

JOSH MALIHABADI: A VOICE OF REVOLUTION

Dr. Syed Mohd Abbas Rizvi
Head
Department of English
Anjuman-I-Islam's
Akbar Peerbhoy College of Commerce & Economics
Mumbai, Maharashtra

Abstract

Josh Malihabadi (1898–1982), frequently referred to as SHAIR-E-INQUILAB, it means Poet of Revolution, catches up a notable and top position in the history of Urdu literature in particular and in literary heritage of India in general. His literary work outmatches traditional poetic verges, orchestrating emotional zeal with conceptual eager interest. Having a glance, his revolutionary poetry, patriotic themes, and modernized elegiac (marsia) compositions, he introduced his literary identity that was the two reflective of his periods which characterized by a high degree of disorder, confusion, and unpredictability and prophetic in its yell for peace, justice and unity. This research paper probes Josh Malihabadi's multifold philanthropy in Urdu poetry, highlighting his roles as a reformer, nationalist, and modernist within the broader canvas of South Asian literary and political history.

Key Words: Nazm, Takhallus, Marsia, Musaddas, Inquilab etc.

Introduction

To understand Josh and his literary potential, we should go through the following paragraph of Charles Dickens to understand him and his work.

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period.”

Josh Malihabadi's life and work cannot be separated with the combination of the socio-political terrain of colonial and post-colonial South Asia. Shabbir Hassan Khan 'Josh' was born in his ancestral land

Malihabad, United Provinces, now it is Uttar Pradesh, India, he garnered various nomenclature like "Shair-e-Inquilab" and "Shair-e-Azam" which these are strong evidence of his literary heights. In this, his literary boldness and revolutionary themes are easily observed. His poetry comes out as an attempt to appeal as a dynamic force for changing in the society.

As noted by Abbas Gul, Aysha, and Batool (2022), "Josh's poetry vigorously resists colonial reign supremacy, condemns feudal autonomy and promotes the interests of national solidarity and communal harmony. His literary potential highlights a revolutionary farewell from the classical Urdu tradition, recompiling poetic thoughts to serve the exigent ethical and political interests of the age."

This paper furnishes a thorough inspection of the contribution of Josh to Urdu literature, concentrating on three main points: his patriotic poetry, his transformation of the classical *Marsia* (elegy) and his humanist philosophy. Putting to work academic sources, actual and factual empirical data and his notable poetic works, this study demonstrates what is the role of the poet in society defined again by him— for realizing that his thoughts, voice, and actions matter in the broader discourse.

Personal-Sketch

Josh Malihabadi was born on December 5, 1898, into a family engrained in literary tradition¹. He received his early education at home and later pursued studies in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. His incomplete formal education at Aligarh Muslim University and St. Peter's College, Agra, did not hamper his highbrow and scholarly growth. Josh worked in Hyderabad's Dar-ul-Tarjuma (Translation Bureau) and later became editor of the progressive Urdu journal *Kaleem*, which brought him into the limelight as a politically engaged intellectual. His literary career also took him to Delhi, Mumbai, and finally Karachi, where he migrated after partition in 1956. Despite political challenges, including censorship and ideological opposition, Josh continued to write prolifically, contributing not only poetry but also essays, translations, and his acclaimed autobiography, *Yadon ki Barat*.

Patriotism and Nationalism

Josh's patriotic poetry took a birth with his profound loyalty to justice and human dignity. He used his composing to knock up public chord contra colonial rule and social injustice. His poetry stands on the people to get up against oppression, demanding unity, courage and resistance. As Abbas Gul, Aysha, and Batool (2022) point out, Josh looked out poetry as a tool for mass mobilization. In poems like

Tarana-e-Azadi and *Shikast-e-Zindan ka Khwab*, Josh's tone is acute, bombastic and full of revolutionary enthusiasm. His work reflects to ample extent objects of the Indian independence movement, reflecting the fervour of his contemporaries while conserving a noticeable literary voice.

Josh cope with the themes of Hindu-Muslim unity and religious to willingness to yield to the wishes of other religions too. He had a belief in a secular national identity and condemned communalism. His poetic vision triumphed over the narrow character of politics, insisting in lieu of the combined fate of India's diverse population. His editorial role in *Kaleem* and later *Aaj Kal* encouraged his ideas to an extensive and follower and audience. His ardent and effective style framed his poetry especially efficient in thrilling collaborative sentiment and political consciousness.

Revolution and Political Awakening

The concern of Josh in political give and take was not confined to poetry. He was a straightforward honest and wisdom speaker who diligently took a part in the intellectual discussions of his age. He brought himself into progressive and socialist role models, expressing sympathy for the labourers, workers and slaves. In his poetry, the revolutionary motivation is not mental image but grounded in especially social suffering and political distress such as colonialism, capitalism, and authoritarianism etc. His poem *Kisan* strongly earns the great efforts of Indian workers and farmers, pointing up exploitation and crying for systemic modification.

He was fault-finding of capitalist structures and feudal oppression, matters visible and apparent in his collections for example *Shola-o-Shabnam*, *Saif-o-Saboo*, and *Aawaz-e-Haq*. His rhetoric was frequently imbued with the diction of fire and thunder, his style gained him marvellous appreciation and censorship.

Fazle Imam says-

Josh's boldness made him a cultural hero as well as a controversial figure. His revolutionary language continues to influence political discourse in South Asia.

Transformation of the Marsia

The most significant literary creation of Josh is his transition of the classical elegy '*Marsia*.' Conventionally, the *Marsia* is considered as religious elegy which having the centre on the tragedy of Karbala. Like Mir Anis and Mirza Dabeer were the pioneers of this classical literary transformation had great perfection in its formation and art. In spite of that, Josh reconceptualised the *Marsia* as an

instrument for contemporary currents and modern ideological engagement. In *Awaaz-e-Haq* (1918) and *Hussain aur Inquilab* (1941), he put the Karbala into action to wipe out modern social dictatorship and boost revolutionary sense to get freedom.

Dr. Kafeel Ahmad observes:

Josh's *Marsias* turned the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) into a symbol of eternal struggle against injustice. Using the traditional *Musaddas* structure, Josh maintained formal continuity while infusing his work with modern themes.

H. Naqvi says:

His *Marsias* are less about mourning and more about awakening. This ideological repurposing of religious tradition made his work resonate with both religious and secular audiences.

Human Dignity And Universal Brotherhood

The political and literary vision of Josh is having an intellectual approach and insight depth to understand each and every aspect of human welfare and a social integrity among human beings each other as a social commitment. He patronized the highness of everyone, irrespective of religion, race, caste, colour and class. Josh's poetry blesses the humanity, rationale and academic liberty. Q. Raees highlights:

Josh's work is characterized by its ethical urgency and universalist outlook. He advocated for equality, opposed dogma, and emphasized rational inquiry. These ideals are particularly evident in his philosophical poems and prose writings.

Expression and Literary Technique

Josh's poetry has a distinctive character by its demonstrative rhetoric, skilful application of metaphor and creative verbal options. His expertise on language permitted him to mix classical refinement with contemporary thinking. His utilization of rhythm, imagery and again and again improves the appealing power of his literary accomplishment. He repeatedly engaged poetic name *Takhallus* with operatic outcome, enhancing the lucrative size of his poetic verses.

His self-written excellent literary work in prose *Yadon Ki Barat* is considered as masterpiece of Urdu prose. Insight into his thoughts, struggles and literary philosophy can be seen in this auto-biography. This book uncovers his stylistic versatility, shifting from satire and irony to pathos and reflection.

A. Farooqi and Z. A. Naqvi illustrates:

Josh's prose is as impactful as his poetry, making him a complete literary figure.

Critical Feedback and Cultural Legacy

Josh's great and superb literary works have a distinguished position in Indian literature in particular and world literature in general apart from any kind of biasness and controversy. Because of this, he was conferred on countless awards including the Padma Bhushan in 1954. His migration to Pakistan, however, was met with mixed reactions. While he continued to be a towering literary figure, ideological tensions and political censorship affected his later years.

As a poet of passion and principle, he has been declared with a notable admiration by the critics. His influence has made a deep impact on the members of academic quarter and various scholars and intellectuals have adopted his igniting style and dedication to justice. Historians from literary circle have reciprocally declared that his work designated as landmark in Urdu literature, recognizing the genre to new themes, forms, and audiences.

Conclusion

Josh is one of the most influential, complex and forgettable figures in Urdu literary history. By putting his revolutionary poetry, innovative *Marsias* and humanist superb pattern, he defined again the role of the poet in society. His work completely encountered autocracy, monopoly of oppressors and truly interpreted the dream of justice and inclusive world. Through integrating classical forms with modern themes, Josh revealed to ensure that Urdu poetry would always be alive with its dynamic power. His inheritance continues not only in literary domains but it cultivates cultural, political and social ethos of South Asia.

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