

Prominent Kohwar poets — V

Ustad Amir Gul Amir

By Sher Nawaz Naseem

The art to play sitar, the talent to create poems and the voice to produce music — these three elements combined into one have constituted the charming, magnetic and well-known personality, Amir Gul Amir. Amir means head and Gul means flower, thus "the head of the flower." Amir Gul has a great affection for flowers, their beauty and colour. According to him, it was flowers that changed the direction of his life and brought him into a world in which he, as a noted artiste has become a shining star. He even uses flowers as a plume to decorate his cap.

Recording his impressions of how he began writing poems and songs. Amir Gul says that in 1936, when he was coming home from his office, he saw a flower on the way which stirred his heart suddenly and thus he developed his love for them. Flowers and lover are the main features of his poems, without which his heart would be barren and no seed of affection could flourish. He does not differentiate between flowers and his beloved. To him both are interrelated and cannot be separated. The following line indicates how he express the relation between his beloved and a flower:

فامیر بر گل کی گویا ہے سرودن نام گل کی گویا ہے نام گل

"In Persian Gul means flower and my beloved too has the same name and I am the head of that flower."

He was born in 1922, in the village of Oveer. He first settled at Morder village, and then migrated to Chitral proper, where he is now permanently residing. He eventually started writing poems and singing songs. He works with the same spirit to amuse his readers and to provide enjoyment for his listeners in spite of his age of 65. As a soldier of the British army, in the Second World War, he fought for the Allies at the battlefronts in Burma, Maldeve, Malaya and Sri Lanka. A handsome youth, he attracted a Christian lady and married her, but she died after three years of marriage. Amir Gul has married seven women and from the last one has had children.

People throughout Chitral and other parts of country, known him not as a poet but as a gifted singer. He is called the "Nightingale of Chitral" because of his high artistic performance. In his youth he was a good dancer. In musical gatherings, his admirers anxiously waited for his quick response to the thrilling music. Sometimes he sprang out in surprise and his leaping feet led to thunderous applause. Once he occupied the floor, it was not possible to stop him until the flute and sitar players were exhausted. He has written poems and national songs and has recorded it in his own voice for the Kohwar programme of Radio Paksitan Peshawar.

Amir gul has a high regard for his beloved. He compares his beloved with a flower and finds her superior to all things. To him life has no meaning without the presence of his beloved, and it is only she who can sustain him as a living being. He says:

میرا دل گلشن کو سمیٹ گیا میری ہی پریتام
شکی نام عشق گویا ہستی کہ باخا فریتام
نہاتے دربر پریتام، نہ ہاتے رنگ لیتام

"I visited many gardens and deserts and found countless flowers, but I failed to trace my own flower, its colour and fragrance, in any garden."

قطع ہوئے دنیا ارض، تہ سار غیر صالحی
زولا اسم بیچی گومان، ازندگیہ حسابی
ہاے زندگی کیر حاجت تہ سرم کی وصالی

"All my ambitions, without you, are cut off from the rest of the world. I look alive but am without soul and out of your company, life (to me) is nothing."

He fell in love once but circumstances were not favourable for him. His desires were left unfulfilled and the journey towards his destination met with failure. The repeated negligence of his beloved inflicted injuries on his heart but he was not unhappy with this and took pleasure from the bleeding wounds. To express his feelings in poems and songs is the only way to heal these wounds. He writes:

ای ویگوشن او مکارہ تاملہ شپہ چہ شہیر
اے ظالم کلابتی لاکھم سوتان بازار آدا
عشو جنون گشتی، ز دوفن آغا زرا آدا
اچھو پلو طاہر تم، اگیورین غلزا آدا
حسنو جادو سر سورا ہاروش کارگر چہ شہیر
اشو گویا ز ہم مسدا رو سارا آدا

"My body is filled with a smokeless fire. O, oppressor (beloved) how long I will keep this (fire) in my heart. I developed love like a mad person without considering its consequences. While searching my flower (beloved) I came across with the thorn. The magic of beauty has influenced me to such an extent that I am playing according to the tune of a juggler."

Amir Gul Amir represented a cultural delegation from Chitral to attend the Lok Virsa (Folk Heritage) Mela held in Islamabad in April this year. He demonstrated well his artistic skill and was awarded the fourth position in Pakistan. He was also invited by Radio Pakistan and Pakistan Television Corporation after his return to Peshawar, where he performed Chitrali music and was much appreciated.

