

Prominent Khowar poets — IV

By Sher Nawaz Naseem

THE LATE Mirza Firdous Firdousi was born in Jughoor, Chitral, in 1885 and received his primary education from a local religious institution before proceeding to Peshawar to study Persian there. His practical life began with humanitarian service when he was appointed as a vaccinator in Civil Hospital, Chitral. It did not last very long because his ultimate mission was not to immunise the body but to heal up the wounds of the mind and to give relief to the soul of the people. However, this would not have been possible for him without his poetic talent.

He served as a courtier of the Nawabs of Dir, Jehanzeb-Khan, Shah Jehan and the Prince of Drasun, Chitral, between 1918 and 1949. He returned to Drosh, Chitral, and formed a close association with Shahzada Hisamul Mulk, the then prominent literary figure of Chitral. He stayed there till 1964 when he left for Peshawar. After a protracted illness, Mirza Firdous died in October 1973 and was buried there.

Mirza Firdous began his writings at a time when Persian was declining in influence and Kohwar appeared to attract the people as a means of expression both in poetry and prose form. He had a wide vocabulary at his command to design his poetry with beauty and charm.

Most of his *ghazals* and *nazams* are filled with words derived from Persian, reflecting the age in which this language dominated the cultural and intellectual aspects of the life of the people. The following every first line is in Persian and the second is in Kohwar:

زلف پیچ و تاب تو، دام گلگیر من —
مرد بوکی، شجر غیر توچی، پھور سے قصص لڑکی ہوئی

"Your curly and entangled tresses are like a trap in which my throat is looking to be entrapped."

بہتر است فرزند کسی، صالح از ارجمند
اڑی شرم غوث یکسان، جم ای طرار لڑکی ہوئی

"The son having trust, good conduct and a refined character is a blessing (from God). An intelligent daughter is far better than a son who is dull and nothing to work."

میں نام در کون تو، تو کہاں ہیں بہ جستجوی تو
نوا چشم کیری کیری، مہ جو بیخ شکر کی ہوئی

"(O, my beloved), where you are? I am weeping and looking for you. (If this sorry state of affairs will continue) my eyes will lose their sight."

When Sardar Hizbullah Khan, the then Political Agent of Chitral, held a Kohwar *mushaira* in 1963, Mirza, for the first time, recited his poems at the gathering. He wrote *ghazals* and songs for the Kohwar programme and extended his full support to Jamhoor-e-Islam Kohwar.

The chief quality of his poetry is that every line of his *ghazals* captures the whole picture of his life and strives to explain it in words. He underwent great distress and despair. Adversity in his life led him to write the following lines:

دنیو شرنیو کا پریشانی، تو تو پائشس پشکوستان تہ نکی
برونی اشش کا لہ بہجونی، بہچکو نشان تہ نکی

"How could you see happiness in this world because before you, many had met with the same fate. In this world every one had to die and there is no sign of life for you either."

Rightly a wise man has said "The chamber of sorrow is the house of God," and "The corn is cleaned with the wind while the soul with adversity." Mirza Firdous experienced a life full of adversity and his heart was purified and his poems were released from the base of evil thoughts. He adopted a didactic tone and preached of love and morality. He writes:

خو کی جم کورینا داجم خوںے ہر بندو دوست
کی خوںے تہ شوم کی او شرفی کہے خار تو دشمنان تہ نکی

"If you are excellent in your dealing with the people, you befriend — everyone, and if you treat them with harshness you could invite hostile elements."

He lamented how love, trust, confidence and affection were disappearing from the heart of the people. According to him sincerity, honour, respect and the spirit of goodwill had lost their credibility.

شکسان یار دوندار، ایسان اغیار ہستے درخ
اشش کوسار ہمدون، کور کیر گسان تہ نکی

"When you are looking for loyal and faithful people you find them in reverse, and do not think of trust and promise because there is none to abide by them."

Mirza Firdous decorated and beautified his poems and writings with similes and metaphors. His style is simple but he never hesitated to use Persian and Urdu words whenever and wherever he deemed it necessary. His correct manner of expression and proper use of language have given a fine colour to his poems. His readers can enjoy his poems without feeling a burden on the mind.

تو عتیق بینا جام + تو یاقوت رومانی جام
تہ دوری کی مشکک مہرور + تہ ہست الماس نورانی جام
مالو خاؤن اشش بیار + تازہ تھمدست تہ چانی جام

"(O, my beloved), you are a high value because you are a beautiful ruby and Yemenite cornelian.

"You are looking to have musk scented and your hands are beautiful like pearl.

"The wealthy people are not feeling well (and usually are sleepless), but do not mind to be poor with good health and free from worries."

A collection of his poems is presently being printed. But alas, Firdous is not with us to see the product of his hard labour, for which he worked day and



Mirza Firdous Firdousi

night untiringly. His collection in printed form perhaps will give eternal rest to his soul. It is to be hoped that those reading his poems (when available) will be enab-

led to explore the world in which he appeared, to grapple with adversity and wrestle with the hardships of life through his mental and physical force.