

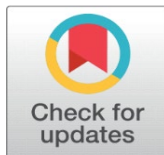
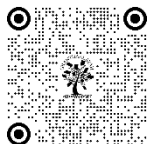
HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND LINGUISTIC IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBRANCES (ZIKR-E-MIR)

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ABSTRACT

Zikr-e-Mir is considered an autobiographical text of the Mir Muhammad Taqi. Mir indicates his claim to be a descendant of the prophet Muhammad; he is also regarded as the important Urdu poet of the 18th century and considered the most influential ghazal poet of north India. Mir wrote Nikat-al-Shu'ara', Faize-e-Mir, and Zikr-e-Mir during his life. But we will limit our discussion only to Zikr-e-Mir. With its help, we can trace the text's historical, cultural, and linguistic importance. If we look at the text carefully, it contains a brief notice of Mir's ancestors, a short section on Muhammad Ali, his friend Amanullah, and political events of Mir's time that he witnessed.

Keywords: Autobiography, Descendent, Historical, Linguistical, Literacy Life, Explicitly Sexual

1. INTRODUCTION

It does not provide some of the details expected in a biography, like his date of birth and literacy life, and lacks details of his mother and wife. It ends with several jokes, some of which are explicitly sexual. Due to the absence of essential characteristics often found in an autobiography, its classification as such remains ambiguous. Taymiya R. Zaman said that autobiographical writings are central or very common to the historical writings of early Mughal India. These accounts serve as a form of instructive memory, lived experience contained within the written words, form an embodied link between the past and the present, and serve as a source of history. Taymiya R. Zaman used the term auto/biography and pointed to the overlap between one's life, composing a history of one's times, and locating one's authorship within social, political, and literacy circles. That's why the influence of the Mughal literacy culture and its form of autobiographies were still pervasive during the 18th century. Zohra Sabri said that Graham Bailey paid tribute in London

by describing Mir and saying it is nothing less than an autobiography. Akhlaq (ethical), Tarikh (historical), and tazkirah (biographical) texts have been found in Mir's literary works. When European literary influences become fully operative, the Arabic-Persian autobiographical act remains a branch of biography, but biography is treated as a branch of historiography.

In Remembrances, Mir discussed his witnessed plight and suffering of the ordinary people at the hands of the Jats, the Rohillas, the Sikhs, and the Marathas, who looted them during the 18th century. That's why he discussed everything that was going on in his surroundings, and he tried to cover politics and society very well. Akhlaq literature contains philosophical discussions about justice and social organisation. Insha refers to the collection of correspondences and letters often used to construct historical records. The term *tabaqat* itself refers to a compilation of biographies containing short accounts of the lives, works, kingship circle, and sayings of influential men. Sidonic Smith and Julia Watson have pointed out that autobiographical writing has been traditionally viewed in terms of 18th-century notions of self-consciousness and expressed within the psyche of the male enlightenment individual. In the context of autobiographical writing in the Arab world, Dwight Reynolds has argued that auto-biographers were aware of the autobiographical act, and their texts were full of details specific to individuals' lives.

Frances W. Pritchett, in "Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics", mentioned the tazkirah tradition. Tazkirahs provided too little information. They neither described the poet's biography nor his temperament and character. Sometimes, they even went so far as to omit the dates of his birth and death. That's why we do not find Mir's date of birth in Remembrances. They also agreed that tazkirah writers often "did not even try" to seek out this "necessary information." Instead, they engaged in "meaningless and petty" critical discussion. But Remembrances is not like that; it provides historical information about the 18th century and can be used as a source for history writing. Most of the time, Mir talked about his father and his teaching and how his father's teaching impacted his life. If we notice his teachings, then we find that most of them were philosophical in nature, and the impact of Sufism can be seen in them.

In 'Interpreting the Self', Dwight F. Reynolds discussed the autobiographical tradition in Arabic literacy. Al Suyui alludes to an entire world of literary conventions and traditions. In various autobiographical works and similar introductions written by other autobiographers, he demonstrated that the culture of autobiography was established in the Arabic literary tradition, and it was in the early 12th century. If we try to find out his motivation, he tried to derive his first motivation from the Quranic injunction to speak of God's blessings in thanks. This motivation is seen in the very title of his work, *Speaking of God's Bounty*. Similar types of work, mainly concerning praise of God's works, can be seen in Remembrances. "In the name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful". In Remembrances, Mir praises God several times. He told him that the creator who blessed the world with creation was the crafter who turned dust into human. In every place, he praises God; his father was a dervish, and he was a faithful follower of God, so it can be said that his father's influence can be seen in the work of Mir. Nothing can happen outside his sight, for "Allah is, of the heavens and the earth, the light". Mir says that nothing is possible without his permission. So, in Remembrances, we can notice the influence of Arabic literacy culture on praising god.

The second motivation of Al Suyui is to provide an account of an exemplary life that can lead others to emulate one's virtues and meritorious acts, an idea found in many areas of Islamic intellectuals and spiritual life. His texts might be used by later writers who may use them in their biographical and historical works. In Remembrances, Mir praises his father and his father's teachings. He said that his father studied with Shah Kalimullah Akbarabadi – one of Agra's most perfect men of God. He said that his father worked hard to tread the path of inner knowledge and suffered a great deal in his pursuit of renunciation, and due to his hard work, he became a perfect dervish. He says that his father was a virtuous man, given to love and possessing a passionate heart, and people honoured him by calling him Ali-e-Muttaqi. He also mentions his father's teaching about love, the importance of love, how to utilise time and not indulge in the materialistic world, and how to devote oneself to God. But along with the intellectual and spiritual life, we find some short temperament with his father, especially when he was willing to leave for Lahore, but the food was not ready. His father was annoyed and decided to go for Lahore. So, here we can say that the uniformity regarding intellectuals and spiritual life was lacking in Remembrances.

Al Suyui's third motivation is the primary informational value of such accounts, allowing others to learn about one's life and conditions. In remembrance, Mir presented his personal information and his periods of hardship. We find that Mir is presenting himself as a man of political importance, and his patron, Raja Nagar Mal, has taken his service not only in poetry but also in the political world. We also find that Mir was a humble man; that's why he left Nagar Mal's service when the latter ignored his advice in a political matter. If we talk about the composition of Remembrances, we find that

it was composed when he was unemployed and confined in the Jat forts of Kumber. We can also draw a list of his patrons, like Amir-ul-Umara, Raja Nagar Mal, and Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula. So, his autobiography gives relevant information relating to his financial condition.

Suyui emphasises passing on the knowledge of his “circumstances,” “condition,” or “states,” and medieval Muslim scholars commonly use these words to describe the contents of autobiographies. These reflect widespread concepts of life as a sequence of changing conditions or states rather than as a static or unchanging life or time of an autobiographer. This means that an author’s life keeps changing from one state to another. We see life as childhood, adulthood, or old age. The fortunes of an author also keep changing. Similarly, the fashion of writing can be seen in Mir’s Remembrances; starting from his childhood, his cycle of life keeps on changing, and we find that his condition also keeps on changing; if we see his fortunes, then it also keeps on changing from one state to another. He spent his childhood under the supervision of his father and his uncle ‘Amanullah’, but after their death, all his fortunes changed. The impact of their changing fortune can be seen in Remembrances and how, during the Afghan invasion, he kept moving from one place to another and used his poetry skills to earn his livelihood.

The pattern of medieval autobiographies differed from that of the Western world; in the Western world, fiction in the form of a novel can be seen; it followed classification, categorisation, and description, which are the ultimate tools in Western autobiography. The term autobiography also differs from person to person, as Mary Carlock has observed: Each scholar has applied the term [autobiography] according to his standards or the definition assigned to the term. This means that the autobiography pattern can be different, and it is unnecessary to follow a single pattern. That’s why we see Remembrances as an autobiography, and its pattern was different from all other medieval autobiographies. Rosenthal and Misch said that the autobiographical tradition in Islam is boundless to personality rather than to the subject matter, and in it, the experiences of the individual, as such, do not have extensive content. However, in Remembrances, it is noticed that Mir provided less information related to him than other contents that he discussed.

Mir’s Mu’amlat i Ishq (The Stages of Love) is also an important work in which he tells the tragic love story of his life. He was 18 years old when he was in love with a girl who was already married. He narrated in his poetry how she did not expect to observe Parda towards him. The Parda system was strictly enforced in the 18th century, and the bride and bridegroom typically see each other after the marriage. He said that they were together for several days, but after some time, they had to depart from each other, and he considered it a fate against him. His affairs with that girl left him mad. If the society of the 18th century is seen, most of them were peasants, and social organisation followed a hierarchy in which the king and the noble held essential positions. Different roles were assigned to them, and all performed their assigned work. In a society like that, love was seen as a danger to social order and was persecuted accordingly. Love in the society in which Mir lived was considered a tragedy. However, in Remembrances, he does not mention even his wife’s name, so Mir selected only tragic stories for his poetry because love was considered a tragedy in the society in which he was living. Love was a force that threatened to dismantle the foundation of society, and that society was obliged to defend itself against it. Thus Mir writes :

Live in the chains of slavery and die in jail
But do not fall into the snare of love.

That’s why love was seen as a distinct element in society, which could dismantle society. That’s why there were lots of restrictions for the boys as well as for the girls. In 18th-century poetry, love was divided into two categories: *ishq i-majazi*, symbolic love, and *ishq i haqiqi*, or real love. It was earthly love, characterised as illustrative and mystic, called natural. In Remembrances, Mir claims to be a mystic, though he tells us that his father was a mystic, and in the book, his father and his uncle were associated with mystics. Apart from mystic love, symbolic love can be seen in the book, especially when his uncle falls in love with the market boy. When his father knew about this incident, he told his uncle, ‘Go now, and for eight days and nights, do not step out of your dark cell. And do not disclose to anyone what has happened. God would protect your honour.’ His father tried to replace symbolic love with that of real love. It can be noticed that love with the same sex was common in the 18th century, or it can also be said that due to Parda, men could see only the men in the public sphere, and they found some attractive personalities among them.

Mir found himself in a position where his poetry was universally praised, while his conduct was often disapproved. He said :

In every region, every city, far and wide, my fame is known;
The beauty of my poetry is spoken of in every home.

It means that he and his poetry were famous in cities, towns, and villages. The convention of the ghazal worked in his favour in that it enabled him to speak "the secrets of his heart" with a voice that was "free and restrained." His poetry was a medium through which he could express his inner voice, which different people interpreted differently. Incidence of granting stipend to Mir by Samsam ud Daula, eunuch Javed Khan's control of the empire in 1748, the story of Mir and Imad near the riverside, and the story of Asaf ud-Daula and Mir, in all the incidences Mir used his poetry skills.

In Remembrances, he writes about the political instability in Delhi. Delhi was wholly ruined after the invasions of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah, Jats, Rohillas, and Marathas. An emperor no longer possessed absolute authority, and most Mughal governors tried to carve out their independent dominions. In Mir's collection of ghazals, there was a verse that seems to be a direct reference to this event:

I lived to see the needle drawn across the eyes of kings

For whom collyrium ground with pearls was dust beneath their feet.

All the incidents of political instability can be seen in his ghazals and how the collyrium was mixed with ground pearls. Collyrium was applied with the needle, heated, and used to blind a man. He was agitated and distressed during the period of instability, and due to all this, he decided to leave the city. He suffered a lot due to his hardships and crisis in his patronage; to find peace, he left the city with the permission of his patrons. Mir saw the effects of the Afghan invasion when he visited the town a little later. He could not recognise the houses, and there were no traces of former inhabitants. Whole houses, bazaars, quarters, and streets vanished. He remembered his former memory regarding the city, and he vowed that he would never come the same way again. In his book "From Plassey To Partition And After", Sekhar Bandyopadhyay also mentions the decline of the Mughal empire and the factors responsible for it. Bandyopadhyay also considered the invasion of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah, and the invasion of many small kingdoms were responsible for its decline. But Bandyopadhyay did not give the micro details as Mir provided in his Remembrances, so he might have exaggerated some of the details.

Urdu means 'military camp' or 'cantonment' in Turkish, considered the military language. It is believed that Urdu was born in the Mughal army camps, where soldiers from different social backgrounds communicate with each other. As a literary language, Urdu absorbed almost everything that Indians loved in Persian, so Urdu gradually supplanted Persian. Narayani Gupta also said that Hindu – Muslim cultural life was conducted entirely in Urdu, and local people had consciously chosen not to learn English. This means that Urdu in the 18th century was the people's language, and the role of Shah Alam II and Javan Bakht cannot be ignored when spreading Urdu poetry in Delhi. The name Mir, used in the "signature lines" of his poems, is regarded as the most critical Urdu poet of the 18th century. However, Mir's three substantial prose works are all in Persian, though Urdu was the people's language, and composition in Persian was standard. Pro. Saifuddin Ahmad mentions some of the literary figures, poets, intellectuals, and genres of their work, and he tried to construct the Urdu literary scene of North India. He said that the 18th century was the emergence of Urdu, and it overshadowed Persian. Previously, Urdu was regarded as unworthy and inferior to Persian and considered unsuitable for poetry; that's why most Urdu poetry was written in Persian. In the initial phase, Delhi and later other regional centres were Urdu's upholders. It was under Mir that Urdu poetry attained its optimum height, and this period was considered to be the golden age of Urdu literary culture. Mir is popularly known as the God of Poetry. The Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century was at the corner of collapse, and the new poets of that period realised they could not attain the glory of Iranian poets; that's why they decided to compose in their language, and Urdu was one of them. The influence of Persian literary tradition was not limited to Urdu; it affected many regional languages of the subcontinent, such as Marathi, Telugu, Punjabi, and Sindhi. Apart from all these, two significant developments took place during this period. First, many Persian idioms were translated into Urdu, and second, many Persian couplets became the assets of the Urdu language. The role of patronage in Medieval times was also essential as it helped spread culture and literature. Patronage was vital for the spread of any culture or language.

Remembrances cover every aspect of the eighteenth century, and it is an important historical source of that period. Though some historians do not consider it an autobiography, as we know, there is no definite pattern for writing an autobiography. The autobiography pattern keeps changing from generation to generation, and Remembrances also tried to carry something from the Arabic and Persian autobiographies. Mir presented a clear picture of the decline of the Mughal Empire and the conditions of the society at that time. He also tried to show Delhi's condition after the Afghan and Maratha invasions, which caused him to suffer a financial crisis. He is known as the father of Urdu poetry, and during his time, Urdu attained great heights. Urdu replaced Persian in the 18th century and became the people's language. So, remembrances cover the eighteenth century's social, historical, and linguistic history.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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