



ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ALLAMAH SHIBLI'S PERSIAN POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Allamah Shibli Nomani (1857-1914 A.D) was one of the greatest luminaries who glittered on the literary firmament of Urdu literature as well as Persian literature. He is an educational thinker, author, orator, Arabic scholar, Persian poet and critic of orientalis. Not only his contribution is on Urdu and Arabic languages, but he left his work on Persian language also. Moreover, he taught Persian and Arabic languages at Aligarh (M.A.O college) for sixteen years. He played an important role to write numerous articles and poetries on this language. 'Shi'r al-'Ajam', a history of Persian poetry is his famous book written in five volumes. Once Maulana Hasrat Mohani quoted that if Shibli had devoted full attention to Persian poetry then it would have outshone all other famous Persian poets.

KEYWORDS : Islamic Indian Scholar, Allamah Shibli Nomani, His contribution on Persian poetry.

It will be the most realistic if the poetry of Allamah Shibli is viewed in the mirror of the politics and culture of his time because the elements responsible for the making of the mind of Shibli are sourced from that and until these aspects are not known, it will be almost impossible to ascertain the appreciation of his literary feats as well as his position in the cultural heritage of the community. Effort has been made in this article to discover the points as to who influenced Shibli and whom Shibli influenced.

Allamah Shibli possessed a multi-faceted personality and extraordinary abilities. In his poetry and other works are found novelty, freedom of opinion and profundity of thoughts. He was a scholar of religious knowledge and limitlessly acquainted with modern opinion and thoughts. He was in the company of both the old as well as the modern scholars. He was an enquirer and an investigator, a litterateur, poet, pose, writer, speaker, thinker, historian, reformer and a politician. He would consider that the development of culture is a fundamental principle of history but by development, he did not mean that every step of history, which was taken towards future from the present time, would be indispensably right and correct or that of culture would get progressively better with its advancement. His views of development is confined to the principle of continuity only because he believes that the foundation stone of the view of history is based upon some natural laws of right and good society. The more these laws are worked and practiced upon the righter, better and stronger the culture will be. Hence, virtuousness and righteousness are possible even in past as they are in the present and the future. His greatest feat is that he cast as a philosophical look over human history especially the Islamic history. He was not only a poet and a historian but he was the founder of a specific philosophy of history and the East and the West has the position of a decisive and definitive scholarly law for the principle of the history.

Communal consciousness is not natural or born; rather it is acquired and gained through personal efforts. No decision can be taken regarding the consciousness of a poet with the help of the change prone action of such a consciousness albeit. But, it is possible to carry out a historian and material analysis of this changing consciousness and to throw light upon the contradictory aspects of the views of the poet. For Shibli, complication of history is the basic feeling of man because the treasure of history is the contributing factor behind the progress and the lives of communities. History alone can keep alive the communal zeal and enthusiasm and if there is no history, there is no existence of a community¹. Sir Syed says that history should not only be a description of incidents, but the cause and the factors of the incidents should be discussed also and that it should be inclusive of the social and culture details and that it should also have the accounts of scholarly and intellectual progressive². The history writing of Shibli also have the same principle albeit the philosophy of history of Shibli is more perfect and progressive compared to that of Sir Syed. He believes that besides being an account of the incidents history is a tale of human culture also. Hence, in order to make history according to the tale

and learning of present day realities, he considers criticism and use of intellectual principle indispensable. By virtue of it, a stormy sea of historical incidents and cultural parts is turbulently present in his poetry, which is evidence of his profound study, critical utmost efforts and pure minded and zealous industry. Since he had interest in the great and glorious tale of the brilliant past of the Islam, so he looks at the conspicuous extracts and parts of history and to bring forward those very parts and works through his poetry was his principle objective. He says:

جمع اسلام که صیتش به دیار افتاد است
حالیبا با غم و دودش سروکار افتاد است
ان که در معرکه تاج از سر قیصر به ربوود
دست و بازوش به یکبار از کار افتاد است
ان که صد قلعه رونین به یکی حمله گشود
حالیبا از همه سو خود به حصار افتاد است³

It also makes one know as to what extent he was acquainted with the intellectual and scholarly taste, learning and demands of the modern period and greatly a feeling he had of the necessity of presenting old thing into modern colours. He says:

حل این مشکل اگر خوابی از ندوه بخواه او گشاید گرپی را که بکار افتاد است
حمکت و شرع در این جابم امیخته نمک و باده این میکند یار افتاد است
وریه پرسی که در این کارچه تندبیر دین و دنیا بهم امیز که اکسیر بود⁴

He was deeply impressed by the stories of the ancestors, their soldiery, their disposition and habits and their pride etc. and those very incidents produced force and power in his individuality and poetry, which was conspicuous by its absence in the works of his contemporaries. He says:

انکه در انجمن فضل نمی داشت بهمال
هینت و هندسه رایایم از وگشت بلند
منطق و فلسفه راداد ه ماو زینب و طراز
نظم او بنگه سخن از سحر مگوی نژاد بین و دیگر قصه مخوان از اعجاز

He has also the feeling of the change in circumstances but he does not fall silent having been flabbergasted, rather he says:

نگ باشد که پیش شه و درویش شریم همت انست که خود چاره گر خویش شویم
چاره ان نیست که بر رسم کهن طرح نهی مکتب و مدرسه بادر همه اطراف و بلاد
تاچه سوادت دیدان شیوه تعلیم قدیم که به رویت در دزقی نتواست گشود
بتوانی که خوداز گوشه برای وانگه عرص اسلام کنی دریمه امصار و بلاد⁵

According to Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, the history of the poetry of Allamah Shibli is very old. In the beginning, he would say poetic lines in Persian. The poems and the eulogies that he wrote in the beginning itself fired up the man of teste and interest. Maulana Shibli is doubtlessly credited with laying the foundation of new poetry in Persian poetry and filled it up with so much power of thought, nationalist feelings and religious sentiments that it became the water of life for the communal life of the Muslims instead of merely being the intoxication cause by the flavor of the language and the correctness of the idioms as it had been till then⁶.

In 1885, it was his mathnavi "Subeh Umid" which was first published in which was presented the tale of the defeat and deterioration of the Muslims and the pleasant picture of Aligarh educational

movements. It is surprising that Maulana omitted this mathnavi from his collected work but the reality is that from the standard of the poetic beauty, this mathnavi is worthy of praise. Since 1878 till 1887, the other occupation of Maulana was poetry. Besides teaching, Maulana would spend most of his time in the company of those who were interested in saying and writing poetic lines. These men included Mufti Sadruddin Azurdah, Maulana Faizul Hasan and Maulana Muhammad Farooq. In this period, Maulana Shibli would generally write Persian ghazals and eulogies. On 27th of March 1884, he requested his mentor, Maulana Muhammad Farooq, to kindly read proof of his Persian of his Persian writings, as they were to go the press for printing. In a letter of the same date, he let him know about his having written a Persian Wasokht, which, he said was worthy of being seen and which he would himself recite to him. In a letter dated 24th of April 1884, he wrote that the said Persian wasokht was based upon fifteen (50) couplets containing forty five (45) poetic lines⁷.

Gradually, poetic lines and writings of Maulana began to be discussed far and wide. During these days in April 1884, he wrote a ghazal in response to a ghazal of Ali Hazin. Allamah Shibli lived under such an environment in Aligarh as he had new thoughts, new feelings and emotions, and new revolutions of modern period everywhere around him in the magic of these influences and emotions, truth and the falsehood were blended in the manner that extraordinary wisdom was demanded to separate them and Maulana was bestowed upon such wisdom. According to Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, "Maulana Shibli showed instant readiness to accept some useful influences of Aligarh the first of them being the sensitivity to the destruction and the pains of the community. His colourful songs which had till then been replete with the fictional tales of beauty and love had then began to shed blood in love for the community. The feeling, as to what the Muslims were and what they had become now became the subject of his poems for the community. The Muslim festival of Eid, which fell in 1883 made him, shed tears of blood. He wrote a eulogy entitled "Eidiyah" in which he shed tears over the pains of the community after describing the happiness of the coming of Eid he shed, some drop of these tears are as follows:

حیف کین شور و طرب یک دو نفس نماند چه کند عید بردی که بود صبر گداز
جمع اسلام چو باشد برف تیر بلا خود چو کج باخت به ایشان فلک عربده ساز
فوق نبود بحقیقت ز محرم تا عید اه از فتنه گری بای سپهر کج باز
خود همان جمع که می داشت بهم تیغ و قلم خود همان قوم که بوده است بر پایه فراز
اینک ان قوم بحالیست که نتوان گفتن خود به بین تاچه انجام ر سید ان آغاز
شرح این حادثه از شبلی دل خسته مخواه شب بود کوته و افسانه دراز است دراز⁸

Shibli wanted to bring before the people the glorious events and important feats of Islamic knowledge and arts and of Islamic history and culture so that the historical, cultural and scholarly greatness of Islam might recreate freshness and zeal in the saddened hearts of the community as well as the enemies might come to know the poverty of the objections⁹.

What is meant to say is that Shibli limitlessly succeeded in his objective and he greatly influenced and impressed the group of the people educated in the modern way through his poetry and writing. Hence, Shibli himself writes, "I take pride in the fact that I also played part in the creation of this new life and it was my fate to instigate this religious zeal and passion¹⁰". Incidents corroborating Shibli's love for politics make it clear that though politics was never the subject of his writing yet he was always a lover of politics because in reality it was part of the vastness of his poetry meaning that it was the natural demand of the Islamic culture, Islamic history and Islamic knowledge and the arts for which he had excessive love. It was so because when he saw that:

بزم رادید که از نغمه دوشینه تپی است است شبلی ان زمزمه را باز ز آغاز گرفت¹¹

One comes to know that he also held the view that the past could not declare to be rightful of its survival why because of its being past, rather the poetry could gain the right of becoming the part of the cultural development only by virtue of throwing light upon the cultural and communal history and by being a mirror reflecting the

human freedom of every age and the struggle making conspicuous the desire for progress. The poetry, which does not present the picture of the pivotal struggle of its time, has neither the historical importance nor the literary one. Only by passing successfully through such a touchstone, it can become the lesson teaching treasure for the past, present and future. When we examine the poetry of Shibli in the light of the above mentioned incidents and the points then according to Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, we reach the conclusion for thirty two (32) years Shibli kept these glorious ideas alive through the raciness of his pen and warm through the fire of his soul.

سالها گوش جهان زمزمه را خوابد بود زین نوابا که دراین گنبد گردون زده است¹²

There is no gain saying the fact that the communal leaning of a poet pin-points his philosophy of his life but it is not sufficient to see as to which community or section of society a poet is associated with. Rather, it should be cared to know as to how he has expanded his intellectual consciousness in understanding the conflict and struggle of life and what has been attitude in regards with understanding the contemporary problems. It is an imperative because the efforts for solving these problems, representativeness of the interests of the society and the struggle for its survival are what ascertain the level of communal consciousness. According to Prof. Mohammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, "Maulana Shibli was a good thinking poet of the Persian language. While on the one hand he has poeticized a historical incident, he has on the problem of the period to that particular incident. His poems for the community are the representative of his political consciousness and contemporary knowledge¹³.

In short, the poetry of Allamah Shibli bears the following characteristics and points:

- Shibli is impressed much by the ordinary and particular incidents of a given period. He reduces historical realities and consequences from those incidents and lives to see the incidents in the light of religious faith and belief. In his view, the past period of Islamic culture was the best period of human culture. He believes that if even in future, human culture wishes to reach the lofty stages of progress, it will then have to have recourse to the past.
- The conspicuous characteristics of the writings of Maulana Shibli are the powerful and zealous description which are the conspicuous products of his perfect feelings and feelings for greatness which he sometimes expresses in a speaker's style, sometimes in the style of a religious discourse while at time in the style of a madrasah teacher and at time in a philosophical manner. He was fully aware of the illiteracy and wrong tastes and learnings of his time, which we can call the result of his introspection and perfect feelings and perhaps it is because of such knowledge that great effects and purity are found in his poetry. Besides, internal meaning, his works also betray manifest logical style and correct as well as the good specimen of construction from the standards of intellectual laws. These very scholarly and logical elements have rendered his poetry are inspiring and serious.
- The second characteristics of the poetic lines of Maulana Shibli are miracle and brevity. The taste and zeal found in his poetic line are greatly due to these very miracle and brevity and he adopt various methods to produce such state and splendence in his writing the most important among them being the uses of simile and metaphors but even in the employment of them, he is the lover of only those pictures and meaning in which are found the lively, intense, abundant and extreme condition of life. According to Syed Abdullah, "Shibli has presented the metaphors and the similes in such a matter as makes it clear that he views of, both of these as something separate and distinct from the description meaning that he considers these as something additional and extend beauty of the writing"¹⁴
- At places in the works of Shibli is found a conspicuous from the

particular influence of the specific scholarly theories and the thoughts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Besides these, in it are also found same leanings of the educated section of the Muslim.

- Most of his poetic pin-point honour for life, self-respect, freedom and truthfulness. These qualities were demanded by the period. One knows by his poetic lines that he wanted to give the messages of revolution, freedom and independence through his poetry.
- Maulana Shibli presents the colourful methods of the Persian Language is extremely beautiful and praiseworthy manner which increases the beauty and fascination of his poetic lines. According to Syed Abdullah, "Shibli mutually inter relates the colourful methods of the Persian Language in extremely beautiful style which produces strength and resplendence in his poetic lines. It is characteristic of his poetic line that they have mostly the elements that are specific to ghazals. His verses let one know that he had been in any other period and environment; he would have been another ghalib or Naziri. The elements of symbolism, miracle and brevity are most found in his verses¹⁵.
- His method bears resemblance to the songs of the modern singers. In these, there we found talks of wine and youth, spring and seasons, intoxication and loss of self-awareness and embellishment and beauty.
- His verses are generally plain but despite plainness, beauty is found in them, which phonetically render them a unique collection of the beauty of the effects and teste. Spontaneity is also found in his verses which itself produces a specific kind of lyricism and phonetic environment because of the need and the demand of the meaning and the subject. It is there that the people in general do not like plain writings but according to Allamah Shibli himself, "the wise men of the spiritual qualities want that the style of life is in reality as difficult and worthy of honour as it is plain and simple"¹⁶.
- In the expression of the zealous thoughts, a specific kind of music is produced in his verses which in turn produces a pleasant sound in the tumultuous waves of the verses and different type of sounds keep rising in the poetic lines successively produce intensity of feelings in the poetic lines.
- One of the characteristics of the verses of Shibli is that they have plain and spontaneous thoughts. Whatever subject he wishes to express he does so in an effortless and spontaneous manner. According to Syed Abdullah, "one of the qualities of his style of description is spontaneity. His style of narration is natural and spontaneous. His verses are cast in beautiful moulds. Presentation is such as is completely devoid of artificiality and formal preparation. Improper and useless preparation will not be found in his verse perhaps even by attempts and yet the beauty and uniqueness of the same lie in the fact that despite perfect effortlessness and spontaneity in the same, there are found a specific style of imagination and specific glory in them. Beautification by Shibli is devoid of defects"¹⁷.

One comes to know through the verses of Shibli that he would not consider poetry and art the representation of nature, rather for him, the principle objective of lofty poetry and art in that bring about the nature and that paint the lofty, exemplary and standard forms of beauty also.

In the historical view of Shibli, the contention has got exceedingly important that the effect of physical geography play important role in the ups and downs of human history. Hence, in his poetry the influences of atmosphere have been considered extremely effective for the incidents and the conditions. His imagery is better than his narrative. At the time of the portrayal of the scenes of nature, his mind appears comparatively of ease. According to Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, "Shibli would recite his poems in extremely fascinating and effective style. A Persian eulogy based upon the condition of his journey to Constantinople is include in both his

travelogue and his collected works which makes us know that his pleasant taste for the scenes had created a specific condition in the heart of Shibli¹⁸. At one place criticizing the Anglophiles among the Muslims, he says that "the Muslims have not only borrowed the style of society from the Englishmen but Anglophibia has dominated their minds also to the extent that if before them:

نکته شرع به افسانه برابر به نبی	یورب ارگب زند ان نیز مسلم باشد ¹⁹
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As giving messages have yet importance in his works, likewise he is always on the lookout for a specific moral spirits in poetry, which should not only contribute to the making of the collective man but should cause rise of the lofty human values and superiority of man also. According to Syed Abdullah, "for Shibli, progress and goodness remain alive. Even after the death of the races and the communities, progress and goodness keep. Even after races and the communities have died progress of the past be fully taken advantage for the construction of the future"²⁰.

In short, keeping in view the above-mentioned causes and factors, leaning which Shibli encouraged were according to Syed Abdullah, "reform of the internal vices of the scholars, assertion of freedom and courage to speak the truth before the rulers and the kings importance of the study of philosophy and other disciplines of Ijtihad and freedom of thoughts, scholarly services of Europe and prejudices of European scholars against the Muslim etc"²¹.

But during his last days, the influence of Hafiz had got highly conspicuous over the Persian ghazals of Shibli because of which critics had written that Sufism was overwhelming the mind of Shibli and he began to seek the answer of who was the seller of wine of reality. But this was not reality. Despite it was a fact that he had got rid of the intoxication of philosophy and wisdom and he had begun to say that:

دو دل بودن دراین ره سخت تر عیب است سالک را
خجل بستم ز کفر خود که دارد بوی ایمان به
ساعر زند گیم حیف که جز درد نداشت
جز بمین جرعه اخر که به پایان زده ام²²

In short, the poetic taste and inquisitiveness of Shibli are extremely solid and perfect political, collective religious, aesthetic and embellishing aspects of his poetic lines are the reflections of his disposition and in reality, the poetry and the personality of Shibli are such as if it said that:

ای بسا شاعر که بعد از مرگ
زاد چشم خود پر بست و چشم ما گشاد

Will then neither be an exaggeration nor any improper thing.

Really, no part of his inventive will be to be left out after centuries. What can be evidence of the importance of the works of Shibli in the present age? Hence, it will not be wrong at all to say:

روشنم سد ز نوا سنجی شبلی کا امروز بند را نیز کمی بست و صفا بانی بست²³

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