



रहमान राही Rahman Rahi

रहमान राही, जिन्हें साहित्य अकादेमी आज अपने सर्वोच्च सम्मान महत्तर सदस्यता से विभूषित कर रही है, कश्मीरी के सर्वाधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण कवियों और समालोचकों में से एक हैं। आपने अपनी कृतियों द्वारा कश्मीरी भाषा को अत्यंत समृद्ध और प्रभावित किया है और इस प्रकार भारतीय साहित्य को अपना महत्त्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया है।

अब्दुल रहमान राही का जन्म 6 मई 1925 को हुआ। आप रहमान राही के नाम से ही अधिक जाने जाते हैं। बचपन में ही माता-पिता की मृत्यु हो जाने के कारण आपका पालन-पोषण आपके मामा ने किया। आपकी प्रारंभिक शिक्षा श्रीनगर और जम्मू में हुई। आपने पंजाब विश्वविद्यालय लाहौर से उर्दू और फ़ारसी में मैट्रिक और एफ़.ए. की परीक्षाएँ उत्तीर्ण कीं। पूर्वी पंजाब विश्वविद्यालय, सोलन, शिमला से आपने बी.ए. किया। 1948 में दैनिक *ख़िदमत* के संपादन विभाग में आने से पहले कुछ समय तक आपने लोक निर्माण विभाग में कार्य किया। उर्दू में प्रकाशित *ख़िदमत* सप्ताहिक नैशनल कांग्रेस पार्टी का मुख पत्र था। इसी समय के आसपास आप प्रगतिशील लेखक संघ में आ गए और इसके महासचिव चुने गए। प्रगतिशील लेखक संघ की साहित्यिक पत्रिका *क्वांग पोश* के कुछ अंकों का आपने संपादन भी किया। अपने अध्ययन को जारी रखते हुए आप अघोषित कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी ऑफ़ कश्मीर के सांस्कृतिक विंग में शामिल हुए। जम्मू और कश्मीर विश्वविद्यालय से आपने फ़ारसी (1952) और अंग्रेज़ी साहित्य (1962) में एम.ए. किया। 1953 से 1955 तक आप दिल्ली से प्रकाशित उर्दू दैनिक *आजकल* के संपादक मंडल के सदस्य रहे। 1964 में फ़ारसी विभाग, कश्मीर विश्वविद्यालय में प्राध्यापक के रूप में पदभार ग्रहण करने से पूर्व आपने कई महाविद्यालयों में अध्यापन किया। 1975 में कश्मीर विश्वविद्यालय के कश्मीरी विभाग में वरिष्ठ फ़ेलो नियुक्त हुए। उस विश्वविद्यालय में सर्वप्रथम “प्रोफ़ेसर एमेरिटस” होने का गौरव आपको प्राप्त है। 1985 में आप विश्वविद्यालय से सेवानिवृत्त हो गए।

Rahman Rahi on whom Sahitya Akademi is conferring its highest honour of Fellowship today is one of the most eminent poets and critics of Kashmiri. He has, through his work, profoundly enriched and influenced the Kashmiri language, thus making a singular contribution to Indian literature.

Born Abdur Rahman on 6 May 1925, Rahman Rahi is better known by his pen-name. Orphaned at an early age, he was brought up by a maternal uncle. He had his early schooling at Srinagar and Jammu and did his Matric and F.A. in Urdu and Persian at the Punjab University, Lahore. He did his B.A. at the East Punjab University, Solan, Simla. He worked in the Public Works Department for a brief period before joining, in 1948, the editorial staff of the Urdu daily *Khidmat*, the official organ of the ruling National Conference Party. Around this time he also joined the Progressive Writers' Association of which he was elected General Secretary after a few years, coinciding with his leaving journalism. He also edited a few issues of *Kwang Posh*, the literary journal of the Progressive Writers' Association. Eventually he joined the cultural wing of the undeclared Communist Party of Kashmir while pursuing his studies. He did his M.A. in Persian (in 1952) and English Literature (in 1962) at the Jammu and Kashmir University. He was on the Board of Editors of the Urdu daily *Ajkal*, Delhi, from 1953 to 1955. He taught in many colleges before he joined the Department of Persian, Kashmir University as Lecturer in 1964. He became a Senior Fellow in the Department of Kashmiri of the same University in 1975. The University also conferred on him the distinction of being its very first Professor Emeritus. He retired from his academic career in 1985.

आप आरंभ से ही ललछद और अन्य कश्मीरी संत कवियों से गहरे प्रभावित रहे । लब्धप्रतिष्ठ कश्मीरी कवि दीनानाथ नादिम के चिन्तन और काव्य ने भी आपके ऊपर गहरा प्रभाव छोड़ा ।

कुछ वामपंथी नेताओं द्वारा राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर उर्दू को कश्मीर की भाषा के रूप में सामने रखने के प्रयास के कारण उनकी राजनीति से राही का मोहभंग हो गया । यद्यपि आपकी प्रारंभिक उर्दू कविताएँ, जैसे “क्रहक्रहा-ए-ज़हरफ़िशान” और “फ़ैसला” प्रगतिशील आलोचकों द्वारा सराही गईं, फिर भी आपने 1952 से कश्मीरी को ही अपनी अभिव्यक्ति के माध्यम के रूप में चुन लिया । आपका मानना है कि मातृभाषा स्वाभाविक भाषा होती है, इसलिए वही काव्यात्मक अभिव्यक्ति का सर्वोत्कृष्ट माध्यम है ।

आपके पाँच कविता-संकलन प्रकाशित हैं । 1952 में आपका पहला संकलन *सानावेनी साज़* प्रकाशित हुआ । *सियाह-रूदा-जरेन मंज़* आपका नवीनतम कविता-संकलन है, जो 1997 में प्रकाशित हुआ । आपके पहले कश्मीरी कविता-संग्रह *नौरोज़-ए-सबा* (1958) ने एक महत्वपूर्ण कश्मीरी कवि के रूप में आपको स्थापित किया । इस कृति के लिए आपको 1961 में साहित्य अकादेमी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित किया गया । *नौरोज़-ए-सबा* उस समय के प्रगतिशील आंदोलन के प्रति राही की निष्ठा को उजागर करती है, जिसे जी.एम. सादिक और डी.पी. धर जैसे राजनेताओं और दीनानाथ नादिम जैसे साहित्यकारों का संरक्षण प्राप्त था । तथापि ‘स्वानलंकी प्यथ’ जैसी कविताएँ, जिनमें सर्वव्यापी मृत्यु के भय को अभिव्यक्ति मिली है, प्रगतिशीलता के ढाँचे से भिन्न प्रस्थान को सूचित करती हैं ।

साहित्य के गंभीर अध्येता होने के नाते तथा जीवन के व्यापक भावात्मक अनुभव ने आपको साहित्य, विचारधारा या आस्था के मामलों में हर तरह की खेमेबंदी से दूर रखा । स्तालिनवादी सोवियत व्यवस्था के अचानक बेनक्राब होने से आपका और भी मोहभंग हुआ । इसके फलस्वरूप एक लेखक के रूप में अपनी संवेदना के अनुरूप आपका एक ताज़गीभरा, आधुनिक और हर तरह के विचारधारात्मक बोझ से मुक्त दृष्टिकोण विकसित हुआ ।

कहवात (1980) में संकलित राही के समालोचनात्मक निबंधों से कश्मीरी का अपना आलोचनात्मक मुहावरा विकसित हुआ है । इस पुस्तक के लिए आपको राज्य की सांस्कृतिक एकेडमी का साहित्यिक समालोचक पुरस्कार प्राप्त हुआ । इससे पहले कश्मीरी साहित्य में योगदान के लिए आपको 1978 में “रोब ऑफ़ ऑनर” भी प्रदान किया गया था । साहित्य-समालोचना की आपकी दो अन्य पुस्तकें हैं— *शार शिनासी*

He was deeply influenced by Lalded and other Kashmiri mystic poets early on. The thought and poetry of veteran Kashmiri poet Dina Nath Nadim, who was a senior contemporary of his, were also to leave a deep impression on him.

The attempt by some Leftist leaders at the national level to project Urdu as the language of Kashmir brought about in Rahi disenchantment with their politics. Although Rahi's earlier Urdu poems like “Qahqaha-e-Zaharfishan” (The Venomous Laughter) and “Faisla”(Decision) were appreciated by Progressive critics, he chose to switch over to Kashmiri in 1952 in conformity with his conviction that the mother-tongue was the natural and, therefore, the best medium of poetic expression.

He has five collections of poems to his credit. *Sanaweni Saaz* was his first collection published in 1952, while *Siyaah-Rooda-Jaren Manz* is his latest poetry collection published in 1997. His first anthology of poems in Kashmiri, *Nauroz-e-Saba* (The Morning Zephyr, 1958) established him firmly as a prominent Kashmiri poet. The work won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1961. *Nauroz-e-Saba* reveals Rahi's loyalty to the Progressive movement of that time, which was patronised by political leaders like G.M. Sadiq and D.P. Dhar and literary figures like Dina Nath Nadim. However poems like “Swanalanki Pyath” (On Swanalank, 1956), in which the poet expressed his fears in the face of all-pervading death, indicate a departure from the Progressive mould.

His evolution as a serious student of literature and his emotional experience of life in general made him veer away from commitment to any regimentation in literature, thought or belief. The sudden exposure of the Stalinist Soviet system disillusioned him further. The result was a fresh outlook in harmony with his sensibility as a writer, which was modern and free from any ideological baggage.

Rahi's critical essays in *Kahwat* (Touchstone, 1980) are considered to have developed an indigenuous critical idiom for Kashmiri. This book won him the Best Literary Critic Award of the State Cultural Academy, which had earlier presented him with the “Robe of Honour” in 1978 for his services to Kashmiri literature. His other two books on literary criticism are *Shaar Shinasee*, 1982 and *Kashir Shayiree Ta Waznuq Soorati Hall*, 2000.

(1982) और कशीर शायरी ता वाज़नुक सूरती हाल (2000)। डॉक्टर फ़ाउस्टस और बाबा फ़रीद इत्यादि अनेक कृतियों का अंग्रेज़ी से कश्मीरी में अनुवाद भी आपने किया है।

इसी वर्ष आपको भारत सरकार के पद्मश्री सम्मान से विभूषित किया गया है। अपने सुदीर्घ एवं विशिष्ट साहित्यिक जीवन में आपको कई पुरस्कारों और सम्मानों से विभूषित किया गया, जिनमें 1989 में मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार द्वारा प्रदत्त एमेरिटस फ़ेलोशिप भी शामिल है।

व्यक्तिगत, सामाजिक और वैश्विक स्तर पर विलगाव, अस्तित्वमूलक दुविधा तथा मानवीय असमंजस राही की कविता के मुख्य विषय रहे हैं। आपकी कविता "परछाइयाँ" इसका एक उदाहरण है :

अपनी निश्चिंता से जिरह और अमरता की आशा करना अब छोड़ दो,
अगर जुटा सको थोड़े-से पल, तो उन्हीं में रम जाओ।
बस्ती की जिस राह चलते रहे, वह धँस गई घने जंगल में,
जिस तरह मेरे आस्था-कवच को भेदा संदेहों ने।
आँख खुलते ही मेरे सपनों को नज़र लग गई,
तमाम उमंगते तरुण सीने झुलस कर हो गए वीराने।
देखो तो दिखेगा आसपास उफनता मेला,
हाथ आएगा बस खयाल एकाधा, और अकेला एक कौआ उजाड़ में।
कभी मुझे चाह थी चाँद-तारे गढ़ने की,
अब सिर खपा रहा हूँ कि खुद को कोई नाम तो दे दूँ।
सारे विश्वास पठार की मुरझाई हरियाली-जैसे हैं,
सारा चैतन्य एक क्रुद्ध साँप-जैसा है।
सारे देवता मेरी अपनी परछाइयाँ हैं,
सारे दानव मेरे ही अहम् के पुतले-जैसे हैं।
सभा भवन मानो बंदरों की खीं-खीं से भरे हैं,
संतों के पहनावे के लिए जंगलों को छनो।
कैसा है नाव का खेना ये, कहाँ तो किनारा है!
दिशाहारा भटक रही नाव आँधियारे में।
अरे ओ नर्तक, नाच निर्वस्त्र चारों तरफ़ उसके,
राही तो एक अगिनखोर दीवाना है।

एक कवि और समालोचक के रूप में कश्मीरी भाषा और साहित्य को समृद्ध करने में अपने योगदान के लिए साहित्य अकादेमी रहमान राही को अपने सर्वोच्च सम्मान महत्तर सदस्यता से विभूषित करती है।

He has also translated a number of works from English into Kashmiri, some of which are *Dr. Faustus* and *Baba Farid*.

He was awarded the Padmashri this year. He has received several other awards and honours in his long and distinguished literary career including Emeritus Fellowship awarded by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India, in 1989.

Alienation, existential dilemma and human predicament at personal, social and universal levels are the principal themes of much of Rahi's poetry. His poem "Shadows" exemplifies this:

Give up questioning your destiny and hope of eternity,
If you can get hold of a few moments, enjoy them.
The much-trodden city road penetrated the dense woods
Just as doubts wormed into the mantle of my faith.
Opening the eyes exposed my dreams to the evil eye,
Many surging vernal breasts became scorched wildernesses.
Cast a look around and you see a sizzling fair,
Reckon a thought and a lone crow in the void.
In days gone by I longed to create stars,
I rack my brains now to give myself a name.
All beliefs are like withered greenery on the uplands,
All consciousness is like an infuriated serpent.
All gods are mine own shadows,
All monsters like my animated self.
Halls appear to be furnished with the gibberish of monkeys,
Comb the forests to robe saints.
What kind of steering and whither the shore,
The boat is drifting unguided in the dark.
O danseuse, circle round him disrobed,
Rahi is a fire-eating lunatic.

Translated from Kashmiri: S.L. Sadhu

For his pre-eminent contribution as a poet and critic enriching Kashmiri language and literature in a profound manner, the Sahitya Akademi confers its highest honour, the Fellowship, on Rahman Rahi.

Acceptance Speech

Rahman Rahi

Modern India's most distinguished literary organization, the Sahitya Akademi, has conferred on me the honour of its Fellowship and I accept this prestigious award in all humility. For this great honour my heartfelt gratitude is due to all the respectable members of the Akademi, its President Shri Ramakanta Rath, its Vice President, Prof. Gopi Chand Narang, and its Secretary, Prof. K. Satchidanandan who unanimously chose me for the award.

I have a candid feeling that this honour is somehow a sincere and perceptive acknowledgment of the creative maturity and cultural importance of the Kashmiri language because whatever little I have been able to achieve as a writer could not have been possible if this language were not my vehicle. Its growth and prosperity are the surest guarantee of the growth and prosperity of my people. To ignore it or deny to it its rightful place would not only be a glaring injustice to its speakers but also an irreparable loss to the entire cultural heritage of the sub-continent. I have given vent to this dreadful fear in one of my verses thus:

*Such a premonition that air comes to a stand-still
before the treetops;*

*Oceans seep down into islets and hills break
under the burden of the sound.*

The Kashmiri language enables me to define my identity and my surroundings and then express my inmost feelings and thoughts and weave my choicest dreams. It is sheer ill luck that the atmosphere which is being generated at the moment in and around Kashmir is inimical to the creative process and its handling of the dream as well as the reality. The distinctive feature of creative literature is to cognize through language the inner and the outer reality and to explore possibilities of their reconciliation and harmonization or to adum-

brate the fear and suspicions that waylay such a process. It is language that brings into being the pulsation of feeling and emotion, the fight of thought and imagination, the effusion of knowledge and wisdom and becomes, in the end, the source of ecstatic joy and peace of mind. Likewise it also brings to light the sordid dynamics of separation, ill-will, insensitivity, hatred and indifference. A sinister attempt to consign a people's language to oblivion and slow death amounts to petrifying that people's eye and heart and forcing it to feel and to aspire for what suits the narrow and selfish interest of its enemies and exploiters.

The speed and extent with which a constantly awake and enlightened literature is neglected in our present-day society should be a cause of great alarm for all of us. What is dreadfully ominous is that genuine creative expression is replaced by hollow and insubstantial literature which may yield momentary excitement but possess no perennial value. This is, in fact, indicative of the growing dehumanization and vacuity of imagination of our society. The earliest great Kashmiri poet, Lal Ded, while describing the state of her creative ferment had asserted:

*Not for a moment did I forbear nor a while wait,
So ecstatic did the liquor of my own verse render me:
I caught hold of my inner gloom and wrapped it
around me*

Then seized it hard and tore it to shreds.

Thus Lal Ded's own poetry acted for her as the intoxicating wine under whose effect she overcame her inner darkness and so dispelled it as to illuminate the whole atmosphere.

Literature defines the ambiguous and the inarticulate, cognizes and brings to light the unknown and the mysterious and facilitates flights to fresh horizons.

It also depicts the combat of the divine and the diabolical forces that always rage in the inner world of man. In any case, whatever its subject, it leads to a rapture which nothing else can yield.

Many are the forces which strive for darkness rather than light, and the worst of these is habit— die-hard and conservative habit— which befores the mind and blinds the eye and makes one contended with what is and oblivious of what ought to be. This generates mental torpor and spiritual emptiness in which one feels reconciled to all evils as decrees of fate: individual discord, social inequality, communal prejudice, parochial tension, linguistic disharmony, totalitarian coercion and constricting enslavement. In such a state, seldom does any one think of questioning the establishment, much less, of challenging and seeking to overturn it. How then, in such an atmosphere, can one think of identifying the gems among the stones or producing the lotus from the myre. Man is converted to an unthinking animal subserving the interest of others or to an all-devastating social rebel outcast. Creative literature invades the fortresses of habit and conservatism and awakens the dreams of reconstruction diving into fathomless depths; it brings to light the fiery streams hidden in the bowels of oceanic mountains.

The history of world literature is a record of achievements — great and small — of demolition and rebuilding on enlightened lines. In its own way Kashmiri literature too is a short and small, yet meaningful chapter of this glorious history. Literature awakens in man the consciousness of realizing his self and his significance in the universe and of coming to terms with the unknown and intractable mysteries of destiny. It reveals to him the self-consuming dedication of the canker that destroys the rose. It enables the affluent to feel the desperation of the needy and makes the hungry appreciate the helplessness of the wise. It engenders the anguish of protest against hatred based on differences of belief and conviction. It exposes, in its own way, the sham trickery of hypocritical religiosity to hoodwink and exploit. It makes man cry and wail on the hegemony and highhandedness of the mighty against the weak. It nerves the weak to challenge and defy the forces of tyranny, coercion and imperialism. It sensitizes the insensitive so that they begin to see the mysterious in their own colourless lives and insipid surroundings. It revives the heart and awakens it to realize the essential unity of all mankind. Like all great literature Kashmiri literature too aspires

to realize these noble objectives.

For ages Kashmir has been an acknowledged centre of Knowledge and enlightenment with its doors and windows wide open. Its contacts with Central Asia and the Far East led to the popularization of the truth-speaking and life-revering thought of Buddha. When it embraced Sanskrit culture it made Katha Sarit Sagar sweep the surroundings far and wide. Through Kalhana it lit up the path of historiography in the subcontinent and promoted aesthetic thought through geniuses like Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and Mammata. When it patronized Persian language and literature it won the title of mini-Iran through the creative achievements of Ghani and Sarfi. In the Kashmiri language it produced a mystic and visionary of Lal Ded's stature and a multi-faceted revolutionary rishi like Sheikh Noor-ud-Din. Even in the pitch dark days of slavery it produced luminaries like Mahmud Ghami, Rasul Mir and Shamas Faquir and altruistic, patriotic and freedom-loving poets like Mahjoor and Azad.

How sad that this warm, sensitive and broad-minded region has been in the grip of an enervating and soul-consuming malady for the last five decades. They have torn to bits a lovely flower-garden, sowed thorns and thistles in fields and plains, converted the hill-tops into ammunition dumps and courtyards into slaughter-houses. Worst of all the barrel of the gun has banned thoughts and feelings and emotions and it has ruled that to dream is to be an impudent traitor or rebel. Opportunism, bribery and hoarding of worldly pelf have become the order of the day and idealism is equated with stupidity. Consequently, most of the modern Kashmiri literature is the literature of anguish, restlessness and protest. It is in revolt against those forces of darkness which seek to destroy our age-old, soul-nourishing values and create anarchy, unrest and pessimism. Kashmiri litterateurs, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, are engaged in an earnest endeavour to humanize and sensitize man in order to replace what is ugly, vicious and false with what is beautiful, good and true.

Unfortunately, an insidious conspiracy seems to be afoot to force the Kashmiri writer into silence. Kashmir right now is the victim of a cultural aggression carried on by opportunistic and myopic forces from within and without. The identity of a people is its peculiar culture and the most effective and resilient defender of culture is a people's language. That precisely is the reason why Kashmiri language has become the prime target of the cultural aggressors —

neither the reed- bed nor any flute. Mahjoor has forewarned Kashmiris of this invasion:

*Said the bulbul to the rose, "your beauty is perfect,
But your drawback is that you lack the tongue
And those who lack it forfeit the right to live."
Come love and handsomely harness my being.*

The Kashmiri writer knows that raising slogans and throwing gauntlets is none of the business of literature. He also knows that the imaginative literature promotes in man self-recognition in an immeasurably vast and complex universe, but when the very vehicle of the writer's expression (his mother-tongue) is in danger of extinction he cannot but feel lacerated and enraged. The Kashmiri writer is not unconscious of the fact that the world today has been converted into a global village and that languages other than the mother tongue ought to be learnt but he knows at the same time that if his language is suppressed in order to promote another language it will deal a death-blow to the intellectual and spiritual vitality of his people. Shaikh Noor-ud-Din, the standard-bearer of Kashmir, prayed in earnest that may his lays be read and understood, but if the very language in which his thoughts are enshrined is destroyed how shall the

prayer come true? The Kashmiri people owe their warmth, their sensitivity, their humane ways, their love of beauty, the idealism and their dreams, in large measure, to their language. To suppress this language is to undermine the admirable values which make Kashmiri culture what it is. This culture is a valuable part of the cultural heritage of the world and to safeguard and promote this culture is the duty of all those intellectuals and creative writers who crave for the restoration of mankind.

At a crucial juncture in the history of the sub-continent, Mahatma Gandhi saw the only ray of light in Kashmir. Today we—Kashmir litterateurs— look up to the intellectuals and writers of the subcontinent to join us in ushering in a fresh dawn so that the darkness in which we are caught up is dispelled and once again — as in the past — we are able to make a substantial contribution to the enrichment of the colourful literature of the subcontinent. As a Kashmiri writer, this is my highest aspiration, my cherished dream—and in this context I view this ceremony, being held today under the auspices of the Sahitya Akademi, as a good augury with consequences of far-reaching import.

Thank you.