**A Poet of Finer Sensibilities**

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After Faiz, Amjad Islam Amjad was one of the best poets who truly counted with the people; was the most loved poet, both by the connoisseurs as well as by the common people alike. As an intellectual of very wider sympathies and with a socialist-realist bent, he had gained great popularity, and in his “Mushairas,” his turn was keenly awaited. He appeared last of all and recited his lines. Invariably, he drew thumping applause from his listeners and stole the limelight of the show.

Beginning his career as an educationist, he taught Urdu in Lahore’s distinguished educational institutions to graduate and post-graduate students and thereafter worked as a Director at Pakistan Television Centre Lahore from 1975-79. In 1997, he was appointed as the Director General of the Urdu Science Board. In his later postings, he served as the Project Director of the Children’s Library Complex.

He was essentially a romantic poet of a very high order, and most of his poems reveal his heartbroken feelings for his lover. I became enamoured of him as a poet of great worth when I heard him in a “Mushaira” in which he recited his famous poem written in blank verse but with a fascinating internal rhythm, “tumhain mujh se Mohabbat hae.” In this poem, his theme was that love is not a silent and subjective emotion, and unless love displays its strength and exuberance in a very practical way, and shows its pulsating urge for the loved one, it remains short of being a genuine emotion. Its actual physical manifestation by letting the loved one know its potentially overweening force is extremely essential. True love, according to the poet, is deeper than the deepest sea; and more stable than the mountains; hence, it should firmly re-affirm itself again and again. Thus, the poet’s incisive understanding of true love’s craving is a perennial psychological reality, which only a poet of the genius of Amjad Islam Amjad could understand and display. Instead of citing many other of his poems, I have cited only this poem at length to only show Amjad’s unique understanding of human nature, which is the hallmark of all the rest of his poetry. This, he achieved, through the careful use of similes, metaphors and symbols and became the representative voice of his age. One of his admirers remarked, “He is a poet whose lines tug at the hearts of those who have either fallen in or out of love. Few modern-day poets have captured the feelings of lovelorn souls the way Amjad Islam Amjad has.” His work is brilliant and towers well above his fellow poets.

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Amjad Islam Amjad Amjad was not only a poet of higher sensitivities but also a prodigious writer of columns, translations, criticism and essays. But his most distinguished talent appeared as an outstanding playwright for Pakistan TV. His TV dramas of the ’70s and ’80s won him international recognition. His most famous dramas were Waris, Dehleez, Samandar, Raat, Waqt and Apnay Loug which were televised by PTV and won acclaim from all Urdu-knowing people around the world. He wrote his first drama, “Pehla Khel,” in 1973. His famous play Waris became a catch-word and kept TV viewers spellbound for a long time. Due to Amjad’s incisive knowledge of the feudal life in his country, he introduced their dogfights, and their mutual clashes peppered with exceptional dialogue peculiar to that culture, which made Waris the greatest-ever TV production from Pakistan.

Amjad won the love and admiration of his friends and admirers for his exquisite and refreshing views about people, customs, language and culture whenever he appeared in talk shows on TV. He had travelled extensively in most countries of the world and had good knowledge of their people and culture. Sometimes in a year, he visited many countries where he was invited to attend ‘Mushairas’ which journeys he undertook with great relish and became a popular poet in the outside world.

He was heard and respected for the clarity of his views which were often broadcast on TV. In one of his TV interviews, he held that Urdu as a spoken language will prosper in the world in future and also anticipated that it might become a very popular language in the world. In his view, even at present it was among the top three spoken languages after Chinese and English. Spanish came at No.4. He was happy with the strides Urdu was making in this global expansion but ruefully held that its script is in danger of being forgotten altogether. Due to the expansion of electronic media and electronic equipment, the people who resort to SMS, smartphones, and the Internet, most people chat with each other using the Roman script instead of the normal Urdu format. Amjad has quoted the famous Urdu fiction writer Ismat Chaghtai complaining that her daughters could not read her books due to their unfamiliarity with Urdu script.

Thus according to Amjad, our detachment from Urdu book literature and our losing sight of its traditional script, Urdu literacy will suffer and lose its appeal. The new generation in Pakistan and India mostly writes Urdu in Roman or Latin script which is linguistically a bad trend. The popularity of spoken Urdu at present supersedes all other languages of the subcontinent but it suffers in its printed literacy. In his interview, he observed that the proliferation of TV channels has brought the standard of screenplays down for and he is not comfortable with what is happening. He maintained that in Pakistan, poetry is of good quality because Urdu is the country’s national language. Urdu has also economic utility in Pakistan. Amjad bemoaned the fact that after the division of the sub-continent, Indian national policy includes the replacement of Urdu words with Hindi, which will hit Urdu badly.

Amjad wrote more than 20 books and his well-known poetry compilations include Barzakh, Saathwan Dar, Zara Phir Se Kehna, Khizaan Ka Aakhri Din, Itnay Khwaab Kahan Rakhoonga, Mohabbat Aisa Dariya hai, to name a few. He was also awarded the Sitaara-e-Imtiaz (1998) and Pride of Performance (1987) by the government of Pakistan for his multiple contributions to the field of Arts of his country. He kept attending various literary festivals and mushairas till his final days.

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