

Kohwar poets: Amin-ur-Rehman Chughtai

By Sher Nawaz Naseem

ONE OF THE CRITICS of English poetry has said about John Milton that "Milton writes for Milton." This is truly applied to Amin-ur-Rehman Chughtai in Kohwar poetry because of what he calls his *mushkilpasandi*, derived from the style of the great Urdu poet, Mirza Assadullah Khan Ghalib. Amin-ur-Rehman, at an early stage of his college life, studied the work of Ghalib, and both his Urdu and Kohwar poems reflect the influence of this renowned poet of the sub-continent. Sometimes Amin uses simple words and sometimes his poems carry words from Urdu and Persian to fashion his poems with poetic and scholastic colour. As a poet, his observation is objective, his experience rich, his thinking and imagination deep, leading him to produce poems which are not easily understood by the common reader.

There is no doubt readers enjoy his poems while reading but to reach to the base of the meaning is beyond their approach. He advocates to accommodating and adjusting words other than Kohwar words to develop the language. According to him no language can escape from the influence of other languages and changing conditions.

Amin-ur-Rehman was born at Tehsil Drosh, Chitral, in 1946. His father, Khalil-ur-Rehman, was one of the associates of the administration of the old Chitral state.

He traces his family back to the great Mughal ruler, Zaheer-ud-Din Babar, and belongs to the Sangeen Ali caste, which played an important role in a shadowed political situation during the period of *Raisa* between 1320 and 1595. In 1963, he passed his matriculation examination from a local school and took admission in Government College and Islamia College, Peshawar, after proceeding there.

Literary activities in these institutions unearthed his hidden potential and he began to write poems in Urdu.

However, his association with the late Urdu poet, Sharar Nughmani, and the famous progressive poet, Ahmad Faraz, remodelled his mind and put his poetic talent on a way completely different from his contemporaries. In his poem "Saqi-Nama" Amin says:

تقاضائے خود آگاہی بہت دشوار ہے ساقی
نگاہِ مست کے صدقے بڑا ہوشیار ہے ساقی
دل ہو غمزہ تو گلشن ہستی بھی زندان ہے
دل خوش ہو تو رک دنیا تبسم زار ہے ساقی

During the last stage of his studies, health did not favour him. He cut short his education and joined the teaching pro-



Amin-ur-Rehman Chughtai

feSSION after returning to Chitral. This area locked within high mountains, kept him away from literary gatherings and his live spirit appeared to be dimming with the passage of time. But nature was there with its full vigour to lead him back to the world of inspiration. In the meantime, *Jamhoor-e-Islam Kohwar*, the monthly journal in the Chitrali language, published by the then Border Publicity Organisation, began its publication from Peshawar. His poems published in this journal, gave him a tremendous reputation. As a sensitive poet, he never spared time to record the unhappy events in human life. Unlike progressive poets he developed a love of his motherland and began to sing the following song:

دستور زندگی ٹھیکنگالی دی ضم نایوران
زورِ خالی نہ کاس دور زندگی حرام نایوران
یورویسے مسس مہر خوش استری مہر غیبی عزیز
چھوٹی وطنو نمک سفان ساری حجاب نایوران
زومالین یور تو رکبو قدر تو برسی ہا سیران
ڈانڈاوشن پیوران پتہ کیچہ ہر ای شام نایوران

"In my native land even the slopes look like a plain. Let me walk on this thorny land because without it life carries no meaning.

"I like the stars, the moon and the sun very much; but my love for the soil has superiority over them."

"Nature has burst into flower with the rising of the sun and the evening of the land has close similarities with the scattered tresses of the beloved."

As a poet Amin-ur-Rehman has presented nature in many ways. All his poetic works are loaded with natural objects. Being a literary artist, he released Kohwar poetry from the fetters of traditional poetry and weeded out old-fashioned and outmoded elements, giving a new dimension to it while maintaining its local colour. While praising his lassie he has sought the help of natural elements. In one of his *ghazals* he records:

جلوہ گورویا سنتے بنون کرینے ہر دیان تانتے
اور سے مسرور شہتیر چھینے پردانان تانتے
ٹیوکی دوری استری، روشنی، دور دانہ نغمہ
ہامت کیا غدونی لاکھونیاں تہ ہی نامان تانتے

جنی تہ پرستی رہی و کیر قیامت یارب
میر تدری زرا پختہ کپال، مال کوئی حوران تانتے

کور سے زندگی ہشتان مہر مٹے گران تانتے
بر چھوٹے ہزار رنگ، پردہ کوزو حسان تانتے

"Display your beauty and attract the heart of the people. Let the moths turn towards you, snatching the light of the moon.

"The bud, the scent, the stars, the light, the pearl and the songs are thy names and why these have been given to others.

"Your appearance in Paradise will lead to hurt and humiliation of the inhabitants and they will condemn themselves for their low-scale beauty.

"Don't take life to be difficult and let it proceed as usual. Let it blossom into flower in thousands of colours and let the thorn guard it."

Amin, identifying himself with poetry through natural objects, has come close to the creator of this universe. He loves Him and His creatures. He wishes to become a source of relief to those with whom he has a social relationship. He asks His blessings and guidance in this way:

رہ تو منجران بیہ شہرہ مہر منار کو
مجتویہ دغار، مہر چنار کو

"Let me be a minaret in a city where people have lost their way. Let me cast a shadow in the (burning) field of love."

Ethnocentrism is a human weakness and everyone loves his own traditions and way of life. Amin too has a great love for his local culture and sustains himself from it. He writes:

حیام اخلاقا حجاب تقییر امہر چتر ار کو
نور خالا ذوالیہ مہر کھوار کو

"Let me have good character as the people of Chitral have; let my conversation be soft and tasteful like Kohwar."

Recording his impression about *Azad Nazam* he says that it is like an abstract art. To him, it is a way, to run away from the field of poetry. He considers similes and metaphors as the basic elements without which poetry is like a flower free from the bondage of beauty and from the clutches of fragrance.