

Classic Poetry Series

Syed Alaol
- poems -

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Syed Alaol(1607 - 1680)

Alaol (Bengali: আলৌ) was one of the greatest poets of medieval Bangla literature.

 Birth and Education

He was probably born in 1607 in Jalalpur village in Fatwabad Pargana of Faridpur district. His father was a minister of Majlis Kutub, the ruler of Fatwabad. Alaol learnt Bangla, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. He was also acquainted with the arts of war and music.

One day while Alaol and his father were going to Chittagong by boat, they were attacked by Portuguese pirates. His father was killed in the encounter. The wounded Alaol was taken to Arakan as prisoner. In Arakan he first worked as an ashwar (bodyguard), but was later employed in teaching music and drama.

 Later Life

His fame as a poet spread and the Prime Minister, Magan Thakur, secured him a place in the court of Arakan. Alaol was also patronised by a number of other important courtiers such as Syed Musa (Royal Minister), Solaiman (Chief Minister), Mohammad Khan (Minister of Army), and Majlis Nabaraj (Minister of Taxation).

In 1659 Shah Shuja sought asylum in Arakan, but was killed along with his family. Alaol was accused of having had links with Shah Shuja and was imprisoned for fifty days. He dropped out of royal favour and for several years suffered extreme financial hardship. Towards the end of his life, Masud Shah, his spiritual master, gave him the title of 'Quaderi Khilafat'.

Alaol was the most prolific medieval Bangla writer. His writings include Ragtāl-nāma, Padmavati (1648), Satimayana-Lor-Chandrani (1659), Saptapaykar (1665), Saifulmuluk Badiuzzamal (1669), and Sikandarnama (1673).

Ragtāl-nāma, his earliest piece of writing, is on music and is his only original writing apart from his songs. His other works are all translations; for example, Padmavati, considered to be his masterpiece, was based on the Hindi Padmavat by Malik Mohammad Jayasi, Saptapaykar and Sikandarnama on the Persian Haft Paykar and Sikandarnama by Nizami Ganjavi, and Tohfa on the Persian Tuhf-e-Nasaih by Yusuf. Saifulmuluk Badiuzzamal was also based on a Persian text. While most of these works are in the nature of romances and tales, Tohfa is a

didactic book.

Alaol's poems possess an urbanity and a sensibility reflective of court culture. He is called the 'Panditkavi' as his poems are a mixture of emotion and intellect.

Padmabati

Syed Alaol

Padmabati 01

Syed Alaol

Shapto Payokor

Syed Alaol