

AMIR KHUSRAU: POET, MUSICIAN, COURTIER AND HISTORIAN

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Amir Khusrau a prodigy of India is loved and adored by the people of the Indian sub-continent. A couple of years ago his 750th birth centenary was observed by the people of the country to pay tribute to Hazrat Amir Khusrau by organizing national & International Seminar and Cultural Programme. Khusrau is a heritage of India whose works constitute a strong cultural bond of the Indian sub-continent with Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran. Even in Europe and America people evince great interest in Indology and pay due attention to the life and works of Indian poets such Kalidas, Amir Khusrau, Ghalib and Tagore.

Khusrau was born in 1253 A.D. in district Etah of the Indian province of Uttra Pradesh. He lived in the most turbulent period of Indian history when the Mongols' threat loomed large over India. During his lifetime (1253 – 1325 A.D.) he witnessed the regime of seven monarchs in Delhi. If he was closely associated with Balban, Khalji and Tughlaq dynasties, he was equally, if not, more connected to the hospice of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia. The Turks were pouring into India to consolidate their political position and formed the dominant element in Indian body-polity. Their outlook on India was silly and they basked in the racial superiority of Central Asia and failed to admirer the wonder India was. However, being an enlightened soul who had imbibed the real ethos of India more often than not Khusrau¹ reminded the Turks to hail India not as a colony but a sacred land and he beautifully made them realize that *if there were paradise on earth, it was there in India, it was there in India, it was there in India!*

گر فردوس بر روی زمین است همین است و همین است و همین است

The Indian common-folk were subject to inhuman treatment in their caste-ridden society. Whenever, they turned to the monastery of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, they were embraced as fellow-human being and regaled with Sufi music. At the feet of his mentor, Khusrau sang the song of love to them and the masses enjoyed his folk song and literature. His rich Persian poetry was sung by the qawwals, the tradition that still continues in the shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi today. He had travelled from Multan (Punjab) to Lucknowti (Bengal) and was intimately familiar with India. He devoted the third chapter of his epic *Noh Siph* in which he exclusively dealt with India - her land and her people. Besides the epic, his other epic poems such as *Qiranus Sadain*, *Miftahul Futuh* and *Tughlaq Nameh* all alluded to the historic India of the 13th century A.D.

¹ the couplet is attributed to many poets including Khusrau.

Amir Khusrau is a pioneer of Indo-Persian literature and a great exponent of music. In imitation of the classical epic writer Nezami, he composed five epic poems: *Aina-e-Sikandari*; *Mutla ul Anwar*; *Shirin Khusrau*; *Laila Majnun* and *Hasht Behisht* and established his position as a great poet in the annals of Persian literature. But his chief fame rests upon Ghazals, which are preserved in five voluminous poetic collections namely: *Tohfatus Sighar*; *Wasatul Hayat*; *Ghurratul Kamal*; *Nihayatul Kamal* and *Baqiyah Naqiyah*. The ghazals of Khusrau are full of artistic merits and are finely turned to the sound of music. They are adapted to Indian geo-social conditions and they have been sung by the qawwals right from the time of Hazrat Nezamuddin Aulia down to this days and one can enjoy the everlasting freshness of his ghazal, which over centuries has become Indian heritage.

Amir Khusrau symbolises a link between peoples of Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. He represents a confluence of two predominant cultures, which enriches their music in song and instrument with innovations such as qawwali, tarana and *sitar*. Being a repository of Indo Persian traditions, Khusrau composed *Rekhta* (Hindavi and Persian verses interlaced together), which are sung with fervour in the subcontinent and enjoyed by people all through the ages. His devotional songs and verses preached love, fraternity and universal truth, influenced great spiritual leaders of India like Guru Nanak. Kabir, Waris Shah and a host of others to closely weld the variegated patterns of Indian life. The poetry of Khusrau is the common legacy of both the Hindus and Muslims and the synergetic genius of the poet fosters unity in multi cultural society.

Amir Khusrau was a great patriot of India. His works, in prose and poetry stand as an eloquent testimony to this fact. In the passionate love for his motherland he exclaims: “***If Mecca would hear of India, it would perform tawaf around this garden.*** (Mecca is the most holy city of the Muslims and tawaf is a religious ritual of circumambulation the Holy mosque of Ka’aba at Mecca). His love and adoration of India is evident from the poetry he has left behind for posterity. In *Qiranus Sadain* he says:

حضرت دهلی کنف دین و داد	جنت عدن ست که آباد باد
هست چو ذات ارم اندر صفات	حرسها الله عن الحاد ثات
گر شنود قصه این بوستان	مکه شود طایف هندوستان

Delhi, the centre of religion and justice
Is the garden of Eden, and so populous.
If the splendor of this garden falls upon the ear
Mecca itself might go round it in reverence^۲.

Among the poets of India, Khusrau is the first poet to pay heed to the linguistic richness of India, a fact which was realised only after she gained independence in 1947. The British Govt. of India treated the Indian languages as vernaculars and failed to recognize

² Sandilvi. S.A. *A Great Indian Patriot*, Amir Khusrau. Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi. p. 24.

linguistic richness of the country. However, Khusrau proudly enumerated the different languages spoken in the subcontinent such as Hindi, Sindhi, Lahori, Kashmiri, Kubri, Tilangi, Gujri., Mabari, Gori, Bengali, Awadhi, and Sanskrit along with Persian and Arabic. He commented upon the Indians' capability of learning foreign languages: "People of India can speak languages eloquently but people of other lands are unable to speak Indian ones". The words of Amir Khusrau will auger well if Human Resources Development takes upon itself the task to invest in linguistic sector of India and equip the Indian Centres of language learning adequately so as to produce good language experts and to have edge in the world of communication.

Poetry constitutes chief element in the domain of fine arts .In the introduction of his poetic collection *Ghuratul Kamal* , Khusrau has propounded his views about poetry in general and his dislike for pedagogic poetry. He has a full-length discussion on art of prose and poetry and as a critic of literature he must be compared with Aristotle, Pope and Sidney or any literary critic of world fame to show that India has never been bereft of men of letters in her history. Beautifully Khusrau says about good poetry: "It's a lamp which burns bright against adverse storms" or " an immortal soul which keeps its body always alive". His discourse on poetry is highly sublime and of high artistic standard and a beacon to modern poets who grope in darkness and commercially degenerate the art of poetry as a marketable commodity and make art venal. Khusrau is the guiding principal in the domain of Indo Persian art and learning.

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