

## **West Punjabi Poetry: From Ustad Daman to Najm Hosain Syed**

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The article focuses on the Punjabi poetic tradition that developed in West Punjab following the region's partition in 1947. It examines the works of poets such as Ustad Daman, Sharif Kunjahi, Ahmad Rahi, Munir Niazi, and Najm Hosain Syed by situating them in the context shaped by religious segregation, literary isolation, and the lack of state patronization in West Punjab. The survey ends with a brief exploration of regional poetry in West Punjab.

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### **The Context**

One can begin with a set of simple questions: What is the precise impact of Partition itself on Punjabi literature? Are there any valid reasons to distinguish contemporary Punjabi poetry written in East and West Punjab? In other words, has the geographic division of the region resulted in any recognizable variations in literature produced there?

The answer to these interrelated questions is in the affirmative. The socio-cultural and literary environments in which the poetic traditions on both sides of the border have grown, and different patterns of patronage that have sustained them, have left their distinctive marks on Punjabi poetry produced there. Let us briefly review some of the factors behind this phenomenon.

With Partition in 1947, the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh mix of the Punjabi society ceased to exist. As part of the general population exchange, all Hindu and Sikh writers, journalist, magazine editors, and publishers migrated to East Punjab. Beginning with those who came to age after Partition, West Punjabi writers grew up in a society where non-Muslims were no longer part of the social fabric. Although the literary tradition of Punjabi Muslims had its distinct patterns, the complete exclusion of non-Muslim influences from the daily life experience of West Punjabi writers is a unique phenomenon, which has affected the literature being produced there in profound ways.

Not only did Partition segregate the combined Punjabi society into two separate communal and geographical areas, the political realities did not permit any social interaction between the two. Until recently, the hostility between India and Pakistan had kept the borders tightly closed with little opportunities for travel and exchange of newspapers, books, and magazines.

For Punjabi literature, an additional problem emerged. The literature produced in East and West Punjab is published in Gurmukhi and Shahmukhi,

respectively. With the exception of a small circle of writers and scholars who have learned to read both scripts, the general public remains informed only of literature produced on their side.

As a result of this isolation, the exposure to most of the developing trends in poetry in East Punjab was minimal in West Punjab. For example, a very small portion of Amrita Pritam's poetry has so far been published in West Punjab in Shahmukhi script, and there is practically no awareness of the women's rights movement in West Punjabi poetry. While Haribhajan Singh and Shiv Kumar Batalvi gained immense popularity in East Punjab in the 1970s, only a few poems of Batalvi were published in West Punjabi magazines. The complete collection of Batalvi's poetry was published in Shahmukhi script as recently as 1997, and Haribhajan Singh continues to remain unknown in West Punjab. There was also no parallel of other modernist trends in East Punjabi poetry, which have had little or no influence in West Punjab.

An important impact of literary isolation between East and West Punjab can now be seen in the growth of two somewhat distinct Punjabi literary languages there, in which some vocabulary is not even mutually comprehensible. In West Punjab, the writers, magazine editors, and book publishers have had to deal with several issues in developing a literary Punjabi.

Persian alphabets that have long been adopted for writing Punjabi language cannot represent all Punjabi sounds, and the efforts to modify and add new symbols are still in the works. The debates on these issues are on but no general agreement is in sight. Questions of representation of regional dialects in standardized Punjabi, and replacement of Urdu and Persian vocabulary with pure Punjabi words is still a work in progress. In East Punjabi literature, Sanskrit vocabulary is now used in abundance. West Punjabi readers in general are not familiar with most of the Sanskrit words used in East Punjabi writings, to the point that magazine editors and book publishers who transliterate and publish in Shahmukhi now resort to providing annotations of these words.

The lack of state patronization of Punjabi language also left a significant impact on West Punjabi literature. Unlike East Punjab, where Punjabi enjoys the status of the state language, the Pakistani emphasis has been on the propagation of Urdu. Punjabi writers and activists who supported Punjabi during the 1950s can be counted on fingers. Tariq Rehman draws this grim picture as follows:

Soon after the creation of Pakistan, Punjabi vanished as a university subject. Because of its association with Sikhs and due to the state's promotion of Urdu, Punjabi was relegated to the periphery. In 1948, however, some activity did begin when a meeting of some Punjabi intellectuals was held at Dyal Singh College under the presidentship of Syed Abid Ali Abid. All the participants were distinguished men of letters, M. B. Taseer and Faqir Muhammad Faqir amongst others. They decided to work towards making Punjabi the language of education in the Punjab and to encourage publications in Punjabi. The first objective remained an aspiration, but Abdul Majid Salik did start

publishing the monthly Punjabi in 1951. Its editor, Faqir Muhammad Faqir, was successful in persuading eminent Punjabi literary figures, who had made their name in Urdu literature, to write for it. The Punjabi League and the Punjabi Cultural Society were formed in early 1952, and a number of minor Punjabi organizations, such as the Punjabi Morcha (Punjabi Front), created in 1954 by Sardar Iqbal Dhillon, proliferated. But none of these organizations was able to get Punjabi accepted as even an optional language in the University of the Punjab in 1953.

The first significant event of this period was the Punjabi Conference held on March 9, 1956 at Lyallpur. It was sponsored by the Punjabi Bazm-e-Adab (literary society) and its main purpose was consciousness-raising. This Bazm-e-Adab was the Pakistani version of Umar Din Ulfat Varsi's organization, which has been mentioned earlier. Having migrated from Jullundur to Lyallpur, Varsi organized his society under an acceptable Persian name. The major impediment to the acceptance of Punjabi, as perceived by Punjabi intellectuals, was that most literate Punjabis (and perhaps also the illiterate) exhibited various degrees of cultural shame about their language. In his presidential address at the conference, Abdul Majid Salik pointed to this and the fact that Muslim Punjabis had always served Urdu. He was, however, quick to add that the progress of Punjabi should not be at the expense of Urdu which should remain the national language of Pakistan.

The Conference demanded that Punjabi be used as the medium of instruction at the lower level. This was accepted in principle, although no real change was made. In fact, since all the provinces of West Pakistan had been amalgamated into One Unit by this time, the ruling elite was less supportive than ever of the indigenous languages of the former provinces.

[Tariq Rehman, 1996]

Fifty years after the first Punjabi conference was held in Lyallpur (now Faisalabad), the overall situation of Punjabi in Pakistan has not improved in any significant way. Almost all sources of information in West Punjab such as educational institutes, newspapers, magazines, books, radio, and television predominantly provide knowledge in Urdu and English. Although Punjab University, Lahore, started Masters classes in Punjabi in 1971, and Punjabi was later offered as an optional subject in schools and colleges, Urdu, and to a lesser degree English, remains the medium of instruction in West Punjab's schools and colleges. Since Urdu and English are the languages that are needed in the job market, many Punjabi parents, especially in cities, converse with their children in Urdu, which has remained the first language of choice for the vast majority of new generations of writers in West Punjab. While interest in writing Punjabi is

limited to a few who go through the trouble of teaching themselves reading and writing in Punjabi, there is no doubt that it is losing ground with every new generation.

Given all these difficulties, it is important to register that West Punjab has produced literature, in particular poetry, that is at par with Punjabi literature produced any where in the world. This accomplishment is rooted in the strong living tradition of reading or listening to the classical Sufi and *qissa* poetry in West Punjab's small towns and villages, on the one hand, and the missionary zeal of a small number of Punjabi writers and activists, on the other.

The interest in writing Punjabi poetry that is created through this exposure to classical Punjab poetry is still the most important inspiration, and the main source for nurturing the creative talents of Punjabi poets. Mainly through establishing Punjabi literary organizations, holding conferences and symposiums on Punjabi language and literature, publishing Punjabi books and a few magazines, and various other activities, these individuals have been able to sustain production of Punjabi literature without support from the state and its institutions. Even the best efforts of this small cadre of Punjabi writers and activists has not been able to fill all the gaps in the development of Punjabi literature and literary language in West Punjab left by the lack of state patronization.

Postgraduate studies in Punjabi are offered only in Punjab University, Lahore, and there is no provision for teaching it at the primary level in the schools. This sole department at the university level can neither fulfill the needs of academic research in Punjabi, nor can it train or employ enough scholars to carry out research work needed. One outcome of this deficiency is the lack of Punjabi literary criticism in West Punjab. Most West Punjabi writers have to play the dual role of Punjabi writers and activists for the promotion of Punjabi language, and when they turn their attention to the research work, their first preference so far has been to explore the rich heritage of Punjabi classical poetry in order to raise the interest of West Punjabis in Punjabi literature. Faqeer Muhammad Faqeer, Muhammad Asif Khan, Najm Hosain Syed, Sharif Kunjahi, Iqbal Salahudin, and almost all other West Punjabi scholars have primarily focused their work on classical literature. As compared to a vast array of books, academic thesis, and other material that has been published in East Punjab on Punjabi poetry, it is hard to find any credible critique of modern Punjabi poetry in West Punjab. Post-Partition West Punjabi poets have few readers and no serious critics to properly appreciate and evaluate their poetry.

### **Post-Partition West Punjabi Poetry**

With Partition, the mainstream Punjabi literary activities came to a virtual halt. Small sections in some newspapers and *mushairas/kavi darbars*, gatherings for reciting poetry, remained the only outlets for Punjabi poets outside their immediate circles. *Baint bazi*, poetry competition, which was popular in Amritsar and Lahore, and had produced a number of prominent

Punjabi poets like Ustad Daman, Talib Jalandhari, Ferozeudin Sharf, Hakim Nasir, Babu Karam, Ustad Hamdam, Ustad Gam, and Maula Baksh Kushta, also came to a halt after Partition.

The poetic scene during the early years was dominated by traditional poets, though a new generation of Punjabi poets had begun to shift towards modern poetry by writing in blank verse or making other changes in form and style. Baqi Siddiqui, Akbar Lahori, Ahmad Salim, Abdul Majid Bhatti, Altaf Parwaiz, Ghulam Yaqoob Anwar, Abdul Hamid Amar, Jogi Jehlumi, Afzal Pervaiz, and Akhter Kashmiri and many other poets were part of this emerging trend.

An important poet of this early period of West Punjabi poetry is Ustad Daman (1913-2002). He came from a humble background and followed his father in opening a tailor's shop in Baghban Pura, Lahore. He also became a disciple of Ustad Hamdam and received guidance from him in the art of writing poetry. Ustad Daman got his early fame from reciting Punjabi poems in the public gatherings of Indian National Congress during the freedom movement. His nationalistic poetry became very popular.

In China the Chinese are grand  
 In Russia they do as they have planned  
 In Japan its people rule over its strand  
 The British rule the land of England  
 The French hold the land of France  
 And in Teheran the Persians make their stand  
 The Afghans hold on to their highland  
 Turkmenistan's freedom bears the Turkmen's brand  
 How very strange is indeed this fact  
 That freedom in India is contraband  
 [Translated by Sharma Fowpe, 2005]

After Partition, he continued to write on social and political issues and was widely recognized as a people's poet. He was arrested a couple of times for criticizing the politicians and government. Even Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had warrants issued for his arrest for writing a highly critical poem about the policies of his government. Tariq Ali narrates an incidence about Ustad Daman's arrest during Ayub Khan's military government in an interview as follows:

When the United States carried out its first coup in 1958—you know they prefer ruling Pakistan through the military—the great Punjabi poet, Ustad Daman—who was an oral poet (his poetry is only written down occasionally) gave a big poetry reading. Some of our best poets were in prison. Ustad Daman came to recite. He was a big man with a wonderful voice. He recited some apolitical poems about birds fluttering here and there. And we said, 'birds flutter anywhere, say something about today.' As he carried on and we pressed him until he got angry and he recited extemporaneously. The poem went something like this: 'Now each day is fair and balmy/ everywhere you look: the army.' This

poem got him imprisoned. He was picked up the next day and was locked up for three weeks. The next time he met us, he said, 'Come here, you .... Don't you ever tell me at a poetry reading to say something, because I go to prison and not you guys.' [David Barsamian, 2004].

Until Partition, Sharif Kunjahi (b. 1915) was the only Muslim poet who can be classified as a modern poet. He had started writing poetry in the 1930s, but published relatively little and even that was done later in his career. His first collection, *Jagrate* (Sleepless Nights) containing 37 poems, was published in Gurmukhi in 1958, and in Shahmukhi in 1965. His second anthology *Orhak Honi Lou* (Finally the Light Shines) was published in 1995. Most of the West Punjabi critics rightfully credit him as the pioneer of modern Punjabi poetry, but he is not very well known in East Punjab.

Kunjahi's poetry is a complete break from the *qissa* and Sufi traditions. Even his earliest poems have all the elements of modern poetry: secularism, expression of individualist experience, awareness of social and political changes around him, etc. His deep sense of departure from the existing value system was expressed in one of his early poems entitled 'The Village.'

Today, I am going to walk past your village,  
 A place from where I was not able to move away in the past,  
 Where I always was looking for some excuse to go.  
 What excuse? The truth is that you were the real reason  
 Who had made that village a place for pilgrimage.  
 What a beautiful name it had,  
 How exciting it was to just listen to its name.  
 Looking at its trees from a distance would take away all tiredness,  
 It seemed like their branches were giving me a signal to come close.  
 Standing under their shadow was heavenly.  
 Today, I will walk by those trees.  
 Nothing is pulling me towards them,  
 Neither do I feel the loving touch of breeze coming from your village  
 No one is there to meet me with affection  
 Or waiting for me,  
 Hiding behind the Kikkar trees, and alone  
 I am passing by your village  
 As if it is a graveyard, not a village.  
 [From *Jagrate*. Translated by SHR].

Without being overburdened by excessive symbolism or extreme emotions, Kunjahi's poetry is a realistic and balanced expression of his social consciousness in a relatively simple and straightforward manner. He played a crucial role in setting new directions for Punjabi poetry and opened the doors for post-Partition poets to move away from the traditional style of writing poetry

and experiment with new modes and techniques. His services to West Punjabi literature as a poet, scholar, critic, lexicographer, and translator are widely recognized in West Punjab. He has translated Iqbal's poetry and the Holy Quran into Punjabi. He also published his autobiography in 2005.

Ahmad Rahi (1929-2002) thrilled West Punjabis with his collection of poetry called *Trinjhanh* (Girls' Gathering) published in 1953. In a traditional environment, Rahi's poetry brought a breath of fresh air. Using the idiom, imagery, and diction of folk songs, he created beautiful poetry of unique charm. First and foremost, his poems addressed the tragic experience of Partition. With the exception of Amrita Pritam and Ahmad Salim, Punjabi poets had stayed away from writing on this topic. Rahi's poetry provided a well-needed catharsis. He focused on the ordeal of young village girls who had become victims of abduction and rape during the Partition riots. Following the tradition of Sufi and *qissa* poets, he assumed the voice of a woman in his poetry and expressed the grief and agony of women in the style of a folk singer.

Almost one half of the poems in *Trinjhanh* are related to women's experience of the turmoil of Partition. The remaining poems are also in the voice of a woman and express the feelings of a young village girl about love and separation. Rahi's songs invoke familiar symbols and metaphors, which make his poems as some of the most captivating written in West Punjab. After *Trinjhanh*, Rahi wrote for films and became one of the most popular lyricist in Lahore and wrote more than 1900 hundred songs for Urdu and Punjabi films.

The early phase of West Punjabi poetry was dominated by poets who had started writing in the early decades of the past century. By the mid-1960s, however, new poets appeared on the scene. Munir Niazi (b. 1928) is the most important figure of this period. Niazi stands out as a poet whose poetry is largely dissociated from the traditional as well as contemporary Punjabi poetry. Niazi, who also wrote in Urdu, is firmly rooted in the urban environment and does not invoke Rahi's affection for folk songs or Kunjahi's love for village scenes. The Punjabi of Niazi's poetry is the simple conversational vocabulary of a city dweller. It is no wonder that he became the most popular Punjabi poet among the young and urban college students.

Most of his poetry consists of short poems, some of which restricted to just a single verse. Only a few *ghazals* appear in the three anthologies of poetry that he has published so far. Overall, his poems are only a small fraction of what he has published in Urdu. He stands on his own having no association with progressive or any other literary movement of his time. Yet, he has carved out a safe space for himself and is considered one of the most popular Punjabi poets in West Punjab.

The two key characteristics of Niazi's poetry that make it unique are its expression of his purely individualistic experience, without the burden of any defined philosophy or belief system, and this is expressed in a style that can be best described as closer to impressionist poetry. Although these poetic features can be traced in various forms all the way back to Baba Farid's *dohras*, there is no doubt that Niazi has taken them to new heights.

The individualism in Niazi's poetry has been noticed and commented upon by many of his critics:

When we read Munir's poetry, we repeatedly come across a few images that include city, jungle, blood, strange and scary faces, travel and paths, old palaces, ruined dwellings, sun, noon time, moon and ghosts, who have surrounded him while Munir stands in the center. From this we can figure out a way to understand his thought process by concluding that Munir is essentially a narcissist (Nasir Rana, 2004. Translated by SHR).

It is hard to find traces of any philosophy or a particular message in Niazi's poetry. It is centered on his own feelings dominated by a sense of fear, at times amounting to terror, as well as wonder, awe, and beauty of things and places. He has an uncanny way of transmitting his feeling in images that carry the same impression to the reader's mind. His poetry is essentially a display of symbols and images:

In an ocean of sharp pink  
up shines the moon  
a black cobra  
swimming through the waves  
the palace is splendid  
though invisible  
all the rooms are empty  
not a soul is living there  
still the old fear remains:  
who knows when  
a thief will come in  
to spill a sea of blood.  
[Translated by Irfan Malik and Jennifer Barber]

Niazi's poetry couldn't have gained such wide range of popularity unless it had deeper meanings than just being a play of imagery and symbols. His altered sense of reality, that in another poem shows him splashes of blood on the walls that are vibrating with loud cries of unseen ghosts in apparently peaceful homes, would be meaningless to his readers unless that was in fact the true representation of their hidden fears and silent sufferings. In many of his poems, Niazi creates a sense of searching for something without clearly defining it, or asks questions without providing a definitive answer:

These paths, these lengthy paths!  
Where do they lead to?  
To some very ancient palaces,  
Where some lost friends meet?  
Perhaps, to the dense forests,  
To scare us, like a vicious beast?



Or, after a round of aimless wandering,  
 Just bring us back to where we started!  
 [Translated by Sain Sucha]

Niazi's poetry was an important turning point in the history of West Punjabi poetry. With his arrival on the scene, the balance was finally tilted in favor of modern poetry. He fashioned a new trend in writing poetry that was followed by a large number of poets who adopted his diction and style, and also initiated many new and different experiments in writing Punjabi poetry.

Although Munir Niazi emerged as the most popular poet, a large number of other poets had also appeared on the scene by mid-1960s and early 1970s. Three major trends can be observed in their writings. First, the influences of leftist and socialist ideology were prominent. Nadir Ali, Javed Zaki, and a number of other poets explicitly expressed these sentiments in their poetry. Second, poets like Malik M. Zamard, Laeeq Babri and others experimented with new forms, including free verse. Both of these trends, however, proved to be short lived.

Finally, a large number of established Urdu poets started to write in Punjabi at this time. Included in the long list are Sufi Tabassum, Ahmad Nadim Qasmi, Arif Abdul Matin, Safdar Mir, Farigh Bokhari, Anis Nagi, Shehzad Ahmad, Zafar Iqbal, Salim-ur-Rehman, Wazir Agha, and many others. This trend of writing poetry in both Urdu and Punjabi has become a permanent feature for many poets now. In addition, Punjabi *ghazal* became a popular verse form, especially after the publication of Pir Fazal Shah's *Dunghe Painde* (Long Distances) and Salim Kashir's *Tatiyan Chavan* (Hot Shadows) in 1963, and Rauf Sheikh's *Balde Shahir* (Burning Cities) in 1971.

Munir Niazi left stylistic impact on the poetry of many young poets, but the lasting influence on their writings came from Najm Hosain Syed (b. 1936). His poetry is perhaps the best illustration of a profound sense of alienation that resulted from the lack of state support for Punjabi language, literature, and culture. The common theme of most of his poetry is his acute awareness of the tragedy of marginalization of Punjabi language that has distanced Punjabis from their cultural and historical roots. Love for Punjab, its land, people, language, culture, traditions, and history is not just a subtext, but the dominant theme of his poetry. The underlying progressive instincts in his poetry are influenced by the realization that cultural and linguistic deprivation of Punjabis is the worst form of exploitation.

In his writings, Syed has led the trend of developing a pure literary Punjabi for both prose and poetry, by carefully employing Punjabi idiom and vocabulary with special favor for *Lahinda* dialect. From lyrical poems of the early period of his poetry to lengthy *vars*, he has experimented with many different forms. Resistance against social injustice is one of the main themes of his poetry, as in the following poem:

Let's light up some straws  
 and put these on rooftops  
 to show the way.

Maybe they look back,  
 Those to whom the oft-walked  
 ways became alien,  
 Those who got trapped by  
 Time,  
 While reconnoitering the  
 hostile territory of the leisured classes,  
 Those to whom adversaries  
 administered  
 a potion of obfuscating words,  
 Let us put some straws in earthen trays and place these, keeping the  
 wind in view.  
 Let us light some straws and put these on rooftops -- to  
 show the way  
 [Translated by Nadir Ali]

The above poem has been aptly interpreted by Nadir Ali:

The poem roughly belongs to the period of post-revolutionary irony. It exhibits hoping against hope. Lighting up straws is a very fragile and vulnerable device. Poetry itself is a very fragile craft. It is like 'lighting up some straws'. While a song may move mountains, its strength lies in its lightness. Moreover, the poet is singing to those who are stone frozen, hardened and brutalized by the oppression of the market and suppression by the upper class. Only a light, loving touch can heal the victims of such a brutality. The victims have been trapped by Time (*kal*) at a juncture of history where people have lost yet another battle. They were lured and dazzled by the forces of the market. The poet instead chooses to 'wed the darkness'. Only by turning away from the dazzle of the market, he seems to say, may we hope to recover and rediscover ourselves.

This poem .... is also an elegy to the mother tongue. The symbols and signposts are linguistic and cultural. After all, language evolved from history and is an apt metaphor for history. [Nadir Ali, 2003]

Beginning with the publication of his first book of poetry, *Qafian*, in 1965, Syed has so far published 10 anthologies of poetry, which represent a treasure-chest of cultural symbols, old and new, rural and urban. As exemplified in the following short poem, Syed has used scenes from Punjabi landscape and life to highlight the need for rediscovering and returning to his roots:

If you have to live somewhere,  
 Live among trees.  
 Without counting,  
 Without straining,

They drink the poison,  
Turning it to nectar

If you have to live somehow,  
Live among trees.  
Without asking  
Without telling,  
They light the green lamps  
And place them on our eyes.

[Translated by Irfan Malik and Jennifer Barber]

Najm Hosain Syed has been on the forefront of the movement for Punjabi language in West Punjab since the mid-1960s. He was the first head of the newly established Punjabi Department in Punjab University, Lahore, which also employed many other senior scholars like Asif Khan, Ali Abass Jalalpuri, and Sharif Kunjahi. Through his poetry, plays, and expositions of classical literature, he has played a major role in reviving the interest in Punjabi literature and cultural identity in West Punjab.

### **Regional Poetry Tradition**

A survey of West Punjabi poetry would not be complete without mentioning regional poetry that is a product of the pre-Partition socio-economic structures. Unlike East Punjab, where successful implementation of land reforms has resulted in the dissolution of large holdings, the situation remains largely unchanged in West Punjab. Landlords continue to have large land holdings and the traditional tenant-landowner relations and power structures have not changed much. The survival of regional poetic tradition fits in this context.

Although there are common features of form, content, vocabulary, and style between the regional poetry and the mainstream poetry, the primary difference is between their reach and exposure. Due to their economic conditions and lack of formal education, these regional poets continue the centuries-old oral tradition of poetry. They almost never leave their immediate circles, rarely participate in gatherings where poetry is recited, and many of them don't leave any written record of their poetry by publishing their poems. Research in this area is a recent phenomenon, and Punjab University, Lahore, has taken interest in this.

Let us take the case of Jhang. This area is well known for producing many important Punjabi poets, including Sultan Bahu, Damodar Das, Abdul Karim Jhangvi, and Siddique Lali. There are many others whose poetry has never been published and requires attention. Among such poets are Allah Baksh Masoom of Chela Tajana, Qaim Ali Shah of Pir Kot Sadhana, Allah Wassaya Ajiz Jenda of Mandi Shah Jawana, Charagh Molayee of village Chatta near Mor Mandi, and many others. There are many village folks in Jhang who know their poetry by heart and have been transmitting it to the new generations.

Charagh Molayee (1907-1974) is one of the most important poets of this area. A reliable account of Molayee's life was given by Ahmad Shah Nasir who spent 17 years with the poet. Molayee was a deeply religious person, who served in the British army in the First World War, and was released from service at its end. He settled down in his village and got married, but after a couple of years his wife died. He didn't marry again, instead became a dervish and spent many years on Keerana Mountains, near Chiniot.

Molayee was a very gifted poet, who was fond of playing harmonium and singing his own poetry. Many singers and poets from the surrounding areas used to come to listen to his poetry, including the famous Punjabi poets such as Ustad Daman and Manzur Jhalla.

Muhammad Khan, who belongs to Molayee's family, remembers most of his poetry, and hundreds of poems of other poets. He has been a big help in recording some of Molayee's poetry. Mohammad Ali, a singer from his village has also written down a number of Molayee's *dohras*, and thus effort is on to save these poems for posterity. Although some of these *dohras* are on religious topics, most of them are about the pangs of separation from a loved one:

Sassi saw herself in the lanes of Kech city,  
Her feet were burning while walking barefooted on hot sand,  
She consoled herself hoping to meet Punun, her beloved.  
Charagh Molayee says, those wounded with love can never sleep.  
[Translated by Muhammad Raiz Shahid, 1989-1990]

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