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Topic- Study of Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib

Online Class Materials

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Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib

Mirza Ghalib was a famous Urdu and Persian poet of the Indian subcontinent in the 19th century. His original name was Mirza Asadullah Baig Khan. His original pen-name was Asad but he changed it to Ghalib, which means 'conqueror'. According to historical documents, Ghalib had no formal education.

Personal Life

Mirza Ghalib was born on 27 December, 1796 in Kala Mahal, Agra into a family of Mughals who moved to Samarkand (in modern-day Uzbekistan) after the downfall of the Seljuk kings. His paternal grandfather, Mirza Qoqan Baig, was a Seljuq Turk who had immigrated to India from Samarkand during the reign of Ahmad Shah (1748–54). He worked in Lahore, Delhi and Jaipur, was awarded the sub-district of Pahasu (Bulandshahr, UP) and finally settled in Agra, UP, India. He had four sons and three daughters. Mirza Abdullah Baig and Mirza Nasrullah Baig were two of his sons. At the age of thirteen, Ghalib married Umrao Begum, daughter of Nawab Ilahi Bakhsh. He had seven children but none of them survived. This pain is apparent in his ghazals.

Literary Career

Ghalib is famous for his ghazals written in Urdu. But he also used to write poems in the Persian language. Most notably, he wrote in both Urdu and Persian. His Persian Divan is at least five times longer than his Urdu but his fame rests on his poetry in Urdu.

His talent flowered at an early age; he wrote most of his poems by the age of nineteen. Initially his ghazals conveyed the pain of love but he expanded the horizon. He pushed the Urdu language to express life's myriad pains and philosophies. This made Ghalib's poetry a masterpiece.

At the time of Ghalib, Urdu was a very ornamental language; he made it interesting by making it an informal one. He also composed humorous proses. The letters written to his friends are ample proof of that humour. In fact, the modern Urdu language is indebted to Mirza Ghalib. He made the language beautiful and gave it a life. Today, Ghalib remains popular not only in India and Pakistan but also among the Hindustani diaspora around the world.

Royal Titles

Mirza Ghalib was bestowed with the title of “Dabir-ul-Mulk” by Bahadur Shah Zafar II. He also got an additional title of “Najm-ud-daula” from the emperor. The other title given to him by the emperor was ‘Mirza Nosha’.

Mirza Ghalib was one of the courtiers of the royal court of the Emperor. He was appointed as Emperor’s poet and the royal historian of Mughal Court.

Ghalib lived on state patronage; he never had a formal steady job. Mirza Ghalib, regarded as one of the most brilliant and influential poets of the Urdu language, passed away on 15 February 1869. He could not attain fame during his lifetime and became famous after his death.

Literary career

Ghalib started composing poetry at the age of 11. His first language was Urdu, but Persian and Turkish were also spoken at home. He received an education in Persian and Arabic at a young age. During Ghalib's period, the words "Hindi" and Urdu" were synonyms (see Hindi–Urdu controversy). Ghalib wrote in Perso-Arabic script which is used to write modern Urdu, but often called his language "Hindi"; one of his works was titled Ode-e-Hindi ("Perfume of Hindi").

When Ghalib was in his early teens, a newly converted Muslim tourist from Iran (Abdus Samad, originally named Hormuzd, a Zoroastrian) came to Agra.[according to whom?] He stayed at Ghalib's home for two years and taught him Persian, Arabic, philosophy, and logic.

Although Ghalib valued Persian over Urdu, his fame rests on his writings in Urdu. Numerous commentaries on Ghalib's ghazal compilations have been written by Urdu scholars. The first such elucidation or Sharh was written by Ali Haider Nazm Tabatabai of Hyderabad during the rule of the last Nizam of Hyderabad. Before Ghalib, the ghazal was primarily an expression of anguished love; but Ghalib expressed philosophy, the travails and mysteries of life and wrote ghazals on many other subjects, vastly expanding the scope of the ghazal.

In keeping with the conventions of the classical ghazal, in most of Ghalib's verses, the identity and the gender of the beloved is indeterminate. The

critic/poet/writer Shamsur Rahman Faruqi explains[16] that the convention of having the "idea" of a lover or beloved instead of an actual lover/beloved freed the poet-protagonist-lover from the demands of realism. Love poetry in Urdu from the last quarter of the seventeenth century onwards consists mostly of "poems about love" and not "love poems" in the Western sense of the term.

The first complete English translation of Ghalib's ghazals was *Love Sonnets of Ghalib*, written by Sarfaraz K. Niazi and published by Rupa & Co in India and Ferozsons in Pakistan. It contains complete Roman transliteration, explication and an extensive lexicon.

Poetry in Persian

"Kulliyat-e-Ghalib Farsi", an anthology of Persian poetry of well-known Urdu poet Mirza Asadullal Khan Ghalib first released at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) and later released at Tehran by Ambassadors of India and Pakistan jointly at a function sponsored by Iranian Ministry of Arts and Culture in Tehran on 20 September 2010. The collection contains 11,337 verses of Ghalib, was compiled by Dr. Syed Taqi Abidi.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Abidi said that the study of Ghalib would be incomplete without his Persian poetry. "Although Ghalib had earned his reputation in Urdu literature, the poet of Mughal era was more inclined towards Persian and produced high-order poetry in that language. At the literary "ru-ba-ru session" (English: Face to Face Sitting, Urdu: 'رو برو') organized by the Haryana Urdu Academy, where Dr. Abidi offered an analytical study of the works of legendary poet Mirza Ghalib, both in Persian as well as Urdu, he informs that Ghalib wrote 1,792 couplets in Urdu by the year 1865 as against the 11,340 in Persian. He also opined that Ghalib was a visionary, a poet of humanism whose works are popular even after three centuries.