



The Evaluation of Mystic Poetry of Female Writers

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ABSTRACT

From day one, men and women consciously embraced Sufism and its teachings through mutual harmony. From the time of the Prophet until today, women have played an important role in the development of Sufism. Sufi poets have rendered their services in poetry and literature in all times and places and left impressions of their names and works. The aim of their poetry is to spread nearness to God and the virtues of religion. Along with heartfelt sentiments, their high literary tastes are reflected and it is estimated that the women of this period were in no way inferior to the men in language, literature and eloquence.

KEY WORDS: Sufism, Sufi poets, Poetry, Literature, Virtues, Heartfelt sentiments, Women, Eloquence.

INTRODUCTION

Mystic Poetry:

The mystical poetry is concerned with the love of God, gazal and its beginning is connected to that. A Sufi is the center of ecstatic poetry. He gives true color to the poetry with deep emotions.

According to Urdu lughat:

“Poetry is the kind of poetry which is concerned with Love of God or it reflects religious feelings.”¹

Maulana Shibli Nomani (d.1332) said:

“Poetry in its base is concerned with expression of feelings. Before mysticism feelings had no existence. The creek of mysticism is the love of God that is ecstasy. Whatever the tongue uttered was exciting.”

He further adds:

“The beginning of ghazal, a particular type of poetry is associated with mysticism. Mysticism exists with emotions, its first alphabet is love though the field began in the third century it reached its climax in the 5th century and this was the time of origin of ghazal. Mysticism became a particular relationship and a reason to a vast range of poetry.”²

In the book of Tasawwuf aur Shairi it is written: “Mysticism is the mirror of poetic ecstasy and poetry is a warm state of mystic taste. Every poet has an inclination towards mysticism and every mystic has a poetic touch. Truly mysticism and poetry are closely linked in such ties which can never be broken.”³

The fame and evolution of mystical poetry:

Many females have started writing poetry since the beginning of Islam. They took various genres of poetry such as elegy, naat, praising heroes; bravery, generosity and dignity were the common themes. They also tried to write on love of Almighty, purity of heart, Day of Judgment, etc. After the birth and growth of spirituality and mysticism, they were not behind poets to write upon the topic. They have brought the problems of Mysticism in their poetry beautifully. The mystics of Islam had interest in poetry in 3rd and 4th century of Hijri, when Islamic mysticism was passing through its early years of revolution.

Rabia Shamia who lived in 2nd Hijri is considered among pioneers mystical poetry.

Rabia Shamia:

Rabia Shamia (d.185) used to read and write in the time of love, pain and agony. She was also a successful Arabic poetess. She uses a lot of Arabic words and expressions in her Persian poetry. Few verses from her poetry are as under:

My beloved is the best one, he has no parallel and my heart is not a part of anyone else. Although my beloved is absent from my sight and my existence, he is not absent from my heart, he is present in my heart.

Rabia Advia/Rabia Advia:

Rabia basri (d.185) holds a prominent position among Muslim Sufi poets. She was famous for her piety and abstinence. Most of her poetry is devoted towards God Almighty, Therefore there is intense exhilaration and in her poetry. Some examples from her poetry include:

Undoubtedly in God love abstraction and truthfulness Rabia is leading among all. She is above Bashar Hafi (d.227) and Zul Noon Misri (d.245). Who are all greatest among Sufi poets?

Love

I have loved Thee with two loves – a selfish love and a love that is worthy of Thee.

As for the love which is selfish,

Therein I occupy myself with Thee,

To the exclusion of all others.

But in the love which is worthy of Thee,

Thou dost raise the veil that I may see Thee.

Yet is the praise not mine in this or that,

But the praise is to Thee in both that and this⁴

The basic theme of other poetess of the same time such as Rehana Waliha, Bibi Shehwana and Mehmoona is mysticism or Sufism. Bibi Tohfa (RA) (d.225) also writes poetry in love and fearing of god.

Rehana Waliha:

Rehana (d.2nd Century Hijri) was a very religious and pious lady of Rabla. She has the same level of famous Sufi Hazrat Salih Al Marri (d.176) of her time. She had written on her shirt:

My Lord my love, my sincerity and my pleasure is only you. My heart refuses to befriend anyone but you!
O my beloved! O my desire and my courage! My passion has increased! When will you meet now?⁵

Bibi Shehwana:

Sufi Shehwana (d.187) belongs to the city of Abla, She preached among people. She had fear of God faced suffering and wept before God and made others weep for him she used to sing:

The world hopes to have someone, but before hope is fulfilled, the greedy one who irrigates the roots of the palm tree dies, so the tree remains green, but the man dies.⁶

Mehmoona Soda:

Mehmoona Soda (d.395) was a great orator along with being a poetess. Her words could melt stone hearts. Her poetry says:

The hearts of the mystics have such eyes. They see things that ordinary people cannot see and the Sunnah whispers to them what is hidden even from the honorable writers.⁷

Persian poetry has had the Sufiana touch since 5th Hijri. Persian mystic poetry can be divided into three parts, like urdu poetry. It deals with the instructions, romantic and lyrical.

Bibi Rabia Qazdari: (Daughter of Kahb)

Rabia Qazdari (d.4th Century Hijri) was the most famous and the best poetess of Persian language and famous for 4th century Hijri. Her odes are having warmth of love splendidence and effectiveness which can be observed.

I want to absorb all his love inside my heart but I fail. I have been calling you for a long time and the captivity is increasing day by day. Every advice seems venom, the face turns into fire and the sight is painful.⁸

Among the poets of 4th Hijri Husama Bint Bilal and Fatima Ummul Yemen are worth mentioning. Both of them were exceptional poetesses.

Husama Bint Bilal:

Husama Bint Bilal (d.4th Century Hijri) was one of the pious and devout women. Her poetry is a reflection of fear of God and love of God.

If you ever cry, cry for the first time prayer and when the Qur'an is recited, cry for the one you were reciting one day. Then recite it with meditation and tears flow from your eyes.⁹

Fatima Ummul Yemen:

Fatima (d.4th Century Hijri) was very devout and well-informed about the state of affairs. You were very much involved in asceticism.

I said, 'Leave me alone, O people, and let me follow your horsemen, I will obey you as a slave does.'¹⁰

Bibi Nazhoon:

Bibi Nazhoon (d.5th Century Hijri) was prominent among ranking Women for her knowledge and wisdom, during the same time she was very intellectual/ she was a great poetess and writer. Similarly Bibi Taqia Shamia whose surname was Umme Ali was also a renowned poetess.

If you are truthful, let the remembrance of a noble covenant do good, and then my remembrance will be bad, and patience is required for every reproach.¹¹

Bibi Umm-ul-Hina:

Bibi Umm ul Hina (d.6th Century Hijri) was born and grew up in Qartaba. Her father Qazi Mohammed Abdul Haque had a great knowledge of jurisprudence, who gave her excellent education. She wrote books and poetry.

If every guard guards his borders, he will always guard, so he will be the one who protects the swords and spears, and his refuge is from the watchful eye.¹²

In 9th century Hijri the greatest names among mystic poetesses are Bibi Umm-tul-Khaliq and Bibi Mariam Binte Ali, especially Bibi Zainab holds a prominent position among all.

Bibi Mariam Binte Ali:

Bibi Mariam Binte Ali's (d.891) patronymic name was "Umme Hani". Besides syntax and jurisprudence she had adroitness in poetry also.

Praise is to Allah and thanks to be Him for His grace in every situation, outwardly and inwardly. By obeying Allah as much as you can, you may be blessed with greatness and pride.¹³

Bibi Umm-tul-Khaliq:

Bibi Umm tul Khaliq (d.921) remained engaged in teaching and learning of Masnad Ahmad and Serah Ibn e Hasham. She had great interest in poetry. Her couplets are:

Destiny sometimes calls, sometimes leaves, even if I make a mistake, but destiny does not make a mistake. When Allah wants a servant to do something even though he has intellect, hearing and sight. He makes him deaf and blinds his heart, and brings forth wisdom out of milk like hair. Until that person works, his intellect is returned so that he can learn a lesson.¹⁴

In 11th Hijri, there was a Turkish poetess Aani Fatima (d.1120). She was the shining star of poetry and literature. Her anthology had been published.

Bibi Zubaida Bint-e-Assad (d.1194) was one of the highest poetesses of 12th Hijri. In the 13th and 14th Hijri Bibi Fitnat Khanum (d.1258), Bibi Laila Khanum (d.1264), Bibi Sharf Khanum (d.1224), Siri Khanum (d.1230) and Bibi Rasha were the most popular poetesses.

Bibi Rasha:

Bibi Rasha (d.13th Century Hijri) was the famous Iranian poetess of the 13th century. She belonged to the Sadat family. Her real name was begum and her pen name was Rasha. She was the poetess of anthology. Few verses from her anthology are:

The heartbeat in my chest seems to be open. The consolation arrow is replaced by a bow.¹⁵

Ayesha Tamuria was one of the famous women who achieved the highest position in the art of poetry and literature.

Ayesha Tamuria:

Ayesha Tamuria (d.1320) had full grip on Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages. She was the famous poetess of Egypt. Her poetry is in Arabic language. Her poetry was eloquent and cogent. Her anthology had been published by the name Hulia-tul-taraz. She also acquired the place in the circle of those who were masters of elegies. She touched the zenith of elegy writing and acquired dexterity.

All praise is due to Allah who has enabled me to count the glorifications. I do not look at the rest.¹⁶

The important things in the poetry of mystical poetesses were those two sorts of jargons which have been in vogue since the beginning of the Persian mystical poetry. Some of these jargons are classical and new meanings are attributed to them and there are some jargons which have never been used before.

In Indo-Pak mystical thoughts and feelings gained a prominent position in the poetry. And poetesses adopted different philosophical mindsets, expressing their delicate thoughts in the attire of poetry. Truly those poetesses in the age of decadence by mysticism affected our life and also the whole literature. The poetesses who gave mysticism the shape of their poetry, were really ascetics and they were adept in their profession. They not only had the concept of mysticism but also followed by themselves, and due to them Urdu poetry took a new spirit.

Mystical poetesses promoted their message not only in Persian language but also in Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi and Urdu languages. It is the reality that due to them literature flourished in Pakistani local languages. When we observe the Indian mystical poets, we find that there are various poets whose verses are full of divine love.

Bibi Fatima Saam:

Bibi Fatima Saam (d.643) name was Bibi Fatima Saam and her pen name was Fatimi. She was a pious, ascetic and altruistic woman. Hazrat Khwaja Fariduddin Masood (d.662) said:

“She was a godly poetess and said poetry according to the situation and on the spot.”¹⁷

Man desires love as well as status, but it is not possible to achieve both

In 8th century Hijri, there was a woman mystic named Lil Arifa and she was the poetess of the peak. She was a magnificent poetess of Kashmiri language. Some critics consider her the founder of poetry in Kashmiri language. Her verses and sayings got great fame.

Lil Arifa:

The name of Lil Arifa (d.782) was called Lil Maj, Lil Didi, Lil Aswri. Non-Muslims considered her goddesses and Muslims considered her a mystic. Due to Hazrat Shah Hamdani (d.786) and other Muslim scholars she turned to be the worshiper of one God and a lover of Islam. After living a long life, she died in the village of Lillah Beej Bharra and her last rituals were done according to Islam. Few verses of her work are:

That is, there is no light better than knowledge and knowledge of God, no pilgrimage better than intention, no friend is better than God and no happiness is better than fear of God.¹⁸

Jana Begum was an abstinent and pious woman. She had a great poetic and literary taste.

Jana Begum:

Jana Begum (d.1070) was the wife of Abdur Reheem Khane Khana (d.1036) and wife of Shehzada Daniyal (d.1015). Jana Begum translated the commentary of the Holy Quran in Persian language. She had a fine taste of poetry. Only three couplets of her poetry are preserved:

Now, how can a lover hide the situation after love? The blood of crying is visible from your two eyes. No one can reach him with peace and tranquility. Until the dust of his feet becomes dust, one cannot reach his beloved. Make affections a wide trodden road and make yourself a waiting eye.¹⁹

Zaib un Nisa:

Zaib un Nisa (d.1113) was the daughter of King Aurangzeb Alamgir (d.1118). She was a Sufi Poet of Persian language.

The hand that did not bend at the neck could not be broken. It was the last hundred times, and every flower that fell into the garden did not grow.²⁰

Bibi Gulshan (d.1069), Zinat Nisa (d.1122), Hayat Nisa Begum (d.1253), Nawab Akhtar Mahal Akhtar (d.1280), Bibi Fatima Sughra (d.1295), Nawab Shah Jahan Begum (d.1318), Syeda Khair un Nisa Buhtr (d.1388) and Syeda Ummatulah Tasneem (d.1396) were the poetesses of high rank.

Akhter:

Her name was Nawab Akhter Mahal (d.1280) and her pen name was Akhter. She was a highly dignified woman of Tamuria family. She was clever, intellectual, intelligent and a good humored woman. She had proclivity for psalms and panegyrics and most of her poetry is in these forms. She had abridged the famous poem of Qudusi into a Quatrain.

My whole life was wasted and I could not remember my Lord even for a moment. Now I am humble and hopeful of God's mercy.²¹

Fatima Qaisri Rehana:

Fatima Qaisri (d.13th Century Hijri) had a unique literary style and was the native of town cot district Fatehpur but she got her education from Bhopal. Qaisari has written very effective Persian poetry. Some of the verses are:

Neither I make temple and Church my Kaaba, nor I prostrate at the doorstep of anyone, else Allah. Heart is fragile like a Glass, as wine makes the class beautiful; heart's beauty is due to love.²²

Behtar:

Behatr (d.1388) real name was Khair un Nisa and her pen name was Behtar. Special arrangements were made for her religious education. She memorized the Holy Quran and also learnt Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages according to the need of time. She was the daughter of a great man, wife of a great husband and mother of a great son Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Nadwi (d.1419). Bab e Rehmat is the literary relic. Few of her prototypical versus are:

O Lord please show me that beautiful face. I have got this opportunity; I have received this divine blessing of seeing Mustafa. This is my wish now, Lord, to deliver me to Pak Tayyaba, take out all the longings in my heart, O Lord; I wish to receive this Naat.²³

Tasneem:

Her name was Ayesha (d.1396), her patronymic name was Ummatullah. Her pen name was Tasneem. Her mother Khair un Nisa Behtar was also a famous poetess. She was sister of Abu Al Hasan Nadwi and she was famous by the name of Ayesha Bi. She got the education of the Holy Quran, Persian and Urdu at home and Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Nadwi taught her Arabic language. She had a natural tendency for poetry and literature due to literary family. She had a fine taste of literature, her famous books are "Qasas ul Anbiya" for children and "Hamare Huzoor". Her collection of poems "Mooj e Naseem" and "Baab Karam" also have been published. Few versus from her poetry are:

O Lord, how long have I stood in hope.
How I spent these days, I do not know.
Anxious and anxious heart goes and call someone,
Who is the one who handles this worst situation?²⁴

For all these poetesses the monotheism and Prophet Hood were not just customary faith, but these principles were full of divine love. So, during the 13th and 14th century Hijri they explained the concepts of monotheism and prophet hood, unity, affection and uniqueness in a very simple way. Self-knowing was considered the best way for good God knowing. By thwarting the spiritual diseases, it was tried to awake the faith.

In short women accomplished daring feats in this field and some women were considered as the greatest poetesses. They were eloquent poetesses and they had many compositions and compilations.

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