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Love, Social Harmony and Religious Consonance in the Select Poems of Janbaaz Kishtwari

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Abstract: During the major administrative reorganization in Jammu and Kashmir in the year 2006, District Kishtwar was carved out of District Doda. Kishtwar which is called as the land of saffron, saints and sapphire has produced a number of poets who have written in different languages like Kashmiri, Urdu, Kishtwari, Hindi, Gojri etc. A huge treasure of poetry remains unpublished and gets passed on to the generations orally. Prominent poets like Nishat Kishtwari, Lekh Raj Nirala, Swami Raj Mastana, Aseer Kishtwari, Rehmat Ali Najar, Janbaaz Kishtwari etc have attained fame during modern times. However, as most of these poets haven't been translated into English and hardly any secondary source is available on these poets so the modern English reader has remained oblivious of these indigenous texts.

This paper tries to introduce widely read and recognized poet Janbaaz Kishtwari who is undisputedly considered to be the best and the most vocal voice from Kishtwar. The paper further critically analyzes his select Kashmiri poems and brings forth the element of love, social harmony and religious consonance as reflected in these poems. However the main objective of this paper is to create some space for the poetry of District Kishtwar in the mainstream Kashmiri literature and to bring to light a voice which remains unknown to the modern English readers.

Keywords: Love, Equality, Harmony, Poetry, Society.

Introduction

India has a rich tradition of poetry in its regional languages. It is the only country in the world where Sanskrit and Hindi literature have been written and published for many centuries. From indigenous literature to the Indian writing in English, India has the distinction of being a country where hundreds of local languages are spoken and written. “As far as advent of Indian poetry in English is concerned, it was Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) who made a mark for the first time. He published *Poems* in 1827 and *The Fakir of Jungheeral: A Metrical tale and other Poems* in the year 1828” (Ahmad 31). As poetry reflects the spark of contemporary life and society, there is a treasure of poetry in regional languages which has been worked upon by the scholars from world over.

In Jammu and Kashmir, there is a huge treasure of Kashmiri poetry followed by Dogri. Besides these two languages, poetry in Urdu, Hindi, Ladakhi, Shina, Gojri, Pahari, Balti, Pashto, Persian etc has been written and published for a long time now. To mention a few poets of Urdu is a cumbersome task as the list is too long. However Ahmad in his paper “The English Poetry of District Doda: A Short Review” mentions Diwan Shiv Nath, Pandit Thakur Prasad, Allah Baksha, Molvi Noor ud Din Qudwai who wrote during the time of Maharaja Hari Singh (32). He further mentions that during Maharaja Partab Singh’s rule when Urdu gained the status of an official language, a lot of poetry came to the forefront. The major writers of the age are Zinda Koul, Baldev Kishen Tikku, Tara Chand, Dina Nath and Shyam Lal Aima. Besides these writers, the poets who attained prominence are Rasa Javdani, Ghulam Rasool Nazki, Abdul Haq, Amar Chand and Shahroz Kashmiri.

District Kishtwar was carved out of District Doda when in the year 2006 during the administrative reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir, District Doda itself was “carved out from Udhampur district and attained the status of district namely district Doda with an area of 11691 Square Km” (Maini). Kishtwar has produced a number of poets who have written in different languages like English, Kashmiri, Urdu, Kishtwari, Hindi etc. The poets like Qadir Beerwadi, Man Mohan Gupta, Nishat Kishtwari, Mushtaq Dev deserve a mention. From the contemporary times Gulab Saifi, Parvaiz ibn e Tayeb, Ahmed Arslan, Tariq Tamqeen, Amin Doolwal, Rehmat Ali Najar, Riyaza Kishtwari, Ajaz Sibt-e-Nishat, Bashir Ibn-e-Nishat, Lekh Raj Nirala, Abdul Salam, Altaf Kishtwari, Ushaq Kishtwari, and Aseer Kishtwari are a few names who have

created a niche for themselves.

A famous writer Mohan Lal Ash writes, “In the galaxy of poets, Nishat’s name shines as polar star ... who started his poetic career in 1933 and printed number of books on his own expenses, though the economic position did not allow him to go for this adventure” (128). He further mentions poets like “Chander Kishtwari, Sant Ram Sana, Khoshi Ram Sein, Swami Raj Mastana, Jagdish Dilgir etc” (137). At another place he says, “Aseer is an intuitional poet, informative essay writer and versatile research scholar ... He has modern sensibility and gives vent to his galvanized emotions in the form of rhyme and metre” (133). One name which stands tall among the list of Kashmiri poets from Kishtwar is Ghulam Nabi Mingnoo popularly known as Janbaaz Kishtwari. About Janbaaz, Ash writes, “Habba Khatoon invented “Rast-i-Kashmiri in Sofiana Kalam and Doolwal invented “Challant” in Kashmiri music” (134). He rose to prominence during his lifetime as in addition to writing poetry he was a composer and singer as well.

A Short Biography of Janbaaz

Believed to be born on 6th August 1925 in a small village Dool which is around 13 kms from the main town Kishtwar, Janbaaz’s family had migrated from Anantnag. Ghulam Nabi Doolwal spent most of his life in the main town of Kishtwar where he worked in the Forest Department. In an article published in Inverse Journal Garima Sudhan traces his ancestry in Anantnag. However in a telephonic interview with Tayab Hamza, Janbaaz’s son Zubair Janbaaz informed him that Janbaaz was born in Kishtwar town and that the family had migrated from Dool to Kishtwar before the birth of Janbaaz. He was born to Ghulam Wali Mingnoo and Khadijah Begum and was second among the four brothers (Hamza 2). Janbaaz married Sakina Begum and had five kids among whom Alam Ara Janbaaz and Jahan Ara Janbaaz have earned fame in the field of singing and music. In an interview Janbaaz shared that the surname of Janbaaz’s family got changed from Mingnoo to Doolwaal because of the fact that their ancestors were originally from Dool (Hamza 3). Zubair Janbaaz shares that in his childhood Janbaaz used to act and sing at school level. Once he played the role of a character named as “Janbaaz” in a drama and the name and the character became so popular among the locals of Kishtwar that everyone started calling him Janbaaz. Later on he wrote poems under the pseudonym name ‘Janbaaz’ (Hamza 5).

Garima Sudhan too confirm the origin of the name ‘Janbaz’ and summarises that the pseudonym has a history that goes back to his high school years when he participated in a play called “Mohabbat ke phool”, where he played the role of a character known as Janbaaz. She writes that his ancestors migrated from Vessu (Anantnag) to Dool Kishtwar (Sudhan). Since those early days, people began to address him as “Janbaaz” and he accepted this name, made it his own and became Janbaaz Kishtwari (Sudhan). In his own musical renditions of the ghazal, Janbaaz Kishtwari articulated deep connections between love and faith, painting a morally rich picture of romance (Sudhan).

Element of Social Harmony and Religious Consonance

Social Harmony and Religious Consonance are the two sides of the same coin, which promote peace, respect, tolerance, cooperation and justice among the masses of divergent backgrounds. Mrs. Manisha Sharma in her paper “Social Harmony for Being Social” defines Social Harmony as “processes of valuing, expressing and promoting love, trust, admiration, peace, harmony, respect, generosity and equity upon other in any particular society regardless of their national origin, weight, marital status, ethnicity, colour, gender, race, age and occupation etc.”(5) The theme of social harmony and religious consonance is dominant in the poetry of Janbaaz. The two popular lines of Janbaaz which serve as an important message for society are, “*Bunyaad prath kuin mazhabas chei saie safeyi/byon byon rangen manz praznawun soi chei khodeyi*” (Kishtwari 78). This song broadcasted on Radio Kashmir and Doordarshan talks about the fact that the base of all religions of the world is purity and the real essence of life is the oneness of God. He further talks about the different ways of remembering God and reminds us about our final destination which can be attained through different routes.

He propagated “masawaat” (roughly translated into equality/equilibrium) a lot through his poetry. A piece of his famous poem on this topic is:

Unch neech ma chu rawa

Ithaaduk yi chu mud'da

asl kath terei ne fikri

kath chi wanan masawaat

Nazneen yaar meone ye chu mulaqat

zoo in legi chooin jaraan

az pagah teit gar ti karaan

Janbaaz yeit chi wuchaan

Wuin ti panin zaat paat (Kishtwari 26-27)

Janbaaz believed in social equality and communal harmony. In this masawaat he talks about social unity and urges us to realise and remember that all human beings are equal. He highlights the actual essence of 'masawaat' through his message of egalitarianism. However he laments that though humans may have reached the moon in terms of scientific developments and progress yet they are stuck in the shackles of casteism and economic disparity.

The lines from this beautiful nazm says:

maanun che peyi Sehib chu kunui

yan yeit maanun yan teit maanun

êk Raam te êk Rehmaan wonui

êk Shaam te êk Subhaan wonui

êik Krishan te êk Yazdaan wonui

êik Allah teêk Bhagwaan wonui

nawech che faraq matlab chu kunui

yan yeit maanun yan teit maanun (Kishtwari 14-15)

Janbaaz's message of communal harmony achieves zenith in these lines where he mentions that we may call God by different names like Ram, Rehman, Sham, Subhan, Krishan or Bhagwan, but Janbaaz in a poignant tone highlights that the difference is in the names only and we all have to accept and bow to the ubiquity of God.

Gasi nai saaf dil dita laaf saasa

Netyow chaite aam zam zam toite kya gow

Agar nai jajba e eisaar aasi

Dhoas parte isme azm toite kya goye (Kishtwari 38)

The concept of social harmony and equality gets reflected in these lines from a famous ghazal where Janbaaz talks about the purity of heart and alludes to the story of zam zam which is considered holy and sacrosanct in Islam. One may drink gallons from it and keep invoking God, but without the spirit of altruism and selflessness all goes in vain. Janbaaz further questions and asserts that one may chant the name of God loudly and multiple times but all this chanting is futile if the spirit of humanity and cleanliness of heart is missing

Reflection of Love in the poetry of Janbaaz

The love as reflected in Janbaaz's poetry though sublime seems to be unrequited. He says that his delicate and innocent heart has been broken into pieces. In his love poetry he deeply expresses emotional pain and susceptibility. The lines mentioned below from his poem convey a sense of separation and regret caused by someone whom the speaker loves intensely. The lines also highlight the tenderness of his emotions and the pangs of the pain the poet experienced:

Che futruth myon nozukh dil nigaaro
ye dil osum sathah aevil nigaaro
che kortham dur ruzith shour bashai
me dop nazdeeq chem manzil nigaaro (Kishtwari 85)

However, Janbaaz in one of his poems talks about the beauty of his beloved and with the use of a metaphor compares the face of his beloved with a lonely rose in the garden. He further praises his beloved and says that he/she is one among thousands.

chon rokh poshwun golaab chuna
gulshanas manz su intekhaab chuna
meai drai chai dekas cze dreh michraw
yout chusman ander cze aab chuna (Kishtwari 35)

At another place Janbaaz questions his beloved and asks why he was ruined and his time wasted. He further laments that his hay days are over and he wishes to go back into the past and restart. In this ghazal Janbaaz directly addresses the one who wounded his feelings and demands an explanation for his emotional and physical. The poet unveils a profound intellect of craving and is longing for the return of his youth, indicating that the poet feels a sense of loss or regret. Further the speaker delves into past, hoping to find compassion and

by reciting a love poem suggests that the speaker's youth was lyrical and amorous filled with emotions. Since time immemorial youth is always tinged with pleasant appearance, strength and the beginning of life's journey. Janbaaz's aspirations to return to his youth might signify a yearning to correct bygone mistakes, revive blissful moments, or merely elude the burdens of the present.

*Kath peth kharaab korthas ath kaith jawaab dikhna
hasrath me wein che warah wapas shabaab dikhna
chete nati ti naar panas pata khaar rah zamanas
yeli yikh cze bil muqabil qatren hisab dikhna (Kishtwari 91)*

The rich use of poetic devices by Janbaaz gets reflected when he alludes to Majnoon and reiterates that a heart which is in love can never be at ease.

*Yas dard aasi jigras
Tas zah qarar aasei
Majnoon zahti warie
Dar askhe naara asei
Lool chum chonai berith
Jismas te janas ander
Nazre seethan ser tche kar
Thar thar me chem panas ander
Ghah me korum chaine chaine
Ghah me wonum yikh tche saine
Ghah me perem ashk ghazal
Ghah me perem munajaat (Kishtwari 26-27)*

In these lines the poet feels the presence and authority of the beloved profoundly, which is not merely emotional sensation, but something that affects the speaker physically and psychologically. By engaging the loved one to gaze with inner eyes signifies the intensity of the feelings and it can be seen through this intimate non-verbal communication, because the eyes are frequently considered window to the soul. The trembling of the body clearly exhibits the disparity of speaker's physical, emotional and psychological balance. The act of

this invitation clearly signifies a longing for nearness and reunion. Janbaaz in the absence of the loved one recites prayer as an act of profound personal significance. It effectuates into the loved ones' mind an amalgam of the sacred and the romantic. In the observation of the researchers these lines portray a potent and intense love that affects the speaker on various levels i.e. physical, emotional and spiritual. The act of remembering, inviting, reading and praying clearly shows the passion and omnipresence of the speaker's feelings for the loved one.

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