

Dr. Jagtar

Fully versed with Urdu-Persian languages and traditional meters- the detailed system of distribution of syllables in lines of poetry- Dr. Jagtar himself is a celebrated Punjabi *Ghazal* writer; he's a poet who constructs meaning and whose craft contracts sense. Winner of Sahitya Academy Award in poetry, his recently published *Bulle Shah: Life and Poetry* marks him as a researcher in the field of medieval Punjabi poetry.

It's grueling task to work on text written in a script that can be read in more ways than one, and investigating life of a person who lived in a country that is now alien. The fact that more than three-dozen scholars have already worked on Bulla poetry makes his job rather more difficult; as their readings of original texts, claims Jagtar, have either made it meaningless or created a context that is irrelevant. He gives an interesting example of the word *Sarj* used by Bulla. One scholar Asaf Khan says that this word can be read as *Siraj* and *Surj* as well; thus this expression has four different meanings: morning, beautiful, to create and candles. But Jagtar, who cites many such examples in the introduction of his book, says the real word is *Siraaaj*, which means Sun and *Chiraag*. He is pleased only with the work of Sharif Sabar of Pakistan; while most of others in the sub-continent, in his words, have relied on conjectures.

Despite refused of a visa to Pakistan on the plea that there is no dearth of scholars in that country to know the details of poet's life, Jagtar has done well in depicting the history of poet's times to highlight his contribution. People like Sarmad, Guru Teg Bahadur, two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhais Taru Singh, Mani Singh, Subeg Singh, Shahbaaz Singh, Haqueekat Rai etc. were mercilessly martyred by Mughals. The period belonged to Aurangzeb, Jahandar Shah, Farukhsere and Nadar Shah. Written in such a turmoil, Bulla's poetry defies fright of state to represent radical stream of Punjabi Sufi poets. Though Sufi thinking had already opened its arms for Buddhist and Hindu thoughts, what distinguishes Bulla is his conscious effort to blend their vocabulary and conventions in his verse:

Ranjha Jogirha Ban Aaya, Wah Sangi Sang Rachaaya

Iss Jogi Dee Eh Nishhani, Kann Vich Mundraan Gal Vich Gaani.
Soorat Iss Dee Yousuf Saani, Iss Alfon Ahad Banaaya

A detailed chapter on concept of *Ishaq* offers a comparative study and distinguishes Bulla, along with Ali Hyder and Shah Hussain, for leading a simple life unlike Sultan Bahu or Ghulam Farid. True bond between a man and Almighty remains at the center of his perception of love irrespective of one's religion, caste or creed.

One only wishes that Dr. Jagtar had written his meaningful pages in a more detailed manner and categorized his material with more dexterity. Though he has displayed courage by admitting, about a Dohrha, that he could not decode it; yet one expects some tentative interpretation from a scholar like Dr. Jagtar, who otherwise has done exceedingly well by also covering, in his discussion, issues like hypocrisy of formal aspect of faiths and poet's sense of meter. In addition to Bulla's whole poetry, detailed and meaningful glossary at the end of book covering more than 100 pages makes this study more comprehensible. A few coloured plates linked to the buildings and memorials of poet and his associates add to worth of this volume.