



# Mirza Dabeer

The Most Prolific  
Urdu Marsiyya  
Writer  
Of The 19<sup>th</sup>  
Century  
Literary Scene  
In India

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AT AUSTIN

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# What Is Marsiyya?

- Marsiyya is Arabic in its origin.
- Traditionally it was a piece of elegiac poetry.
- Urdu *marsiyya* is a long poem.
- It is an epic.
- It is a tragedy like Shakespearean tragedies.
- It is a lament.

# Urdu Marsiyya

- Urdu *marsiyya* has borrowed its tradition from Arabic and Farsi poetical traditions.
- But there are differences,
- because in its form and content, it is a product of the sub-continent.

# The Differences

- Arabic *marsiyya* is short, 60 lines, Urdu *marsiyya* is long, 600-1000 lines.
- Arabic *marsiyya* is full of passion but simple.
- Farsi *marsiyya* is good for its sonic value.
- Urdu *marsiyya* is like a large canvas showing a multitude of colors and scenes.

# Differences, continued

- Arabic and Farsi *marsiyya* carry mostly internalism.
- Urdu *marsiyya* is based more on externalism.
- The main feature of the Urdu *marsiyya* is its recitation.

# The Two Kinds

- Urdu *marsiyya* is written in two forms:
- Main-line recital to a gathering, long poems, larger canvas, very diverse scenarios.
- Soz-khwani recital – shorter versions with limited scope, mainly lamentation.

# Ingredients Of Urdu Marsiyya

MATL'A	مطلع
CHEHRA	چہرہ
SARAAPA	سراپا
RUXSAT	رخصت
AAMAD	آمد
RAJAZ	رجز
JANG	جنگ
SHAHAADAT	شہادت
BAYN	بین

# Why Arabic Base?

- The Arabic *sh'er* consists of two lines; each line is called a *misr'a*.
- *Sh'ar* means hair and by association it means the tent of the Bedouin that is made of the hairy goat skin.
- The tent has two ropes to hold it erect, each of those is called *misr'a*.



# The Arabic Sh'er

لفظِ شعر شعور سے ہے۔  
شعور رکھنے کے معنی ہیں  
کسی بات کی سمجھ اور  
اسکے مفہوم کو محفوظ کر لینا

# Parts Of Sh'er

ہر مصرعے کے بیچ میں سے دو حصے کر دئے گئے۔

پہلے حصے کو صدر کہا گیا اور دوسرے حصے کو عجز۔

صدر جانور کے سینے کو کہتے ہیں اور عجز اسکی دُم کو کہتے ہیں۔

صنعت

رَدُّ الْعَجْزِ عَلَى الصَّدْرِ

# Dabeer's Art

کس شیر کی آمد ہے کہ رن کانپ رہا ہے  
رن ایک طرف چرخ کہن کانپ رہا ہے  
رستم کا بدن زیر کفن کانپ رہا ہے  
ہر قصر سلاطینِ زمن کانپ رہا ہے  
شمسیر بکف دیکھ کے حیدر کے پسر کو  
جبریل لرزتے ہیں سمیٹے ہوئے پر کو

# صنعت مہملہ یعنی غیر منقوٹ

اعدا کو اُدھر حرام کا مال ملا  
حُر کو اِدھر اسد اللہ کا لال ملا  
واللہ کلاہِ سِرِ عالم ہوا حُر  
حُلّا ملا ، معصومہ کا رومال ملا

# Rajaz In Marsiyya

مرحب ہے تو، ہم مرحب و عتر کے کشندے  
عتر کے کشندے ہیں تو خیبر کے کشندے  
خیبر کے کشندے ہیں تو اژدر کے درندے  
اژدر کے درندے ہیں تو لشکر کے برندے  
لشکر کے برندے ہیں تو شمشیر خدا ہیں  
شمشیر خدا ہیں، سپر آلِ عبا ہیں

# The Qayd-Khaana Marsiyya

- It is principally a female-centered *marsiyya*.
- It is a collection of conflicts.

# Female Centered

- The wife of the ruler visits the prisoners.
- The prisoners are all women except Ali Zayn-ul-Abideen.
- A long dialogue ensues between the two.
- The dialogue is all feminine.
- A diverse set of female emotions and feelings are expressed.



# The Conflicts

- The ruler has perpetrated a great wrong by killing the grandson of the Prophet of Islam and imprisoning his womenfolk – the ruler's wife is a devotee of that family.
- Hind is curious about the prisoners' identity and she wants to know more, the prisoners are embarrassed to reveal their identity.

# The Main Theme of the Marsiyya

- The Ahlul-Bayt were given a special glory in the holy Qur'an 33:33 & 33:59.
- The center of that glory was the Prophet's daughter, Fatima Zehra, for whom (and for all Muslim women) hijab was decreed as a sign of honour and glory.
- After the killings of the men at Karbala, the tents were burned so that the women and children had to run out for their lives, then their CHADARS were confiscated, as if the ruler was taking away their honour that was bestowed upon them by the Qur'an.

# The Main Theme, continued

- The *marsiyya* makes frequent references to that event.
- #2 makes a reference to Qur'an 33:33.
- # 4 to 8, 10,38 refer to the lack of chadar.
- #17, 20, 24 highlight that Hind and her maids are wearing chadars.
- #57- Hind offers chadars to the prisoners.

# Main theme, concluded

- #57 is the most dramatic stanza.
- Hind offers chadars to the ladies.
- Zaynab hears her late mother's voice reminding her that her brother is lying in dust unshrouded and unburied.
- Zaynab refuses to accept the gift of a chadar from Hind.
- Ref: Holy Qur'an 5:27-31.