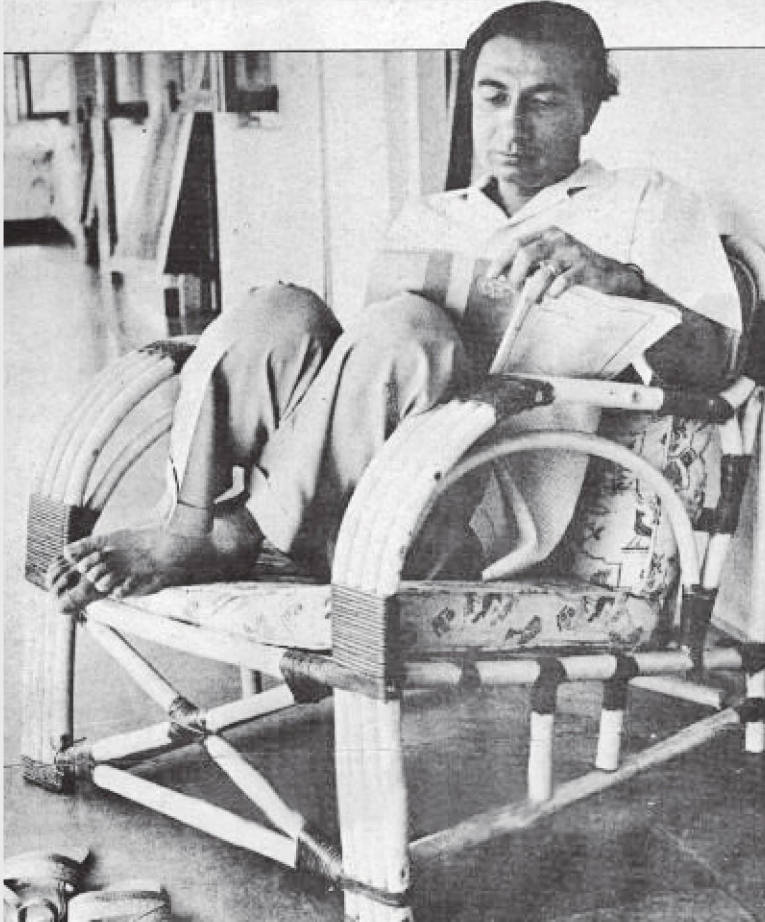


Amrita & Sahir: Written in longing

The love that smouldered between poems

Sahir Ludhianvi
► The celebrated Urdu poet and lyricist whose quiet demeanour and powerful verses captivated Amrita Pritam for a lifetime



Amrita Pritam
► The fearless Punjabi poet whose words transformed personal longing into timeless literature



► A rare image of Amrita Pritam and Sahir Ludhianvi: Though they were rarely photographed together, their bond has become one of South Asia's most enduring literary romances



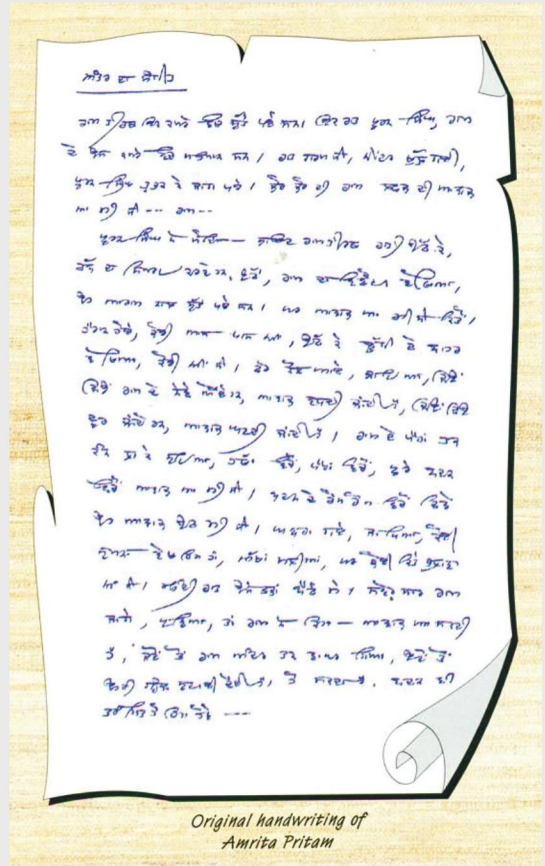
► Imroz: The artist who loved Amrita unconditionally, accepting that a part of her heart would always belong to Sahir



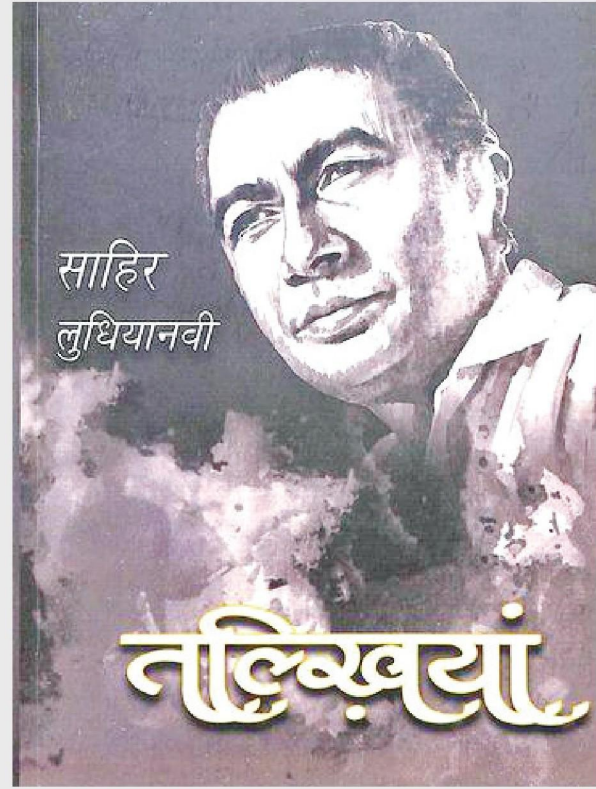
► Amrita Pritam with Imroz: Their companionship lasted over four decades, becoming a remarkable story of trust, respect and unconditional love. A love that asked for nothing in return. Amrita Pritam and Imroz built a life together, where art, poetry and unwavering devotion spoke louder than words



► He knew a part of her heart still belonged to Sahir Ludhianvi, yet Imroz never asked her to choose. Instead, he loved her completely—a rare testament to unconditional love.



► Every stroke of Amrita Pritam's pen carried echoes of love, loss and longing—the emotions that shaped some of the most unforgettable verses in Punjabi literature



► Long before Kabhi Kabhi Mere Dil Mein became one of Hindi cinema's most beloved love songs, it lived as the poem Kabhi Kabhi in Sahir Ludhianvi's Talkhiyan. Though never dedicated to Amrita Pritam, its wistful reflections on love, memory and longing have long been seen by readers as echoing the emotions that bound the two poets

They never exchanged vows. They never built a home together. They were never photographed walking hand in hand through the streets of Lahore or Delhi.

Yet, for decades, Amrita Pritam and Sahir Ludhianvi continued one of the greatest conversations ever written—not through letters alone, but through poems.

Every verse they wrote seemed to carry the weight of a name they rarely spoke aloud.

Their love did not bloom in embraces. It survived in pauses, unfinished sentences, cigarette smoke and words that readers would later recognise as cries from two hearts that could never truly belong to each other.

When two poets met, silence found a language

Lahore in the 1940s was alive with poetry gatherings where young writers debated revolution, love and freedom.

It was here that Amrita first saw Sahir. He was shy, impossibly quiet, often hiding behind a cloud of cigarette smoke. She was already an acclaimed Punjabi poet, trapped in an unhappy marriage yet fiercely independent in thought.

The attraction was immediate, though almost invisible.

Sahir spoke little.

Amrita listened to everything—even his silence.

Years later, she would write that sometimes he sat in her room for hours without uttering more than a few words. Yet those silent afternoons became the loudest memories of her life.

The cigarettes that became love letters

Among the countless stories about them, none is more heartbreaking than the one Amrita herself revealed in Rasidi Ticket.

Whenever Sahir visited, he smoked continuously.

After he left, Amrita gathered the cigarette butts from the ashtray.

She would light them one by one, placing them on her lips exactly where his had rested.

"I smoked those unfinished cigarettes," she recalled, "as though I were touching him."

It was perhaps the closest they ever came to a kiss.

Then came Partition—and distance became another character in their love story

The Partition of 1947 tore Punjab apart. Amrita fled Lahore for Delhi.

Sahir eventually settled in Bombay.

History did what society had already begun—it placed borders between two people who had never truly found each other.

Yet separation only deepened their poetry.

Amrita's immortal lament, "Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu", mourned not only a divided Punjab but a world where love itself had become homeless.

Sahir's poetry, meanwhile, became increasingly filled with longing, loneliness and impossible desire.

Neither poet wrote, "This is about you."

Neither had to.

The poems that whispered each other's names

There is no collection titled

Letters to Amrita or Poems for Sahir.

Instead, their emotions slipped into metaphors.

Amrita often wrote of waiting for footsteps that never arrived, of love existing beyond possession, of souls recognising one another across impossible distances.

In one of her most celebrated poems, she imagines calling to her beloved across lifetimes, suggesting that if destiny failed them once, perhaps another birth would be kinder.

Sahir's verses carried a different ache.

His poetry questioned love's cruelty, mocked society's hypocrisies and spoke repeatedly of relationships that remained incomplete.

Whether in his literary work or in his unforgettable film lyrics, his lovers rarely found easy happiness.

Songs like "Kabhi Kabhi Mere Dil Mein", though written years later for cinema, continue to evoke the emotional landscape readers associate with Sahir—a love that exists as memory more than possession.

Amrita once admitted that while readers searched for metaphors, she was simply writing her truth.

Then another man entered the story—and chose not to compete with a ghost

Artist Imroz arrived quietly, without demanding that Amrita forget the man she could never stop loving.

He simply loved her.

Every day.

Without conditions.

Without jealousy.

One evening, as they rode through Delhi on his scooter, Amrita absent-mindedly traced a word on his back with her finger.

The word was "Sahir."

Imroz knew.

He said nothing.

Years later, he confessed that he understood exactly whose name she had written.

And still, he stayed.

Perhaps that is why their relationship became one of the most extraordinary examples of unconditional love in Indian literature.

Imroz never tried to erase Sahir.

He simply gave Amrita a home where she could love without apology.

The confession that arrived too late

After Sahir died in 1980, Amrita wrote about him with an honesty that only death sometimes permits.

She no longer hid the depth of her love.

She described him as an emotion that had never left her, even after decades.

Some relationships end.

Theirs simply transformed into literature.

Every poem became another conversation they never finished.

Every book became another meeting they never had.

Every reader became a witness to a romance that history never allowed to blossom.

A love that refused to die

There are grander romances in history.

There are happier endings.

But few stories have turned longing into art the way Amrita and Sahir did.

She wrote him into eternity.

He hid her between metaphors.

And somewhere between Punjabi verses and Urdu couplets, two poets built a home neither distance, nor Partition, nor time could ever destroy.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of their story is also its greatest beauty:

They never really had each other.

And yet, they never stopped belonging to one another.

Some love stories end at the altar. Theirs began with a cigarette.