy of divide and rule nourished on the hatred emanating from misuse of religious sentiment. There are no two opinions about the fact that every religion has preached, practised and propagated universal brotherhood, fraternity, love and truth. The clergy, the self-styled politician, the agencies of reaction all had joined hands to exploit humanity by playing with such sensitivity. Azad warns humanity about these intrigues and makes his readers conscious of the real purport of religion. He says:

Essence of the creation is "love".  
Thou hast, instead, bargained away  
Both thy faith and religion.<sup>10</sup>

Azad is one of the great exponents of religious unity, preacher of communal harmony and protagonist of secular ideology. This ideology emanates from the teachings of his predecessors. During the historically challenging period of the 15th century Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din had laid the foundation rock of religious amity by stressing in his verses high ideals of fraternity, love for humanity and respect of each other's sentiments. He had categorically reacted against duality preached in the name of faith and says :

How, my Lord, can thou forgive sins of such  
unscrupulous people,  
Who sow the seeds of hatred,  
In the hearts of children from the same  
parents,  
Hindus and Mussalmans.<sup>11</sup>

Azad conveys the same idea but in a new metaphor. They only differ in their tones. It may be briefly stated that from the 14th century till Azad's time, a great caravan of Kashmiri poets carried this thread ahead by creating synthesis between the two philosophies of love viz, Trika Shastra and Tassawuf.

Azad has nowhere propagated for any specific organisation committed to the freedom but made the ground fertile for revolution and for sacrifice to achieve the goal of independence. Thereby he lends every support to the freedom movement but warned his fellow countrymen of the consequences of blind hero-worship. He says :

Like a lamb,  
Thou followest blindly  
The sheep proceeding ahead of the herd;  
Beware, instead of reaching the pasture lest,  
Thou fall in a deeper ditch.<sup>12</sup>

In his brief literary career Azad sung the songs of love and romance, created a deep-rooted tradition, became the first exponent of a revolutionary ideology, preached and consolidated the secular tradition of Kashmir, spread waves of awakening among the down-trodden, highlighted the miseries of have-nots and preached for universal brotherhood. But his poetic-self remained a subject of evolution and before his death he became more or less philosophical in his outlook. He conveyed his thought of humanistic ideology in more philosophical, allegorical and symbolic diction successfully in his later *ghazals* and poems. He has blended his revolutionary thought with super artistic qualities. In his later composition both the poet and the thinker co-exist in the successful synthesis of thought and art. Poems "The River", "Gold", "Youth", "Old Age", "The Enemy", "Shikawal Iblis", "God" and a host of *ghazals* do substantiate this view point.

The poem "Complaint of Iblis" deals with a delicate and sensitive theme. Dealing with the episode of Iblis disobeying the command of his Lord to prostrate before

Adam the poet has built the character of Iblis in a manner that he seems to have been subjected to arbitrary condemnation. Though Azad admits that he had been influenced by a Kashmiri poem of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din and Urdu and Persian verses of Sir Mohd Iqbal on this theme, yet the treatment he has given is both original and daring. A few verses are quoted as samples :

Conscious as I was of Thy exalted Highness,  
 Could I bow before any one else but Thee?  
 Due to my dedication and Love  
 My pure gold was converted into inferior  
                                           brass.  
 Alas! my wisdom has marred me.

Had I been Thy foe,  
 Thou should have behaved with me,  
 As enemy behaves with an enemy.

Neither would there be dissention nor dispute,  
 Nor would infidelity raise its head.  
 Thou hast created hell.  
 To quench the thirst of its flames,  
 Thou created dispute and dissension.  
 Death is the destiny of what Thou created.  
 Thou art immune, from it, above any  
                                           accountability.  
 Birth and death is the destiny of a human  
                                           being.  
 Thou enjoyest the gimmicks in his coming  
                                           and going.  
 Thou hast not taken birth nor have given  
                                           birth to anyone.  
 Free art thou from family affiliation,  
 And so carefree of the pangs of separation.<sup>13</sup>

After reading this poem an impact is left upon the mind that Iblis has been made a victim of his obedience, unshakable faith and exclusive devotion for his Creator. The heroic image of Satan is created in the mind of the reader and it emerges that Iblis is a strict monotheist

and a believer in the utter and absolute supermacy of his Lord.

Highlighting the evolutionary stages through which a "Perfect Intellect" or conscious human being, is to traverse, the poet in his poem *The Gold* says :

For a narrow-minded wicked person  
Concealed is my being in the bosom of the  
earth,

With an upstart, I play hide and seek,  
The mines lulled me in their lap,  
Thunders and storms scattered me around,  
Calculated accuracy traced me out,  
The flames of fire melted me in kilns.<sup>14</sup>

In another poem *The God* Azad plays with fire by dabbling with a delicate idea of the conception of the superbeing. It seems from this poem that he was yet in search of the reality lurking in between denial and affirmation. This poem indicates that while his heart strictly believed in the existence of some supreme power his inquisitive mind was hanging upon the gallows of ifs and buts.

Limitless is the manifestation of beauty,<sup>15</sup>  
And the restless vision encompasses it.

#### NOTES

1. Great king - (Budshah) Sultan Zainulabi-Din who ruled Kashmir from 1420-1470
2. Habba Khatoon - Queen of Yusuf Shah Chak the founder of modern lyric and one of the wisest women died in oblivion some-time after 1556 when her husband Sultan Yusuf Shah was imprisoned by Akbar with utmost deceptive tactics.
3. Mulla Tahir Gani (d. 1553) A Persian poet of pure Kashmiri origin who received high appreciation even from Iranian poets, critics and scholars.
4. Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, a renowned Persian poet and author lived during sixteenth century.
5. Papers on Kashmir edited by S.L. Gadro.

6. Ibid.
7. Poem "Nabek Taarakh Wanaan Insaanas" In *Kuliyati Azad* Ed: Ganju. Pub. State Academy.
8. Poem : "Payami Inquilab" *Kuliyati Azad*.
9. Ibid.
10. Poem : "Nabek Taarakh Wanan Insaanas" *Kuliyati Azad*.
11. *Shiekh Noorud-Din* : English Monograph. Sahitya Akademi P: 60.
12. Ghazal of Azad with refrain "Pazl Sham Shere..." *Kuliyati Azad*.
13. Poem "Shikwa-i-Iblis" *Kuliyati Azad*.
14. *Kuliyati Azad*.
15. *Kuliyati Azad*.

## Genius for Research

KASHMIR had no written literary history. The bulk of our poetry was either scattered in badly written manuscripts or it was confined to the memories of singers, priests and story-tellers. The fast growing popularity of Urdu *ghazal* and film music was posing great threat to its bulk which was preserved mainly in memories. The ignorance prevailing about the defective script in which a portion of Kashmiri verse was maintained also contributed towards its disappearance. However, a few local publishing houses made efforts for preservation of some of literary pieces. The printed material available from these publishing houses was also devoid of authenticity. The bulk of it was wrongly recorded and even the authorship of various literary pieces was attributed to wrong persons or at occasions to several poets at a time. In this background Azad, a poor primary-school teacher, with no resources at his disposal, depressed by failing health and heavily surmounted by socio-political pressures took it upon himself to collect and collate material about the lives and contribution of poets who had lived during the last six centuries in the vastness of the inaccessible countryside. Azad thus started endeavours to sift their creative works. It was not an easy task. It will not be out of place to mention that in proportion the contribution of the city of Srinagar was scanty and to collect this hidden treasure one had to wander throughout the whole region. Nowhere were there indirect hints provided about any of our writers in any chronicle or history. It was unfortunate that Sanskrit and Persian chronicles contained only information about kings. In some of them there was brief mention of literary output but that too confined only either to Sanskrit or to Persian writers. In this background Azad, a patient of stomach ulcer, had to wander throughout the Kashmiri speaking areas in

distant corners. He traversed considerable areas of hilly and plain terrain partly on foot and partly on horseback. The vicissitudes which Azad felt in this uphill-task are, to some extent, hinted at by Sri Ali Jawad Zaidi in the forward written by him for the second volume of Azad's posthumously published *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shaire*.

What remuneration could he get for these sacrifices? At various places he even received an utter set-back and was discouraged. He would after great trouble reach a destination only with the aim to look at some manuscript, but he was denied access to such document in spite of his utmost endeavours to persuade the possessors. Once a son of a deceased poet even refused to meet him. In one village he was ridiculed and embarrassed but, in spite of this, he continued with his efforts. He was an ordinary school teacher drawing a few rupees as pay on which he had to sustain a big family. But he had such a devotion for his job that he did not care for money, health and his relatives. The only sentiment which led him to undertake such a gigantic task was the urge to serve letters and literature. There was no probability for him to receive any reward nor was it possible for him to get his anthology even published. In spite of this he wandered from village to village and town to town, met his contemporary writers and scholars, perused hundreds of manuscripts and thus collected material for his monumental work. In case of any problem he would discuss the matter threadbare. He collected some material from the files of newspapers and traced out from various booksellers the cheap editions of the books of creative writing.

We were not even aware of the names and contributions of many of our great writers and it was Azad who introduced the nation to their creative contributions. He has recorded some incidents about various poets which



speaking volumes about the wit and intelligence of our predecessors.

Before the partition of India Azad had completed the task of collecting the material for a "Literary History of Kashmir". He had yet to revise his manuscript. He might have had to add or delete something from the already written material but due to his untimely death he could neither revise the manuscript nor could add explanatory notes. This collected material was the only asset which he lovingly left for his family. He would keep this material under his pillow so that no mischief was possible. His only ambition was to see it published but there was no publisher who could undertake such task as could not fetch even the cost of its publication. At the same time there was no agency which could subsidise the project or assist the poor author.

In April 1948 Azad was in village Surasyar with his wife where he fell ill. That illness proved fatal. But till he was removed to Srinagar hospital on the 3rd of April, 1948, this material was at his bedside. Under the severe stomach-pain he entrusted it to his illiterate wife. Azad had left no assets for her nor even a child in whom she could pin her future hopes. She was ignorant about the value of this treasure but was conscious of the labour her husband had put in its collection and compilation. She preserved the wealth of these few pounds of paper till it was acquired from her by the State Government and left unpublished for more than a decade. It was on the creation of the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages established in terms of section 146 of State Constitution that a Sub-Committee of three distinguished scholars was constituted which edited the material and published it in three volumes.

The first volume consists of six parts. It opens with a precise introduction of the work by the convenor of the committee Sri Amin Kamil, a biographical sketch of Azad by his close friend Dr. Padam Nath Ganju, a detailed discussion on theories about the origin and development

of Kashmiri language, its script, grammatical and phonetical variations, influences of various languages upon it, discussions on consonants and vowels and, in the light of historical background, makes a lucid assesment of Kashmiri literature, its main characteristics, movements, etc.

He has, for the first time made a pointer towards understanding the socio-economic under-currents in our folk literature.

In the second volume Azad has comprehensively discussed six dozens of representative poets from the 14th century till his own time. He has provided us with their works and whatever other material was available to him about these poets. He carried to the posterity the specimen pieces of their poetry and made an objective and critical appreciation of each of them, highlighting their creative abilities and even exposes their shortcomings. In giving the appropriate treatment of creative capacities of each of them he has successfully unveiled their respective environment through their poetry. It is due to the efforts of Azad that we know many poets who have been otherwise lost in oblivion. Azad gave us precise details about their lives and short pieces of their specimen creative writing and thus provided sufficient basis for his successors to make further research in the matter. It is a fact that Azad has lost sight of many poets but that cannot be considered as his failure. It was due to the fact that either the people (even the heirs of distinguished poets) refused him access to the material or the scattered material which the widow of the poet handed over to the institution which published it after a decade or so did not receive it in the order it was arranged. Besides, he had yet to complete the task but his untimely death left some defects in it.

The third volume is confined to the detailed discussion on three front-rank representative poets of Kashmir viz, Swami Parmanand (d. 1857) Pir Maqbool Shah Kralwari (d. 1877) and Mehjoor (1888-1951).

In both these volumes, Azad for the first time in the history of Kashmiri language, emerges as the only researcher with an objective approach, critical outlook and logical aptitude. In this respect his work is the pioneer one in the field and will remain a source for the present and future research scholars.

Azad has with great success detailed out the facts of the lives of our luminaries like Lal Ded, Shelkh Noor-Ud-Din (Fourteenth century poets) Habba Khatoon (1556) Parmanand (d. 1857). Poets like Khawaja Akram "Daid Lad" (Azad names him 'Baqa') Hassan Shahganai, Mehdi Trali, Habibullah Zargar, Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Saif-Ud-Din Aariz and many others would remain unknown. Azad's efforts not only traced out their creative contribution but also highlighted their poetic genius.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of his utmost endeavours and untiring efforts he was not able to know a number of poets. Even if he was able to know their names he failed to trace out specimen of their verse and their bio-data. These failures were natural consequences of those circumstances which prevailed then. It is being further said that some instances of poets quoted by him are either based on weak foundation or have been misquoted. I have myself pin-pointed, in a recent article, an incident quoted by Azad about Akram Daid Lad. In spite of these minor flaws Azad has been cautiously conscious about the historical significances of his work and thus has given to the material collected a preferential treatment on the touchstone of veracity.

Owing to the changing socio-economic set-up, the old system of division of labour had started a process of decline and presently we see that the system has completely broken because of fast urbanisation. The son of a carpenter is an engineer and peasant's son mason. In the result the most confidential technical terms of each profession could not pass to the posterity. Azad was conscious of this swift change and took upon himself to collect a number of such words relevant to the various

professions including that of cobblers, masons, weavers, *bhagats* etc. He, therefore, went to the houses of cobblers, *baands* and to the old men of other inferior professions. He had no occasion to prepare the comprehensive glossary of all such technical and professional words and phrases but had a sample survey relevant strictly to his study of linguistic shades of Kashmiri language. The bulk of such words has by now become obsolete. Hence the list preserved by Azad is of great historical importance.

While preparing biographical articles on Lal Ded, Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din and Habba Khatoon, Azad relied mainly on traditional sources. He, however, made a synthesis of incoherent anecdotes and fables relating to the lives of these three literary luminaries. Only the contemporary record, if and when made available, may establish or disprove the conclusions drawn by him. Otherwise his research on the available material is logical, reasonable and to the point. To write a chapter on Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din, Azad had to beg from the owners of rare manuscripts of 'Reshi Namas'<sup>2</sup>, which cover thousands of pages written in ornate Persian. Authors of 'Noor Namas'<sup>3</sup> and 'Reshi Namas' have been more concerned with the miracles of the Sheikh and so in the bulk of such supernatural anecdotes there are only a few lines relevant to the life-story of the Sheikh.

Thus the material collected from this bulk by Azad is the first relevant and condensed piece of biographical literature, in Urdu language, available to a researcher. One is really indebted to this genius for this remarkable work.

In giving a just treatment to the great Leela poet Krishan Razdan, Azad had to go to his village, a far-off place from Azad's home, so as to snatch opportunity to peruse the manuscripts of his poetry. The majority of Kashmiri poets hailed from far-off villages and poor families and had left no recorded version of their poetry. Khoja Subhan is an unknown poet and his poetry is hardly remembered even by local singers. But Azad's devotion to sincere research is manifest from this single

fact that he not only collected material about his life and poetry but also gave us the location of his grave in the grave-yard of Awntipora and describes the poor hut in which the late poet lived.<sup>4</sup>

To be more accurate in details Azad had to consult even village records maintained by land revenue official.

The sincerity with which Azad conducted varied type of research work has yielded miraculous results. Ordinarily such a gigantic task was not possible for a single man, and that too with poor resources. In spite of every possible encouragement from universities, academies and other institutions run or aided by the government, the present day researchers are not able to add even errata to this monumental work. Though high claims are made about his shortcomings and critics have lost no opportunity to pin-point lacunae in it, none has, so far, dared to come with an authentic publication which could be at least treated as an addition to Azad's work.

### CRITIC

It is Azad who has laid down the foundation of criticism in Kashmiri language. He had no study of English literature but after reading his objective evaluation of Kashmiri poets one has to admit that Azad was a born genius who had originality in appreciation of creative art. To evaluate Kashmiri verse, Azad had a deep understanding of the various trends in our literature. He had grasped well the socio-political compulsions of our history to assess, in an objective manner, his predecessors and contemporaries. To arrive at the best conclusions in his assessment of art and thought of Kashmir he made deeper study of philosophies which had some impact on Kashmir creativity. It was with this end in view, that Azad studied the influences of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Urdu literatures upon the evolution of Kashmiri thought. Though his study of Sanskrit influence was from secondary sources, he had primary study of Persian and Urdu influences. It is manifestly clear from the discussion

which he had made on plagiarism in his pioneer work *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi*. Honesty and impartiality of his judgement is evidently clear from the critical analysis he has made of his own verses while making a comparative study of various poets with late Mehjoor. Dubbing his verse logically redundant and aesthetically frivolous he adds :

"The other verses of this author are also devoid of aesthetics".

In the second volume of his masterpieces Azad makes a precise critical appreciation of a few dozens of Kashmiri poets from the 14th century till 1945. Though these comments are very brief, they are apt and appropriate.

Summing up the critical appreciation of Lal Ded (d. 1380) Azad says :

*Lal Vaakh* (Lal Ishvari's Poetry) is the manifestation of the intellectual emancipation of our predecessors.

Detailing out the essence of Nund Reshi's lyricism Azad writes:

The diction of his poems is surcharged with lyricism and they go very close to the modern *ghazal*.

These findings of Azad about the two pioneers of our poetry bears testimony to his deep study of the bulk of Kashmiri poetry composed for more than five hundred years by dozens of representative poets. His original understanding of the different phases, varied currents and divergent trends in the evolution of our literature is more than evident in his comments about the totality of these two forerunners of the caravan of litterateurs in Kashmir. He has rightly assessed that : the "poetry of these two luminaries can well be considered as a conclusion of a rich literary era rather than a start in the creativity of this language."

He manifests his talent as a critic in the third volume of this work while evaluating the creative potential of three

classical poets : Swamy Paramanand, Maqbool Shah and Mehjoor. Discussing the influences upon the development of literary thought of these poets, Azad advances with logical analysis and cogent reasons the import of the cultural synthesis which had at several junctures, taken place. He shares with his reader the deep knowledge he had acquired both in Urdu and in Persian literatures by quoting extensively from the poetry of these two languages while drawing comparisons. His comparative study of Kashmiri verse with the masters of Urdu and Persian is comprehensive. At times one wonders to see his sharp intellect which successfully pin-points parallels between a great pre-Islamic poet of Arabia with a verse of Habba Khatoon, whose voice is closer to common folk rather than to scholastics. His study of the poems of four languages Kashmiri, Urdu, Persian and Arabic is remarkably demonstrated in the chapter in which he deals on the delicate topic of plagiarism. While discussing in this discourse the influences on Maqbool Shah he successfully puts forth the convincing argument that his verse was free from plagiarism. The question arises as who accused Maqbool of the theft in poetic thought and craft when there was no written criticism before Azad. There was no tradition of making discussions even orally about Kashmiri poetry, nor was there any taste for criticism, nor is it developed even now-a-days. So, the reasonable inference is that the inquisitive mind of Azad probed into these defects itself and then entered into a debate to forestall such comments of any future critic. It will be astonishing for my reader to know that Azad had quoted hundreds of verses from four languages in his original manuscripts to elucidate the difference between the occurrence of the same idea to two poets and the apparent plagiarism. More than a hundred verses were later deleted, yet a good number of verses illustrating this point were left to remain. One finds, and reasonably so, that Azad wanted only a pretext to make a lucid discussion on this topic in relation to the bulk of poetry. He pin-pointed the instances of the repetition of ideas in various Kashmiri

and Persian poets and made it a point to convince the reader about the genuineness of the identity in their thought. We may not agree with all his deductions. His assessment about Lal Ded and Nund Rishi remains yet unassailed though a vast difference has taken place in the field of literary criticism since then.

To appreciate the thought of Swami Parmanand, Azad had made sufficient study of Hindu mythology, Kashmiri Trika Shastra and Tassawuf. He has also discussed the influence of Greek philosophies and impact of Zoroastrian teachings upon the mystic thought of Iran. He studied the impact of synthesis in Trika philosophy, *Tassawuf* and Buddhist teachings. It had also received influences from Jews and Greeks. It has, besides receiving these influences, left indelible imprints upon the thinking of the sub-continent and the Central Asian countries. The Buddhist teachings had already influenced Tassawuf before it entered into Kashmir and so Kashmiris found the mystic thought closely identical with their local thinking. It is necessary to mention that the Buddhist teachings had penetrated into Central Asia from Kashmir itself.

It is to be kept in mind that our poetry evolved around the main pivot of mystic expression. Thus, no critic could have an objective assessment of Kashmiri poetry unless he had a grip and command on all the sources through which all these streams of influence have run and finally assimilated into the confluence of mysticism. Azad has thus rendered full justice to the conception of criticism, its teachings and to the creative contribution of Kashmir. It cannot be denied that the creative mind represents directly or indirectly all influences, impacts and imprints upon the development of the thinking of a nation whether remotely connected or visibly proximate. All these factors reflect clear as well as faint shades in both the conscious and sub-conscious mind. The poets for the last six centuries have assimilated all these cultural influences through their creative process and their inner



experiments. Azad probed, and with masterly skill, all these apparent and hidden traits of influences. He made sufficient study in the socio-political history of Kashmir from its antiquity till date.

It needs a specific mention that though the mystic poets used strictly the same idiom, metaphor and symbol as was inherent in the Persian Sufi poetry they assimilated with it the technical phraseology of *shaivistic* metaphor and idiom which they call "Shastra" Poems. Shams Faqeer and Shah Gafoor have a good number of "Shastra" poems to their credit but the two streams flowing from the same source are akin though distinguishable. In this synthesis these outstanding mystic thinkers even devised their own intrinsic Idioms and symbols. Only a few from Shams Faqeer are quoted herein.

The "Perplexed Crow On The Branch of Devastated Chinar", "The Chinars of Love", "Seven Thousand Plied Thread," etc.

It is here that to cope with the complexity of Kashmiri's mystic thought Azad faced the most tedious challenge and met it successfully. Unfortunately, he could not completely divorce the protagonist from the progressive within him. Hence his reservations on Sufis and Tassawof. He could not evaluate in right perspective the import and essence of mystic poetry. Had Azad overcome such a complex he could have made better assessment of this rich treasure.

At the time when Azad first opened his eyes all the traditions for which Kashmir had pride and pleasure had reached the final stage of degradation. Such was the case with the *sufi* and mystic poetry as well. Quacks, hypocrits and pretenders were exploiting the innocent and ignorant masses in the name of spirituality. The degradation was not only in the rank of spiritualists but even in the *sufi* poets. Pessimism, fatalism, escapism and such other ills were common themes in the *sufi*-labelled poetry. The *sufi* metaphor of abstinence from pleasure and luxury was

used to induce a sense of hatred for the world and for everything in it. *Sufi* poets had preached against the worldly life which appeared to them inseparable from greed and lust. Thus the degeneration was not attributable to the mystic philosophy but to the perversion among the later so-called mystic. As a consequence these mystic poets sung the hymns of inaction rather than preaching for sincerity in action. All ills were attributed to destiny and an unavoidable writing on the wall incurable by human action.

This situation was not peculiar to Kashmir as the malaise appeared as wholesale epidemic in the east and particularly in the Muslim world. Sir Mohammed Iqbal had sharply reacted against the very institution of mysticism, and even criticised the great Persian poet Hafiz of Shiraz, nick-naming the *sufi* as a "sheep in the degenerated flock". Azad was a fan of Iqbal and a keen student of his Persian and Urdu poetry, hence his sharp reaction against mystics.

It is in this background that Azad has not given adequate treatment to the topic as was expected of a genius of his stature. Yet his treatment is both logical and scholarly. It cannot be controverted that the metaphors, similes and symbols frequently used in *sufi* poetry had proved utterly misleading when left to the use of imitators who had neither sensitivity affable to the intricacy of such complexities nor had a sufficient command in their mode of expression. Here the critic would have made proper sifting which he has not done. He has aggravated his apathy towards this cult by totally banning into his literary history entries about two great contemporary mystic poets, Abdul Ahad Zargar (1905-1986) and Abdul Samad Mir (d. 1951). Both of them will be equally remembered with Mehjoor and Azad as outstanding literatures of the 20th century.

While highlighting the masterly craft of a poet Azad does not lose sight of his defects or shortcomings though at times he transgresses these limits and tries to justify

some of his glaring mistakes. On such occasions he appears apologetic rather than convincing. He does not hide realities either to glorify his past or to praise his favourites. He has a great respect for his senior contemporary Mehjoor and his dedication to Maqbool is equally great, but he does not spare either of them when he comes across any defect in their thought or technique.

With particular stress he pin-pointes such verses of Mehjoor wherein the poet had conveyed some borrowed ideas. At places he argues that such recurrence of ideas was possible but the overall position is that he leaves it to the reader to find sincerity or otherwise in such a bargain.

Unnecessary Persianisation in the language used by Maqbool Shah is usually ridiculed by Azad. With the same force he exposes similar defects of Akram Daradmand. Haqani, who commanded admiration and respect as a spiritualist was a vociferous writer. Azad had once got an opprtunity to witness the mystic circles of Haqani and was overawed both by his creativity and spiritual eminence. However, he did not hesitate to admonish him on his unnecessary use of Persian verbosity and for illogical blending of mystic claims with delicacies in romantic experiences.

Equally is the critic Azad all praise for Swami Parmanand for his commanding grip on the expression of delicate mystic experience. He has objectively assessed his hold on language but has not hesitated to mention that the Swami has over-burdened his language with Sanskrit words and has thus marred the beauty in his thought.

Azad has pin-pointed such a common shortcoming among the 19th century poets, especially in their diction, but he, as rationalist, has successfully exposed the reasons which prevailed upon stalwarts like Maqbool, Dardmand, Rasul Mir, Haqani and Parmanand to rely heavily on other languages what proved to be a bad

bargain for them. It is the natural urge in a skilled poet to be read rather than to be heard only. Their readers considered the language of commoners below their dignity. Hence to attract the readership these poets had to borrow from richer languages not only their phrasology but even the frame to contain their ideas therein. Azad correctly holds that to appease the so-called elite these poets exposed themselves to ridicule while trying to match the diction, style, ornamentation, innovations etc. of Persian poets. Even Nazim, Rasul Mir, Maqbool and other few great poets ineptly used Persian words in their verses. Azad had listed such words in the frame of these Kashmiri verses which patently appear misfit. To highlight the poetic innovation of pun in a word, Azad has pointed out the fallacy of even some front rank poets who, to imitate such a device used a specific word which had a different meaning in Persian and quite different meaning in Kashmiri language. The device appears to Azad ridiculous. Azad has not spared even his own verses from objective criticism and made it clear that at certain places he has been a bad master in selection of words.

Dr. Shakeel Ur Rehman, an outstanding critic in Urdu, commends the critical originality of Azad.

“The principles of literary criticism enunciated by Azad will prove of immense help to the coming generation of critics”.

Azad's critical mind had a universal approach as was the case with his later poetry. It seems that he was also influenced by Marxism and had read, though, indirectly, Aristotle and Plato. “*Grees Nama*” is a poem in which, with telling sarcasm, Maqbool had exposed the shortcomings in the character of peasants. Sri M.Y. Taing, who has edited the second and third volumes of Azad's magnum opus *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi*, observes that Azad's comments regarding *Grees Nama* of Maqbool has universality and it is very close to the modern sense of appreciation.

It is just and convenient to quote Taing :

The other significant characteristics of his ability as critic lie in his dedicated and extensive study. To him depth is essential and sacred. The inferences he has derived shall form the guideline for future critics of Kashmir. To make any ordinary reference Azad had to undergo the study of thousands of pages. It is an ordinary claim to project Kashmiri as one of the rich languages of the world but it requires courage and stamina to substantiate this high claim. In spite of his limited knowledge Azad successfully draws parallels between Habba Khatoon and a great Arabic poet Qais Amri.

By limited knowledge Mr. Taing surely means that Azad had limited formal education. On the other hand, the critical discussions of Azad are a clear proof of his vast study.

#### NOTES

1. See *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi* volume II.
2. *Reshi Nama*, The history of Kashmiri mystic thought, Reshi cult and the Reshi Movement.
3. *Noor Nama*, Compilations of the Poetry of Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din.
4. See *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi* Vol. II.

## Biographer

THERE was no tradition of biography-writing in Kashmir, and less so about Kashmiri poets and writers. Thus, Azad had to start from the scratch. Though we have a sufficient written material in Persian language about two leading Saints, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din and Sheikh Hamza (1495-1578), yet the material about both of them consists of mainly their miraculous deeds and supernatural acts. Such writing could hardly be termed as biographical literature. Besides being the great revered and respected saint Sheikh Noor-ud-Din has other important dimensions. His literary person is more important to the student of letters, and as a founder of the present Kashmiri culture he is of vital importance to the student of history. But, both could get no material from thousands of pages written on him in Persian prose by various writers from the sixteenth century and from thousands of verses composed by poets like Shaiq and Kamal Baba. It is a gigantic task to sift with logical cohesion the life story of this towering personality from this bulk.

In these circumstances, Azad had accepted a grave challenge. He had not only to collect material about one or two poets but about the dozens of men of letters who had contributed to the Kashmiri verse for the last more than five centuries. The record about a leading hero of this caravan of luminaries, Nund Reshi, was also challenging because most of it is unrelated and irrelevant. The historical being of "Lal Ded", mother poetess of Kashmiri, was also eclipsed in the anecdotes of folk and legendary tales. The authors of Reshi Namas and Noor Namas have usually appended a separate chapter for his spiritual mother, Lal Ded. These chapters were also based on such legends and folk stories which were carved out by the tradition. The articles written on Lal Ded in early

years of this century, after compilation of her *Vaakh*, were only a printed summing up of these legendary anecdotes.

In the galaxy of more than five dozens of eminent poets none had kept a record of his own life. Neither of their heirs nor any disciple had tried to maintain at least notes about the lives of these men of talent. The majority of Kashmiri poets comprised of such spiritualists as were indifferent gnostics who were also so humble in their thinking that they considered it a sort of arrogance, or at least self-praise to maintain some written material relevant to their own lives. After their death, their heirs and disciples too were at best concerned with their spiritual being, so they may have maintained some record relevant to their spiritual facets. That too, however, was confined to their spiritual genealogy and nothing beyond that..

Among this caravan of gaints some were so neglected that even their kith and kin, neighbours and co-villagers ignored them completely. Musicians maintained distorted versions of their lyrics and *ghazals* in their memories, and nothing about their lives could be gathered even by any inquisitive probing.

The position of those poets who came from reputed and highly literate families was no better. Maqbool Shah came from a renowned family of *Peers*, who, due to compulsions of their profession, had to be literate and were so. But we are unable to know the exact year of his death or the year of his birth. He died only at the end of the last century but his exact year of death is not authentically known.

Another poet hailing from a well-to-do family of the city, late Abdul Gaffar Farig (who's son late Mr. G.M. Sadiq died as the Chief Minister of Kashmir) is no exception to the general rule to this apathy. Azad writes that Farig had written a commentary on the verse of Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din. I approached late G.M. Sadiq to trace out the material. He had said that the material was taken

by the late Dr. G.M. Din Sufi of Lahore, and was never returned.

In this factual background we will have to assess and appreciate the task of Azad as a pioneer biographer. He had to wander in the vastness of the valley over difficult terrains of hilly areas, had to knock at the doors of indifferent and indecent heirs of many poets, had to beg, with utmost humility, an access to the manuscript of a Reshl Nama of Noor Nama from the *Mujawairs* who had their own interest in hoarding such valuable materials. Besides, at the time when a good number of political activists were busy with underground agitation, Azad was, at many places, dubbed as a spy of Maharaja's regime and, at places, suspected as an underground political criminal. But with all these challenges, he was successful and prepared biographical material of all the representative literary talents of Kashmir.

As a biographer, his treatment of the poets and writers is both logical and rational. In a society with a cultural background of legends, myths and abundance of folk anecdotes, Azad received material overburdened with all these traits. But he collated the material rationally, made a judicious sifting in it and finally retained only such part of the information as proved reasonable.

As already stated that the life story of the most outstanding personality of Kashmir and leading poet, Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din, is so overburdened with the element of hero-worship that it has become a gigantic task to sift the grain from chaff and collect a reliable biographical material from the mist of the legend. The task becomes further delicate because of the emotional and sentimental attachment with the saint-poet. Azad has, for the first time, after diving deep in the bulk of material, provided us data with such accuracy as is closer to reason and logic and at the same time projects the Sheikh's literary contribution in historical perspective and cultural eminence. The chapters on Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din in the second volume of *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi* is thus a



comprehensive summing up of the life and works of the saint-poet in Urdu language and is of immense value to the present and the future biographers.

While highlighting the cause of certain complexes upon the creativity of the various poets, Azad, as a biographer, had to dive deeper into their socio-economic background. He had to make dialectical study of the environment in which the poet lived, his political situation and economic conditions. To explain the causes of the pessimistic strain on later 19th century poetry, Azad makes special references to Gh. Mustafa Shah, a less-known poet. The eminent Urdu scholar Ali Jawad Zaidi quotes with benefit excerpts from the discussions made by the biographer while pin-pointing such strains upon the verses of the said poet. A few lines are reproduced below from foreward to second volume of *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shaire* :

"The age of Gh. Mustaffa Shah was suffocating and in his era Kashmiri culture was being consigned to the records of history. The upper class was living in luxuries and the down-trodden were being fed with hunger. People were dragged like flocks of cattle. The community of writers like opium eaters, had become a stumbling-stock of stagnation...."

Azad tried to be as accurate to the fact as a logician could be. To assess and evaluate the mystic hold of a vociferous poet, Haqani, upon his verse, the understanding of the mystic within the frame of the poet was highly essential. He could not get admission to sit in the mystic circles of Haqani because of the latter's aversion to publicity, so, he played proxy to witness the gnostic practices of the Sufi poet. From the verses of Maqbool he got a hint that the poet must have been an embodiment of various physical ailments. Azad, therefore, obtained material particularly relevant to his health condition and established that the poet Maqbool lived a dejected life as a patient of tuberculosis.

Mehjoor was an elder contemporary of Azad but died after Azad. Hence to write Mehjoor's biography Azad had a living source of information before him. But being judicious and legalistic in his approach, Azad genuinely felt that Mehjoor was not a direct source relevant to reveal facts about his birth and early-childhood. He, therefore, obtained through Mehjoor access to the family records of the latter. Here his hawkish-eye traced out a manuscript scribed by Mehjoor's late mother Syeda Begam and based his information about Mehjoor's year of birth upon the colophon of that manuscript. Controversy arose about the actual year of birth of Mehjoor when the first birth centenary of the poet was to be celebrated. The government of the State constituted a sub-committee. Besides this author the other distinguished members of this committee were Sri Amin Kaamil and Autar Krishan Rehbar. Sri Moti Lal Saqi associated with it as an official representative. These experts rejected all other opinions about the year of the birth of Mehjoor and preferred the view taken by Azad.

It is a convincing manifestation that the biographical value of Azad's work is free from flaws, nearer to accuracy and significant in certainty.

## LINGUIST

Azad's main concern was to write a literary history of Kashmir but in doing so he could not avoid discussion on the origin, development, growth and evolution of the Kashmiri language. Though he could suffice on casual references, yet being conscious that there was no comprehensive discussion available on the subject, he went deeper into linguistic studies of the Kashmiri language.

In the first volume of his book he dwelt upon the origin and development of this language with special reference to the influences it had undergone. In spite of disagreement with him no present or future linguist can afford to ignore him, even though his theories may be

discarded, rejected or amended. In dealing with the origin of the language he has dealt upon its relationship with Sanskrit, and more particularly with Prakrit. He has quoted views of other scholars and then, with original assessment based on cogent reasons, he projects his viewpoint about the influences which the Kashmiri language has undergone in its early stages. His discussions on phonetical variations became a pointer to the need for a phonetics-oriented script for the Kashmiri language which is presently in vogue. Thus, no historian can deny his contribution towards the development of the modern script of our language. He has made logical discussions about the etymology of the various Kashmiri words to show the various influences the language has at various occasions received.

Making an assessment of the present-day spoken language, Azad has highlighted the influences that richer Persian literature left upon its literary genres. Taking full stock of its history he presents the Kashmiri literary activity on the linguistic pattern within three broad phases. The demarcation is universally recognised even now, five decades after his premature demise.

We may be disappointed that Azad does not propound any theory of his own regarding the origin, evolution and growth of this language, but his distinctive viewpoint is manifest within lines.

It is he who, for the first time, makes a logical study of the variation in dialects spoken in the different regions of Kashmir. Taking cue from him our own contemporary Sri A.K. Tak embarked upon the project and now the publication of Kashmiri dictionaries by the state Academy have consolidated these efforts of preserving the identity of linguistic study of Azad.

Diving deeper into the linguistic studies, Azad stressed upon the infallibility of the Kashmiri language and qualified its elasticity and its inherent energy to withstand the onslaught of history. At the same time, he

categorized within four broader compartments the reasons of its backwardness. These are domination of foreign language, apathy of local intellectuals, unscientific script and recklessness in its creativity. Despite a definite change around us, these four reasons are yet eating the inner vitality of this language. Azad complained about the excessive domination of Persian and Sanskrit which has lost its edge. Now English, Urdu and Hindi have taken the place of Sanskrit and Persian in our times and it is politicalisation around these three languages that Kashmiri remains yet neglected.

Though it was a guiding principle of our freedom movement that the attainment of self-rule shall guarantee the development of the language of the masses as was pledged in the document of "Naya Kashmir", the guarantees have been sacrificed in the conflict created by the State and the Central Constitutions. There is no formidable public opinion which can force the state to accord it its constitutional status as a regional language.

We have adopted a script so much overburdened with diacritical marks that no key-board for typeface is practically possible with it. The continued dependence upon the mercy of a few calligraphers has deterred its creative growth so that the longer fiction is yet to make its entry felt. A young critic Sri Shanti Veer Kaul writes in *Indian Literature* (Volume 32 part 4) while commenting upon Sahitya Akademi awarded novel *Pun Te Paap*.

"Writing in a script which has to depend on a Kaatib or calligrapher (no typeface is available) is in itself a major problem for a novelist".

Lastly Azad protested against the reckless creative character of his contemporaries or immediate predecessors who overburdened their verse with Sanskrit or Parsian verbosity and who followed blindly poets of other languages. In doing so they narrowed both their experience and expression. Though this situation has changed, but not so significantly.

In drawing the similarity between the pre-Azad and post-Azad eras I am only impressing the prophetic vision with which Azad made a study in the development of Kashmiri language.

## INFLUENCES

I have stated earlier that initially the mystic society of his father had an impact on Azad. Hassan Shah is probably the first poet of protest, and his personal rapport with Azad's family must have modelled the latter's developing intellect. Azad himself says that he had a faint idea of Hassan which could not leave much influence upon a small boy. Yet his memories must have been a family topic in Azad's house. The influence is patently clear. Later on Azad was deeply moved by the influence of Mehjoor. He followed him strictly upto a destination, thereafter rubbed his shoulders with his guide and then carved out a distinct path for his creative journey. At this stage he receives deeper impact from the poetry of Allama Iqbal. A smaller poem of Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din motivated Azad to write his famous poem complaint of Iblis. Here also Iqbal's influence is visible. In his later compositions, like the 'River' Azad takes a line different from that of Iqbal. The latter in his various poems projects that his ideal person (whom he calls 'Mardi Kaamil', a perfect man,) should be endowed with the pre-requisites of a true Musalman. Azad in the poem *Darya* (The 'River') projects his ideal man as *Mardi Darya Siffat* (a man with the qualities of a river) but does not confine him to any discipline except that of love for humanity.

In spite of all these influences Azad had his own originality, born instincts and God-gifted talent.

As a literary historian and critic we can decipher the various influences in his discussions contained in three volumes of *Kashmiri Zaban Aur Shairi*. It seems that Azad had the idea to write this book in Kashmiri but owing partly to the suggestions received from the poet Darvesh Abdul Qadir and partly to the defective script of the

Kashmiri language he changed his mind and ventured his project in Urdu.

He was a student of Persian literature and prepared himself for the examination of Honours in Persian from University of Lahore. During that preparation he might have drawn inspiration from Prof. E.G. Brown's *Literary History of Persia*, Dr. Raza Zada's *Literary History of Iran* and Shibli Nomanî's *Sharul Ajam*. These influences are visible from the comparative study Azad makes of various poets. Shibli had made a detailed comparative study of Mir Anees and Mir Dabir (Pillars of Urdu Elegy), so Azad was moved to make similar studies of various poets of his language. Azad must have consulted Maulana Mohd. Hassan Azad's *Abi Hayat* to chalk out a *modus operandi* for his monumental work. While making a critical assessment of poets with objectivity and realistic approach, Azad might have considered the approach evolved in Altaf Hussain Hali's *Muqadimi Sharo Shairee*. While summing up the precise but relevant and comprehensive bio-data of various poets Azad must have received some inspiration from Iranian anthologists like Mohammed Din Aufl and Abdul Rehman Jaami.

All these influences establish it beyond doubt that Azad had studied vastly and was a voracious reader. His extensive reading helped him to evolve a distinctive style of his own.

## OTHER FACETS

Azad's command of Perso-Arabic prosody has been vastly admitted. He applied those principles to Kashmiri *ghazal*. Thus, he detects minutely metric variations in the verse of particular *ghazal* of particular poet and sometimes even the variation between the two parts of the same verse. Probably he was conscious of the strict inapplicability of forms of the Perso Arabic prosody to Kashmiri verse and postponed the discussions to some separate treatment after further study on the subject. Here again his untimely death deprived us of his worthy guidance. For the last

half a century we have not been able to take a positive step in this direction.

While eminent orientalist had with profound study made efforts to edit the rich folklore of Kashmir yet no serious attempt was made to collect a particular segment of folk poetry which Kashmiri women usually recite on marriage functions and allied ceremonies. Azad is the first local scholar who goes deeper in the wisdom of the creative genius of our illiterate women.

It needs mention that these songs locally called "Wanawon", are spontaneously composed by illiterate women of Kashmir and relevant strictly to various sub-ceremonies connected with the main function of marriage. Azad has meticulously and appropriately arrayed these verses with a particular sub-ceremony to which they are relevant or connected.

At the last hour of the night the groom waits at the house of his in-laws for the bride, her kith and kin are preparing her for permanent departure from her paternal affection, the women folk of distant relationship and neighbourhood stand in circles and recite verses full of pathos. One verse says :-

Oh, innocent, delicate sensitive heart,  
The paternal house was your momentary  
abode,  
Hand over the keys to thy gloomy mother  
And leave with the mercy of thy Lord.

In understanding the original intellect of a nation even minor things are important. Azad did not study only books and manuscripts of the various languages but made a keen study of his society. To have a deeper study of the folklore composed by women, this great author seems to have spent much time with illiterate ladies to record the scattered verses of this particular folk poetry called WANAWON.

Azad's contribution is uniquely distinctive in its aspects. It is unfortunate that this genius remains largely

yet unexposed even to our own progeny. Let me conclude with his own observation which he made while making the comparison between Lal Vaakh and Khyam's Rubai and poems of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din and Hakim Sanai's and Fareed-Din Attar's Persian poetry. He rightly adjudicates that all these three are as great poets as Lal and Sheikh but the latter are not known outside Kashmir because they belonged to a poorer language. Applying the same principle I can claim that Azad would have been recognised and appreciated on larger and wider scale but, unfortunately, he wrote for a language which remains inaccessible even to its own elite.

## URDU AND PERSIAN POETRY

Azad has composed verses in Urdu as well but I could not get specimens of his Urdu *ghazals* or poems. However, an autograph manuscript of his Persian panegyric (*Qasida*) consisting of about three hundred verses has added glamour to my library. It is in the praise of Sheikh Noor-Ud-Din the patron saint-poet of Kashmir. It was composed in 1929 and is unpublished. It is not within the ambit of this book to evaluate Azad as a Persian poet. But it can be said with certainty that this *Qasida* is a significant contribution to Persian Letters from Kashmir.

## THE RIVER

Dr. Padam Nath Ganju in his foreward to *Kuliyati Azad* rightly remarks about the poem "The River" :

"This is an unique piece about which I can claim that had Azad composed no other verse except this poem, even then he would live till eternity as a creative genius....."

Azad as a teacher of the primary school of the village Branwar in Budgam district would spend whole days on the banks of the rivulet Dood Ganga, a tributary to the Jhelum. This river in the surroundings of evergreen pine and lofty fir trees, green and golden fields and slippery but giant rocks runs ahead like a flock of roaring lions



(forcefully). Sometimes it even sweeps away whatever comes in its way and sometimes sings in low tune as though on the strings of a Kashmiri santoor. At places it dazzles the vision of an onlooker and at places provides a crystal mirror to poor shepherd girl haphazardly dressed and carelessly modest. Impressed with the pereneal society of this speaking voice of nature, Azad finds in it a formidable companion and a real human sentiment free from all barriers geographical, physical, environmental, national, religious and racial. In its deafening thunders and tender heart-beating it has only one message for a sensitive poet, that of universal brotherhood. The Dood Ganga somewhere near Branwar, whispers during a full moon night this message of human love to the restless sentiment of the poet that a river flows from his creative being.

With his direct study of Iqbal's Persian and Urdu poetry Azad must have been influenced by his conceptions of the "Perfect Man". Azad did not confine his ideal human being to any particular discipline except one, and the only one, that is the discipline of love for humanity. Azad must have read some translations from Tagore as he had equal respect for him. Hence, he depicts in this poem the naked beauty of nature though dressed in the delicacy of similes and symbols. While studying the impact of philosophy of the "Ego" upon the poetry of Iqbal, Azad might have read indirectly the conception of 'Superman' contained in the thought of the German philosopher Nietzsche. He might at least have heard about Qazi Nazarul Islam's famous poem "Vidrohi". All these influences might have created a restlessness in his mercurial mind and a reaction too.

In this background Azad's poem "The River" is one of the precious pieces of world literature but unfortunately in a neglected language.

It is not an ordinary job to translate a poem of the dimension of "The River". No translation can convey the force in its narration, or flow in its depiction or beauty

in its skill or intricacy. Yet, however, word to word rendering is contained hereunder :

Life I enjoy  
 Amidst perplexities, fervour and tumult,  
 In constant journey and change in destination,  
 Amidst rocks upon the cliffs of hills,  
 Proceeding ahead night and day,  
 Unmindful of the patting of others,  
 Never held up in ordinary gimmicks,  
 One may flatter, the other may ridicule me.  
 (To both I am indifferent)  
 I proceed to the goal of my being,  
 Neither can any boss deter my journey,  
 Nor am I to live in subordination.  
 There is none to judge my performance.

Nor can any one call me inefficient;  
 I enjoy life in constant journey.  
 I proceed ahead, never a step in retreat,  
 Am not to wear costumes like a rose,  
 Nor have to make a nest like a nightingale.  
 In the Zigzag paths and curves,  
 In upheavels and tremours,  
 Constantly afoot,  
 I enjoy the change in destination ;  
 No polish do I require for my mirror,  
 My nickle is the glister within my being,  
 I do not hesitate to open my bosom to beauty.

Hesitate?  
 Why? With this vigour and valour  
 The moon, the sun and the stars,  
 Recognise their identity through me,  
 That too when I confine my existence,  
 Sometimes, at moments of commotions,  
 Within lakes or dams.

Ups and downs,  
 Uneven surfaces,  
 Stones and rocks do melt,  
 Upon the fire within my grip.

The Himalayas, mountains and hills,  
Undisturbed I am of conflicts.  
Carefree of misgivings,  
I enjoy to strike my head,  
Against iron walls and granite hills,  
To collect once again,  
My scattered being,  
To scatter once again my integral identity.

To achieve  
Zeal in destruction,  
Urge in construction,  
I pierce the hearts of mountains,  
Erode high hills to roam in thick forests.  
Why be misled by the battle among waves?  
Overlook these superficial diversities.  
Look into my unity, my singular one-ness.  
In absence of this one-ness  
How can wisdom co-exist  
Within one frame with ignorance?

Nor have I lost wits nor am intoxicated,  
Mad I am but with love.  
Here a whirlpool and there a flood,  
A swift and storm mighty,  
The placid serenity in lakes,  
Exalted highness in ocean,  
All are facets of my being.  
The clouds fly with my feathers,  
Showers soothe the thirsty earth,  
Heavens are echoed in thunders,  
My sparks shine in lightnings.

Distinct is my muse,  
Different my orchestra,  
Distinguishable my zeal,  
Unique my voice,  
Distinct in particular is the style in my  
romance,  
Surcharged with sweetness,  
Enchanting in love.

My shades surely not alike in different  
situations,  
Within streams, canals, waterfalls and rivulets.  
I witness the ups and downs.

The enjoyment of Nature,  
Varies with every situation,  
Slave I am to none;  
None can drag me in chains or tathers  
Constant journey and change of destination,  
Are the truth in my essence.

Wait? For none do I wait,  
Nor wait for a moment,  
One may quench his thirst,  
The other may clean his dirt,  
All beg for my generosity,  
Rich and poor, Hindu and Musalman,  
Be a king, an emperor or a beggar,  
Without any distinction or difference,  
I offer my being to the whole world.  
Devotedly am committed,  
To the sense of space and time.  
Stagnation is alien to me.  
Essence of my being,  
Is the change in destination.  
My alms feed the gallant and the lords  
The pearls with which they decorate,  
Their crowns and gorgeous thrones  
Are the froth on my exhausted tiresome lips.  
The secret of my bosom.  
These ups and downs in uneven surface  
Are ground to equality by my endeavours.  
It is why I run fast.  
With forceful impatient-swiftness,  
I strike my being,  
With turbulation and turbulences.  
The hydrogen in my constitution,  
Lulls me in the lap of fire.

From high altitudes  
Restlessly I descend to plains.

Roaring like a lion,  
Stalking like a deer,  
Amidst bears, leopards, ibexes and shapoos.  
Endless is my journey,  
And above destination too.  
Within villages chanting melodies,  
At times I whistle within the hearts of cities,  
At times I walk straight as a crow,  
At times zigzag are my curves,  
Froth on my mouth, pearls in my bosom,  
Gems which are even unknown to my own  
gaze.  
Endless is my journey, beyond destination.  
Constant journey is the charm of life,  
Humming and noise its incidents,  
Fearlessly I go ahead,  
Unmindful of exhaustion,  
I thrive in adventures,  
To test the prowess of my being.  
Carefree am I of comings and goings.  
Neither I care as to who comes,  
Nor I repent when he goes,  
Cowards only keep such calendars,  
I am above destinations,  
Endless is my Journey.

On the Dal lake,  
Can I confine the limitless with limits,  
Does at all mercury offer its lap,  
For a while of restful lull,  
To easy loving pleasure-hunters,  
For their luxurious enjoyment,  
In houseboats and *shikaras*.  
Does the fire of vanity and valour  
Contain the fatigue of cowardice.

Rosy cheeks and hyacinth tresses  
Of paragons of beauty,  
I wash with my inner clarity.  
Equally I distribute my attributes,  
Between the ugly and the charming,  
The vicious and the pious.

Their reaction is manifestation of their own  
nature.  
Among flowers and perching birds,  
I play at orchestra,  
Among the stone-hearted I beat the drum of  
revolution,  
Unique is my message to all.

Endless is my journey.  
Freedom my belief, by nature I am free.  
Love, Action, Prosperity  
Unity, Equality and Joy for ever  
Do constitute and integrate my existence.  
Therefore, the free people, the "Azads" love me.  
Humility and self-respect,  
The two wheels of my chariot,  
Take me to my destination  
Fresh and dimensions new.

The valiant are terrified of my tides,  
The infants suckle my breasts,  
The cyprus, the pine and deodar,  
Borrow life from my being.  
And so I, endlessly,  
Rush to the destination of permanent change.

For tired and exhausted workers,  
For my well-wishers,  
Upon the two arms of my being,  
I lay soft and pure velvet:  
They may choose to adorn my lap,  
Sooth their fatigue,  
And I rush to the destination of change.  
At times in smaller streams,  
Sometimes in dams or through pipes,  
My generosity invites the thirsty,  
Offers them fresh life,  
Revitalises their energies,  
So as to join me in my endless journey,  
with the zeal of a new goal in mind.

The loosened strings in the stream,  
 I tie repeatedly with my inner muse,  
 So as to make the surroundings to dance,  
 To the tune of my flute.  
 For the pleasure of gloomy and exhausted life,  
 With sweet heart-throbbing,  
 I make beauty to throb in life,  
 In small rivulets,  
 I offer nectar to lilies,  
 In lakes I come, mirror in hand,  
 To daffodils to enjoy their own image.  
 With this zeal I travel to another destination.

Nature has made me to drink in abundance  
 The nectar of life to immortalise my  
 attributes,  
 Ceaselessly echo the melodies of my love,  
 With the whistles of my inner flute: I sing:  
 "Each and Everything has life from me"<sup>1</sup>  
 It is the secret within my message,  
 It is the only pivot of my activity,  
 And thus I enjoy : life  
 In relentless change,  
 And the change in my life.

### NOTES

1. Here Azad, precisely, quotes from Holy Quran, chapter 21 verse 30 which reads:

We made from water

Every living thing

Please refer note: 2691, Translation and Commentary (English) of Holy Quran: Abdulla Yousuf Ali, revised and edited by 'IFTA', kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh.

