

ALI NAMAH

BY

MULLA NUSRATI (1067 HIJRI)

Mulla Nusrati, the author of Ali Namah, is a classical poet. His poetry celebrates Dakhni Literature. When we talk of Bijapur and Adil Shahi dynasty, we have to remember Mulla Nusrati because he was not only a court poet but was “Malikus Sho`ra” (King of poets) also.

During the days when Adil Shahi reign was coming to a close, that is, the period of Mohamed Adil Shah II and Sikandar Adil Shah, the kingdom was resonant with Nusrati’s poetry because of his musical character which had enriched Dakhni Literature.

Biographical details of Nusrati are not available. He has not himself mentioned any thing about his personal life. A few glimpses of his life can be sketched with the help of his Masnavies, namely Ali Namah and Gulshan-e-Ishq. His contemporaries and others have mentioned him in their biographies from which we come to know that his name was Mohammed Nusrati. He had two brothers viz., Shaikh Mansoor and Shaikh Abdur Rahman. Moulvi Abdul Haq has done some research which gives some information about his personal life.

Nusrati came of a respectable family. His ancestors were warriors by profession and they were Jagirdars of Bijapur. His father was Salahdar, who was a brave and faithful warrior, but he considered it important to educate his son and appointed great scholars as his teachers. Nusrati was very fond of reading books which enriched his knowledge, and eventually he became a great scholar. People used to call him ‘Miyan Nusrati’ with great respect, love and affection. Nusrati can be compared with great urdu poet Mirza Ghalib owing to some similarities, the chief of them are that Nusrati too belong to the family of warriors and his access to the Sultan’s “Durbar” was through poetry and he earned the title “Mlikus Sho’ra.

The family of Nusrati was benefited by jagirs granted to him in Bijapur. Bagh-e-Nagina was his jagir, and when he died in the Year 1674 he was laid to rest in that garden, where we can find his grave. Unfortunately he did not die a natural death as the following fragment of his historical couplet reveals: “Nusrati Shaheed Ahey” (1085 Hijri). Because of his fame and glory, many become his enemies. He has mentioned it in his poetry. His enemies had fewer chances of flourishing as long as he lived. Nusrati had lampooned them in his satirical verses (hajoes). His enemies joined hands and plotted his assassination. In a Ghazal he has revealed that an astrologer has cautioned him about the danger to his life.

Nusrati had no male issue, only a daughter was born to him. Even to this day his successors are enjoying the benefit of their ancestral property (that is, jagir) and leading a happy lives.

According to Nusrati himself he was not a newcomer to Bijapur. His ancestors were loyal servants of the Adilshahi Government. Many members of his family inherited the service of this dynasty. But Nusrati was the first man to reach the Durbar by virtue of his individual efforts as a poet during the period of Adil shah II when the latter ascended the throne in the year 1076 Hijri (1656 A.D). The king invited Nusrati to his durbar and honoured him. Because of this honour people came to know Nusrati and his works, and stars began to shine.

PREFERENCE FOR NATIVE LANGUAGE

We are aware that Bijapur gave much importance to the Dakni Language which reached its zenith because of patronage it received at the hands of the Khutub Shahi and Adil Shahi dynasties. Prior to the patronage of the court or Durbar this language was only a dialect in which only common people used to express their thoughts. How can we expect a literary masterpiece of the order of Ali Namah to be composed in a dialect? As if to prove that even a dialect can be the vehicle of expression for literary effusions, the king of Bijapur and Golconda, during the 17th century adopted the Dakhni language and it assumed the status of a durbari language. The king wrote their poems in this language. If Wajhi and Ghavasi adopted this language and shine brilliantly at Golconda, here in Bijapur we see Meeranji, Mulla Nusrati and Hashmi attaining the highest place by means of this language and enriching the Dakhni language with their valuable contributions.

MIGHTIER THAN SWORD

In this environment Nusrati grew up. His family sword was put back in its sheath. He proved his mettle in the field of poetry. He had a very good command over the language and exploited its resources for conveying his thoughts and feeling in it. This shows that he had a natural taste for poetry. He says that his ability for writing poetry was natural and it was a divine gift, and such a talent cannot be achieved with the might of one's hand.

Nusrati's " Gulshan-e-Ishq" was written in the year 1657 (1068 Hijri). It was his first contribution to Dakhni Literature. Ali Namah was written in the year 1665 (1076 Hijri). Taareeq-e-Sikandari was written in the year 1672 (1083 Hijri). Deewan-e- Nusrati contains Ghazals, Khaseedas, Mukhammas, Hajoos and Rubayees. (Odes, Pentagon verses, Satires, quatrains.)

Gulsha-e-Ishq was Nusrati's first work which brought him recognition as a poet and through it he carved a niche for himself in the hearts of the people and also in the heart of the king. And it was by virtue of this work alone that he got a place in the Shahi Durbar, and Flourished as a poet. Ali Adil Shah knew him from his childhood and he was an ardent admirer of his poetry. This served as an introduction to 'Ali Namah'. When Ali Adil Shah II came to power, a very great

responsibility was placed on his shoulders. Wars took place throughout his kingdom, and they became the source of good material for Nusrati to compose Ali Namah. He narrated those happenings in this poem. Along with the narration we can see the emotions of Nusrati interspersed in the poem. Nusrati has also provided some details of a few important personalities of the shahi durbar, such as Shah Noorullah, Abdul Muali, Khazi Kareemullah and others. Of them Khazi Kareemullah was the man who encouraged Nusrati to write Ali Namah.

As regards his characteristic of poetry we can say no poet was ever born in Bijapur or Golconda who can be compared with Nusrati in that behalf. We can truly say that Nusrati with his skill as a poet has enriched Dakhni literature and has elevated it to the highest rank. Nusrati in his Poetry has combined and gathered all the elegance of Persian and Urdu Languages. He has endowed his verse with the liveliness of Dakhni and the mellowness of Persian Poetry. Yet another characteristic of Nusrati's poetry is that it is not only full of precise expression but replete with meaning. In his poetry we can see not only rhetoric but great flights of thought too. Because of these reasons we find Nusrati enjoying a high position among Dakhni Poets.

EVALUATION OF HIS POETRY

We can adjudge Nusrati's literary ability and accomplishment in the light of his Gulshan-e-Ishq and Ali Namah. These two Masnavies are the masterpieces of Dakhni Literature. The beauty of expression and the fluency of language are the two important aspects of these Masnavies and we find no difference in these two except for the titles and contents. Gulshan-e-Ishq contains a love-story, and Ali Namah contains the pomp and glory of Shahi Durbar, Political issues or problems and war-scenes.

His third literary output, namely Tareeq-e-sikandaree was written after the death of Ali Adil Shah, during the period of his successor Sikandar Adil Sha. According to Baba-e-Urdu, this book is unlike the other books. The reason may be that after the death of Ali in the year 1672 (1083 Hijri) the political scene had changed due to the selfishness of Vazeers and Ameers, and politics of Bijapur had become worst. The writers lost their erstwhile zeal and Nusrati was no exception. That is why we do not find the same qualities in this work of Nusrati.

HIS STYLE

Whenever Nusrati wants to describe a thing, he does so in a delightful manner, just a posing interesting instances, and the reader will appreciate his manner. When he describes a scene it appears like a picture before the eyes of a reader. When he analyses any love-thought he presents a scene and when he describes a war, he presents the war scenes in such a manner that reader gets excited. When he describes the Shahi Durbar we can witness the pomp and splendor of Ameers and Vazeers in an elegant manner. When he describes a

war we can see in its advances and attacks of the invaders, can here the clanging of arms and ammunitions.

HISTORICAL VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE

When we make an in-depth study of Ali Namah, we come to know of some facts. Ali Namah, is not merely a masterpiece of Dakhni literature but it is much more: It is a history of Deccan. It is the true history of Ali Adil Shah, which span a period of fifteen years: 1656-1672 (1072-1083 Hijri). The period was one of disturbance and chaos in whole Deccan in which Bijapur was also involved. On the one hand Shivaji invaded the Deccan continuously, and on the other, a flood of Mughal armies from the North attacked the Deccan. Both these armies invaded the Deccan from the North and fierce battle took place and river of blood flowed, which washed the whole Deccan. In order to save themselves the Deccan Sultanates fought with courage. Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur and Abul Hasan Tana Shah of Golconda were the last rulers who fought with these invaders throughout their reigns. Ali had to face two enemies. One was the Marathas and other one the Moghuls.

During the period of Mohamed Adil Shah a new force of the Marathas came into existence. Shivaji, son of Shahji, was the founder of this force. We can call it wonder. Shivaji had good leadership qualities. He had a very attractive personality. Wherever he went, hundreds of people gathered around him. In the Year 1646 he began to attack parts of Bijapur Empire and conquered the fort of Tornasen Gadh and raigadh. At that time Bijapur was vast empire. In the south could we see its flag hoisted on canara, Banglore and Jinji. But considering its vastness its military power was not sufficient to protect its borders. Because of this reason the enemies grew stronger. After the death of Mohammed Adil Shah II succeeded to the throne. He increased the military Power. Marathas were one among the Deccan forces. Besides them a huge Mughal Army came from the North and wiped off the whole Deccan Sultanates. The predecessors of Aurangzeb had also attacked the Deccan but their intention was to make these Deccan Sultanates subordinates to the Moghul Empire. But Aurangzeb shattered the policies of his predecessors and was very often sending his armies to conquer these two kingdoms. When he was the Governor of Deccan, he had planned to break these kingdoms. He proceeded according to his plans and in the year 1656 (1076 Hijri) he attacked these kingdoms but in vain, because Shah Jahan was the Shahinshah at the time and he did not appreciate the policy of Aurangzeb. He ordered to check further advances of Mughal armies. But now the conditions were different. Aurangzeb himself was the Shahinshah and now he could act according to his own whims and fancies. So the whole Shahinshi forces flooded the Deccan and besieged it from all sides.

With the arrivals of Mughals at Deccan, now there were three forces in the field, that is, the Deccan Sultanates, the Marthas and the Mughals. Each force

had to face two enemies. But for the lopsided politics the scene would be cleared at the earliest. But because of the Marathas and complicated political aspects, each group had to face a complicated situation. If they made a treaty with Bijapur on one side, on the other they would plan a scheme against the Mughals. Because of this complicated political scheme Bijapur had to face dual difficulties.

When Ali Adil Shah succeeded to the throne after the death of his father, Shivaji continued his attack on Bijapur and it was the first and foremost task to prevent these attacks as the most of the Important forts had been conquered by the Marathas, and day by day the danger to Bijapur Kingdom was greatly increasing. Ali took steps to prevent these attacks. In the year 1659 he sent his general Afzal Khan to fight against Shivaji. Afzal Khan was an able General. Both the armies met at Prtap gadh. Shivaji had no courage to face Afzal Khan. The two armies did not fight a single battle. But at a secluded meeting Afzal Khan was attacked by Shivaji and he died on the spot. After the death of Afzal Khan, Adil Shahi forces could not stay in the field, and they fled. The Ali sent another general namely Siddi Salbat Khan. But he betrayed Ali and joined with Marathas. When conditions became worst Ali himself led his army. In the year 1660 (1070 Hijri) he attacked the fort of Panala where he has to face Shivaji himself. The attack was severe, Marathas could not withstand it. In a short while the fort of Panala was conquered. Ali marched forward. Now all the ways of the Marathas were blocked. Shivaji then diverted his attention towards Mughals. The Mughals become alert. As Aurangzeb, and not Shahjahan, was the ruler at the time, from North India a continuous flow of Mughal armies started marching towards the south. Shaista Khan came first, but near Poona his camp was ransacked in a nightly attack. To recoup the loss Jaswant Singh Rathod was sent next. But he was defeated. Now Aurangzeb handed over the military command to his famous General Raja Jai Singh. This was a great attack. Mughals asked Bijapur ruler to help in war. This was a good opportunity for Bijapur. General Khawwas Khan came to the battle field before the arrival of Raja Jai Singh. The Allied forces mounted a severe attack in an unbroken manner on Marathas. The Marathas could not withstand these attacks and the field was cleared for the Mughals. When Raja Jai Singh marched further, Shivaji made a peace treaty with the Mughals. But Shivaji wanted to take revenge on Bijapur. He incited Jai Singh to attack Bijapur. Now the Political scene changed. The Mughal armies began to move towards Bijapur. Bijapur had to confront a new enemy. It had heaved a sigh of relief after the treaty, but now a greater disaster overtook Bijapur. It had not expected this from the Mughals because until that day the Mughals were good friends of Bijapur and they had assisted the Mughal kings against their war with the Marathas. Instead of thanking Bijapur Jai Singh made an attack on it. Ali Adil Shah was a strong and powerful man. He also fought with the Mughals as he had done with the Marathas. Mughals attacked Bijapur five times in the year 1666 (1076 Hijri) and in almost all these attacks Mughals were defeated, as it had happened in the period of Malik Umer. In the beginning of the 17th century Ali Adil Shah had devastated the Mughal armies. After facing a defeat Jai Singh lost his patience and was heart broken. He was not in a position to the Shahinshah. While returning to Delhi in 1667 (1077 Hijri) he died on the way. His dead body

was consigned to the flames in Burhanpur. Mughal Historians give a brief account of this incident as though it was not important matter, The reason is obvious that the Mughals had suffered dishonour in these wars.

If with all these incidents we put together the wars of Malnad and Torgal it will look like the synopsis of Ali Namah. But truly speaking , it is a clear picture of war. The manner in which Nusrati has described is quite beautiful. Ali Namah deals mainly with the details of wars. Hence we can re name Ali Namah as "Razm- Namah". We have to bear in mind the fact that along with the details of war we can have a picture of the politics of Bijapur, the king used to call his durbar, which would be attended by ministers and military generals. Plans of attack was discussed there. To lead the forces brave generals were chosen. And these Generals took the entire responsibility of wars on themselves. Along with this, the poet also describes the plans, policies and faithfulness of Ameer and Vazeers who were considered as the pillars of the Kingdom. Miyan Abdul Muhammed, who was a minister and a shrewd politician, played a very important role in the politics of Bijapur. Khavas Khan, Syed Ilyas and Sharza Khan were brave generals. When the poet describes the invaders, he portrays their characters and their advances from which we can come to know of the feeling of these generals towards their enemy. We cannot say any thing about the war fields. We can have a clear picture of war before our eyes. For example, the swiftness of the military generals, the jingle of war equipment, death of soldiers in the war-field, and the flow of blood from their wounded bodies. Every thing can be seen in this work of poetry.

ANNALS OF WAR AND CULTURE

Ali Namah is not only a war-story but it is a live picture of Dakhni culture, too. When we study it, we will come to know about the history of Bijapur, and also of the eminent place the Adil Shahi dynasty had occupied in Indian History, and the services they had rendered to the kingdom, and to the Indian history and culture.

Ali Namah is the History of Bijapur covering a period of 15 Years. When we try to evaluate it as a work of history, we will find the continuation of incidents in a methodical manner. In the poetic form also there is instance of single example of any incident missing. As we know, when the poet used to record the historical events he would depict the incidents in a subverted or distorted manner. Ultimately it will be treated as fiction instead of history. But as far as Nusrati's case is concerned, it is obvious that he has tried his best to put the historical events in a precise manner. And this is a distinct trait of the art of his poetry. And because of this very quality we can consider it as living history. In this work of poetry find even the minute incidents dealt in detail, a thing we cannot find in any book of history, because in history enough scope is not given to small incidents. As far as the subject is concerned it is undoubtedly drawn from history. Historians of the Bijapur history have taken much from Ali Namah, a detailed history of Bijapur, has taken his material from Ali Namah, He has praised

Nusrati and said, “ He is a King of the poetic realm and the title Malikus Shora be fits him.” (Basateenus Salateen by Zuberi, p.430)

Shah Noorula is yet another historian of Bijapur who has written the history of Ali Adil Shah. Nusrati himself has praised him much. But Noorulla in his history has not mentioned a single word about Nusrati. But we can find many more similarities in the history of Ali Adil Shah and Ali Namah. This is so because both of them were contemporaries and they used to meet often and have talks on important matters.

ITS DISTINCT FEATURE

Yet another feature of Nusrati’s history is that it will not exasperate the reader. On the other hand we find that it create interest in the reader owing to the true events Nusrati has presented in it in a pleasing and interesting manner, and he narrates only those things which happened before him. As we got through details we can surmise that he must have accompanied the kind in some of the wars and then narrated the happenings. We cannot have any doubt about his history, instead we can evaluate his statements comparing them with other histories. Because, today in writing historians tend to write what they wish to, and that too in a very colourful manner. But so far as Nusrati is concerned, we find nothing but truth in his historical statements.

THE FIRST EPIC POEM

Apart from this the Masnavies and Khaseedas of Ali Namah are an ocean of emotions. Each couplet is a wave of emotion. To put it frankly, Nusrati was a patriot, and the emotion of patriotism was plenty. Whenever he used to write, a variety of emotions used to generate in his heart. We cannot call Ali Namah merely poetry because it is live history and it is the ‘ Shah Namah’of Deccan, which has enriched the fund of Urdu Literature. We should not forget that Ali’s “Shah Namah of Deccan” opened a new vista in Urdu literature. This is the first Masnavi in Urdu literature presented with the grandeur of an epic poem. It can be sincerely said that none had written an epic poem in Urdu until Nusrati wrote it. We do not find this type of poem in Dakhni literature, in which the cultural wealth of a country alongside the events of war is composed in a metrical pattern. The Urdu literature up to Nusrati’s period contains only love stories. Honestly speaking, no poet either from south or North had the courage to write an epic poem. We are aware that is a lot of difference in language and style in presenting a love poem and an epic poem. The events of a war need a different style from that of fiction. The Dakhni and Urdu poets were familier with different styles. But by writing Ali Namah Nusrati created a new capital –mmatter and created a fresh mould to help other poets follow suit. And the new generation was definitely benefited by this creation. What is ‘Shah Namah’? In the words of Nusrati “it is

the life of Deccan”, because it contains not only the stories of battle but also the various aspects of culture in which the Deccan style of life, colours of society can be seen. It throws light on the fineness of temperaments, sweetness and softness of language and literature.

A BIOGRAPHY TOO

In addition to the features already referred to Ali Namah is also a Biography of some important personalities. Nusrati has written much more about his king, and along with him he has written much about the Ameers and Vazeers of the sultanate, such as Miyan Abdul Mohamed, Kareemulla and others. He has portrayed them in such a manner that their characters have become immortal and nobody will ever forget them.

ITS ENDING

Ali Namah ends with the year 1667 (1076 Hijri). We find this to be the last year dealt with in this work. This is an important year in which the last battle was fought with Raja Jai Singh, and Jai Singh went back with a broken heart. Here we may get a little confused about why Ali Namah ends with that year only. If Ali Adil Shah II, He had to move a step further and should have included the last phase of Ali's period, because Ali died in the Year 1083 Hijri, which means he lived seven years more and Nusrati was also alive till then. But it can be guessed that the years of Ali's reign were peaceful and no major incidents occurred. Ali Namah in the real sense of the term is originally a Shah Namah which deals with battles, conquests, and political ups and downs. Pictures of important events have been drawn in this work, and Nusrati in his 'Shah Namah' wants to take cognizance of the important events of war. The last period of Ali's life was peaceful because Bijapur enemies, namely Mughals and Marathas did not have the guts to attack Bijapur once again, and no major war or any important historical event took place. Hence Nusrati found nothing more to write about. So the work was confined to the year 1667 (1076 Hijri)

ADDENDUM TO PART- B

Points related to the synopsis of the project.

- 1 The task to be accomplished under the research project is the translation of Ali-Namah by Mulla Nusrati . It will be monumental work as it is at once history and poetry, spread over 10,000 couplets in perfect metrical composition in Dakhni Language, now defunct. It is comparable to ancient classics and epics which are in poetic form but their subject matter comprise humanities.
- 2 It seeks to enlighten the present day intellectuals about the excellence of poetic creation dating back to five centuries and to show how the epic poem could also be studied as historical records or documents, and to prove that where history fails to convince, literature or poetry satisfied in a two fold, and some times in many-fold, way.
- 3 Hypothetically it is a work which helps us to learn history of a glorious past in the annals of Karnataka, having first hand information, and resolves conflicting and distorted versions given by other historians, understand history in its true sense and spirit.
- 4 Being a translation work, the question research design and methodology confines itself to either of the two forms in translation : prose or verse. The same will be decided by the investigators later, and the form which seems befitting will be give preference.
- 5 Only original work will be followed faithfully.
- 6 The work is all the more significant as it will make clear to the reader how the genius of a poet in the past took cognizance of facts and presented them in a unbiased manner and to ascertain in what light does he stand as a poet-cum-historian.
- 7 It helps in eliminating the wrong notions built around the biased views and wrong premises that have struck discordant notes in human relationship owing to narrow-minded approach to the study of history, by highlighting the impartial and fair-minded attitude of the Sultans who treated the people of all faiths alike and considered the wellbeing of their subjects to be of paramount importance.
- 8 As a work of literature it helps us study the nuances discernible in a dialect which assumed the status of a language through royal patronage, and to have a comparative and relative estimate of the proximity and resemblance it has to a few languages of the South, and how best we can exploit its resources, that is, phraseology and terminology, etc., to enrich the regional language, and to study the give-and-take the Dakhni language had already had when the epic in question was composed five centuries ago.

