Saghar Siddiqi



Biography and life story of Saghar Siddiqi (ساغر صدیقی)

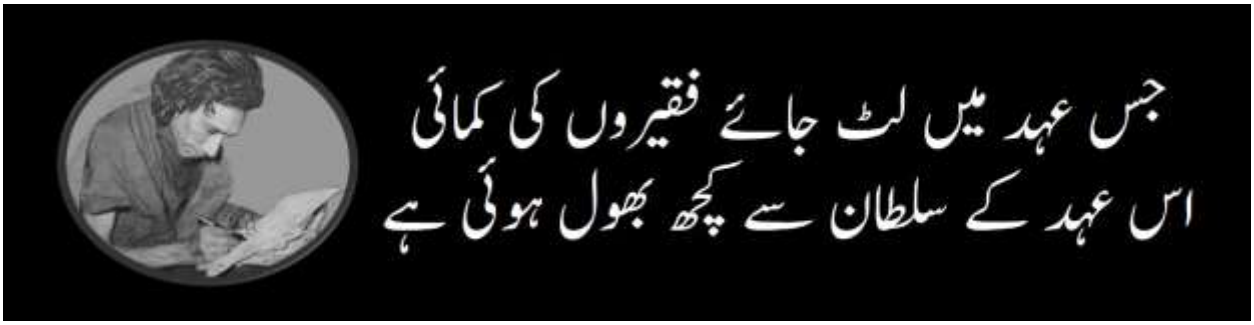
He is one of the most tragic yet brilliant Urdu poets of the 20th century. His full name is Muhammad Akhtar and his pen name is Saghar Siddiqui. He was born in Ambala, British India in 1928. After Partition (1947), he migrated to Pakistan and settled in Lahore. He was young, talented, and soon gained a reputation as a writer of ghazals and poems with a unique blend of pain, beauty, and rebellion. Saghar was gifted with romantic and tragic poetry, with a natural flow of words. He was popular in the literary circles of Lahore in the late 1940s and 1950s. He wrote ghazals, poems, and songs that were published in literary magazines and sung by singers on Radio Pakistan. His poetry reflects these themes:

- **Ishq (love)** – both worldly and divine.
- **Dard (pain) & loneliness**.
- **Rebellion** against injustice and hypocrisy.
- **Existential despair**, often mirroring his own life.

Some of his verses were widely quoted for their emotional intensity. Despite his fame, Saghar faced exploitation by publishers who bought his poetry at low prices. He was extremely sensitive and could not adapt to the materialism and hypocrisy of society. Gradually, he fell into poverty, addiction (especially drugs and hashish), and homelessness. By the 1960s, he was often seen wandering around Lahore, poorly dressed, sometimes writing verses on cigarette packets or scraps of paper, which people took from him without any reasonable compensation.

Tragic Decline

Siddiqui's life took a dark turn due to personal and social betrayals. A romantic heartbreak compounded his troubles: he fell in love with a woman from a humble background, but his father rejected the match, forcing Siddiqui to leave the comforts of home. After being exploited by friends and strangers, he became poor, addicted to morphine (obtained illegally from hospital watchmen), and homeless. He wandered the streets of Lahore, including the areas around Circular Road, Anarkali Bazaar, and Data Darbar, living like a beggar and embodying the Qalandar (wandering mystic) tradition. In a notable incident, when President Ayub Khan, after praising his work, invited him to a poetry symposium in India, Siddiqui responded with poems critical of the rulers of the time that were written on cigarette packets.



On July 19, 1974, at the age of 46, Siddiqui was found dead on a street corner in Lahore, possibly from overdose or exposure. He was laid to rest in the Miani Sahib graveyard. Heartbreakingly, his faithful dog died at the same spot a year later. Despite his hardships, Siddiqui’s poetry endures, capturing raw emotions and social evils, inspiring generations of Urdu and Punjabi writers. His life story serves as a poignant mirror to the cultural and social landscape of Pakistan, highlighting the fate of an unsung genius.

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