

AHMAD SHAMLU: A CREATIVE QUEST AND A MILITANT LIFE

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Abstract: This article discusses Ahmad Shamlu, one of the most prominent representatives of contemporary Iranian literature. It highlights his contribution to modern Persian poetry, his collections, translations, and personal life, as well as the restrictions imposed during his time due to the political regime.

Keywords: Tehran, modern Persian literature, poetry collections, translator, director, political regime, editor.

INTRODUCTION:

Ahmad Shamlu is one of the brightest figures in modern Persian poetry, known for his pursuit of innovation and artistic independence. Deeply influenced by the socio-political atmosphere of his time, Shamlu's poetry centered around themes of human freedom, justice, and resistance to all forms of oppression. His works are not only lyrical but also express powerful moral demands for justice. Shamlu played a major role in the development of modern Persian literature and helped shape new poetic trends. Besides being a poet, he was a translator of major literary works from various languages into Persian. His distinctive stylistic choices and harmony between language and art are deeply embedded in his works. Shamlu's life and legacy remain one of the most significant contributions to Iranian literature, with his influence extending across the globe.

MAIN BODY:

Ahmad Shamlu was born on December 12, 1925, in Tehran, into a military family that moved frequently due to his father's assignments. He received his primary education in various cities around Iran. In 1938, he completed secondary school and enrolled in Tehran Technical College.

In 1942, his father took him to northern Iran, then occupied by the Soviet Army. Due to his political ideas, Shamlu was arrested by the Red Army and sent to Rasht. He was released in 1945 and moved to Azerbaijan with his family, where both he and his father were briefly detained by separatists before being sent back to Tehran. Shamlu then decided to permanently leave school.

He married three times. In 1947, he married Ashraf Eslami and published his first poetry collection *Forgotten Songs*, a combination of classical and modern poems, with a foreword by

Ebrahim Dilmaghanian.

In 1948, he began writing for the literary monthly Sokhan. Two years later, his first novella *The Woman Behind the Iron Door* was published. His second collection *Manifest* appeared in 1951, showing a clear inclination toward socialist ideology.

In 1952, he worked as a cultural adviser at the Hungarian Embassy. After the 1953 coup against Prime Minister Mossadegh and the ensuing political crackdown, Shamlu's poetry collection *Iron and Emotions* was destroyed by the police, along with translations of works by Sigmund Morris and others. Several of his books, including *The Death of the Chain* and *Three Men from the Sunless Port*, were confiscated and never recovered. He was arrested and imprisoned as a political detainee, during which he studied *Shahnameh* and began drafting a Persian grammar. His manuscripts, including long stories in the style of Amir Arsalan and Malek Bahman, were destroyed during a prison transfer. After a year in prison, he was released in the winter of 1955.

In 1956, four of his new poetry collections were published. That same year, he became chief editor of the literary journal *Bamshad*. In 1957, he released the collection *Fresh Air* and published several studies on classical Persian poetry. He remarried in 1957, though the marriage was short-lived.

He translated Zaharia Stancu's *Barefoot*, which cemented his reputation as a skilled translator. In 1959, he began publishing short stories for children and directed documentary films.

His 1960 poetry collection *The Garden of Mirrors* was followed by personal losses in 1961. He became editor-in-chief of the groundbreaking journal *Ketab-e-Hafte*. In 1962, he met Ayda, his lifelong love, and later dedicated two collections to her: *Ayda in the Mirror* and *The Moment and Eternity*. They married in 1964.

He published several collections in the mid-60s, including *Ayda*, *Trees*, *Memories and the Dagger*, and *Phoenix in the Rain*. His attempts to compile *The Book of Streets* continued despite censorship by the Ministry of Information.

In 1967, he became editor of the newspaper *Khusheh* and was active in founding the Iranian Writers' Association. He gave numerous poetry readings at Iranian universities and began studying Hafez. He translated poems by García Lorca and biblical texts like *Song of Solomon*. He organized weekly poetry readings, which were well-received and compiled into a large anthology.

In 1969, police shut down his weekly journal. In 1970, his collection *Blossoming in the Mist* was published. He continued directing documentaries and republishing earlier translations.

In 1972, he taught Persian literature at Tehran University and released several audiotapes of poetry readings. He became a member of the Iranian Academy of Language and published new translations and film scripts. Due to serious illness, he went to Paris for treatment. In 1973, he released *Ibrahim of Fire and the Doors* and *The Great Wall of China*, along with new translations.

His critical work on Hafez was published in 1975.

In 1976, he toured the U.S., reading poetry across several cities and participating in a poetry festival in San Francisco. In 1977, his collection *The Dagger on the Plate* was published. Opposing the Shah's regime, he left Iran and spent a year in the U.S., lecturing at various universities. In 1978, he moved to Britain and became editor of the new journal *Iran-Shahr*. After the Iranian Revolution, he returned home, rejoined the Writers' Association, and launched a new periodical, *Ketab-e-Jom'e*. That year, he published widely and was elected to the leadership of the Association, gaining recognition as Iran's leading poet.

1979 marked another intense year of activity. The first two volumes of *The Book of Streets* were released. In 1980, worsening political conditions led him to isolate himself for the next eight years. He continued working on *The Book of Streets* with Ayda and translated Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*.

In 1988, he was invited to the World Literary Congress by Interlit. He toured Europe delivering lectures and poetry readings. His complete collection was published in Germany before he returned to Iran.

In 1990, he toured the U.S., where he received the Annual Award for Human Rights and Freedom of Expression. Several works analyzing his literary legacy were published. From 1991, he toured Europe again and returned to Iran for four years of intensive work. In 1992, his work appeared in Armenian and English, and he later visited Sweden in 1994. In 1995, a special gathering of Iranian writers and critics was held in Toronto to discuss his contributions. His works were translated into Spanish.

His health declined in 1996. He underwent several surgeries, and in 1997, his right leg was amputated due to severe diabetes.

Ahmad Shamlu passed away on Sunday, July 23, 2000.

CONCLUSION:

Ahmad Shamlu is widely recognized both as a towering literary figure and a great poet. He was also a journalist, playwright, translator, and broadcaster. His historical contributions to Persian poetry reform have been the subject of numerous studies. Although his poetry has been translated into several languages, it remains a largely undiscovered treasure in the West. A humanist intellectual, Shamlu skillfully wove social engagement with themes of love and tenderness. He lived with passion for justice and hope.

Through his poetry, Shamlu championed human freedom, social justice, and resistance against oppression. His life was marked by struggle, facing constant censorship and threats. Yet his works remained bold and rich with free thought, challenging injustice in society. His personal and creative journeys were deeply intertwined, showing that for Shamlu, there was no boundary between life and literature. He strove to elevate justice, freedom, and human rights through his

poetic universe.

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