

# *Amir Khusrau*

## *-an Icon for Peace*

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and Nasreen Ahmed*

Amir Khusrau, a unique intellectual, who lived in India during the middle 13<sup>th</sup> century up to the first quarter of 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D, was vastly known for his acumen in languages, lyrics, and music of the day, who mesmerized audiences with his skill and command in languages, for his genius and creativity, for his empathy for the people in the courts and the deprived and the underprivileged people on the streets, who spoke various languages of the day. His life of nearly 72 years was filled with events and instances of writing, reading, and composing couplets, riddles, and songs in various languages, Brij Bhasha, Khadi Boli, Hindavi, Sanskrit, languages of the day among Indian population; and the languages of the courts and government: Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. Amir Khusrau responded to the calls of masses and created two new languages of the time: Hindi (Sanskrit base of the population) and Urdu (Turkish base of the Government). The Hindi language written from left to right, and Urdu language, written from right to left created common language and dialogue for communication and harmony created for the different races and tribes thus; provided life of harmony between rich and poor alike. Amir Khusrau sought harmony among masses with his multifaceted genius in his poetry, lyrics, riddles and songs often representing all existing cultures. This amalgamation of cultures gave impetus for creativity using rich and simple couplets from different languages thus creating harmony between various cultures. This mingling of different cultures helped create opportunity with various inventions yet not known in the surrounding community.

Amir Khusrau was always known for his strong religious beliefs and practices, he daily engaged in reading thousands of reading Qur'an and other literature and regularly engaged in prayer (Salat). He also worked under the guidance of his mentor Sufi Saint, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, who also approved his mingling of

languages and creativity helped popularizes in expansions in religious harmony as well. There were thus millions who participated in special sessions known as Sama that became Sufi promotional events to popularize Islam. Whether Sama was legal or illegal in Islam is left for Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia and Amir Khusrau to defend this important issue. In this volume there are two articles, one by Prof. Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago, Illinois, and the other by Prof. Carl Ernst of the University of North Carolina, address this issue at length. Prof. Fazlur Rahman provides pro and con references of the legal boundaries of this issue. Prof. Carl Ernst provides historical review of literature on the subject.

In this atmosphere of helping various cultures to harmonize Amir Khusrau was opposed to aristocratic ideals of nobility birth, purity of blood and heartless bigotry fanaticism of bigoted aristocracy. He was equally at home in the company of highest in the land, kings and emperors, and most lowly horn weavers and washer men. His poetry, lyrics and songs made his presence welcome in all company, he wrote and sang for them all. He wrote ornate eulogies for royals and captains, profound historical philosophical dissertations for the learned, who paid him handsomely, and tender and moving lyrics, and yet he wrote tender and moving lyrics both, devout and profane, alongside riddles and jingles for children, word games for house wives and homely songs for love-sick maidens and tired old men. He taught music makers of his times to sing these compositions in a mode that touched every heart. Thus, apart from his very significant contributions to contemporary history, it is by his ineffable body of poetry, verse and music that he is best remembered by posterity.

One of many intellectual works, Ijaz-i-Khusravi, he challenges intellectual minds about his wisdom in Islamic thought as well. In Ijaz-i-Khusravi he writes: "It is evident from the tablets of heart of the masters of diction who recognize and know that God is knowledgeable and cognizant, and Who caused man (*Insan-i-Kabir*) (designated as microcosm) to arrive from the region of non-existence to the two letters, "kaf and nun", had this aim in view that he may dignify the progeny of Adam with the knowledge and teaching of: "*He taught with the pen, taught man that which he did not know.*" Hence he ordered naïve men, dwellers in pre-Eternity, that within span of six days they should learn the lesson of progress: "*Already has our word been passed before this to our servants sent by us.*" Those immature creatures by that time reached the state of maturity of their existence under orders from that custodian of Destiny and presented themselves as self-contained entities. Under the tutelage of that Omniscient, discerning and clear-

*sighted being (God), some of them became pure intelligence, others whole selves, some of them absolute mentors, some abstruse souls, and still others articulate ones, till the process culminated in Adam. And as and when, from the falling of place of pre-Eternity to earth (or lost-eternity) they brought into being air, fire, earth and water and thus caused the created things to proceed from the state of non-attachment or non-being to an integrated state of being, and then architects of Destiny recorded the gifts of “manliness” for Adam (that is, conceded that he was primeval ancestor of all beings.)*

Allah said:

“Consider the human self, how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be, how it is imbued with moral failings as well as with consciousness of Allah.”  
(All-Qur’an 91.78)

“Verily We created *Insan* in the best of form, thereafter We reduced him to the lowest of the low.” (Al—Qur’an 95: 4,5)

That is implied that human were created and endowed with certain physical and mental inborn qualities, with the natural advantages and disadvantages within the limitations imposed by individual’s environment, corresponding to functions he or she is meant to perform. Humans are reduced to lowest of the low as a result of persistently adhering to false beliefs and refusing to hear the voice of truth and thus losing the ability to perceive the truth. This alludes to the extremely complex phenomenon of a life-entity in which bodily needs and urges, emotional and intellectual activities are so closely intertwined as to be indissoluble, following organically upon a call to consider the inexplicable grandeur of the universe as perceived and comprehended by the human. This is the natural consequences of free choice and actions undertaken by humans. Human nature either rises gradually to reach great spiritual heights or falls into the utter depths of carnality through one’s own actions. All materials are thus classified as dead, *jamadati* (angelic), and living. Living materials are vegetable (*nabatati*), animal (*hayawani*), and human spirits, the humans can probe the heart of such mysteries with their keen intellect.

The soul of the meaning was located in the body of words, all three were gathered in a house like three spirits in a single body. The individual with a very limited knowledge is described as the one containing only the vegetable spirit, but as the knowledge of the individual grows this spirit ascends to the level of animal spirit and then finally to that of the human spirit. When someone enlivens the heart of his readers, then the animal spirit is awakened and provides vital influence which

keeps the hearts alive (with the life of emotion), just as the animal spirit keeps the body alive. Those with dead hearts were as unaware of his virtue as inorganic souls were of the animal spirit. Eventually the solitary cell where we (three) met and became the image of the great man due to the configuration of three spirits influence every single creature of earth, elevating its creation to high spirits to bring together heavens and the earth. In the discussion of the sublimities raid the treasures of intellects. And of spirits. The true structural pattern of humans can be comprehended with reference to what has been said by Allah 'He created the human in His own Image' or Allah endowed humans with His own qualities. One who has allowed himself to be contented with ignorance and boorishness is one who from the lofty status of a human being has fallen so low that he has come down to a level even lower than animals and has attained the status of grass (vegetables). All those in human shape achieve a status in knowledge and constantly seeks to grow further in knowledge...rising high and high to the status of a great man (or Insan-i-Kabir).

That was the intellectual level of someone who cared so much for lowly depressed masses, and if nothing else, he found comfort in trying to find for them a life of enjoyment, comfort and progress. It is their generations who still remember him for trying to please them with his ever living lyrics and songs. It is that which needs to be transported to USA, it is that which compelled us to stage a celebration in 1987 at the University of Chicago, it is that which has it sealed opened in this Amir Khusrau USA Memorial. It was easy for Amir Khusrau, being endowed with wealth and position in government, to be satisfied with the cause of charity for the poor, because that should be enough to seek a place of promise in heaven, but his desires were far beyond that. He wrote lyrics and songs for them to give comfort and joy in their lives, yet he wrote educational and inspiring words so they seek and increase the knowledge as a way of life so they can better themselves. Never did he write vulgar and cheap songs to enjoy external life, but always garlanded their own culture with cherishing true spiritual enjoyment in their lives.

It is essential to impart education at home, at cultural centers, town halls, universities and institutions on the style of interacting with poor and depressed families. Amir Khusrau made his way of live to understand the inside problems in cultural life of others and made enormous efforts to make their lives interesting and meaningful. Keep gaining insight in the life of others gave him knowledge of the

cultural life of others. If wise men remained contented with their knowledge they would be like an air-filled sheep-skin, which is as empty as it is filled, and through which air escapes when its closed mouth is opened. But when this air is combined with the fragrance of knowledge it produces fragrance of humanity. Wherever a rose rosebud blossoms, everyone in its vicinity desires its fragrance and benefits from it. So, when somebody's rose of humanity blossoms, the person would become famous and people would honor him till the end of his life. His essence or fragrance perishes at that Time and is dissolved in the air.

Amir Khusrau's ideas of developing *Insan-i-Kabir* are important in the development and reforming of a personality. The growing of an individual in knowledge requires reading and writing of literature beyond the basic requirements of comprehension of the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). This does not imply that each individual should become a scholar or make a career as a scholar. The habit of growing in knowledge should be developed consistently over a long period of Time so that each individual consistently increases his/her capacity of retention and develops the ability meet various challenges confronting in life.

That was the life of Amir Khusrau that presents an example of indulging with the life of others, an effort in problem solving, in creating an atmosphere of goodwill and an atmosphere of goodwill and harmony for all surrounding population. That was why we cared so much that we present to you his original writings in our previous work, the "Writings of Amir Khusrau", a direct English translation of his work, the "Ijaz-i-Khusravi," the 1987 conference and its proceedings is an original reflection of some of the most authentic original scholars of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their works are reflections of Amir Khusrau writings and their sincere dedications to him. That is the sum total of Amir Khusrau USA Memorial Volume, which has also been posted on our Internet site and the current publication of this effort.

Allah is pleased with the one who constantly seeks knowledge and will show him/her the way to paradise. The angels lower their wings being pleased with the one who seeks knowledge. Whoever is heavens and the earth, even the fish in the sea ask for the forgiveness of the scholar. The superiority of the scholar over the worshiper is like that of the moon over all heavenly bodies.

Prof. Hashmat Moayyad of the University had a pioneering work at the conference and in subsequent days. His paper on "Masnavi: Hasht Bihisht and Haft Akhtar" was regarded as the master-piece work by most present at the conference.

Subsequent to the conference he continued his research and made a serious effort to present Amir Khusrau to the USA audience. Moreover he brought Amir Khusrau in the lime light with the many legends of Persian poetry. He further had two Ph,d students to conduct their work on Amir Khusrau for their degrees respectively. For this reason we regarded the conference as a legacy of Prof. Hashmat Moayyad, and we recognized him for the highest award, Imtiaz-i-Khusrau.

The works of Prof. Ali Asani & Prof. Annemare Schimmel of the Harvard University were also exemplary. It was because of participation and support Prof. Annemare Schimmel that many scholars, including all those from the Harvard University were supported by the Harvard University.

One other prominent work at the conference was that of Dr. Zafar Iqbal, who, joined with his father, Dt. Shujaat Ali Sandelvi, began conference planning more than a year before the conference and developed contacts and relationships with numerous scholars who voluntarily came to the conference. Dr. Shujaat ali Sandelvi also presented his pioneering work on Amir Khusrau's Hindi poetry and riddles. We have recognized both of them for the Ijaz-i-Ksravi award.

We the immigrants in USA offer to our generations in USA opportunity to create a life of harmony in a land of opportunity to move forward to achieve a life for progress and peace within the community and the Society in which we live, to join with others in building a country of promise.

The following awards are granted:

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