

Kamal Ahmad Rizvi as a Dramatist

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Abstract

Kamal Ahmed Rizvi (1930-2015) is among the very first people to give credence to Pakistan Television Urdu drama. He is one of the first rate and accomplished dramatists, director, actor, as well as a visualizer. In the world of drama he has a very versatile presence. He is also one of the first persons to affect the transition of the Urdu drama from stage to television, as such, he is an indelible name in the history of our art and theatre. Whenever Pakistan Television drama is mentioned, his name can never be omitted; or if its history is written, it shall be incomplete without reference to him. If Kamal Ahmad Rizvi is called an institution by himself, it shall not be wrong, because he is a creative writer, a translator, a director and a producer; and until now there has been no other individual with like qualities in the history of Pakistan Television, and this is his mark of distinction.

Early education and upbringing

Kamal Ahmed Rizvi was born in the historic city of Gaya on 1 May 1930. His father was a police officer, but one with literary taste. The household had a literary and intellectual atmosphere, but, on the other side, there was an accent on religious teachings and values. When Kamal Ahmed Rizvi grew up he found a large treasure of books in his house. He made use of this from his childhood. He had a sensitive temperament; this sensitivity increased after the death of his mother. When he was promoted to Class VIII he started reading classical Urdu books and also started taking a special interest in drama as a form of art. In those days he said: 'I had the occasion to read a drama and the dialogues were so captivating that I began to rehearse them all the time'.¹

Rizvi developed an early taste for theatre because of his father, because, in spite of having a religious bent of mind, he was fond of theatre, and when he saw a play his father would take young Kamal along and infected him with his taste. In his school days Rizvi played

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¹ Jung forum, '*Naqlain karta karta drama navis bun gaya*', Jung, Lahore, 12 October 1987.

Shylock in Shakespeare's favorite drama 'Merchant of Venice' and during those days, at the age of 12 years he wrote a short story and had it published. He had signed his story as Kamal Rizvi.²

His father did not approve of this abridgment of his name, therefore Rizvi made his full name his pen name. Rizvi graduated from Patna University in Psychology and then, at the age of 21 in 1951, came to Karachi. Here he started attending meetings of the Progressive Writers Association, but since this activity was frowned upon then he was forced by a member of the Intelligence Bureau to leave Karachi for Lahore.

Kamal Ahmad Rizvi was forced to go to Lahore but he found the city very congenial to his artistic temperament. By finding residence in Lakshmi Mansions he became a neighbor of Sa'adat Hasan Manto. His endeavors in pursuing a career in theatre began with his dramatic adaptation of Saadat Hassan Manto's *Badshahat ka Khatima* (The end of kingship). After that he never looked back. At this time he was passing his life in penury; his life can be described in only one sentence, one that he wrote in his dedication to his translation of *Crime and Punishment*: 'To my father, who gave me life, and life gave me misery'.

Apart from translating world classics and their dramatization, during this oppressive period, he wrote original plays as well but he excelled in translating the works of Leo Tolstoy, Anthon Chekhov, Jean-Baptiste Moliere, Ivan Turgenev, Nicholai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Henrik Ibsen and others. The translated works that were staged were *Crime and Punishment* dramatized by Ronny Auckland, *You Cannot Take It With You* by Moss Hart and George S Kaufman, *The Diary of a Scoundrel* by Alexander Nikolaevich Ostrovsky, *The Tyrant* by Carlo Goldoni among others.

The beginning of his journalistic carrier

In 1964 he was given an array of journals to edit, most of them anonymously *Tehzeeb*, *Taleem o Tarbiyat*, *Ayeena*, *Phulwari*, *Shama*, *Bachoun ki Duniya*. He wrote a regular column for *Imroz* and also contributed short stories to the *Adab-i-Latif*. How he fulfilled his duties can be understood that from the same office he edited a religious and a children magazine; he edited all these for only Rs.300 a month.

² Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, 'Kamal Ahmed Rizvi ki aap beti', mahnama (monthly) *Jungle Mangal*, Kamal Ahmed Rizvi number, Karachi, May 2010, p.13.

Selection of dramas by renowned Urdu dramatists

Kamal Ahmed Rizvi completed in two volumes, both one act and three acts dramas by renowned dramatists of South Asia under the title *Muntakhib Dramay* (Selected Plays), published by the National Book Foundation. In the first volume he has gathered 33 one act plays written from 1935 to 1965 and it can be said without fear of contradiction that this selection is fully representative of the historical and literary trends of the designated time. On the other side, since this selection was done by a veteran dramatist, director and actor, it was taken into account that each of these dramas would not only impress in print but could also be easily staged, because as a practicing director Kamal Ahmed Rizvi knew all the nuances, and all the small details that could hinder the playing of a drama on stage. This trait did not come naturally, Imtiaz Ali Taj's 'Anarkali' could never be fully staged at one time. In the second volume of his selected plays (*Muntakhib Dramay*) he collected long plays in which narration and realism were dominant.

As a translator his most popular rendering was Dale Carnegie's books as well as a number of novels; all these translations numbers one hundred and fifty. The most prominent were Ivan Turgenev's *On the Eve* and Agatha Christie's, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, *An Appointment with Death*. While Rizvi was recasting Doestovesky's *Crime and Punishment* in 1956 in Urdu, he had realized that resorting to power or fascism could never improve any situation; the objective conditions of each society are different from others, and he has to take into account the country he is presenting in the play. It is difficult to bring about a revolution, therefore, if there is any hope of betterment in social conditions it is only through an individual's looking for a solution in his own self.

How he defined drama and dramatic adaptation in the introduction to *Muntakhib Dramay* has not been improved upon. In the same way the depths of time and impressions comes to the fore in the novel in which the complete drama is founded on the clash of realities and views of life, which is the starting point of the eternal and abiding human struggle: where the limits of the novel ends from that point the drama begins.³

This observation shows that Kamal Ahmed Rizvi was not merely a director or actor, but a person gifted with critical insight. That is why he chose *Crime and Punishment* for dramatic adaptation and narration. He looked for the creative impulses of this novel in the common political

³ Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, *Muntakhib Dramay*2, (Lahore: National Book Foundation, 1959), p.3.

economic and social conditions and he also focused on the psychological struggle Dostoevsky underwent during his exile to Siberia.

Another feature of his translation of world classics is that without damaging the core essence and property of the literary creation he would adapt these to stage in Pakistan. This we come to realize, is evident in his translations from the Russian classics. These were notable also for revealing the exploitation rampant under the feudal system, and it was relevant to Pakistani society as well because the same feudal system was rampant here.

On the other side when we visit his realm of poetry we find his anthology, *Old Wine (Sharab e Kuhun)* which contained ghazals from Wali Deccani to Jameel Mazhari. Despite such heavy and weighty intellectual pursuits, Kamal Ahmed Rizvi because of being a professional journalist could write dramas for children as well. The litterateur in him was awake, and he wrote the following five plays for children: *The Magic Bottle, The Beautiful Princess, Salt in the Sea, The Clever Cat, In Search of the Mind.*

Rizvi also wrote four novels for children which includes *The Tree of Water, A House and Two Walls.* Apart from original novels, he translated *Pinocchio* and, although he did not like to mention it, Kamal Ahmed Rizvi was not totally averse to acting in films. In a Pakistani film he played the role of Nawab. Rizvi did not identify the film.

Affiliation with Radio Pakistan

Kamal Ahmed Rizvi started writing dramas for Radio Pakistan in 1951. His first drama was *Jab Ankh Khuli* (When I Woke Up) besides he translated Russian, French and English classics and from other languages, as well. His translated plays were: *Suraj ka Jilawatan, Ghosts, Baraf ka Toofan (Snow Storm)* by Ostrovsky; *Atonement* by Tolstoy, *Loss and Gain, The Rainstorm* by Pushkin, *Wild Duck* by Ibsen.

Rizvi's original radio plays that were broad cast and proved popular were: *When I woke Up (Jab Ankh Khuli), Sunshine and Shadow (Dhoop Chhaon), The Right Restored to the Rightful (Haq ba Haqdar Raseed), Basement as a House (Khanay Tah khany), Slaves of The Mighty (Bandigan-i-Aali), Sometimes Summer Sometimes Autumn (Gahe Garmiyān Gahe Khizān), Birds of a Feathers (HamJins), Zest for Life (Zindagi ka Matwala), After the Flight (Uran ka Bad), New Generations (Nai Paud).*

This was the time when it was socially unacceptable to act on the stage, but Kamal Ahmed Rizvi served the stage and for a sustained period he displayed his talent as a dramatist, director and actor. He used to stage plays in the small towns and hamlets of Pakistan because those

students who had frequented the Pak Tea House and had entered the Central Superior Services and were administering these districts used to invite him (Rizvi) to stage his plays in these towns.⁴ This was also time of hardship and penury for Rizvi, and these performances contributed to his survival.

Pakistan Television

When Kamal Ahmed Rizvi was producing a dramatic adaptation of Intizar's Hussain story. The Travellers of Dreams (*Khawabon ke Musafir*), Aslam Azhar (The General Manager) had also come to see the play on stage. After seeing his work he invited Rizvi to write for television. Rizvi replied I have never seen television how can I write for it? Aslam Azhar laughingly replied, 'You don't need to write, the way you speak is what television is'.⁵ In this way Rizvi was able to enter television. At Pakistan Television his popular serials as dramatist, director and actor were: *Alif Noon*, *Mr Shaitan*, *Challenge Weekly*, *Naya Sabaq*, *Bano ke Mian*, *Darta Hoon Ainey say keh*, *Aao Naukri Karein*, *Chor Darwaza*, *Aap Ka Mukhlis*, *Hum Sub Pagal Hain*, *Batain Kamal Ki*, *Sahib Bibi Ghulam*.⁶

There were four long teleplays also: *The Lost Man (Khoaya Hua Admi)*, *My Comrade, My Friend (Mere Hum Dum Mere Dost)*, *The Thief raises a Din (Chor Machai Shor)* and *We who have become strangers (Hum ke Thahre Ajnabi)*. Rizvi's adapted plays were: *Some one's Wife some one's Husband (Kis ki biwi kis ka shohar)*, *A Wife of one's Choice (Biwi apni Pasand ki)*, *We are all naked (Hum sab nange Hain)*, *A wife should be like this (Bewi ho to Ayesi ho)*, *I beg for a wife (Aik Bewi ka Sawal hay Baba)*, *She says shall not give her heart (Kahte hain na deinge dil)*, *Shadows (Sayey)*, *Light and Darkness (Andhera Ujala)*, *The Wax Mary (Mom ki Maryum)*, *Our Brotherhood (Apni Biradri)*. Apart from these he appeared as a director and actor in plays written by others.

Those short stories by others that Kamal Ahmed Rizvi dramatized are led by Saadat Hassan Manto's *Badshahat Ka Khatma* (The end of kingship). On stage the heroine was played by Zakia Sarwar, on television by Ghazala Rafique. In this series Manto himself had been played by S.M Saleem. Of his translated works the most popular was Ostrovsky's famous drama, *The Diary of Scoundrel (Eik Lafangay ki Diary)*. Other hits included *Daghabaz* (The deceiver). *Bulaqi Badzat* (Le

⁴ Kamal Ahmed Rizvi's interview, 1st January 2011.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ 'Kamal Ahmed Rizvi aik nazar mai', *Mahnama, Jungle Mangal*, Kamal Ahmed Rizvi number, Karachi, May 2010, p.10.

Misanthrope 1660) by Moliere. These enjoyed equal popularity on the stage and television.

The influence of Ostrovsky

The Diary of Scoundrel was actually his protest against his society. How he was treated by society, he threw back at society. It was in this drama of Ostrovsky that Rizvi saw a reflection of himself. He translated this Russian drama in 1964 and in its introduction, Rizvi wrote about the central character:

One character which has never left me is the character in Ostrovsky's *Diary of Scoundrel* The smile on his lips had such a horrifying poison in a triangular shape that one could not deflect one's eyes from it for long. People hated him, spat on him, threw him out from their door; on no tongue could one find a word sympathy for him, perhaps this was the trait of his which attracts me.⁷

This is the reason why in *Alif Noon* he used a sardonic smile to present his art to the people of Pakistan. Perhaps that is why this series caught the imagination of the people. Side by side in our society we have this misfortune that if any common man unmasks the hypocrites he is called a vagabond and a rascal while in reality he is performing a service.

The insight we find in Kamal Ahmed Rizvi derives from Dostoevsky who roams about his society and whose eyes analyses those situations and happenings and reveal this reality to the people. Rather than pondering over them people just laugh, and this is the decay towards which he tries to point. We need to describe in detail these dramas because Kamal Ahmed Rizvi was himself a very consummate writer. If he chose to translate a classic it must have been because of his critical acumen and it does display his talent as a director. To dramatize a work of fiction, whether a short story or novel is to change and enhance the medium for immediate effect. Pulp literature is popular because the public at large does not have the patience to bear with a classic. If a classic is to retain its essence during such a transformation it needs deft and sure handling by a writer of a creative bent of mind.

Following the footsteps of Dostoevsky and Chekov, Rizvi has kept his plots simple and uncomplicated, perhaps, that is the reason that even if we see these plays after a break of even 35 years, we do not get the feeling that they are out dated. They seem to deal with our everyday issues even now whether he was writing a column in *Imroz* or short

⁷ Himayet Ali Shaier, 'Kamal Ahmed Rizvi...Tamseel ki aik akiyee', *Adabe Latif*, February, Lahore, 1989, p.45.

stories in *Adab-i-Lateef*, it is apparent that he was influenced by both the Russians and French masters. It is incidental that some situations in Pakistan were common to the countries these classics were written. That is why he could depict the common place and yet imbue it with a mystique derived from classical literature. That is why his renowned contemporary Ashfaq Ahmed wrote that Rizvi's life was characterized by drama. Writing, producing and directing was his life.⁸

The production of *Alif Noon*

Kamal Ahmed Rizvi's *Alif Noon* is the only drama series on PTV to have gained popularity during four different eras, spread over about four decades, and whenever it was presented it only gained in popularity. The two character had predecessors in Agha Hashar's characters Abdur Rehman Kabuli and Mughal Bashir and Z.A Bukhari's Dumbaz and Damsaz but they were mere prototypes, all the flesh and blood especially the visual dimension was due to Kamal Ahmed Rizvi's eye for detail and yet the ailments of society that Rizvi depicts, are not confined to Pakistan, but rampant in neighboring countries as well, revealing of their hypocrisy.

It was when *Alif Noon* was telecast for the first time in June 1965, that the goddess of renown smiled on Kamal Ahmed Rizvi. The main characters of *Alif Noon* were only two — Allan (Kamal Ahmad Rizvi) and Nannha (M. Rafi Khawar). Few recall that the original producer was Agha Nasir from whose initials *Alif* and *Noon* were derived. It has to be conceded that while the story, script and direction were by Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, a great measure of the success was due to Rafi Khawar. Kamal Ahmed Rizvi eye for talent discovered the latent qualities in Rafi Khawar. In this connection Rizvi recalled:

Nanha first come to me through someone's recommendation He had a great desire to become an actor. On my asking he told me sadly that the television people had rejected him six times. When I suggested that he find another vocation as this acting will not be within his abilities, he burst out in tears and my heart softened. I cast him in one of my dramas. I remember that when his first shooting was about to commence he said I am feeling very nervous put your hand on my head. I put my hand on his head. After words he was so successful as an actor that everyone was amazed.⁹

⁸ Ashfaq Ahmed, *Arze Musanif* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2006), p.49.

⁹ Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, *Kamal Ahmed Rizvi* (Karachi: Atlantis Publications, 2016), p.38.

We recount this to show the eyes of a director can discern the hidden talent of an actor just as a jewelers can discern the value of an uncut gem and then he refines it. This was in 1965 when plays were telecast directly (without being prerecorded). In 1965, the series was presented for eight months without prior record. The second time this series was presented was in 1967-68. The third time it was presented in 1971-72, and for the last time in 1981-84.¹⁰

The fourth time this production of the Lahore studio was by Khalid Mahmood Zaidi and colour broadcast added to its appeal; it also addressed a new generation of viewers. This series was designed to unmask the fraud, the corruption, the delusion, betrayal and dishonesty rampant in society. All these failings were projected by Kamal Ahmed Rizvi in such a humorous style that the viewers were held spell bound before the screen. Unfortunately PTV has been able to preserve only 48 episodes of this program but they have twice been published in book form.

The history of PTV is witness that this program has always gained popularity whenever it was telecast. The renowned dramatist Munno Bhai remarked: There has been no other drama series to have telecast more than a hundred episodes, with each episode proving more popular than the previous one, the French critic Alain Desoulieres has most pertinently pointed out that in *Alif Noon* the *Laurel and Harry* prototype is apparent, but:

It is well known in stage and cinema tradition that earlier works have always been a source inspiration for producers as well as authors. Tradition also shows clearly the role of the producer who makes specific demands on the writer (like the mentor in classical comedy) revitalizing the inspiration of the writer without diminishing its worth.¹¹

Thus it surfaces that the two characters were chosen not because of the prototype but because the two characters Allan (Kamal Ahmed Rizvi) and Nanha (M. Rafi Khawar), could exploit this format to the maximum. Allan is a thin cunning person, eyes shining with mischief and a poisonous smile on his lips. He is always engaged in devising new methods to produce wealth. The other character Nanha is fat and short, a simpleton, who is honest, hardworking and whose innocence is exploited to the fill by the clever Allan.

¹⁰ Rashid Ashraf, 'Kamal Ahmed Rizvi say aik Mulaqat', mahnama *Zavia Nigah*, Karachi, September 2010, p.46.

¹¹ Kamal Ahmad Rizvi, *Alif Noon* (Lahore: Feroze Sons, 1982), p.21.

Tragedy and comedy together

This is according to classical terminology. In comedy people are shown as worse than they are, while in tragedy they are shown as better than are.¹² Thus if we analyze them, these characters singly represent tragedy and comedy. Perhaps by sitting them of against one another, produces the allure that keeps the audience transfixed. The following points also need to be noted:

1. These characters are not bound to a specific time or place.
2. Comedy on the whole is the essence of a universal element and they represent a meaning which is separate from, and is greater than, the self it represents and which guides them to the future as well. If we seek the meaning of what the writer represent by looking into his sub-conscious and seek the reason why he has chosen humour and satire as the vehicle to convey his message? What are the factors in a society that makes an intelligent person do many things yet he is unable to acquire the material assets which make him acceptable in that society.

In order to display the social injustice and inequality we see a character devising ever new methods to cheat and deprive people of their earnings just for his own material benefit and in this manner he unmasks the machinations of an exploitative world and at the same time making people burst with laughter. It is because of the apparent and the real being in tandem that the producer of *Alif Noon*, Agha Nasir, in his preface to the first printed collection of *Alif Noon* wrote:

Agha Nasir resident of Islamabad as the first producer of *Alif Noon*, who has made a small contribution to its concept and mode of presentation, while being in full possession of my senses is prepared to state on oath that *Alif Noon* is not a series of farcical plays but of tragic plays.¹³

If we see the series as reflecting the tragic aspect of our society then we find the scenes extremely repelling but by employing the mode of humour and satire the play writer is able to focus on those sores of our society that have been dripping for ages now. We see that black marketing, loot and plunder are only increasing day by day. Those who prey upon the simple people by different guiles are a particular mafia.

Another important point is that *Alif Noon* can be called a tragedy also due to the reason that in tragedy stress is laid on manliness. If we

¹² Dr Aslam Qureshi, *Dramay ka Tareekhi or Tanqeedi Pasmaanzar* (Lahore: Majlis-i- Taraqi -i- Adab, 1971), p.75.

¹³ Agha Nasir, 'Alif or Noon', *Shakhsiat Kamal Ahmed Rizvi Number*, Karachi, September 1998, p.315.

glance at world literature we find that in all tragic dramas the central character is a man.¹⁴ In *Alif Noon* there are female characters but there is no heroine, the whole story revolves around Allan and Nanha.

The themes of *Alif Noon*

At the outset we have to judge whether the themes that have been addressed are important or not. Secondly we have to see whether their mode of presentation is equal, or not, to the task of conveying the author's meaning and purpose. If we see the topics of *Alif Noon* none of them appear grand rather they are common place and, seemingly, even trivial. But it is due to this format that the audience was able to relate to, laugh and laugh over the situation and, in most episodes, only when the show was over could the implications of the social evils, thus revealed, begin to sink in. These would never have been apparent or condemnable had Kamal Ahmad Rizvi chosen to be didactic. As we have seen there were around a hundred episodes out of which forty-five have survived, but even these make a very long list, incapable of insertion here.

When we look at his themes we find that they are really bitter but because of his mimicry he makes his portrayal palatable. Who are the people behind the social evils? Rizvi depicts that hypocrisy, deceit and fraud have kept the perpetrator away from the public view? Rizvi raises the question of why a person, in order to live, has to labour beyond his endurance and yet he is unable to have satisfactory life. Every day the common man's life becomes more difficult. In this fashion Rizvi unmasks the so-called white collar class of Pakistan. Rizvi's themes represent the crises due to which people live from day to day, but the crises never go away. Sometimes the country sees democracy, sometimes dictatorship, but for the common man darkness only seems to increase. See this dialogue from *Old Clothes Market*:

NANHA: Allan in this market only poor people like us come to buy clothes.

ALLAN: Oh the poor don't even come here. He makes do with a loin cloth. He eats pure food, he doesn't have any adulteration in his food or drink or in his apparel.

NANHA: Then who come here?

ALLAN: The middle class people who are languishing in the middle. They cannot wear loin clothes like the poor, nor can they have new suits tailored like the rich.

NANHA: Meaning those who are not upper class but want to look upper class?

¹⁴ Aslam Qureshi, *Almiya* (Lahore: Mawara Publishers, 1987), p.147.

ALLAN: Yes.

Another dialogue reveals the tendency to ape the West even after gaining independence years ago.

NANHA: Allan it is strange but ever since I have put on this suit I feel like speaking in English

ALLAN: Not only you a number of people are affected by this disease; as soon as they wear western clothes they start speaking English in a very painful manner.

NANHA: Aslam becomes Aselum, Azhar becomes Aez-har, Abdullah becomes Ebdulah (laughs) Right.

NANHA: Allan is Allen

ALLAN: Talk plainly you don't have to disfigure your face while speaking

NANHA: After wearing these clothes I cannot speak in Urdu. The British left but they left behind their apparel and their language for us as their token, it is our misfortune that we take pride in dressing and speaking like them.¹⁵

It is Kamal Ahmed Rizvi's mimicry of the common place that encompasses his genius and in this gift he has no peer. Sometimes he uses double entendre sentences which has such a bite and such audacity that it stings but it cannot be censored by the censor board. Allan is encouraging a capitalist to take part in elections:

SETH: Will the people vote for me?

ALLAN: Why not Sir, for twenty five years you have----- served this nation.¹⁶

In one sentence the electoral politics of politician of Pakistan and their participants is represented through a long gap which cannot be censored, so Rizvi gets off with making a satirical statement.

Kamal Ahmed Rizvi knows how to turn a phrase on since his characters are the common people found in our cities, localities, villages, bazars and offices. Kamal Ahmed Rizvi brings about realism which usually crosses the danger level.¹⁷

Direction, acting and its screening

The character of Kamal Ahmed Rizvi and the milieu in which they are shown are integrated technically and logically, which is why his

¹⁵ Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, *Alif or Noon (Lunda Bazar)* (Karachi: Fazlee Sons, 2011), p.117.

¹⁶ Rashid Ashraf, *Kamal Ahmed Rizvi say aik Mulaqat*, op.cit., p.48.

¹⁷ Agha Nasir, 'Kamal Ahmed Rizvi or Theater', *Shaksiat Kamal Ahmed Rizvi Number*, Karachi, 1998, p.121.

audience never get a feeling of boredom. From the beginning he keeps the cast of his characters to a minimum. Whether it is *Alif Noon*, *Mr Shaitan* or any other series, the main characters are only two, around whom the episode revolves. Another very important reason for the episodes to be gripping is that it revolves around the theme of good and evil. Another point, brought out by Alain Desoulieres, is the harmony between the writer and producer. Desoulieres quotes Agha Nasir to the effect that:

The relationship between producer and writer is extremely delicate complicated and even a bit dangerous. If a good writer and a good producer do not maintain a faithfulness [to each other's ideas] things will of necessity be difficult.¹⁸

In most of his dramas the character played by Kamal Ahmed Rizvi has been negative, that is villainous, but in spite of this his popularity went on increasing. This is perhaps he was himself the writer, the actor and the director. It would have been difficult for another person to direct such a consummate actor. Rizvi casts the battle between good and evil, some times in the comic and sometimes in the tragic mode and, in both instances, warns that if matters are allowed to drift, as hitherto, then there shall be nothing to save people from the impending doom.

Long teleplay *Khoya Huwa Admi* (The Lost Man)

Rizvi has expressed existentialist pain in an unparalleled manner. The story is very simple, a married couple lives on the tenth floor of an apartment building but the travails they face including the dismissal of the husband and an armed robbery, committed when they had left the flat briefly, are typically the problems the people of Karachi face: Destitution. The rising crime graph which is affecting the people of this mega polis has been only increasing in time and Rizvi is focusing on this plight two decades earlier.

BANO; You are being hysterical. You don't seem to feel that our house been looted.

DANISH; Well am I a tenant here? My house has also been looted.

BANO: There is no need to shout at me if you are upset, then so am I.

DANISH: I am sorry Bano I am not shouting at you (going towards the bedroom) I am fetching Valium for you.

BANO: I don't want Valium.

¹⁸ Alain Desoulieres, 'A Study of Kamal Ahmed Rizvi's Urdu TV Drama Alif Nun', *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, Centre for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1999, p.68.

DANISH: Take a tablet.

BANO: I have said that I won't take it.

DANISH: You have become too stubborn.

BANO: They took away Valium as well.

DANISH: Valium too?

BANO: They have emptied the whole medicine cabinet. Valium, pain killers Iodex, Aspirin, shaving cream, toothpaste, razor, blade. They have left only the tooth brush. They had no use for it.

DANISH: I can't believe that such a thing can happen.¹⁹

The fast paced life of any large city gives rise to a number of problem because human beings day and night are subjected to mental stress. Presentiments, danger, restlessness, hypertension and worry has been displayed in *Khoya Hua Admi* with complete mastery. All those ailments and problems which make a common man a psychological patient and which affects his actions have been portrayed most skillfully.

Drama serial Mr. Shaitan and state censorship in 1985

Kamal Ahmed Rizvi began a new series with the name of *Mr. Shaitan*. Initially it was proposed to name the serial Dr Shaitan but after objections from the PTV head office it was renamed *Mr. Shaitan*. The pilot program had been prepared by Bakhtiar Ahmed and the rest of the series were produced by Ali Rizvi, but in this series there appeared to be dissonance between the producer and the writer; and Rizvi refused to complete all thirteen episodes. The scissors were applied freely and simultaneously, Rizvi became the object of censure. The basic purpose of this drama was to bring out that a Satan resides in every man who tries to misguide him and, in some instances, is also successful. However, Rizvi projected Satan, hidden in the society, on the TV screen. As a result he was forbidden from indulging in harsh criticism because, in a number of episodes, he had displayed corruption in many government departments with the result that a *sherbet* manufacturer and the civil aviation authority served notices of defamation of character. The plaintiffs took the plea that the writer had displayed lack of responsibility in his plays, he was partial and made such imputations about the institution that damaged their credibility.²⁰

See the dialogues below to understand how, in *Mr Shaitan*, the bitter reality of Pakistani society have been portrayed.

¹⁹ https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=khoya+howa+admi

²⁰ Aqdas Farooq, 'Mr shaytan or Muqadmat', *Daily Jung*, Karachi, 2 October 1985, p.15.

THE POLICE SUPERINTENDENT: I did not feel anything perhaps I reached here just like this.

SHAITAN: The purpose is to arrive.

POLICE SUPERITENDENT: Why you call me here?

SHAITAN: I wanted to ask you how despite your presence peace and tranquility prevails over here.

POLICE SUPERITENDENT: I don't understand.

SHAITAN: I mean people are travelling comfortably, there are no incidents on the high ways, no bus was looted, no car was lifted, no one was kidnapped.

POLICE SUPERINTENDENT: This is very sad story.

SHAITAN: Why have the dacoits vacated the area?

POLICE SUPERINTENDENT: The dacoits have a swollen head have lost their temper they don't even speak in civil manner.²¹

The disturbed state of peace and tranquility in which institutions have been destroyed and evil itself is worried about how events are moving, but this is the tragedy that Rizvi recounts in his plays. For the crime of revealing the evils of society, the writer had to be banned because, in these episodes, he narrated those bitter realities that offended the dignity of these institutions. The government department did not have the patience to suffer such positive criticism although the media when it projects such evils publicly is for the good of the institution in question.

Kamal Ahmad Rizvi brings out the irony of his character when one of his victims appeals for mercy asks for forgiveness. Mr. Shaitan says he cannot do it because spreading goodness is beyond his jurisdiction. Jurisdiction is a peculiar term used by the bureaucracy which determines the scope of duty assigned to any government functionary. By employing this term here Kamal Ahmad Rizvi hints that doing good is beyond the scope of the bureaucracy. After such harsh criticism it was impossible for Rizvi to continue with this drama serial.

Even previously PTV had presented many programs which brought to light the problems faced by the common man when they had to approach government departments, these were mostly treated with a lace of humour and satire. One such program was Rizvi's own *Challenge Weekly*. Rizvi lampooned government departments on the official PTV channel at a time when no other magazines or journals had the courage to criticize the rulers and even cartoonists were prevented from drawing cartoons of political rulers or their hangers on. At that time it was only Rizvi who through the PTV could take on the bureaucracy,

²¹ Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, 'Mr Sahitan (Drama Script Ep12)', *Shaksiat Kamal Ahmed Rizvi Number*, Karachi, 1998, p.399.

the ministers and the advisers. This he did because he could read all the signs of the depths towards which the country was being taken. See in this context the dialogue from *Sachchai ki Talash* (The Search for Truth)

EDITOR: This man does not spare even intellectuals he keeps on stirring them.

SADAQUAT: (Who during his speech seeks the pulse of the audience) Now what is at the bottom of this challenge? In my imperfect opinion it is this and I rely on you not to make fun of my simplicity ...

This is the time, this is the age that we never discuss those who are the most corrupt and the most selfish, both men and women. They look after their personal interest. They first consider before doing anything, 'what benefit will it bring to me?'²²

If we view these dialogues in the perspective of the present times we have to praise the prescience of Kamal Ahmed Rizvi that he could foresee those social evils that are glaringly apparent now but were not so apparent then .The gentry used to change their slogans and used to carry out their loot and plunders under different pretexts Although Rizvi gave it a humorous aspect but since our society does not have a tradition of bearing criticism it is unable to bear it.

The secrets of successful dramatization, directorship and acting

When we analyze the merits of Kamal Ahmed Rizvi as a dramatist we must keep before over selves that he undertakes the direction and acting simultaneously which can only be tightly fitted, otherwise even if one element is loose then the drama shall lose its impact. Alongside we should keep in mind that an accomplished director keeps his eyes on precisely those things otherwise the best written dramas shall lose their effect when projected on the screen.

The following are the main components of a successful drama:

1. The central idea in the story
2. The plot
3. The overture
4. Characterization
5. Dialogues
6. Continuity, the complexity and the uncertainty
7. The encounter
8. The climax
9. The conclusion

²² Kamal Ahmad Rizvi, 'Sachayee Ki Talsh (Drama Script)', *Ibid.*, p.436.

If we view Rizvi's plays in the light of the above listed elements, we shall find all the above elements in their proper proportions and in complete harmony. This is why his plays are popular even today if we view them technically it has optimum sound recording and photography. In all of his plays we find an interesting story, realistic acting, spontaneous dialogues and a fast tempo.

Commenting on the acting skills of Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, his famous contemporary Firdaus Jamal said Kamal Ahmed Rizvi's delivery of dialogues is quite unique, after repeating his words in a marked manner, and the greatest portion of it is art, he throws out whole sentence in a manner that the audience cannot help but appreciate.²³ It is because of this aspect of his acting his audience never feels bored. The second reason why his dramas gripped, has been given by Kamal Ahmed Rizvi himself:

I need to write less and speak more, my pre-written script were a type of blueprint only, the frame. During rehearsals with others actors I would add new sentences and it was never felt that the actor was speaking lines written by someone else.²⁴

If we measure his famous series *Alif Noon* by this standard, the spontaneous nature of his dialogues and a repeated refrain of his co-star Nanha in a completely simple manner: 'Dear Allan you are a scoundrel', was uttered in such a natural matter that we would forget that these dialogues were written by Allan (Rizvi) himself. In this equation he cast himself as a down trodden but evil person and Nanha as a down trodden but virtuous person. Here Rizvi demolishes the myth that a downtrodden person has the right to lead an immoral life, or that being downtrodden is an excuse for creating anarchy in society.

Depicting a reality which was the stuff of humor, far from the buffoonery of the later stage and early films. This humor was based on the every-day experience of the common man, who faced these experiences every-day. Without burdening the audience with philosophy or a didactic approach, Rizvi makes them laugh. This is the comedy. The tragedy is that, that despite the passage of 50 years the social evils he depicted are still with us.

An important aspect of this presentation is that even after seeing all the cunning, the mockery and the cynical machinations of Allan, the character does not repel the audience. In every new slot of his series new

²³ Jang forum, 'Naqlain karta karta drama navis bun gaya', *Daily Jang*, Lahore, 12 October 1987.

²⁴ Shafiq uz Zaman, 'Kamal Ahmed Rizvi say aik Mulaqat', *op.cit.*, p.59.

methods of cheating, new machinations only increase the appeal of the *Alif Noon* series. Even after a hiatus of 40 years the DVD's of these programs are available in the market and are being sold. Any re-telecast would have been welcomed, had Rafi Khawar Nanha not died, perhaps yet another series would have been aired. Sahira Kazmi presented an episode in which these actors were shown as having grown old and retired. This depiction proved to be a fantasy.

Even though Rizvi's themes were topical, he was able to rise above a journalistic presentation. At some places the themes are dated, but due to technical advancement, the proliferation of cell phones has decreased the value of the landline telephones. Technically feature films have seen an advancement; still Kamal Ahmed Rizvi could focus on the moral and not the methods of corruption, that is why his production still stands high. Kamal Ahmad Rizvi has attained heights in both tragic and comic plays. In the very last years of his life, he wrote four dramas which have neither been performed or printed. Like a great artist he has been full of suspense till the last.