

BOOK REVIEWS

Ghaar Mein Baitha Shakhs by Rafiq Sandeelvi, Published by "Kaghadi Paerahan", Royal Park, Lahore.

Rafiq Sandeelvi's is now a familiar name in the domain of Urdu nazm. His latest (and perhaps maiden!) collection of poems *Ghaar Mein Baitha Shakhs* ('the man squatting in the cave') testifies to his originality and artistic fecundity as a poet.

Renowned poet and critic Satya Pal Anand's epilogue to the book is a remarkable exposition of its author's poetic calibre and excellence besides being a classical commentary on the literary worth of work.

An obsession with the morbid realities of existence seems to be the major concern of the poet. His monologic outpourings, in some poems, tend to border on pessimism. Taufiq Rafat's affirmation that "myths are created by poets" could be legitimately extended to Rafiq Sandeelvi insofar as the contextual fabric of his work is concerned. The synthesis of the topical with the mythical serves to produce an euphoric effect on his audience who adequately pre-qualify for this exercise by virtue of their mental ripeness and audio-visual alacrity.

The modernistic element (monologue, myth, mystique *et al.*) in Rafiq's verse coupled with an impalpable imagery also accounts for its casual obscurity. A deep crisis of faith, scepticism, creative uncertainty, socio-cultural conflicts and disparities together with the dilemmas of 'being' characterise the modern poetry the world over. Rafiq Sandeelvi's poetic work is no exception to this phenomenon; the 'concentric circles' of his free verse too configure on its spatial canvas.

All said, *Ghaar Mein Baitha Sakhs* is a value-addition to the genre of modern Urdu nazm. Dr. Wazir Agha's considered dictum on the distinctive force of Rafiq's poetic voice can hardly be gainsaid.

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Mohabbat Azab --- A Short Collection of Almas Shabi's Punjabi Verse

Poetry is a spontaneous expression of feelings in a given artistic form. Rhythm and cadence are its prominent attributes. An element of universality juxtaposes it to science. Poets are sages whose vision and insight, leads them to look at life from a quasi-philosophic angle not consistent with the general concept of poetry being the moody but 'ineffectual' outbursts of a social 'discussion' called the poet.

The cathartic function of poetry distinguishes it from other arts. In an age of growing social discontent in the face of maelstrom of science and technology, literature and more specifically poetry, serves as a shield against the merciless sorrows of a woeful existence. "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts".

Almas Shabi is a known Urdu/Punjabi poet. Her poetic forte is her soft but firm accent enveloping her world view as a gender conscious, self-asserting female devotee of the Muse. "*Mohabbat Azab*" is her maiden Punjabi verse collection, first published in the year 2000 and re-published in 2008: '*Phul di nazuk pattiyan tay / Kandeyan di tikhi nok naal / likhi kitab / mohabbat / azab*'.

In an environment charged with emotional suffocation and inhibitions of sort, it is rather very difficult for a female poet to voice her feelings without unwarranted restraint. That does not mean that she enjoys a poetic licence to indulge in any kind of sentimental outburst or perversion. In fact the poetic art does not preclude moral or aesthetic restraints. Almas Shabi seems to be fully seized of this aspect of her role as a poet.

Almiya

*Mohabbatan di / khabar rakho kay / mohabbatan ton / bay khabari /
meray ahed da / sabh ton wadda / almiya ay*

Tay Fayr

*Tayri khwahish tay / tayrey huth aa tay jawan par / toon fayr vi
mainu na pasaakey tay fayr*

Hell of (a) Difference

*Kisay day dil vich vas jao / tay mohabbat / kisay nu dil vich vasa layo /
tay azab / apna apna qalam, apni apni kitab*

Camouflage

Undar da haal / tay Rabb ee jaanay / bahran saaray / changay nay

These poems represent the core of her poetic sensibility as also art. She is simple, earnest and very candid in her expression. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she does not encumber her diction with high sounding, unfamiliar native words or phrases. This enables her to have an instant rapport with her readers.

All said, "*Mohabbat Azab*" is a good addition to the extant Punjabi verse literature. It points to a new trend in the poetic accent that is likely to be followed and emulated by many a young aspirant to the art.

Muhammad Afsar Sajid