Volume 20 Issue 73
Originally issued as A18



Global Journal of human-social science: a
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 20 Issue 18 Version 1.0 Year 2020
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

# Hazrat Maulana Mohammad Anwar Shopiani[RA]: The Colossal Literary Figure of Kashmiri Literature

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*Abstract-* The understanding of poetry has always been a subject of debate among the literary figures of all generations and classes. Various definitions to differentiate a piece of poetry from what is not have inundated the literary pages of all times. History acknowledges the fact that there lived people, more specifically literary figures who contributed to the spirit of poetry. It is the essence that entices others who otherwise consider poetry dreary stuff and just the depiction of the poet's mental skirmish.

Every literature has its prominence and essence; it is the storehouse that presents the society then and now. The literature of Kashmir is one such pearl in the stock of world literature that has its inimitability and identity. Maulana Mohammad Anwar ShopianiRA (1849-1939), the repository of knowledge whose insight and sagacity have been attested by the giant literary figures worldwide. Though it was a very difficult task to mold the minds of people towards the truth, Maulana Anwar, with his knowledge and poetic composition, swayed many people. Maulana was a social reformer; he opted to absorb the pain for the sake of society. His poetry and translation works have its own class that has been benefitting ever since his pen has begun to write.

*Keywords: poetry, literary figures, kashmiri literature, maulana anwarra, translations, and ahl-i-hadith.*

*GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 200599*




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# Hazrat Maulana Mohammad Anwar Shopiani[RA]: The Colossal Literary Figure of Kashmiri Literature

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Every literature has its prominence and essence; it is the storehouse that presents the society then and now. The literature of Kashmir is one such pearl in the stock of world literature that has its inimitability and identity. Maulana Mohammad Anwar Shopiani[RA] (1849-1939), the repository of knowledge whose insight and sagacity have been attested by the giant literary figures worldwide. Though it was a very difficult task to mold the minds of people towards the truth, Maulana Anwar, with his knowledge and poetic composition, swayed many people. Maulana was a social reformer; he opted to absorb the pain for the sake of society. His poetry and translation works have its own class that has been benefitting ever since his pen has begun to write.

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## I. Introduction

Expressing feelings in words is an art that has many definitions. Every literature at its core is an expression of society where an individual breathes. At the same time, we must know that the expression of one's spontaneous ideas (after an inspiration) is what discerns a poet from a common man. The notion of self-examining poetry and reflective poetry plays an important role in understanding the natural expression. The mystery of poetry is difficult to apprehend unless we know what differentiates poetry from other forms of writings. Every writing can never be poetry though every writing has some connotation.

Writing that is an expression of an inspiration conveying ideas, feelings, beliefs, vision, and intellect and, at the same time, fabricates and blends the thoughts rendering the reader to struggle and evolve with multiple degrees of meaning is poetry and not just writing. Writing a good piece of poetry is a responsibility that everyone cannot take, even though we come across a galaxy of lines presented in the name of poetry that are merely piled up words deriding the lines as bunkum. History acknowledges the fact that there lived people, more specifically literary figures, who contributed to the spirit of poetry; it is the essence that entices and appeals to others who otherwise consider poetry monotonous stuff and the representation of the poet's mental skirmish.

Every literature has its reputation and soul; it is the storehouse that presents the society then and now. The literature of Kashmir is one such pearl in the stock of world literature that has its rareness and identity. Almost from every corner of the valley of Kashmir, we have literary figures who have contributed to Kashmiri literature. While groping the pages of literature, we come across a literary figure, Hazrat Maulana Mohammad Anwar Shopiani[RA] (1849-1939), the repository of knowledge whose insight and sagacity has been attested by the giant literary figures worldwide. Maulana Anwar[RA] is one such literary figure whose expertise over Kashmiri literature has barely any match; his poetry and translation works have its own class that has been benefitting ever since his pen has commenced to write. His life speaks about his contribution towards society by way of fulfilling his religious obligations. Born in a village called Shopian that is about 50 kilometres from the summer capital Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, presently under Indian occupation. He was a Kashmiri preacher, scholar, and poet and, above all, the founder of the Ahl-i-Hadith movement in Jammu and Kashmir (1). After attaining his education from various Islamic scholars, he got inclined to bout against many misconceptions prevailing in the valley of Kashmir about Islam. Though it was a very challenging task to mold, the minds of people towards the truth but Maulana Anwar[RA], with his knowledge and poetic composition, predisposed many people. His basic message was all about the genuine and fundamental principles and practice of Islam, which made him speak and criticize openly against all those practices which were clearly in contradiction of the teachings of Islam. Among many malpractices prevailing in the valley one was the worshiping of graves *(qabarparasti)* which means people used to worship graves by bowing and asking for help from those (Saints) lying in the graves. It is pertinent to mention here that this practice is completely prohibited in Islam and accounts for the major sin. Appreciating Maulanas contributions, Akhtar Mohiuddin writes: -

> *"A significant poet, preacher of the period is Molvi Anwar Shah of Shopian. He belonged to the Wahabi sect of Muslims. His poetry is therefore, devoted to the subjects*

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*relating to religion and more especially to this creed, while he versified Hadith and Muslim code of Social conduct he denounced the grave worship and forms of superstitions. He exhorted the people to rise above the world of petty gains and fear none but Allah. He wrote better satires against outmoded customs. His targets were Mullahs who, he thought preached superstition instead of true religion."* (2)

Writing religious poetry is not an easy task, as the rudimentary inspiration is not any worldly affair but the religion itself. As already conversed, writing poetry is a responsibility, and when it comes to any sophisticated form of poetry, then things become even more intricate and open to all the unwelcomed criticism. In order to propagate the religious teaching supported by authentic texts, Maulana Anwar[RA] met the same fate.

*"He was criticized by the then religious leaders for propagating his views towards the leaders after claiming 'mullahs are misleading people'. He had several cases filed against him and was subsequently charged under blasphemy law for allegedly insulting the religion".* (3)

Maulana Anwar[RA] was the man of ethics; he was a god-fearing soul always ready to absorb the pain for the furtherance of his society. To fight against an illiterate is difficult but fighting against those having incomplete knowledge is even grimmer. Maulana was fighting against those who not only had inadequate knowledge but even fabricated one, and indubitably it was his knowledge that tiled the path for his triumph and delight in the end. He used poetry as a noxious weapon against religious miscreants, morons, and the megalomaniac figures of his time. There is no doubt about the fact that his hold over Kashmiri literature was ultimate which made his poetry to melt the stiff hearts of those times. His poetry has both the poetic assets viz self-examining poetry and reflective poetry. The first one made him scrutinize his inner self, and the second one was used to address the arid souls. He used poetry as a tool to propagate the message of Allah and His Prophet[PBUH]. What was addressed by Maulana Anwar[RA] was not simple; it was the old customs, practices, and traditions which were the root cause of deviation from the true teachings of Islam. This is what historians have to say about the religious imbalance in the valley:

*"Many lien practices entered Islam because of the fact that the converts did not give up their old customs and practices. The Khanaqahs (graveyard of saints) became the canters of superstition and charlatanism"* (4).

Maulana Anwar[RA] in one of his famous poems, address the subject of worshiping the graves of saints as: -

*Catechizing the edifices for bounties while circumambulating the graveyards*

*The sentinel and his wife earn gluts rendering this worship licit*

*Be cognizant the worship of graves is undue*

*Alas! the make-ups around these graves are places of major sin*

(Naseehat-un-Niswaan, p. 30)

Yet in one of his other poems, Maulana presents the fact that the people who visit these graveyards are none but the people of the faith (Muslims) itself. While addressing this issue, he beautifully puts forth the fact that people who practice all this are *Mushriks* (namesake Muslims): -

*It is these Muslims who are just Muslims by name tangled in worshipping of graves*

*It is them the cohorts of the devil Oh! My friend*

*It is him the Ghulam Qadiani the foe of true faith*

*It is him the atheist who is rolling down the blood Oh! My friend*

(Dewan-e-Anwar, p. 53)

Justifying his position Maulana in another poem presents the fact that he is himself aloof from this major sin: -

*I am none among the Najdi, the Kofi, the Mulhid, the Sufi*

*Neither do I concede the Hari Parbath, for I am just the scholar of true faith*

(Dewan-e-Anwar, p. 64)

Maulana Anwar[RA] was the realistic propagator of Islam, whose vision and knowledge could clearly be traced in his poetry. It is really arduous to convey religious messages by way of translating the same into other languages. While Maulana has contributed a lot to the Kashmiri literature by translating the true religious teachings, his hold over the Kashmiri language and literature has always done justice to his translation works. Each word considered for translation has been minutely examined before any use. In one of his poems he while giving happy tidings to those who will be near to the Prophet Muhammad[PBUH] on account of their good deeds, but at the same time, he has also warned those setting up partners with Allah: -

*Believers, on the Day of Judgment shall swill a special drink*

*Those close to the Prophet shall relish the class of soaring*

*People setting up partners with Allah shall drink the sting and shall live in an appalling place*

(Dewan-e-Anwar, p. 120)

Maulana was a social reformer; he opted to fascinate the pain for the sake of his society. While delivering religious lectures and fulfilling all the religious commitments, he always dreamed and worked for a society free from all sorts of misapprehensions and bewilderments not only about faith but other social issues. For all this, he exploited poetry and used it as a platform for social habilitate. Much of his contribution in the form of Kashmiri poetry is dedicated to this theme; the following lines from his pen aptly justify this statement: -



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*Be exultant, be conscious*
*Your provisions for the journey is this*
*Allah is one, have faith*
*Come recollecting this*
(Salam-e-Anwar Mae Kalam-e-Anwar, p. 20)

*It is Him Muhammad[PBUH] the guide for the world*
*His constitution is our certificate to peace*
*Be it a pious Man or Women*
*He (Allah) blessed them in both the worlds*
(Salam-e-Anwar Mae Kalam-e-Anwar, p. 25)

In the above lines, Maulana Anwar[RA] is counselling all the people of faith in general and women, in particular, to enjoy all the social gatherings and occasions idyllically, but at the same time never set themselves aloof from the true faith that Allah is one, for this is what is going to bring relief in the hereafter. It is important to note that Maulana always remained confined to the subject of truthfulness and earnestness. The faith is a vast subject which couldn't be explained unless the one who explains has himself absorbed every thread of faith. Maulanas poetry has the mystic touch in the sense that it has made a great difference in the psyche of people of his times.

*He our pal has kept to watch our deeds*
*For we must assess our deeds*
*The book of Allah is the ultimate guide for sick*
*Come with love and in bliss*
*For now, the light of Tauheed (faith) is luminous*
*The light of Tauheed is ubiquitously disseminated*
*Amass the flowers of guided deeds*
*Decorate the flowers with passion*
(Salam-e-Anwar Mae Kalam-e-Anwar, p. 21)

Maulanas combat was genuine, and that is why he could survive the incessant endeavours to his character assassination by those spiritual quakes who remind one of those scavengers who fight between themselves for the last bit of a corpse flesh. Maulanas' remarkable contribution is a blessing for the entire Kashmiri culture, for all that he has written is not only advice but the veracity to accept, to live in peace and tranquillity here and hereafter.

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