

**CRITICAL VISION OF
MIAN MUHAMMAD BUKHSH
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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Abstract

There is a long list of poets who enriched Punjabi language and literature through their valuable literary contributions. Mian Muhammad Bukhsh is one of them. He is truly termed to be the representative of Potohar/semi Lehnda dialect of Punjabi language. His contributions range from creative works to translations from Persian to Punjabi. But his main claim to fame is his legendary poetic work namely *Saiful Mulook*. This book covers all aspects of human life from moral to spiritual, religious to mundane and economic to social. Given its dealing of human emotions, this book got unprecedented popularity in the Punjab. Many of its couplets have become proverbial in the Punjab. This article is an analytical study of the master piece of Punjabi language *Saiful Mulook* of Mian Muhammad Bukhsh

Keywords:

Punjab, Punjabi, Waris Shah, Ahmad Yaar, Hafiz Barkhurdar, Mian Muhammad Bukhsh, Hashim, Ganimat Kunjahi, Saiful Mulook, Gulazar-e-Faqr

Mian Muhammad Bukhsh (1890-1903)⁽¹⁾ is one of the Punjabi poets who introduced verse-story writing in Punjabi language to its peak. Mian Sahib led a very simple and saintly life. He was a well-aware and wise person. He was equally a man of letter and action. Words and actions were two salient features of his personality which made his poetry universal especially his poetic rendition namely *Saiful Malook*. This book is truly a master piece of Punjabi language and hence is widely read, sung and cherished everywhere in the Punjab. In circles of mysticism, its reading is a must. Mian Sahib's poetry is not confined to only *Saiful Malook* (1279) but it is covered in many of his books such as *Sakhi Khawas Khan's Tale* (1282), *Mirza Sahiban's Tale* (1288), *Hidayatul Muslimeen* (1297), *Sohni Mahinval's Tale*, *Sheikh San'an's Tale* (1274), *Shiren Farhad's Tale* (1276), *Shah Mansoor* (1275), *Tuhfa Rasolia* (1281), *Tuhfa Meraan* (1274) and *Gulzar-e-Faqr*. Besides he composed *Si-harfi* (1264)⁽²⁾ (literal meaning thirty lettered. A famous genre of Punjabi poetry)

His translations of *Nairung-e-Ishq* (1275) by Ganimat Kunjahi from Persian to Punjabi verse and *Tazkira Muqimi* (1324) in prose speak high of his scholarly profundity.⁽³⁾ These poetic compositions and translations, both verse and prose, are of much importance. But the main claim of his fame is *Saiful Malook* which made him an established and well-recognized literary genius. Since he was basically a Sufi, he discussed in his master piece the 'Real' in disguise of 'Unreal'. Side by side he expressed his poetic excellence. Flight of thought, selection of words, modesty of thinking, charged passion and vivid objectives are some of the components of his poetry.

Mian Sahib's poetry is so good and of high rank that it may be presented in comparison of poetry in any international language. (4) Amazingly, Mian Sahib's poetry is in accordance with standards set by the literary critics of the West. Although Mian Sahib had not gone through the western literary theories and had no acquaintance with the western literatures yet one feels reading his poetry that it had been composed in light of the western poetic theories. For example renowned philosopher Dante⁽⁵⁾ once said that in literature topic was more important than anything else and that any common language could be made universal by presenting comprehensive vision through it.

Though Punjabi language had already become universal by virtue of its rich literary tradition, yet Mian Muhammad Bukhsh tremendously contributed to it and took it to new heights. His usage of Potohari and semi-Lehnda dialects has made his poetry more appealing. Here comes to mind the two principles to judge a good literature: timelessness and popularity and that a poet's job is to amuse and teach others.

Mian Sahib's poetry is absolutely in compliance with the abovementioned principles. His poetry is timeless and ever fresh and popular with the people of all periods. Besides happiness and pleasure, it comprises moral lessons. Read the following verses of Mian Sahib which testify to the statement:

ماں ملیئے ماں ملیئے ماں ملیئے ماں ملیئے
 مٹھا بول اندر وڑ ملیئے عاشق را رِل کھس کے
 جے سو چاکر نوکر ہووے خدمت والا اے !!
 ہتھیں خدمت کریئے آپوں جاں ساجن ہتھ لگے

Experts of poetry are of the view that a good verse consists of three qualities: reason, emotion and humour and consequently leaves lasting impact on others. It seems that Mian Sahib composed his poetry keeping in mind these three qualities. He says:

نیچاں دی ایشائی کولوں فیض کسے نہ پایا!
 ککر تے انگور چڑھایا ہر گچھا زخمایا!
 جے ویکھاں میں عملاں وکے گچھ نہ میرے پئے
 جے ویکھاں تیری رحمت وکے پئے پئے پئے

Ruskin⁽⁶⁾, Galsworthy⁽⁷⁾ and Sydney⁽⁸⁾ share their viewpoint on standard literature. They all are agreed that a poet should have flawless character and that verse should be rich morally. Galsworthy goes to the extent in this regard that he does not consider a man to be of any worth void good character. He considers character building to be the primary purpose of poetry.⁽⁹⁾

If Mian Sahib's poetry is studied in light of views expressed by these renowned western literary figures, it appears that Mian Sahib already knew these principles and had composed his verse in line with these principles. His poetry is a true example of morality and probity. Can be a more lucid example of moral based poetry than the following:

دُشمن مرے تے خوشی نہ کریئے جہاں وی مر جانا!
 ڈنگر تے رن گیا محمد اوڑک نوں ڈب جانا!
 اوکھی ویلے کاری آوی بھلیاں دی ایشائی!
 اڑیا آکھن دی لُج پالن جو انسان وفتائی!

These verses of Mian Sahib's have also negated the theory

presented by a western critic in which he expounded that literature distorts its image if teaches morality. But Mian Sahib proved otherwise as his poetry is based on morality.⁽¹⁰⁾

A.E. Poe⁽¹¹⁾ looks poetry through the prism of aesthetics. Astonishingly, Mian Sahib's verse is rich aesthetically too. The verses in praise of prince Saiful Mulook's handsomeness or in extolling his beloved's beauty may be presented in this regard:

نُسخ بدیع الجمال پری دا وانگ بہار چمن دی
 سنبھل وال مہین زنجیری ہر مینڈھی وَن وَن دی
 زگس مست بہار پری دے نین گوڑھے متوارے
 چہرہ پھل گلاب بہاری گل لالے زخسارے!
 ٹھوڑی وکھ خبانی تائیں ریک پی وچکاروں
 گلہاں والی سرخی کولوں وکیا رنگ اماروں!
 چودھویں دا چمن داغی ہویا مٹھا وکھ نورانی!!
 اکھ بھڑا نہ تگس ہونڈی سورج ہار پیٹانی
 چاندی پیرنگے جد چاندی جاندی جان پچاندی
 قد میں ڈھبیدی عرضا کہندی سجدیوں سیس نہ چاندی
 چہرہ صاف بہشتی صفہ اہر وطاق بنائے!

واہ نقاش محمد بخشا جس اوہ رنگ لگائے (12)

Eliot⁽¹³⁾ is a famous western critic whose theories are part of syllabi at master level in Pakistani universities. His name and work are household in literary circles. He theorized that criterion to determine efficacy of poetry was tradition and not individual talent. Here he meant by tradition being same with others in topic and its narration.

Doubtlessly, Mian Sahib himself did not weave the story of *Saiful Mulook* but he took its idea from four different books he named them as 'Four Fairies'. This story is also found in *Alif Laila*. As far as sameness in narration of the story is concerned, Maulvi Lutf Ali Bahawalpuri's name comes into mind at first. It was Bahawalpuri who composed this story for the first time in Punjabi language.

Anyhow, Mian Sahib's poetry stands high both in tradition and individual talent.

Mian Sahib's poetry is meritorious for its fluency, sweetness, closeness to heart, usage of simile, metaphor, allusion, treatment, depiction and composition etc. His poetic work bears out that Mian Sahib was not only a great poet but also a seasoned artist and experienced critic. He was well aware of poetic beauties and techniques. He was not only a good composer himself but also an authority on poetry. In his book *Sohni Mahinwal* he wrote:

احمد یار خضر تھیں، پایا شعر کلام
میںوں مرشد اپنے، کیتا ایہہ انعام (14)

There is another verse to this effect in his book *Sheikh San'an*:

احمد یار خضر تھیں پائی سبزی باغ سخن دی
میںوں پیر میرے نے بخشا عجب بہار چمن دی

Employing the phrase 'عجب بہار چمن دی' by Mian Sahib is an ample proof of his aesthetic inclination and that he dealt everything in literature aesthetically. He took pleasure in highlighting qualities in others' poetry instead of pointing out their shortcomings. He said:

نک نک عیب نہ کردے واندے چنگے لوک کداہیں
نکتہ چینی نکتہ روزی بھلیاں را کم ناہیں (15)

It does not mean that Mian Sahib did not know delicacies of poetry or unaware of rhyme, rhythm or meter of poetry. In fact he was more at home with intricacies of a good poetry than Ahmad Yaar who is considered by some writers to be the first critic of Punjabi language. As compared to Ahmad Yaar who thought himself to be a great critic, Mian Sahib spoke positively about other poets whenever he spoke. It is Ahmad Yaar who wrote criticizing the legendry poet Waris Shah:

وارث شاہ سخن دا وارث کتوں نہ ہکلیا ولیا
پر مندرای چکی وانگوں نکا مونا دلایا

It is strange to know that when he himself began to compose the tale of *Heer* in order to beat Waris Shah, he could not do so and then started praising Waris Shah with feeling of repentance. Indeed Mian Muhammad Bukhsh was a great visionary critic. His mystic personality and aesthetic approach of criticism did not allow him to follow Ahmad Yaar's line despite the fact that his critic vision was higher than that of Ahmad Yaar's. Hereunder Mian Sahib praising other poets' compositions said:

جھے جھے گھما وارھا جے میں انگل دھرا
احمد یار مصنف وانگوں تاں کوئی معلم کرا
تھوڑی بوہتی تہمت کولوں کون کوئی بچ رہندا
پر میں آپوں اوگن ہارا دوسریاں نہیں کہندا
عیوں پاک خداوند آپوں کون کسے نوں آکھے
کاہنوں گل کسے دی کرنی میں بھی شاعر بھاکھے (16)

Mian Sahib was well aware of his poetic qualities as well weaknesses, but he did not propagate to be a great poet or critic instead he loved to present himself very humbly:

میرے مالوں ہر کوئی بہتر میں ہی سچے ایماں
تھوڑا بوہتا شعر سخن را گھانا وارھا جاں (17)

Since he was a great poet, he knew very well the hindrances in thought and art which come while composing verse. A critic who himself has no poetic experience, cannot sense the hindrances through which a poet suffers. Such a critic cannot appreciate an art piece but to find faults with others. Mian Sahib's poetic and critic vision both were sublime. He did not take every Tom, Dick and Harry to be a true critic. He opined about such people as:

مر مر ہک بناون شیشہ مار وٹا ہک بھندے
دنیا آئے تھوڑے رہندے قدر شناس خندے (18)

.....

جے کوئی میلی اکھیں ویکھے عیب دھگانے لاوے
اوہ بھی عدل تیرے دے گھر تھیں کجھ مزائیکیں پاوے (19)

Mian Sahib is of the view that criticism is not restricted to only finding faults with others' work. A critic's job is to appreciate literary contributions side by side pointing to weaknesses. Let's go through Mian Sahib's appraisal of different Punjabi poets. His critical vision comes forth in this appraisal.

He comments on Ahmad Yaar saying:

فیر ولایت شعر سخن دی احمد یار سنجالی
دھونا مار تخت پے بیٹھا مل پنجاب حوالی!!

تیغ زبان چلائوس ترکھی وچ پنجاب زمیں
سکہ ملک سخن دے ائے جزیوس مال آئینے (20)

Here he not only protested against Ahmad Yaar's treatment of great Punjabi poet like Waris Shah but also rejected his self proclamation to be the greatest of all Punjabi poets and critics through the phrases 'تیغ زبان چلائوس ترکھی' and 'دھونا مار تخت تے بیٹھا'. Interestingly, here too he had employed a lighter tone. However, it does not connote that he did not recognize Ahmad Yaar as a good poet or he disliked him. He praised him and appreciated his poetic work:

باز طبیعت اُسدی والا گلکوں ہو ہو تھھا
جس اوہ باز وگایا مزا مزا دھن توہیں اوہ بیٹھا
ہر قصے دی ووہٹی اس نے زیور لاسنگاری
صنعت تے تکلینوں گئے زینت کر کر ساری (21)

Expressing his opinion on Hashim's poetry he says:

ہاشم شاہ دی حشمت برت گتتر وچ نہ آوے
در یتیم جواہر لڑیاں ظاہر کڈھ لٹاوے
مختصر کلام اوہناں دی دروں بھی بوٹی!
در ہو یا تاں سبھ گھہ ہو یا کیا لٹی یا چھوٹی
بیت ترازو تول بناؤس سارے لذت والے
کلیاں پختن ہار پرہوس زگس تے گل لالے (22)

Mian Sahib though appreciated Hashim's poetic excellence yet he also pointed out historic discrepancies and fallacies found in his poetry. He stated categorically that Hashim did not compose this story in light of history rather it was based on heresies or oral narrations:

سئی سنائی اس بھی آکھی کہ مردوش بے چارے

Mian Sahib's critical appreciation of Hashim's poetry is beautiful. He did not compromise with poor dealing of history towards he pointed out but he did not degrade or humiliate the poet. Read what he had said about Hafiz Barkhurdar:

راٹھا بر خوردار سنیدا کبھل باغ سخن دی
 شعر اوہدے جیون واؤ فجر دی آنے باس چمن دی (23)
 حافظ بر خوردار مصنف گور جیناں دی چنی!
 ہر ہر بےج اوہدا بھی رٹھا جیوں مصری دی کھنی (24)

Mian Muhammad Bukhsh thinks poetry to be a gift from God. Nobody is a poet himself. If somebody tries hands at poetry after reading books and gaining much knowledge, his poetry would be worthless and less appealing as compared to that of God gifted poet's. Altaf Husain Hali had also expressed the same thoughts in his famous book *Muqaddima Sh'ir o Sha'iri*. Mian Sahib's considered opinion in this regard is:

ویکھو ویکھی ریت بناون شعروں خبر نہ پاؤن
 ایس طرح تے صفتاں رٹھاں بوچے ڈوم بناؤن
 زدی رڈیوں نام نہ جانن قانون بدھ نہ کائی!
 وزن برامہ نڈا بجودا صنعت رسم نہ بھائی
 پاک علم دے زوروں کردے اوہ بھی ظاہر رسدا
 جس پر ہوئی عطا الہی سخن نہ چھپدا رسدا (25)

According to Mian Sahib it is essential to have deep knowledge of poetry and its techniques for its complete comprehension and critical appreciation. And that without doing so, it is not possible to do justice

with poetry or pass any critical remarks on it:

کرنا سمجھنا شعر دا بوہتا دکھا، وال چیرے کے کرنا چار ہے جی
لفظی معنوی صبح جو نہ جانے اونوں ساڈڑا شعر آزار ہے جی

So, poetry is appealing when it is full of emotions and that mere rhetoric or diction is not any substitute to emotions. The poet himself must have experienced the ordeal. Mere depiction of such conditions will be of no engaging. Such verse may be fine in its diction and structure but fail to attract attention and persuasion. At the end, read how beautifully Mian Sahib has expressed what makes poetry worth reading and appealing:

جو شاعر بے پیڑا ہووے سخن اوہدے بھی رکھے!
بے پیڑے تھیں شعر نہ ہوندا اگ دس دھواں نہ دھکھے
قصے ہو رکے دے اندر درد اپنے کجھ ہوون!!
دس پیڑاں تا شیراں ناہیں بے پیڑے کدروون
جس لپے پھل بدھے ہوون آوے بو زمالوں
درد مٹراں دے سخن محمد دین گواہی حالوں! (26)

☆☆☆☆☆

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- (3) Ghulam Husain Azhar; Mian Muhammad; Qutb Minar, Anarkali, Lahore, 1980, p70
- (4) Ismatullah Zahid: Perkh Pragey, Al-Tehrir, Urdu Bazar Lahore, 1980, p197
- (5) Dante (1265-1321) was a major Italian poet of the Middle Ages. He is widely known for his master piece namely Divine Comedy.

- (6) John Ruskin (1819 -1900) was the leading English art critic of the Victorian era. He wrote essays and treatises, poetry and lectures, travel guides and manuals, letters and even a fairy tale.
- (7) John Galsworthy (1867 -1933) was an English novelist and playwright. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1932.
- (8) Sir Philip Sidney (1554 -1586) was an English poet, courtier, and soldier. He is remembered as one of the most prominent figures of the Elizabethan age.
- (9) Sajjad Baqir Rizvi:Maghrab ke Tanqidi Usool, Muqtadira Qaumi Zaban, Islamabad, 1987, p153
- (10) Sajjad Baqir Rizvi:Maghrab ke Tanqidi Usool, p249
- (11) Edgar Allan Poe [A.E.Poe] (1809 - 1849) was an American author, poet, editor, and literary critic, considered part of the American Romantic Movement.
- (12) Saiful Malook, Mian Muhammad Bukhsh, Mian Muhammad Bukhsh Library, Mirpur Azad Kashmir, 2010, p206
- (13) Thomas Stearns Eliot [T.S Eliot] (1888 - 1965) was an essayist, publisher, playwright, literary and social critic and finally one of the twentieth century's major poets.
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