URDU AND MUSLIM SOUTH ASIA

Studies in honour of
Ralph Russell

EDITED BY
CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE

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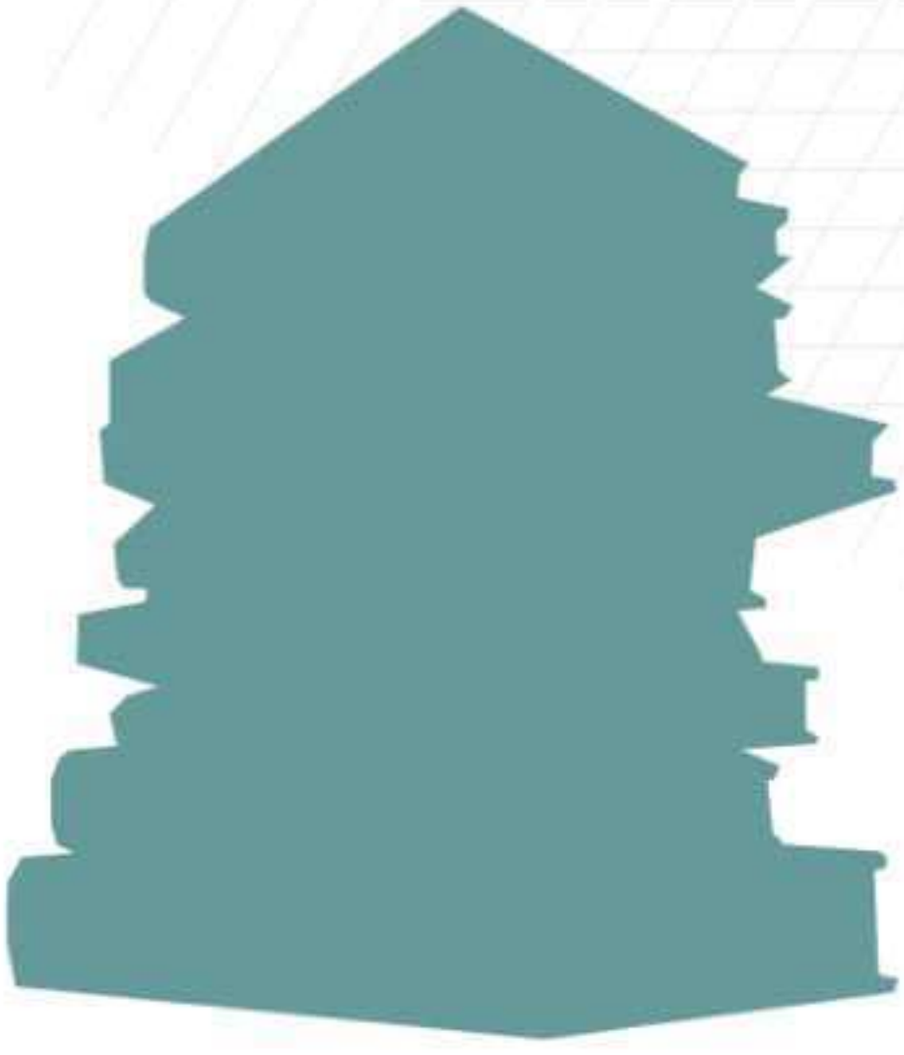

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Christopher Shackle

Professor of Modern Languages of South Asia
in the University of London

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Transcription

In the transcription of words and titles of books from Urdu and Persian, the following conventions have been employed:

Macrons mark the long vowels *ā ī ū*, while nasalization is indicated as *-ṅ*, final silent *h* as *-a*, and the Persian *izāfat* as *-e*. The Arabic article is transcribed phonetically, as pronounced in Urdu.

Subscript dots indicate the retroflex consonents *ṭ ḍ ṛ*, while *w* indicates silent *vāo*. Letters of the Arabic alphabet identically pronounced in Urdu are not distinguished by diacritics, but *'ain* is systematically written throughout. The single-character symbols *c x š ğ* indicate the consonants *ce*, *xe*, *šīn*, and *ğain* respectively.

Muslim personal names have been standardized as far as possible according to the same conventions, except that the last four single-character symbols have been replaced by the more familiar digraphs 'ch', 'kh', 'sh', and 'gh'.

Place-names appear in their usual English spellings, without diacritics.

As all contributors and many readers will recognize, absolute consistency is virtually impossible to maintain in the transcription of a language with so mixed a heritage as Urdu. The aim has been simply to preserve a reasonable level of consistency, however illogically determined. Thus 'ghazal', for instance, is treated as a naturalized English word (thanks not least to Ralph's own success in familiarizing a general readership with the genre): but 'musha'ira' keeps its *'ain*, like 'Shi'ite'; and *dīvān* is treated as a technical term requiring full diacritics, like *tārīx*, *qasīda*, and *masnavī*.

RALPH RUSSELL

1918. Born.

1937-1940. St. John's College, Cambridge. BA Classics.

1940-1946. War service in the army. Indian Army, March 1942-August 1945.

1946-1949. Studentship in Urdu at SOAS. BA Urdu with Sanskrit.

1949-1964. Lecturer in Urdu at SOAS.

1964-1981. Reader in Urdu in the University of London.

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A select bibliography is provided at the end of this book.

Contents

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Introduction

Many claims are made for their language by Urdu speakers themselves, some of which may often seem exaggerated to others. Few, however, would seriously dispute its significance as the major cultural language for the last two centuries of the Muslims of South Asia, who constitute one of the largest and most influential regional groups within the Islamic world. The distinctive pattern of their peculiarly interesting history is, of course, directly reflected in the changing evolution of Urdu as a cultural medium, first cultivated as a courtly successor to the Persian of the Mughal empire, then both adopted by the British as a convenient lingua franca through which to administer their Indian Empire and further developed by the Muslims as the medium in which to reformulate their identity as a colonial minority, until finally achieving national status in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and an international diffusion with the settlement of South Asian Muslims in many parts of the world, notably in Britain.

For all this, Urdu has always been something of a Cinderella as a subject of serious study in Western universities. It is sometimes assigned an uneasy niche in departments of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, where it is at best a poor relation of Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Or else it is fitted into departments of South Asian languages, usually dominated in the past by Sanskrit, nowadays often by her favourite offspring, Urdu's step-sister Hindi.

Luckily for Cinderellas, however, they sooner or later always manage to find their fairy godmothers. Ralph Russell, unquestionably the outstanding Western scholar of Urdu of his generation, succeeded in working a magic in bringing his subject to life rivalled by few teachers of Middle Eastern or Indian languages. This collection of papers is dedicated to him as an expression of the general recognition of his tenacious dedication to the cause of bringing Urdu and its literature as live and lively subjects before both specialists and a much wider Western audience. If this Festschrift helps to enhance the appreciation and understanding of Urdu literature and immediately related fields of the Muslim culture of South Asia, it will have succeeded in its purpose of honouring Ralph best by maintaining the dynamic of his work.

Several contributors to this volume have taken advantage of the occasion to indicate the particular character of the debt they feel they owe him, whether as colleagues or as students. All would certainly recognize his particular gift for communicating his enthusiasm for his subject, whether through his writings, his teaching, his memorable skills as a public lecturer, or his lively humour in private conversation.

Though born in the same month as that in which Ralph joined the Indian Army, thus beginning his lifelong commitment to Urdu, it has been my good fortune to have experienced all these at first hand since I became a junior colleague of his at SOAS in 1966. One of the qualities I first learnt to admire about him was his caustic dislike of cant; and so I have no desire to play the role of devoted *bulbul* to his often rather spiky *gul*. Charismatic teachers are seldom the easiest of colleagues to work with all the time. What matters, after all, is their charisma; and this is something which Ralph has possessed in abundant measure, allied to a formidable power of concentrating only on what he had defined to himself as being genuinely important. The combination of these two qualities resulted in a career of exceptionally clear focus.

As usual, he himself has provided the clearest account of his aims and achievements, in his review of the British contribution to Urdu studies. In characteristically emphatic style, his predecessors are suitably dismissed with the words, 'Indeed what is at first sight *more* surprising is that the British contribution has not been much *more* considerable than it has.'[1] Although due tribute is paid to the astonishing *Dictionary* of Platts, the general dullness of most British studies of Urdu during the pre-1947 period is rightly attributed to the colonial situation which gave rise to them. Ralph's own assessment of his quite contrary purpose is later perfectly indicated in his description of the reaction of one of his students to his very idiosyncratic *Elementary Urdu*, who said, '"I can learn from *this* course. It is written for human beings!" No tribute could have made me feel more adequately rewarded. Studies of Urdu and its literature should indeed be written for human beings, and in a way which stresses the equal claims to respect of Urdu-speakers and English-speakers alike as fellow-members of the human race.'[2]

This conviction underlines all Ralph's work, which is — as he has always been the first to point out — given so much of its authenticity by his practice of working at every stage with Urdu-speaking scholars, hence his productive series of collaborations in different ways with Aziz Ahmad, Ibadat Barelvi, Khalid Hasan Qadiri, and above all Khurshid ul Islam, to whose long association with Ralph we owe *Three Mughal poets, Ghalib: life and letters*, and — we hope in the near future — the long-planned accompanying study of Ghalib's poetry. The select bibliography included at the end of this volume will serve to remind readers of the range and enduring quality of Ralph's contributions to the study of Urdu literature, especially the poetry of its classic masters.

For some scholars, such creativity might be sufficient. The bibliography also, however, serves to indicate the extent of Ralph's commitment

to his other major activity, the production of Urdu teaching-materials, in latter years. Since his early retirement from SOAS in 1981, his energies were largely given to the cause of establishing Urdu as a fully recognized subject in the British school system. Although some of us find it hard not to regret the loss this has entailed to the hard-pressed field of Urdu literary studies, none would dispute the success of his tireless activities in this area, or its importance for the eventual formation of a genuinely multicultural society in Britain. This aspect of Ralph's work for Urdu is separately described in the final paper of this book, by Marion Molteno, who conveys a vivid sense both of Ralph's enthusiasm and of his power to communicate it to others.

The other papers collectively pay their more indirect tribute through the examination, from a variety of perspectives, of Urdu literary themes and related aspects of the richly complex cultural history of the Muslims of South Asia. It is no part of the purpose of a book of this kind to attempt a unified overall coverage, since its success is rather achieved on the basis of the interest of the individual subjects treated therein, more often than not for the first time in English. Possible thematic arrangements have therefore been rejected in favour of a fairly straightforward ordering of the papers according to the rough chronology of their subject-matter.

Since Urdu only emerged as the premier cultural language of the Muslims of South Asia at that point, towards the end of the eighteenth century, when their long-exercised political hegemony over a largely non-Muslim population had at last drawn to its effective close, the opening papers in the volume are mostly devoted to non-Urdu themes. The collection fittingly begins with an ambitious overview by Victor Kiernan, best known to Urdu enthusiasts for his fine translations of Iqbāl and Faiz, but also to a wider public for much broader studies. His attractive picture of the once vast world of Persian poetry may serve to underpin the understanding of the more specialist treatments to be found in later papers of aspects of Urdu poetry, nowadays perhaps Persian's most vital living heir. Peter Hardy, long closely associated with Ralph in the Indo-Muslim field at SOAS, if from a quite different perspective, next explores the economic underpinnings of the Mughal culture, of which Persian poetry was so prominent a part. His examination of the conscious models provided by both courtiers and clerics at the time of the height of Mughal power does much to illuminate attitudes towards money still characteristic of Indo-Muslims, which are often to be perceived as underlying themes explored in later papers.

Perhaps one of the most striking features of this collection is the way in which it is justifiably able to ignore the Hindu dimension, so carefully excluded for so long from high Indo-Muslim culture. Rupert Snell's paper on the one Muslim convert proudly claimed as one of their own greatest poets by Hindu Vaishnavas fills in this blank from the interesting perspective of sectarian hagiography. His account of Raskhān makes it clear both how the cultural divide between the two communities was

quite as deeply felt on the Hindu as on the Muslim side, also how this is often vividly and amusingly reflected in early Braj Bhāshā prose. Attempts to gloss over this divide are rightly dismissed for what they are worth by David Matthews in his description of assessments of the great pre-classical Urdu *Kulliyāt* by Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh in the Deccan, so long before Urdu became established as a literary language in the North. His assessment of the presently all too often amateurish quality of editorial standards, although specifically couched in terms of Dakanī, should be widely echoed by all who have been involved in the detailed study of pre-modern Urdu literary texts.

Contributors have decided to leave the high ground of classical Urdu poetry to Ralph himself. The following papers, covering the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are accordingly devoted to the examination of its wider contemporary cultural context. Simon Digby, perhaps as widely envied for the richness of his personal collections as for the breadth of his scholarship, elegantly combines both in a fascinating account of a late eighteenth century manuscript describing the voyage of a Bengali Muslim to London. Quite apart from the felicitous coincidence of this Munshī having been employed by an earlier Mr Russell, Ismā'īl's *New History*, foreshadowing a long series of subsequent *safarnāme* describing Indo-Pakistani Muslims' experiences of the now post-imperial capital, may serve as a timely reminder of the cultural divides which exist around so many dimensions of South Asian Islam.

The enormous popularity so long enjoyed by the *Amīr Hamza* cycle in Indo-Muslim culture is more often hurriedly acknowledged than seriously examined. Frances Pritchett's paper on the role of a genuinely Indian hero in this vast *dāstān* is therefore particularly welcome, especially in view of its suggestive exploration of wider mythic themes, notably that Imām Husain dimension so peculiarly pervasive in the cultural attitudes of so much Indo-Muslim literature, no matter how explicitly Sunni the attitudes of its authors. Jumping almost a century from her, my own paper looks at a minor Urdu *dīvān* produced by a Sufi poet now rightly alternatively celebrated as the greatest poet of one of the local languages of Pakistan, and attempts both to indicate the reasons for this differential assessment and to suggest the limiting factors which may determine the future of Urdu as the prime literary medium of the one country where it has full official recognition.

The twentieth century is much more richly covered here, in the following eight papers, whose focus is first on the immense variety of Urdu prose-writing in a whole variety of genres, as achieved and sustained since around the turn of the century, then upon the enduring capability for endless adaptation of the still premier poetic tradition to capture the imagination of contemporary audiences.

Any glance at Western library holdings will immediately reveal that Urdu is the language of South Asian Islam, long before it is the language of the Muslim culture of India and Pakistan: and this state of the market is

reflected in the emphasis of the following papers. Barbara Metcalf pays generous tribute to Ralph Russell's role in encouraging her to pursue her dedicated examination of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī's *Bihištī zevar*, that endlessly reprinted classic statement of conservative norms which has been given to so many young brides, and has had such effect in the formation of cultural attitudes. Here she uses her intimate knowledge of the text to illuminate our understanding of the way in which clerical attitudes to literature must be regarded at the same level of seriousness as the statements of often deliberately antinomian writers, if genuine understandings of twentieth century South Asian Muslim identities are to be properly achieved and presented. Francis Robinson is equally well-known, in the true Ralph-ian tradition of intimate collaboration between Western scholars and South Asian Muslims, for his long association with the Farangī Mahall in Lucknow. Here he has chosen to focus on the role of cadet members of this historic dynasty of authoritative 'ulama in a journal challenging contemporary attitudes, not least those of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī himself.

Journalistic themes continue to be explored in the following contributions, from the twin perspectives of examining those enduring obsessions of so much Urdu writing today, namely the proper interpretation of the Islamic heritage and the appropriate style for its transmission to women. In a contribution somewhat different from others in character, as an abridged translation, Christian Troll looks both to that more successful version of the Nationalist cause to which Abul Kalām Āzād came to give his allegiance as ultimately the most prominent Muslim in the Congress party, and more immediately to the fashion in which his imagination was captured in his angry young man days by the figure of Sarmad, still a potent symbol of opposition to authority. Although firmly to be dated in the circumstances of the time of its composition, this is of course a text which equally evokes a past time in the usual trans-chronological fashion of the Indo-Muslim imagination.

Gail Minault, herself the co-editor with Troll of a major study of Āzād, writes of the work of the father of one of the best-known of the female fiction-writers who have come to play so major a role in contemporary Urdu creative prose. Her thoughtful analysis of the work of Rāshid ul Khairī's writing for women inevitably suggests parallels and contrasts with Metcalf's paper on the quite different approach of Ashraf 'Alī. Equally, earlier touchings-upon the Karbala theme are explicitly activated in Muhammad Umar Memon's reflective discussion of a recent novel by Intizār Husain, to whose uniquely interesting oeuvre he has devoted so much careful explication. Ralph Russell's own commitment to a Marxist historical view was used to great effect in conveying the sense of tragedy which underlies so much classical Urdu poetry composed with a sense of imperial collapse: Memon's approach adds the longer felt Shi'a dimension, inevitably coloured by the more recent experience of almost total cultural upheaval felt by the Urdu-speaking *muhājirs* in Pakistan.

In the meantime, however, Urdu continues to flourish as a long cultivated medium of rightly great prestige both in its homelands and in the diaspora: and the subsequent papers are accordingly devoted to different aspects of the powerfully established forms of Urdu poetry, which continue to demand so passionate an allegiance from so many who define themselves in terms of its cultural heritage, wherever in the world they may live.

Few could match the grasp of this heritage evidenced in the paper contributed by Ralph's long-term SOAS colleague Khalid Hasan Qadiri, which evokes the incredible facility of his well-known father in the now arcane art of the chronogram. Khalid Sahib is himself, as I can fully testify from my own experience of his skills, a more than expert practitioner of the form; but the wizardry evinced in the examples he gives of his father's legendary expertise in this addictive genre may serve to remind of both how much of the old Indo-Muslim civilization is now being lost and how much of it still remains to be appreciated.

Happily, though, in the modern circumstances of the Muslim South Asian diaspora to so many urban centres in Europe and North America, at least some of the traditions of that civilization continue to be enthusiastically maintained by the patronage of local communities in such a way as to bring them directly before a wider Western audience wishing to experience the oral and musical performance of Urdu poetry at first hand. Like all performing arts, these twin presentations have been subjected to especially rapid change in the present era, and these are examined in the carefully observed papers by C. M. Naim and Regula Qureshi. Naim's focus is on the musha'ira, that institutionalized poetic symposium which has been a cause of so much good and so much harm in the development of Urdu poetry over the last couple of centuries, and the ways in which its modern presentation to a necessarily widely-based paying audience differs from the courtly norms of the past. Even those vaguely aware of these social changes and the economic shifts which underlie them will more often as not be quite unaware of the sheer diversity of musical styles in which the ghazal and other genres of Urdu poetry may be performed, and how this affects the character of their texts. These factors are most illuminatingly summarized in Regula Qureshi's paper; and all devotees of the ghazal as the performing art-form it has always been will have much to learn from her systematic presentation, from the perspective of a musicologist, of its various styles.

A volume of this kind can, after all, hardly hope to achieve more than an incomplete presentation of various styles of literary and cultural expression developed by the Urdu-speaking Muslims of South Asia. Although absences in coverage are inevitably to be regretted, there is surely a considerable gain in the concentration upon real pictures from experts in their particular fields of the all-important details of one of mankind's most fascinatingly varied living cultural traditions.

As editor of the volume, I should like to take this opportunity of thanking most warmly all those who responded so readily to my invitation to contribute to a worthy Festschrift for Ralph Russell. My thanks are also due to the Publications Committee of the School for meeting the full cost of the publication of the book. Finally I wish to express my particular gratitude to Martin Daly for his expert assistance with its publication, and to Diana Matias for her invaluable help in reducing a heterogeneously formatted bundle of typescripts to at least reasonable uniformity.

Christopher Shackle

SOAS, 4 March 1989

NOTES

[1] *Oriental College Magazine*, 50, 1-4 (1974), p. 425.

[2] *Elementary Urdu* (1974), pp. 179, 185.

1

Persian poetry and its cosmopolitan audience

VICTOR KIERNAN

A twelfth century Persian historian could write of his country as the hearth and home of civilization, as complacently as a Chinese talking of his Middle Kingdom and its surrounding barbarians.[1] Most of Persia's barbarians belonged to the great Turki-speaking family that was spreading out to the Balkans and north-west China. They came out of the desert, or its oases, to plunder and conquer, and set up empires most of which soon broke apart into petty principalities. Coexistence of Persian and Turk over a wide area of middle Asia was for ages its chief driving-force, and as a symbiosis of two races was a phenomenon unique in history. Turks took over from Persia its bureaucratic monarchy, having no state-system of their own, and had an almost equal need of Persian culture. An élite derived from tent-reared upstarts had to adopt a culture that could serve it as a bond and advertise its ascendancy. On their side Persians might well say to themselves, like the English upper class when democracy came in, 'We must educate our masters'.

A consequence of this relationship, and of geography, was that Persia could not evolve on the lines of a nation-state, as European peoples were learning to do. Its record shows remarkably little of internal evolution; it consists of efforts to dominate other lands, and longer periods of subjection to foreigners. Linguistically there was the same standing still. Islam swelled the vocabulary with Arabic words, but from then on the language remained virtually unchanged, for much the same reason that Italian stood still after Dante. Italy too was failing to grow into a political nation, and its literary medium was the monopoly of the educated, while ordinary folk talked in a medley of local dialects.

National life had to take other than political forms. It flourished in various arts, foremost among them verse. Of the great poets after Firdausī, Rūmī belonged to the thirteenth century, Sa'dī and Hāfiz to the fourteenth, Jāmī to the fifteenth. During most of this time Persia was under alien rule, and it was above all when it was parcelled out into small territories that poetry took its highest flights,[2] as music did in old Germany: a weighty reminder that interactions between political and cultural history are highly complex. It has been observed that Hāfiz had almost nothing to say about the events of his tumultuous era; there is a

sharp contrast here between him and Horace, so like him in many ways but full of anxious ponderings over the fortunes of Rome and its empire. Safavid rule in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought 'national revival' after the reign of the Mongols and then the heirs of Tīmūr, but only in the guise of a sectarian religious cult. It brought no improvement in the life of the masses; instead there were endless futile wars with Ottoman Turkey, leading before long to a fresh relapse into political decadence. Nor was there a recovery of the poetical vitality of the great years. Poetry kept its primacy, but this was now inhibiting the advance of prose. Both suffered greatly, as did debate on public themes, from the absence of any secular theatre, so important a stimulus in Europe to both literature and collective consciousness.

Arab expansion and the spread of Islam created a vast cosmopolitan area, with much shuffling up of individuals and groups, especially on the higher social levels. Troops of writers were among those who left home in search of brighter prospects, or were carried off by empire-builders like Mahmūd of Ghazna or Tīmūr to grace their capitals and sing their praises. Within this entire region the unchanging character of the Persian language and its literary forms was a recommendation for it as a lingua franca, and in turn is likely to have been reinforced by this use of it. Diffusion of Persian culture was a far from unmixed blessing. It could polish but also denature other languages, Ottoman Turkish in particular, by widening the gap between common speech and the style cultivated by the governing class, full of Persian words, idioms, and imagery. Turkey's arrested mental development, and its failure to grow into a nation until after the revolution in our century, may be seen as in part a result of this.

Horace trusted that in days to come he would be known as far and wide as the Roman name was known: Hāfiz congratulated himself on being admired in Samarkand, in Kashmir, and as far away as Bengal. It was largely by the Turks' military prowess that Persian civilization was diffused, into India in particular. Persians and Turks, along with Arabs, Afghans, and others, were always among the fighting-men, officials, clerics, authors, whose continual influx kept the ruling stratum in northern India at least half-alien. They multiplied with the establishment of the Mughal empire in the sixteenth century, and its vastly wealthy court. For a long time the finest prospect a Persian man of letters ever saw was the highroad leading to India, even if when he got there he liked to think of himself as an Ovid among the Goths, and sometimes after shaking the pagoda-tree made haste to return home. Old prose romances of travel, voyaging, adventure, perhaps partly Hellenistic in derivation but familiar in Persia through market-place recitation, had a fresh vogue at the Mughal court;[3] it must have been easy for men there, born under distant skies, to link their own wanderings with those of bygone heroes.

Indo-Persian literature was always in most ways an exotic, full of tropes and images and allusions from abroad, all helping to fix its style in artificial patterns. It has been described as, too often, a coterie style,

highly cerebral, conventionalized, even contorted.[4] To Browne's ear it lacked the full authentic flavour of native Persian.[5] Of the two poets of the 'Indian school' reckoned the most considerable, 'Urfī came from Shiraz, earned the notice of Akbar, and died at Lahore in 1591. Sāib, born in 1602, was only in India half a dozen years, at the court of Shāh Jahān. He was of Azerbaijani stock, and composed partly in his Turki mother-tongue. Their achievements have been variously judged, though each has been credited with a fair share of originality and imagination.[6] Indian air supplied such men with little fresh oxygen; at the aristocratic level it was in the more impersonal arts — pictorial, musical, architectural — that a fruitful mingling of Persian and Hindu could take place.

A ceremony peculiar to the 'Indian school', and one that has continued to flourish, was the musha'ira, which brought poets together to recite their verses in more or less friendly rivalry. At Agra or Delhi, far outside the boundaries of the Persian-Turkish-Arabic realm or condominium, they could hope to strengthen their position by collective effort, and become a more integral part of courtly social life. The musha'ira served to fix literary standards, to decide gradations of merit, to provide beginners with an apprenticeship, and to educate auditors and encourage their liberality. It would favour production of short poems, and it has been remarked that the Indian school excelled in epigrams and ghazals, rather than in long-winded *masnavīs*.[7]

An Arab invention, perfected by Hāfiz, the ghazal was well adapted to recitation, and attained high popularity in India. In its lyrical, emotional keys it lent itself better than any other vehicle to a sort of impressionism, a manner imprecise and evocative, almost intermediate between verse and music, and often sung rather than spoken. Its loosely strung couplets were emanations of a society, or social mood, without purpose or organizing impulse, where life might be experienced poignantly, but only in disconnected pulses that no logic could draw together. With its sensitiveness to subterranean associations, the ghazal belonged to a world offering no such plain meaning as life does, or may seem to do, where civic and political activity gives men a sense of vital ties with one another, or rational enmities; a world where men's thoughts as well as women's faces were habitually concealed.

A common stock of images accumulated which could function as symbols, and suggest covert meanings. Wherever Persian culture held sway a symbolizing idiom came into currency. It was appropriate to a feudal hierarchy much more centralized than Europe's, where individuals had no existence but as members of a collective life, and found their way into it from many remote starting-points, social as well as geographical and linguistic. Cut off, in their palaces and rose-gardens, from Nature, as well as from the workaday life of mankind, they needed conventional images as emotional counters. By genuine poets these could be used creatively, woven into a pattern of whispered messages, peculiarly at home in the poetry of the Sufi or those of a mystical persuasion.

The Sufi movement was a recoil from the inflexible shapes of a society that no one knew how to alter, and a creed that none of its guardians knew how to breathe new life into: after the early centuries of Islam they had imposed on themselves an embargo — always congenial to official custodians of thought — on any further thinking. Their creed amounted to no more than 'the unvarying forms of ritual, rigid doctrine and dry-as-dust sermonizing'.[8] Sufi thinking often verged on the heretical; some of its sources were pre-Islamic, Christian and Buddhist among them, and it had much in common with the *bhakti* devotionalism of India. It centred on a longing to be taken up by, or merge into, something greater than the painfully isolated individual, an escape from or transcending of the desiccated self.

From immersion of self in a world-spirit it was only a step to pantheism. This has always been a complex of elements and tendencies. It could be consoling to men removed from their early surroundings. It blurred the hard structure of the visible universe, melting it into one substance; in some minds this must have had an affinity with the structure of an outworn society, which might some day make room for a better, less divisive one, however dimly descried. More easily it would induce a resigned quietism, an evasion of any problem of evil, by reducing oppressor and oppressed, lion and lamb, to manifestations of the same Reality.

Back in Cambridge after his year in Persia, Browne wrote: 'It seemed as though my whole mental horizon had been altered by the atmosphere of mysticism and opium smoke which surrounded me.'[9] Mystic thinking of one colour or another has frequently shown itself in Europe, and has spilled over into literature, but has never been nearly so pervasive as in the Islamic countries, or in what was for ages their foremost literary tradition. Sufi lore might seem to relate only to the hermit's cell, or a monastery like Rūmī's; but along with everything else in that feudal environment it could adapt itself to court life, and the leisure hours of the patron. There, with writer and hearers in intimate contact, the moulding influence that an audience always exercises was intensified. It may appear that to an aristocracy engrossed in its cavalier pursuits of fighting, feuding, feasting, wenching, an art or philosophy as withdrawn or introspective as that of the Sufis would be unappetizing. So no doubt it was to a good many, more naturally drawn to the bottle for refreshment. Nizām ul Mulk devoted a chapter of his treatise on statecraft to the qualifications called for in boon companions whose duty was to soothe royal cares and convey titbits of news to the royal ear.[10]

But life often generates its own opposites. Spiritual and spirituous or opiate rhapsodies might be next of kin; it is not surprising that in literature they were often indistinguishable. In the lamplit hall a shared self-pity could well up. There was of course a great deal of posturing in the flood of poetic sighs and laments, as there was in Elizabethan sonneteering, or among romantic contemporaries of Werther. Yet there was much

in the way these perfumed buccaneers were doomed to live to nurture a species of *Angst* real and acute enough. It owed much to the lack of any national or civic framework, any political institutions above the merely administrative like a jail or a tax-collector's office. As in Horace's Rome, the higher classes, incapable of organizing themselves in any better way than by submitting to a despot, suffered chronically, and their rulers suffered with them, from the mutability of fortune, bringing with it a craving for reassurance. They formed an élite which continued as changelessly as the mandarinate in China, while its membership changed continually. Pelsaert in India was struck by the combination of immense luxury with extreme insecurity. These men inhabited a paradise from which they might be expelled, like Adam, at any moment. Jāmī compared royal favourites to climbers of a steep mountain, always liable to lose their footing: the higher they were, the worse the fall.[11]

A court poet ran similar, if as a rule less fatal, risks, and had many tribulations to undergo. He could thus act as it were as public orator for the class he belonged or aspired to, the same symbols serving them both; the more so because he and his hearers were often footloose migrants, far from their old moorings. When men of this class sought refuge in poetry, it was in a one-sidedly subjective mood, a willingness to see everything round them, mankind included, dissolve in a golden haze of words. As in Elizabethan sonnets (and on another level in today's pop-songs), the minstrel is always an 'I', addressing a 'You'; but with 'I' and its discords so much in the foreground that the 'You' is unfocussed, indistinct. An imprisoned self is yearning to clasp something outside itself, but an ambiguous something, which may be a lover, or spiritual illumination, or another flask of wine. Really the inner need is not one that anything external can satisfy; it is a generalized dissatisfaction with life as it is and must be, with its fixed regulations, wages, penalties, where individuals cannot be themselves but are forced into arbitrary combinations.

Two recurrent themes, loneliness and separation, point to a recognition, never banished for long, of this artificiality of most of their relationships. Love, friendship, union, could seldom be more than nostalgic regrets among men deprived of them (not unlike the eunuchs they employed, in another sense) by the conditions of their existence. Such regrets found an outlet, and a fantasy-comfort, in the Sufi beatitude. On the astral plane an illusion of permanence and stability could be found, suffused by an emotional glow lacking in formal religion, an appeal like that of Pentecostalism in our time in the West. A mysterious Friend was holding out his arms, whose protection, unlike that of earthly patrons or sovereigns, would never be withdrawn. As in mysticism everywhere, the search for him was an endeavour to rise above the suffocations of a warped society. It was an obsessive desire of the individual to convince himself that a welcome awaited him, very far off yet very close — and, in the first place, that he himself was still indeed capable of a whole-hearted attachment, of wanting the arid egotism that

weighed on him to be exorcized. Burns could speak of 'battering himself into love',[12] trying to make himself believe that he was falling under a truly ideal spell, not giving way to mere lust.

Ralph Russell must be right in his conviction that true flesh-and-blood love was not an impossibility in those Eastern climes.[13] Romantic love between man and woman has been an instinct of every human community from the most primitive to the most refined. In Persian there is plenty of it in Firdausī's epic. But everywhere it has been checked and hemmed in by encroaching regulations and bans, very often following on class division. In many regions, and in Asia at large by contrast with Europe, it came to be practically outlawed, and could hardly survive except in disguise. One cloak was supplied by the Sufi concept of the divine Lover. Parallels to it can be found elsewhere. After the Albigensian crusade, when the poetry of the troubadours of Provence was frowned on, they performed a sort of transubstantiation, investing the phraseology of courtly love with celestial meanings.[14] As time went on the latter might come to be the real theme, though beneath it a spark of the old one might still smoulder.

It is to be remembered however that high on the list of ambitions of the men of this élite, and the rewards and badges of distinction they craved for, was a well-stocked harem — which might be recruited from as many and various lands as their own class was. We must suppose them to have suffered chronically from over-indulgence and satiety. In old Russia the wealthy were apt to alternate between drunken orgies and religious transports of contrition and self-abasement. In the East a similar reaction could take the form of an invocation to an ideal love, and this, whether divine or human, had to be an etherial one, an inversion of the animal passions of the harem. For the true Sufi, as for the Christian ascetic, sex was poisoned at the root by the social effluvia it was exposed to. Jāmī's love stories turn into homilies on the worthlessness of all embraces of man and woman, and the superior virtue of the spiritual.

The Persian mentality, and the Persian language, lent themselves to ambiguities and mutations, harmonics or echoes. A classic example is Hāfiz's ode about the 'Turk of Shiraz', whose many diverse interpretations are analysed in a study by Arberry.[15] Wine, God, universe, girl, or youth, were interchangeable, a fact which made poetry equivocal enough to slip through the meshes of political or ecclesiastical censorship.[16] Its real concern was with the inner workings of minds morbidly self-conscious, in a world only dimly discernible by them. The vision they strain after is always misty. The Friend has no legible message to impart. The loved one always has bright eyes, but as to her height, tastes, temper, costume, we are left to guess; she has not even a name, but is anonymous as well as featureless. Horace could conjure up a winning picture of femininity in four words about his *dulce ridentem*, *dulce loquentem Lalagen;* there is no Persian Lalage. Nor is there any Falernian or Sabine, claret or burgundy, — only *wine*, a liquid whose sole property is to intoxicate. The universe of the Eastern pantheist has the same amorphous imprint; it is viewed through myopic eyes to which, as to Peter Bell,

a primrose is a primrose and nothing more. Nature has none of the minutely perceived detail that we learn from a Wordsworth or a Tennyson. In order to be interchangeable all symbols had to be as smooth and faceless as old worn coins. Reveries of heaven, lover, winecup, flowed together in a single euphoric harmony; a reader or hearer could stray at will among them, as among flowerbeds in a park, or as the listener to music oftener than not loses himself in musings and daydreams.

There could be no full release, for the less hardened among the dominant classes, from the morass of oppression and corruption in which they lived and moved and had their earthly being. Mystic poetry offered a substitute, escape from consciousness of the unpleasant realities, social as well as personal, that must have haunted them. It was at its best when content with 'short swallow-flights of song', instead of padding itself out into philosophic *longueurs*. Even then, such a manner of poetizing, such an attitude to life, may well seem unpromising. Yet it showed itself capable of true inspiration, and luminous insight.

It had this power thanks to the independent world-view it upheld, its implicit rejection of the cramping laws of social life, of any divine or even human right of kings. Decadent as the entire Muslim state-system increasingly was, no social forces were emerging that could challenge the feudal-military dictators; the poet could make at least a token withdrawal from its control, as the Chinese scholar-official alienated from his own society did when he retired to a hermitage among the hills and lakes, to commune, not with a supernal Being, but with Nature. 'Umar Khayyām's wilderness may not have been quite so far from the town gates; but when he spoke of rulers it was not to extol the living, but to smile at the self-importance of monarchs now dust and ashes and nullity, of paths of glory leading but to the grave. More outspokenly, Rūmī warned his disciples that to associate with princes is to run a worse risk than loss of life, the risk of being corrupted by their baleful influence.[17] There were some Sufi poets, very different from their brethren at court, who preached and practised austerity, renunciation, humility, somewhat in the Franciscan spirit of joining the poor in their poverty since it was impossible to deliver them from it. Cut off from their fellow-men, living riotously at their expense, the ruling classes could not think of sharing their hard lot; some infusion at least of sympathy with them, or awareness of their misery, may have mingled in the self-pity voiced for them by the poets. It may be possible sometimes to understand the visionary Friend as an emancipated, apotheosized, Humanity.

Sufi poetry was in essence the wail of an ossified society, a self-imprisoned civilization. The old order could only go on mouldering, all the worse attributes of the Asiatic state worsening as it grew more decrepit, until Western intrusion brought about a painful and costly new start. But the old culture had something to bequeath of true and lasting significance, its influence radiating out through diverse channels. Even while still a court art it could have an appeal outside palace walls. Copies

of the *dīvāns* of poets like 'Urfī were on sale in every bazaar in Delhi, and were bought by Indians as well as foreigners.[18] The very abstractness of the style, and the polyvalence of its symbols, could assist it. Being unconnected with anything tangible, it belonged to no one and everyone; its imagery could find a way into the speech of very different mortals. Shortly before the Mughal advent Kabīr, addressing his brotherly message to Muslim and Hindu alike, had made use of the trinity of garden, lover, rose. Something of a primeval animism must have lingered into latter-day pantheism. In ninth-century China the poet Po Chü-i believed that in bygone days the discontents of the people could often be learned from folk-songs where rivers or hills were personified.[19] In the Panjab and Sind the Sufi mode, with another of its protean shifts of meaning or emphasis, can be recognized in folk poetry. In this setting love could be genuine and romantic, but it might be tinged with the ideal or spiritual; between the two lay a vein of social feeling, love for the singer's fellow-men, a glimpse of human fraternity.

While the Mughal power was young and vigorous, there was room for writing of a more energetic cast; after the mid seventeenth century the mystic bent was reasserting itself.[20] It accompanied the return to narrow religious orthodoxy under Aurangzeb, marking a contraction or drying up of the empire's vitality; and provoking, once again, a retreat into other-worldly contemplation. But it was too late in history for the old mysticism to have a new flowering in literature. Europe was already knocking at worm-eaten doors, with its wares and its ideas. A medium more accessible than Persian to the ordinary north Indian, the Urdu blend of Persian and Hindi long in use as a vernacular, was entering literary service as well; the sole case in all its chequered annals of Persian marrying another language and giving birth to a new one.

Urdu inherited the familiar forms of expression, but the imagery of love had less to do now with a heavenly Comforter, more with the Saqi, the wine-pourer, as an embodiment of the 'eternal womanly', magnetic, enigmatic, capricious. In many ways she resembled the Lady Fortune of feudal Europe. Mughal disregard of the ban on pictorial representation must have helped to humanize her. Paintings of ladies impatiently awaiting their lovers, much as in Sanskrit erotic poetry, were bringing love down to earth. There was also in aristocratic circles the breathing and blooming hetaira or courtesan, a woman of charm and accomplishment, a teacher of the decorum that good breeding required, the 'Nawabi manners' that survived into this century, admired and imitated by upper-class Hindus too. There could be polite competition for her favours, and in more fanciful terms for those of the Saqi, with the hated rival becoming a stock character.

While Persia was drying up, India was embarking on or being dragged into a new life. The finest Persian poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the work of two Indian poets, Ghālib and Iqbāl.[21] Ghālib (1797-1869) is revealed in his letters[22] as — when not wielding his magic

wand — a shrewd, whimsical person, often modern-minded and with a fund of good sense. But he was writing in the twilight of the Mughals, and his verse reflects their decline and fall, experienced through the medium of his private disappointments. These, it seems to be agreed, must lie behind his perpetual laments and reproaches against the cruel mistress. When he is seated in her circle the cup never reaches him, and if it did he would expect to find poison in it. In other words his days were full of frustrations, worst of all his failure to be chosen as senior court poet by his imperial patron, himself a versifier.

It may not be too much to guess that sounds of a people's afflictions blend at times with his own repinings, whether he was fully conscious of this or not. At any rate a century later his verses and his traditional imagery were the chief model of the communist poet Faiz. 'The wine of love, fatal to men': Ghālib's words may tell us that pursuit of fame and fortune in the old courts was a perilous game to play, but the couplet they belong to is borrowed by Faiz to form the ending of a political poem, an elegy for a martyred patriot, where the wine stands for a reckless spirit of loyalty to the People.[23]

Urdu could make such imagery more comprehensible to newcomers in India, as well as to Indians. Europeans, like their many forerunners, were wanderers, conquerors in exile, further from home than Tabriz or Bokhara, and some of them in want at times of more refined comforts than the whisky that satisfied most of their countrymen. Some learned to turn verses, and carried the taste back to Britain. Walter Scott could boast of poems by friends on the death of his dog Camp in 'Hindostanee' as well as half a dozen other languages.[24]

More broadly, the contradictions and dilemmas that beset the dominant class of middle and western Asia, throughout its long term of life, made up in a sense a paradigm of the human condition, of a human race perpetually homeless and journeying. A testimony of this is the spell that the best of its poetry laid on a Europe disoriented by sudden and bewildering change, when it came to be known there; on Vambéry making his ecstatic discovery of it in early life in a corner of Hungary,[25] or Goethe at Weimar imitating Hāfiz, or Fitzgerald translating 'Umar Khayyām in a Suffolk village.

NOTES

[1] In the *Mujmal ut tavārīx*, included in H. M. Elliott and J. Dowson, *The history of India as told by its own historians* (London 1867), vol. 1, pp. 100-112.

[2] E. G. Browne, *A history of Persian literature under Tartar domination*, (Cambridge 1920), pp. 160, 267.

[3] W. L. Hanaway, *Love and war: adventures from the 'Firuz Shah nama' of Sheikh Bighami* (New York 1974), p. 5.

[4] Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic culture in the Indian environment* (Oxford 1964), pp. 229-30.

[5] Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

[6] E.g. by W. Heinz in J. Průšek and J. Becka, ed., *Dictionary of Oriental literatures* (London 1974).

[7] J. Kritzeck, ed., *Anthology of Islamic literature* (Harmondsworth 1967), p. 367.

[8] R. Levy, *An introduction to Persian literature* (New York 1969), p. 40.

[9] E. G. Browne, *A year among the Persians* (Cambridge 1893), p. 535.

[10] Nizam al-Mulk, *The book of government or rules for kings (the Siyasat-nama)*, trans. H. Darke (London 1960), chap. 17.

[11] F. Hadland Davis, *Jami* (London 1908), p. 89.

[12] On this theme see D. Ferguson, ed., *Selected letters of Robert Burns* (London 1953), pp. 57 ff., 340, etc.

[13] See R. Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal poets* (Cambridge 1968), especially on Mīr Taqī Mīr.

[14] Marina Warner, *Alone of her sex: the myth and cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York 1983), pp. 149-51.

[15] A.J. Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic civilizations* (London 1964), pp. 344 ff.

[16] Levy, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[17] A. J Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi* (London 1961), p. 21.

[18] P. N. Chopra, *Some aspects of society and culture during the Mughal age, 1526-1707* (Agra 1955), p. 166, citing Badāūnī.

[19] Arthur Waley, *The life and times of Po Chü-i 772-846 AD* (London 1949), p. 108.

[20] Aziz Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[21] An observation made to me by Iqbal Singh, author of the best book on Iqbāl, *The ardent pilgrim* (London 1951).

[22] See R. Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Ghalib: life and letters* (London 1969), and R. Russell, ed., *Ghalib, the poet and his age* (London 1972).

[23] Faiz's poem is no. 47 in my anthology *Poems from Faiz* (London 1971).

[24] Letter to Lady Abercorn, 25 February 1811.

[25] A. Vambéry, *The story of my struggles* (London 1904), pp. 96-7.

2

The Mughals and money

P. HARDY

In the opening chapter of their *Three Mughal poets*, Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam write:

> The social organization [of Mughal India] was a hierarchy ... In theory this social organization was seen as one which enabled all members of society to work in harmony for the common happiness of all. God had given each man his capacities and set him in that station in life for which those capacities fitted him... so long as every man — be he noble or peasant — conscientiously performed the duties of his station, society would prosper... Medieval society demanded of its members... the observance of a whole way of life which it held to be as much 'society's concern as the individual's.[1]

Visions of hierarchical societies in which there are to be seen conscious attempts to achieve a certain quality of collective life, often embrace exchanges of services, and goods, within their expectations of a properly-functioning social ensemble. Peasants and soldiers are seen as exchanging on the one hand the means of subsistence and military equipment for protection and, perhaps, an opportunity for cultivating new territories in peace on the other hand. Rulers and hierarchs are seen as exchanging freedom from physical labour for legitimacy, craftsmen and merchants an assured supply of skills for an assured supply of raw materials and an assured market for the finished goods.

But the relationships between the parties to such exchanges within a hierarchical order are not conceived as being precisely priced or precisely proportionate. It is not to be supposed that the soldier will know whether the price of the subsistence the peasant is providing him will be the (more proportionate) readiness to fight or the (much less proportionate) sacrifice of life and limb. The peasant will not enjoy the certainty that, despite the best will of benevolent rulers and of prudently-minded officials and soldiers, demands for his produce will remain within set and known limits. Custom rather than contract will control the exchange relationship, if indeed controlled it is. In the furtherance of the ultimate purposes of such transactions — peace, justice, perhaps conformity with

reality on a cosmic level — the prices of exchange, i.e. the sacrifices on either side, should be, even if they are not, inevitably, in fact, unquantifiable.

The sequence of magisterial studies by such modern economic historians as W. H. Moreland, Irfan Habib, K. N. Chaudhuri and Tapan Raychaudhuri (studies recently synthesized in *The Cambridge economic history of India*) have amply shown Mughal society to have been the locale of elaborate and spreading systems of very different exchanges, namely economic exchanges. These were conducted at specific and precise prices for the limited purpose of meeting quantifiable needs and obligations. The detailed pay scales for Mughal officers, the tables of revenue demand per unit area according to the crop grown, the data on the prices of specific commodities provided not only by the occupationally-involved European factors but also by the writers of stylized Indo-Persian histories and 'gazetteers', all attest the existence of a highly-sophisticated commercial and, at the then level of technology, industrial economy. Exchanges, conducted by means of a high grade metallic coinage and by paper credit, certainly drew in large villages as well as metropolitan cities, ordinary Indian cultivators and weavers as well as European factors engaged in forming world-wide economic networks. So, we have on the one hand (if we build on, as we should, the Russell-Khurshidul Islam formulation) an ideal of hierarchical exchange conducted in one idiom, and on the other, the fact of economic exchange conducted in another idiom. It is necessary for the present purpose to be clear in what the differences of idiom consist.

In economic exchange, each object of exchange acquires a precise and practical realization and expression of its value through the other object with which it is exchanged. For example, when one finds first someone who will give in exchange one volume of *The Cambridge economic history of India* for (say) four volumes of Gibbon's *The decline and fall of the Roman empire*, and then someone who will take one volume of the Cambridge work and give up four volumes of Gibbon's, an objective, quantitatively expressed valuation of two 'goods' has been arrived at. And this valuation, though related to, is different in kind from the subjective appeal of either Indian economic or later Roman history for either party. Economic value is the relativity of objects in exchange. Moreover there is a reciprocal determination of value by the objects in exchange without regard for satisfactions and advantages which may be enjoyed by others not directly party to the exchange. Furthermore, with (say) four volumes of Gibbon one might be able to acquire five card index drawers, one ten-mile taxi journey or a three-course dinner. In such circumstances, Gibbon's history, or rather four volumes of it, would become money as purchasing power, as a measurement of value and as a medium of exchange. Any one commodity can be seen measuring simultaneously, as a general equivalent, any other commodity brought to exchange. Any socially-accepted general equivalent may become money,

whether that general equivalent be books, horses, measures of corn, sea shells, metals or inscribed pieces of paper (now even stored digits in a computer memory). Money, in whatever form, will come to be regarded as wealth, the measure of wealth, and as a social power able to command and redistribute resources. As an exchange value in itself, as a commodity in exchange itself with other commodities, money will come to have an independent life of its own.

In his *Grundrisse*, Karl Marx argued that as all goods, products and activities dissolve into exchange value, customary personal obligations to produce goods or to perform services for particular persons are weakened, each works to produce (immediate) exchange value, i.e. to gain money. 'The general exchange of activities and products, which has become a vital condition for each individual — their mutual interconnection — here appears as something alien to them, autonomous, as a thing. ... The private exchange of all products of labour, all activities and all wealth stands in antithesis to a distribution based on a natural or political super- and sub-ordination of individuals to one another (to which exchange proper only runs parallel or, by and large, does not so much take a grip on the life of entire communities, as, rather, insert itself between different communities.'[2]

Against the background of the considerations so far expressed, it is proposed to offer some notes on Mughal attitudes to exchange value ('money' in shorthand) and on what was seen as its proper role in society.

Traditonally-educated Mughal Muslims tend to share a sentiment that the operation of exchange value ('money') should be controlled by the requirements of Islamic law. Those requirements, however, are not depicted as particularly comprehensive or as particularly exigent. 'Abd ul Qādir Badāūnī in his *Najāt ur rašīd* ('The Orthodox Way to Salvation')[3] proclaims, with the authority of citations from Quran and Hadith, the absolute obligation to pay *zakāt* (the tax on capital, the proceeds of which are to be devoted to the poor of the Muslim community) (Badāūnī 1972: 34). He employs the same form of authority to support the prohibition of hoarding, the giving of short weight and the cheating of workmen of their agreed wages (Badāūnī 1972: 349-50, 434). Restrictions on the use, by honest men, of their property appear to be few: Badāūnī mentions that free men (the context suggests Muslim free men) should not be sold into slavery and Muslim slave owners should not take advantage of their female slaves until after one month, or one menstruation, after purchase. Badāūnī would also appear to allow a Muslim to conduct business within a mosque, provided that the Muslim's intention was also to pray there. Although Mughal Muslims are aware of the legal prohibition of *ribā*, the taking of interest as an issue does not appear to have aroused any marked excitement; Badāūnī recommends the granting of non-profit-making loans (Badāūnī 1972: 267). An anonymous work on ethics, the *Tahzīb ul axlāq*, apparently written in Aurangzeb's reign,[4] represents the general drift of the materials consulted when it states (*Tahzīb:* fol. 65a) that one

should manage one's property so as not to incur blame and reproach from the angle of the Islamic law (*šar'*) and the intelligence (*'aql*).

The *Mau'iza-e Jahāngīrī*,[5] written about 1021/1612-13, by Muhammad Bāqir Khān (who served both Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān as a provincial governor) is much more positive (perhaps by reason of his practical experience of life) about the value of seeking and enjoying a competence in this life. He holds that property (*māl*) can be a capital stock for both this world and the next. Whatever any one wishes as regards (high) rank in this world can be attained through property. But as an indigent person is deprived of pleasure and enjoyment in this life, so may he be deprived of high rank in the next world. In his quest for daily bread, he may have begun to indulge in unlawful means (of acquisition) that may become the cause of exemplary punishment in the next world, indeed may bring about his (utter) downfall. As he was in the grip of distress and indigence in this world, so in the next he may be incarcerated in a prison of eternal misery (Bāqir Khān, *Mau'iza:* fols. 49a-49b). A man who has nothing enjoys nothing and can achieve nothing. Indeed, every quality that is deemed praiseworthy in a rich man may be deemed deserving of scorn and reproach in a poor man — the latter's daring may be called temerity; any liberality the poor man may be tempted to show may be called extravagance. If a poor man attains some position of public responsibility, his character may be suspected and his motives impugned (*Mau'iza*, fol. 50a-50b). Death is better than this situation. No doubt no human aim can be achieved without divine favour and benevolence, but great exertions, even at the cost of trouble and stress will achieve success sooner (*Mau'iza:* fols. 51b-52a). One may reasonably conclude that there is much in the *Mau'iza-e Jahāngīrī* to encourage an enterprise economy, albeit on a modest scale.

Some Indo-Persian materials of the Mughal period, drawing, it would appear, on the stock of motifs expressed in the tradition represented in Nāsir ud dīn Tūsī's *Axlāq-e Nāsirī* and Jalāl ud dīn Davānī's *Axlāq-e Jalālī* accord money, as the quantitative representative of commodity values in exchange, a morally-necessary social role as an organizing principle of man's social existence. In his *Āīn-e Akbarī*,[6] Akbar's friend Abul Fazl refers to ancient books of wisdom as describing gold (a metonym for money) as *nāmūs-e asğar*, the lesser statute (reason being the greater statute) in the organization of human affairs. The already-mentioned *Tahzīb ul axlāq* proclaims that the person who does not act according to the *hukm* of the *dīnār* (synecdoche for money) on every occasion when money makes possible both the precise quantitative expression of exchange value and equivalence between inherently disparate commodities (the author's own example is an exchange between a horse and some clothing), will be an oppressor guilty of seizure of goods by force (*Tahzīb:* fols. 22b-23b).

Members of the Persian-knowing elites of Mughal India regard money (whether as capital stock or as a means of exchange) as a respectable

social phenomenon. But it is one respectable social phenomenom among several. Money is certainly not seen as expressing the highest values that man should attain and can attain in his membership of human society. It is a means of meeting basic needs, and the less time and effort a man spends in satisfying his basic needs, the closer he will be to fulfilling his 'real' nature. Man as such is seen as living in a world conceived as making possible the attainment of a hierarchy of values and ends, harmoniously integrated into an organic unity. Man, writes the author of the *Tahzīb ul axlāq* already cited, has, in his deepest ground (*dar asl-e fitrat*) been created capable of perfection; in his species nature (*tabʿ*) as man, he unites such a capacity with an inner yearning for perfection so that his inherent potentiality expresses itself in action. By reason of his species nature, man is made for civil society (*madnī*); his material needs cannot be assured to him without the specialization of function and occupation that social living makes possible, and without the habit of co-operation that social existence fosters (*Tahzīb:* fols. 21b, 82b). Now all existent beings have their own special property (*xāsiyyat*): man's special property is his capacity for realizing the reality of Reality, namely that this world is God's created world, and that for all man's desire for his own pleasure and advantage (which of course money can serve), his own perfection lies elsewhere — in acknowledgment of God's creative power, in the necessity of living according to Divine guidance and commandment. Although Abul Fazl may not see the divinely-ordained purpose for man as exclusively communicated in the Islamic law (*šarīʿa*), or indeed through the sequence of prophets culminating in Muhammad, he does nevertheless regard the created world as existing to praise God.[7] To ensure that the world is so ordered that recognition of this reality is not inhibited by men's blindness and cupidity, rulers, who are themselves a praise of God, have been instituted. Their only function is to ensure that the egotism of class or individual does not challenge the divinely-created reality and the divinely-willed end of the temporal order. That metaphor of God on earth, the ruler illumined by divine light, must control human life, not man's desires expressed in the power of money.

The directive, corrective and harmonizing functions of the ruler are central to the organic conception of society expounded (though not as systematically as in Tūsī's *Axlāq-e Nāsirī*) in the opening pages of the *Āīn-e Akbarī* (Abul Fazl, *Āīn* 1872: 3-4). Those functions are indicated in a manner that implies that they are more medical than political, more aimed at achieving psychiatric balance than, say, at promoting the dominance and exploitation of the natural environment by individual or collective action. Abul Fazl's metaphor of the ruler-physician attending to the malfunctioning of a social body implies that unity, uniformity, equilibrium and placid well-being are the natural order of human affairs and disunity, variety, imbalance and fierce rivalry are forms of a mental disorder which the natural defences of the mind are occasionally unable to repel, but which appropriate treatment, administered by the ruler, can

usually cure. There is no independent order of reality capable of taking control, no organ or limb capable of a life on its own or of taking over the function of another organ or limb. The mind through its insightful agent, the ruler, not only remains in control, but also gives life and sustenance to the body's limbs and organs.

It is indeed, in the section of Abul Fazl's *Āīn-e Akbarī* entitled *ravāī-e rozī* (the fulfilment of daily sustenance) that we have an explicit statement of the ruler-dependent status, of the contingent character of those 'organs' and 'limbs' of the social body that provide the nutrition for that body (*Āīn*: 289ff). Abul Fazl there depicts man as not quite capable of successfully engaging in husbandry and commercial exchange independently of Divine Providence and the ruler. He depicts cultivators as trying, with limited success, to pursue peasant farming on holdings which, they hope, will pass from father to son. But they cannot be sure that this succession will occur, since husbandmen, like others, are often the objects of human malevolence. The cultivator should think on the power of the Adorner of the Universe and on the antidote that is, God, to the venom of the living; the merchant should turn away from wickedness and reflect upon the favour of the lord of the world the ruler (here, specifically, Akbar), the repository of divine grace. Then his possessions would be acceptable to wisdom (*xirad-guzīn*). The propriety (*šāyistagī*) of possessions (*māl*) lies in the pledge of intention (*girau-e nīyat*) — presumably the intention to acknowledge God and his deputy on earth, the enlightened ruler (*Āīn*, I: 290).

Ideas such as these are resistant to the formulation of notions that the activity of exchange, 'the making of money' should have an independence and autonomy of its own with rules and codes of its own which are not subject — except perhaps in the conscience of the individual — to any general, supra-economic set of values. Mughal thought was antipathetic to any assumption that the value of any activity was to be decided by those who engaged in that activity. It was resistant too to any impersonality in the exchange of goods, to the untrammelled exercise of 'the money power', to any equation of the possession of wealth to the possession of honour. The prospect of making money should not be allowed to induce people to follow occupations thought demeaning: buffoonery, cupping or tanning and sweeping, for example. However, the anonymous author of the *Tahzīb ul axlāq* acknowledged that several such occupations were often necessary to society and conceded that where they were they did not bear any imputation of unbelief (*Tahzīb:* fols. 63a-b). In practice, the possession of money was recognized as an agent of social mobility, as in the notorious proverb of the rise of a Muslim cultivator to sayyidship with the sequence of good harvests, but the only proper way for a man to rise was not to 'rise' at all — merely to reveal his true status in a display of the real or inner character or endowment with which he had emerged into the world. Character is not seen as a developing habit of behaviour but as an 'essence'. Life and history reveal rather than shape 'the real you'. Money will not help to nurture a lemon from a mango seed.

But as the Mughal empire began to suffer military setbacks, first in wars with the Marathas, then through wars of succession, and then against invaders from outside India such as Nādir Shāh and Ahmad Shāh Abdālī, there begin to appear in the literature traces of the real world of economic choices outside the 'world-spinning' of the Muslim academics. Aurangzeb's officers begin to complain of a shortage of land for assignment in *jāgīr* (*Ahkām-e 'Ālamgīrī:* 69).[8] Shāh Valī Allāh, (1703-1762) the Delhi scholar-polymath, chooses to reiterate the theme (well-established in the writings of Nāsir ud dīn Tūsī and Jalāl ud dīn Davānī) of a need to keep a proper balance between the different occupations in society, in terms that suggest a contemporary abandonment of agriculture for soldiering (Baljon 1986: 198).[9] He (like others such as Khāfī Khān in the *Muntaxab ul lubāb*),[10] complains of the oppression of the peasantry through excessive taxation by those who are supposed ideally to protect them, the ruler and his officials (Baljon 1986: 197). But these quantitative problems of resource distribution are to be solved by means of qualitative measures, rather than by, say, the means of price manipulation and demand manipulation within a market economy. Men should, Shāh Valī Allāh proclaims, be encouraged to improve their moral conduct — through obedience to divine mandates against gambling, the giving and taking of interest and spending money on extravagant display (Baljon 1986: 193ff). Men should realize the wisdom of co-operation in the general welfare.

It should be no matter for surprise that much Mughal Muslim thought rejects, explicitly or implicitly, any notion that money as exchange value or as store of wealth should represent man's temporal fulfilment or that it should have untrammelled power over man's social relationships. In human history few have thought the gratification of human impulses and of desires to possess (of which exchange value is a mode of accomplishment) was what human life was all about. Marx was not the first to see the power and the attraction of money as an alienation of man from his true species nature. (For example, al-Ghazzālī held that man is created with a *fitrat* or innate religious propensity to acknowledge and obey God.)[11] Elsewhere, he holds that if a person needs a thing one should give it to him making as little profit as possible and if the giver forgoes any profit or even suffers a loss it will be better for him.[12] Few have considered that an individual's or a group's inability to offer in the market what someone else (whom that individual or group may never know as a person) wants, constitutes a derogation from man's essential humanity. Man has ever been in danger of allowing one set of devices he has devised to meet some of his needs and aspirations to frustrate the fulfilment of all his needs and aspirations.

What is a matter for comment is, first, the general assumption in the literature that men readily prefer exchanges made justifiable by a hierarchical ideology the essential ground of which is that men may be classified within a scale of capacity, moral, intellectual and practical.

According to their place in that scale, men will engage in exchanges the character of which will not change throughout their lives. Second, it is noteworthy that it is assumed that human beings will readily acquiesce in paying a large quantifiable material price for an essentially unquantifiable general ambience, that in which men enjoy protection, but perhaps not complete protection and order, but perhaps not perfect order. These assumptions are, moreover, accompanied by an apparent obliviousness to the actual structures of Indian society under Mughal rule, and thus to the real problems of winning consent to the ideology propounded and to the sacrifices required by the exchanges that the ideology calls for. (Abul Fazl's account of Hindu culture in the *Āīn-e Akbarī* is very schematic and relies much on al-Bīrūnī's eleventh-century *Kitāb fī tahqīq mā li'l-Hind* and on *ad hoc* instruction by members of the superior *varnas* around Akbar's court.)

An explanation of these characteristics in the literature examined may be offered along the following lines. The peoples of the Mughal empire were so greatly and minutely divided by sensibility, by differences of caste, creed, that is, by ethnic and ethical background, that the solidarity groups into which they saw themselves divided were unable of themselves to perform all the functions necessary for survival — child-rearing, production, exchange and protection. They needed an outside power with the ability and the standing to regulate their relationships in a rational fashion: a power which, if not one bound by rule, was at least directed by a steady purpose, that of achieving universal peace. The power of money could not do this: it, most likely, would have been seen to put power into the hands of the alien and the unworthy. Only that entity which moderns call 'the state' and which Mughals called, *inter alia*, *pādšāhī* could supply stability and honour. Dimly, the writers examined were perhaps aware of this, and in placing hierarchical above monetary exchanges were offering an appropriate ideology for Mughal rule.

NOTES

[1] R. Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal poets* (London 1969), pp. 1-2.

[2] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: foundations of the critique of political economy* (Harmondsworth 1973), pp. 157, 159.

[3] 'Abdul Qādir Badāūnī, *Najāt ur-rašīd* (Lahore 1972).

[4] *Tahzīb ul axlāq* (1094/1683), Delhi Persian MS 909, India Office Library.

[5] Muhammad Bāqir Khān, *Mau'ıza-e Jahāngīrī* (1021/1612-13), Persian MS 1666, India Office Library.

[6] Abul Fazl, *Āīn-e Akbarī*, ed. H. Blochmann (Calcutta 1872).

[7] Abul Fazl, *Akbar-nāma*, ed. Āghā Ahmad 'Alī and 'Abdur Rahīm, vol. 1 (Calcutta 1877).

[8] Hamīd ud Dīn Khān, *Akhām-e 'Ālamgīrī*, ed. Jadunath Sarkar, 2nd edn (Calcutta 1926), p. 69.

[9] J. M. S. Baljon, *Religion and thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi 1703-1762* (Leiden

1986), p. 198.

[10] See the extensive translated passage from Khāfī Khān in Irfan Habib, *The agrarian system of Mughal India* (London 1963), pp. 325-6.

[11] L. Gardet, *Dieu et la destinée de l'homme* (Paris 1967), p. 301.

[12] M. Umaruddin, *The ethical philosophy of al-Ghazzali* (Lahore 1970), p. 241.

3

Raskhān the neophyte: Hindu perspectives on a Muslim Vaishnava

RUPERT SNELL

A special regard is reserved for those of one culture who successfully achieve the transition into another one. Such a figure is the sixteenth century Hindi poet Raskhān, identified by tradition as a Pathan named Sayyid Ibrāhīm, perhaps of Pihani in Hardoi district,[1] and renowned for his elegant and impassioned verses in praise of Krishna. As with many literary and religious personages of the period, little can be said with any historical certainty about the circumstances of his life; but the Vaishnava hagiographic tradition supplies an appealing story to contextualize and accommodate the uncomfortable fact that some of the best-known and most loved of all Krishna-lyrics in Hindi are attributable to the pen of a Muslim. This hagiography provides an unusually graphic illustration of Hindu attitudes towards the Muslim community, whose leaders held temporal power throughout the heyday of North Indian Hindu *bhakti* from the early sixteenth century. The aim of this paper is to investigate these attitudes and to observe how the sectarian tradition treats the arrival of so unexpected a guest into the Vaishnava fold.

There are, of course, several North Indian Muslim poets of the pre-modern period who, for various reasons, composed in one or other of the literary dialects which in the modern nomenclature fall under the umbrella of 'Hindi': one thinks immediately of Sufi poets like Malik Muhammad 'Jāyasī' who adopted Avadhī as their literary language, of Braj Bhāshā poets such as Abdur Rahīm Khānkhānān, and of the great Kabīr. But none of these figures worked primarily in the tradition of *sagun bhakti*, in which the divine is represented uncompromisingly in terms of an anthropomorphic Hindu deity, and in which much of the orthodoxy of Hindu thought and mythology is rigidly maintained. Raskhān, by contrast, exhibits the intensely emotional attitudes typical of *sagun bhakti* verse; and his poetry shows too the zeal and fervour typical of neophytes the world over.

Who then was Raskhān? In the text *Prem vāṭikā* traditionally ascribed to him, a couplet refers to Raskhān's leaving Delhi because of an insurrection which had reduced the city to a burning-ground:[2] an ambiguous chronogram in the text yields 1584 or 1614 as the date of its composition.[3] But the attribution of the *Prem vātikā* to Raskhān is as

uncertain as the identity of the historical events to which the text refers, and discussions of the historicity of these references are largely inconclusive (although a consensus locates Raskhān in the second half of the sixteenth century). One intriguing issue which is generally overlooked is the significance of the poet's pen-name. The form 'Raskhān', barely attested elsewhere,[4] is usually parsed as a Sanskritic compound, *rasa-khāna/khāni*, with the rather solecistic sense 'a mine of aesthetic essence'; and it is in this sense that the name does supplementary duty as an epithet of Krishna when it appears as the *chāp* or *taxallus* in a line of verse.[5] Yet this interpretation overlooks the possibility of reading *-khān* as the typical Pathan designation, having a distinct spelling in the Persian script (i.e. *xān*), but graphically indistinguishable from the other sense when written in Sanskritic Devanagari. Given this ambiguity, we must recognise a chicken-and-egg problem here: does the name 'Raskhān' derive from a Pathan background, or does the attribution of such a background itself derive from the existence of such a name? The uncertainty of the historical situation makes the latter explanation a possibility at the very least.

The traditional 'biography' of Raskhān is that given in the Vaishnava hagiology *Do sau bāvan vaishnavan kī vārtā* (hereafter DVV), 'Chronicle of the 252 devotees of Vishnu'. This text is an important channel for the teachings of the Krishnaite sect known as the *Pushṭi mārg* or 'Way of Fulfilment', a devotional cult which traces its history to the teachings of the Brahmin theologian and votary Vallabhāchārya (1479-1531).[6] The 252 disciples to whom the title refers are the initiated disciples of Vallabhāchārya's second son and spiritual heir Viṭṭhalnāth (*c.*1516-1586); Vallabhāchārya's own disciples are described in a similar text entitled *Caurāsī vaishnavan kī vārtā* (hereafter CVV), 'Chronicle of the 84 devotees of Vishnu'. Both these texts, important examples of early Braj Bhāshā prose, are ascribed to Viṭṭhalnāth's son Gokulnāth (1552-1641): but they were probably compiled from largely oral traditions by a great-grandson of Viṭṭhalnāth's called Harirāy, whose lifespan is given in the sect's notoriously optimistic chronology as 1591-1711. While compiling the text Harirāy intercalated his own commentary entitled *Bhāvprakāš*, which emphasizes the spiritual implications of the text and interprets the narrative along more narrowly defined sectarian lines than the original author had felt necessary; in so doing, Harirāy's aim is to maximize the didactic potential of the chronicles as parables of the holy life.

Raskhān is not the only Muslim character in the Vaishnava hagiographical tradition of the DVV and CVV narratives. While few Muslims feature as the subjects of conversion, the not infrequent references to contemporary Hindu/Muslim relations offer an important sidelight on the political and cultural background against which North Indian Vaishnavism flourished in the centuries of Muslim hegemony. The hagiographers' striking use of the term *baṛī jāti* or 'senior race' to denote

Muslims is itself a very revealing indicator of a social as opposed to a spiritual hierarchy; and the tension which existed between Hindu subjects and Muslim overlords is explicitly referred to in a number of the *vārtā* episodes. The *vārtā* of one Padmanābhdās in the CVV,[7] for example, tells how the devotee's *ṭhākur* or Krishna-image was carried off as loot by a 'Mughal army', and how the Vaishnava fasted until it was returned to him after the intervention of the freebooter's wife, who feared incurring the sin of causing the Vaishnava's death: reading this episode in the historical context points to a parallel with the fate of the image of Shrīnāthjī, the principal *svarūp* or deity-image of the Vallabha sect, which had to be removed from Braj to escape Muslim iconoclasm during the reign of Aurangzeb, and which now provides the focus of sectarian activity at Nathdwara in Rajasthan.

A less sympathetic portrayal of Muslim character is given in the CVV chronicle of a Kshatriya devotee named Dāmodardās Sambhalvāre (Parīkh 1970: 46-47), whose wife, anxious as to the outcome of her pregnancy — itself granted as a boon by Vallabhāchārya — consulted a woman with special powers to discover the sex of her child. Because of the sectarian insistence on the importance of single-minded faithfulness of devotion to the chosen *guru*, such a consultation constituted the sin of *anyāšray* or 'resort to another authority', and was punished by Vallabhāchārya who foretold that the child would be born as a *mlecch* — here synonymous with 'Muslim'. The child's mother, once aware of the fact that she carried a *mlecch* in her womb, desisted from the service of the deity; and when the child was born he was disowned to be reared by a wet-nurse. The *Bhāvprakāš* commentary, evidently anxious to distance the pious parents from the 'uncleanness' of their unfortunate child, adds that the boy did not actually become a *mlecch* until reaching the age of ten.

A banal association of degenerate habits with Muslim personality is exemplified at various points in the hagiographies, and serves to underline the unlimited salvific potency of Krishna's grace, which has the power to overcome even such daunting obstacles as the misfortune of being born into a Muslim lineage! One of the most intriguing Hindu/Muslim confrontations described in the texts, however, has a different emphasis; this is the meeting between the blind poet Sūrdās (born *c.* 1479) and the emperor Akbar, as told in the CVV in an account which portrays Akbar as being endowed with wisdom and discrimination. Akbar summons Sūrdās to his court, and being very impressed by his spirituality attempts to reward him with gifts of wealth and land. But Sūrdās scornfully rejects such worldly considerations, and curtly forbids Akbar ever to bother him again. The ingenuousness of the story, in which the emperor of Hindustan meets his match in an other-worldly Vaishnava devotee, has a forthright charm; but the commentator Harirāy feels constrained to interpose an explanation of the anomalous fact that a Muslim such as Akbar should be sufficiently perspicacious to be able to appreciate Sūr's spiritual qualities:

> So the emperor Akbar was endowed with discrimination. How so? He had become a non-Hindu (*mlecch*) through a transgression of correct ritual practice; in his previous birth he had been a Hindu celibate (*brahmacārī*) by the name of Bālmukund,[8] and one day when he drank unfiltered milk a cow's hair entered his stomach. And because of that transgression he became a *mlecch* in his next birth. (Parīkh 1970:418)

Thus the representation of Akbar as an apostate Hindu neatly explains his liberality towards Sūrdās (and indeed towards Hindus generally, for Vaishnavism flourished under his rule). But Akbar's sympathetic liberality is nothing when compared to Raskhān's complete commitment to Vaishnava sentiments; and in explaining the anomaly of Raskhān to an orthodox Hindu readership the author of his biography in the *vārtā* has recourse to a sectarian convention in which contemporary flesh-and-blood devotees are identified with characters in the eternal and wholly transcendental world of Krishna's *līlā*. This convention allows the particular circumstances of the birth and hierarchical status of individual devotees to be depicted as subordinate in importance to the true nature of their eternal souls, and thereby justifies the inclusion of Raskhān in the inner circles of devotees initiated by the sect's most prestigious *guru*. Specifically, Raskhān's transcendental persona is that of a *gopī* with the name 'Ras-siddhā' ('Endowed with passionate feeling'), itself a kind of elucidation of the poet's name.

A *Bhāvprakāš* gloss at the head of the chronicle of Raskhān in the CVV explains that he was a *rājas bhakt*, meaning that his devotion was manifested in terms of the quality *rajas* or 'urgent passion'. This contextualization seeks to accommodate the paradox of Raskhān's character, with its juxtaposed attributes of piety and passion — twin elements fundamental to the doctrine of the *Pushṭi mārg*, in which renunciation is not highly valued and in which physical enjoyment (*bhog*) is sanctioned on condition that the object of enjoyment be first dedicated to Krishna. Raskhān's Muslim background notwithstanding, many elements of the chronicle follow an entirely conventional or even formulaic pattern, especially in the importance to the devotee of seeking a *daršan* or 'vision' of the deity, the literal and realistic interaction of the devotee with the deity himself, and in the core narrative element which describes the yielding of a soul lost in the world to the grace of Krishna through the all-important medium of initiation by the *guru* Viṭṭhalnāth, here referred to as Gusāīṅ (= *gosvāmī*). The original narrative, written in episodes called *prasang*, is somewhat less than twice the length of the following synopsis:

> Episode 1. Raskhān, living in Delhi, was enamoured of the son of a merchant; he watched him night and day, and even ate his leftovers. When chastised by his fellow Muslims, who said his actions had made him an 'infidel' (*kāphar*), Raskhān said, 'I am as I am: but if you say anything to me I'll knock you down on the spot!' (*ṭhaur mārūṅgo*). So

everyone became wary of him.

Episode 2. One day in conversation a Vaishnava said to another, 'One should have attachment to the Lord as this Raskhān has to that merchant's lad — he roves around after him without fear of public slander or caste displeasure!' Seeing Raskhān standing engrossed some way off, the other Vaishnava clapped his hand to his head and stuck his nose up in the air [*mātho dhunāyo aur nāk caṛhāī*]. Raskhān saw this and threatened him: 'Was it about *me* that you did that? Tell me or I'll knock you down on the spot!'. When Raskhān drew his sword the Vaishnava nervously explained, 'If you loved the Lord as you do that boy, you would find fulfilment'. Raskhān asked, 'Whom do you call "Lord"? I know nothing of this.' The Vaishnava replied that the Lord was the one from whom all the magnificence of the world derived. Asked how he was to be recognised, the Vaishnava showed him a picture of Shrīnāthjī. Immediately on seeing this image, tears sprang to Raskhān's eyes and his mind was turned (*man phiri gayo*); and his love for the boy came to an end.

[*Bhāvprakāš* commentary:] Attachment is divine in essence, and even if worldly will ultimately lead the soul towards God.

Then Raskhān asked, 'Where does this beloved (*mahbūb*) live?'; the Vaishnava replied, 'This beloved lives in Braj'. Raskhān asked for the picture; and the Vaishnava, realising Raskhān to be a divine soul (*daivī jīv*), gave it to him. Raskhān set off for Braj, visiting numerous temples but nowhere finding an image with Shrīnāthjī's distinctive form. Finally his wanderings brought him to Govardhan; but when he tried to enter the temple the doorkeeper threw him out unceremoniously. Raskhān went to the nearby lake of Govindkund, thinking to himself that such stringent security must surely indicate the house of the *mahbūb*, since he had never been thrown out of any other Hindu shrine. So he sat there with eyes fixed on Shrīnāthjī's temple, mouthing the words 'My *mahbūb* dwells in that house!', and resolving not to leave without having *daršan* there.

After three days, Shrīnāthjī thought to himself that Raskhān would soon expire from hunger, and feeling compassionate towards him he accoutred himself in a guise identical to that in Raskhān's picture, and accompanied by his retinue of cows and cowherds he appeared to Raskhān on the top of Govardhan hill, playing his flute. Raskhān realised this to be his *mahbūb*, and rushed to grasp him (*pakaran koṅ doryo*). But Shrīnāthjī vanished, and went to Gokul where he awakened the sleeping Gusāīṅjī by stroking his hair. Gusāīṅjī greeted him with the salutation, 'Homage to the one who removes the suffering of his devotees' (*bhaktatāpanivārakāya namaḥ*). Then Shrīnāthjī told him, 'There is one who is a divine soul but who has been born in the Muslim community (*baṛī jāti*). I have given him *daršan* but he ran to grasp me. You initiate him (*tākoṅ nām deu*), then I shall accept him.'

Gusāīṅjī asked why Shrīnāthjī had come in such a hurry, and was told, 'Because he came to touch me: and my vow is that to those whom you initiate I shall speak, them I shall touch, and their food-offerings I shall eat. To no one shall these three things be granted save by your connexion (*sambandh*)'.[9]

Delighted, Gusāīṅjī ferried the Yamuna and rode to Govindkund; and Raskhān, seeing Gusāīṅjī's gaze fixed on Shrīnāthjī's temple as he alighted from his horse, realised him to be Shrīnāthjī's friend (*mitr*). He approached him and said, '*Sāhib*, the *mahbūb* to whom I am greatly attached lives in this house; kindly introduce him to me!'. Gusāīṅjī made him bathe, and initiated him through his grace; he then had a servant take Raskhān into the temple for *daršan*. Gusāīṅjī sounded the temple conch and made the afternoon food-offering; then Raskhān had *dŭršan* of Shrīnāthjī and was greatly pleased. When Raskhān made as if to leave, Shrīnāthjī grabbed his arm and said, 'Hey you old sod, where are you off to now?' (*are sāre, ab kahāṅ jāt hai?*). And so from that day whenever Shrīnāthjī went grazing the cattle he would take Raskhān with him, and the divine sports (*līlā*) that Raskhān saw there he would describe in his verses. So it was that he acquired the attitude of a milkmaiden (*gopī bhāv*).[10]

The story of Raskhān's conversion is a straightforward parable of sectarian priorities. Yet the narrative itself has a very special flavour, which can perhaps be seen even if dimly in the synopsis above. Raskhān is portrayed as an archetypal Pathan, the traditional attributes of his race being represented in near-caricature: the starting point for the tale is Raskhān's paedophilia, and subsequent developments in the narrative hinge on the fervour and violent immediacy of his reactions to the unfolding events (with the timorous Vaishnavas providing a perfect narrative foil); even after his conversion, his devotion is expressed in markedly physical terms as he runs to grab Shrīnāthjī. Raskhān is shown as experiencing things in an extremely literal and consequently unsubtle way, his heart on his sleeve; and he does not understand what is going on around him until very unequivocal and clearly-expressed explanations are offered him. In short, he is portrayed as something of a buffoon, completely at the whim of his passions and only accidentally brought to the realization of God's grace.

While other 'seekers' in the text may feel quite strongly the suffering caused by their separation from God, and consciously lament the wasting of a godless life, their pain tends largely to be interiorized, with little outward display of histrionics; there is no real parallel for the description of Raskhān's frantic tour of the Braj temples, culminating in his ejection from the sectarian site at Govardhan and his ensuing three-day vigil and fast. In the extravagance of its description this episode is of the nature of a *masnavī* tale of the anguish of separated lovers, and the author's choice of such a genre-based style of narrative seems deliberately intended to

reflect the Muslim cultural background of its protagonist.

Yet it is in its diction that the most clearly distinct flavour of Raskhān's *vārtā* is to be seen. By and large the language of the DVV is heavily Sanskritized, and uses a register of vocabulary which is appropriate to the pious and reverential contents of the *vārtā* stories. There is a substantial reliance upon the use of formulae, both narrative and lexical, as a result of which any departure from the established register stands out all the more strikingly. In this Vaishnava context, certain modes of address and status-specific titles follow a well-defined pattern: witness the use of the designation 'Gusāīṅjī' for Viṭṭhalnāth, and of 'Shrījī' for Krishna himself. Any deviations from this narrowly prescribed and entirely conventional pattern immediately smack of the secular, and that quality itself implies profaṇity (whether intentional or caused by ignorance of the usual conventions). The reader of the *vārtā* is thus brought up short when he finds the deity being referred to as *mahbūb*, for despite the currency of that term in the Sufi context its tone here is as unexpectedly secular as equivalents such as 'sweetheart' or 'poppet' might be in the English idiom. When Raskhān first asks, 'Where does this sweetheart live?', his Vaishnava interlocutor replies, 'This sweetheart lives in Braj', retaining not only the designation *mahbūb* but also the verb *rahat* — far too temporal and commonplace a word to be considered worthy of normal use with reference to Krishna himself! The reply is thus intended to be ironic, and such irony, which is not without humour, contributes a subtle subtext to the outwardly naive paratactic construction of the hagiology narrative.

An effect similar to that achieved by the term *mahbūb* is intended by Raskhān's ingenuous use of the title 'Sāhib' to address Viṭṭhalnāth, where the better-briefed Vaishnava would prefer the standard honorific 'Mahārāj'. Likewise and to an even greater degree the use of the word 'friend' (*mitr*) in respect of Krishna is conspicuous here — for although the canons of *bhakti* recognise friendship as a legitimate model for the votary's relationship with god (alongside the preferred attitudes of servile humility and of parental or romantic fondness) the word *mitr* is hardly expected in this context. As an extension of the 'friendship' idea, Raskhān is made to ask Vitthalnāth to 'introduce' him to the deity, as though he were seeking some merely social connexion with a banal expectation as to the outcome — *tum mokoṅ milāy deū to bohot ācho hai*. Most remarkable of all the lexical choices in the text is in Krishna's delightfully brusque and profane challenge to Raskhān as he makes to leave the temple — '*are sāre, ab kahāṅ jāt hai*'! With its blunt use of the famíliar *tū* register, and with its vocative *sāre* (=*sāle*, Hindi/Urdu's favourite term of abuse, whose literal translation would by no means soften the tone of the English rendering 'old sod' given above), such a sentence is surely intended to have a considerable rhetorical impact on the reader. The challenge to Raskhān is an affectionate one, and in suggesting a close rapport between Krishna and Raskhān is of course a

vindication of the Pathan's status as a devotee of the inner circle; but at the same time there is no escaping the disparaging tone of the language, and the Vaishnava author of the text is clearly enjoying the implied subjugation of this non-Hindu devotee while yet praising his innately spiritual character.

The implications of the portrayal of the Raskhān and other *baṛī jātvāre* are indicative of the general attitude of the sect towards 'outsiders' as a whole. The Muslim community is just one of the groups identified in the DVV and the CVV as being potentially alien to the purposes of the sect and, to a greater or lesser extent, threatening to its survival and autonomy; other such groups include movements within Hinduism such as Shaivism and even the generality of *maryādā-mārgī* Vaishnavas, those who adhere closely to the scriptural authority of classical Hinduism and do not subscribe to the doctrines of devotional traditions such as the *Pushṭi mārg*. Thus it would be an over-simplification to regard the clearly expressed attitude of the DVV towards Raskhān as being specifically 'racist' or 'communalist' in intention; but the portrayal given in this traditional text of inter-communal distrust and contention, tempered sometimes by a condescending good-humour, is evidence of the stability of cultural perspectives over the centuries.

NOTES

[1] This unsubstantiated claim appears in the *Sivsiṅh-saroj*: cf. M. Corcoran, 'The life and poetry of Raskhāna', in Monika Thiel-Horstmann, ed., *Bhakti in current research, 1979-1982* (Berlin 1983), p.75.

[2] D. Bhāṭī, ed., *Raskhān granthāvalī*, 3rd ed. (Delhi 1977), p.333:
dekhi gadara hita sāhibī dillī nagara masāna;
chinahi bādasā bansakī ṭhasaka choṛi rasakhāna.

[3] *Ibid.*, p.334:
bidhu sāgara rasa indu subha barasa sarasa rasakhāna;
prema vāṭikā raci rucira cira hiya harashi bakhāna.

[4] A reference to a poem entitled *Ras khāni* is given by M. Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire de la littérature hindoue et hindoustanie*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1871), vol. 3, p.447, from an Agra edition of 1858; but this is untraceable. Comical etymologies for the name 'Raskaan' (sic) are offered in Partap Sharma's novel *Days of the turban* (London 1986), p.92: 'Some say he ['Raskaan'] was a convert to hinduism. Others say he used the pen name Raskaan, meaning one who has an ear for the essence, but his real name was Rais Khan, which is a muslim name meaning a noble person.'

[5] An example of this usage is seen in the first line of the following frequently anthologized *savaiyā*, which serves to illustrate Raskhān's poetic style:
mānusha hoṅ tau vahī rasakhāni
basauṅ braja gokula gāṅva ke gvālana;
jo pasu hauṅ to kahā basu mero
carauṅ nita nanda kī dhenu manjhārana.

pāhana hauṅ to vahī giri,ko
jo dharyau kara chatra purandara dhārana;
jo khaga hauṅ [to] baserau karauṅ
mila kālindī kūla kadamba kī ḍārana.

'If I am [reborn] as a human then let me be that "Raskhān" and dwell with the cowherds in the pastures of Gokula; if I be an animal, then so be it, let me graze eternally amongst Nanda's cattle. If I be a stone, let me be of that mountain which [Krishna] held as an umbrella against Indra's torrents; and if I be a bird, let me dwell on Yamuna's shore in the branches of a *kadamba* tree.'

[6] A succinct introduction to the history and principles of the sect is given by Richard J. Cohen, 'Sectarian Vaishnavism: The Vallabha *sampradāya*', in P. Gaeffke and D. A. Utz, ed., *Identity and division in cults and sects in South Asia* (Philadelphia 1984), pp.65-72. Further detail on the sect and on the *vārtā* texts is given in R. Barz, *The bhakti sect of Vallabhācārya* (Faridabad 1976); the dates quoted in this paragraph are from this source.

[7] D. Parīkh, ed., *Caurāsī vaishnavan kī vārtā* (Mathura 1970), pp.32-35.

[8] 'Bālmukund' is a common enough Vaishnava name: but some play on the word *bāl* as meaning 'hair' may be involved here.

[9] *sambandh* or 'connexion' refers to the mantra called *brahmasambandh*, by which devotees are initiated to membership of the Vallabha sect.

[10] B. Sarmā and D. Parīkh, ed., *Do sau bāvan vaishnavan kī vārtā* (Kankrauli 1953), vol.3, pp.299-304.

4

The *Kulliyāt* of Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh: problems and prospects

D. J. MATTHEWS

Over the past fifty years or so, the Urdu works composed in the Deccan mainly under the patronage of the rulers of Bijapur and Golkunda from the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century have attracted the attention of scholars. Although many manuscripts still remain to be edited, we now possess a fairly representative corpus in printed form. Much of this work was produced in Hyderabad by a number of dedicated scholars from 1940 to 1960, in the series known as *Silsila-e Yūsufiyya*, and then in the fairly short-lived journal *Qadīm Urdū*, which appeared from Osmania University from time to time. Other important works have been edited by Pakistani scholars, who have at their disposal the very rich collection housed in the Karachi Anjuman-e Taraqqi-e Urdu. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, the editions of these Dakanī works are far from satisfactory and abound in obscurities which more patient and careful editing could have shed light on. In glossaries, which are essential for the reader, editors have tended to limit themselves to words which can be found in the standard dictionaries like Platts and few of the editions possess adequate commentaries. The obscurity of some texts has been compounded by hasty and careless reading, and few of the printed editions we have before us can be totally relied upon. Much basic analysis of these important works still remains to be carried out, and this can only be done by returning to the original manuscripts, a re-reading of which usually solves many of the apparent difficulties in the 'edited' texts.

One of the works that deserves urgent attention is the *Kulliyāt* of Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh. The *Kulliyāt*, which was composed at various stages during the king's life and edited after his death in 1611 by his nephew and successor Muhammad Qutb Shāh, is the first substantial collection of non-religious Urdu verse that we possess, and probably the first Urdu *Kulliyāt* to have been compiled. The form of Urdu generally known as 'Dakanī',[1] in which Muhammad Qulī wrote, developed in various centres of southern India after the Muslim conquests of the area in the fourteenth century and reached its highest and most standardised form in the kingdoms of Golkunda and Bijapur during the seventeenth. The language was brought from the north by the armies of Sultanate and rapidly became a convenient *lingua franca*, a position occupied by Urdu

to this day. Brief quotations in the *malfūzāt* of the early Sufis who followed in the wake of the soldiers show that they used the language for their everyday communication, but there is no evidence that they employed it in writing.[2] The first compositions of whose authenticity we can be absolutely certain date from the end of the fifteenth century and the general awkwardness of works like the short poems of the Bijapur Sufi Mīrāṅjī (*c.* 1490) illustrates the problems faced by writers who were trying to come to terms with a previously unwritten language. Mīrāṅjī, like other writers of this period, is honest enough to admit his difficulties and frequently apologizes for his inept style.[3] Until the end of the sixteenth century, Dakanī writing was largely a Sufi enterprise and the comparatively large number of works that have survived, though extremely interesting from the point of view of language and content, hardly possess great literary merit. The function of the early preachers, who obviously took their task very seriously, was to instruct rather than amuse. Some modern literary historians claim to have discovered *dīvāns* and *masnavīs* dating from a much earlier period, but in spite of the ingenious and convoluted arguments they present to justify their dating, their claims require careful scrutiny.[4] Dakanī scholarship is still in its infancy and much research into the most basic problems presented by the large corpus of texts we possess is yet to be carried out.

Before the second decade of this century little was known of writers of the Deccan, the manuscripts of whose works lay unread and unedited in libraries and museums. One of the pioneers in the field was Maulvī 'Abdul Haq, who during his secretaryship of the Anjuman-e Taraqqi-e Urdu in Aurangabad spent much of his time describing and editing works which had previously been unknown. 'Abdul Haq wrote prolifically and worked rapidly with a zeal and enthusiasm which all too frequently impaired his scholarship. His great contribution to Dakanī studies, however, was to introduce this considerable body of literature to the world.

In 1922, in the Anjuman's journal *Risāla-e Urdū* he described at some length a manuscript of the *Kulliyāt* of Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh, which had been preserved in the Āsafiya Library (now the State Central Library) of Hyderabad.[5] According to the article, this important manuscript, which had been assembled by Muhammad Qulī's successor, Muhammad Qutb Shāh in AH 1025/AD 1611, contained some 1,800 pages and comprised 50,000 verses, in which all the major poetic genres were represented. Muhammad Qutb Shāh, who had adopted the *taxallus* 'Zillullāh', prefaced the work with his own poem in praise of his uncle's verse.[6] We are told that the *Kulliyāt* contained verse not only in Urdu, but also in Persian and Telugu.

It is surely one of the tragedies of Urdu literature that the manuscript was transferred to the Nizām's private library before it could be edited; and it has never been seen again. A number of theories as to its whereabouts have been put forward, but the most persistent is the

rumour supported by the director of the Nizām's Trust that it fell prey to the ravages of white ants and is now a heap of dust.[7] Other manuscripts mentioned briefly in the catalogues of Sprenger and Stuart also seem to have disappeared and the only two that survive are those which are referred to for rather obscure reasons as *nusxa-e qadīm* and *nusxa-e jadīd* (neither is datable but both appear to be early copies).[8] These two manuscripts which between them contain about 4,000 verses are now housed in the Sālār Jang Museum. For the most part they contain only the Urdu ghazals, with a few other genres sparsely represented, and were edited and published in 1940 by the great Dakanī scholar, Muhyuddīn Qādirī Zor.[9]

We of course have no means of checking the accuracy of 'Abdul Haq's description, but there are signs that his claims were exaggerated. If Muhammad Qulī did in fact write in Telugu, nothing of this work has survived elsewhere and in the verse we have before us little Telugu influence can be detected.[10]

'Abdul Haq also gives the text of the famous poem beginning:

پیا باج پیالا پیا جائے نا
پیا باج یک تِل جیا جائے نا

Without my love, I have no taste for wine.
Without my love, what use this life of mine?

This, even before the 'discovery' of the *Kulliyāt*, had been ascribed to Muhammad Qulī. The poem however appears in neither of the extant manuscripts, but is nevertheless included by Zor, without reference to this fact, in his 1940 edition.[11] If the ghazal had really been the composition of Muhammad Qulī, it seems strange that it should have been omitted from both of the manuscripts which are still extant. A slightly different version of the poem exists in the *dīvān* of Vajhī, Muhammad Qulī's contemporary, who was closely connected with the Golkunda court:

پیا بِن پیالا اُچا جائے نا
پیا باج یک تِل جیا جائے نا

Without my love, why take a cup of wine?
Without my love, what use this life of mine?

This has led some scholars to the logical conclusion that it was composed by Vajhī and not by Muhammad Qulī. Perhaps over-enthusiasm for their hero prompted both 'Abdul Haq and Zor to ascribe the poem to the latter.

Zor's obvious affection for the founder of Hyderabad often led him to false conclusions which are difficult to substantiate. It must, however, be stated that his edition of the *Kulliyāt*, in spite of inevitable blemishes, remains one of the great works of Dakanī scholarship and later editions and *intixābāt*, which all rely heavily upon his original work, have made little improvement upon it.

The lengthy introduction, in which he included many 'translations' and paraphrases of the original poems, is a mine of information about aspects of seventeenth century Golkunda society, which contemporary Persian historians, with a characteristic disdain for 'vernacular' writing, omitted to comment upon. For its time, the text is surprisingly accurate, and we are indebted to Zor's patient research for the discovery of the meaning of the many archaic and local words which abound in the poetry of Muhammad Qulī.

The arrangement of the text into two sections, *hissa-e nazm* and *dīvān*, has however led some later literary historians, who have perhaps not read the work as carefully as they should, to give the impression that Muhammad Qulī's *Kulliyāt* in some way resembles that of Nazīr Akbarābādī. As has been stated above, the extant manuscripts consist almost entirely of ghazals, which are arranged in the normal way according to the last letter of the *qāfiya* or *radīf*. It is therefore difficult to understand why, for example, the first six ghazals in the first part of Zor's edition, which are all written in *hamd*, should be styled *nazm* and thus be separated from those also written in *hamd*, but included as ghazals in the second part.

Muhammad Qulī over a period of time wrote many loosely connected ghazals on various subjects, such as the religions and secular festivals of Golkunda, the joys of the rainy season, his own birthday, the buildings of Hyderabad and so on, and one can appreciate Zor's reasons for grouping such poems together. Contrary to popular belief, however, they are far from being 'documentary' *nazms*, and in many cases were written to a formula which allowed the poet little room to go into detail about his subject. A common theme which recurs over and over again is: 'Such and such a festival is being celebrated; everyone is happy; flowers are blooming and pretty girls grace the king with their favours; Qutb Shāh has been blessed by the Prophet, whose prayers have secured his fortune.' A typical example is one of the poems written to celebrate the 'Īd-e Mīlād-e Nabī:[12]

حضرت نبیؐ مولود بھی سر تھے نوی لیا یا انند
تو اُس مبارک دیس تھے ترلوک سب پایا انند

گھر گھر بدھاوا کاج ہے بھوساج سوں دن آج کے
سب جگ اُپر بادل ہو کر چوندھیر تھے چھایا انند

خوش ہو خوشی ہنستی اہے ہور عیش متوالا ہوا
عشرت لگیا ات ناچنے آلاپ جب گایا انند

جیسے اَنند منگتے اتھے اُس تے آلے لاک لاک
کرتار اپنے پیار تھے ہمناں کوں دکھلایا انند

جھاڑاں چمن کے آج مست جھولیاں سوں جھلتے ہور مست
لالے کے پیالے بھر مگر مد باد پیلایا انند

مقصُود کے غنچے مرے مولود تھے پھُل پھل ہوئے
اُمید کی برسانت کا جھڑ پر سو جھولایا انند

قسمت کر نہارا اپیں جس دیس تھے قسمت کیا
اُس دیس تھے اے قطبؔ شہ تقسیم تج آیا انند

The birthday of the Prophet has once more brought new joy, and because of this blessed day, once more the whole world has found joy. There is congratulation from house to house with great splendour on this day. Becoming a cloud, joy has spread everywhere over the whole world. Happiness, becoming joyful, laughs and luxury is intoxicated; enjoyment began to dance, when joy struck up its song. As the great in their thousands asked for joy from it, the Creator by his love has shown us joy. Today the trees in the garden sway with drunken swinging and, filling the ruby cups, joy has given us intoxicating wine to drink. Because of this birthday the buds of my intentions have all flowered. The day on which the Creator distributed his portion, from that day, o Qutb Shāh, joy fell to your lot!

The themes of happiness, joy, good fortune and everlasting bliss are repeated throughout the *Kulliyāt*, with little variation. Brief references are made to the rituals which accompanied the festivals in which he

participated, equally brief comments are made upon some of the buildings which he commissioned, and here and there a little information is given about his personal feelings and enthusiams. But in general, Muhammad Qulī's ghazal is after all an elusive art, and we know by experience that we should beware of taking any poetic statement entirely at its face value.

It is commonly supposed with some justification that life in the seventeenth century Deccan was peaceful and at court was conducted in untroubled luxury and splendour. The frequent occurrence of words like *'aiš*, *'išrat*, *xuš* and *ānand*, which abound in the verse of Muhammad Qulī and his contemporaries, indicates that this may very well have been so. Modern historians of Hyderabad often go out of their way to emphasise the extreme religious tolerance of the rulers of Golkunda and Bijapur; and Zor, in his great enthusiasm for his subject, depicts Muhammad Qulī, who was a fervent, and uncompromising Shi'a, as the mildest and most tolerant of them all. This point of view of course ignores the many verses concerning religious belief, of which the following are typical:[13]

محمدؐ دین قایم ہے ہندو بھاراں بھگاؤ تم
سیاہی کفر کی بھانو اُجالا جگ مگاؤ تم

اجالے دین میں فوجاں جو آویں دھاٹ کر غم کی
توحیدر کی کٹاریاں سوں ہیا ان کو چراؤ تم

پیئے جے ساقیٔ کوثر کے ہت تھے جام کوثر کا
سدا حضرت کیرا برمال شاہاں میں گواؤ تم

کھُلے ہیں بخت دروازے نبیؐ کے داس پن تھے منج
محبّاں دوستاں سارے طبل نصرت بجاؤ تم

Muhammad's faith is paramount, so set the Hindu hordes to flight!
Attack black-hearted infidels, and raise the dawn of wondrous light.
Armies stormed the dawn of faith and in its face they flung their darts.
Take Haidar's daggers in your hands and mercilessly tear their hearts.
The one to whom the Saqi gives the heavenly draught from Kausar's springs

By grace divine will take his place upon the throne — a King of Kings.
The doors of heaven are open wide to me, the servant of the Lord.
Beat on the drums of victory, my friends! This is your great reward.

The conviction of modern scholars that the text must contain reference to legends regarding Muhammad Qulī's life, which may or may not be true, is best illustrated by the story of Bhāgmatī, a Hindu courtesan in whose honour Muhammad Qulī is said to have founded his new city of Hyderabad. The details of this legend found in the early histories such as the *Hadīqat ul 'ālam* and *Gulzār-e Āsafiyya* are well known and require no repetition here. Zor was so convinced that this highly unlikely account must be true that he produced any slender piece of evidence he could find to justify it. Embarrassingly enough for those who accept the legend, Muhammad Qulī makes absolutely no mention of Bhāgmatī in his poetry, but does refer by name to other women: these might have been real people, but have names like Nanhī, Kaṅvalī, Pyārī, Sāṅvalī and Chabelī, which incidentally occur frequently in the verse of other writers. They were probably no more than figments of poetic imagination. The equation of Vajhī's heroine Mushtarī with Bhāgmatī seems very far-fetched and statements that any verse containing the common word *bhāg* 'good fortune' is a cryptic reference to her cannot be taken seriously. For example, the verse:

ٹیلا سوبھ نشانی ات بھاگ کی نشانی
کَن موتی ہے نورانی زہرہ و مشتری کا

in which Zor finds conclusive proof that Bhāgmatī and Mushtarī were one and the same person can only fairly be interpreted:

The spot on your forehead is a sign of great good fortune. The pearl in your ear is the light of Venus and Jupiter.[14]

Much debate has gone on concerning the identity of the so-called 'Twelve Pyārīs' with whom Muhammad Qulī is said to have been connected.[15] The theory of their existence stems from the verse:

نبی صدقے بارہ اماماں کرم سوں
کرو عیش جم بارہ پیاریاں سوں پیارے

By the grace of the Prophet and the kindness of the Twelve Imāms,
ever enjoy the company of the twelve Pyārīs, o lover.

This verse led Zor to search out a number of ghazals in which the names of twelve 'females' are mentioned, and to include them in the first part of the *Kulliyāt* under a separate heading. It may be pointed out that the names of many other fictitious or real women are mentioned elsewhere in the *Kulliyāt*, but poems concerning them are conveniently excluded from this section. More curiously, two of the so-called Pyārīs, namely Lālā and Lālan, are obviously men, addressed in keeping with Dakanī verse tradition by their *female* lovers. In the following verses, Lālā can by no stretch of the imagination be considered a woman:

عشق میں مست متوالی ہوں، لالا
توں اپ ادھراں تھے منج کوں دنیا پیالا
ہوئی ہوں میں تمہاری نیہہ کی ماتی
کہ دیتا ہے او نیہہ منج کوں اُلالا

I (*fem.*) am drunk in your love, Lālā; give me the cup to drink from your lips. I (*fem.*) am drunk with your love, and that love gives me excitement.[16]

The gender of the subject had presumably not been noticed by Zor and has been ignored by those who have followed him.

The recent publication of a new edition of the *Kulliyāt* by Dr Sayyida Ja'far[17] was long awaited and must be welcomed, since the 1940 edition of Zor has long since been out of print. Unfortunately the work adds little to what has already been accomplished and by and large the arrangement of the text is that of the first edition. The arbitrary division of *nazms* and ghazals is maintained and the titles invented by Zor, which do not appear in the original manuscripts, are reproduced without explanation. The somewhat rambling and repetitive introduction takes into account the work done by more recent scholars like Harun Khan Sherwani, who did his best to explode the myth of Bhāgmatī, but is really no more than a compilation of all that has been written before. The *Kulliyāt* contains many poems in which interesting reference is made to the various 'Īds and other festivals celebrated in seventeenth century Hyderabad, the rituals of which are no longer remembered. Patient research might have clarified the obscurities in the poems concerning the 'Īd-e Sūrī and the 'Īd-e Ghadīr for example, but one searches in vain for a satisfying explanation. In the text, poor Lālā, for all his obvious masculinity, still remains as one

of the 'twelve Pyārīs' and the famous ghazal *piyā bāj piyālā piyā jāe nā* is categorically ascribed to Muhammad Qulī in a short note in the editor's introduction on the evidence of a non-existent manuscript!

When editing a text from two incomplete manuscripts which have suffered the ravages of time and insects, and when in the majority of cases only one version of a poem exists, there are bound to be many insoluble problems. A slip of the pen by the *kātib*, whose calligraphy was usually superior to his philology, can make total nonsense of a verse. In some cases the original can be restored by intelligent guesswork, but given the usual brevity of the lines we can often do no more than admit defeat and add a question mark. This simple device is helpful for the future researcher, who otherwise might be led to imagine that the editor must be in possession of linguistic secrets that he or she is incapable of understanding.

Given the fact that we possess only two incomplete manuscripts of the *Kulliyāt* of Muhammad Qulī, we can hope to do no more than establish a text on the basis of this material. We can probably assume that the manuscript described by 'Abdul Haq in 1922 has been lost to the world, and will never come to light.

Both manuscripts are fortunately well and clearly written and Muhammad Qulī's language and style present far fewer problems than those of some of his predecessors and contemporaries. The pattern he set in his verse was taken up by many of those who followed him and therefore we have much material at our disposal for comparison. The problems are therefore in general not insuperable. Obviously a thoroughly produced edition requires the work of a team of experts, who have various skills, and if such a team can be assembled the prospects are good. Dakanī scholarship has in the past suffered too much at the hands of individual editors who have taken far too much upon their shoulders and who have preferred to rely on their own intuition rather than the cooperation of others who could have advised.

NOTES

[1] 'Dakanī', which also appears in the forms *dakhinī*, *dakkhinī* and *dakhnī*, is the most convenient term to describe the language of the writers of Bijapur and Golkunda. Some modern scholars prefer the term *qadīm urdū* applying it also to the language of works written at the same period in other parts of India. Certain Hindu editors who have transliterated texts into Nagari prefer the term *dakkhinī hindī*. Much heated and largely futile debate on the subject continues.

[2] One might mention, for example, the Sufi Gesū Darāz (d. *c.*1426). A few short poems which have been ascribed to him may be authentic. The Dakanī *risāla*, the *Mi'rāj ul 'Āšiqīn*, which is commonly stated to have been composed by him is certainly from a much later date.

[3] In his short *xud-navišt nasal-nāma*, Mīrāñjī actually states that he 'learnt' the *zabān-e hind* after his arrival in Bijapur from Mecca in 1441.

[4] Some Dakanī poets of Golkunda, including Muhammad Qulī, mention the names of the two poets Fīroz and Mahmūd implying that they were their predecessors. The identity of these writers is, however, far from certain.

[5] 'Kulliyāt-e Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh', *Risāla-e Urdu* (July 1922).

[6] The text, which is reproduced in the editions of Zor and Sayyida Ja'far, was given by 'Abdul Haq in his 1922 article. It does not appear in either of the two extant manuscripts.

[7] I have personally on a number of occasions tried to trace the *Kulliyāt* with no success. Access to King Kothi, where the manuscript is thought to have been lodged, is unfortunately impossible.

[8] A discussion of the manuscripts of the *Kulliyāt* is given in the introduction to the editions of both Zor and Ja'far.

[9] M. Q. Zor, ed., *Kulliyāt-e Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh* (Hyderabad 1940).

[10] Only one poem (Zor, p. 322) contains a Telugu expression — *em re em*, the equivalent of Urdu *kyā re kyā*.

[11] A brief discussion of the poem appears in Ja'far, p. 104. No reason for its inclusion is however given.

[12] Zor, pp. 38-9.

[13] Zor, p. 32.

[14] The account is given in some detail by Zor, introduction, p. 79. The Bhāgmatī theory was contested by Harun Khan Sherwani in his book *Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh* (London 1967).

[15] The existence of these 'Twelve Pyārīs' was first suggested by Zor, pp. 74, ff. and has never been questioned by later editors. It is possible that the numeral 'twelve' was somehow suggested by the twelve Imāms, as in the following verse.

[16] Zor, p. 247.

[17] Sayyida Ja'far, ed., *Kulliyāt-e Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh* (New Delhi 1986).

5

An eighteenth century narrative of a journey from Bengal to England: Munshī Ismā'īl's *New History*

SIMON DIGBY

According to Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador of King James I of England and VI of Scotland to the court of the Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr, a proposal was mooted in 1616 that an Indian 'gentellman' should accompany Roe on his return to England, 'to kisse his Majestie's hand and see our countrye'.[1] Like a project to despatch an ambassador to Portugal in the reign of Jahāngīr's father Akbar,[2] the idea was not implemented; and Jahāngīr's own memoirs contain only a single brief mention of the English.[3] Although detailed information regarding Western Europe was available at the Mughal court and to other Indian princes from Europeans who could communicate in Persian or Turkish,[4] Indo-Muslim sources of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries evince a profound ignorance of the geography of the world beyond the countries adjacent to India, and of Western European countries in particular. This was in spite of the fact that representatives of these nationalities were causing trouble at the extremities of the Mughal empire, and in spite also of a taste for European luxury manufactures both at the Mughal court and at lesser local Indian princely courts. These were not clearly distinguished in popular consciousness from the Far Eastern luxuries which European embassies also brought.[5] From the end of the sixteenth century there was some receptivity to European technical processes in contrast to the almost total failure to grasp the geographical knowledge of Europe which was simultaneously available.[6]

Thus it was possible for a nobleman at the court of the Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707) and of his early eighteenth century successors to write a work in which geographical information from eleventh and twelfth century Arab sources was combined with tales of the 'Wonders of Creation' (*'ajāib ul maxlūqāt*).[7] In this work the impossibility of navigation from the south of the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean was firmly restated, notwithstanding the passage of European vessels by this route through the previous two centuries.[8] According to the author, Amīn ud Dīn Khān, the island of Bartāniyā (Britannia, Great Britain) is situated in the Atlantic Ocean. The entry regarding it is preceded by a notice of an island where women ruled and ebony was so plentiful that it was used for firewood. It was followed by a notice of an island populated

by diminutive cannibals who professed allegiance to the pre-Islamic prophet 'Ād. The only information regarding Bartāniyā itself is that it was a very large island, and was the last place of human habitation towards the west.[9] Further evidence of the feebleness of geographical knowledge in the late seventeenth century is provided by Mughal historians writing in the Deccan.[10]

Scanty record survives of the earliest Indian seaborne travellers to England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[11] Traces remain of 'the first Indian convert to the Church of England' brought from western India and baptized in London in 1616,[12] and of a Parsee visitor in the seventeenth and an Armenian from Calcutta by the middle of the eighteenth century.[13] Rather rare advertisements testify to the presence of Indian servants and slave-boys in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century London.[14] At least during the eighteenth century the sight of lascars or Indian seamen, mostly Muslims from Bengal, had become familiar in London.[15]

A tantalizing reference by the youthful Armenian adventurer Joseph Emin suggests that as early as the 1740s boys worked their passages aboard East Indiamen from Bengal with the intention of becoming chimney-sweeps in London.[16] Probably other immigrants from India, like Emin himself, joined the pool of unskilled labour in the London slums. More commonly later in the eighteenth century, Britons returning to the United Kingdom with large or small East India fortunes brought Indian servants with them, who ranged in status from the butler and steward of Mr. Claud Russell, the employer of the subject of this article, to William Hickey's 'little pet boy' Nabob and thirteen year old 'faithful creature' Munnoo.[17] Rather rarely, such Britons also brought home their Indian wives or mistresses. 'During my time in London,' Abū Tāḷib Khān noted, 'I had the good fortune to form an acquaintance with two or three Hindoostany ladies, who from the affection they bore to their children, had accompanied them to Europe.'[18]

The random arrival of these visitors, usually uneducated, can have contributed little to the knowledge of Britain and Europe in India, and the record of this is usually lost. Tradition however credits one early eighteenth century sailor and his western travels with a considerable influence on his own isolated area of the Indian subcontinent, in which a strange flowering of European influence took place without the concomitant presence of the Sahibs as a new political force. This was in Kutch and has been attributed with some plausibility to the activities and the skills and knowledge acquired during a long residence in Europe and possibly subsequent returns there of Rām Singh Mālam (*c.* 1710-1765), who was shipwrecked off the African coast in youth and first brought by his Dutch rescuers to Europe. Rām Singh is credited with subsequent trips to Europe after his return to Kutch. Unfortunately no record other than popular traditions survives of Rām Singh's travels, but such a contact at least provides a possible explanation of the extraordinary flowering of

European influence in this remote region of the subcontinent and the introduction of European techniques of manufacture in such industries as glassmaking and ironfounding.[19] Testimony of this interest in Europe is preserved in the collection of European engravings apparently formed by the Raos of Kutch in the mid eighteenth century. These European engravings were carefully mounted to preserve them against the ravages of the Indian climate and notes were added about what they depicted. This included views of London besides other European cities.[20]

In this period also, partly as a consequence of the victories of Clive and the ascendancy of the English East India Company in the Carnatic and Bengal, educated Indian Muslims began to visit the United Kingdom, unhindered by the caste rules which deterred most of their Hindu compatriots from crossing the 'Black Water'. Few of these appear to have produced records of their experiences in the United Kingdom. As in the case of the prints in the Kutch collection, evidence of the presence of one such visitor from the Carnatic survives in comments inscribed in Persian in a now rare engraved panoramic view of London. This may have been carried home to India around 1781 and later have been brought back to England from there, to find a home in the City of London Museum. The comments, written in Persian on the face of the engraving, record the equivalent of sterling costs in *hūns*, a coinage current in South India, and this provides a clue as to the locality from which the traveller came. There are notes of ferrymen's wages on the river Thames, the height of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral and the length and breadth of Blackfriars Bridge.[21]

Two accounts survive, written in Persian by Indian Muslims, of their visits to the United Kingdom in the latter part of the eighteenth century and at its close. They have been known since the time of their composition and were translated into English in the early nineteenth century. The first of these is the *Šigarf-nāma-e Vilāyat* ('Wonder Book of England') of Mīrzā I'tisām ud Dīn. I'tisām ud Dīn's travels took place between January 1766 and October or November 1769. The *Šigarf-nāma* suffers from the disadvantage that it was composed, or at any rate revised and completed, a decade and a half later in 1785, though the detailed narrative suggests that I'tisām ud Dīn took notes upon the journey.[22] The second account of such a visit is of Mīrzā Abū Tālib Khān Isfahānī, an inhabitant of Lucknow of Persian descent, who left Bengal in February 1799 and after a voyage around the Cape of Good Hope disembarked at Nantes in France. He also visited Ireland, after which he resided for many months in England. He returned overland to India, eventually reaching Calcutta in August 1803. His narrative, entitled *Masīr-e Tālibī fī bilād-e afranjī* ('Tālib's travels in the land of the Franks') was completed in 1804-05.

A two volume translation of Abū Tālib's work, by Major Charles Stewart, was published in London in 1810, and two years later the Persian text was printed in Calcutta.[23] The narrative of Abū Tālib's predecessor

I'tisām ud Dīn remains unedited and unprinted, though several manuscripts have survived. An abridged English translation by Captain J. E. Alexander, also accompanied by an Urdu translation, was published in London in 1827.[24]

In constrast to these two accounts in Persian by Indian Muslims, that of Munshī Ismā'īl, through the circumstance of its preservation in a great but inaccessible collection, has remained unknown until recently.[25] Munshī Ismā'īl, a Persian-language secretary from Kalnā in lower Bengal, left the Hooghly estuary in December 1771 upon an East Indiaman, sailed by the Cape of Good Hope and sighted England in June 1772. His time in that country was spent in London and Bath. He set sail from Portsmouth in March 1773 to return to India, and he reached Calcutta probably in November of the same year.

On his outward voyage from India, Munshī Ismā'īl recorded that when he was on the island of St Helena (in March 1772), he resolved that he would write an account of what befell him.[26] He also expressed the hope that he would be able to compose an account of the return voyage to Bengal. His account of the return journey is in fact disappointingly brief, but the phrasing of his account as well as the recorded place of residence of the scribe of the surviving manuscript, 'the port of Hooghly' (*bandar-e Hūglī*),[27] suggest that Munshī Ismā'īl composed the whole of his work during the course of his travels, and that it was copied for a patron immediately on his return. The circumstantial evidence is strong that this patron was James Grant (known as 'the informer' to distinguish him from another namesake in the East India Company's service).[28] As we see below, Munshī Ismā'īl enjoyed James Grant's protection and patronage on the last stages of his return voyage. In its date of completion this is therefore the earliest of the eighteenth century Indo-Persian narratives of travel to England.[29]

Both of the other travellers to England were men of high social standing among Indian Muslims. I'tisām ud Dīn went to England as an emissary of the Mughal emperor Shāh 'Ālam, in an attempt to gain the support of King George III for the cause of the Mughal emperor against the plans of the East India Company.[30] Abū Tālib Khān was a former high official of the Navvāb-Vazīr of Awadh (Oudh), then at a loose end in Calcutta. He travelled on shipboard at the invitation of the Persian lexicographer Captain Richardson.[31] He does not appear to have been dependent upon Richardson for financial support or for his social contacts when he reached England. Munshī Ismā'īl was the humblest of the three travellers, brought to England as the Munshī (Persian correspondence secretary and language teacher) of a British servant of the East India Company in Bengal, Mr Claud Russell.

Nevertheless one should not exaggerate the lowliness of Munshī Ismā'īl's status. His employer Claud Russell travelled with his Indian butler (*xānsāmān*) and steward (*sarkār*); two other servants accompanied the munshi himself and attended to his needs.[32] It is a curiosity of these

eighteenth century narratives of travel that the presence of such servants is usually mentioned only when their ministrations to the comforts of the travellers are recalled. Neither their names nor any details of their backgrounds are given, nor is it mentioned whether they returned home safely or were lost in far-off lands.

From his narrative it is evident that Munshī Ismā'īl came from a family with pretensions to gentility and learning who held lands in rural Bengal, in the vicinity of Kalnā, Burdwan District.[33] This suggests that they may have been Sayyids or Shaikhzādas who had been long established there. Munshī Ismā'īl had previously looked for employment in Calcutta, and had returned home to his household when he failed to secure this.[34] He did not renew the quest till the following year, when even 'good families' had been reduced to indigence by famine prices.[35] He had only a brief experience of employment as munshi or Persian secretary by an Englishman before he was induced to undertake the voyage to England.[36] It was not intellectual curiosity or the desire to see the world which impelled him to accept the offer to take him there. He confesses that he was terrified at the thought of undertaking such a journey. According to his own account he only overcame his reluctance to accept the offer when he recalled the wealth that another munshi had brought back who had gone on a much shorter sea voyage (from Calcutta to Madras?) with an Englishman.[37]

Munshī Ismā'īl's narrative of his travels is less sophisticated than those of I'tisām ud Dīn and Abū Tālib, and it is also shorter; but his naive vision gives his account its particular appeal and value. The level of his comprehension of what he witnessed of an alien civilization parallels that of medieval European travellers rather than their late sixteenth or seventeenth century successors. His narrative is a description of a real-life adventure and of the marvels which he witnessed in distant lands. When he draws a moral from these sights and experiences, it is usually an illustration of the operation of divine providence rather than an incitement to action. In this he stands in marked contrast to Abū Tālib Khān, in whose writing the germ of reformist ideas is perceptible. Abū Tālib wrote of 'each useful thing of that kingdom', and suggested that Indian Muslims might imitate certain useful European customs and arts.[38] There is no such suggestion in Munshī Ismā'īl's narrative.

Munshī Ismā'īl's descriptions of the places which he visited and the people whom he encountered, when stripped of purely conventional rhetorical embellishment, are usually regrettably brief. Sometimes, when the detail is not too meagre, his narrative evokes scenes which have not been presented in the same terms or from the same point of view by any other source of the period.

His narrative begins with a picture of the manner in which the official correspondence of the East India Company was conducted. Close to the grandiose Residency of the Company at Murshidabad, which was still the capital of the impotent successors of Sirāj ud Daula, a group of munshis

were sitting on a mat under a fragrant tree awaiting calls upon their services.[39] Their Persian correspondence was directed and overlooked by three or four civil officials of the East India Company, Englishmen or Scots who, in spite of the lack of any adequate or accessible grammars of Persian, had managed to acquire from these munshis or their like some proficiency in Mughal documentary Persian and in the crabbed *šikasta* hand in which most documents were written.

In the previous two decades very few servants of the East India Company had possessed a good working knowledge of Persian, but this had become a desirable acquirement for those with ambition among them.[40] The services of a competent munshi were at a premium, particularly if he could be employed in a period of leisure from official duties. A sea-voyage round the Cape of Good Hope to England might last for five months, as in the case of Munshī Ismā'īl's own voyage, or longer. Even the wealthiest passengers suffered from cramped accommodation, gross physical discomfort and a monotony which could in some degree be alleviated by a course of study.[41] Twenty-five years after Munshī Ismā'īl, when that highly educated oriental traveller Abū Tālib sailed for Europe, he took the opportunity of this prolonged period of forced leisure to acquire a fluency in English which he had not previously possessed. He was taught on the voyage by John Richardson, the compiler of the first large Persian-English lexicon,[42] and the consequence was that during his stay in England he was able to conduct intellectual conversations with Anglican bishops and ladies of high society.[43] In the early nineteenth century it became common for cadets of the East India Company's services to carry in their luggage grammars of Persian and of the vernacular languages of India, in order to make progress in these languages during the months of the sea-voyage before they took up their appointments. In 1771 the chance which Munshī Ismā'īl was offered during his search for employment amid the munshis attending at the Company's Residency at Murshidabad, was that of accompanying a British servant of the East India Company to England, teaching him Persian or assisting him in deciphering documents on shipboard or when he wished for his company during his furlough in England.

Claud Russell, who engaged Munshī Ismā'īl's services, was at this time thirty-nine years of age. He was born in Edinburgh in 1732, son of a Writer to the Signet, i.e. a lawyer. His early career in India had been on the Fort St George (Madras) establishment. He had been seconded to Fort William (Calcutta) in 1765, and in 1770 he had been appointed Accountant and Collector-General in Calcutta. In April 1771 he had been ordered back to Fort St George, but pleading ill-health he had resigned instead in order to go to Europe. He had the prospect of a fresh appointment on his return to India.[44]

Munshī Ismā'īl had previously obtained two months' temporary employment with David Anderson, the Assistant of the East India Company at the Murshidabad Durbar, when Anderson's regular munshi

had fallen ill and died. Anderson was evidently prepared to recommend Munshī Ismā'īl to Russell, and himself urged Munshī Ismā'īl to accompany Russell to England. The munshi did not accept the offer immediately but went home to attend to the affairs of his family, who were in distress. He states that Russell at this time turned down the services of several other munshis. A further summons from Anderson at Murshidabad came to him, and he accepted the employment. He received as advance the sum of 100 rupees, equivalent to £12/10s. in the English money of the time. Russell had already departed for Calcutta. The munshi bought provisions, evidently with a further advance from Anderson, who also arranged for a boat to take him down to Calcutta.[45]

En route on the waterways of the Ganges delta, the boat moored at the landing stage of Ganj Kalnā on the western bank of the upper reaches of the Hooghly channel. For two days it was placed in the care of a local official while the munshi made his last farewells to his family. The boatmen from Murshidabad were not familiar with the waters so far downstream. The munshi considered that they propelled the boat recklessly; and when they reached Bāranagar, not far above Calcutta, they were dismayed by the effect of the ebb and flow of the tide. They reached Calcutta just before a heavy storm broke.[46] The munshi appears to have been more alarmed by this part of the journey than by anything which befell him on his subsequent travels.

The river journey must have taken place at the end of September 1771, about two weeks after the munshi had first met Claud Russell. He states that he spent two months in Calcutta in fine and comfortable lodgings. He sometimes went sightseeing with his employer, as he was later to do at the Cape of Good Hope and in England. On 27 November Russell and the munshi embarked on separate river-craft, the munshi presumably with his own two servants and provisions. The following day they looked round the Company's military post at Budge Budge, a few miles downstream. After another night on their boats and two days at the roadstead of Hijli, at the point on the western shore where the Hooghly debouches into the sea, they embarked on the *Morse*, an East Indiaman commanded by Captain John Horne, who weighed anchor on 3 December. The only observation which the munshi makes on the initial six-week sea-voyage from Bengal to the Cape of Good Hope is that he was unable to keep the fast of Ramazan or regularly to perform the five Muslim prayers of the day, presumably because of conditions on shipboard.[47]

His description of Cape Town and its environs dates from a period when there were amicable relations between the English and its Dutch rulers. The munshi himself was lodged in the house of a Dutch official. After mentioning the gardens and orchards around Cape Town, he has some uncomplimentary observations on a local population, who must be identified as the Hottentots, whose colour 'though fairly black is less so than that of the *Habšīs* (Abyssinians)'.[48]

From Cape Town the *Morse* reached St Helena after fifteen days'

sailing. The description of St Helena is one of the most vivid portions of the munshi's narrative. As he explained at the beginning of the work, it was there that he decided to write an account of his travels. He was lodged at the settlement of Jamestown. His description of this settlement, with its fort and ordnance lodged in a crack between two precipitous hills, well matches the view of Jamestown painted by Thomas Daniell in 1794; and his references to the springs of fresh water and the firewood brought down from the hills are confirmed by other accounts. The variety of banana which he mentions as growing there and common in Bengal may have been one of the many edible or useful plants which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were imported from India to St Helena. It seems likely that the unpalatable vegetable which he also mentions, which made him eat pickles *(ācār)* to rid himself of the taste, was in fact the yam, described variously by English visitors to the island as 'tasting between a potato and an artychoke bottom, but ruff on the palate'[49] and 'a coarse unappetizing root considered suitable for negro slaves and pigs.'[50] The island suffered from recurrent chronic shortages of locally-grown foodstuffs, during which the yam tuber provided a staple diet to the extent that St Helenians were nicknamed 'Yamstock'. A further gift of cash from Russell enabled the munshi to purchase meat and fish from the local inhabitants. Russell himself probably dined at the Governor's table and was entitled, as a servant of the East India Company, to purchase government stores.[51] Their sojourn at St Helena lasted three and a half weeks. A reason for this long stay was that the *Morse* had been leaking. According to the munshi, with the English passengers were also furious, the captain for reasons which he declines to explain, and they decided to take their luggage and effects ashore.[52] The *Morse* sailed from St Helena without Russell and the munshi on 21 March. There was another ship, probably the *Northumberland* from Canton bound for London, which had reached St Helena four days before the *Morse*. Russell negotiated passages for himself and his entourage on board this vessel, which sailed on 6 April.[53]

The ship was heavily laden with China goods, including tea and porcelain, to the extent that the passengers below deck were obstructed by the cargo; but Munshī Ismā'īl was made more comfortable than on the previous ship, as he had been allotted a place to himself, and the steward fulfilled instructions to supply him with provisions. He records the sight of flying-fish as one of the spectacles of God's creation. After sailing for six days the vessel struck anchor at Ascension Island. He describes the hunting of turtles there and the placing of bottles with messages by a flagstaff in the water. His account is paralleled by those of European travellers of the period.[54]

After leaving Ascension Island the ship was becalmed in the tropics for fifteen days. Then an incident occurred which excited some alarm, the approach at night of a large unidentified ship. The English passengers came to the deck to observe the spectacle, and the captain ordered the

guns that East Indiamen carried to be run out. Eventually a boat was lowered with the first mate and an interpreter. It was learnt that this was a Spanish man-of-war; but it was homeward bound with peaceful intentions. The munshi states that it had 130 guns, which would make it a very large ship for this period.[55]

The passage through the North Atlantic was rainy and windy. Nearly eight weeks after they had left St Helena, the south-western coast of England was sighted, close to a town that the munshi thought was itself called *Inglan* ('England', possibly Falmouth or Plymouth). Claud Russell disembarked there, leaving Munshī Ismā'īl and their personal servants on board. Three or four days later the ship reached the Thames estuary, but because of the low tides it was five or six days more before the ship could berth. After a further four days on shipboard Russell summoned the munshi. He landed with the other Indian retainers at *Ulich* (Woolwich), whence he was taken off to London, to the lodging house of a 'Mr William'. He went there by coach, accompanied by his own servants.[56]

In London, Munshī Ismā'īl's lodgings were within about half a mile of the Haymarket, but the transcription of the manuscript leaves us in some doubt about the name of the street. It might have been either Broad Street or Brewer Street, both at the southern end of Soho, an area which had been built over by the early eighteenth century.[57] By the time of the munshi's visit to London it had passed out of fashion as a residential area, but it was conveniently close to the currently fashionable squares and streets.[58]

The London which Munshī Ismā'īl describes is that of the terrace developments which were taking place at the west end of the city through the eighteenth century. The houses, according to him, were all five storeys high and were distinguishable from one another only by the number-plates at their doors. Fear that he would be unable to find again the house from which he had come made him afraid to wander out alone.[59] This is an alien's view of the baffling uniformity of design of English terraced Georgian townhouses, in which at this period all classes from the lesser aristocracy to moderately prosperous tradesmen preferred to dwell.

His indulgent employer was clearly keen that the munshi should see the sights of London. He does not mention by name Ranelagh Gardens and the Spring Gardens at Vauxhall, but these favourite resorts were probably the 'pleasant gardens and wonderful tableaux' which he recalls. After some time he made an expedition to the nearby open countryside in the company of his landlord Mr William. Probably this was to the north or west of the latest newly-developed streets and squares, to the open fields in Chelsea or beyond the corner of Hyde Park. At the fringe of the inhabited area they went into a coffee-house for refreshments.[60]

Munshī Ismā'īl's account of the coffee-house, and of the inquiries which he made regarding how such a splendid establishment was maintained, are one of the most interesting parts of his narrative. His

companion Mr William explained to him the connection between coffee-houses and news-sheets, a connection which is well attested by English social historians and in the literature of the period.[61]

The last portion of Munshī Ismā'īl's description of London concerns its amenities. He praises the paving and lighting of the streets. He mentions 'three sound and elegant bridges' across the Thames. These must have been London Bridge, Westminster Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge, the last only completed in 1769.[62] His descriptions of the paving and street-lighting of London can be matched in other eighteenth century descriptions by foreign travellers,[63] but he has a noteworthy account of the wooden water-wheels, which pumped piped water from the river to the houses, 'in motion night and day from the ebb and flow of the tide'.[64]

After some comments on the abundance of horses in England — 'more numerous than the cows in Bengal' — and on the abundance of wares displayed in the shops on either side of the streets of London, Munshī Ismā'īl next describes his journey to Bath. He was impressed by the efficiency by which the coach was supplied with relays of horses at the staging-posts.[65] This as well as other observations remind us that the munshi had never travelled beyond Bengal and Bihar on the lower Ganges, where transport was largely riverine, in contrast with the drier areas of the Indian plains where a relay system had been maintained for centuries.

On arrival at Bath he was given lodgings on the top floor of the house which his employer had taken. A brother of Claud Russell was also there. The latter was an employee of the Levant Company, and Munshī Ismā'īl was able to conduct conversations in Arabic with him. The munshi also mentions expeditions with Russell into the verdant countryside, as well as the beneficial effect of the hot springs of Bath, which he compares to the well-known hot springs of Sītākund in eastern India.[66]

At this point in his narrative he inserts a description of the parliamentary system of government as it had been explained to him. He was impressed by the freedom of the country from forcible and arbitrary exactions by the sovereign. He identifies the members of the House of Lords as *amīrs* ('chiefs'), and those of the House of Commons as *vakīls* (agents or representatives) of the *zamīndārs* (landholders). When a deficit occurred in the royal expenses beyond the fixed sum of money allotted annually, these two assemblies were summoned to discuss what was needed, and they then agreed on the taxes to be raised. Hence 'degrees of punishment and exaction... are not brought into operation, nor the forbidden pattern of confiscation and violence without representation.'[67] It is curious to find in the munshi's account in Persian, written only a few years before the American War of Independence, this echo of the cry that there should be no taxation without representation.

In Munshī Ismā'īl's exposition the middle classes, traders and artisans find no mention. He himself came from a society which was predominantly agricultural, where the greatest source of revenue was from the

produce of the land. The munshi's view of the British constitution, while it may have been influenced by his personal experiences of the chronic insecurity, misery and scarcities of Bengal during the transitions of the mid eighteenth century, also reflects the complacency of an informant from the British possessing classes during the Whig ascendancy. 'The peasantry (*ra'āyā*),' he remarks, 'do not suffer from the oppression and blows of the landholder. According to the King's law every man is himself free, but without power over others. A balanced connection has become established whereby the King fears the ministers, the landholders the peasantry, and the populace the law. Through the interposition of this moderating chain of behaviour each man is accountable, and none causes pain or injury.'[68]

The munshi spent four pleasant months in Bath; but 'like other fresh immigrants' (possibly a reference to the other Indian members of Russell's entourage and his own servants), he suffered acutely from the cold of the English winter. He therefore 'asked his employer's permission to depart'. He evidently went to London, possibly because a passage could more easily be secured for him there, as he refers to 'leaving the English capital'. He sailed from Portsmouth for India on 20 March 1773, aboard a vessel which can be identified as the *Europa*.[69]

Munshī Ismā'īl, perhaps disheartened by his experience of an English winter or by the end of any immediate expectation of largesse from Russell, made no serious attempt to record the next portion of his travels.[70] The narrative of his return journey lacks interesting details comparable to those he gave on his earlier voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, St Helena, Ascension Island and the encounter with the foreign man-of-war. A description of the 'isle of Portugal' is vague, possibly a conflation of memories of the cliffs of the Portuguese coastline with other memories of a call of the *Europa* at the Cape Verde Islands, where the inhabitants would have appeared as black as he describes. After this he provides an ornate description of a waterspout, and of the ship firing cannon to divert it.[71]

As was common on the outward-bound passage to India, the *Europa* evidently did not put in to St Helena or the Cape of Good Hope, but sailed to Johanna Island in the Comoro group near Madagascar, where outward-bound Indiamen often took on supplies. The *Europa* was sailing to Bombay, whereas both the munshi and James Grant, the returning Bengal civilian for whom the manuscript of the munshi's account was probably copied, were bound for Calcutta. At this period landing at Bombay would have involved them in a long, arduous and somewhat risky journey overland across India, or another sea-voyage around Ceylon and up the Bay of Bengal. They therefore disembarked at Johanna Island and waited nearly three weeks for a ship to take them directly to the Hooghly roadstead.

The munshi's spirits appear to have been revived by the equable climate of Johanna Island and the patronage of James Grant. He

recorded the pleasure he derived from the sight of the green hills of the island covered with coconut groves. He also mentions fishing or hunting a 'kind of water-worm' called (or mistranscribed) *falūs*.[72] Possibly he was referring to the spermaceti whale, or to its ambergris. Ambergris was the most valuable product exported from the Comoros, and many travellers refer to its collection of the shores on these islands.

The 'country' vessel on which James Grant and the munshi now embarked was commanded by a Frenchman and was carrying a cargo of cowrie-shells used as currency in Bengal. The munshi gives no further details of the voyage. He reached Calcutta 'on the same day and month of the year' as he had set out from there two years earlier.[73] As most of the dates of the munshi's narrative are according to the Christian calendar, this was probably on 27 November 1773; but if his reckoning was according to the Muslim lunar calendar it would have been three weeks earlier, on 20 Sha'bān 1187/6 November 1773.

After landing he set off immediately to visit his family, giving his thanks to God, 'Who brought him to the object of his desires, without Whose aid a weak man like himself could not have undertaken such a journey.'[74] The transcription was done in a small neat *nasta'līq* hand by one Ghulām Hasan, probably a professional copyist, who describes himself as 'resident (*sākin*) of the port of Hooghly (*bandar-e Hūglī*). As we have suggested, it is likely that this copy was made for James Grant. For this Munshī Ismā'īl may have left his original holograph behind for copying before he went to his reunion with his family. We have no means of knowing whether he ever came back to collect it, and we have no record of his subsequent career. We would not even know the name of this early Asian visitor to England if the scribe had not given it in the roundel on the flyleaf, for the author omitted to mention it in the customary manner in the proem of his narrative.

Munshī Ismā'īl appears to have been a shy and self-effacing man, little prepared to take the initiative or to set out upon adventures unguided. He did not dare to wander around the streets of London for fear lest he lose his way. His knowledge of English was more limited than that of the other two late eighteenth century Indian Muslim travellers I'tisām ud Dīn and Abū Tālib Khān.[75] Munshī Ismā'īl was capable of exchanging courtesies and greetings with Mr William, landlord of his London lodgings, and he could understand Mr William's account of how news was reported in the coffee-houses and news-sheets were printed and circulated.[76] It is possible that Mr William, with whom Claud Russell had arranged his accommodation, himself had East Indian connections and some knowledge of oriental languages. Munshī Ismā'īl's knowledge of the British constitution could have been acquired through the medium of Persian or Hindustani conversation with Claud Russell.[77] It is doubtful if the Arabic conversation between the munshi and Russell's brother afforded any serious exchange of information.[78]

Munshī Ismā'īl gives no record, of the kind which is to be found in

I'tisām ud Dīn's and Abū Tālib Khān's accounts,[79] of the impression which he as an Indian visitor made upon the local population. Munshī Ismā'īl is also very reserved in his comments on the people whom he met on his travels. Abū Tālib was free with his criticisms of the British national character, as well as lavish in praise of its virtues. He mentioned the behaviour of those who were disobliging to him as well as of those who showed him kindness or affability. I'tisām ud Dīn expressed his lively resentment against his travelling companion Captain Swinton, Lord Clive and others, whom he did not hesitate to accuse of fraud and deceit.[80] But Munshi Ismā'īl has only praise for those whom he met, except on the one occasion when he refers to the 'blameworthy acts' of the captain of the first ship on which he sailed; and there he will not write about such things.[81]

This account has remained unpublished either in the original or in translation. Its earlier failure to attract scholarly attention appears to reflect the hazards of the survival of the only known manuscript. This, together with at least one manuscript of the same provenance (from James Grant), entered the collection of the bibliophile Sir Thomas Phillipps in 1856, where it escaped scholarly attention for over a century. In 1968 it was acquired by the present owner at a sale of a portion of the Phillipps Collection.[82]

NOTES

[1] Sir William Foster, ed., *The embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India, 1615-19*, revised edn (Oxford 1926), p. 212. Roe's syntax does not make it entirely clear who volunteered to go on this embassy. It was probably Mīr Jamāl ud Dīn Ānjū, then *Sūbadār* of Patna, the compiler of the dictionary *Farhang-e Jahāngīrī*, and a man of wide intellectual interests.

[2] In AD 1582, in response to the Jesuit mission to his court, Akbar had approved the despatch of a return embassy to Spain and probably other European courts; but one of his two emissaries fled when he reached the western coast of India and the other got no further than Goa; see J. S. Hoyland and S. N. Banerjee, trans., *The commentary of Father Monserrate, S. J.* (Oxford 1922), pp. 163, 191; P. du Jarric, trans. C. H. Payne, *Akbar and the Jesuits* (London 1926), pp. 114, 259-60. For Jahāngīr's unfulfilled intention to send an ambassador to Portugal, see F. Guerreiro, trans. C. H. Payne, *Jahangir and the Jesuits* (London 1930), pp. 77, 110. These projects were apparently not of sufficient importance to find a mention in the Persian histories of the Mughal emperors' reigns.

[3] Syud Ahmad, ed., *Toozuk-i-Jehangeerie* (Ghazipur and Aligarh 1863-64), p. 134; A. Rogers, trans., H. Beveridge, ed., *The Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī or memoirs of Jahangir* (London 1909), I, p. 247. William Hawkins mentions that Jahāngīr called him 'by the name of English Chan, that is to say, English lord', W. Foster, ed., *Early travels in India* (Oxford 1921), p. 83.

[4] Du Jarric, p. 55 [Prince Murād questioning the Jesuits about Portugal]; N. Manucci, trans. W. Irvine, *Storia do Mogor* (London 1907), II, p. 137 [Manucci giving Shivajī, who had only heard of the King of Portugal, information about 'the greatness of European Kings']; F. Bernier, trans. A. Brock, ed. A. Constable, *Travels in the Mogul empire, A.D. 1656-1668* (Oxford 1914), pp. 324, 353 [Bernier discussing European anatomy and philosophy with his patron Dānishmand Khān]; H. Das, *The Norris embassy to Aurangzib* (Calcutta 1959), p. 308.

[5] A. Topsfield, 'Ketelaar's embassy and the Farangī theme in the art of Udaipur', *Oriental Art*, XXX, 4 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 359-63.

[6] See A. Jan Qaisar, *The Indian response to European technology and culture [A.D. 1498-1707]* (Delhi 1982): geographical knowledge is not discussed in this study. The actual availability of such geographical knowledge at the Mughal court is strikingly demonstrated by the depiction, in one of the allegorical political portraits of Jahāngīr, of the emperor standing upon a terrestrial globe of European manufacture, but with place names inscribed in Persian; see R. Ettinghausen, *Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India* (New Delhi 1961) Plate 12 [on which the labels *Rūs* and *Purtuqāl* are clearly visible]; M. C. Beach, *The imperial image; paintings for the Mughal court* (Washington 1981) pp. 74, 169-70. Monserrate states that the emperor Akbar, during a conversation, consulted an atlas [probably presented by the Jesuits] to see the relative positions of India and Portugal; *Commentary*, p. 124.

[7] Mu'īn ud Dīn Husainī Haravī *called* Amīn ud dīn Khān, *Ma'lūmāt ul āfāq* ['Knowledge of the horizons', Storey, *Persian literature*, II, No. 213] (Lucknow 1870). For details of this Mughal dignitary's career, see Storey, *loc. cit.*

[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 87.

[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

[10] Bhīm Sen, who lived in Aurangabad, thought of Ceylon as an almost unreachable island of wonders, *Nusxa-e dilkušā*, trans. V. G. Khobrekar and others (Bombay *c.*1972), p. 196. Khāfī Khān and the Mughal authorities at Surat appear to have had no knowledge of the island of Madagascar as the base of European piracy in the Indian Ocean, cf. *Muntakhab ul-lubāb* (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1860-1874), pp. 423-25.

[11] By contrast there is evidence of Indian students brought to Portugal in the first half of the sixteenth century; see Luis de Matos, *Imagens do Oriente ni sécolo XVI* (Lisboa 1985), intro., pp. 48-51. Harihar Das, 'The early Indian visitors to England', *Calcutta Review*, 3rd series, XIII (1924), pp. 83-114.

[12] W. Ashley-Brown, *On the Bombay coast and Deccan; the origin and history of the Bombay diocese* (London 1937), pp. 64-65.

[13] M. M. Murzban, *The Parsis in India* (Bombay, 1917), I, p. 5; E. J. Emin, ed. A. Apcar, *Life and adventures of Emin Joseph Emin* (Calcutta 1918), *passim*.

[14] R. Visram, *Ayahs, lascars and princes* (London 1986), pp. 13-14.

[15] By 1783, according to M. D. George, *London life in the eighteenth century*, (London, 1925), pp. 138-40; but I'tisām ud dīn's reference [trans. Alexander, p. 39, see 24 below] to the familiar sight of lascars 'of Jahangirnagar and Chatgaon' dates from 1766-67. Later, in the early nineteenth century, attention was devoted to their presence and predicaments in London and other English ports; see also N. Benjamin, 'The British and Indian sailors (*c.*1790-1885)', in P. M. Joshi and M. A. Nayeem, ed., *Studies in the foreign relations of India* (Hyderabad 1975), pp. 485-96. For case-histories of the misfortunes and maltreatment of lascars in London in the ninetteenth century [which must have been paralleled in the century before] see the Rev. George Salter, *The Asiatic in England* (London 1873).

[16] Emin, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[17] W. Hickey, *Memoirs of William Hickey*, ed. A. Spencer (London 1918-25), II, p. 228; IV, p. 376.

[18] Abū Tālib Khān, *Masīr-e Tālibī*, trans. Stewart (see below, 23), I, p. 198.

[19] L. F. Rushbrook Williams, *The Black Hills; Kutch in history and legend* (London 1958), pp. 138-42.

[20] B. N. Goswamy and A. L. Dallapiccola, *A place apart; painting in Kutch, 1720-1820* (Delhi 1983), pp. 33-35.

[21] The engraving is entitled 'A General View of London and Westminster — Printed for R. Sayer and J. Bennett — Jan[y] 1777'. The apparently unique surviving example of this print is preserved in the City of London Museum. One of the Persian annotations upon it bears the date AH 1194 (= AD 1780-81). Mr A. H. Morton kindly drew my attention to this print. The information in the annotations, as he remarks, 'does not seem bookish', and is unlikely to have been acquired other than by conversation and experience in London itself.

[22] Mīrā I'tisām ud Dīn *Šigarf-nāma-e Vilāyat* [Storey, I, No. 1595], completed in AH 1199/AD 1785; Ms., Royal Asiatic Society, London, Hindustani 2 [mis-catalogued, in fact the original Persian text, not a Hindustani or Urdu translation].

[23] Mīrzā Abū Tālib Khān Isfahānī, *Masīr-e Tālibī fī bilād-e afranjī* [Storey, I, No. 1178(2)], completed in AH 1219/AD 1804-05; ed. Mīrzā Husain 'Alī and Mīr Qudrat 'Alī (Calcutta 1812); trans. C. Stewart, *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa and Europe*, 2 vols. (London 1811).

[24] J. E. Alexander, *Shigurf namah i velaët; or excellent intelligence concerning Europe; being the travels of Mirza Itesa Modeen [sic], translated from the original Persian manuscripts into Hindoostanee, with an English version and notes* (London 1827).

One further eighteenth century Indo-Persian account of a voyage to Europe and the United Kingdom is recorded as existing in manuscript, see Storey, I, No. 1596, p. 1144: — Mīr M. Husain b. 'Abd ul-Hasanī (?), *Risāla-e ahvāl-è mulk-e Firang o Hindostān*, 'an account of a journey in 1188/1774 via Calcutta to Lisbon and London, and of a year's residence in the latter place, followed by a sketch of European astronomy', manuscript in the Mulla Firuz Library, Bombay; Rehatsek, p. 189, No. 33; p. 99, No. 51. I have been unable to consult this.

[25] Munshī Ismā'īl, *Ta'rīx-e jadīd* (not recorded by Storey), evidently completed around November 1773; Ms., Simon Digby Collection, No. 107, formerly Sir Thomas Phillipps Collection, No. 18225; see notes 28, 29, 82 below. An edition of this text with translation is in course of preparation.

[26] Ms., folio 11A.

[27] Colophon: Ms., folio 49B.

[28] James Grant was absent from India, evidently on leave in 1772. Grant's return passage to India on board the *Europa*, the vessel in which Munshī Ismā'īl sailed, is mentioned in a despatch from East India House to Fort William, see R. P. Patwardhan, ed., *Fort William — East India House correspondence* VII, *1773-1776* (New Delhi 1971), p. 13. The conjecture that the manuscript was transcribed for James Grant is corroborated by the presence of another manuscript formerly in the Phillipps Collection, of Tāj ud Dīn Malikī's *Mufarrih al-qulūb* [a Persian translation of the *Hitopadeśa*], Phillipps No. 18259; Sotheby & Co., (*Bibliotheca Phillippica, N. S.*), *Medieval manuscripts, Part IV*, Sale of 25 November 1968, Lot 154, second item. This manuscript states in its colophon that it was copied for James Grant in AH 1199/1784-85. It came into the Phillipps Collection from the same provenance as Munshī Ismā'īl's *Ta'rīx-e jadīd*, as both manuscripts bear pencilled annotations by Sir Thomas Phillipps (W. Rodd 1856).

[29] A date of composition is given in the roundel on the flyleaf (folio 9A) as AH 1185 (= AD 1771-72), which is the year when his travels began. The author's name and a title for the work also appear only in this roundel, which is in the hand of the scribe of the manuscript.

[30] *Šigarf-nāma*, Ms., f. 6A-B; trans. pp. 4-10.

[31] *Masīr*, p. 20; trans. Stewart, I, pp. 18-19. For biographical details see *Masīr*, pp. 9-19; Storey, *loc. cit.*

[32] Ms., folio 37A

[33] Ms., folios 17B, 20B.

[34] Ms., folio 12B.

[35] Ms., folio 12A. For the Bengal famine of 1770, see N. K. Sinha, *The economic history of Bengal*, II (Calcutta 1962) pp. 48-67.

[36] Ms., folio 16B.

[37] Ms., folio 17B.

[38] *Masīr*, pp. 3-4.

[39] Ms., folio 14A.

[40] Hajji Mustapha (M. Raymond) refers to a time in Bengal in the 1760s 'when, Governor Vansittart and Mr Hastings excepted, I was the only European that understood a little Persian', *A translation of the Seir Mutaqharin* (Calcutta 1789), I, intro., p. 17. But in this period I'tisām ud Dīn's disreputable travelling companion, Captain Archibald Swinton, had a sufficient knowledge of Persian to collect, or possibly to procure the manufacture of compromising documents; see *Šigarf-nāma*, trans. pp. 199-200. By a curious coincidence, a good manuscript of collections of the emperor Aurangzeb's letters, bearing the seal of Archibald Swinton Rūstam Jang Bahādur, found its way to the Sir Thomas Phillipps Collection (No. 5145).

[41] *Masīr*, trans., I, pp. 48-50; C. Northcote Parkinson, *Trade in the Eastern seas, 1793-1813* (Cambridge 1937), pp. 265-303.

[42] *Masīr*, p. 20; trans., I, pp. 18-19.

[43] *Masīr*, pp. 432-33, 455.

[44] I am most grateful to Professor Peter Marshall of King's College, London and Dr Richard Bingle and his assistants of the India Office Library and Records who have supplied me with biographical details of Claud Russell and other servants of the East India Company who figure in this narrative, as well as information regarding the sailings of East Indiamen.

[45] Ms., folio 20A-B.

[46] Ms., folios 20B-22B.

[47] Ms., folios 22B-24A.

[48] Ms., folios 24A-25B.

[49] F. Rogers in 1703, quoted in P. Gosse, *St Helena 1502-1938* (London 1938), p. 119.

[50] P. Gosse, *op. cit.*, p. 127. According to a letter of 1717, the diet of yams was often washed down by strong liquor; Gosse, *op. cit.*, 135.

[51] Ms., folios 26A-29B.

[52] Ms., folio 26B.

[53] Ms., folios 29B-30A.

[54] Ms., folios 30A-32A.

[55] Ms., folios 32B-34A.

[56] Ms., folios 34B-38A.

[57] Ms., folio 38A. Both streets appear on Roque's map of 1746, published by John Pine and John Tinney. I am grateful to Miss Doris Johnson for this reference. That there were lodging houses in Brewer Street we know from a nearly contemporary reference. In the autumn of 1776 the Highland footman John Macdonald called on John Stuart of Allan Bank, a young Scottish gentleman staying in London for a few weeks, 'at Mrs Elliot's in Brewer Street, where he lodged.' John Macdonald, ed. J. Beresford, *Memoirs of an eighteenth century footman, John Macdonald: Travels [1745-1779]* (London 1929), p. 187.

[58] J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (Harmondsworth 1945), especially chapters 7 and 12.

[59] Ms., folio 39B. This South Asian visitor's impression of the monotonous and confusing uniformity of Georgian town-houses in London is quoted by Raymond Head, *The Indian style* (London 1986), p. 21.

[60] Ms., folios 40A-41A.

[61] Ms., folios 41A-42B. Cf. R. Bayne-Powell, *Eighteenth century London life* (London 1937), pp. 140-42. Munshī Ismā'īl's reference to news sheets being produced by a printer (*basma-sāz*) is of interest in the context of the permeation of ideas in the Indian Muslim environment, as this is before the production in India of Charles Wilkins' movable *nasta'līq* type. It seems to indicate a familiarity, not attested elsewhere in Muslim India, with eighteenth century Istanbul Arabic-script printing. For the word, see Sir J. W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English lexicon* (Constantinople 1890), s.v. *bāsma*. I am grateful to Professor T. Gandjeï for pointing out this Turkish connection.

[62] Summerson, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-24, 277.

[63] Archenholz, 1780, in M. D. George, *London life in the eighteenth century*, p. 102.

[64] Ms., folios 42B-43B. Cf. M. D. George, *op. cit.*, quoting a source of 1783.

[65] Ms., folios 43B-44A.

[66] Ms., folios 44B-45A. The artist Thomas Daniell, who visited the Sītākunḍ in 1790, makes the same comparison with Bath, see M. Archer, *Early views in India; the picturesque journeys of Thomas and William Daniell* (London 1980), p. 103. For other descriptions of the Sītākunḍ, see 'Abd ul Latīf Shushtarī, *Tuhfat ul 'ālam* [Storey, I, No. 1560] (Hyderabad 1294/1878), p. 501; C. J. C. Davidson, *Diary of travels and adventures in Upper India* (London 1843), II, pp. 45-47.

[67] Ms., folios 45B-46A; cf. the acounts of Parliament in *Masīr*, pp. 434-36, much abridged in Stewart's trans. I, pp. 303-04; and the account of constitutional monarchy in *Šigarf-nāma*, Ms., folios 98A-101B, omitted in Alexander's translation; cf. also *Tuhfat ul 'ālam*, pp. 315-17. At this early date the topic of representative government evidently excited interest among educated Indian Muslims.

[68] Ms., folio 46A.

[69] Ms., folios 46B-47B.

[70] Russell in fact did not return to India until 1775, and the remainder of his Indian service appears to have been in the Madras Presidency, not Bengal.

[71] Ms., folios 47B-48B.

[72] Ms., folios 48B-49A.

[73] Ms., folio 49A.

[74] Ms., folio 49B.

[75] However I'tisām ud Dīn mentions his own lack of inclination to study English, and the fact that in later years people in Bengal used to comment on the fact that he had gone to England but not acquired a sound knowledge of the language, *Šigarf-nāma*, Ms., folio 7B. Yet he knew English well enough to memorize a popular rhyme and reproduce jokes about Highlanders, *ibid.*, folios 73B-74, 130B; trans. pp. 83-87, 178.

[76] Ms., folios 38B, 40A-42B.

[77] Ms., folios 45B-46A.

[78] Ms., folios 44B-45A.

[79] *Masīr*, p. 164; *Šigarf-nāma*, trans., pp. 38-40.

[80] *Šigarf-nāma*, Ms., folios 6-8; trans., pp. 6-10, 194-95, 217.

[81] Ms., folios 26B-27A.

[82] Sotheby & Co, Sale of 25 November 1968, Lot 227, first item.

6

Emperor of India: Landhaur bin Sa'dān in the *Hamza* cycle

FRANCES W. PRITCHETT

Ralph Russell was the first Western scholar to pay serious attention to the Urdu *dāstān*, or prose romance. He marshalled the available evidence about the history of the genre, said a few words about dastan plots and characterization, and emphasized the importance of the dastan as 'the main form of Urdu prose narrative before the modern period'.[1] His brief discussion was the first reference I had ever seen to dastan literature, and it caught my interest immediately. Dastans have now become part of my life, and Ralph Russell has become a most valued friend and mentor. It is a pleasure to dedicate this article to him.

Nowadays surprisingly little attention is paid to a genre which was indeed 'the main form of Urdu prose narrative before the modern period'. After reaching unprecedented heights of popularity in the latter half of the nineteenth century, dastans have generally had a bad press in the twentieth: they have been perceived as unrealistic, irrelevant, perversely escapist. Dastan literature has thus suffered from neglect; and modern Urdu fiction has suffered too, for it has been unable to claim the superb achievements of the best dastan literature as its inheritance.

The Urdu dastan tradition itself was, by contrast, sure of its roots, and very proud of them. Urdu dastan literature grew out of Persian dastan literature — or rather, mostly out of one single Persian dastan, that of Amīr Hamza. While in Iran the Hamza story was simply one of a number of medieval romances,[2] outside Iran it attained a popularity equalled only by that of the Alexander Romance. The Hamza romance spread rapidly all over the Islamic world: there are versions of it in Arabic, Turkish (twenty-four volumes), and Georgian;[3] also in Malay and Javanese.[4] In South Asia, it came through medieval Indo-Persian versions, and spread into Sindhi, Pashto, Panjabi, Hindi, and as far east as Bengali.[5] But above all, it flourished in Urdu. The dastan of Amīr Hamza not only developed far more elaborately in Urdu than it ever had in its Persian homeland — it also developed along what in some cases were distinctively Indian lines.

Since the dastan world knows no form of government except monarchy, all dastan lands have kings — there are kings of Chīn (meaning

parts of southern Central Asia), Misr (Egypt), Rūm (meaning Constantinople), Yaman (Yemen), Yūnān (Greece), Tūrān (Turkestan), etc. These places are real in a sense, but they are also remote enough to be exotic; they are places where wonderful or terrible things might happen. Many of Hamza's adventures involve journeys to such places, and encounters with their kings.

Among other rulers of such exotic regions, Hamza also encounters and conquers Landhaur bin Sa'dān, son of Sa'dān Shāh, king of what the pre-Safavid Persian *Qissa-e Hamza* calls 'the twelve thousand islands of Sarandīb'.[6] Sarandīb or Sarandīp is a well-known region of the story-telling world, loosely identified with Sri Lanka. King Landhaur plays no exceptional role in the early Persian Hamza cycle: he is merely one more chivalrous adversary, honorably defeated by Hamza after elaborate, prolonged single combat, who accepts Islam and joins the small band of Hamza's close companions.[7] But in the Urdu cycle, he becomes a strikingly important figure. Egypt and Greece and other lands are remote and almost legendary, but India is now home. Landhaur, the 'Emperor of India' (*xusrav-e hindūstān*), becomes charged with a special significance.

Landhaur's name is an unusual one, and stands out among the elegant, picturesque, or vulgar names normally given to dastan characters. The name has acquired an Indic-sounding aspirate *dh* only in Urdu; in classical Persian his name is Land-hor, 'son of the Sun'. The well-known seventeenth-century Indo-Persian dictionary *Burhān-e qāti'* (Calcutta 1834) explains his name somewhat confusedly: 'It is the faith of the Brahmins that when the great Sun looked at his mother, she became pregnant, and this is why the Persians call him Landhor.' The later *Šams ul luğāt* (Bombay 1891) is more explicit: 'Landhor is the name of an Indian king who is called Raja Karn in the Hindī [=Indian] language, because it is the faith of the Brahmins and Hindus that the Sun cast a kindly glance on his mother, who was called Kuntī. She became pregnant, and that is why the Iranians have named him Landhor, that is, the son of the Sun, because *land* means "son" and *hor* is the Sun. God knows the correct thing best.'[8] Landhaur is thus identified by these dictionaries with the hero Karna of the *Mahābhārata*, who was the son of the sun-god Sūrya and the princess Kuntī. Of course it is an after-the-fact identification; but it shows how strongly Landhaur was perceived as an Indian hero, with roots reaching even into Sanskrit story tradition.

Another Indic source for Landhaur's name has been suggested by a modern Indian historian, V. S. Agrawala, who argues that the great warrior and king Pratāpa Rudra Deva (1295-1323) of Warangal, referred to by Amīr Khusrau and others as Luddar Dīv, evolved into Landhaur 'Dev'.[9] But this seems doubtful: Landhaur is not given the title 'Dīv' or 'Dev' in any version of the story I have yet examined. 'Dev' is taken seriously in Urdu dastan tradition as the name of a demon species, and Landhaur is certainly not a demon.

According to the most popular Urdu version of the romance,[10] Hamza is commanded by his liege lord, Naushervān, the King of Kings of the

Seven Realms, to seek Landhaur out and kill him; Hamza swears to do so. After many vicissitudes Hamza arrives in Sarandip, and through a series of minor incidents comes to know Landhaur as chivalrous, gallant, generous — a champion with all the qualities Hamza most admires. But Hamza is true to his pledged word, and forces Landhaur to take the field against him. (Landhaur rides a female elephant called Maimūna, and has an army full of thirty-one carefully named groups, tribes, and castes of Indians.) The two champions finally wrestle for three days and nights, but neither can budge the other. Even on the fourth day when Hamza gives his famous battle-cry, he can lift Landhaur only as high as his cheek, not all the way above his head. But Landhaur then surrenders, submits himself to Hamza, and embraces Islam. Hamza adopts him as a brother, subject only to the condition that they must go together before Nausherwān.

At court, however, Nausherwān's evil counsellor Bakhtak has poisoned the king's mind — never a difficult thing to do — with fears that Hamza and his growing band of powerful companions might plan to seize the throne. The vacillating Nausherwān gives Bakhtak permission to deal with the situation. Bakhtak insists on having Landhaur's head, in literal fulfilment of Hamza's oath. Hamza and Landhaur, faced with this grim prospect, are of one mind: they consent, and prepare to play out their lofty roles of feudal loyalty to the death.

But against them are ranged their companions, who all flatly refuse to carry out the order of execution. Moved by Landhaur's gallantry, they would rather die with him than kill him. This passive resistance is itself a special, feudally correct form of loyal protest, for we know them all to be eager, fierce, and heroic warriors. Even the impeccable Landhaur contrives to remind everyone, by playing alarmingly with his huge mace, that he submits through choice rather than weakness; Nausherwān's fearful reaction creates a fine touch of humour.

'Amar the trickster *'ayyār* then prepares to take drastic action. We in the audience know 'Amar's violent and unscrupulous tactics very well: when he hastily slips behind the royal executioner's back we know he has a plan. Just at that point, however, the queen arrives, and her timely intervention rescues Landhaur (Bilgrami 1969: 166-169). Nothing similar to this episode ever occurs again; in a highly patterned story, it is unique. And nothing like it occurs in the Persian *Qissa-e Hamza* at all.

Landhaur's later career includes other adventures that link him especially to Hamza. Hamza and Landhaur are, for example, the only heroes in the dastan who are lifted up into the supernatural realm of Qāf; both kill Devs, marry Paris, and beget children there.[11] At one point, as both are in Qāf and killing Devs simultaneously, they even hear each other's battle-cries from afar (Bilgrami 1969: 365).

Such selective expansion of locally popular characters, like Landhaur and 'Amar, and locally popular themes, like magic and trickery, helped the Urdu Hamza romance develop from its relatively modest beginnings

into an extraordinary cycle of forty-six huge volumes. The forty-six-volume *Dāstān-e Amīr Hamza*, a monument to the popularity of dastan literature in its heyday, was published by the Naval Kishor Press in Lucknow, from about 1881 to about 1906.[12] As far as I know, no living human being has read the whole cycle — which is not surprising, since the volumes average about 900 pages each. To the best of my knowledge, there is no complete set of all forty-six volumes in any library.[13]

In this long version, the character of Landhaur develops further, and Landhaur's special relationship with Hamza becomes even more intense. One particularly striking instance can be offered: a serious, almost fatal, clash between Hamza and Landhaur.[14]

This clash grows out of a wrestling-bout that takes place, under the gaze of both Muslim and infidel armies, between Landhaur and an infidel warrior called Qahrish bin 'Ạntar Sūkiya. Neither champion can budge the other, and they wrestle for six days and nights. On the seventh day, Landhaur strikes an unfair blow at Qahrish's windpipe, then conquers his disabled foe with ease (Husain 1900: 301).

Qahrish agrees to accept Islam, and at first all seems to be well. But the new convert wears a hangdog look, and his unhappiness comes to Hamza's attention. When interrogated, Qahrish reveals that Landhaur had defeated him through an unfair blow. Furious, Hamza sends for Landhaur at once, denounces him, and banishes him forever, telling 'Amar, 'Throw this Indian deceiver (*dağābāz-e hindī*) out of my court, I have no use for such Indian deceivers in my court!' (Husain 1900: 302).

Landhaur then takes leave of his two sons, his huge Indian army, and his elephant Maimūna. He renounces the world, assumes the dress of a faqir, and sets out to wander in the wilderness. This vivid, emotional scene (Husain 1900: 302) has been translated in the Appendix below as Passage A.

Even in the wilderness Landhaur is not safe, however, for his fame as a champion of the Muslim army causes his and Hamza's infidel enemies to seek him out and try to kill him. In great peril, he is obliged to fight for his life against overwhelming odds. But he still has friends at Hamza's court, and chief among them is 'Amar the *'ayyār*. 'Amar tries to move Hamza to compassion. Hamza, however, expresses joy at Landhaur's sufferings, and threatens to have 'Amar's tongue cut out if he mentions Landhaur's name again. But 'Amar easily persuades Badī' uz Zamān, one of the most likeable and attractive of Hamza's numerous sons, to ride to Landhaur's rescue.

Badī' uz Zamān joins Landhaur, and is badly wounded in the fighting. Undaunted, he refuses to leave Landhaur's side. In a similar act of magnanimity, Qahrish himself, Landhaur's original opponent, also hastens to Landhaur's defence. His explanation is a model of chivalrous generosity: 'How could I possibly not have come? How could my honour have failed to demand it? Whatever is past is past; I am here to stay with you' (Husain 1900: 312).

But Hamza, unmoved by the gallantry of his own champions — or perhaps in reaction to it — becomes all the harsher toward Landhaur. In the lull that follows after the infidels have been temporarily beaten back, he writes Landhaur a hostile letter, taunting him and demanding single combat. Landhaur receives the letter with reverence, and resolves to end his life rather than do battle with his loved and honoured lord. He says farewell to his friends: 'The only choice for me is to drink a cup of poison tonight, and give up my life for the Sāhib-qirān'.[15] But they react strongly: 'We will all drink a cup of deadly poison with Landhaur, and give up our lives with Landhaur! Without Landhaur there will be no joy in living' (Husain 1900: 323).

Their proposed suicide is averted by news of dire peril: the infidel army, profiting by the dissension in the Muslim camp, has seized the Amir himself and carried him off into captivity. At once everyone goes to the rescue. It is a classic dastan crisis, and we in the audience know that the situation can yet be retrieved. Now all the heroes must exert themselves to the utmost. Hamza too must break his bonds, and rally his mighty champions. Since man-for-man no one in the infidel army can match them, they can still save the day.

As is usual in such cases, 'Amar takes advantage of his special guerrilla-warfare skills of *'ayyārī* to penetrate the enemy fort and locate Hamza. But this time the situation is ominous in a frightening new way. Hamza has entirely lost the will to live, and is actually seeking his own death. When 'Amar begs him to break his bonds and join the battle, Hamza commands 'Amar to leave him alone: 'No, now let me be killed. I'm not willing to live; I've had more than my fill of life' (Husain 1900: 327).

Without Hamza's support the battle goes badly. Landhaur, despite his prowess, is now very seriously wounded; he had sent all his weapons and armour away with Maimūna into the forest, and had suffered already in the enemy's earlier attacks on him. 'Amar returns in desperation and tells the news to Hamza, only to receive the same harsh reply: 'That's good, that Landhaur's been wounded! I absolutely won't break my bonds. Don't you hear me? Get out of my presence, or I'll have you captured too!' (Husain 1900: 327). Things could hardly look worse for the Muslim forces.

The whole episode builds to an extraordinary conclusion — one which clearly owes a good deal to the Lakhnavi *marsiya* tradition so prominent in Indian Shi'ism. Landhaur's graphic and heavily emphasized physical suffering, including wounds, faintness, blood, dust, and thirst, coupled with his utter self-abnegation and faithfulness, win him a kind of redemption. This final encounter between Hamza and Landhaur (Husain 1900: 329-330) is here translated in the Appendix as Passage B.

Despite the obvious differences between these two episodes, continuities and resonances make themselves felt. Above all, the emotional alignments are similar: in both episodes Hamza and Landhaur play an obsessive game with each other, following rules which they alone

understand. Others around them, from their exploitative enemies to their indignant companions, find their behaviour bizarre and inappropriate. But the two are deaf to all admonitions and blind to all consequences; they insist on playing out their game to its end.

The game is perfect chivalry and impeccable knightly behaviour; in the first episode Landhaur delights Hamza by observing it, in the second episode he infuriates Hamza by violating it. In both cases Hamza cares disproportionately much about Landhaur's perfect behaviour: he treats Landhaur's honour as part of his own. Hamza values this private, mutual sense of honour above either of their lives; he is ready to let Landhaur die to preserve it, and ready to die himself when it is damaged. Landhaur too enters fully into the pact, and would rather die than break his bond with Hamza. He never defies Hamza, even when all those around him do; he never at all questions Hamza's extravagant behaviour. This special bond between the two heroes is unique. The only other among his companions whom Hamza treats with anything like such intimacy is 'Amar, who as an *'ayyār* stands outside the whole feudal code from the beginning. And not even 'Amar ever evokes such a death-wish in Hamza. The second episode makes it unforgettably clear that any wedge driven between Hamza and Landhaur will bring ruin to them both.

Landhaur's career as an Indian dastan hero is thus a spectacular one. He grows from being one vague king among many — as he was in Iran — into a figure of unique vividness, power, nobility, and intimacy with Hamza. Landhaur rides an Indian elephant, commands an Indian army, and has an Indian history. If Hamza is one half of a South Asian Muslim's heritage, Landhaur is the other.

APPENDIX

PASSAGE A: *Landhaur's renunciation*

Summoning the officers of the army, he said, 'Brothers, the wrath of the Sāhib-qirān has fallen on me. I now have neither any use for an army, nor any concern with wealth or property. I have renounced all military activity and prowess. Now all of you are to obey Farhād Khān Yakzarbī and Arshiyūn Parīzād, and let no one ever neglect their orders. Always accompany both my sons.'

And to Farhād Khān Yakzarbī and Arshiyūn Parīzād he said, 'Beware — never transgress the bounds of obedience and submission to the revered Amīr Hamza, the Ṣāhib-qirān of the Age! Remain always in auspicious attendance upon him, like slaves with rings in their ears in token of servitude. If you disobey my command, I will not lie quiet in my grave, and on the Day of Judgment I will seize hold of you and accuse you!' Both of Landhaur's sons began to weep and said, 'What is this that you are commanding!' Landhaur said, 'Do what I tell you. Tears are of no use; I have confided you to God's care.'

The officers of Landhaur's army petitioned, 'Lord and Master, why are you renouncing the world? The Provider of the Universe has made you master of a fierce army of eleven hundred thousand horsemen and foot-soldiers. Go back to your realm of Hindustan and reign there — defeat armies, subjugate lands!' Landhaur said, 'No doubt all this is possible. But by God, I prefer serving the Sāhib-qirān of the Age over everything else. Now, having left the service of the revered Amīr, I will not pursue power or kingship or military activity or prowess. My life is a burden to me. Enough, now I am through with soldiering, I will wander as a faqir for a little while and then die. Do you think I will remain alive much longer?'

At this distressing speech of Landhaur's, tumult broke out in the camp. The sound of weeping and lamenting arose among the army. Everyone began to cry aloud and sob, a dismal and mournful confusion arose. Landhaur removed all his arms — helmet, coat of mail, and gloves, and inner coat of mail, and visor and chain mail and spear and sword, musket and bow and arrow and dagger and axe. He loaded all this on his elephant Maimūna Mubārak and said 'Oh Maimūna, now set out for the wilderness, I take leave of you now.' The elephant Maimūna Mubārak, weeping heavy tears like a grey spring raincloud, set out for the wilderness.

Landhaur, taking leave of his sons and all the *'ayyārs* and the officers of the army, set out toward a fearsome wilderness. He picked up a handful of dust and put it on his head and rubbed it on his face, and tore open his collar; wrapping an ochre-coloured cloth around him, he assumed the dress of a faqir and began to wander in the wilderness.

PASSAGE B: *The final encounter*

Wounded as he was, Landhaur was in a dire state, covered with dust and blood. Writhing in pain, he managed to reach the revered Amīr. He put his gashed and bloody head on the feet of the revered Amīr. The Amīr removed his feet from under Landhaur's head. Landhaur sometimes lost consciousness, and sometimes grew conscious again. Outside, the champions were fighting sword-battles, infidels were being killed, and the Amīr's champions too were being wounded.

Landhaur regained consciousness. With a convulsive effort he fell on the Amīr's feet. There was no colour at all in his face, and his eyes were glazed. A wounded man always feels very thirsty. With his dry tongue protruding from his lips, he made a sign for water. But at such a time how could there by any water? He could only run his dry tongue over his lips.

But in that extremity, he folded his hands and petitioned the revered Amīr, 'Oh bestower of crowns upon sultans, cherisher of the poor and lowly, Christ of the generation, Messiah of the age, Hamza, Sāhib-qirān, now in my last hour I come before you! Pardon my error, forgive my sin. I have but a moment to live, my last breath is on my lips, the Angel of

Death stands before me. I want to travel lightly into death. Now is the time for you to look kindly upon your slave. I was not able to fulfil the demands of faithfulness — forgive my fault. This slave now sacrifices his life in Your Excellency's service.

This old family servant now dies
This slave now offers up his life at your feet.'

With these words Landhaur groaned and shut his eyes, his face grew even paler.

When the revered Amīr, having heard all these words of humility and submission, turned his gaze on Landhaur bin Sa'dān, the river of love burst forth, and tears began to fall. Those lustrous pearl-drops fell on Landhaur's face. Landhaur bin Sa'dān opened his eyes from his faint and gazed intently at the radiant face of the revered Amīr. At this moment the Amīr lost control, he gave a cry and wanted to embrace Landhaur. But there were fetters on his hands, he was helpless. Landhaur again gazed with half-open eyes at the Sāhib-qirān of the Age.

The Amīr in anguish wrenched at the fetters. The fetters broke. Hamza the Sāhib-qirān of the Age tenderly and lovingly pressed the head of Landhaur bin Sa'dān against his breast, and began saying, 'Oh my faithful friend, oh my heroic champion, don't leave your Amīr yet and set off for the land of Death! Alas, a hundred thousands times alas — what revolution of the crookedly turning spheres is this, that I see you in this desperate state and helpless condition!'

The revered Amīr kept saying this, and letting fall tears of passionate grief from his loving eyes, until 'Amar came up and said, 'Oh Amīr, for God's sake break your bonds! All the renowned champions have already been wounded. Karab, Asad, Hāshim the Sword-wielder, etc., are fighting. I fear that some shameless one might strike a blow, you might be wounded, and this wounded one — Landhaur, I mean — would be finished off.'

'Amar was still speaking these words when two worthless rascals ran in with drawn swords to kill the revered Amīr. The Amīr was enraged; he immediately burst his bonds and flung them aside, and rested Landhaur's head on the ground, and hurled himself on the two rascals. Seizing one in each hand, he picked them up, cracked their heads together, and flung them down to the floor, so that their bones were smashed and both reprobates were mingled with the dust.

'Amar ran to give the Amīr a sword. The Amīr began to fight. He struck some and killed some, picked others up and hurled them into the air and dismembered them with his sword as they fell, tore some cowards apart and flung them aside. A tremendous turmoil arose, like a novel Doomsday.

NOTES

[1] R. Russell, 'The development of the modern novel in Urdu', T. W. Clark, ed., in *The*

novel in India: its birth and development (London 1970), pp. 106-7.

[2] W. H. Hanaway, *Persian popular romances before the Safavid period* (Columbia University Ph.D. dissertation, 1970).

[3] D. M. Lang and G. M. Meredith-Owens, '*Amiran-Darejaniani;* a Georgian romance and its English rendering', *BSOAS*, XXII, 3 (1959) pp. 471-4.

[4] P. S. van Ronkel, *De roman van Amir Hamza* (Leiden 1895).

[5] Q. A. Mannan, *The emergence and development of Dobhasi literature in Bengal* (Dacca 1966), pp. 79-133.

[6] J. Shi'ar, ed., *Qissa-e Hamza* (Teheran 1968-9), vol. 1, p. 113.

[7] I owe this and many other observations about the Persian romance to Professor William L. Hanaway of the University of Pennsylvania, who discussed the story with me and most kindly lent me his own copy of the *Qissa-e Hamza*.

[8] I owe these references, and the translations, to my long-time collaborator Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, who has given me a great deal of help at every stage of my dastan work.

[9] V. S. Agrawala, 'Lindhaur Dev of Hamzah Namah: an identification', in H. R. Gupta, ed., *Essays presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar* (Hoshyarpur 1958), vol. 2, pp. 20-22. I thank Professor Hanaway for this reference.

[10] 'Abdullāh Bilgrāmī, *Dāstān-e Amīr Hamza* (Lucknow 1969). This version was first published in 1871 and has been kept in print ever since; it was based on an earlier version by Ghālib Lakhnavī (Calcutta 1855).

[11] Landhaur's Qāf-born son is named Arshiyūn; he also has an earth-born son, Farhād.

[12] G. C. Jain, *Urdū kī nasrī dāstāneṅ*, 2nd edn (Karachi 1969), pp. 470-90.

[13] One is, however, being put together on microfilm and is almost complete. It is housed in the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago, as part of the South Asia Microform Project (SAMP) collection.

[14] T. Husain, *Bālā bāxtar*, 2nd edn (Lucknow 1900), pp. 301-30. I thank S. R. Faruqi for pointing out this episode to me, and for commenting on my draft translation of it.

[15] 'Sāhib-qirān' [Lord of the Conjunction] is a title referring to Hamza's birth at an astrologically auspicious moment; it is taken seriously as a sign of his special destiny.

7

Urdu as a sideline: the poetry of Khwāja Ghulām Farīd

CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE

بے وقت جنوں پر مرے کیوں ہنستی ہے زنجیر
ہُوں پیرو لے عشق کا جولان جواں ہے

Too quick to mock my madness, these rustling fetters cackled;
A sprightly Pir am I, to youthful love still shackled! (134)[1]

No apology is offered for the freedom of this translation. Once the English rhyme had suggested itself, it proved impossible to resist the temptation to produce an oblique rendering of Khwāja Farīd's Urdu, in small token of my debt to Ralph Russell's keen insights into the ghazal's intrinsic ambiguities, not least for the sheer fun to be had from the word-plays which these so freely generate.

It is however to Ralph Russell that I, like so many others in Britain and the West, also owe far more for an understanding of the central and serious place of the Urdu ghazal in the post-Mughal high culture of Muslim South Asia. Since this paper is based upon the description of a short Urdu *dīvān* rather casually produced by a nineteenth century Sufi poet from Bahawalpur, an area lying about as far to the west of Delhi as Varanasi does to its east, it may appear somewhat peripheral in character. But rather wider themes are necessarily touched upon, notably the marked neglect of the sub-genre of the overtly Sufi ghazal in most accounts of Urdu poetry, and the way in which this particular *dīvān* is given special interest by the fact that its author is chiefly famous for the poetry composed in his native Siraiki.[2]

Khwāja Ghulām Farīd (1845-1901) belonged to one of the great Sufi dynasties which stemmed from the transplantation in the mid eighteenth century from Delhi to the western Panjab of the vitally renewed Chishtī Nizāmī *tarīqa*.[3] This influential revivalist movement combined a strict emphasis on Sunni norms with an equal devotion to the traditional Chishtī emphasis on the importance of listening to the musical performance of Sufi poetry in *samā'*. This double emphasis is equally reflected throughout the Persian *malfūzāt* compiled by Khwāja Farīd's disciple Rukn ud Dīn.[4] On the one hand, the Khwāja is depicted as upholding the minutest letter of the Law in his personal practice and in his criticisms of deviations therefrom by Shi'as or others. But numerous episodes are located in a *mahfil-e samā'*, and describe how the holy Shaikh was moved to tears by the *qavvālī* performance of Persian or Urdu ghazals, or of Sufi

songs in local languages in the genre known as *kāfī*. Repeated references in the Khwāja's discourses underline the awe instilled in all Chishtī devotees by the archetypal example of the death in ecstasy of Khwāja Qutb ud Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 1232) when listening to the sung performance of the Persian ghazal by Ahmad-e Jām beginning:[5]

کشتگانِ خنجرِ تسلیم را
هر زماں از غیب جانِ دیگر است

Those murdered by submission's blade
By life unseen anew are made.

The whole tenor of Khwāja Farīd's poetry, in whatever language, is very much in keeping with the picture of his personality drawn by the pious compiler of the *malfūzāt*. It is, however, also relevant to say something about his outer life. Close ties had been formed between Khwāja Farīd's forebears and the Navvāb-Amīrs of Bahawalpur, whose vast desert dominions had been casually incorporated into the British Raj as the Panjab's largest princely state, and he was himself educated alongside the royal princes. After the premature death of his father, he was brought up by his elder brother and *pīr*, Khwāja Fakhr-e Jahān, the author of a Persian *dīvān* under the pen-name 'Auhadī'. In 1871, Khwāja Farīd succeeded him in turn as *sajjāda-nišīn* for the following three decades. As such he became the target for extraordinary devotion from Navvāb Sādiq Muhammad Khān IV (1866-1899), who became his *murīd* at the end of his minority in 1881 and thereafter played the role of Ludwig to the Khwāja's Wagner. Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī, for instance, was much struck on a visit to Bahawalpur by the sight of the Navvāb pulling the Khwāja along in a small carriage: and his generosity is still to be seen in the existence of the implausible branch railway which runs from Khanpur to Khwāja Farīd's seat at Chacharan, opposite the family *dargāh* at Mithankot across the Indus.

By education and status Khwāja Farīd was thus very much a member of that late nineteenth century elite whose traditional way of life was so comfortably preserved in the surviving Muslim states of British India. His library was of legendary size (though it is now sadly lost), and he repeatedly refers to Arabic and Persian books on all manner of subjects in the *malfūzāt*. Besides Urdu and his native Siraiki, he also knew Sindhi and Braj: and his fascination with languages emerges from the descriptions of him writing Persian verses in Roman or Gurmukhi. He had an equal interest in music, and would carefully work on the settings of his poems with his favourite *qavvāl*, Barkat 'Alī. A final ingredient in his complex personality is provided by his love of nature, above all of the great desert of the Thar, whose western region is known locally in Bahawalpur as the *rohī*. On the one hand associated for Khwāja Farīd with the holy deserts of Arabia, perhaps especially after his deeply felt

experience of the Haj in 1876,[6] the *rohī* in which he spent so much time was also the scene of his romantic association with a girl from one of the tribes of desert-nomads, who became his second wife and was known as Haram Māī Hotāṅ.[7]

All these features of his spiritual, intellectual and emotional life find rich poetic expression in the great Siraiki *dīvān* he rightly regarded as his masterpiece and over whose compilation he took such evident care.[8] Khwāja Farīd was, for instance, properly proud of the logical method he had devised for the arrangement of its 271 *kāfīs*, which are ordered alphabetically by the first word of the poem within each *radīf*. No such attention was paid to the smaller Urdu *dīvān*, containing 95 ghazals and a few minor poems, which was first published from private copies only in 1972.

As anyone who has been faced with the task will know, it is far from easy to characterize any poet's *dīvān* in individual terms, since so many of the verses will be drawn from the standard ghazal repertoire. In Khwāja Farīd's case, however, the dominance of the *haqīqī* element is usually unambiguous. This emerges at its baldest in straightforward teachings:

ارے حارص عبث ہے حرص اس دنیائے فانی کا
فنا جس کو نہیں ہے وہ توکل کا خزانہ ہے

What vanity it is to crave this passing world!
Security is drawn from Him who does not pass. (121)

Or, in the archaic tone of so much medieval Indian religious poetry, with its fondness for very simple images:

پکڑ کے درد کا جھاڑو اُٹھا دے گردِ غیریت
تصوّر باندھ کر سب صُورتوں میں اک تو پایا رہ

With suffering's broom sweep the dust of duality,
And realize the One in external appearances. (82)

Such simple verses hardly support the extravagant boasts so often used by Farīd as a closing device in the *maqta'*. Interestingly, these often involve claims to have outdone Saudā (d. 1781) or Nāsikh (d. 1838):

سودا کہے جی دیکھی غزل تیری اے فرید
سو رمز نہاں ہے ترے اک اک سخن کے بیچ

Now Saudā says he's seen your ghazals, and
He has discovered mysteries in every verse. (50)

جل جاتا آگ رشک سے ناسخ اے فرید
سُنتا کسی سے جو تیرے شعر آبدار کو

The lushly polished verses of Farīd
Set even Nāsikh's envious heart ablaze. (84)

Just why these two poets only should be so often mentioned is something of a puzzle, unless they simply stand for Delhi and Lucknow respectively. At all events, both might have enjoyed the untranslatable word-plays (34) of:

کیوں سر میں ہے سودا ترا سودا نہیں آتا
ناسخ کو بھی یہ درد کا نسخہ نہیں آتا

Saudā, at least, might also have enjoyed the half-Persian macaronic ghazal beginning:

دروں جانم نگار کردی خدنگ غمزہ چلا کے ہم کو
بہ بسترِ ناز خفتہ بودم وہاں سے ناگہ اٹھا کے ہم کو

You planted in my heart the arrow of your glance,
And from my lovely bed did suddenly arouse me. (86)

Nāsikh, however, would hardly have failed to criticize Khwāja Farīd's occasional transgressions of correct usage,[9] although he too might have been charmed by the exuberant juxtapositions of languages in more than one Siraiki *kāfī*, as in the following example (where French and Latin stand for Persian and Arabic):

تھل برتتی رُلدی ہے کیوں
سِدھ واٹ توں بھلدی ہے کیوں
یار است ہمدم ہم نشیں
ھٰذا جنون العاشقیں

Why wander through the burning sand?
Direct the way lies near at hand.
Ton Ami est toujours près:
Sic est furor amitiae. **(K94)**

By far the greatest number of verses in Khwāja's Farīd's Urdu *dīvān* are naturally devoted to those familiar descriptions of the pains of love. The language is usually quite simple, but at its best also quite effective:

مجھ کو ہے نوکِ جورِ ستم گر لگی ہوئی
خنجر ہے جاں پہ تیغ ہے دل پر لگی ہوئی
جس دن سے تیرے کوچے میں سویا ہوں خاک پر
ہے سیج میری عرش کے اوپر لگی ہوئی

With piercing cruelty, my harsh beloved's laid
A dagger at my soul, and at my heart a blade.

When in your street I lay to sleep upon the dust,
It seemed to me my bed in heaven had been laid. **(130)**

This simple style is of course as suited to the demands of the *mahfil-e samā'* as are those elaborate complexities of the late style of classical Urdu poetry to the leisurely programme of the courtly musha'ira.[10] This style is often given added point by the short synonymous phrases so favoured in *qavvālī*:

ہم کو پسند یار کی بانکی ادا لگی
دل میں لگی جگر میں لگی جان پہ لگی
وہ کس طرح سے پائے مزا زندگانی کا
جس کو ازل سے عشق کی دل میں بلا لگی

I love that graceful way of moving,
In heart, in soul, in all my being.

For life is hardly sweet for those, who
From First Day's passion find no freeing. (103)

The almost infinite Persian heritage guaranteed the existence of many other simple formal devices to the Urdu poet. The possibilities afforded by the long *radīf* are, for example, illustrated in this fine ghazal, whose second verse is equally notable for the ecstatically coined compounds of its second verse:

عاشقِ روئے خدا ہوں غیر سے مطلب نہیں
سالکِ راہِ ہُدیٰ ہوں غیر سے مطلب نہیں

ایک داں ہوں ایک خواں ہوں ایک جو ہوں ایک گو
سب میں اس کو دیکھتا ہوں غیر سے مطلب نہیں

طوف کرتا ہوں میں اپنے خانۂ دل کو مدام
اپنا خود عابد ہوا ہوں غیر سے مطلب نہیں

I love the face of God – for nothing else I care.
I tread the mystic path – for nothing else I care.

One-knower and One-teller, One-seeker and One-sayer,
Beholding Him in all – for nothing else I care.

Revolving ever round the Ka'ba of my heart,
Become my own adorer – for nothing else I care. (79)

Khwāja Farīd's own passionate devotion to the real Ka'ba gives added point to this repeated proclamation of having abandoned it in favour of the idol-temple:

میں نے کعبہ کو بھی بُت خانہ کا نقشا سمجھا
اپنے لَبَّیْکَ کو ناقوسِ کلیسا سمجھا

To me the Ka'ba now an idol-temple seems,
And this my cry of faith a Christian church's bell. (38)

The *maqta'* plays rather nicely on the Hindu theme:

عشق بازی میں مرا مرتبہ ایسا ہے فرید
قیس بھی مجھ کو گرو، آپ کو چیلا سمجھا

So high I've come to rank in passion's deadly game,
They're chelas to my guru, as Qais himself knows well. (39)

This generalized tone gives way to more identifiably personal emotion in the frequent references to the poet's revered and beloved elder brother, Khwāja Fakhr-e Jahān, whose *'urs* on 5 Jumada I regularly recalled Khwāja Farīd to Mithankot:

بیاں کس طرح ہوگا مجھ سے رتبہ فخرِ عالم کا
کہ بعد از انبیاء وہ فخر ہے اولادِ آدم کا

مری آنکھوں سے وہ نورِ نبی جب چھپ گیا اس میں
جمادالاول اب مجھ پر بنا ماہِ محرّم کا

How can I magnify Fakhr-e Jahān,
After the prophets, the greatest of men?

Now that his glory is lost to my eyes,
I mourn in Jumada as once in Muharram. (44)

Khwāja Farīd's extreme devotion often causes his *pīr*'s name to conjure up ecstatic visions of the presence of the Universal Beloved in all things, as in the ghazal beginning:

فخرِ جہاں کا نور ہر اشیاء میں ہے عیاں

The light of the Pride of the World is everywhere seen... (78)

This in fact a poem almost more like a *kafī* than a ghazal, with its tumbling lists of nouns. Even the tired natural imagery of the Persian garden achieves a certain life when thus juxtaposed with Indian musical terms:

غنچہ میں گل میں سرو میں لالہ میں داغ میں
سنبل میں اور نرگسِ شہلا میں ہے عیاں

ڈھولک میں سُر میں تال میں تانوں میں راگ میں
خوبانِ ماہ رُخ قدِ طوبیٰ میں ہے عیاں

In roses and cypresses, sable-scarred tulips.
In hyacinths, tinted narcissi it's seen.

In drums and in beats and in phrases and tunes,
In faces as fair as the moon it is seen. (78)

Elsewhere the same formal pattern is used to embrace the natural phenomena of which Farīd was so fond, as in this particularly effective *maqta'*:

دخاں ہو یا چکر ہو یا بھنور ہو یا بگولا ہو
فرید آسا کوئی زیر و زبر ہو وے تو میں جانوں

No smoke, tornado, eddy, whirlwind
Can match this turmoil in Farīd. (68)

His dual love of music and the desert is memorably suggested in:

پھرتا ہوں مثلِ ریگِ رواں کوہ و دشت میں
آوارہ اس کے رقص کی ٹھوکر بنا دیا

Through mountain and desert I wander like rippling dunes,
Set moving by thrusts of those feet as they danced. (32)

Such delights are admittedly rare in this *dīvān*: but even the naturally preponderant conventional imagery of the ghazal is not infrequently employed by Khwāja Farīd in such a way as to establish at least a half-carved poetic individuality. In the following final quotation from his Urdu poetry, for instance, the idols have escaped from their temple, just as the poet has escaped into his own vision of spiritual reality, fortified by his confidence that the classic literary exemplars have nothing to teach him about the effects of the sands upon the soul:

بندۂ زلف بتوں کا میں دل وجان سے ہوں
لوگ ہیں کفر سے آزاد میں ایمان سے ہوں

قیس وفرہاد نصیحت کے لئے آتے ہیں
عجب آشفتہ میں وحشت کے بیابان سے ہوں

These idols' tresses hold my heart, so I
Shun faith as others do impiety.

This desert of insanity has led
Farhād and Qais to come and learn from me. (73)

Nevertheless, while I hope to have shown that Khwāja Farīd's Urdu *dīvān* is far from being devoid of interest, it would be equally far from the truth to claim that it contains very much in the way of memorably great poetry. The dismissive label of '*nīm-šā'ir*' so unjustly applied by Mīr Taqī Mīr to Khwāja Mīr Dard, that lovely poet who is perhaps the only true master of the Sufi ghazal in Urdu, might here find a more appropriate target a century later. But such a dismissal cannot be quite straightforwardly executed: for while Khwāja Farīd may be at best interesting in the Urdu ghazal, he was also the last and greatest master of the *kāfī*, to whose intrinsic directness as a genre with short lines in strongly rhythmic metres and with an abundance of emphatic rhymes,[11] perfectly designed for singing in *qavvālī*, he brought the sophistication of a uniquely distilled blend of learning and poetic genius.

It is therefore worth pausing to reflect as to just why it should have been that the supreme master of Siraiki poetry should have proved relatively so undistinguished in Urdu, even after account has been taken of his own personal predilection for the former. The contrast does, after all, have quite important contemporary implications in Pakistan, where the growing consciousness of separate identity amongst Siraiki-speakers[12] has the greater *dīvān* of Khwāja Farīd as one of its proudest symbols, but also where the prior sophistication of the Urdu-speaking *muhājir* community settled since 1947 in such large numbers of Bahawalpur is readily able to point to the weaknesses of his lesser vehicle.[13]

The easy answer as to why Khwāja Farīd's art is so much more finely displayed in the Siraiki *kāfī* than in the Urdu ghazal is the one which occurs so readily to latter-day 'sons of the soil', namely that he was writing in his native language. Both the introductory description of Khwāja Farīd's linguistic sophistication and the macaronic quotation from the 'Siraiki' *dīvān* cited above should, however, serve to show that this can only be a partial explanation. It therefore seems more profitable to look at the internal literary constraints which may be presumed to have

underlain Khwāja Farīd's selection of his prime poetic medium, since enough will have been indicated of his status as the privileged spiritual adviser of a ruling prince to indicate his freedom from external constraints.

The numerous descriptions in the *malfūzāt* of the Khwāja sitting in a *mahfil-e samā'* (e.g. MM 341, 462, 573) make the catholicity of his taste clear: the piously recorded programmes range from classic Chishtī Persian ghazals, naturally including compositions by Khwāja Fakhr-e Jahān 'Auhadī', through various Urdu ghazals, to masters of the *kāfī* in local languages, whether Panjabi in the case of Bullhe Shāh (d. 1758)[14] or Siraiki and Sindhi in the case of Sachchal Sarmast (d. 1827).[15] Khwāja Farīd was thus privileged to live precisely at that period of time when Persian was gradually retreating westwards in favour of Urdu (in Bahawalpur as well as in British Panjab), but also when the dominant Sufi tradition of the local literatures was still enjoying its final flowering.

For a poet of the Khwāja's temperament and linguistic facility, the choice of medium within the immense range to which he was exposed was therefore perhaps not all that difficult to decide upon. The intrinsic structure of the ghazal, however determined in its initial Persian formation by Sufi master-poets,[16] had come to assume such a conscious awareness of the available play-spectrum along the famous *haqīqī/majāzī* axis that it was very difficult for Indian poets to express a genuinely Sufi inspiration within its tired norms. The examples quoted from Khwāja Farīd's Urdu *dīvān* may have served to show that the overt expression of Sufi ideas, so magically achieved in the thirteenth century, could so easily seem boring or awkward in terms of the more sophisticated norms of the late nineteenth. Those classic Urdu poets so attractively presented by Ralph Russell, such as Mīr or Ghālib (sharply conscious of imperial decline in a way which seems hardly to have touched Khwāja Farīd)[17] were able to draw upon real experiences, whether of human love or that surely forgiveable love of humans for the fruit of the grape, to express a much wider message in great poetry. But the ghazal had become so 'Sufi-ized' in tone that it was much harder for a real Sufi to express his actual devotion to the Ka'ba or his immediate apprehension of the beauties and horrors of a real desert in this endlessly elaborated genre than in the simpler conventions of the *kāfī*.

These conventions, which imply a powerful refrain reiterated between short rhyming verses, were — perhaps accordingly — employed by Khwāja Farīd to achieve the sort of direct impact derived from rhythm and assonance in such lines as the following, where he would surely have been equally conscious of the additional elegance of the absence of dotted letters in the script:

ہک ہے ہک ہے ہک ہے
ہک ہے دم دم دی سک ہے

The One, the One, the One, the One,
It's after Him my yearnings run. (K268)

While reminiscent of those coined *ek*-compounds cited in an earlier quotation from the Urdu *dīvān*, the impact is both far more direct and far more natural. A similar qualitative contrast may be drawn between the previously quoted pilings-up of nouns in the Urdu *dīvān* with such ecstatic litanies as furnish the basis for such popular Siraiki poems as:

میڈا عشق وی توں میڈا یار وی توں
میڈا دین وی توں ایمان وی توں

میڈا کعبہ قبلہ مسجد منبر
مصحف تے قرآن وی توں

میڈی آس امید تے کھٹیا وٹیا
تکیہ مان تے ترّاٹ وی توں

You are my Love and my Beloved,
Religion and my faith You are.

My Ka'ba, Qibla, mosque and pulpit,
Quran and sacred text You are.

And all my hopes and what I've earned,
My pride and joy and strength You are. (K132)

Such hymns, now described on cassette-labels as being sung in the heart-jerkingly melancholy modes of *Rāg Multānī* by such magical singers as Paṭhāne Khān or Suraiyā Multānīkār, attract a vast public both in Pakistan and in the diaspora.

Equally popular are Khwāja Farīd's exploitations of the intrinsic resources of the *kāfī* to celebrate his love of the *rohī*-desert, especially when so simply expressed as in the famous poem beginning:

وتج رو ہی دے رہندیاں نازک نازو جٹیاں
راتیں کرن شکار دلیں دے ڈینہاں ولوڑن مٹیاں

Those sweet and slender nomad-maids
Out in the desert stay.

By night they churn for lovers' hearts,
But churn their pots by day. (Ḳ47)[18]

Such popular favourites are, however, no better a guide to the sheer poetic range of Khwāja Farīd in Siraiki than are such endlessly quoted lines as the hackneyed *dil-e nādāṅ tujhe huā kyā hai* to the complex poetic genius of Ghālib in Urdu. In an earlier paper[19] I have tried to suggest that the largely Sufi-inspired classic literatures of the local languages of Pakistan are best approached under three headings, embracing respective debts to the learned terminology of Islam, to the ambiguous mix of the Perso-Urdu ghazal, and to the local poetic traditions with their inbuilt Indic bias. The earlier quotations here should have served to show that the long-established aesthetic criteria of the ghazal made the incorporation of these varied elements immensely difficult to achieve: the first are clumsy, the second tired, and the third impossible.

Three counter-examples from the liberated Siraiki *dīvān* may serve to indicate the alternative possibilities then available to a great poet, and to suggest the reasons for his choice of linguistic medium. On the learned front, there is nothing in the Urdu *dīvān* which prepares one for this magic blend of music with orthodoxy, where for instance, not to speak of the association through musical tradition of a Hindu god with the legendary Panjabi flute-playing hero Rāṅjhā, we are also reminded of the difficulty the Prophet's favourite *habšī* muezzin had with the pronunciation of sibilants:

ڈینہاں راتیں سنجھ صبا میں کنڑیں کاٹ بجاوم بین
قدسی بنسی انہد ازوں رانجھن پھوک سٹاوم فضلوں
رکھ رکھ وحدت دی آئین
اثنینیت دی گئی علت عوج تھئی سبھ حنفی ملت
سین بلال دا بے شک شین

By day and night, at morn and eve,
Lord Krishna sounds his lute to me.

How graciously has Rānjhā's flute
Played its celestial melody,
All in the mode of Unity.

Now sick duality is gone,
All Hanafis to soar are free:
Bilāl said 'SH' as 'S', you see. (K110)

The immensely constraining norms of the Perso-Urdu ghazal naturally make it difficult to achieve similarly original effects in verses which rely upon traditional imagery: and these norms have accordingly been suggested as a prime factor in impelling Khwāja Farīd towards his principal poetic expression in Siraiki. Even in this severely constrained mode, however, he is occasionally capable of original effect, even if with evident debt to the wilder tone of his precursor Sachchal Sarmast:

صید کریندے مرغ دلیں دے ناز و ادا ہن باز شکاری
چشماں شوخ بہادر جنگی پلکاں دھردیاں دست کٹاری

His airs and graces hawk-like swoop
And from these hearts they snatch their prey.

His wanton eyes are brave for war,
With lashes ready for the fray. (K207)

It is, however, above all in its chastely preserved refusal to take any cognizance of local reference,[20] that the Perso-Urdu classical tradition for so long most inhibited any natural expression from Indo-Muslim poets. And it is here, above all, that one senses the breaking-out of Khwāja Farīd from the tired *biyābān* of Qais and Farhād, at which point we left his Urdu *dīvān*, into a more real local landscape, however baroque the outrageous exploitation of the specialist local vocabulary he draws upon in such verses as:

جتھ تھلڑا جتھ دربوں ہے یار اتھ ہر ویلے ادبوں ہے یار
تڈرے چپکن گبیرے گھوکن جرکھاں ترکھاں لومبر کوکن
گوہیں شوکن سانہے پھوکن نانگیں دی شوں شوں ہے یار
سوہنڑیاں بھیڑیاں ٹپڑے بھڑے نازو والے کنکڑے وٹڑے
باہیں ٹوبھے پاڑے گھٹڑے وٹھڑیں ڈکھڑا ووں ہے یار

Where the desert-grasses twist, my love,
Ever-shifting shapes exist, my love.

The crickets creak, the pigeons coo,
The foxes howl, hyenas whoo,
The geckoes puff, and lizards mew,
The snakes and serpents hiss, my love.

In these fair mounds and hills of sand,
In graceful stones and gravel bland,
Ravines and banks and gullies grand,
The rains all grief dismiss, my love. (K39)[21]

Such examples as these may serve to show the beguiling attraction of local poetic resources in Khwāja Farīd's locally determined time. There is, however, quite a distance between late nineteenth century Bahawalpur and late twentieth century Pakistan. If the present paper has helped point towards the intrinsic contradictions underlying the contrastive quality of Khwāja Farīd's output in Siraiki and Urdu on the one hand, or implicit in that Hālī-esque heritage, so enthusiastically taken up by Iqbāl (d. 1938) and Faiz (d. 1984) in their individual fashions[22] on the other, it may have served some of its purpose. As Virgil said, long before the ghazal was even a twinkle in its Sufi creators' eyes:

Sic parvis componere magna solebam.

NOTES

[1] Bracketed numerical references after quotations are to the page-numbers of Siddīq Tāhir, ed., *Dīvān-e Khwāja Ghulām Farīd (Urdū)* (Bahawalpur 1972).

[2] Subsequent numerical references prefixed by K are to the *kāfi*-numbers of the standard 'Azīz ur Rahmān, ed., *Dīvān-e Farīd* (Bahawalpur 1944), a truly princely edition of the Siraiki poetry with extensive Urdu commentary. The language, described in my grammar *The Siraiki language of Central Pakistan* (London 1976), involves the use of modified letters in the Urdu script to distinguish the implosive consonants /ɓ ɟ ɗ ɠ/ and the retroflex /ṅ/, all shared by Siraiki with Sindhi.

[3] Cf. the summary account in M. Z. Siddiqi, 'The resurgence of the Chishti silsilah in the Punjab during the eighteenth century', in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 1970* (New Delhi 1971), pp.408-412.

[4] These *malfūzāt* have the double title *Išārāt-e Farīdī* or *Maqābīs ul majālis* (MM) 'Sparks of the assemblies'. Since the four published volumes of the Persian text, issued between 1903 and 1923, are now difficult to obtain, it is easier to refer to the somewhat abridged Urdu version, *Maqābīs ul majālis*, trans. Vahīd Bakhsh (Lahore and Bahawalpur 1979), or to the English version of the first Persian volume, *The teachings of Khwaja Farid*, trans. C. Shackle (Multan 1978), though users are warned that this is unusually full of the usual typographical errors.

[5] Cf. Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a distant flute* (Tehran 1978), pp.21-3, for the immediate context, and the whole book for the broader background.

[6] Cf. C. Shackle, 'The Pilgrimage and the extension of sacred geography in the poetry of Khwāja Ghulām Farīd', in Attar Singh, ed., *Socio-cultural impact of Islam on India* (Chandigarh 1976), pp.159-170.

[7] For this delicate episode the Urdu biography by M. H. Shihāb, *Khwāja Ghulām Farīd* (Bahawalpur 1963), pp.66-77, is a particularly valuable supplement to the standard Urdu account of Khwāja Farīd by 'Allāma Tālūt, based both on the MM and other sources now lost, which prefaces the standard edition of the Siraiki *dīvān* (cf. n.2 above).

[8] The earliest standard printed edition is *Asrār-e Farīdī ma'rūf ba-Dīvān-e Farīdī* (Lahore: Muhammad 'Abd ur Rashīd, 1902), of which there is a copy in the British Library.

[9] Besides those examples which may be noted in the quotations given here, these include e.g. errors in gender, *malhūz jo dildār kā tamkīn na hotā* (48), in the use of the ergative, *bhūlā hai jis ne mujh ko* (113), or the confusion of Siraiki *pāvaṇ* 'to put' with Urdu *pānā* in *jo ki dildār ke kūce men qadam pātā hai* (96).

[10] Cf. the article by Regula Qureshi in this volume, to whose text and musical examples (especially no. 4) the attention of those readers is drawn who may have been disturbed here by the occasional metrical lapse *(sāqit ul vaznī)*, as in the following verses besides one or two earlier examples.

[11] Hence the widely popular derivation of *kāfī* from the Arabic broken plural *qavāfī*.

[12] My now-outdated impressions of the Siraiki movement are most recently recorded in 'Language, dialect, and local identity in Northern Pakistan', in W. Zingel and S. Lallemant, ed., *Pakistan in its fourth decade* (Hamburg 1983), pp.175-187.

[13] E.g. as witheringly expressed by Sayyid Tābish Alvarī (then an MPA) in his *muqaddima* to Khwāja Farīd's published Urdu *dīvān*, pp. 23-6.

[14] Cf. *Bulleh Shah, a selection*, trans. Taufiq Rafat (Lahore 1982).

[15] Cf. C. Shackle, 'Sachal Sarmast and his Siraiki poetry', *Panjab University Journal of Medieval Indian Literature*, II, 1-2 (1978), pp.87-100.

[16] Perhaps most illuminatingly analysed in A. Bausani, 'L'intelletto rosso', in *Persia religiosa* (Milano 1959), pp.135-354.

[17] Though cf. the unique *kāfī* (K240) addressed by Khwāja Farīd to the young Navvāb on his coronation. An English version is included in *Fifty poems of Khawaja Farid*, trans. C. Shackle (Multan 1983), no.17. Subsequent CS references are to the *kāfīs* of this translation.

[18] Cf. CS 47.

[19] 'Styles and themes in the Siraiki mystical poetry of Sind', in Hamida Khuhro, ed., *Sind through the centuries* (Karachi 1981), pp.252-269.

[20] As long ago observed by Aziz Ahmad, e.g. in *Studies in Islamic culture in the Indian environment* (Oxford 1964), especially pp.223 ff.

[21] Cf. CS 39.

[22] No one has yet bettered the constrastive picture of these two founder-figures sketched by Victor Kiernan in the introduction to his translation of *Poems by Faiz* (London 1971). Cf. also A. Bausani, 'The position of Ġālib (1796-1869) in the history of Urdu and Indo-Persian poetry: I. Ġālib's Urdu poetry', *Der Islam* 34 (1959), pp.99-127.

8

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī and Urdu literature[1]

BARBARA D. METCALF

The reformist 'ulama of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were men troubled by the pattern of individual and community life in their society. They were concerned, in a period of alien political rule, new cultural influence, and a more mobile society, with bringing individual Muslims to an active commitment to what they saw as the normative scriptural basis of their faith: this was to be the foundation of a better society overall. Themselves typically members of well-born families, often indeed members of scholarly lineages, they participated in a fundamental change in the very basis of education, in who was educated and how they were educated, as well as in what they saw as their main concern, namely, the correct content of that education. As writers and publishers who utilized the new technology of lithographic presses of the nineteenth century, they contributed to the key element in that transition: a wealth of printed materials that took education out of the privileged relationship between master and select pupil and into a public domain where learning, even religious learning, was widely available.[2]

The teachings of the 'ulama were meant to create a certain kind of person, informed by the religious law, individually responsible for the fulfilment of obligations, and unfailingly self-controlled. Both consciously and unconsciously these teachings proved, in many ways, congruent with the social change of their day. As communications and the growth of cities, for example, brought people into contact over larger areas, they could share a basis for relationships in scriptural Islam as they could not in local customary practices that tied them to a particular place. The early supporters of the 'ulama tended to be, in fact, members of the well-born classes affected by new employment, new modes of travel, and exposure to the institutions of the empire.[3]

Many of the concerns of the 'ulama are well illustrated in one of their most influential books, the *Bihišti zevar* of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī (1864-1943) written at the turn of this century.[4] The book was meant, most importantly, to be a complete education of a respectable Muslim girl or woman. To influence women was an urgent concern since so much of family and ritual life was in their hands. Thānavī expected girls to turn to this book as soon as they had completed their reading of the Quran, a

reading focused not on mastery of a new language and content, but on being able to pronounce sacred words for ritual purposes.

Such education was not the purpose of this book. Far from encouraging rote learning, Thānavī carefully explained periodically throughout his long work the kind of study that was required. Once the pupil was able to read letters, everything was done to encourage active learning. Thānavī gave, at one point, ten rules for teachers, condensed here, that underline that his book was meant to be understood and acted on:

> 1. ...as far as possible, you should elicit the lesson from the children themselves. 2. ...tell the children to write the daily lesson on their slate...This will develop good writing. 3. The children should memorize the numerals so that they can write them without even looking. 4. Explain the beliefs and legal points carefully...Have the student say them in her own words so that it is clear that she understands. 5—6. You should have the children memorize...all the supplications...the prayer... 7. ...a male teacher can have embarassing matters explained by his wife. 8. If a child cannot grasp [certain complicated sections], teach only what you consider appropriate. 9. Insist that the student always study the lesson carefully and figure out the meaning by her own power — as much as she can figure out. Have her recite the lesson several times... This gives her the ability to explain things. From time to time revise the parts already studied... If two or three girls are studying together, have them ask each other questions. 10. If a student does anything contrary to what she is studying in this book, restrain her...[5]

This education was meant to be understood and acted on.

Those who followed the religious teachings of these 'ulama were people who had the satisfaction of doing something new, of not simply replicating their received culture. They were critical and self-conscious of what in their practices was normative and what was deviant from the religious law. Education of girls did not go uncriticized. Even within the book, Thānavī deals with the kinds of arguments girls are likely to encounter, most reflecting fear that girls would forget their proper place. 'Would you turn them into maulavis like men?' one imaginary critic asked. Others feared that girls who could write might initiate written correspondence that would compromise seclusion; to this fear, Thānavī could only say that if a family feared for its honour, that concern must be given first place. Thānavī's own goal, however, was for a new world of educated individuals, each better able to be a good Muslim, each better able to play her or his appropriate social role. The circle of educated should ever widen, and women were instructed to pass on to their husbands any matter they might not know and to read sections over and over to the illiterate of their household and elesewhere so that they too might learn.[6]

Thānavī did not approve of any practice that compromised religious teachings, nor did he approve of learning English at the cost of religious education. But his book was meant for women in touch with the changes of the times. These were women who rode trains, and he therefore included detailed instructions on proper behaviour, the organization of tickets, and sensible travelling. They were curious about new products and recipes, and he provided pages and pages of recipes of goodies like 'biscuits' and leavened loaves of bread. Newly literate, they needed to know how to use the post-office, and rules were accordingly provided. Every novelty had its disadvantages, and part of Thānavī's concern was to see that women used the new resources well.

Thānavī's method was to measure every custom, every practice, every invention by the standard of the religious law. Origin alone, generally speaking, was not sufficient to make anything illegitimate. Nonetheless much that was objectionable could be identified by non-Muslim origin, and origin itself came to be a shorthand for customs and practices the 'ulama eschewed. Each domain had its own fault-lines, usually unobserved and unknown, split apart only in times like these when people looked at themselves and their ideologies critically.[7] In religious ritual, certain errors were attributed to false Sufism and to Shi'ism that unduly exalted holy men and compromised the unity of God. In life-cycle rituals, many customs were shared with Hindus and denounced as a distraction from proper observances, an elevation of optional practices into required, and a forum for pride and display. In court or governmental procedures and in literary culture, the fault-line separated out the cosmopolitan culture, Persianate at first, now giving way to European. These layers are implicit as Thānavī moves from subject to subject throughout his book, including his treatment of the new publications in Urdu, the subject of the remainder of this brief essay.

In the concluding pages of his work, Thānavī faced the ambiguity created by the book itself. If a girl had read to this point she had acquired considerable skills, as much as 'a middling '*ālim*' he said at one point. This was all to the good. At the same time, however, she was at risk of serious corruption were she to use her skills indiscriminately and, able now to educate herself, read books that might lead her and others astray. Thānavī encouraged his readers to learn some Persian and, most important, Arabic, 'as men do'. Even for learning a new language, a printed book, one he himself had had printed, would suffice. Now 'a middling '*ālim*' after studying the *Bihištī zevar*, in only three years a girl could be, he said, a maulavi, able herself to give judicial opinions like learned men, to teach Arabic, and to have the great reward promised those who teach others. Short of this, a girl could simply build up a stock of knowledge by inquiring of a relative or other learned men. Or, the method to which he gave his greatest attention, she could make use of the newly available Urdu books, possibly studying them with a well informed scholar. If she were however to be on her own, he gave the following

advice:

> Now you must realize that in these times there are many so-called religious books, including some that are faulty and some that include outright mistakes... Women and girls, however, do not see this at all. They buy and start to read any book that they want. Instead of profit, there is harm. Habits are ruined. Thought is sullied. Indiscretion, shamelessness, and Satanic matters are encouraged. Learning unjustly gets a bad name: 'Sir, teaching women to read is not a good thing.' Learning about religion is in every respect a good thing. You cannot blame proper learning about religion if the learning is about something else, or is not obtained methodically, or is not acted on.[8]

Thānavī insisted throughout that women have the same potential for a disciplined and exemplary religious life, whatever the conventional wisdom, which he at times clearly shares, that women are less rational and more given to disproportion than men. Knowledge was the key to self-improvement, perhaps the more so for women and girls. Girls ought to pursue religious knowledge with the same range and goals as boys.

Urdu, as a source of that knowledge, was clearly to his mind a mixed blessing. All books should be approved by a worthy scholar, and to begin that process, Thānavī here provides a fascinating list, a guide amidst the thicket of burgeoning Urdu publications, to separate those approved from those condemned. His index lists 99 books 'that are nowadays popular', selecting, to emphasize the positive, 71 approved and 28 condemned.

The subject matter of those approved is evident from many of the titles; about half are also identified in Blumhardt's catalogue.[9] The books that are approved include publications on such topics as Quranic texts and commentaries as well as several books on prayer, funeral customs, the *'aqīqa* ceremony of infancy, civil law, the Last Judgment, the Prophet, widow remarriage (whose encouragement was a particular concern of the reformers), and Sufism (including a work by Thānavī's own preceptor, Hājī Imdādullāh who had settled in Mecca). These are books that, at least in part, would have deplored local customary practices including elaborate ceremonials, reciprocal gifting, and feasts. Some are given limited approval, for example three books on the Prophet which mistakenly approve of celebration of the Prophet's birthday, an event of growing popularity which 'ulama like Thānavī disapproved of. Included is an Urdu translation of Shāh Rafī'ud Dīn's *Qiyāmat-nāma*, a collection of Hadith prepared by one of the great sons of Shāh Valī Allāh a hundred years earlier and used extensively by Thānavī to underline the seriousness of all he had to say. Another is an Urdu version of a work by Shāh Valī Allāh himself 'providing directions for leading a holy life'. Yet another is an abridged translation of Ghazzālī's *Ihyā 'ulūm al-dīn*. Overall these are books that teach the details of the law, the example of the Prophet and other exemplars, and the way to moral perfection.

There are at least five books on Thānavī's list offering advice specifically to women, thus making clear that Thānavī's work was only one of many. The best known of these is the *Tahzīb un nisvān va tarbiyat ul insān* ('The Polishing of Women and the Instruction of Humans'). It was written by the ruling princess of the princely state of Bhopal, a woman deeply influenced by the reformist group that rivalled the Deobandis like Thāṇavī, and insisted on ignoring the medieval classical schools of law in favour of consulting Quran and Hadith. Thānavī wrote, 'This is a very good book, but its legal points are not in accord with the law school of our Imam. Therefore act on those points with the *Bihištī zevar* as a guide, just as in matters of medical treatment you should not undertake a cure by looking at a book without asking a *hakīm*. Other points written here are all ones that encourage a good disposition, that offer good counsel, and that are conducive to comfort.' Again, the reader can direct herself, as long as she has the right books as guide.

Beyond religion narrowly defined, the approved list includes two works on Greco-Arabic medicine, newly revived in this period in a manner analogous to the revival of religious law in the face of folk practice. There is a book on composition, another on the shorthand script called *šikasta*, and a book on arithmetic, all of use to the girl who was learning to be competent and in control of herself and her affairs. These are, thus, works that cover more or less the ground of the *Bihištī zevar* and that, over all, share Maulānā Thānavī's reformist views.

Thānavī had disapproved of all novels as reading for girls as 'worse than poison', but one novel crept into the list of books he approved: Deputy Nazīr Ahmad's *Taubat un Nasūh*, widely regarded as among the first and best Urdu novels ever written.[10] The story clearly posits religion as the necessary source of values, a view Thānavī surely shared. The hero, Nasūh, undergoes a sick-bed vision of the Day of Judgment and returns to health to reform both himself and his family. His wife, his daughters, and his two younger sons ultimately share in his reform. One boy joins the education department; the other becomes a *hakīm*, a doctor skilled in the medical system noted above. Only the youngest son, Kalīm, adheres to unreconstructed *šarīf* culture: poetry, chess and cards, pigeons and kites. The colonial state provides the context for reform; Kalīm therefore leaves for a princely state where, in the end, he becomes a soldier and dies. It is he who is the 'traditionalist'; Nasūh, Nazīr Ahmad and Thānavī who represent what is new. Nasūh, in what C. M. Naim suggests 'must be one of the most horrifying scenes in Urdu novels', burns Kalīm's library of the books that from Nasūh and Thānavī's perspective were central to his ruination.

The fictitious library would have held many of the books on Thānavī's second list, his index of proscribed reading. To return to the image of the fault-line, these are the books in many cases that come to be seen as falling on the side of the cosmopolitan culture, the Persianate, urban culture of the cognoscenti and the court. These are books that at worst

encourage values other than the puritan virtues of sobriety, righteousness and godliness that inform the reformers' work or at the least provide a self-indulgent distraction from the duties that ought to come first. The list may seem short but its first item is a genre — nothing less than all *dīvāns* and books of ghazals, the very pride of Urdu literature, beloved of Urdu speakers and teachers in that day as well as our own. Thānavī had no use for poetry, even if its themes stressed the passion for the worldly beloved as analogue of the soul's passion for God. Similarly Nazīr Ahmad, associated like the writer and critic Hālī with the modernists of Aligarh, dismissed the poetry of love, however symbolic, in favour of utilitarian poetry and prose. On much Nazīr Ahmad and Hālī on the one side and Thānavī on the other were opposed, but on this point they agreed.[11]

Thānavī's list of unacceptable books included not only poetry but many other works that are regarded as masterpieces of Urdu literature. Not only lovers of Urdu literature, but the British of Thānavī's day might have been disappointed by the list. Many are the Urdu editions of classic fabulous tales and adventures prepared for use at Fort William College to present 'native culture' in the vernacular. Under the leadership of John Gilchrist, the goal of these translations at the college was twofold: to help shape the vernacular into a popular and usable language for Indians and to make accessible works deemed necessary for the British to understand the local culture. Of these books Thānavī's list includes the *Qissa-e Badr Munīr;* the *Qissa-e šāh-e yaman;* the *Dāstān-e Amīr Hamza;* the *Gul-e bakāwalī;* the *Alf lailā*, known of course as 'The Thousand and One Nights'; the *Ārāiš-e mahfil*, identified by Blumhardt as a translation of the Persian story of Hātim Tāī; and the *Jang-nāma-e Muhammad Hanīf.* Included as well was that product of what Thānavī no doubt regarded as the decadent, even polytheist, court of Lucknow, the *Indar sabhā*, usually identified as the first drama written in Urdu. It is, perhaps, telling that all but a half dozen of the works noted among those disapproved are among the items listed by Blumhardt in the library of the British Museum in its collection of early Urdu literature. Those few not noted tend to be those on the list that reflect the customary religion the reformers deplored, on omens, miracles, and inappropriate veneration of the Prophet.

The final four items on the list of disapproved books were Deputy Nazīr Ahmad's four novels that deal with women: the *Mir'āt ul 'arūs*, 'The Bride's Mirror'; the *Banāt un na'š*, 'The Daughters of the Bier'; *Muhsināt*, 'The Chaste Women'; and *Ayāma* 'Widows'. Thānavī simply notes that, 'these four books are of the sort that include some points encouraging discernment and decorum, but elsewhere have sections that weaken faith.' We can assume that, as lines were drawn, these novels went too far in the direction of the cosmopolitan at the risk of what was seen as the normative cultural core. Englishwomen are looked on with approval, books are read from both Thānavī's approved and disapproved lists, girls study history and play with dolls, and women go beyond the

bounds of being competent and responsible to being more independent than fits comfortably with their received domestic role.

The *Bihištī zevar* is a book about the kind of person every woman, indeed every human, ought to be. The key to that person is control. The kind of personality Thānavī envisages is of a type associated with sustained formation and discipline. That woman is quiet and guarded, doing nothing without reflection, speaking little and weighing the impact of every word; she is orderly, clean, and systematic. To use a concept developed by McKim Marriott to describe Indic societies generally, she is a person of 'minimal transactions', not one of those concerned with maximizing exchanges, building up relationships and networks, creating clients and patrons, offering and receiving food, gifts, money, one's very substance.[12] She must guard her honour. She must restrict social interaction. She must measure her words. She must measure and count every item. She must limit her worship to God alone. She should eat little. She should pay her due but not dispense largesse causally or without just desert. In the new Urdu publications of the day, this self-reliant person could find the key to knowing just how this ought to be done. She would not cultivate the characteristics others, including fellow Urdu speakers, would value — spontaneity, creativity, witty conversation — nor would she read and recite the verses and tales that so many of them, despite Thānavī, continue to cherish.[13]

NOTES

[1] I am grateful to Professor Shackle for giving me the opportunity to participate in this collection, particularly since the work I am writing about, the *Bihišti zevar*, was first called to my attention by Ralph Russell when I was beginning my studies of the north Indian 'ulama. Ralph shares certain concerns evident in Thānavī's book, notably a relentless commitment to appropriate education for everyone — even women. There is, however, a nice irony in his pointing me to a book that deplores those aspects of Indian Muslim culture, poetry and belles lettres generally, that he himself most admires — and has taught so many of us to admire as well.

[2] Louis Brenner, speaking of African societies, has called this a 'paradigm shift' in education, identifying an 'esoteric' paradigm where knowledge depends on a hierarchic relationship of personal transmission and a 'rationalistic' paradigm when education is, at least in principle, available to all.

[3] For the larger context of this book, see my *Islamic revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton 1982).

[4] I have recently completed a partial translation with annotations and introductory sections of this book, tentatively entitled *An advice book for Muslim women: Maulana Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming). I am grateful to the Translation Grants Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities which supported me in preparing this translation. I should also like to thank Dr Marc Gaborieau and his colleagues at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes with whom I explored the theme of Thānavī's concept of the ideal person in June, 1986. See their *Lettre d'information*, No. 6 (November 1986), pp. 1-11.

[5] Book X, Second Essay, 'How to Study this Book'.

[6] Book VII, Appendix, 'A Summary of Instructions for Teaching this Chapter'.

[7] For a series of essays on characteristic patterns of argument in times of perceived crises see Katherine P. Ewing, ed., *Shari'at and ambiguity* (Berkeley 1988).

[8] Book X, First Essay, 'On Acquiring Further Knowledge and the Names of Some Books'.

[9] J. F. Blumhardt, *Catalogue of Hindustani printed books in the Library of the British Museum* (London 1889).

[10] This discussion of the novels of Nazīr Ahmad follows the analysis made by C. M. Naim, where he specifically discusses Thānavī's two lists, 'Prize-winning adab: a study of five Urdu books written in response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification', in my *Moral conduct and authority: the place of adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley 1984), pp. 290-314.

[11] On the utilitarian critique of Urdu literature, see Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, 'Images in a darkened mirror: issues and ideas in modern Urdu literature', *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 6 (1987) pp. 43-54.

[12] McKim Marriott, 'Hindu transactions: diversity without dualism', in Bruce Kapferer, ed., *Transactions and meaning: directions in the anthropology of exchange and symbolic behavior* (Philadelphia 1976).

[13] The question of the relationship of two discourses, one the formal one of modesty and self-control, the other an anti-structural one of passion and vulnerability, has been raised for the case of Urdu by Ralph Russell. The contexts and the social and psychological aspects of such seemingly dichotomous languages has been brilliantly explored in the everyday life of North African Bedouins in a recent study by Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled sentiments: honor and poetry in a Bedouin society* (Berkeley 1986).

9

An-Nizāmiyya: a group of Lucknow intellectuals in the early twentieth century[1]

FRANCIS ROBINSON

From the mid nineteenth century the cheapness of lithographic printing allowed a wide range of north Indian Muslims to express their ideas in journals and magazines. Where these survive many different and sometimes conflicting voices can still be heard. *An-Nizāmiyya* was a monthly journal published by members of the Farangī Mahall family, Lucknow's leading 'ulama, from March 1915 to February 1919. In general it was the voice of the family (although one branch stood aside), their pupils, their followers in the city, and their connections in the surrounding *qasbas*. In particular it was the voice of those associated with the family's Madras-e 'Āliya Nizāmiyya. A survey of the three hundred or so contributions to the journal offers us an opportunity to explore the world of these men of learning and cultivation. We can discover their concerns, the stands they wished to make, and the intellectual resources on which they drew.

In the early twentieth century the Farangī Mahallīs looked back on hundreds of years as bearers of the high cultural traditions of Muslim India. They saw the line of their ancestors reaching into the past through a host of scholars to the eleventh century saint 'Abdullāh Ansārī of Herat and thence to Ayyūb Anṣārī the standard bearer of the Prophet. Family tradition held that they had come to India early in the period of the Delhi sultanate and that in the fourteenth century they had settled at Sihali in Avadh. Large numbers of documents in family possession revealed that they had received grants in *madad-e ma'āš* from the Mughals. The name they bore reminded them of the circumstances in which they had come to Lucknow: the murder of their learned ancestor, Qutb ud Dīn, in a dispute over land, the granting of the sequestered property of a foreigner to his sons in recompense by the emperor Aurangzeb, and the transfer of the family to the Farangī Mahall in 1695.

In the two centuries that followed the sons of Qutb ud Dīn and their descendants made the Farangī Mahall into a major focus of Islamic learning in India. As scholars they developed the traditions of rationalist learning which had flourished vigorously in seventeenth century Avadh and eastern UP and consolidated them in their Nizāmī teaching course, the *Dars-e Nizāmiyya*. This focused attention on the meaning of scripture

and the classical sources rather than on their literal content, and enabled an able student to complete his studies more quickly than before. As teachers they had both written many of the commentaries and books which underpinned their Nizāmī course and had carried it throughout India and beyond, so that it came to be the form of Islamic teaching patronized by the East India Company until the 1830s, besides being widely used in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Then as Sufis they had cultivated spiritual development both in the Qādirī and in the Chishtī ways and had done so much influenced by the understanding of Ibn ul 'Arabī. As the years went by the family blood became thick with that of saints, and the best scholarship came to be seen as that which was influenced by spiritual knowledge. Until the mid nineteenth century these Farangī Mahall traditions remained the dominant ones in Indo-Islamic scholarship. Then they were forced into retreat both by the rise of Islamic reform, most obviously represented by the Dār ul 'Ulūm at Deoband and its offshoots, and by the patronage given by the colonial state to specifically western knowledge.[2]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the Farangī Mahall vision of Islam was still quite widely followed, and the prestige of the family was still great. Indeed, this was one of the liveliest periods in the family's occupation of the quarter by the cloth printers' lane which ran from the main street of the old city down to Victoria Street which the British had bulldozed through after the Mutiny uprising. The family had long since formed a substantial muhalla on the basis of their original Mughal grant and now spilled out of it into numerous properties in the surrounding quarters. At any one time there might be between twenty and thirty adult Farangī Mahallī 'ulama present with their families — hakīms, poets, retired government servants, publishers, preachers, teachers and scholars, most notable amongst them being Maulānā 'Abd ul Bārī, who was gaining a national reputation as a spiritual leader and a defender of Islamic causes (Robinson 1974: 262-344; 1984: 178-83). There might also be visitors — boarding students, family members from Hyderabad and elsewhere, Sufis and scholars from India and further afield, and the odd leading politician. Amongst many there was a deepening concern about how to defend Islam against the growing oppression of the West, and more particularly about how to defend their Islamic way of life against the secular system being established in their society by the British. In public affairs this concern was expressed in the foundation of organizations such as the Majlis Mu'īd ul Islām (1878) and the Anjuman-e Khuddām-e Ka'ba (1913), and in the campaigns to raise 'funds for the Red Crescent' Mission (1912) or to oppose government action over the Cawnpore Mosque (1913), all of which were just foretastes of the great outpouring of sentiment and energy which after World War One was to be devoted to the defence of the Turkish Khilafat. In the more private world of Farangī Mahall this concern was expressed in the coordination of the family's teaching efforts within the framework of

the Madrasa-e 'Āliya Nizāmiyya in 1905 and in the devotion of much effort and resources to its success (Robinson 1987: 21-25).

The founding of *An-Nizāmiyya* stemmed from the same impetus as the family's work in public life and in the Madrasa. Indeed, it was at bottom the journal of the Madrasa's pupils and teachers. Here the latter were published frequently while the former might come to see themselves in print for the first time. Here, too, the completion of a new Madrasa building was made public, the annual examination results were announced, and even a mildly unfavourable report of an inspection of the Madrasa was published, to the credit of the editors, alongside a counter comment by Maulānā 'Abd ul Bārī. But the purpose of the journal was greater than that of a somewhat superior school magazine. It promulgated six aims: (1) the progress of Islam and the encouragement of Muslims to follow its tenets in all possible ways; (2) to put an end to those improper rites and ceremonies which had entered Muslim life as a result of mixing with people of other faiths; (3) to illustrate those lives of our forebears which should be models for the currrent generation; (4) the strengthening of unity amongst Muslims; (5) the spreading of knowledge; (6) the publishing of useful and interesting articles on academic questions.[3] Introducing the journal to the public 'Abd ul Halīm Sharar, former student of the family and at this very time serializing his most famous work on the decline of oriental culture in *Dil-gudāz*, stressed the deepening unease which underlay these stated aims. There was a danger of national (*qaumī*) disaster for the Muslims because English education was dissolving their ties with the 'ulama; the newly educated were becoming interpreters (*mujtahid*) of religion while the 'ulama were being reduced to nothing. For the good of the nation (*qaum*) the 'ulama must reassert their leadership. The 'ulama of Farangī Mahall were urged by this experienced popularizer to harness the opportunities offered by printing to rebuild their ties with their followers.[4]

An-Nizāmiyya was not, in fact, the first foray of the Farangī Mahallis into journalism. The family had produced some of the earliest Urdu newspapers which still exist, *Tilism-e Lakhnaū*, which appeared in the year before the Mutiny uprising, and *Kārnāma*, which appeared in the three decades after it. *Tilism* was primarily a newspaper, one which offers intimate details on Lucknow between the annexation and the uprising, while *Kārnāma* covered news, religious and literary affairs: both were written in the versified Urdu of Rajab 'Alī Beg Surūr.[5] The production of *An-Nizāmiyya* was the first time that the family had published a journal specifically to advance its religious purpose. It was the work of the most junior branch of the family, the descendants of Qutb ud Dīn's fourth son, Mullā Razā. It was owned by Maulānā Sakhāvatullāh, who taught mathematics at the Madrasa; the editing was done first by his younger brother, Maulānā Sibghatullāh, another Madrasa teacher and renowned orator, and, after he went to look for a job in Hyderabad, by his first cousin Maulānā Shāfī who was to be one the notable Islamic teachers of

the century.[6] Forty-eight issues were published, although not all on time: one moment the printing house had fallen down in the rains, the next the *kātib* had the plague, while there were constant delays at the Lucknow post office. Finance was also a problem. In the first few months family and friends placed advertisements to help to launch the venture, but by the eleventh issue Sakhāvatullāh was financially so embarrassed that he was only prevented from shutting the journal down by gifts of money and further encouragement from two senior 'ulama, Maulānā 'Abd ul Bārī and Shāh Vilāyat Husain of the Dāira Shāh Hājatullāh in Allahabad.[7] After three years the journal was still running at a loss. Advertising revenue ought to have increased; there were more advertisements and they now came from Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and the Panjab. But Sakhāvatullāh still had to dip into his own pocket to keep things going and admitted that at least one hundred more subscriptions were needed to break even. Much of the problem was that the journal was elitist in conception and execution; no concessions were made to try and win a wider constituency amongst Muslims. Love stories were rejected, as were verses that should only be read in the 'privacy of one's room'; high-falutin' language with many Arabic and Persian words was used, and men like Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, who might use a Hindi term to bring a point home to the widest possible public, were strongly criticized.[8]

The contributors themselves were very much part of the well-born and highly educated public to which the journal was designed to appeal. There were always some who were teachers or pupils of the Madrasa itself. There were also former pupils and literary figures in Lucknow, for instance, Shams ud Dīn, the hakīm, Maulānā Sayyid 'Alī, descendant of the great Shi'a scholar Sayyid Dildār 'Alī, and Khwāja 'Abd ur Raūf, the secretary of the city poetry society. Many contributions came from families of the *qasbas* around Lucknow long connected with the Farangī Mahallīs, for instance, the landed families of Paisar and Satrikh, with whom they had been connected since the seventeenth century, and the Qidvāīs and most notably the Mohānīs, whom they had known since the eighteenth century. Some contributors were major literary figures: the historian and novelist Sharar, of course, but also the best-selling author, Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī, the celebrated Hindu *nā't* writer and former prime minister of Hyderabad, Sir Kishan Prasād 'Shād', Akbar Ilāhābādī, who was now deep in his Sufi phase, and Hasrat Mohānī, whose verses were submitted to the editor from his place of wartime internment. As might be expected, in the beginning most contributions came from immediate family connections in and around Lucknow, but as the journal's reputation came to be established, more and more came from further afield: Hyderabad, Bahawalpur, Baroda, Ambala, MA-O College Aligarh, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Azimabad and so on. A typical issue of thirty-two pages would contain around six articles plus verses, comments, and reviews.

A good number of contributions were typical productions of the 'ulama: on the Quran, Hadith and the Prophet; on major figures of the past such as Imām Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Hajr Asqalānī and Muhammad ibn 'Abd ul Wahhāb; on miracles, exegetical technique and aspects of Sufism; and major series on the 'Faith of Islam' and the 'Faith of the Sufi' by Maulānā 'Abd ul Bārī. Amongst these typical articles one series stands out; this was a run of seventeen contributions published from September 1916 to August 1918 (three by Sibghatullāh and fourteen by his uncle 'Ināyatullāh) with associated comments and correspondence. This offered an extended critique of Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī's *Bihištī zevar*, a popular compendium in which comprehensive advice to women on how they might live an Islamic life was distilled through the Deobandī reformist ethos.[9]

Bihištī zevar had been available in various forms for over twenty years. What aroused *An-Nizāmiyya* to attack it seems to have been the news that the Navvab of Palanpur had banned its sale in his state and that a meeting was called in support of his action. In beginning the attack Sibghatullāh was quick to distance himself from any idea of personal antagonism towards Ashraf 'Alī, or lack of respect for the Deobandīs who were doing 'good work in Hadith although our interpretations rarely coincide', or opposition to women's education which Islam emphasized was a socio-political necessity, and which need *Bihištī zevar* had been written to meet. Nevertheless, the book had grevious faults: Ashraf 'Alī had used it to impose his reformist ideology without giving evidence for his beliefs; he dealt with matters which were not fit reading for grown men and women let alone girls; moreover, he used rustic (*dehātī*) forms of speech for whose Sanskritic origins Sibghatullāh expressed a mixture of Muslim distaste and upper class fastidiousness.[10]

These positions established, 'Ināyatullāh took over the assault. His articles, somewhat cheekily entitled 'The Polishing of the Jewels of Paradise' first defined the nature of innovation (*bid'a*) in Islam, which forms the equivalent of heresy for Christians, and then defended practice after practice against the criticism of Ashraf 'Alī: the use of the phrase '*Allāh miyāṅ*', the holding of *maulūd* ceremonies, the custom of mild swearing, the carrying of pictures, the belief in the auspiciousness of certain days, the use of names such as 'Abd un Nabī and 'Abd ur Rasūl and so on.[11]

By his sixth article, which appeared in the May 1917 issue, 'Ināyatullāh was clearly annoyed that his painstaking demolition of Ashraf 'Alī's scholarship had failed to provoke a response. He threw a punch below the belt! Why did Ashraf 'Alī not answer Farangī Mahallī criticism of *Bihištī zevar* when he had taken up twenty pages of *'Ālim-dād* to defend his second marriage?[12] Ashraf 'Alī did not reply; 'Ināyatullāh's articles continued. In all probability Ashraf 'Alī did not bother to reply because there was no point. He was trying to develop a simple set of rules for Islamic behaviour which would enable a Muslim with no more than his

book as a guide to keep to a safe path. The Farangī Mahallīs with their great learning were defending positions which were fine for the intellectually gifted and religiously sophisticated, but which could well lead into danger the vast majority of Muslims who, in the absence of a Muslim state and significant leadership from 'ulama, would have to use their own knowledge and their own will to impose the Muslim way upon themselves.

Suddenly, six months later, Ashraf 'Alī wrote a long letter to 'Ināyatullāh to explain why he had not practised in his own married life what he had preached in *Bihištī zevar*. 'Ināyatullāh insisted that the letter was published immediately, material alrèady designated for January 1918 issue being held back. Ashraf 'Alī admitted his folly in taking a second wife. He explained how for over twenty yèars he had quarrelled with his first wife, coming to avoid her by going home late at night or even by sleeping in his mother's house. People said that he was afraid of her. He prayed for guidance. He also considered the disadvantages of second marriages; the power struggles between wives, and the fact that such a decision ought to be taken out of reason (*'aql*), not base desire (*nafs*). Then he dreamed that someone wanted to marry him. He asked, 'What will happen to my wife?', and was told, 'She will read the Quran'. A holy man told him that he had dreamed that Ashraf 'Alī would be visited by Hazrat 'Āyisha. Ashraf 'Alī compared his position to that of the Prophet; he recalled that he had a widowed niece. In Ramazan AH 1324 (1906) he dreamed that he would marry a second time. He was asked if he was afraid of his wife, and this became the motivating factor. He surrendered to a desire which had long been curbed, and married his niece. His first wife took it badly. The only refuge he could offer her was religion, while his reputation suffered. Because his first wife was so badly shaken, he broke off relations with his second wife. He was widely criticized by 'ulama. His first wife was again disturbed and brought him and his second wife together once more. Now criticism was redoubled on the grounds that he should not be with his second wife again until she had been married and divorced by someone else.[13] The publication of this sorry tale of human frailty brought a cheap though irrelevant victory to Farangī Mahall.

The contributions examined so far were all ones in which 'ulama were operating within their normal intellectual world. But there were also articles which revealed how they were beginning to venture beyond the horizons of established Islamic culture. Several showed knowledge of western scholarship. Sibghatullāh, for instance, in celebrating the Prophet's birthday with an article on how Muhammad was seen in western eyes, explained Carlyle's approach in *Heroes, hero worship and the heroic in history*. Hakīm Shams ud Dīn in discussing the scientific understanding of the material world and the existence of God quoted Herbert Spencer. And the student Ihsān ur Rahmān Qidvāī in talking of economics referred to several western economists. However, quite

outstanding in this respect was the brilliant young Maulvī Muhammad Yūnus of Farangī Mahall, one of the most frequent contributors to the journal. He drew on sources which ranged from the classical Islamic scholars, including Ibn Taimiyya, to Leibniz on philosophy, Gustave Le Bon on French education and J.W. Draper on the conflict between religion and science. A scholar of breadth and imagination was lost when he died young in 1923 just after he had been appointed professor at Osmania University.[14]

A further way in which we find these 'ulama and their circle reaching beyond their usual horizons lies in their probing, at least in the years from 1915 to 1917, into the nature of nationality and how it might be preserved.[15] Ibn Khaldūn's idea that it was group solidarity or party spirit (*'asabiyya*) which enabled groups to survive, and in favourable circumstances to dominate others, seems to have been their staring point. In the very first issue of the journal Muhammad Yūnus argued, in a piece on how nations gain political importance, that it was group solidarity that had enabled both the Aryans to maintain their national existence amongst non-Aryans and the English to maintain their dominion over India.[16] Two issues later, again following Ibn Khaldūn, he argued that it was high moral principles which enabled a nation to progress. Islam had brought the Arabs to an advanced state, and when they neglected it, they declined.[17] In the same issue Sibghatullāh took the argument a stage further. Nations, he declared, survived by protecting their national characteristics (*qaumī ši'ār*), and the secret of doing so lay in prejudice (*ta'assub*) that is prejudice in favour of one's group, which is precisely what Islam endorsed.[18] In yet another article in the same issue Sayyid Amīn ul Hasan Mohānī brought the discussion up to the point of action needed in the present. Missionary work (*tablīğ*), of which the prime element was the development of individual character, had enabled a handful of men in the Prophet's time to form and to rule a universal community. They made Muslims a nation. But now we have given up missionary work: there are many Muslims who do not hold to Islam as firmly as before; there are many living in Hindu settlements who are Muslim only in name and dress. Missionary work is essential. If it is undertaken it will lead to the higher ends of nationality (*qaumiyyat*) and democracy (*jumhūriyyat*), the absence of which makes life incomplete:

ہم خواہ 'فیشن ایبل مسلمان' ہوں یا پُرانے مُلّا، خواہ اسٹیج پر کھڑے
رہ کر اصلاح کی کوشش کریں یا زاویہ میں سبحہ خواں رہ کر، ہر صورت میں
ضرورت ہے سچّے جذبات کی اور حقیقی جوش کی۔ یہ جذبات' یہ جوش عام ہونا

چاہیئے تب قومی ترقی ہو سکتی ہے۔ اس وقت دنیا کی متمدن قومیں منفرد انہ حیثیت سے قوم کا جذبہ رکھتی ہیں اور یہی ترقی کا راز ہے۔ ہماری قومیت کا عنصرِ غالب اسلام ہے۔

Whether we are 'fashionable Muslims' or old mullas or standing on the 'stage' calling for reform or sitting in seclusion, the need in every case is for integrity and genuine passion. This integrity and passion must become widespread. Only then can we hope for national progress. The civilized nations of the world think in terms of their distinctive nature and here lies the secret of progress. The dominant ingredient of our nationality is Islam.[19]

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There is no sense in any of these articles, nor in those written in the months which followed, during a period which saw growing discussion of the political future of India and the conclusion of the Lucknow Pact between the Muslim League and the Congress, that these men could conceive of a nation for themselves which was not framed by Islam. The news of the Shahabad riots in autumn 1917, in which Hindu mobs protesting against cow-sacrifice killed many Muslims, and which came just before Montagu's tour as secretary of state to receive addresses on India's political future, entrenched this attitude yet more deeply. Sibghatullāh in an article entitled '"Sacrifice": the most important principle of Islam' emphasized that Muslims must maintain their identity by protecting their chief characteristics, of which sacrifice (*qurbānī*) was one. Hindus had a sense of solidarity which underpinned their nationalism. They avoided Muslims whom they regarded as untouchables or barbarians (*mlecchas*); and despite Muslim rule they had not allowed themselves to be absorbed into Islam.[20]

Combined with these musings on the nature of the nationality of Muslims, there was also discussion of the role of the 'ulama in the Muslim nation. What was needed was leadership and it was the task of the 'ulama to provide it. So Sharar welcomed the foundation of *An-Nizāmiyya* as evidence that the Farangī Mahallīs, who had in the past refused to play a part in national politics, were at last assuming their proper role (Sharar 1915: 1). Not all, however, felt that the 'ulama were fit to lead. Their scholarship was rotten, said Barkatullāh Razā of Farangī Mahall; they did not go into their sources when making a judgement, but did so in accordance with their own opinions. They were no match for the great men of the past like Jalāl ud Dīn Suyūtī, Mullā 'Alī Qārī and Shaikh 'Abd ul Haq Muhaddis.[21] Nevertheless, Maulānā Shāfi in his first editorial in autumn 1917, which echoed Shiblī Nu'mānī's first address to the Nadwat ul 'Ulamā twenty-three years before, felt able to assert that the role of the 'ulama was much greater than just teaching and writing legal judgements. It was to explain current issues. Moreover, if they did so, the young who

were deserting them would return.[22] The address of Farangī Mahall's Majlis Mu'īd ul Islām, which was presented to the secretary of state in November 1917, went much further. It claimed a substantial area of government activity for the 'ulama. Government described it as a 'nakedly impracticable demand for the predomination of priestly influence' (Robinson 1974: 284-86). It was a predomination which, in the years of the Khilafat movement that followed, the 'ulama were for a moment to realize.

The entry of the 'ulama, and in particular those of Farangī Mahall, into the politics of the colonial state is mirrored in the changing nature of the contributions to *An-Nizāmiyya*. Indeed, through the journal we can witness the politicization of the Farangī Mahallīs. In the early years contributions are largely of an academic nature. The wider world only breaks in when 'Abd ul Bārī inserts an advertisment for a new secretary for the Anjuman-e Khuddām-e Ka'ba to replace the interned Shaukat 'Alī or when a contributor gives expression to his overpowering sense of the decline of Islamic society. 'Twenty years ago the Muslim way of life, culture and relationships was of such grandeur', declared Sibghatullāh, penning a great diatribe against the slackening of Islamic standards, 'that non-Muslims would feel attracted to Islam. But today our standards have sunk so low that instead of attracting others they would rather we did not join their company.'[23] During 1917 this passive phase comes to an end. In September and October the journal published substantial details of a meeting of 'ulama from many parts of India to consider the address of the Majlis Mu'īd ul Islām. This was followed by a protest against Britain's policy in Palestine and three articles on the region. In the joint number for September/October 1918 *An-Nizāmiyya* symbolically identified more closely with the Islamic world by abandoning Christian for Hijri dating. Now the journal was full of the record of 'Abd ul Bārī's speeches and addresses plus articles on the Khilafat and on the Dār ul Islām. Alongside the classic scholarly fare and the monthly assaults on *Bihištī zevar*, there is a growing record of actual engagement in the great issues of the day, of 'ulama preparing to leave mosque and madrasa for the maidan. Such a change was bound to attract government attention. The editors appear to tread more warily, leaving out, for instance, the word 'Baghdad' from the last two lines of Hasrat Mohānī's passionate ghazal of protest at the British capture of the city in March 1917, and at their jubilation at having done so:

شاہِ جیلاں سے یہ حسرت عرض ہے اسلام کی
یُوں نہ ہونا چاہیئے تھا فیصلہ ..... کا

Islam wishes, Hasrat, to convey respectfully to the Shāh of Jilān
That this is not the way in which the... affair should have been settled.[24]

Government, however, was alarmed by the new activism of the Farangī Mahallīs; after the February 1919 issue was published, *An-Nizāmiyya* was ordered to close.

The plea with which Sharar introduced *An-Nizāmiyya* to the public in March 1915 was answered by the time it was closed. The 'ulama of Farangī Mahall were asserting themselves; they were reaching out to the Muslim public. In surveying the three hundred or so contributions gathered in the forty-eight issues of the journal in which we can see this change take place, we have been privileged to join a group of Lucknow intellectuals. We have noted their pursuit of traditional scholarly concerns; we have been surprised by the western learning displayed by some; but above all we have sensed their passionate engagement with Islam, which framed their past, which focused their future, their visions of nationality, their ideas of leadership. This engagement is urgent, almost obsessive, because they see their world rapidly collapsing under the crushing weight of British power. As 'ulama they are oppressed by their marginalization in the affairs of Muslim India. As Muslims they are oppressed by the marginalization of Islamic power in the world at large. Their security threatened, their very identity questioned, their distress bites ever more deeply as World War One comes to its close. Witness of this fact helps to explain their prolonged, and often frenzied, struggle from 1919 to 1924 to defend the Turkish Khilafat.

NOTES

[1] I should like to thank my friends Humayan Ansari, Mahmud Jamal and Saleem Ahmad for assistance with aspects of translation and discussion of issues raised by *An-Nizāmiyya*.

[2] M. R. Ansārī, *Bānī-e Dars-e Nizāmī* (Lucknow 1973); F. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 1860-1923* (Cambridge 1974), pp. 262-344; ibid., 'The 'ulamā of Farangī Mahall and their adab' in B: Metcalf, ed., *Moral conduct and authority: the place of adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley 1984), pp. 152-183; ibid., 'Problems in the history of the Farangī Mahall family of learned and holy men', in N. J. Allen *et al*, eds., *Oxford University Papers on India* (Delhi 1987), I, 2, pp. 1-27. The last title contains a select bibliography on Farangī Mahall and its 'ulama.

[3] *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 1 (March 1915).

[4] 'Abd ul Halīm Sharar, 'An-Nizāmiyya aur Farangī Mahall', *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 1 (March 1915), pp. 1-5 [Sharar 1915].

[5] For further details on *Kārnāma* see Sharar, *ibid.*, p. 3 and Home Public B March 1886, 122-24, National Archives of India; some copies are in the possession of Muftī Razā Ansārī of Farangī Mahall. For a discussion of the contents and style of *Tilism* see, Iqbāl Husain, 'Lucknow between the Annexation and the Mutiny', unpublished paper, Centre of Advanced Historical Study, Aligarh Muslim University.

[6] Maulānā Muhammad Shāfī (d. 1979) was the son of Maulānā Salāmatullāh of Farangī Mahall. In the Khilafat movement he was sent to Calcutta at A. K. Āzād's request to help to establish the Madrasa Islāmia in the Zachariah Mosque; he became chairman of the Calcutta Khilafat Committee; taught in Marasa-e 'Āliya Nizāmiyya, Farangī Mahall, 1923-32; member Muslim Unity Board, 1934; lecturer in Sunni Theology, Muslim

University, Aligarh, 1934-41; Principal, Madrasa-e 'Āliya Nizāmiyya, Farangī Mahall, 1941-45; Head Maulvī, Calcutta Madras 'Āliya, 1945-47; teacher in Dacca Madrasa 'Āliya, 1947-57; lived in Dacca 1957-72 and in Aligarh 1972-79.

[7] 'Note added by the editor to Shāh Muhammad Vilāyat Husain, 'Aqāid-e Islām', *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 11, (January 1916), p. 8. Notable amongst the early supporters placing full-page advertisements were men from two families long associated with Farangī Mahall: Altāf ur Rahmān Qidvāī, disciple and companion of Maulānā 'Abd ul Bārī, for the 'Altāf Biskiṭ Faikṭorī' and Sayyid Mumtāz Ahmad Razzāqī of the holy family of Bansa for tobacco under the title 'Shahinshāh Jahāngīr aur ham', arguing that the emperor's introduction of tobacco was his great contribution to the Indian Muslims.

[8] Editorial comment, *An-Nizāmiyya*, II, 1 (March 1916), p. 30; II, 2 (April 1916), p. 8; II, 9 (November 1916), pp. 17-21.

[9] In addition to the preceding article by Barbara Metcalf in this volume, her other articles on the reformist purpose of *Bihištī zevar* may be noted: B. D. Metcalf, 'The making of a Muslim lady: Maulana Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar', in M. Israel and N. K. Wagle, eds., *Islamic society and culture: essays in honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, (Delhi 1984) pp. 17-38: 'Islamic reform and Islamic women: Maulānā Thānāwī's Jewelry of Paradise', in B. D. Metcalf, ed., *Moral conduct and authority: The place of adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley 1987), pp. 290-314: 'Islamische Reformbewegungen', in W. Schluchter, ed., *Max Webers Sicht des Islams* (Frankfurt-am-Main 1987), pp. 242-55.

[10] *An-Nizāmiyya*, II, 9 (November 1916), pp. 17-21.

[11] Muhammad 'Ināyatullāh, 'Bihištī zevar kī jilā', *An-Nizāmiyya*, II, 9 (November 1916), pp. 1-8; II, 10-11 (December-January 1916-1917), pp. 46-54; II, 12 (February 1917), pp. 21-24; III, 2 (April 1917), pp. 28-30.

[12] Muhammad 'Ināyatullāh, 'Bihištī zevar kī jilā', *An-Nizāmiyya*, III, 3 (May 1917), p. 21.

[13] Muhammad 'Ināyatullāh, 'Bihištī zevar kī jilā', *An-Nizāmiyya*, III, 11 (January 1918), pp. 20-28.

[14] It was not entirely surprising that Muhammad Yūnus should be so gifted. His maternal grandfather was Maulānā 'Abd ul Hayy who was the outstanding Farangī Mahallī mind of the nineteenth century. His father was Maulvī Muhammad Yusūf, the owner of the successful Yusūfī Press.

[15] In view of the weight subsequently given to the terms *millat* and *quam* by the debate between Muhammad Iqbāl and Maulānā Husain Ahmad Madanī, the principal of Deoband's Dār ul 'Ulūm, it should be clear that the term usually used by the writers in *An-Nizāmiyya* to express the idea of nation is *qaum*, although occasionally *millat* (religious community) is used, and even more occasionally *umma* (the term traditionally used to describe the Muslim community worldwide). For a summary of the debate between Iqbāl and Madanī see P. Hardy, *Partners in freedom — and true Muslims: the political thought of some Muslim scholars in British India 1912-1947* (Lund 1971), pp. 36-43

[16] Muhammad Yūnus, 'Tārīxī qaumeṅ kyoṅkar bantī haiṅ', *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 1 (March 1915), pp. 19-24.

[17] Muhammad Yūnus, 'Hamārī taraqqī ke rāz', *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 3 (May 1915), pp. 23-27.

[18] Ed., 'Qaumī ši'ār kā tahaffuz', *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 3 (May 1915), pp. 29-30.

[19] Sayyid Amīn ul Hasan Mohānī, 'Tablīğ', *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 3 (May 1915), pp. 15-22.

[20] Sibghatullāh Shahīd, 'Islām kā sab se aham usūl: "qurbānī"', *An-Nizāmiyya*, III, 8-9 (October-November 1917), pp. 49-57.

[21] Barkatullāh Razā, untitled contribution on the position of the 'ulama, *An-Nizāmiyya*, II, 8 (October 1916), pp. 9-16.

[22] Muhammad Shāfī, 'Maulānā Śahīd aur An-Nizāmiyya', *An-Nizāmiyya*, III, 8-9 (October-November 1917), pp. 1-3.

[23] [Sibghatullāh] Shahīd, '34 Sanh', *An-Nizāmiyya*, I, 10 (December 1915), p. 22.

[24] Hasrat Mohānī, ghazal in *An-Nizāmiyya*, III, 2 (April 1917), p. 21. It is important to remember that the journal was taking a risk in publishing anything by the interned Hasrat Mohānī, let alone barely concealed political protest. The full text can be found in Maulānā Jamāl Miyāń Farangī Mahallī, ed., *Kulliyāt-e Hasrat* (Delhi n.d.), p. 200. The Shāh of Jilān was 'Abdul Qādir Jilānī, the great Sufi whose shrine is in Baghdad, and who is regarded by the Qādirīs as the founder of their order and is revered widely amongst Muslims.

10

Abul Kalām Āzād's *Sarmad the Martyr*

CHRISTIAN W. TROLL

Anyone familiar with Old Delhi knows the shrines placed near one another in front of the imposing entrance structure leading to the main portal of the Jāmi'a Masjid. One is that of Sarmad the martyr, the other that of Maulānā Abul Kalām Āzād (1888-1958). It is less well known that Āzād was fascinated from an early age by the figure and fate of Sarmad. Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī (1878-1957), who was in contact with the young Āzād when preparing the special *šahīd nambar* of his Urdu periodical *Nizām ul mašāix*, had pressed him to write an essay on Sarmad. Āzād complied and on 9 July 1910 the completed essay was sent to Khwāja Sāhib.

Over the years the essay has been repeatedly reprinted under varying titles, with omissions and misprints. Our abridged rendering here is based on the reliable reprint produced by Danish Mahal under the title *Hayāt-e Sarmad* (Lucknow: Tanvir Publishers, n.d.). The publisher's foreword to this edition notes with insight:

> The Maulana himself kept playing throughout his life 'the game of gallows and rope'. During the two first decades of the twentieth century events took place in and outside India which must have kept Sarmad the martyr alive in the imagination of Maulana. The peculiar quality of the literary piece created by this imagination, in conjunction with Maulana's unique way of writing, can be fully appreciated only by people of heart and understanding. Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī correctly stated: 'This essay is an inebriated and original sermon on the stages of the Sufi path.'

Mullāh Vāhidī, the long-standing secretary of Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī (1878-1957), relates in the preface to his biography of the Khwāja that during the annual session of the Nadvat ul 'Ulama in 1910 he presented to Shiblī Nu'mānī (1857-1914) the special number of *Nizām ul mašāix* which contained Āzād's essay. Shiblī is reported to have commented later: 'We have no more biographical facts concerning Sarmad than those given by Āzād. But he has expanded them considerably. He has in fact produced a full twenty pages. Had I written it, I would have managed hardly two

pages. Two pages are facts, the rest goes to the credit of Abul Kalām's penmanship.'

The essay, written two years before the inception of *al-Hilāl* (12 July 1912) is the earliest example of the kind of prose style that characterizes Āzād's essays in *al-Hilāl* and, especially, in his *Tazkira*. More importantly, it bears witness to Āzād's fundamental moral and religious values at a time when he had just found his way back to religious conviction after a protracted period of 'search', even of 'darkness' and 'despair'.[1] As the essay was written before the political-journalistic engagement of *al-Hilāl* in the context of *dargāh* and *adab*, and was produced in association with Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī, it unwittingly indicates the deeper mainsprings of Āzād's religious world-view, removed from any directly political engagement.

First of all, it shows that the same Āzād who vehemently rejected his father's and his father's followers' promptings to succeed him as *sajjāda-našīn* and as *pīr* and thus to secure continuity in the Sufi tradition of the family, and who furthermore felt sympathy with the tenets of the *al-Manār* group and to the Salafiyya movement with its emphasis on reform in the spirit of Ibn Taimiyya, not only appreciated an unconventional, Law-transcending mystic like Sarmad but quite openly expressed his dislike of Aurangzeb's outlook and violent 'suppression of the Truth'. Āzād clearly expresses his preference for Dārā Shikoh's conviction that in the search for the ultimate Truth, mosque as well as temple (*dair-o haram*) validly mediate the one candle's light.

The meditation on Sarmad's life and poetry also provides Āzād with the occasion to adumbrate an outlook marked by a comprehensive, Muslim religious humanism, very much in the line of the humanism embodied in the classical Persian Sufi poetical tradition.[2] In his reflections on Sarmad's faith and witness the young Āzād unambiguously opted for a kind of religious outlook that was to mark the decades of his public career. Āzād's advocacy of what has been termed 'composite nationalism', as opposed to territorial separatism, was therefore not the fruit of his association with Mahatma Gandhi or simply a product of political opportunism as some historians would have it, but has its firm roots in an outlook and an option within the wider Indo-Muslim tradition. This option was chosen by Āzād a good time before his later party-political commitments.

Lastly, we notice Āzād linking Sarmad with Ibn Mansūr al-Ḥallāj (857-922) the early mystic martyr of Baghdad whose memory has lived on in India throughout the centuries in the popular imagination. We thus can appreciate more deeply Louis Massignon's expression of affinity with Āzād, experienced in the course of several meetings with him over the years.

> Maulana seemed really sympathetic with my account of the Hallajian theory of truth, *Haqq*, having led me to share socially in the Gandhian

satyagraha. And he seemed very close to me when I mentioned the visit... to Qutbuddīn Bakhtiyār's tomb in Mehrauli: in remembrance of Gandhi's last fasting (for the sake of justice for Muslims) and *ziyārat* to Mehrauli, four days before his death.[3]

Those who have had the privilege of being close to Ralph Russell will understand why an abridged translation of this essay[4] has been particularly chosen for this volume. The Urdu original with its numerous interspersed Persian couplets, defies fully adequate translation, especially by one who became a student of all the languages involved relatively late in life. If the effort has been at all successful, no small credit goes to Ralph Russell who inspired me and bore patiently with me during four years of apprenticeship at SOAS. Moreover, from the first time I read this essay, it evoked in me the memory of Ralph Russell, and of the time of *suhbat* with him on a level far beyond that of mere acquisition of linguistic skills and cultural information.

Āzād's preface

آنانکہ غمِ تو برگزیدند ہمہ در کوئے شہادت آرمیدند ہمہ
در معرکۂ دوکون فتح از عشق است با آنکہ سپاہِ او شہید اند ہمہ

All who have chosen your love
Rest in the lane of martyrdom.
In the battle between the two worlds love is victorious,
Even if all its army is slain in martyrdom.

The Persian *tazkiras* dating from the time of ʿĀlamgīr's reign and after generally contain a few lines under the heading of Sarmad. Yet, for one thing, the information given in them is so scant and inadequate that if one had to write him a letter in his lifetime, these *tazkiras* would not yield even the complete address for the envelope. And, unfortunately, these *tazkiras* are not available to me. I have gone into the histories of the era of Aurangzeb, hoping to find in the account of the political events of the time some biographical data but the authors, foreseeing political consequences, seem to have held back their pen...

The year of Sarmad's martyrdom [1070/1659-60] coincides with that of the invasion of Kuch Bihar and Assam. Therefore, both histories[5] have allotted one half of the account of that year to the story of each of the two victorious campaigns. No one questions the importance of the conquest of Assam, yet how could it have been known to Mustaʿid Khān that in the theatre of this world there are spectators who would not care to throw even a cursory glance at this happy victory but who would forever shed bitter tears of sorrow over the sad defeat the same ʿĀlamgīr incurred in the struggle for truth when he dragged this Majnūn of the Divine Lailā to

the gallows.

To cut the story short: there are available to us two books, unsurpassed in providing reliable information about Sarmad. The first, the *Mir'āt ul xayāl*[6] by Sher Khān Lodī, reports the events of the 'Ālamgīrī period directly since he is a *tazkira*-writer of that very period. The second is by 'Alī Qulī Khān Dāghistānī [1712-1756], a nobleman of the time of Muhammad Shāh. Dāghistānī has compiled with extreme perspicacity and care the *Riyāz uš šu'arā*,[7] a *tazkira* of Persian poets. The author's manuscript is in the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. I have taken most of the biographical facts from this work. Although it was written during the reign of Muhammad Shāh [1719-48], it is remote from Sarmad by only one generation. Furthermore, my memory has retained the odd point of information from all the other *tazkiras*. In the Asiatic Society there is preserved the original notebook of Sirāj ud Dīn Sirāj [d. 1756],[8] a fine poet belonging to the reign of 'Ālamgīr II [1754-59]. Here and there this work too yields some information. Thus a bouquet has been formed so that on my way to the place of Sarmad's martyrdom, I may not be empty-handed and can present these few leaves and flowers I have collected.

Sarmad's nationality and religion

No one clearly indicates Sarmad's nationality and religion. The author of the *Mir'āt ul xayāl* states that 'he hailed from the land of the Franks and was an Armenian'. But the other *tazkiras* declare him to be of Jewish origin. Dāghistānī adds that his home-country was Kashan. This is not contradictory because from ancient times onwards a substantial Armenian population, largely Christian but also in part Jewish, has been living in Iran. In our day they have fully taken to the European way of life and lead all other ethnic groups of Iran in the acquisition of the new sciences. Until a century ago they differed in no way from Muslims except in religion. Some of them adopted Islamic learning and culture to such an extent that they could fully partake in the educated conversation of Muslims. Thus in the *tazkiras* we come across the lives of various poets who were Armenian or Christian, yet whose poems are in no way inferior to the poetry of the delightful Muslim poets of Iran. Sarmad's family, too, must have been Armenian or Jewish. He will have been born in Kashan and because of his being Armenian he must have been thought to be a Frank. Indeed, it is not surprising that such an error should arise concerning an unknown person from abroad.

When the sun shines it does not seek the garden and the orchard as an abode for its rays. Rather, its light-shedding bounty resembles the bountiful Lord who bestows His favour on everyone. When the golden cupolas on the pinnacles of a royal palace shine forth in glittering light, does their golden colour not cover the branches of withered trees as well? But what am I saying? I do not mean to speak of the centre of the solar

system, but of the sun of Islam. When the waves of this ocean of divine splendour rose, they washed away the erstwhile distinctions based on race, blood, and nation, just like sticks and bits of straw. Then, when the period of blossoming arrived, the freemen of the Quraish and the poverty-stricken Ethiopians, Mecca and Medina, Persians and Franks, the Ghassān rulers and the nomads of Arabia, high and low, far and near, on all of them without distinction Islam bestowed its favour. The only standard applied in meting out favour was ability and capacity, according to which each land and nation received its share. Abū Jahl was a Quraish and thus close to the treasury of Islam, but he remained poor all his life. Bilāl was an Ethiopian and Suhaib[9] a native of Minor Asia and thus they both were, to some extent, from far away. But look at their skirts — they were filled to the brim! Where does the cloud of divine generosity not shed its rain? And yet not every spot on earth turns into a field of tulips!

توفیق باندازۂ ہمّت ہے ازل سے
آنکھوں میں ہے وہ قطرہ کہ گوہر نہ ہوا تھا

From eternity success is meted out according to enterprise.
The drop in the eyes has what the jewel does not.[10]

It is the fruit of this overflowing generosity favouring all that the Arabs, in spite of their being at the origin of Islam, did not retain an exclusive, privileged position. Newly-converted Muslim peoples who had come into Islam from far-off countries, excelled in every science and art, in a way that the Arabs had to break their ranks to make place for them, to such an extent that when today you consult translations and biographies, you will find hardly a science or an art which have not been led by newly-converted Muslims. Even the history of asceticism and mysticism, nurtured as it was by religion, remains under obligation to the generous sacrifices of these converts to Islam. The point is that, just like the love of God, the stintless favour of Islam, also, was so universal that neither descent and nationality, nor colour and family played any role. The water-stands (*sabīl*) of Muharram seek to serve thirsty devotees, not golden crowns and silken gowns. So too does the overflowing source of divine bounty remain on the lookout for those thirsting for love: it has no business with lineage and nationality, with colour and family.

Sarmad's life is a case in point. He belonged to some Armenian family in Iran and was a Jew or Christian by religion. Early in his life the choice of divine favour fell upon him and the attraction of mystical absorption and guidance drew him to the fold of Islam.

Family name

Sarmad's family name is unknown; nor do we know what name he was

given after adopting Islam. In the *tazkiras* he is normally mentioned just by his surname Sarmad. It is indeed not surprising that Sarmad should remain anonymous, because he adheres to the creed whose first principle, nay, whose pillar of faith it is, to be without name and any token of remembrance.

باوجودت زمن آواز نیامد که منم

Given Your existence, I did not find
The voice to say 'I am'

However, in the same *tazkiras* his biographical data are entered under the name Sa'īdā-e Sarmad which leads one to conclude that perhaps the word Sa'īd was part of his Islamic name which became recorded in abbreviated form together with his *nom de plume*.

Education

His educational background is unknown but the *tazkiras* unanimously agree that he was perfectly equipped in learning and accomplishment and in Arabic. It may be concluded that he must have been instructed in accordance with the syllabus then in force.

Initial profession

Initially Sarmad worked as a trader, taking goods from Iran to India since India at that time was the exhibition-ground of material goods just as of science and art. But this young trader who set out in his inexperience for India did not know in which transaction he would stake all his wealth and goods. He probably wanted to sell Iranian products and buy precious Indian goods, the gems and diamonds of the Indian mines, envied the world over. He was unaware that fate had already decided against this plan. Yes, he would have to trade until the end of his life, but not in the market-places of material goods, rather in the market-place of beauty and love. There, in place of the ordinary gold or silver coin is traded the coin of a heart broken a hundred times and of a liver, wounded over and over again. There, trade is such that for offering patience and long-suffering, intelligence and judgement, heart and liver, you buy an indifferent glance, one wrinkle on the brow, one inadvertent look at the face of the beloved because such precious ware, sold at such a low price, is given away virtually free.

صد ملکِ دل بہ نیم نگاہ میتواں خرید
خوباں دریں معاملہ تقصیر میکنند

A hundred kingdoms of the heart can be bought with a half-glance,
But the beauties are negligent in this matter.[11]

Nor is it simply a matter of the show of this bazaar and its outward bustle. If courage leads you forward you will have to make the ultimate transaction too, the price of which is no less than your own life. There it can happen that the brim-filled cup of life is exchanged for the brim-filled cup of the blood of martyrdom.

دو عالم نقدِ جاں بر دست دارند
بہ بازارے کہ سودائے تو باشد

Both worlds are standing with the cash of life in their hands
In the market-place where your love is traded.

At that time the Iranian traveller normally came to India via Sind. Thatta, forgotten in today's geography, was famous among the cities of Sind. This Thatta was the sacred Sinai which for Sarmad was to become the fortunate place of the manifestation of divine love, and where the Lailā of beauty for the first time removed the veil from her face. It was a Hindu boy, it is said, whose infidel eye wrought this magic. This is not far-fetched because for breaking a heart in love both the needle of a quilt-maker and the sword of the executioner are equal. Generally in trade the buyer is unworried and free from pressure, whereas the one who sells the goods is concerned. Thus, those who present their hearts like an offering on their hands and search for a buyer, have no right to expect special qualities in him. It appears that this guileless Iranian trader had become frustrated by no one being interested in the love he offered and that he was himself restlessly looking out for a customer. When he met one, he did not even care to look up and see who the buyer was and what amount he had brought. He thought it enough that a cheap commodity like the heart be in search of an enchanting eye, and without hesitation he accepted the deal.

دلالِ عشق بود خریدارِ جانستاں
خود را فروختیم چہ سودا بما رسید

The dealer of love was a buyer who wanted our life.
We sold ourselves. What a deal we got!

This was the first step towards the roaming of the desert which was Sarmad's lot, and it is not peculiar to him. Of whatever kind it may be, love is always the first step towards the station of truth and reality. Or better, love is the door to be passed before man can become man. How can he in whose heart and liver there is no throbbing wound and whose eyes are not wet with tears fathom the meaning of humanity? You will have noticed frequently that even the devout ascetic sitting in his hermitage for all his stern countenance and abject poverty cannot do without enjoying the smile of the houris and young men of paradise...

We must not forget this Hindu boy whose Lailā-like look made Sarmad his Majnūn. But,, alas, not every lover enjoys the fate of Qais and Farhād.[12] As far as Sarmad is concerned, we only know that it was a Hindu boy. On reflection, this is enough, because when a deal is struck in the market-place, the lover never cares to see who is the buyer and what price he obtains.

مرا فروخت محبّت وے نمیدانم
کہ مشتری چہ کس است وبہائے ما چند است

Love has sold me but I do not know
Who bought me and what is my price!

The authors of the relevant *tazkiras* are also not agreed as to where this incident happened. Vālih Dāghistānī mentions the port of Surat whereas Āzād Bilgrāmī [1704-1786][13] in one of his *tazkiras* writes Azimabad Patna. However, the *Mir'āt ul xayāl* is the oldest, and it states: 'And when engaged in trade in the city of Thatta, he came across a Hindu boy and fell in love with him.' We give preference to this account. In any case, the lightning struck somewhere. What we have to look at is the condition it left the farmer's burnt harvest-heap in.

The upsetting qualities of love are everywhere the same. Although not every lover equals Qais, he is certainly a mad 'Majnūn'. When love enters, reason and the senses are asked to cede place. This was also the case with Sarmad; absorption and love spread to such an extent that together with sense and understanding all his possessions and trade-goods were left to ruin. Covering the body with clothes was the only attachment that continued to fasten him to this world: Finally, his feet were freed from this chain also, because such restraints, after all, exist only for those who claim to be in their senses. Those madly in love are not bound by reason and are generally absolved from all obligation...

Roaming in the desert

Roaming in the desert means to walk about in the state of love, and this renders man's reason experienced and mature. If Majnūn occupies a special place among the lovers, it is because he is unequalled in 'desert-roaming'. Sarmad, too, toiled in the desert for years, the soles of his feet burned in the deserts of Sind, and he endured naked both the hot and cold seasons of Hindustan, until at last his problem was resolved:

بیہودہ چرا در طلبش میگردی
بنشیں اگر او خدا ست خود می آید

Why do you foolishly roam about in search of Him?
Sit down — if He is God, He will come by Himself.

Now the search was for a permanent abode where he could sit and await the final trial of love. Yet, if this was to be the outcome, then why the need for roaming in the desert? But no — as I have already stated, this too forms part of the perfect law of love, which includes:

یکے از دستگیری ہائے عشق است
عزیزاں را بخواری برکشیدن

One of the ways love leads is
To drag its favourites into disgrace.

This was the time when 'Ālamgīr was about to establish a new way of conducting affairs over almost the whole of India. It was the last phase of Shājahān's reign, and the heir-apparent was Dārā Shikoh, remarkable among the Mughals for his nature and his intelligence. It is forever a matter of regret that his enemies have dominated the writing of Indian history, with the result that his image has been hidden by the dust of political intrigue. Right from the beginning he was a friend of dervishes and a Sufi in mind and heart, and he was constantly in the company of ascetics and mystics. Those few of his writings that have escaped plunder tell us that their author possessed spiritual taste and disposition. A strong proof of this is that in his search of the goal he discarded the distinction between temple and mosque (*dair-o haram*). Just as he bowed his head in humble respect before Muslim ascetics, so he showed faith in Hindu dervishes. What person of genuine mystical experience would quarrel with this principle? If even in this realm, too, we insist on maintaining the distinction between unbelief and Islam, then what difference will remain between the 'blind' (*a'mā*) and the 'clear-sighted' (*basīr*)?...

Whatever may be the case with 'Ālamgīr's soberness, we prefer Dārā Shikoh's love of madness and his loss of reason. Because, in the case of the former we have the sword of sobriety, stained with the blood of those killed in grief, whereas in the case of the latter, rivers of blood flow from the jugular veins of his own body. Possibly, too, Dārā Shikoh was annoyed with the sobriety of 'Ālamgīr and therefore preferred the company of 'mad' people like Sarmad to the assembly of the sober.

In short, Sarmad took to the company of Dārā Shikoh [1615-59] who, on his part, was devoted to Sarmad. In ordinary circumstances the commotions of love would have forced Sarmad to leave Shahjahanabad now and then during this time, but since it had become clear to him that this would be the place of his ultimate trial, he could not leave until finally Shāhjahān's ailing health and the viceregency of Dārā Shikoh became the occasion of bringing 'Ālamgīr's intentions into the open. Thus, after a period of turbulence and bloodshed in 1069 [1658-9] 'Ālamgīr Aurangzeb ascended the throne. This period was equally grievous for Dārā Shikoh and for his companions and associates. Many people left Delhi together with him. Those who stayed behind found themselves as it were in a storm-beaten ship. But how could the prisoner of heedlessness have found the opportunity in his absorption to look up and take note? And even if he had, why should he have left the place? No; his heedlessness had not made him unaware of the fact that what had so far happened to him up to then represented only the initial stages of love. The final stage was left to be traversed. It would present itself nowhere else:

بیک دو زخم که خوردمی ز عشق یمن مباش
که در مکیں گه ابرو کماں کش است ہنوز

> If you have received one or two wounds at the hands of love, do not think you are safe.[14]
> Because the archer is still there, hidden in the ambush of the eyebrows.

The martyrdom of Sarmad

Most *tazkira*-writers have stated the reasons for Sarmad's martyrdom. The *Mir'āt ul xayāl* relates that the officials of the Law became alarmed by the following quatrain which they considered to imply a negation of the bodily ascension [of the Prophet] and, hence, qualified as unbelief.

ہرکس که سرِ حقیقتش پا در شد — او پہن تراز سپہر پہنا در شد
مُلّا گوید که بر فلک شد احمدؐ — سرمد گوید فلک به احمدؐ در شد

Whoever steps into the mystery of his true identity
Becomes more expansive than the expansive heavenly sphere.
The mullah says that Ahmad ascended to heaven.
Sarmad says that heaven entered Ahmad.

But what had this guileless Turk to do with a legal dispute? He would not even lift his eyes to notice the noise and commotion of these blind people. Did he not belong to a world unreached by the clamour of these arguments about affirmation and denial?

در عجائب ہائے طورِ عشق حکمت ہا کم است
عشق را با مصلحت اندیشیٔ مجنوں چہ کار

The wonders of the Sinai of Love have little to do with learned points.
What does reason have to do with what Majnūn thinks best?

The root of the matter is that in the eyes of 'Ālamgīr, Sarmad's greatest crime was associating with Dārā Shikoh. For this he wanted, under one pretext or another, to kill him. In Asia politics has always operated in the guise of religion. The veil of religion has covered up thousands of bloody political murders. When no other pretext was at hand, his indictment was based on the accusation of his moving about in nakedness, as being against the established Law. Furthermore, from the quatrain just quoted it was concluded that Sarmad denied the bodily ascension of the Prophet. Mullā Qavī was Chief Judge (*qāzī ul quzāt*) at the time. 'Ālamgīr sent him to Sarmad to enquire about his going about without clothes. The mullah asked him, 'On what grounds do you base your excuse for remaining unclad and for not covering your private parts, in spite of your being a man of perfect knowledge and excellence?' Sarmad answered, 'What can I do? Satan is powerful (*qavī*).' He then recited this quatrain extempore:

خوش بالائے کردہ چنیں پست مرا — چشمے بدو جام بردہ از دست مرا
او در بغلِ من است و من در طلبش — دزدے عجبے برہنہ کردہ است مرا

An elegantly-built beauty has humbled me;
His eyes with their two goblets have robbed me of myself.
His is in my arms and I am in the search of him,
A wonderful robber, who has stripped me naked.

The mullah turned angry, and for good reason, because not only had Islam been debased but even his own person had been made fun of, since his own august name had been declared to be the name of Satan the accursed. Returning to 'Ālamgīr he reported that he had gathered

sufficient material to prove unbelief. He was about to open his pen-case — is this not the scabbard in which the blood-stained sword of the doctors of the Law rests? — when ʿĀlamgīr in his far-sightedness found this pretext alone insufficient. He well understood that Sarmad was no ordinary person. His killing would not be taken as an everyday event. He was after all unequalled in learning and excellence and had become the hope of the common man. The people of Shahjahanabad followed him and were his well-wishers. So the plan had to be delayed until a sufficient pretext could be found.

Throughout the thirteen centuries of Islam the pen of the jurists has been an unsheathed sword and the blood of thousands of truthful persons stains their verdicts (*fatāvā*). From whichever angle you study the history of Islam, countless examples will illustrate how whenever a ruler came to the point of shedding blood, the pen of a *muftī* and the sword of a general rendered him equal service. This was not confined to the Sufis and nobles, for those ʿulama who were close to the seers of the mysteries of truth and reality also had to suffer misfortunes from the hands of the jurists and in the end obtained deliverance in giving their lives. Sarmad, too, was martyred by this same sword...

Finally, it was determined that Sarmad be summoned before the assembly of the learned and good men of the age and that a decision would be taken in accordance with the opinion of all the ʿulama. So the assembly was convened and Sarmad was summoned. First, ʿĀlamgīr himself put the question, 'People say that Sarmad once predicted to Dārā Shikoh that he would inherit the rulership. Is this true?' Sarmad answered, 'Yes! And, in fact, this prophecy did come true when he was granted the crown of eternal rule.' The turbanned doctors of the Law then declared that nakedness was a violation of the Law, and for this no excuse could be accepted from anyone of sound mind. To this Sarmad had already given his answer:

> A wonderful robber, who has stripped me naked...

Vālih Dāghistānī relates that when Sarmad was told in the assembly of the ʿulama to wear clothes and did not pay heed, the emperor told the ʿulama that the accusation of walking about in nakedness was not in itself a sufficient reason for killing him. Sarmad should be told to recite the *kalima*. The emperor said this because it had been brought to his notice that one of Sarmad's strange habits was to pronounce, in reciting the *kalima*, only the first half of it: *lā ilāha*. So, when the ʿulama asked Sarmad to recite the *kalima*, he recited, as usual with him, only *lā ilāha*, which is a negative statement. When the ʿulama became excited over this, he said: 'I am still absorbed in negation. I have not yet reached the stage of affirmation. If I pronounce *illā'llāh*, it will be a lie, and how can what is not in the heart pass on the tongue?'

The ʿulama said: 'To speak in such a manner is outright unbelief (*kufr*)!

If he does not recant and repent, he deserves to be killed.' These worshippers of the outer letter did not realize that Sarmad was far beyond paying attention to debates on unbelief and belief and that he could not be cowed down by injunctions regarding killing and spilling of blood. Those deciding on *kufr*, standing on the floor of their madrasa or mosque, may consider their 'throne' to stand out at a considerable height; yet Sarmad stood on that minaret of love from which the walls of Ka'ba and temple were of equal height and where the flags of belief and unbelief waved together...

Anyway, Sarmad had declared his basic position unambiguously. Those who are not satisfied with faith in the hidden world — and this lack of satisfaction is only to be called the 'search for Truth and Reality' — want to remove their doubt and strengthen their faith by seeing Reality with their own eyes. Witness (*šahādat*) in the true sense is the appearance of Truth itself. That had not yet been granted to Sarmad. So why should he have declared 'it exists' concerning something he had not yet seen. All those who are on their way to this realm have to traverse this station. Sarmad's crime was that he drank that cup in public which others drink in private. This earned him the censor's whip...

Deeper reflection shows that this public declaration was necessary. Since the final station on this journey was martyrdom, it was the duty of the camel-rider to direct the camel which might go astray anywhere in that very direction:

منصور را کہ رخصتِ اظہار دادہ اند
غیر از قصاص و محنتِ زنداں نبودہ شرط

When they gave Mansūr the permission to declare [the Truth],
It was on condition of punishment and harsh imprisonment.

In short, when Sarmad did not retract, the 'ulama immediately published a *fatvā* and one day later took him to the place of execution. This happened in 1072 [1661-62] within three years of 'Ālamgīr's ascending the throne...

When they led Sarmad to the place of martyrdom, the whole city rushed to see. There was such a crowd that it was difficult to walk the streets. How to describe the deceitfulness of love, when the shedding of blood becomes a spectacle cherished by one and all, when the sacrificing of a human life becomes a choice game, and when a person condemned to death moving on to be decapitated, takes the appearance of a bridal procession on the move and of a throng of bridal guests rubbing shoulder to shoulder?

It was, of course, only ordinary love (*'išq-e majāzī*) that created the desire to come to the terrace, whereas Sarmad did not even need to raise his head to look. When the executioner came forward brandishing his

sword, Sarmad met his eyes and with a smile said, 'I am sacrificed to you. Come! Come! I do recognize you full well in whatever form you come!' The author of *Mir'āt ul xayāl* reports that after pronouncing these words Sarmad recited the following verse, before he bravely placed his head under the sword and gave up his life:

شورے شد و از خواب عدم چشم کشودیم
دیدیم کہ باقیست شبِ فتنہ غنودیم

As there was a great clamour, we opened our eyes from the dream of non-existence.
But when we saw that the night of sedition had not yet ended, we slept again.

In his flattery of 'Ālamgīr how could the author of the *Mir'āt ul xayāl* have found time to shed tears over Sarmad's bloodstained corpse? But what is outrageous indeed and exceeds even such harsh-heartedness, is the author's wish to see this bloody deed for ever listed in the register of 'Ālamgīr's virtues and laudable deeds, when, in fact, right from the beginning, every page of this register is coloured with blood. You may take it to be another clever strategem of love that those whose hands become stained with love's bloody sacrifices demand reward and praise, instead of incurring the blame of being killers and criminals. As if the arena of love was a place of sacrifices to the gods where, in the measure blood is spilled, reward is earned...

There are people who think that the place considered to be Sarmad's tomb is in fact only the place of his martyrdom. But Vālih Dāghistānī has clearly stated, 'they decapitated and buried him close to the Jāmi' Masjid'. What other place could this be but the existing tomb? And he continues: 'I, the writer of these lines, have repeatedly had the honour of making the pilgrimage to this tomb. It remains verdant throughout the four seasons. Indeed, a wondrous grace attaches to the pilgrimage to the second Mansūr'...

'Ālamgīr ascended the throne in 1069 [1658-59], and Sarmad's martyrdom occurred one year later. After that 'Ālamgīr ruled for more than the period of a whole generation. Most people think that:

خونے کہ عشق ریزد ہرگز مہدر نباشد

The blood spilled by love is never wiped out.

It was by the magic of Sarmad's blood that throughout this period 'Ālamgīr did not enjoy a day of peace and tranquillity. Even the call to leave this world reached him in a state of poverty and distress. His biographer, of course, could not state such facts. As far as we are

concerned it will be definitely better to hold 'Ālamgīr, so far as possible, excused in this matter. History is another name for guesswork, personal views and opinions. Even today two journalists will hardly agree when writing on an event occurring at the distance of only a few miles. Who knows what were the true circumstances of that time and what constellation of circumstances surrounded 'Ālamgīr? And since the martyrs of love themselves do not accuse their killers of injustice, what right have we to stain our pen in complaining about them? Since Sarmad addressed his executioner with the words, 'in whatever form you come, I have recognized you', what complaint can be allowed against 'Ālamgīr and his 'ulama? The point is that in the realm of love there is no listening to avenging a grudge, and in the religion of love nothing is forbidden more than rancour and enmity. Here the greatest act of worship is to bow your head before the executioner who advances sword in hand and, if possible, kiss his hands.

شد است سینۂ ظہوری پر از محبتِ یار
برائے کینۂ اغیار در دلم جانیست

Zuhūrī's breast is full to the brim with the love of the beloved.
No place is left in my heart for hating.my rivals.[15]

NOTES

[1] The importance of Āzād's essay on Sarmad for an overall understanding of his life and work has been highlighted properly for the first time in Malikzāda Manzūr Ahmad, *Maulānā Abul Kalām Āzād: fikr-o fan* (Lucknow 1978), pp. 108-112. For the nature and significance of Āzād's crisis of religious faith see 'Abdur Razzāq Malīhābādī, *Żikr-e Āzād* (Calcutta 1960), p. 260 and the first chapter of the late Ian H. Douglas' *Abul Kalam Azad: an intellectual and religious biography*, ed. G. Minault and C. W. Troll (New Delhi 1988).

[2] Cf. the obituary tribute to Āzād by Dr. Zākir Husain in *Maulana Azad, a homage by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting* (New Delhi 1958), pp. 34-35.

[3] Louis Massignon, 'My Meetings with Maulana Azad', in Humayan Kabir, ed., *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a memorial volume* (Bombay 1959), p. 29.

[4] Cf. the Pakistan reprint in *Sarmad šahīd: savānih, rubā'iyāt* (Lahore: Adabistan, 1973). For Sarmad's life and poetry and for bibliographical information see A. Schimmel, *Islamic literatures of India* (Wiesbaden 1973), pp. 40ff. and fn. 180; D. N. Marshall, *Mughals in India: a bibliographical survey* (Bombay 1967), no. 1649; and Fazl Mahmud Asiri, ed. and trans., *Rubaiyat-i-Sarmad* (Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati Studies II, 1950).

[5] I.e. the two histories mentioned in the preceding paragraphs omitted here, the *Maāsir-e 'Ālamgīrī* by *Musta'id Khān*, and the *Muntaxab ul albāb* by Khāfī Khān.

[6] Completed in 1690-91; cf. C. A. Storey, *Persian literature*, I, 1-2 (London 1970-72), no. 1135; Marshall, *op. cit.*, no. 1693.

[7] Storey, *op. cit.*, no. 1147, Marshall, *op. cit.*, no. 1864.

[8] Most widely known by his *taxallus* 'Ārzū'. See Marshall, *op. cit.*, no. 269; Storey, *op. cit.*,

no. 1149; H. Ethe, *Neupersische Literatur*, in Geiger-Kuhn, *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, II (Strassburg 1903), pp. 214ff. For his contribution to Urdu literature cf. Ram Babu Saksena, *A history of Urdu literature* (Allahabad 1927), pp. 47ff.

[9] Suhaib ibn Sinān (d. 659), a companion of the Prophet, who was a rich merchant driven to Medina by the opposition of the Quraish, forced to leave great riches behind in Mecca.

[10] I.e. the tear in the eye is more precious than a jewel because the latter, out of lack of ambition, was content with remaining in the stone instead of becoming part of the human heart or eye; cf. Yusuf Husain, *Ġālib aur ahang-e Ġālib* (New Delhi 1971), p. 287. I am grateful to Prof. G. D. S. Sheikh, Pune, to whom I not only owe this reference but substantial help throughout in translating this essay, especially the Urdu and Persian verses quoted in it. I also wish to express my gratitude for much help received from Prof. Khwaja A. Faruqi, Delhi, in understanding the couplets quoted by Āzād.

[11] I.e. because of their reluctance to enter this transaction, whereby they could gain so much for paying so little.

[12] In the case of Qais and Farhād or of Lailā and Shīrīn love was reciprocated and both lovers sacrificed their life.

[13] See A. Schimmel, *op. cit.*, pp. 45ff. and fn. 202; Marshall, *op. cit.*, no. 287; Storey, *op. cit.*, no. 1162.

[14] Reading *eman bāš* for *yamn mabāš*.

[15] There follows a rather clumsy final paragraph in which Āzād announces his intention of sometime presenting Sarmad's poetry, and apologizes for the length of this account.

11

'Ismat: Rāshid ul Khairī's novels and Urdu literary journalism for women

GAIL MINAULT

'Ismat means modesty, chastity, or honour; it is also a woman's name in Urdu and Persian, and it is the name given by Rāshid ul Khairī to the Urdu literary magazine for women that he began publishing in Delhi in 1908.[1] Rāshid ul Khairī (1868-1936) was one of the most prolific Urdu novelists of the early twentieth century, a nephew of another well-known Urdu writer, Deputy Nazīr Ahmad (1836-1910).[2] During his career, he earned the sobriquet *musavvir-e ğam* ('painter of sorrow') for his tear-jerking and immensely popular stories about the lives of women. Yet, except for critiques of his novels,[3] little exists in English about his life and work, or the thematic relationship between his novels and his Urdu literary journalism for women. The name that he chose for his journal is the key to that relationship.

Rāshid ul Khairī was the scion of a learned Delhi family. His great-grandfather was a scholar of Quran and Hadith, and his ancestors included many 'ulama. The women of the family also married learned men, of whom Nazīr Ahmad was only the best known. His father, Maulvī Hāfiz 'Abdul Vājid, who died when Rāshid was about ten years old, was an official in the Hyderabad government service. Rāshid was raised by an uncle who was also a government servant, given an Islamic education at home, and then sent to the Delhi Arabic School, where he was the student of, among others, Maulānā Hālī.[4]

Rāshid ul Khairī was thus representative of that class of Muslims who, having served the Mughals as religious functionaries, legal scholars, and educators, then entered the administrative, judicial, and educational service of the British. The men of this embryonic middle class were educated in Arabic and Persian and gradually developed their mother tongue, Urdu, into a medium of literary expression in prose.[5] By the time of Rāshid ul Khairī's generation, these men were also beginning to study English, whether at Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān's college at Aligarh, founded in 1875, or at other schools, such as Delhi Arabic, that offered English and western subjects along with Islamic instruction.

Rāshid ul Khairī completed his education at the matriculation level. He did not, therefore, secure that passport to professional success in British India, the BA, and he entered government service at a fairly low, but

entirely respectable, level. His son Rāziq, reflecting later upon his father's eighteen years in the postal department, noted that the humdrum work did not suit his temperament; he did not earn many promotions, and when he was finally able to live by his writing, he resigned. That was not until 1910, however. Before that, Rāshid ul Khairī wrote a number of novels and short stories, showed the earliest ones to his uncle, Nazīr Ahmad, who approved, and submitted stories to the Urdu literary magazines that flowered in Lahore and Delhi in the early years of this century. One such was *Maxzan*, founded in Lahore in 1901 by Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir, which had achieved great renown for the high quality of its prose and poetry. Rāshid ul Khairī published his first stories in *Maxzan* in 1903. In 1907, 'Abdul Qādir moved *Maxzan* to Delhi for a few years and hired Rāshid ul Khairī to help bring out the journal. He took leave from the post office at that time, but only resigned when his future as a literary journalist seemed secure.

In the late 1890s, he wrote two social reform novels in imitation of Nazīr Ahmad's, describing women's lives, using the highly colloquial language of Delhi women in the dialogue, and emphasizing the importance of women's education for the happiness of their families. These early novels, *Hayāt-e Sāliha* or *Sālihāt*, and *Manāzil us saira*, were published between 1902 and 1905 and established Rāshid ul Khairī's reputation as a creative writer. *Sālihāt* is the story of the beloved and well-educated daughter of an elderly man who, having lost his wife, remarries. The ignorant stepmother decides to marry off this daughter to her wastrel younger brother. Since her father agrees to the plan, the daughter also accepts. She makes an exemplary wife and mother, but is unappreciated by her worthless husband. Her father eventually dies, and so too does she.[6] Unlike Nazīr Ahmad's omnicompetent heroine, Asgharī of *Mir'āt ul 'arūs*, Rāshid ul Khairī's heroine, Sāliha, even though educated, is ill-used by her father and husband, but she remains dutiful and uncomplaining. Many of his heroines die — the only way out of a miserable marital existence — often of consumption. They are then honoured in death, unlike in life. One begins to see why he was dubbed 'the painter of sorrow'.

After this debut, Rāshid ul Khairī developed his connection with *Maxzan* and, in 1907, published another novel that was a great hit: *Subh-e zindagī* ('The Morning of Life'), which repeated the good and bad sister plot-motif of *Mir'āt ul 'arūs*, as did a number of his other novels. It is principally the story of the good sister, Nasīma, her education and exemplary upbringing up to the time of her father's untimely death, and her marriage at the age of fourteen. One is left with a sense that she will not 'live happily ever after', and indeed, Rāshid ul Khairī later wrote a sequel to the story of Nasīma, *Šām-e zindagī*, ('The Evening of Life'), published in 1917, which describes Nasīma's married life up to her own death. In spite of the unhappiness of the marriage, Nasīma has plenty of opportunity to use her education and skill. The book is a kind of guide to

marriage for women, wherein the highly competent Nasīma delivers lectures to her less clever sisters-in-law on the responsibilities of a good wife, husband-wife relations, useless superstitions and their harmful effects, women's rights in Islam, and useful household tips — including even a sketch of how to tie a baby's nappy.[7] Nasīma extends her efforts at enlightening her family to the entire surrounding neighbourhood, where she founds an informal educational association. She also shows great compassion toward the poor. When she dies, she is mourned by one and all. The success of *Šam-e zindagī* led to another sequel, *Šab-e zindagī* ('The Night-time of Life'), Parts I and II, wherein admirable women, on the pattern of Nasīma, are contrasted with less capable members of their gender. Rāshid ul Khairī's formulaic plots and sermonizing about the good woman reappear in novel after novel; his readers knew what to expect and came back for more.[8]

The success of his novels enabled Rāshid ul Khairī to persist in an enterprise that was not a money-making proposition, the women's literary magazine, *'Ismat*, founded in 1908 after the success of *Subh-e zindagī*, but while he was still working for *Maxzan*. Indeed, the first volumes of *'Ismat* appeared, not under Khairī's name, but rather that of Shaikh Muhammad Ikrām, the publisher of *Maxzan* in Delhi.[9] To found a women's literary magazine seems, however, to have been Khairī's idea, and after 1910, his name appeared as its publisher. In that year, *Maxzan* moved back to Lahore, Ikrām went to London to study law, and Khairī resigned from government service to become a full-time writer and journalist. Over the next several years, *'Ismat* and a number of other journals became the enterprise of the Khairī family.[10]

'Ismat joined a handful of other women's magazines in Urdu: the weekly *Tahzīb un nisvān* of Lahore, the monthly *Xātūn* of Aligarh, and *Parda-našīn* of Agra, another monthly. All these journals stressed the need for the education of women in order to improve their housekeeping and childrearing skills, and hoped to provide uplifting and useful reading material for urban, literate Urdu-speaking women (most, but not all, of whom were Muslim). Articles included news items on the founding of girls' schools or women's associations, information on home economics, health, nutrition, educational curricula, women's rights in Islamic law as against custom, and so on. There were also embroidery patterns and letters to the editor asking for advice on items ranging from cures for illness to gardening. In short, these few journals aimed at a small but growing market of literate women, hungry for informative reading matter. The publishers and editors of such journals wanted to raise women's educational level, and thereby improve their lives and the lives of future generations. In increasing women's knowledge of the world outside the veils of purdah, these publications also sought to increase women's communication among themselves. One means of doing this was through letters to the editor which, in *Tahzīb un nisvān*, became the *'Mahfil-e tahzīb'*, a forum for readers to ask for the advice of other

readers, to offer advice, or to discuss the pros and cons of various social reform articles.[11]

The content of these early women's magazines was an excellent window on the world of women and the issues that interested them in the early years of this century. The language of these journals was simple and colloquial, not highly Persianized or Arabicized, as befitted a newly literate public. This public, however, was small, and thus starting a new women's magazine was a perilous undertaking, not only financially, but also because the more conservative members of the Muslim community were bound to attack the perpetrator of the journal for contributing to the immorality of womankind.[12] Rāshid ul Khairī, therefore, was entering troubled waters when he launched '*Ismat*. Not only did he have to secure a portion of a small market, but he had to meet the criticisms that were bound to arise. He emphasized his journal's literary character. In addition to providing women with appropriate reading matter, he wanted to encourage women themselves to contribute articles, short stories and poems. In this, '*Ismat* was unique, and it soon began to attract a reading public, and contributors, from among the women of the educated Urdu-speaking elite.[13]

The first issue, a special case, since it was doubtless designed to attract subscribers, nevertheless indicated the nature of '*Ismat*'s content. There were several articles on education, one on housekeeping, one on Urdu journals for women, several letters welcoming the advent of this new representative of the genre, a couple of short stories, a description of the Taj Mahal, and a number of poems. The line-up of authors read like a who's who of Urdu literary journalism at the time: Shaikh 'Abdul Qādir contributed the piece on the Taj Mahal; Rāshid ul Khairī, writing under his own name but from a woman's point of view, contributed 'A Sister-in-Law's Letter to her Sister-in-Law' (*Nand kā xat bhāvaj kē nām*). Bint Nazar ul Bāqar, a young woman known for her contributions to *Tahzīb un nisvān*, contributed a story.[14] Welcoming letters came from Begam 'Abdullāh of Aligarh, wife of the founder of Aligarh Girls' School and editor of the journal *Xātūn*, and from Begam Razā Ullāh of Delhi, Zohra Fyzee of Bombay, and Suhrawardiya Begam of Calcutta.[15] One of the poems was by Muhammadī Begam, wife of Sayyid Mumtāz 'Alī of Lahore and editor of *Tahzīb un nisvān*. The clan had gathered to welcome its newest member.

'*Ismat*'s stated purposes and the ways it sought to further those purposes merit detailed analysis. It was to be a journal in Urdu for 'respectable Indian women' (*šarīf hindūstānī bībiyāṅ*), which would contain high-minded articles dealing with scientific and educational subjects, literature, and useful knowledge. In each issue, in addition to articles by leading male writers, there would be articles, poems, stories, etc. by 'honourable ladies' (*mu'azziz xavātīn*). Beyond this general statement, the first issue of '*Ismat* listed nine specific aims:

1. 'To make the sanctuary sanctified' (*haram kī harmat qāim rakhna*), or 'as the English saying goes, to make the home a castle'.
2. To bring progress to the world of women (*'ālam-e nisvān kī taraqqī*).
3. To support the cause of women's education (*ta'līm-e nisvān kī himāyat*).
4. To supply general knowledge (*ma'lūmāt-e 'āmma*).
5. To supply specialized knowledge (*ma'lūmāt-e xāssa*).
6. To publish every sort of article that would be useful and necessary for women: intellectual, cultural, literary, historical, social — but *not* political articles. Interesting and well-composed poems were also welcome.
7. To advance the cause of women's literature (*zanāna liṭarecar*), especially writings by women, but also writings by men specifically for women.
8. To reach as well Hindu and Christian women who knew Urdu.
9. To accomplish these aims, the journal requested readers' suggestions, correspondence, and contributions.[16]

If one couples the name of the journal, *'Ismat*, with its statement of aims, and compares them with the themes of Rāshid ul Khairī's novels and short stories, one begins to sense a certain unity of purpose in his various literary endeavours. *'Ismat* assumed the modesty and honour, the respectability, of its readers. It viewed women as the objects of a programme of amelioration. The home was to become a 'sanctuary' (the double meaning of the word *haram* is significant); progress and enlightenment were to be brought to women. If women themselves could contribute to this effort, well and good, but Rāshid ul Khairī and other men were there to fill the pages of the journal until such time as women contributors came forward. *'Ismat*'s aims assumed the passivity, isolation, and modesty of its readers. In 1908, this may have been a safe assumption, but judging from the energy and articulateness of the — admittedly few — women writers already contributing to such journals as *Tahzīb un nisvān* and *Xātūn*, it seems rather to have been condescending.

To urge women to write for the journal, Rāshid ul Khairī sometimes wrote articles using women's pseudonyms. 'Begam S.' or 'Ahmad un Nisā' would produce a 'clear and well-written' article on how to clean vessels, or report a discussion between two girls about some useful household skill such as cross-stitching. The rationale for this, reported his son, was that a girl who read such an article would think that she too could write something like that, and would be inspired to contribute her bit. The examples he gives are all mundane, and in no way challenge the assumption that the only subjects women are capable of, or interested in, writing about are those connected with the universe of the household.[17]

Such a view of women is highly conventional. It coincides with the vision of women in Khairī's novels. No matter how well-educated and

competent his heroines may be, they are always dutiful, even to the men who oppress them. They are victims, incapable of defending themselves because they are devoted to the overriding ideals of obedience and fidelity. To end the oppression of women, therefore, men must undergo a change of heart. Consequently, in the early years of '*Ismat*, there was little, if any, discussion of women's rights in Islam. Rather, the journal contained articles and stories designed to inform women about how to make their husbands' lives more comfortable, what sorts of difficulties they would encounter (and have to bear patiently) when they married and went to live with their in-laws, and so on. Younger sisters were instructed to be dutiful to older sisters and brothers, brides were informed about better housekeeping, accounting, childrearing, and nutrition.[18] The didactic purpose of '*Ismat* was as clear as that of Rāshid ul Khairī's novels, and neither challenged male authority or female seclusion (*parda*). The name of the journal, its emphasis on respectability, and its didacticism were also designed to answer the kinds of moral objections and attacks that other women's journals had met.

To be fair to Rāshid ul Khairī, however, his concern for purity, honour, and respectability was not a façade. His sincerity and earnestness of purpose were transparent. His morality was highly conventional, but to champion the cause of women's education, to urge women to express themselves even on mundane topics, and to urge men to undergo a change of heart required a good deal of courage at that time. Rāshid ul Khairī would have been horrified if women started demanding their own rights, but he wanted men to recognize those rights and to end their injustice toward women.

To further this purpose, between 1911 and 1915, he published a journal, *Tamaddun* ('Culture/Civilization'), aimed at a male readership, the chief purpose of which was to champion women's rights. He solicited contributions from the best-known *literati*, educators, and social reformers of the day, as well as contributing many articles himself. The tone of his articles was typically lachrymose:

> The story of women's rights is heartrending. Women are oppressed day and night and find no relief from their fate. Blessed will be that time when a spirit of sympathy [for women] will spread [among men] upon the earth. Torment will change into paradise and sorrows will change into happiness. Even when going to their graves, husbands do not recognize the oppression they have visited upon their wives. Nor has news of the rights which Islam has given them reached women's ears.[19]

In its first year, *Tamaddun*'s circulation reached 1200 (at a time when '*Ismat*'s was only about 900), but the novelty soon wore off. By 1915, it had barely 250 subscribers and Rāshid ul Khairī had to close it down.[20]

He continued, however, to champion women's rights in his novels. His goal, as before, was to bring about a change of heart among their

oppressors, not to arouse women themselves. In particular, he attacked polygamy as a manifestation of men's heartlessness toward women, and he criticized fathers for denying daughters their fair share of inheritance. For example, in *Saukan kā jalāpā*, he portrays the indignities that the first wife has to suffer when her husband remarries; she is cast off like an old shoe and is helpless against this injustice. In *Maūda*, a father prefers to keep his property intact rather than ensure the welfare of his daughter.[21]

Another practice that Rāshid ul Khairī attacked was the slavish imitation of the West and the wasteful and shallow behaviour of those who engaged in it. *Jauhar-e qadāmat*, for example, is again the story of two sisters: Shāhida has been raised as a modern girl by her father, while Zāhida has been raised by her mother to have old-fashioned, homely skills. Zāhida marries a comparatively poor man, suffers courageously (Khairī's husbands are never considerate), and ultimately achieves a reasonably happy life. She is also charitable towards those less fortunate than herself. Shāhida, on the other hand, is smart and happy-go-lucky, but also totally selfish and shallow. Her marriage starts out happily, but collapses in petty quarrelling. She refuses to give alms, with the remark that one should not encourage begging; what is worse, she fails to consider the plight of her childhood nurse when the latter is in difficulty.[22] Khairī's characters are unidimensional; his good women suffer, his men inflict suffering — often unwittingly or because of social expectations, and his bad women are without redeeming qualities. It is easy to criticize his novels for this reason. Rāshid ul Khairī's purpose, however, in his novels as in his journalism, was to instruct. He certainly made more people aware of social evils through his melodramatic plots than he did with his overt preaching in the pages of *Tammaddun*.[23]

The key to understanding Rāshid ul Khairī's life and work is his emphasis on *'ismat:* modesty, chastity, or honour, and its importance for Muslim society. The good women in his novels, the ideal woman in his magazine articles, embodied this virtue. Muslim society as it then existed in India, with a host of customs and observances which he felt were un-Islamic, did not permit such a woman to achieve her full potential while still maintaining her modesty and honour. The only emerging model of alternative behaviour was the liberated, western woman, and that idea he abhorred. The liberators of women would have to be the men; their change of heart should lead toward a more Islamic model of society, not away from it.

Confirmation of his thinking on this came in 1918, when the Anjuman-e Khavātīn-e Islām (otherwise known as the All-India Muslim Ladies' Conference), meeting in Lahore, passed a resolution condemning polygamy. The resolution stated that: '...the kind of polygamy practised by certain sections of the Muslims is against the spirit of the Quran and of Islam, and that is inimicable to our progress as a community', and called upon women to exercise their influence to end the practice. Rāshid ul Khairī, much to the shock of many loyal readers of *'Ismat* who were also

members of the Ladies' Conference, attacked the resolution and opined that the members of the conference were seeking to impress their western, Christian educational mentors, and this was unacceptable. The women were astonished, because Rāshid ul Kahairī had exposed the evils of polygamy in several of his novels and had made clear his own position that no man could do justice to more than one woman, in the spirit of the Quranic injunction. Yet, when women themselves addressed the problem and invoked the spirit of the Quran, as opposed to its letter, Rāshid ul Khairī fell back upon the letter, saying that since Islam permits polygamy, it would not do for Muslim women to seek its abolition. A number of women criticized him for his inconsistency, and yet his stance is quite consistent with his position that it is men who must be the reformers of society and the improvers of women, not women themselves. Further, his criticism of the women for their western or westernizing outlook is also consistent with his overall view. If women take to public platforms and stand up for their own rights, then *ipso facto*, they must be westernized, since no woman who embodied *'ismat* would do such a thing. By extension, if men honoured women as they were supposed to do, then such immodesty on the women's part would be unnecessary. His position was thus internally consistent, whether one agrees with it or not.[24]

Rāshid ul Khairī's writings overflow with sympathy for the oppressed women of the Indian Muslim community. He regarded himself as a champion of women's rights within the Islamic tradition, and for his time, he certainly was. It took courage to expose the social evils that he described in his works. It took talent to do so and to become one of the biggest bestsellers in the history of the Urdu novel. The modern reader may find his characters flat, his plots maudlin and repetitive, and his view of women condescending and patriarchal. But Rāshid ul Khairī was a pioneer. He founded his journal to encourage women writers, and it did so, giving rise to many who went on to write openly about subjects that he surely would have disapproved.

When his son, Rāziq ul Khairī, took over managing the journal in 1922, he permitted greater latitude of subject matter in the articles he accepted. One such was a satirical article by 'Āzam Beg Chughtāī entitled 'Conservatism' (*Qadāmat-parastī*), published in 1931, in which Chughtāī took issue with a contributor who felt that their culture was in danger because women were adopting the fashion of bobbed hair. 'Āzam Beg cited the Quran and Hadith in favour of short hair, and ended by saying that, anyway, it was easier to keep clean. The article was preceded by a short but serious introduction by Rāziq, explaining that he felt that all points of view on contemporary topics should be aired, and inviting response. Apparently, the response was enormous. Rāshid ul Khairī's response is not recorded.[25]

There is no evidence that 'Āzam Beg Chughtāī's younger sister ever published a story in the Khairīs' journal, but it would be poetically just if she had. Following her Aligarh education, she left *parda* (and, eventually, cut her hair) and began publishing stories in the 1940s that were

initially influenced by the Progressive Writers' Movement. Her powerful stories are characterized by a frankness about female sexuality and women's oppression that would have made Rāshid ul Khairī blanch, had he lived to read them. Her name, of course, is 'Ismat.

NOTES

[1] 'Ismat was published in Delhi from 1908 to 1947, when the Khairī family moved to Karachi, where it continued to appear. I am indebted to the son of the founder, the late Rāziq ul Khairī, for his encouragement of my research on Urdu journalism for women when I visited the '*Ismat* office in Karachi in 1977. Rāziq ul Khairī's account of the history of the magazine, '*Ismat kī kahānī* (Delhi 1936) [hereafter cited as *Kahānī*], is a source for much that follows, as are: Rāshid ul Khairī Number, '*Ismat* 57, 1-2 (July-August 1936); Rāziq ul Khairī 1964: *Savānih-e 'umrī-e 'Allāma Rāšid ul Xairī*, Annual No. of '*Ismat* (1964) [hereafter cited as *Savānih*]; and the files of '*Ismat* at the '*Ismat* office, Karachi and the Urdu Research Centre, Hyderabad, India. For access to the latter collection, I am indebted to 'Abd us Samad Khān of Hyderabad.

[2] Nazīr Ahmad was Rāshid ul Khairī's father's sister's husband (*phūphā*).

[3] On the novels of Rāshid ul Khairī, see Shaista Akhtar Banu Suhrawardy [Begam Ikramullah], *A critical survey of the development of the Urdu novel and short story* (London 1945), pp. 105-122; M. Sadiq *A history of Urdu literature*, 2nd edn (Delhi 1984), pp. 512-514 (in a chapter entitled 'Bestsellers'). Ralph Russell, 'The development of the modern novel in Urdu', in T. W. Clark, ed., *The Novel in India* (London 1970), pp. 102-141, remains an excellent guide to the early Urdu novel, emphasizing its didactic content, a tradition Rāshid ul Khairī continued. For a recent critique in Urdu, see Yūsuf Sarmast, *Bīsvīṅ sadī mēṅ urdū nāval* (Hyderabad 1973), pp. 124-130.

[4] This summarizes *Savānih*, pp. 25-70; his family tree is found in *ibid.*, pp. 756-57.

[5] For the 'ulama and the development of Urdu prose as a medium of religious disputation, see Barbara Metcalf, *Religious revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton 1982) pp. 198-234; on Urdu journalism, see Imdād Sābrī, *Tarīkh-e sahāfat-e urdū*, 4 vols. (Delhi 1953-64); on prose literature, see Suhrawardy 1945, and Russell 1970.

[6] I have not seen a copy of *Sālihāt;* I owe this summary to an advertisement for a number of Rāshid ul Khairī's works from the back cover of Rāshid ul Khairī, *Nauha-e zindagī* (Delhi 1934).

[7] Rāshid ul Khairī, *Subh-e zindagī* (Delhi 1923); *Šām-e zindagī* (Delhi 1923), p. 113, (Karachi, 1971 reprint), p. 127; Sarmast 1973, pp. 127-128.

[8] Sarmast 1973, pp. 129-130; Suhrawardy 1945, p. 107; Rāshid ul Khairī, *Šāb-e zindagī*, Part I (Delhi, 1947 reprint); *Šāb-e zindagī*, Part II (Delhi, nd).

[9] This S. M. Ikrām (d. 1940) is not the same as S. M. Ikrām, author of *Modern India and the birth of Pakistan* (Lahore 1970), and the historical trilogy in Urdu, *Āb-e kausar*, *Rūd-e kausar*, and *Mauj-e kausar* (Lahore 1950 ff.)

[10] *Kahānī*, 4, pp. 20-21.

[11] This summary is based on reading files of the cited journals.

[12] Sayyid Mumtāz 'Alī, the publisher of *Tahzīb un nisvaṅ*, started his weekly in 1898 by sending it out to all the names on the civil list. This attracted some subscriptions, but more recipients returned it to sender, frequently with imprecations and accusations of whore-mongering scrawled on the label. S. Mumtāz 'Alī, 'Tahzīb un nisvān', *Tahzīb un nisvān*, 21 (6 July 1918), pp. 425-426.

[13] Circulation figures are hard to find, but in 1910 '*Ismat*'s circulation was around 800 per month. *Kahānī*, pp. 1-4.

[14] As Nazar Sajjād Hyder, she became known as a novelist and short story writer; she married S. Sajjād Hyder and was the mother of the contemporary Urdu novelist Qurrat ul 'Ain Hyder.

[15] Begam Razā Ullāh was the daugher-in-law of Munshī Zakā Ullāh, the subject of a biography by C. F. Andrews *Zaka Ullah of Delhi* (Cambridge 1929). Zohra Fyzee was a member of the extended Tyabji clan of Bombay, known for their enlightenment and education of women. Suhrawardiya Begam was an author, educator, and member of the prominent Suhrawardy family of Calcutta; see her niece's memoir: Shaista Ikramullah, *From Purdah to Parliament* (London 1963), pp. 15-16.

[16] *'Ismat*, 1, 1 (June 1908): app.

[17] *Kahānī*, pp. 5-6.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 12, quoting *Tamaddun* (March 1913).

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-15.

[21] Later in life, he became an advocate of a woman's right to initiate divorce (*xul'a*), which was a belated admission that women could, perhaps, defend themselves in such situations. Suhrawardy 1945, pp. 109-115.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 110-112.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 107; Sarmast 1973, pp. 124-125, 129.

[24] For this controversy, see *Kahānī*, pp. 22-23; *'Ismat*, 20, 3 (March 1918), p. 8; *Tahzīb un nisvān*, 21 (11 April 1918), pp. 245-249, and (11 May 1918), pp. 298-302; and my 'Sisterhood or separatism? The All-India Muslim Ladies' Conference and the nationalist movement', in Gail Minault, ed., *The extended family: women and political participation in India and Pakistan* (Delhi 1981), pp. 94-95.

[25] *'Ismat*, 46, 1 (Jan. 1931), pp. 30-35; *Kahānī*, pp. 52-53.

12

Shi'ite consciousness in a recent Urdu novel: Intizār Husain's *Bastī*

MUHAMMAD UMAR MEMON

In late 1979, Intizār Husain, Pakistan's finest Urdu fiction writer and easily the most significant one after Sa'ādat Hasan Manṭo, published his second novel *Bastī* ('[An Idyllic] Town').[1] In the months that followed, the work was accorded glowing praise, guarded acclaim, grudging acceptance, and scathing censure. Among the more circumspect critics, Muhammad Salīm ur Rahmān described it as 'an enriched white-bread novel'. For although it did have a certain amount of nutrients, it nevertheless suffered from an overall deficiency as these elements had been rather thinly distributed. What seems to have particularly provoked Rahmān's ire was his impression that the unsuspecting reader had been deceived by Husain's packaging and marketing tricks. The two seminal areas of personal experience (i.e., mythic childhood and metropolitan doubt) which seemingly obsessed Husain had again come to haunt him in *Bastī*, but with considerably less of his earlier grace, freshness and artistic finesse. Rahmān's conclusion was: 'Everything that Intizār did successfully once is repeated here, with less vigour and noticeable lack of panache'.[2]

The charge of creative depletion was repeated in another critique by Anvar Sajjād, who also charged Husain with reactionism, obscurantism and outright cowardice. In Sajjād's view, although Husain had tried to fuse Hindu mythology and Arabic/Islamic parables with a quasi-historico-mystical point of view, he had nevertheless failed to pull it off. The very history in which the author sought refuge flew in his face. For instance, Imām Ghazzālī, Ibnul 'Arabī, Ibn Rushd, and Hallāj had all resisted both secular and ecclesiastical authority, and Hallāj had even laid down his life to preserve the integrity of the mystical truth. A true mystic did not just lead men to the mystical path but himself trod upon it as well. The true mystical path lay, according to Sajjād, 'in struggle against the declining moral values and the prevalent exploitative system brought about by an unholy alliance of the oppressive ruling classes and religious groups'. Husain was unwilling to pursue the path of resistance and sacrifice because of the terrifying consequences that might follow:

> When, however, cowardice stings the innards, one way to ease out of one's sense of shame is to become a masochist, to lament, to recall old times and stories of verdant glory in hopes of recovery and dramatic reversal. Undaunted defiance and struggle inevitably produce change. Husain, however, does not want change. Change frightens him... He keeps talking about the advent of the occulted Mahdī (*zuhūr*). All right. But does that not require that we facilitate the coming of the Mahdī through action against the tyranny of times? Perhaps Husain does not care about the *zuhūr* after all. What he is waiting for is a saviour who would set things right for us without our participation and move along... If Mecca is our dream and Kufa our fate, what significance would Husain then attach to those countless martyrdoms, both great and small, that have occurred since the martyrdom of Imām Husain? You see Husain is a very sneaky fellow. Scared, he shrinks back into the cocoon of silence, hoping that we would mistake his silence for eloquence.[3]

While this rather long quote from Sajjād does contain elements of truth and exemplifies the tenor of much of the critical writing on Husain by friend and foe, it also presents most graphically some of the errors of understanding which have all along bedevilled most such critiques.[4]

Sajjād's critique is not just beset by contradiction, it is also garbled. By calling Ghazzālī and the others to the witness-stand, he betrays an uncritical romanticism which is all the more shocking in a creative writer who otherwise represents a completely modern artistic sensibility.

Ghazzālī never rebelled against authority, whether religious or secular. In fact, he taught school at the Nizāmīya Madrasa in Baghdad, a government-run religious institution set up by Nizām ul Mulk, the great Persian vizier to the Seljuk sultans Alp Arslān and Malik Shāh. If Ghazzālī later resigned his post at the Nizāmīya, it was dictated more by a harrowing personal crisis than by reasons of conscience against given state policies. Ghazzālī was a staunch Ash'arite who aspired on the one hand to revive the insipid, unavailing legal Islam through liberal infusions of mystical Sufi spirituality, and on the other to rid Sufism itself of largely foreign accretions suggestive of pantheism, incarnation and unbridled speculative metaphysics.

Ibnul 'Arabī, on the other hand, was the very model of prudent fear and dissimulation. His speculative theories of *vahdat ul-vujūd* (transcendent unity of being) and *al-a'yān us-sābita* (fixed prototypes of being) outraged the held beliefs and tenets of exoteric Islam. Rather than die defending those theories, however, he couched them in the most extravagantly muddled and elliptic language. The notorious *double entendre* of much of the later ghazal poetry may be said to have originated with him.

Ibn Rushd missed his chance at the sort of glory Sajjād has in mind when he quietly submitted to the decree of exile given by Abū Yūsuf, the

Berber Almohid king of Muslim Spain. The same monarch also ordered Ibn Rushd's books to be burnt, and burnt they were. Yet the sage did nothing to stop that madness.

Hallāj comes to us filtered through mists of romantic attachment and mystical love that have been steadily accumulating over centuries. Yet let us for once set the record straight: Hallāj was not decapitated following his so-called blasphemous cry 'I am the Truth/God!' Instead, he met his end as a result of the petty jealousies of state bureaucrats.[5]

I do not wish to denigrate these celebrated Muslim intellectuals. I am also aware of the rather small worth 'historicity' has in the context of sacred or emotive truth. Even so, none of these venerable savants displayed the exemplary courage necessary to qualify for entry into Sajjād's Hall of Fame.

But then, neither were they cowards, quislings or compromisers. Our expectation that these men should have embraced our contemporary political and social concerns is clearly misguided, and so is our judgement of their careers' success or failure, based solely upon their espousal or rejection of our own specific cares, concerns and anxieties. They were truly great men. But, for instance, Ghazzālī's success or failure must depend on whether or not he was able to effect the harmony between Ash'arite theology and Sufism he had set out to achieve, not on whether he had successfully resisted and defied the policies of the Seljuk state, which were, as Sajjād would have us assume, as corrupt, oppressive and unjust as those in contemporary Pakistan.

My purpose in dilating at some length here on what is merely a peripheral issue within the novel's context is simply to show how Husain's critics have tended to ask the wrong kind of questions of his fiction. In doing so they have all along betrayed a noticeable lack of sensitivity to the religious element in his work. Where, however, they do bring in that element, their perception of it appears generally at odds with reality, whether historical or emotive.

To recapitulate, the two counts on which critics have faulted *Bastī* are, firstly, that Husain has recycled a lot of old material in it; and secondly, that Zākir, the novel's protagonist, lacks dynamic will, which only reflects Husain's own lack of will. In other words, they are not revolutionaries. The world around them, Pakistan to be more precise, has all but gone to the devil, yet they do nothing to change its fate.

I could not agree more with the critics that *Bastī* does recall a number of earlier works of the author; but whether it is an etiolated or a heightened reflection of those other works should also be precisely determined. I do not propose to do so here. Instead, I would like to discuss fully the charge of lack of dynamic volition leading to apathy and political quietism. My purpose is to take the issue out of the realm of revolution, politics and ideology and into that of literary aesthetics, where it properly belongs.

I also happen to think that in the case of Husain's fictional characters the question is not one of consciously embracing or spurning dynamic

will. Rather it is pre-eminently one of remaining loyal to a greater will which quite transcends the limitations of time and space. According to the Quran (33:72), God offered His trust to 'the heavens and the earth and the mountains' in pre-eternity but they all excused themselves. Only man, though infirm, willingly accepted it. It was a burden that broke his back; worse still, it exposed him to the Divine jest: 'Verily he was very iniquitous and very ignorant.' Why is it that man, otherwise endowed with free will, chose what God had wanted him to? Was there perhaps some inevitability about the choice? Individuals, like nations, sometimes consciously and willingly opt for a course of action — or, inaction — which leads to sure annihilation. In their choice they are supported by a unique personal vision of transcendent truth. Against their better judgement, none of the Apostles tried to save Jesus. In mid-ninth-century Muslim Spain, a group of Christian monks, later identified as the Martyrs of Cordova, were so possessed by sublime dementia that they openly made scurrilous attacks upon the Prophet of Islam in hopes of speedy martyrdom.[6] Such behaviour defies conventional logic and might even seem irrational. Is it? I shall return to this question later. For now let me move out of the arena of shadow-boxing and give, as briefly as possible, some idea of the novel's contents.[7]

The novel's locale is a city in Pakistan, presumably Lahore; its time the last few months preceding, and leading up to, the fall of Dhaka; its protagonist a young professor of history, with the typically Shi'ite name Zākir. Originally from a small town tucked away somewhere in the mythic landscape of eastern UP in India, Zākir moved with his parents to Pakistan in 1947, leaving behind not just an idyllic childhood, but also his cousin and childhood sweetheart Sābira. Sābira never comes to Pakistan, even when Muslim life is threatened in India and her own immediate relatives emigrate to what was once East Pakistan. She never marries, nor does Zākir. He is deeply in love with Sābira, but lacks the will either to call or to fetch her himself from India.

Although the novel chronicles only a few months in the life of Zākir, his entire life, and, more importantly, his entire cultural personality extending back through a millennium and a half of Muslim history is recalled through skilfully deployed flashbacks.

Being a professor of history, Zākir is aware (perhaps all too well aware) of the course of Muslim history in the subcontinent; being a Shi'ite, he is also aware of the course of this history beyond India in the heartlands of Islam. This history has been one of constant internecine feuds among Muslims for political dominance and — as the Hindu freedom fighter Tāntiyā Topī says at one point in the novel with brutal irony — 'for the throne' (186). In fact, for Zākir, it was the advent of the scheming Umayyads on Islam's political horizon in 661 that inaugurated an interminable era of dissension, strife and hatred — Islam's dark night of soul.

There are references to Muslim South Asian history throughout the novel: to the 1857 war of independence; the creation of Pakistan in 1947;

the 1965 war between India and Pakistan; and finally the 1971 political disintegration of Pakistan with the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation-state. The novel ends with this last event.

This skeletal account hardly does justice to the otherwise rich details of the novel, but I am sure I have here all the elements I will need for my discussion.

All the critical fuss about Zākir's inactivity centres round his characteristic lack of emotion regarding the course of political life in Pakistan. The separation of Bangladesh showed in stark detail the failure of religion as a principle of bonding across linguistic and ethnic diversities. But the failure of religion itself had been foreshadowed by a morally bankrupt political leadership. In these harrowing circumstances, why is it that neither Zākir nor any of his friends do anything to change the course of life in their country? Why do they sit silent and let the worst happen? They could, at the very least, show verbal disapproval of the situation, rather than rush off to an old, run-down cemetery, as Zākir and 'Irfān do, and, clinging to their loved ones' graves, tear their hearts out in imbecile dementia, evocative of all the surrealistic horror of an overheated consciousness.

The critics, such as Sajjād, feel that Zākir, by his silence and failure to act, teaches a dastardly acquiescence to an admittedly oppressive and demonstrably corrupt political system.

In what follows I shall try to show that Zākir's silence, or apparent lack of overt political activism, does not stem from some inherent flaw in his moral fibre, but is rather the result of a particular view of history shaped in the crucible of Karbala. Seen as such, it is not failure. The novel is not about political resistance and activism. If anything, it is about how a personality survives in a morally corrupt universe by drawing on its own inner resources.

Naturally it is significant that the author is a Shi'ite, but what is more important for us is that Zākir is a Shi'ite. He has been nurtured in a richly Shi'ite ambience. We can best understand the logic of some of Zākir's apparent behaviour by referring it to Shi'ite phenomenology.

In his controversial *Moses and monotheism*, Freud suggests that nations, races, and religious and cultural groups can be the subject of psychological complexes, just as individuals can. These complexes may be the result of a particularly stressful or traumatic situation encountered by the group in its infancy, and once formed might persist among the group's members through subsequent centuries. In a moment of crisis, men tend to look for a past solution that proved most fundamental and satisfying in a like situation.

Karbala may be considered just such a traumatic event for the Shi'ites, occurring quite early indeed in their history. Presumably it has fundamentally shaped their psyche for all subsequent time. Some of the seminal concepts in Shi'ite phenomenology might have emerged in the aftermath of this event and may be identified as those of redemptive

suffering; the *raj'a* or *zuhūr* (i.e., the Mahdī or the Saviour's eschatological return or manifestation); *taqīya* (i.e., dissimulation or prudent fear); and the vision of the empirical time between the martyrdom of Imām Husain and the return of the Mahdī as inherently corrupt, graceless, oppressive and immoral.

The details of Imām Husain's martyrdom at Karbala are quite well known and need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that the episode of his slaying is packed with pathos and highlights passion and suffering. Outnumbered and 'outgunned', many of his supporters having either abandoned or betrayed him, Husain marched against the Umayyad forces with all odds fatally against him. Still more striking is the fact that right from the start he had absolutely no illusions about the outcome of the battle. He did nothing to avert it. Certain less tragic options, such as those adopted by the Murji'ites and the Jabarites in the name of political expediency, were available to him. The Umayyads, however corrupt, still held authority and, as those other groups reasoned, any form of rule was preferable to anarchy. Husain, however, chose to denounce the Umayyads openly as immoral.

From the time Husain left Mecca, he knew of his impending doom. His willing sacrifice touchingly underscores the primacy of a certain higher principle. There is nothing in the historical record to suggest that he was moved by desire for personal gain. On the contrary, from beginning to end his strategy seems to have been to look evil in the eye with undaunted and self-immolative defiance. He 'was planning for a complete revolution in the religious consciousness of the Muslims. All of his actions show that he was aware of the fact that a victory achieved through military strength and might is always temporal... But a victory achieved through suffering and sacrifice is everlasting and leaves permanent imprints on man's consciousness.'[8] On the eve of 'Āshūrā, only hours away from his end, Husain gathered his seventy-odd followers and said:

> I think tomorrow our end will come... I ask you to leave me alone and go away to safety. I free you from your responsibilities for me, and I do not hold you back. Night will provide you a cover; use it as a steed... (Jafri 1979:189)

These cannot be the thoughts of a man motivated by political ambition.

At any rate, however small and militarily insignificant, Husain's was still an armed struggle. But with Karbala, Shi'ism would seem to have given up faith in armed struggle as a viable means of achieving essentially spiritual and moral goals. Yet wherever and whenever such a struggle is joined, its moral and religious motivation dominates the Shi'ite consciousness. Indeed with the advent of the sixth linear Imām Ja'far us Sādiq, uprising and military struggle were effectively renounced. In a sharply focused and comprehensive interpretation of the function of the Imamate, Ja'far us Sādiq 'differed categorically from the hitherto

dominating view that an Imam should be a caliph as well, and put forward the idea of dividing the Imamate and the caliphate into two separate institutions until such time as God would make an Imam victorious' (Jafri 1979: 281). Whatever the hope of such 'victory' in calendar time, it was effectively dashed with the occultation of the twelfth Imām Muhammad al-Mahdī. Henceforward, Shi'ite concern with material history and empirical time noticeably declines. Instead, aspirations of victory come to be placed, dramatically, in meta-historical time. Henceforward, Shi'ite history enters the murky domain of time suspension or, to use a more catchy phrase, 'time-lock'. This, of course, holds true only for the Twelver or Imami Shi'ites. The Isma'ilis or 'Seveners' and the Zaidis never eschewed the military option.

In a dark, sinful world, the only 'healing of existence or the fulfilment of human life' is located by Shi'ite piety, as Mahmoud Ayoub has poignantly shown, in the 'phenomenon of redemption through the suffering and passion of a divine hero or holy martyr', who is no other than the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husain.[9] In order to exist, suffering presupposes continued enactment of the principle of evil. The Shi'ites look at 'trials of affliction [as] more than a mere discipline,' as 'an active choice made independently of rewards and punishments' (Ayoub 1978: 26). 'All suffering and martyrdom after [Husain] are only modes of participation in his martyrdom' (*ibid.*: 27), which he voluntarily and unconditionally accepted for the love of God and for the preservation of His religion. The piety, Muharram, with its mourning assemblies, memorial services, self-flagellation, and display of grief, underscores a Shi'ite desire to share vicariously in the pain of Husain and symbolically connect his 'here' and 'now' with sacred time and space, with the *karb* (pain) and *balā* (test, trial, tribulation) experienced by the Imām at Karbala.

Zākir, whose name means 'one who remembers', walks through his time and space with the graphic memory of Shi'ite suffering. I think Husain's choice of Zākir as the name of the novel's figuratively martyred central character and of 'history' as this character's profession is quite deliberate, though, interestingly enough, it does not appear forced. Not uncharacteristically Zākir says, 'I want to remember, to dwell on my pains... The tragedy of this war-infected age is that it thwarts our pain from becoming our memory' (152). And elsewhere: 'One can study the history of another people with indifference, not one's own' (79). The more the world around him crumbles into chaos, the more he withdraws into himself in what appears like a scramble for a very private kind of salvation through the Shi'ite principle of interiorization of suffering (cf. 14).

Yet the most powerful allusion to 'defeat' and 'humiliation' as catalysing agents for a redeemed existence occurs towards the end of the novel. News has just arrived that East Pakistan has fallen. Zākir and 'Irfān sit sadly in the Café Shiraz, their favourite haunt. In walk Salāmat

and Ajmal. In an impassioned outburst of anger, Salāmat places the entire responsibility for the humiliating defeat squarely upon 'Irfān and Zākir. Later, outside the café, when the accusation of 'Traitor!' rises above the din of a scuffling band of young men, Zākir says to 'Irfān, 'You know, Salāmat wasn't perhaps all that wrong. *I am* responsible for this defeat.' When 'Irfān looks at him uncomprehendingly, Zākir explains, 'The thing is this, 'Irfān, that *defeat*, too, is a kind of trust. But, today, in this country, everybody is accusing the other, and will still be tomorrow; today everyone is trying to prove his innocence, and will still be tomorrow. Somebody must bear this trust. I thought I might do so just as well' (178).

Our expectation that a consciousness so deeply immersed in a Shi'ite ambience would feel outraged over the misconduct of a temporal leadership is, I am afraid, quite illogical. Being the person he is, Zākir is not likely to react openly to such temporal issues as the conduct of the government and the nature of political authority. Where in the Shi'ite world-view has government and authority ever been anything other than corrupt? I am less inclined to attribute Zākir's quietism and so-called lack of will to the more attractive Shi'ite doctrine of prudent fear (*taqīya*), even when support for it is not wanting in the novel itself.[10] Rather, I strongly feel that a truly Shi'ite personality, formed in the tragic aftermath of Karbala, inherently transcends involvement in issues pertaining to material, profane time, or gives them an unmistakable religious meaning.

I do not wish to imply that external events, however intrinsically insignificant, are, or can be, quite without impact even on an excessively introvert Shi'ite personality such as Zākir's. That is hardly the case. But material events, instead of inciting the personality to physical action, can conceivably heighten its sense of suffering. They are, therefore, irreplaceable items in the baggage of redemption. Grief, experienced in all its harrowing intensity, helps the personality rise to sublimity.

Not confined to external events, a similar stunning restraint in the display of raw emotion is evident even in intimately personal areas of Zākir's life. His love for Sābira — another name rich in symbolic connotations (Sābira means 'one who is patient, is able to endure') — remains unfulfilled, not by external impediment, but by deliberate choice. Salīm ur Rahmān has demanded: 'May we have another novel, please, sir, one in which you tell us things you have always held back, like the escapades and attachments of your salad days... Also one in which we can come across women in their prime, not one with sexless kinky grandmas or innocent childhood playmates in it. Give us women who talk and think and love, don't just drool over their attractive curves...' (Memon 1983b: 207-208). I am afraid this demand is likely to remain unattended — and for a deeper reason: Zākir is not given to look for love's blossoming in a morally imperfect world. The Shi'ite 'House of Sorrows encompasses not only all human history, but the cosmos in its

totality as well' (Ayoub 1978: 26). Even physical relationships have to be blessed by a state of moral beatitude, impossible in this life for a post-Karbala Shi'ite. A self-willed denial of the barest creaturely pleasures beckons with inexorable force!

Yet neither Shi'ite history itself nor Zākir's biography may be assumed to be entirely free of contradiction: between empirical truth and emotive truth, between humiliation and proud, assertive exaltation, between stout will and meek submission, between cruel judgement and compassionate pardon, between existential despair and messianic hope — all located and held in tense equilibrium along a single continuum. Even as he prepared for the fateful encounter, knowing the inevitable end, Imām Husain kept asking his adversaries for understanding and mercy. Left alone, unable to move, he sat on the ground and uttered a pathetic cry for help:

> Is there no one to defend the women of the Apostle of God? Is there not one professing the oneness of God (*muwahhid*) who would fear God for our sake? Is there no one to come to our help, seeking thereby that which God has in store as a reward for those who would aid us? (Ayoub 1978: 118-19)

Imām Husain's consciousness is beset with enough agonizing conflicts to thwart even the most liberal attempt of the historian to reach some workable logical resolution of them. Likewise, Zākir, too, is not entirely free of heart-wrenching contradictory feelings. Not a few of them balk our way. Only a couple of these need be mentioned. The most obvious instance of conflict is this: in spite of his near-hermetic abstemiousness in his relationship with Sābira, he has known and experienced desire. Although his relationship with Tasnīm never came to anything, he did well-nigh come to the pleasures of the flesh in his fleeting encounter with the generously promiscuous Anīsa. What is significant here is not that desire for sexual gratification remained only latent, but that he consciously and willingly experienced it. In fact, one could say he virtually burned in it.

A more subtle instance has to do with a raging conflict in Zākir's historical consciousness. This is his ambivalence towards the creation of Bangladesh — yet another incident from temporal and, therefore, spiritually unavailing history. Developments in Pakistan since its creation in 1971 have left Zākir's father in a state of stoic resignation. One day he sums up his dark thoughts for Zākir by narrating a saying of Imām Zain ul 'Ābidīn. On being queried by an individual about the state in which he had spent the night, the Imām rejoined with sadness, 'By my Creator, I have spent it in the tyranny of the Umayyads!' After recounting the saying, Zākir's father adds pessimistically, 'Son, it's been the same ever since ... and will continue to be so till the Mahdī's advent (*zuhūr*)' (202).

Now Zākir tacitly accepts his father's characterization of Pakistani life and history as tyrannical. The recent events in Bengal seem to him an

instant replay of the earlier Islamic civil wars. A history in which brother killed brother is being re-enacted with inexorable normative force. One would least expect a response of shocked disbelief at these predictable events from a person whose entire consciousness is formed in the crucible of sectarian injustice, tyranny, usurpation and wrong. Yet there is more than a measure of loss and personal unhappiness in Zākir's attitude towards Pakistan's national disintegration. In his diary entry for 18 December 1971 he mentions three separate instances of stunning resistance and phenomenal courage from Indian history. Two of the individuals involved are Hindus: the Rani of Jhansi and Tāntiyā Topī. We are thus left to conclude that the surrender of Pakistani forces in East Pakistan and their inability to avert national disaster was the most humiliating event. The question arises: why should this sadden a Shi'ite for whom historical time is basically tyrannical time? Why must he agonize over the defeat and humiliation of a country to which he had emigrated not out of ideological preference but out of sheer necessity? More importantly, what possible significance could such purely temporal concepts as national honour and unity have for a person whose entire attention is unwaveringly focused on meta-historical time?

There are other examples of Zākir's muted anger at the turn of political events in Pakistan. Their presence suggests, at the very least, more than a whisper of regard for that country.

But these contradictions are more apparent than real. On closer examination it is found that in no pair are the two terms of opposition either fully equal or truly contrastive and comparative. In each case the weaker one seems to have been marshalled only to underscore the incontestable superiority of the other and to bring out, dramatically, its inherent truth. Zākir's sexual desire could have found gratification in Anīsa, but it did not; his feelings of outraged honour in the wake of the 1971 débâcle could have turned him into a committed revolutionary, but they did not. Ultimately, we are left with a personality curled back upon itself, seeking salvation through redemptive suffering in the abject cruelty of empirical time.

Contradiction, moreover, cannot be rooted out from life. It is perhaps less significant that an individual may entertain several possibilities, each essentially different from, even antipodal to, the other. What is significant is that the choice that is ultimately made is the only choice one could have made, that it is consistent with one's nature. As a human being, Zākir experiences moments of love, pain, desire, anger and frustration — all prompted by external events, but all ultimately dissolved in an enduring and powerful feeling of suffering. This suffering alone can redeem those other feelings, alone can redeem existence. In my opinion, Zākir's response, described as 'cowardly' by Sajjād, is religiously determined and has its origin in the collective experience of the Shi'ite community, as it stood in the plain of Karbala, mourning the cruel murder of its innocent leader.

Finally, overt activism and passive submission may be interpreted as two modes of resistance, of denial and disapproval. Sunni pragmatism — always unable to comprehend the Shi'ite response to questions of history, time, and temporal authority — places its confidence in the efficacy of arms. The Shi'ites, on the other hand, reach a state of grace through suffering: as if truth becomes manifest through enactment of grief. Ultimately, they too by their self-immolative, but entirely self-willed, forfeiture of conventional modes of salvation, deny the victor the spoils of victory. Of all Muslims, the Shi'ites alone seem to appreciate that, in the words of Wordsworth:

> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;

one must find strength

> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering;
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.[11]

If Urdu critics, among them Anvar Sajjād, do not understand the Shi'ite response, it is because Urdu theory has so far paid scant attention to the religious element at work in Urdu literary consciousness. I am not suggesting that a creative piece must be ultimately valid in religious terms, or that these terms are the only valid means of approach to its inner life. Rather, I am making a case for greater sensitivity to seminal religious concepts that might be organically present in a work. If properly discerned, these concepts could conceivably enhance our potential for experiencing its inner world more fully and, thus, deepen our understanding of its poetics. This certainly seems to be the case with Intizār Husain's *Bastī*.

NOTES

[1] Intizār Husain, *Bastī* (Lahore: Naqsh-e Avval Kitab-Ghar, 1979). Bracketed numbers in the text refer to pages of this edition.

For Intizār Husain's life and works, and for a critical assessment of his creative output, see the following by Muhammad Umar Memon: '"The lost ones" (A requiem for the Self)', *Edebiyāt*, 3,2 (1978), pp. 139-56; 'Partition literature: a study of Intizār Husain', *Modern Asian Studies*, 14,3 (1980), pp. 377-410; 'Reclamation of memory, fall, and the death of the creative self: three moments in the fiction of Intizār Husain', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13,1 (1981), pp. 73-91; 'Pakistani Urdu Creative Writing on National Disintegration: The Case of Bangladesh', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 43,1 (1983a), pp. 105-27; (ed.) 'The writings of Intizar Husain', *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 18,2 (1983b); (ed.) *An unwritten epic and other stories*, (Lahore: Sang-e Meel Publishers, 1987).

[2] 'An enriched white-bread novel', in Memon 1983b, p. 206.

[3] Anvar Sajjād '*Intizār Husain par cand noṭs*', *Mu'āsir*, 2 (1983), pp. 990-1.

[4] Cf., Jīlānī Kāmrān, 'Intizār Husain: bastī, jangal aur šahr', *Mu'āsir*, (1983), pp. 978-86; Rāhat Nasīm Malik, 'Makrūh bastī meṅ bašārat kā lamha', *Mu'āsir*, 2 (1983), pp. 997-99; Sirāj Munīr, 'Bašāratoṅ ke darmiyān', *Mu'āsir*, 2 (1983), pp. 1000-1014; and 'Atā ul-Haq Qāsimī, 'Intizār Husain aur unkī bastī', *Mu'āsir*, 2 (1983), pp. 1015-1018.

[5] Cf. "al-Ḥallādj', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*[2], vol. III (1971), pp. 101-102.

[6] Cf. N. Daniel, *The Arabs and mediaeval Europe* (London 1975), pp. 23-30.

[7] For a fuller idea of the plot, theme, and technique of this novel, see L. Wentink, 'Curfew in Kufa', *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 2 (1982), pp. 123-130.

[8] S. H. M. Jafri, *Origins and early development of Shi'a Islam* (London 1979), p. 202.

[9] Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive suffering in Islām* (The Hague 1978), pp. 23 and 7.

[10] See, for instance, Zākir's interior monologue on pp. 22-23.

[11] From his *Ode to Innocence*.

13

Maulānā Hāmid Hasan Qādirī and the art of the chronogram

جناب مولانا حامد حسن قادری اینڈ دی آرٹ آف کرونوگرام

AD 1988

KHALID HASAN QADIRI

My father Professor Hāmid Hasan Qādirī (1887-1964) came from a distinguished family which numbered among its ancestors the famous Muslim saint Bābā Farīd ud Dīn Ganj-e Shakar (1175-1265). He was born in Bachhraon, a small village in the Moradabad district of UP. He was educated up to the age of ten in the classical languages and learning of Islamic tradition at home, and thereafter in Rampur, where his father was a lawyer with a successful practice. Both he and his younger brother 'Ābid Hasan Farīdī eventually became professors in the Department of Urdu and Persian in St. John's College, Agra.

My father was one of the greatest Urdu scholars of his times, and the author of more than thirty books, including the standard history of Urdu prose to the end of the nineteenth century.[1] He was also a master of the art of the chronogram,[2] and this is the subject of the present article.

The basic rules of the chronogram

The art of the chronogram is an ancient one, which was formerly practised in Europe also, on the basis of the numerical values assigned to some of the letters of the Roman alphabet. The entry under 'chronogram' in *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1954 edition) includes the following definition and illustrative example:

> An inscription in which certain letters, more prominent than others, express a date in Roman numerals when put together in order. Example:
>
> MerCy MiXed with LoVe In hIm
> MCMXLVII = AD 1947[3]

A stricter rule is followed in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, where every letter must be counted in a chronogram (*tārīx*). The basic rules are simple. Each letter of the Arabic alphabet is assigned a numerical value, and the letters are grouped in meaningless words composed of letters arranged in the ascending order of these values. The basic mnemonic pattern is:

ابجد ہوز حطی کلمن سعفص قرشت ثخذ ضظغ

abjad havvaz huttī kaliman sa'fas qurišat saxxaz zazzağ

The additional letters which occur in Persian and in Urdu are assigned the same value as the nearest Arabic letter of the same 'family', thus *pe* = *be*, *ṭe* = *te*, *ce* = *jim*, etc.

The following numerical equivalents are thus assigned to the letters of the Urdu alphabet according to the *abjad*-system:

ا = 1	ح = 8	س = 60	ش = 500
ب پ = 2	ط = 9	ع = 70	خ = 600
ج چ = 3	ی = 10	ف = 80	ز = 700
د ڈ = 4		ص = 90	
ہ = 5	ک گ = 20	ق = 100	ض = 800
و = 6	ل = 30	ر ڑ = 200	ظ = 900
ز ژ = 7	م = 40	ش = 300	غ = 1000
	ن = 50	ت ٹ = 400	

There are some other important rules too. Letters that are written, irrespective of whether they are pronounced or not, are all counted. For instance, in the Arabic *āmiṇū*, the *alif* written after *vāo* is not pronounced but will be counted; but in *allāh* the *alif* pronounced after *lām* will not be counted, as it is not written. Letters carrying a *tašdīd*, though doubled, are, since they are written only once, only counted once.

These are the basic rules. There are other areas in which different exponents of the art follow different rules. There are also a number of different ways of composing chronograms. In this article I shall illustrate

these things with reference to chronograms composed by my father and exemplifying his own practice in these matters.

But this is the point at which I should first speak of the development of my father's interest in the art.

My father's early chronograms

My father collected his chronograms in five volumes. The first volume is entitled *Daftar ut tavārīx*[4], itself, not surprisingly, a chronogram which gives the year 1901. In the preface of this volume he tells us that he composed his first chronogram when he was still a child. He goes on to recall the first chronogram he ever composed.

> In AD 1901 an unusually large number of famous figures died. But the death which affected me most was nearer home and was that of a rather insignificant person. Najjū was an old maidservant and all of us called her Najjū Khāla or 'Auntie Najjū'. She died suddenly and though I have only a faint memory of her now, I composed a chronogram. It happened like this. I had never tried my hand at it before. I was quite small and had not yet started school. In the evenings I used to go to a tutor for English lessons. While I was doing sums there the line of a chronogram flashed upon my mind:
>
> انتقالِ نجوّ خالہ ہوگیا
>
> The death of Auntie Najjū has occurred.
>
> I at once calculated the value of the letters on my slate and could hardly suppress my excitement at the discovery that the line gave the year AH 1319. I could hardly wait to get back home and announce my new and first achievement to the family. And everyone was delighted.
>
> My first published chronogram was on the coronation of Edward VII in 1902:
>
> جشن شاہِ صاحبِ ثروت کا ہے
>
> AD 1902
> It is the celebration of the King, possessor of wealth.

I may mention here that in the fourth volume of his collected chronograms he tells us:

> I have composed chronograms on the coming and going [the coronation and the death] of all the English monarchs, from Queen Victoria to the Queen Elizabeth, using in each one the words *taxt-o taj* ('throne and crown').

His interest in composing chronograms continued throughout his life, and every significant and insignificant event both in private and public life would inspire him to compose a chronogram upon it. These chronograms were often composed extempore in a matter of minutes, as for example in AH 1354 when he received a postcard asking him for a chronogram on the death of one Ghulām ul Hasnain and realised as he read it that the name itself yielded this date. He at once set it in a couplet, wrote it out on a postcard and posted it; and all this, he tells us, took no more than fifteen to twenty minutes. His five-volume collection abounds in examples in every vein. He himself wrote of his interest as one which bordered on a 'disease' or 'derangement of the mind', and more than one chronogram mocks the art of chronogram-writing itself. Many others are in the same satirical vein, and some are even more light-hearted. He himself wrote of them in the preface to the first volume: 'Some... could be considered slanderous, and some are plainly bawdy.'

Although there is room for only a small selection of them here, a few examples will give some indication of their range. At one time he used to smoke quite heavily; at least that is what I have heard, though I myself can never recall seeing him smoking. He had broken his habit further back than my memory goes. He writes:

> 15 February AD 1932/6 Shavval AH 1350. On the morning of the day I set out for the holy pilgrimage of Hajj, I stopped smoking the hookah. I started smoking in 1909. When I decided to give it up, I felt great doubt and hesitation. The same morning I composed:

ترکِ حقّہ کا سوچ کیا فی الحال	+ کچھ بڑی ایسی کائنات نہیں
1014 = AH 1350	AD 1932 = 918

Just now I decided to give up the hookah.
These material things are not so very great.

This is based on a famous couplet of Nāsikh

ترکِ دنیا کا سوچ کیا ناسخ
کچھ بڑی ایسی کائنات نہیں

Nāsikh has decided to give up the world.
These material things are not so very great.

Elsewhere he tells us:

In the *Statesman* of 31 May 1949, there was a news item that on 7

May, Prince Aly Khan, the son of HH The Agha Khan, had married the famous film star Rita Hayworth. One of the London newspapers had captioned the news 'Rita Hayworth says 'Oui' to Aly Khan'.

He then composed the chronogram:

نکاح میں جو علی خاں کے آئی مس ہیورتھ
تو وصلِ مشرق و مغرب ہُوا مٹا کے دوئی
وہی ہے سال جو لندن پریس کی ہے سُرخی
کہ آج ریٹا، علی خاں سے کہتی ہوگی "اوئی"

AD 1949

When Miss Hayworth entered into marriage with Aly Khan,
Then union between East and West erased duality,
The year is that which the London press headline gives:
'Today Rita will be saying "Oui" to Aly Khan'.

The chronogram is the more piquant because in Urdu *ūī* is a woman's exclamation of surprise or disdain.

When the welcome relief of torrential rain came to Karachi in July 1958/AH 1377 he wrote:

AH 1377

یہاں رحمت ہی رحمت ہوگئی ہے

AH 1377

Here God's abundant mercy has come.

Here either of the groups of words underlined and overlined gives the date.

But in this article I wish to concentrate upon examples that show the full range of his technical mastery and exemplify his practice in areas where there is general agreement upon the proper rules. The beauty of a chronogram depends upon its choice of words and appropriateness and in its completeness, i.e. it should be composed of a full phrase and words thus composed should give the exact year, neither more nor less.

Quranic chronograms

To mark an event of solemn religious significance nothing could be more appropriate than composing a chronogram consisting of words taken from the Holy Quran. But as one can imagine, because of the nature of the words involved, divine, revealed and according to Muslim belief, for ever unchanged and unchangeable, a chronogram using only Quranic words has always been a great challenge and this fact explains the paucity of its occurrences.

My father composed over two hundred and fifty chronograms from Quranic words, some giving the date in the Christian era and some in the Muslim era. I do not know of any other person who has composed chronograms from Quranic words in such large numbers.

Some examples may be quoted here. In AD 1911/AH 1329 a fierce war between Turkey and Italy was being fought in Libya, and news of heavy casualties on both sides was appearing in the newspapers. He composed the following chronogram:

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ

AH 1329

Surely the pious shall be in bliss, and the libertines shall be in hell. (Quran 82:13-14)

His daughter-in-law, Āsiya Khātūn, wife of his eldest son Sājid Hasan Qādirī, compiled a book of recipes. For this he composed a remarkable chronogram from the Quranic words:

كلوا واشربوا ولا تُسرِفوا

AH 1357

Eat and drink but do not waste. (7:31)

In AD 1947/AH 1366 the Partition of India and the creation of an independent homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent were epoch-making events. My father composed several chronograms to mark these. From Quranic words alone he composed four. He wrote two excellent ones that are printed in Urdu newspapers almost every year on Pakistan Day:

كُنتُم خَيرَ أُمَّةٍ

AH 1366

You are the best of the people. (3:110)

Another yields the AD date:

اَحَلَّنَا دَارَالمَقَامَةِ من فضلهٖ لا یمسُّنا فیها نصبٌ

AD 1947

(Who has) out of his bounty
Settled us in a home that will last,
Where there is no toil nor sense of weariness. (35:35)

Besides using Quranic verses for chronograms, he composed an excellent chronogram for the construction of a mosque in Berlin from the words used in the *azān*, the call to prayer. What more appropriate words could give a chronogram for a mosque?

حَیَّ عَلَی الصَّلٰوۃ حَیَّ عَلَی الصَّلٰوۃ حَیَّ عَلَی الْفَلَاح حَیَّ عَلَی الْفَلَاح

AD 1926

Come to prayer, Come to prayer,
Come to salvation. Come to salvation.

Addition and subtraction

I said above that, in general, it is felt that the best chronograms are those which yield the exact date. But there are chronograms in which the key words require addition or subtraction (called respectively *ta'miya* and *taxrija*) to yield the right date, and where the chronogram-writer is able to indicate this really effectively, what in other circumstances would be reckoned a defect becomes a matter for admiration. The coming of independence to the subcontinent inspired my father to compose quite a large number of chronograms; some of them are quoted below, but two are worth quoting here as illustrations of *ta'miya*.

A few words of introduction are necessary. Momin has a couplet in one of his most famous ghazals which has acquired the stamp and currency of an idiom:

صاحب نے اس غلام کو آزاد کر دیا
لو بندگی کہ چھوٹ گئے بندگی سے ہم

The Sahib has freed this slave.
See! *bandagī!* we are freed from bondage!

In the context of the Raj and foreign rule over the subcontinent, the words *sāhib* 'master', *ğulām* 'slave', *āzād* 'free' and *bandagī* 'bondage' all

acquired an added connotation. Momin originally composed the verse simply as a couplet in a ghazal; and since Sāhib is said to have been the name of one of his sweethearts, the couplet had a flavour of realism too. But when the English rulers (*sāhib*) freed (*āzād kar diyā*) the slaves (*ğulām*) and went away, the couplet became rather more meaningful! People tried their hand at using this couplet to fit the occasion.

My father composed two chronograms using both lines of Momin's couplet and set them in separate quatrains. Addressing the British, he says:

شکوہ جو تھا غموں کا وہ اپنی جگہ پہ ہے
یہ شکر کی جگہ ہے کہ دل شاد کر دیا

اب قادری کے ساتھ وطن مل کے زے صدا
315 + 65
صاحب نے اس غلام کو آزاد کر دیا

1576
315
65

AD 1947

The complaint which we had of our sorrows is valid.
But it is an occasion for gratitude that he has made
our heart glad.
Now the country should join with Qādrī to raise the cry:
'The Sahib has freed this slave.'

The other one uses the other line of the couplet to give the Hijri year:

صاحب! تھے ہم غلام تو حیواں تھے یا جماد
آزاد ہو کے لگتے ہیں کچھ آدمی سے ہم

بے شک ہیں شامل اس میں عنایاتِ ایزدی
564
لو بندگی کہ چھوٹ گئے بندگی سے ہم

802
564

AH 1366

Sahib! When we were slaves we were animals or minerals.
Now we are free we seem to be something like men.
Without doubt divine favour is involved in this,
See, adieu! We are freed from bondage!

One way of composing a chronogram is to use letters in such a way that if the numerical values are read one after another they produce the correct year. This method is so difficult that only a very few examples are known. One classical example, often quoted, is a chronogram posed to give the name of a nobleman's garden, based on the *tūbā*-tree which grows in paradise:

طوبا = ط و ب ا

AH 1269

There was a great flood in AH 1352. Everything was swept away by the waters. My father composed the chronogram:

بہ جا = ب ہ ج ا

AH 1352 Flow away!

Perhaps it would not be out of place here, as examples of this kind are

so rare, if I quote my own chronogram on the date of birth of the great poet Ghālib:

بابا = ب ا ب ا

'Baby!' AH 1212

Another difficult mode of composing chronograms is that which follows the rule of *zubur-o bayyināt*. This is most easily explained by giving an example. The word *'ilm* according to the general rules yields the sum:

ع ل م

140 = 40 + 30 + 70

But in this mode the value of the word is calculated by, so to speak, spelling it out, and adding the values of all the letters so written. Thus the value of *'ilm* will be calculated as:

ع	ل	م
ع ی ن	ل ا م	م ی م
50+ 10 + 70	40+ 1 + 30	40 + 10 + 40
130	+ 71 +	90 +

291 =

It is obviously a very challenging task to compose a chronogram in this mode. In AH 1341, Mustafa Kamal Pasha Ataturk scored a resounding success at the Lausanne Conference. My father composed a chronogram in this mode with the added restriction that all the words were composed of undotted letters. Not only this, but he set the chronogram in a *qit'a* composed entirely of undotted letters:

صلح کردہ کمالِ کامل — عادل، محمودِ عصر و ہمدرد
حامد را کرد ملہم الہام — صلح حاصل مراد دل کرد

AH 1341

According to the rules of *zubur-o bayyināt* this chronogram is calculated as follows:

صاد لام حا حا الف صاد لام میم را الف دال دال لام کاف را دال

35+201+101+71+35+35+111+201+90+71+95+111+9+9+71+95
= AH 1341

Another mode is to take only the first, the middle, or the last letter of each word, and to indicate this in a subtle way.

My father used all three variations of this mode. Using the first letters alone he composed this chronogram on the communal riots in Kanpur:

یہ تاریخ سنیئے کہ کہتے ہیں کیا
لبِ شورش و غدر و طغیان و مرگ

ش غ ط م

40 + 9 + 1000 + 300 = AH 1349

Listen to this chronogram: what do they say?
The 'lips' of turmoil and revolt and sedition and death?

Here the 'lips' indicates that only the first letter of the key words is to be counted.

On another occasion, using only the middle letters of each word, he composed a chronogram on the death of Dilgīr Akbarābādī, a celebrated poet, littérateur and mystic of Agra:

بے سر و پا ہو گئے دلگیر کے جانے سے ہم
لطف و کرم، شعر و سخن، عشق و وفا، وصل و ادا

ط + ر + ع + خ + ش + ف + ص + د

4 + 90 + 80 + 300 + 600 + 70 + 200 + 9
= AH 1353

By Dilgīr's going these have now lost their head and feet (beginning and end):
'Kindness' and 'compassion', 'poetry' and 'verse', 'love' and 'loyalty', 'union' and 'grace'.

Elsewhere, using the last letter of each word, he composed the following chronogram to mark the hospitality of a friend:

جو چاہو دیکھنا تاریخ اس مہماں نوازی کی تواضع فیض و لطف و مکرمت کی انتہا دیکھو

ع + ض + ف + ت

400 + 80 + 800 + 70
= AH 1350

If you want to see the chronogram of this hospitality,
See the extreme of 'entertainment' and 'generosity' and 'kindness' and 'favour'.

Here 'the extreme' (*intihā*) indicates that it is the last letter of the preceding words which is to be counted.

Yet another mode is to give the year in words which themselves yield the same year or the corresponding year in a different era when read as a chronogram. When Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān founded his first educational establishment at Aligarh in AD 1875/AH 1292 Maulvī Safdar Husain composed a chronogram for it in this very clever fashion:

تھی فکر مجھ کو اک دن تاریخِ مدرسہ کی
بولا یہ ملہمِ غیب اٹھارہ سے پچھتر

AH 1292

The words give the year AD 1875, but when the value of the letters is counted one gets the Hijri equivalent 1292.

My father composed a few chronograms on this pattern:

ہے تاریخ الفاظ و اعداد میں کہ سن آج تیرہ سو بتّیس ہیں

AH 1332

Here is a chronogram both in words and in numbers:
Hear, today is the year thirteen hundred and thirty-two.

جو پوچھے کوئی سال ان حادثوں کا • تو کہہ دو کہ "تیرہ سو اٹھارہ ہجرت"

AD 1902

If anyone asks the year of these events say 'AH 1318'.

Compare this Persian chronogram, marking an addition to the existing building of a mosque in Ghalibpura in Agra:

یافت این مسجد چو توسیعِ جدید
بر زبانِ حامد این تاریخ رفت
صوری و معنوی بے وادِ عطف
یک ہزار و سہ صد و ہفتاد و ہفت

485 + 490 + 159 + 243

= AH 1377

When this mosque received a new extension,
This chronogram came to Hāmid's tongue:
Apparent and synonymous, without the 'and's:
'One thousand' and 'three hundred' and 'seventy' and 'seven'.

At five o'clock in the evening of 30 January AD 1948 Gandhi, the architect of Indian freedom, was shot dead by the bullet of Nathu Ram Godse. This tragedy shook the whole nation, and moved my father to compose several chronograms. Some were based on the Muslim era, some on the Christian and some on the Hindu era. We quote one of each:

قتلِ رہبرِ اعظم

AD 1948

The murder of a great leader.

چتا میں تری قوم کا سہاگ

AH 1367

On your pyre is the honour of your nation.

رہبرِ اعظمِ ہندوستاں ہائے

SV 2004

Alas for the great leader of India!

In another chronogram he used a combination of words in one line to give four chronograms on the death of Shādān Bilgrāmī:

فاضلِ تنہا	کرم شیوہ	عظیم القدر بود
AH 1367	581	AH 1367
	1948	1948

He was a man of great worth, his kindness itself uniquely eloquent.

The value of hamza

Some of the chronograms I have quoted illustrate my father's practice in the disputed areas referred to above, areas in which some chronogrammists follow one rule and some another.

There is some difference of opinion concerning *hamza*. Some have given it the value 10; others give it the value 1; and yet others have ignored it. Detailed arguments have been adduced in support of each of these rules. In my opinion, and I believe, in my father's opinion, some of these rules are in any case relevant only to Arabic. The rule in Urdu should be to ignore *hamza* except where it can be regarded as the equivalent of *ye*, in which case it should have the value 10. Some Urdu words now commonly written with *hamza* were once written with *ye*, e.g. *ā(y)īna*.

My father's chronogram on his marriage in which he uses my mother's name with *taxrija*, to produce the right date, shows that this was the rule he observed. The marriage took place in AH 1332. My mother's name was Sāira Khātūn, which yields the figure 1333. He said:

نکاح ہوتا اگر اور ایک سال کے بعد
بھتی نام زوجہ سے تاریخ سائرہ خاتون

1333 – 1 = AH 1332

If the marriage had taken place one year later
The chronogram would have come from the name of my wife Sāira Khātūn.

Here he counts *hamza* as 10, since the name can be spelt with *ye*, although it is more often than not written with *hamza*.

Tā-e marbūta and tā-e qurišat

Some disagreement exists about *tā-e marbūta* written as *choṭī he* with two dots and sometimes described in English as 'closed *te*', as against *tā-e qurišat* written as *te* and called 'open *te*'. Some chronogrammmists treat 'closed *te*' as *he* and assign it the value 5, while others treat it as *te* and count it as 400. Some have used both these values and valued the letter either as 5 or as 400 to suit their convenience. My father did the same. He writes of one of his own chronograms:

In this chronogram the *tā-e marbūta* of *tahiya(t)* is reckoned as 400, though it should have been 5 and I myself on other occasions[5] have reckoned this *tā-e marbūta* as 5. But some chronogrammists have reckoned *tā-e marbūta* as 400; so I too did this.

In my opinion pronunciation is a vital consideration here. This letter necessarily occurs only in Arabic phrases. In pure Urdu 'closed *te*' does not exist. Thus in my opinion if in a particular phrase the *te* is pronounced then it should be counted as 400 whether written as *tā-e marbūta* or as *tā-e qurišat*.

Alif-e maqsūra

Alif-e maqsūra **is not counted. In Urdu some words are written by some with this *alif* while others write them with *alif-e mamdūda*. Only when the *alif-e mamdūda* is used in such words should the *alif* be taken into account. For instance if 'Iṣhāq' is written with *alif-e maqsūra*, its numerical value would be 169; but if it is written with a full *alif* its value would be 170. In some words, such as 'Mūsā', the *alif* is written above the *ye*, but it is the *alif* that is pronounced, and not the *ye*. Here too however the same rule applies. The *ye* is valued, and the *alif-e maqsūra* is not.**

The point of the art

In conclusion, one may ask just why my father spent so much of his time and effort in composing chronograms. The answer is, because he could not help it! There is an amusing passage in the first volume of his collected chronograms which reads:

> **One night I was busy composing chronograms and lost all sense of the time; and when I realised it was eleven o'clock already, I got up, exclaimed *lā haul!* put out the lamp and lay down to sleep. But as soon as I stretched my legs pondering upon the sheer waste of time, my mind busied itself with composing a chronogram to record this waste of time! With my eyes closed and my head under the eiderdown I composed two chronograms. Then, thinking that I might not be able to recall them in the morning, I got up again, lit the lamp with a match and wrote them down. Later in the day I set them in verses.**

The words in one of these verses comprise the chronogram

کام اس سے زیادہ نہیں فضول ہمیں

AH 1355

For me there is no more useless task than this.

But however 'useless' he described his art as being, we can be thankful that he practised it to the delight of those of us who can still enjoy his achievement today.

بتوفیقِ الٰہی ختم شد

AD 1988

NOTES

[1] *Dāstān-e tārīx-e urdū* (Agra 1941).

[2] The word *tārīx* signifies 'chronogram' as well as 'date' in Urdu, and art of the chronogram is termed *tārīx-goī*, from *tārīx-go* 'chronogrammatist'.

[3] Cf. the *Shorter OED* (1977 edn), s.v.: 'a phrase, sentence, or inscription, in which certain letters (distinguished from the rest) express by their numerical values a date or epoch. Thus a pamphlet published in 1666, when an engagement between the English and Dutch navies was expected, had in place of the imprint of the year this sentence: 'LorD haVe MerCIe Vpon Vs'. The sum of the numerical values of the capital letters is 1666'.

[4] Followed by *Mīzān ut tavārīx* (1937), *Jāmi' ut tavārīx* (1943), *Āsār ut tavārīx* (1953), all preserved as MSS in my own collection.

[5] As in *ummatin* in the third Quranic chronogram quoted above.

14

Poet–audience interaction at Urdu musha'iras

C. M. NAIM

The Urdu word 'musha'ira' (*mušā'ira*) is from *mušā'ara*, an Arabic verbal noun, reciprocal in reference, whose primary meaning, according to Steingass, is 'contending with, or excelling in poetry'.[1] That is still the basic meaning of the word in Iran, and *mušā'ara*, in Persian, refers to a poetic contest in which two persons or groups exchange couplets back and forth, each being required, for example, to respond with a couplet beginning with the letter with which the opponent's couplet ends.[2] In the Urdu milieu of South Asia such a contest is called *bait-bāzī* ('the game of couplets'), whereas 'musha'ira' exclusively refers to a gathering of poets for the purpose of reading poetry before an audience. (Elements of game and contest, however, are still discernible, as we shall see later.) According to Shiblī Nu'mānī, musha'iras in the latter sense — i.e. gatherings of poets — began in the Persian milieu near the end of the fifteenth century; but Nu'mānī does not indicate his source of information.[3] However, in the Persian/Urdu milieu of eighteenth century Delhi, Muhammad Taqī Mīr tells us that a new term *murāxta* was coined on the pattern of *mušā'ara* to refer to gatherings of *rexta* or Urdu poets.[4] The new term did not gain wide currency and was soon replaced by the original word.

No detailed descriptions of early Urdu musha'iras have come down to us; the only available information is fragmentary and begins with the second half of the eighteenth century.[5] We know that musha'iras were held quite frequently, often at regular intervals. Night was probably the preferred time. They were held at the homes of individuals as well as at such public places as those of the *dargāh* and *takiya* associated with Sufi saints; and they were sometimes held in the Red Fort. In every case, however, the audience was restricted: these were not 'open' events. Limitations of space and the protocols of an hierarchical society dictated that this be so. Also, it appears that very few non-participants attended those early musha'iras. In other words, there was at that time no distinguishable audience separate from the participating poets. The host of the evening was also the presiding person; he conducted the proceedings and usually started the musha'ira by presenting his own verses first. He then invited other poets to read, beginning with the young

and the lesser known. The poets sat forming an arena, i.e., with an open space in the middle. A candle circulated in the assembly, and was placed before each poet as his turn came. The poets read strictly in order of fame and seniority, with the master-poets (*ustād*) coming at the very end. Any lapse in that regard could lead to serious trouble. So far as we know those musha'iras were exclusively male affairs.

Returning to the element of competition mentioned earlier, its origin no doubt lay in the tribal role of the poet among the Arabs: poets praised their own tribes and disparaged tribal enemies. That element was further enhanced in the milieu of royal courts in the Islamicized lands: poets praised kings and competed with each other for royal favours. In India, Urdu poets vied with each other for the patronage of the nobility as well as for fame and prestige. And the arenas for this rivalry were the musha'iras, just as much as were the *mahfils* or private gatherings at the homes of the nobles. We must also mention here the important tradition of *ustādī* ('mentor-ship') and *šāgirdī* ('discipleship') in Urdu poetry. In pre-modern society, poetry was considered a science (*'ilm*) as well as a vocation (*fan*), and one needed to learn how to write poetry from some master (*ustād*). Every master poet had his loyal disciples (*šāgird*), and their numbers and names were matters of prestige. These disciples attended musha'iras in the company of their masters, and were quick to rectify, verbally or otherwise, any loss of face.[6]

Prior to this century, the chief source of competition in an Urdu musha'ira lay in the convention of *tarh* ('manner/foundation'). A line of verse was announced well ahead of any musha'ira and was called *misra'-e tarh* ('the foundation line'); it laid down the metre and the rhyme scheme which all poets then had to follow in writing ghazals for that musha'ira. Poets tried to outdo each other in discovering unusual rhymes and using them as many times as possible. Many rhyme-words would have conventional ideas to go with them; and in such cases poets strove to find original nuances.[7] A master-poet would not only compose a ghazal of his own, but often write verses to distribute among his disciples; he would also correct and improve their original verses, for any mistake on their part would reflect badly on him. In earlier musha'iras it was fairly common for poets to question each other's craftsmanship and linguistic or rhetorical prowess. Such arguments could develop into lengthy feuds if they were taken up by rival groups of disciples or instigated by some patron for his own amusement.

Tarhī musha'iras gradually lost favour with poets and audience alike, particularly in this century when the nature and size of audiences has radically changed. Musha'iras are now public affairs of a substantial size. Small private gatherings of poets are usually referred to by some other name, e.g. *našist* or *mahfil*. Musha'iras may be held indoors in an auditorium or a hall, or outdoors in some open space or under a lage tent. The easy availability of sound amplification systems has made it possible for thousands of people to attend any musha'ira. Almost without

exception, musha'iras are held only at night, beginning around nine and ending in the early hours of morning, even later. One may say that any musha'ira lasting less than four hours is not really a successful musha'ira; it is more like a *našist*.

Obviously a radical change has occurred. What were originally participatory events, in which performers and audience were almost one and the same, have now turned into occasions for a small number of poets to perform before a numerically much larger audience. This change is physically visible in the way poets are now seated on a stage separate from the vast majority of their audience. There is still a presiding person, a *sadr*, but now usually he is some politician or bureaucrat who will most likely not be a poet himself.

A more crucial role is now played by a new member of the cast: the conductor or *nāzim* of the musha'ira who is often simply referred to as the 'announcer'. It is not an easy job. The 'announcer' is expected to do much more than simply to announce the names of the poets in some order. He has to be sensitive to the feelings of the poets and must arrange their names in an order of precedence which will not hurt their egos. At the same time, he has to be alert and responsive to the changing moods of the audience, and must not let it get too restive. This requires that he should come up with a good mix of the popular and not-so-popular poets. He must also be quite witty, and ready with jokes and literary anecdotes to smooth over rough interludes; he should also be able to come up with novel ways to introduce poets. He must of course have a head for poetry, for one apt couplet serves his purpose better than ten elegant phrases. On some occasions he might find himself acting much like an umpire at some contest, mediating between feuding poets as often as between a hostile audience and an unpopular poet. The larger a musha'ira, the more crucial the role of the announcer becomes. His comments and decisions play a decisive role in the success of any large musha'ira. Thus, the announcer can add to a poet's reputation by giving him an extra laudatory introduction or by inviting him to read at some critical moment during the evening. On the other hand, he can ruin a poet's act by giving him a cursory introduction, by not paying him much attention during his reading, or by calling him to the microphone after some highly popular poet. These are only some of the ways an announcer makes his presence felt. A good announcer is therefore courted by most poets: this means more business for the announcer, which in turn makes more poets seek his good will. Earlier, it was the rule for the announcer to be a poet himself, but now some people, at least in India, have gained fame exclusively as announcers, and seem to have made a profession of it.

The original musha'iras were occasions where Urdu poets sought recognition from their peers. A poet's reputation was built upon the opinion of other poets, the number of his disciples and their status in that stratified society, his ability to compose properly and to defend his compositions from any adverse criticism, his talent for composing at

command if necessary, and so forth. In all cases, he was judged either by his peers, i.e. other poets, or by his patrons, who were frequently poets themselves. Every poet strove to show not only how good a poet he was but also how superior he was to other poets. That twofold aim still exists, but now a poet must seek approval from an audience that is anything but an assembly of his peers. Today's audiences at musha'iras are separated from the poets not only physically, but also in many other ways. A musha'ira audience these days will have a large number of people who may not be able to read, or in some cases even to speak Urdu. There will be people from all strata of society, representing all ranges of literacy, education, and value orientation. They will share a fondness for Urdu poetry, but their notions of what constitutes good poetry will be quite disparate. In fact, we now have poets who are called 'musha'ira poets' (*mušā'ire ke šā'ir*) because they are able to win over any musha'ira audience regardless of the literary quality of their verses.

What makes one a good 'musha'ira poet'? The primary requirement, it appears, is a good style of delivery. At present, in order to be successful at any musha'ira, every poet, except for someone with a very high literary reputation or some other star quality, has to have a distinctive way of presenting his poetry. That, in the great majority of cases, means a good voice and a musically attractive manner of recitation. This particular style of chanting or recitation, called *tarannum*, has been carefully analysed by the ethnomusicologist Regula Qureshi, and we need not dwell on the subject here.[8] We should simply note that, except for those who write either humorous of political verses exclusively, popular 'musha'ira poets' rarely use the simple, declamatory style called *taht ul lafz:* they tend to favour *tarannum*, often pushing its musical quality to the limits where it might begin to resemble singing. On the whole, however, most poets maintain the distinction between *tarannum* and singing, and try to invent new mannerisms or flourishes within the limits of *tarannum*. A 'musha'ira poet' with a pleasing *tarannum* does not have to worry much about the quality of his poetry, or even its inventory. His reputation will remain safe, even if he sticks to a handful of his more popular compositions. A typical musha'ira audience would rather hear some old, familiar poem recited in its favourite *tarannum* than ask for freshness of thought and newness of imagery.

Tarannum or no, all poets present their ghazals in a certain manner which is very significant for our purpose. The ghazal is still by far the most favoured genre of poetry in Urdu, and in the context of musha'iras one can safely assert that eighty to ninety percent of the poetry recited will be in this form. The basic unit of poetry in a ghazal is a couplet (*bait* or *ši'r*): two lines which are grammatically and, more often than not, also thematically independent of the other couplets in that ghazal. (What all the couplets of a ghazal must share are the metre and the rhyme scheme). As the readers read or the listeners listen to a ghazal, they focus their attention on one couplet at a time.

It is this fragmentary quality which facilitates the following manner of presentation scrupulously adhered to by all ghazal poets in a musha'ira. The poet reads the first line (*misra'*) of a couplet, then briefly pauses. A few poets sitting nearby, the announcer, and some members of the wider audience can then be expected to repeat that line. The poet himself then repeats the first line, and continues with the second line. That completes the presentation of one couplet. The audience, if it liked the verse, would then show its appreciation and delight by shouting certain phrases, e.g. '*vāh vāh*, *subhān ullāh*, *bahut xūb*', etc. If the couplet pleased some people a great deal they might ask for an encore by shouting: '*mukarrar*' or '*phir paṛhiye*'. And the poet would oblige them by repeating the couplet as many times as they ask. He would also show his appreciation of their praise by bowing his head, raising his right hand to his forehead in salutation, or making some other such gesture.

This particular order of repetition and response probably originated in the desire to facilitate the audition and comprehension of a couplet by a large audience. It also serves, however, to enhance the enjoyment of the couplet in a crucial way: the pause, followed by the repetition of the first line, creates an air of expectation and suspense which pulls the audience closer to the performance. As the audience hears the first line, it obviously learns one half of the couplet's contents. Add to this the fact that after the first couplet, if not after the very first line of a ghazal, the audience knows the metre and rhyme scheme the poet intends to follow. The more cognizant among the audience will also be familiar with the conventions of the ghazal. Consequently, while the poet pauses then repeats the first line, the audience may race ahead and work out the second line, either fully, partially, or merely to the extent of its rhyme. In fact, one may sometimes hear the second line called out by the audience before the poet recites it. This sequence of events is in a sense the reverse of the poet's original creative process: a ghazal poet usually begins with the rhyme-word and works backward to the first line. This creation of suspense, followed by its resolution, whether in the form of fulfilled expectations or some surprise, greatly adds to the pleasure that an audience seeks at a musha'ira.

Of course, in either case, the couplet must have some thematic or linguistic virtue. An unexpected or obscure rhyme no longer suffices; nor does a trite poetic statement. The audience at a musha'ira never hesitates to express its contempt for mere poetasters. If it can be loud in praising a good poet, it can be equally emphatic in ridiculing a bad one. A poet may draw upon himself an audience's wrath for several reasons. His style of declamation or chanting may be too plain or, alternatively, too obtrusive. He may read couplets which have nothing to recommend them. He may look strange, because of his dress or physical appearance. It is fairly common in musha'iras for a number of poets to be hooted off the microphone. This can sometimes happen even to the more established poets. Younger audiences, predictably, tend to be more boisterous, and

musha'iras at educational institutions can be expected to turn into severe trials for the participating poets. On such occasions, some poets resort to reading overly erotic, political or religious verses — particularly the latter, in order to appeal to the predominantly Muslim audiences. Many a time this works, but one should give the younger audiences credit for not always being taken in.

Every successful musha'ira poet must be sensitive to the mood of the audience, and able to respond to their silent or vocal cues. If he is a *nazm*-writer — i.e. he writes thematically unified poems with linearly linked lines or couplets — he may try out a short poem before launching into something long. Another poet may read a few quatrains or perhaps some separate couplets, to get some sense of the audience, before committing himself to a particular ghazal. Of course, they all watch how the poets preceding them fare. In this context, a ghazal writer has an additional advantage: he can change the order and number of his couplets at will. Usually he will try to make his opening verse quite good, to be followed by another of the better couplets. If he gets some applause he might try to sneak in a mediocre verse before presenting another good one. Thus a poet, while reading the same ghazal at different musha'iras, may alter the order of the verses or vary their number to suit the audience.

As a poet reads, he is likely to draw the attention of his audience in many ways. He may say a few words to explain his couplet, particularly if there is some difficult allusion. Or he may simply say: 'please listen to this couplet', or 'this couplet deserves special attention' (*mulāhiza ho: tavajjuh cāhtā hūṅ*). Often a poet may do this to keep the other poets sitting nearby quiet or to force a rival to acknowledge him. Once directly addressed by a poet, other poets have to pay him attention and say something polite about his verse. The people at large may not, of course, feel so constrained, but they may be impressed to some extent. The more informed will even enjoy the subtle game of one-upmanship going on among the poets.

In a significant sense, a similar game goes on between the poet and the audience in contemporary musha'iras. A large section of the audience appears to come with the attitude, 'Show me how good you are'. Most of them may not be too adept at recognizing genuine talent, but they can be trusted to be quick and ruthless if someone tries to fake greatness. They never fail to deflate pomposity. A good 'musha'ira poet' remembers this. He makes sure of appearing humble before the audience, no matter how arrogant he may be towards his peers or how contemptuous he may seem of political and religious authority. A good 'musha'ira poet' never takes his audience for granted; at the same time, he uses every known device to manipulate it. One poet recently prefaced his reading by saying to the younger section of his audience, 'If *you* don't praise this couplet, no one will.' That of course ensured a good round of applause. Another contemporary poet was heard referring to his recently dead wife at every reading for several months, thus immediately earning the audience's sympathy.

It should be clear from the above that contemporary Urdu musha'iras are not at all like the poetry-readings one sees in the West, though both have a small number of performers appearing before a much larger number of listeners. Urdu musha'iras are larger in scale and much more lively. They are also quite complex in their dynamics. People come to a musha'ira not merely because they like poetry or admire certain poets; they come also to be active participants in it. Further, they basically come to have a good time. They watch the poets contending with each other, and they themselves engage in a playful contest with them: they tacitly challenge the poets to win applause from them, or at least not draw their jeers. In that sense, contemporary musha'iras are also vastly different from the original musha'iras of the eighteenth century. Nowadays the non-poet members of the audience have not only greatly increased in numbers but also in importance. They now contribute as much to the totality of a musha'ira as a 'performance' as do the poets. Whether these developments have been bad for Urdu poetry or good, is a subject beyond the limits of this short note.[9]

NOTES

[1] F. Steingass, *A comprehensive Persian–English dictionary* (London 1892).

[2] See, for example, Muhammad Sabūrī Tabrīzī, *Mušā'ara* (Tehran 1341 Shamsi); Mahdī Suhailī, *Mušā'ara* (Tehran 1343 Shamsi).

[3] Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Ši'r ul 'ajam*, vol. III (Azamgarh, 1945 reprint), p. 17.

[4] Muhammad Taqī Mīr, *Nikāt uš šu'arā*, ed. 'Abdul Haq (Aurangabad 1935), p. 147.

[5] There is an excellent summary account in Munibur Rahman, 'The musha'irah', *Annual of Urdu Studies*,3 (1983), pp. 75-84.

[6] One suspects that the extreme emphasis on an apprenticeship with an *ustād* and the close identity between an *ustād* and his *šāgird* were developments that took place in India, particularly in eighteenth century Delhi. It is a subject that deserves to be explored.

[7] It is interesting to note that when in Lahore in 1870 an English administrator organized a different kind of musha'ira (poets were asked to compose poems on a set theme rather than a *tarh*), the element of competition was maintained and prizes were offered. See my forthcoming article, 'Mughal and English patronage of poetry: a comparison', to be published in the proceedings of a conference on 'Patronage in India', held under the auspices of the U.S. Festival of India in 1985.

[8] Regula Qureshi, 'Tarannum: the chanting of Urdu poetry', *Ethnomusicology*, 13, 3 (1967), pp. 425-468, and her following paper in this volume.

[9] The original version of this paper was presented in a panel on 'Capturing an audience: oral performance in South Asia' at the annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies, Philadelphia 1985.

15

The Urdu ghazal in performance

REGULA BURCKHARDT QURESHI

The ghazal has a dominant place of pervasive importance in the world of Urdu-speaking people. This importance extends far beyond literary circles and scholarship, into the minds and hearts of people of every background and occupation. Perhaps unique, this situation is certainly unparalleled by other living literary high cultures, even within the South Asian culture area.

How can a poetic genre hold such a central place in the expressive culture of a language community, highly segmented by stratification and regional differences and, more recently, by political division and emigration? The answer, clear to participants in the cultural life of Urdu speakers everywhere, can be summed up in one word: performance. This presents a paradox for the Western literary tradition which has encoded its own separation from its oral roots in the mutually exclusive categories of 'literate' and 'oral'. For the Urdu ghazal is as much oral as it is literate and literary. True, ghazals are enshrined in *dīvāns* and literary magazines, read by scholars and connoisseurs, but their primary communicative channels have traditionally been oral, and even today they are most widely disseminated in sound, an aural, not a visual experience which is shared between performer and listener and, equally important, shared among listeners. No wonder Bausani called Urdu poetry 'il dizionario dei analfabeti';[1] ghazals can arouse mass sentiment, and poets can attain fame before their works are published.[2]

Unlike its written version, the ghazal in performance has its meaning embodied in sound and its form becomes integral to its content. What sustains this integration and gives it life is musical sound. For in performance the 'musical' qualities felt to be inherent to the ghazal genre[3] become manifest in actual musical settings[4] of remarkable diversity and beauty. The goal of this paper is to examine the ghazal as an aural experience and thereby to gain an expanded perspective on the unique cultural impact of this poetic form.

Implied in this approach is the serious consideration of ghazal repertoires which are widely used in performance, even if they are of variable poetic quality — for instance Sunni and Shi'a religious verse, as well as what one might term the 'entertainment ghazal'. This is justifiable

even to the literary purist, for it is precisely the breadth of use of the ghazal form and idiom that nourishes the receptivity towards its most outstanding artistic manifestations, just as the reverse process, more generally recognized, is also true. Turning thus toward the ghazal's *Rezeption* means taking in account its place in the wider world of the living Urdu word, a world to which Ralph Russell has devoted an untiring commitment. I would like here to acknowledge with gratitude his early encouragement and his contribution, through his pragmatic study of *'arūz*,[5] to my understanding of Urdu verse structure

The ghazal exists in the form of six distinct musical genres identified most clearly by their traditional occasions of performance. These genres belong to two major cultural domains, the secular and the religious, and to two major musical categories, chant or 'recitation', and song, and may be represented schematically as:

	Secular	Religious
Chant	1) *tarannum*	2) *nauha* *salām* *mātam* 3) *na't*
Song	5) ghazal art-song 6) recorded ghazal	4) *qavvālī*

1) *Tarannum* is the solo chanting of poems, mainly by poets reciting their work in the musha'ira, a poetic symposium with an audience including both the sophisticated and the untutored.

2) *Nauha*, *salām* and *mātam* are three hymn types chanted in the *majlis*, the commemorative assembly of Shi'a Muslims which is convened for mourning the martyrdom of Imam Husain and the tragedy of Karbala. Vocal accompanists may support the solo reciter; in addition, regular chest-beating by all participants accompanies *mātam* only.

3) *Na't* is a ghazal in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, chanted in the *mīlād*, the devotional assembly of Sunni Muslims, which is often held to celebrate the Prophet's birth. Here too, vocal accompanists may support the solo reciter.

4 *Qavvālī* is the song genre performed at the *mahfil-e samā'*, the Sufi assembly held for achieving mystical experience. A singing group is accompanied by the barrel drum (*dholak*) and harmonium (*bājā*), and by regular clapping.

5) The ghazal art-song is sung in the *mahfil* or *mujrā*, the traditional élite musical entertainment which is associated with feudal courts and courtesan salons. A soloist, traditionally female, is accompanied by the bowed sarangi and the tabla (two-piece drum), and more recently also by the harmonium.

6) The recorded ghazal is the song genre for 'playback' entertainment,

also associated with films (*filmī ğazal*). Most often a male singer is accompanied by tabla, harmonium, sarangi, and other melody instruments.

Of these six, the three secular genres are linked by a shared textual repertoire of standard traditional poetry. Thus the same poems which their creator may recite in *tarannum* in a musha'ira can be sung in a *mahfil* or *mujrā* as an art-song, and can also be turned into a recorded playback song.

The three religious genres share a functional basis of articulating the devotional religious practice of the three major religious groupings among Urdu-speaking Muslims. While *majlis* and *mīlād* poems differ in topic and personage addressed (Imām Husain, Hazrat 'Alī and other martyrs for most *majlis* hymns, the Prophet Muhammad for *mīlād* hymns), Sufi song texts can be shared with *na't* and also with some Shi'a *salām* hymns.

All of these performance idioms result from the intersection of the ghazal tradition with that of Indo-Pakistani 'light' music. The relationship between the two is, in an overall way, governed by what may be called a cultural ideology regarding the poetic word which derives ultimately from the supremacy of the revealed word of God in the Quran. Based on the Muslim approach toward the Quranic word, and reinforced at least since the thirteenth century by the Sufi emphasis on poetic expression, poetry has been the approved cultural form for the heightened articulation of significant communication — expressive, cognitive or didactic. Poetry as an art is subject to high formal and aesthetic standards, and its originator, the poet, is highly regarded.

Music, according to the same ideology, is on the other hand at best an ambivalent cultural form, for it articulates emotion through sound experience, but that sound lacks inherent cultural content. Its powerful expressive potential needs therefore to be controlled and directed, most appropriately by a text, so as to infuse it with content. While this is possible acoustically in vocal music, the purely sensory-emotional impact of instrumental music can only be controlled indirectly, through contextual association. Conceptually, this concern has been embodied in a categorical distinction between singing with instruments on one side, and musically enhanced recitation, or chant, on the other. Terminology succinctly articulates this separation between the two vocal categories: the first is 'singing' (*gānā*), the second 'reading' or 'reciting' (*paṛhnā*).

The intersection of the two cultural traditions of poetry and music results in a clearly definable relationship between the ghazal and its musical setting. In accordance with the clear supremacy of the text, the words and their message must remain intact; the music must therefore be subordinated to these priorities. In concrete terms, this means that features of music must be constrained directly by features of the text.

All ghazal musical settings share a strophic form, corresponding exactly to the form of the couplet. The binary structure of the couplet is

represented musically by the *asthāyī-antarā* complex. The *misra'-e ūlā*, the initial, non-rhyming line with its opening statement, is always set to a higher pitched, open-ended tune, the *antarā*, whereas the *sānī misra'*, the rhyming line with its concluding statement, is set to a lower pitched, conclusive *asthāyī* tune. Unlike the *antarā* which requires melodic completion, the *asthāyī* tune is self-contained which also makes it an appropriate setting for the opening line of the *matla'*. The formal correspondence between text and music is thus:

Text		Music
a (rhyming line)	=	A (*asthāyī*)
a (rhyming line)	=	A (*asthāyī*)
b (non-rhyming line)	=	B (*antarā*)
a (rhyming line)	=	A (*asthāyī*)

At the same time, parallel endings between the two tunes are common, so the musical setting is capable of emphasizing contrast as well as parallelism between verse lines (e.g. Fig. 1). Within the *misra'*, the rhyme scheme of *qāfiya-radīf* is often highlighted melodically or marked by a melodic cadence. Likewise, the caesuras that occur naturally in the lines with an extended *bahr* are represented by the musical phrase structure within the *misra'* (e.g. Fig. 2b).

The rhythm of the tune corresponds to the poetic metre by representing the long-short pattern durationally, be it with or without reference to a musical metre. The large number of diverse poetic metres result in equally diverse rhythmic patterns which in turn generate a number of different metric arrangements. In accommodating asymmetrical or irregular metric groupings of a *bahr* within a musical metre, a considerable variety of interpretations results, based on the choice of the downbeat and on the variable musical duration allocated to long syllables *vis-à-vis* short ones (2[+n]: 1). This may be illustrated by the different musical rhythms which occur in the figures below, corresponding to a single *bahr*:[6]

∪ — ∪ — | ∪ ∪ — — | ∪ — ∪ — | ∪ ∪ —

mafā'ilun fa'ilātun mafā'ilun fa'ilun

free [Figs. 1, 2a, 2b, 3]

6/8 [Figs. 4, 6]

8/8 [Fig. 2c]

8/4 [Fig. 5]

In general, metric rather than semantic groupings determine groupings of musical rhythm. In fact, there are favoured musical arrangements of poetic metres in the form of tunes which have become transferable between poems of the same metric structure and even between ghazal genres. Such stock or 'pattern-tunes' (*paiṭarn dhun*) can also serve poets to cast their inspiration into the mould of their chosen *bahr* (Fig. 1 is a widely known pattern-tune).

Also subordinated to the text, finally, are features of acoustic articulation which serve to preserve the declamatory integrity of the poem. This is mainly reflected in the consistent enunciation and weighting of consonants as well as in the differential tonal representation of long and short vowels, of voiced consonants, and of the '*nīm-fatha*' (represented by ɔ in transcription). A pace slower than that of speech is another feature common to all ghazal music.

From the vantage point of the common structural frame of reference for ghazal music, it is now possible to focus on the individual ghazal genres that share this frame, articulating and modifying its features in ways specific to their particular character. For beyond the shared structural features derived from the poem, each ghazal performance-genre has its individual characteristics, or 'distinctive features', which identify it to its audience. These features are linked to the particular function of each genre, its context of use. And that context is embodied in the occasion of performance with which each of the ghazal genres is associated. Using this functional link as a starting point, there follows a brief characterization of the six different ways in which Urdu speakers listen to ghazals in performance.

1) *Tarannum: the ghazal recited in the musha'ira*[7]

Of all chant genres, this is the one with a function most completely centred on the poem, for it serves poets as a means of communicating their work to their constituency of literati for evaluation and public approbation. This purpose may be pursued with or without the help of musical sound, although *taht ul lafz-xwānī*, spoken declamation, is much less favoured by musha'ira audiences. What chant is seen to add to the poem is to enhance or 'activate' its emotional or experiential content, thereby arousing heightened emotional experience of it in the listener and in turn creating in him a sense of identification with the message and with its originator, the poet.

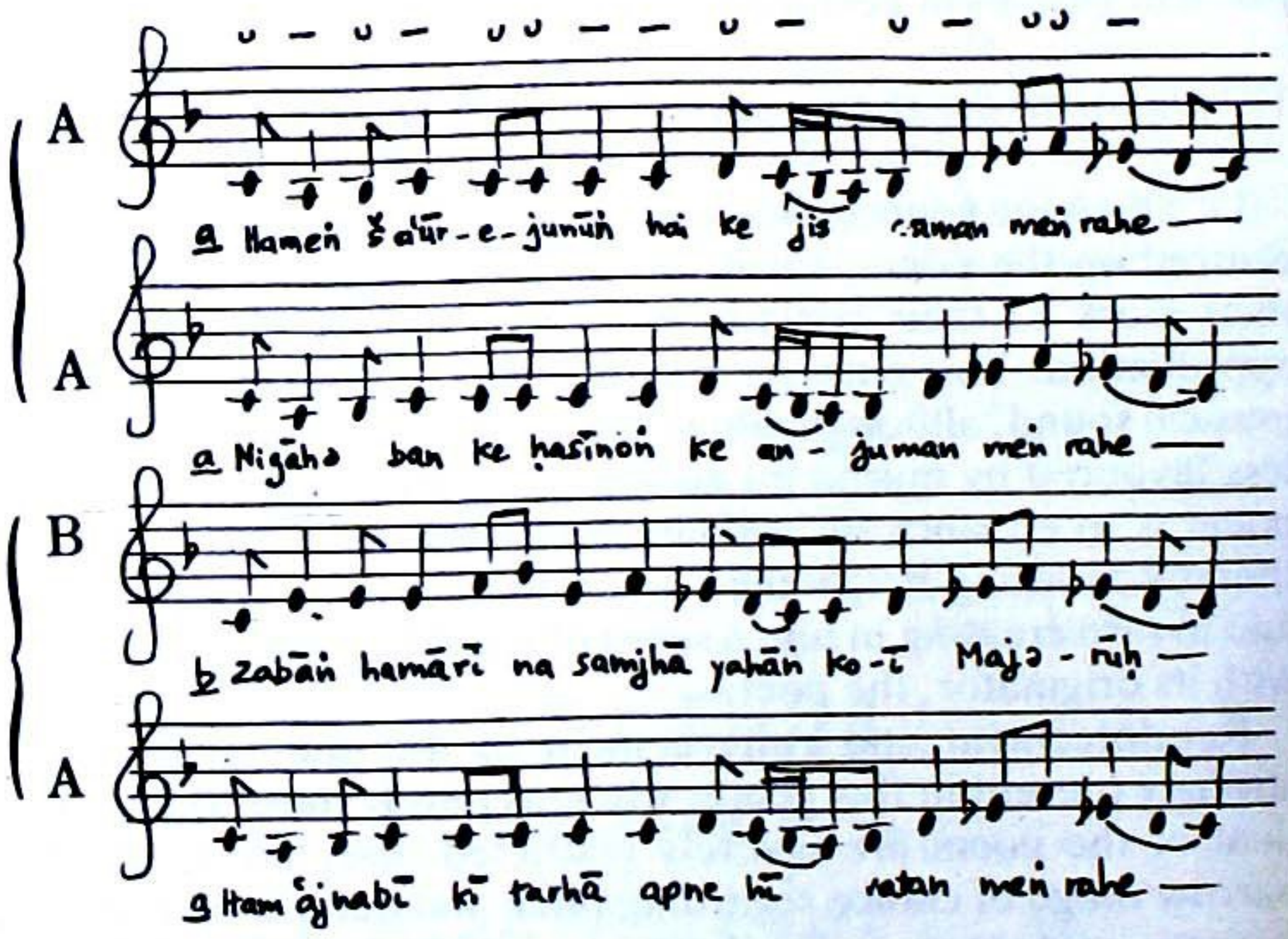
Reinforcement and enhancement of the poetic structure are most strongly present in this genre, whereas purely musical features independent of the poem are severely restricted; they are limited to a rather narrow range of choice regarding pitch and durational choices as well as acoustic presentation. Furthermore, all these choices are linked to the

reciter's personal presentation or individual performance style; but they are also subject to textual structural constraints, most of all the durational proportion of the poetic metre, or, more comprehensively, the bounds of spoken declamation. What is not acceptable for *tarannum* is any autonomous element of musical structure, most of all expansive melody. This correlates with the fact that a number of poets and literati disapprove of *tarannum* altogether, because they consider it inappropriately 'musical', to the detriment of the poetic message. In particular, poets themselves have criticized *tarannum* as a musical 'cover-up' of mediocre poetry, among them Josh Malīhābādī[8] in one of his poignant ruba'is:

گا گا کے مشاعروں کے میدانوں میں
تعریف کی گھاس چر رہے ہیں شعرا
سینے پہ غزل سرا چلاتے ہیں چھری
کرتے ہیں سُروں سے شعروں کی خانہ پُری

Singing away in the meadows[9] of the musha'iras,
Poets are eating up the grass of praise.
These ghazal-singers (!) are piercing my chest with a knife;
With musical notes they cover up their (mediocre) verses.

Fig. 1: *Tarannum* (Majrūh Sultānpūrī)

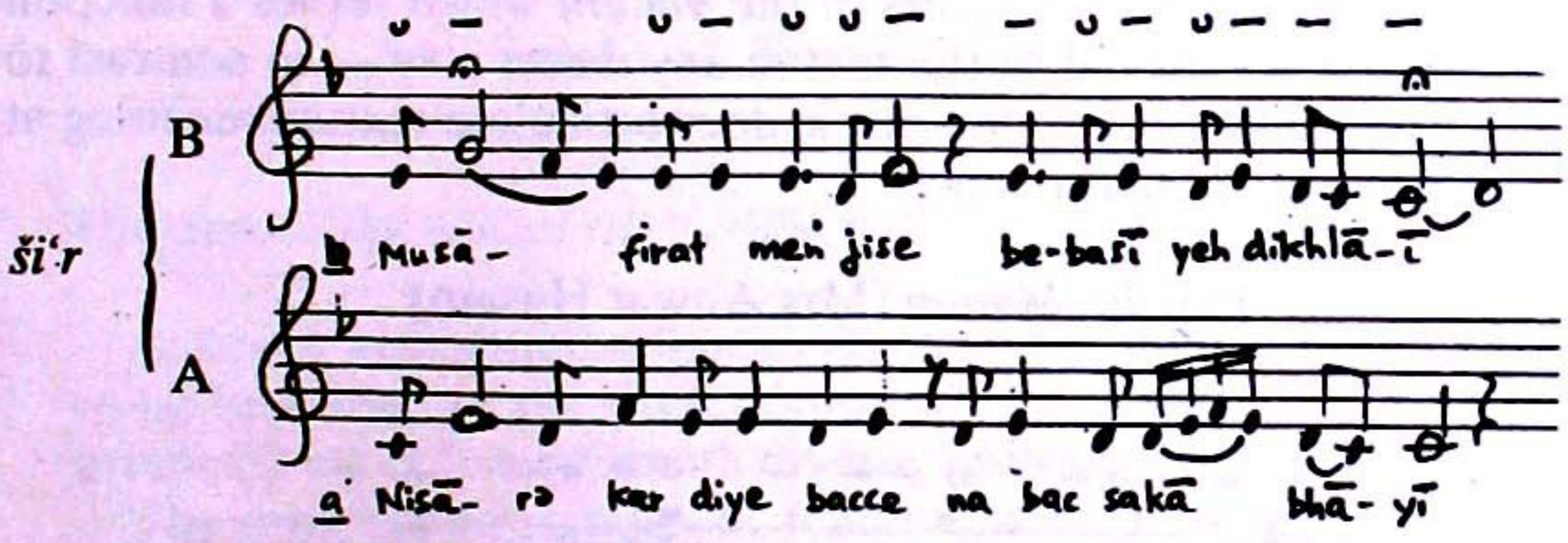


2) *Nauha, salām and mātam: the ghazal recited in the majlis*[10]

The function for all religious chanting traditions of the ghazal is fundamentally similar: to serve the presentation of appropriate poetry so as to evoke religious emotion while also reinforcing religious solidarity among the listeners. (Because the *majlis* is far more central to Shi'a religious practice than the *mīlād* is to that of the Sunni, there is a definite '*majlis*-ideology' articulating the function of the performance genre, unlike the somewhat less clearly defined notions relating to the *mīlād*.) The emotion to be aroused in the *majlis* is intense grief over the tragedy of Karbala.

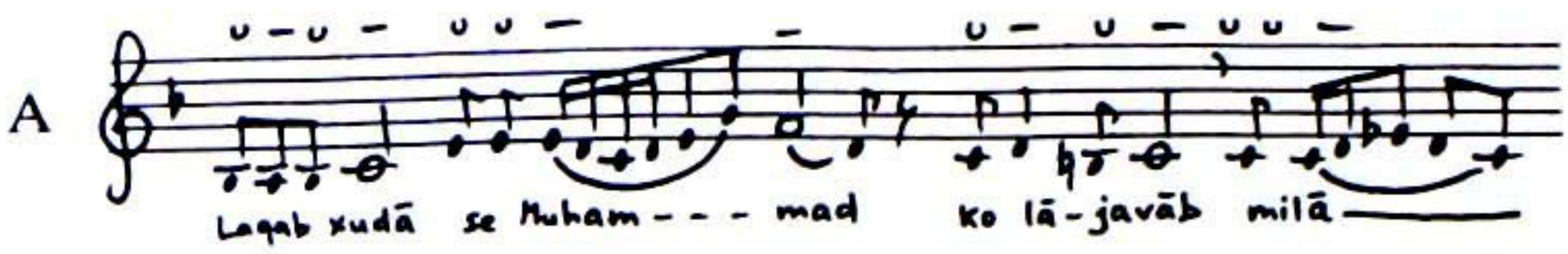
At the centre stands the *nauha*, melodically simple, having as its main characteristic the elongation of pitches on appropriate long syllables, especially at the end of a *misra'*; also, there is a preference for reciters with a lyrical; expressive 'soft' voice:

Fig. 2a: *Nauha* (Nāsir Jahāṅ, ghazal by Āl-e Razā)



The second hymn, the *salām*,[11] is a genre of artful melody, a dimension highlighted by the presence of a vocal drone and of raga-like melodic settings. The function of arousing grief is here taken over by the expressive resources of classical ragas, whereas vocal beauty, paramount in the simple *nauha*, loses its primary place in the functional scheme. At a subordinate functional level, this artful genre also articulates an élite character, an important component in the shaping of the Shi'a tradition in India.[12] .

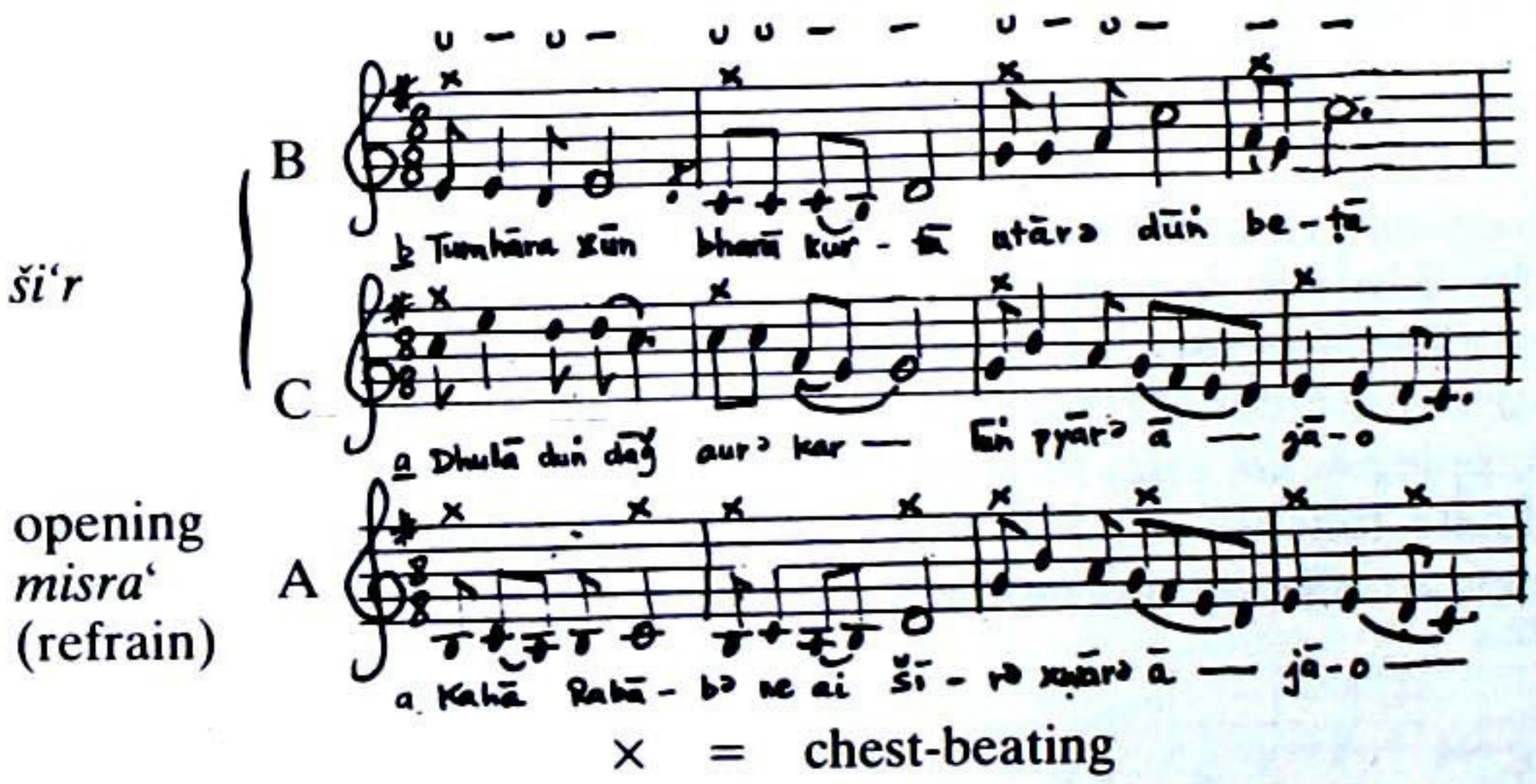
Fig. 2b: *Salām* (Sayyid Razī): opening *misra'*



A secondary function of articulating solidarity in mourning is served by the coordinated expression of grief: this takes the form of communal chest-beating which accompanies the third hymn genre, the *mātam*. Musically speaking, chest-beating amounts to sounding a regular pulse of forceful accents which imposes metric regularity on the poem being recited. While all other functional characteristics of arousing grief remain the same, this results in a more regulated rhythmic arrangement as well as a preference for melodic regularization in the form of motivic patterning.

The participation of the audience in the rhythmic pulse regulation reduces their receptivity to new textual content. Instead, in many *mātam* settings, regularity is formalized further, taking the shape of a recurring refrain between verses. Created from the opening line of the ghazal, this formal modification amounts to a distortion of the ghazal's structural integrity.[13] Significantly, it occurs in the *mātam* which serves a function (solidarity) not connected to the text in any direct way — in contrast to the *nauha* and *salām* where the music does articulate textual meaning at least in a general, thematic sense.

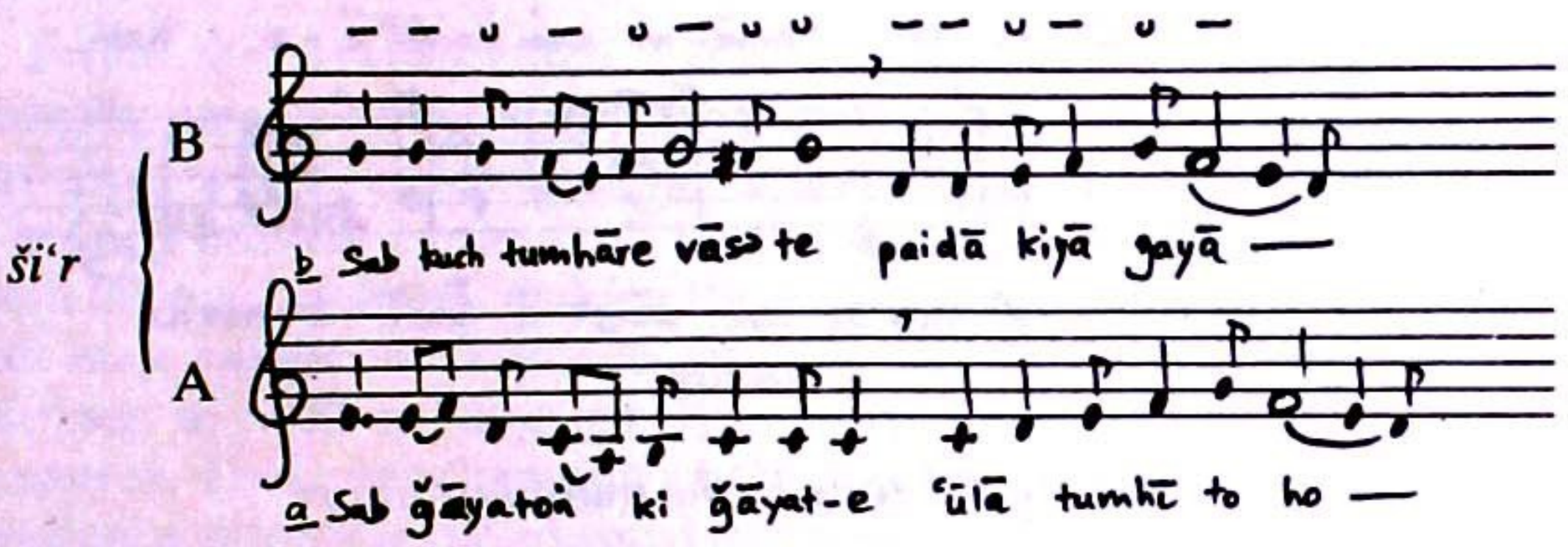
Fig. 2c: *Mātam* (Mrs Anwar Husain)



3) *Na'ṭ: the ghazal recited in the mīlād*

The emotion to be aroused through *na'ṭ-xwānī* is devotion. This function is served by enhancing the poem with attractive lyrical vocal quality (*xuš-gulūī*) and through only one strictly musical feature which is, however, not universally found in *na'ṭ* chanting: an emphasis on, or extension of high pitches within the contour of the melody, especially the *antarā* setting of the first *misra'* of each couplet. A further characteristic of the *na'ṭ* is melodic simplicity, and the absence of individuality in reciting style, both related to the need to cast over each ghazal a feeling of veneration and submission before the most exalted personage in Islam. The *bahr* in the following example is *muzāri'*:

Fig. 3: *Na'ṭ* (Mas'ūd Ahmad)



4) *Qavvālī: the ghazal sung in the mahfil-e samā'*[14]

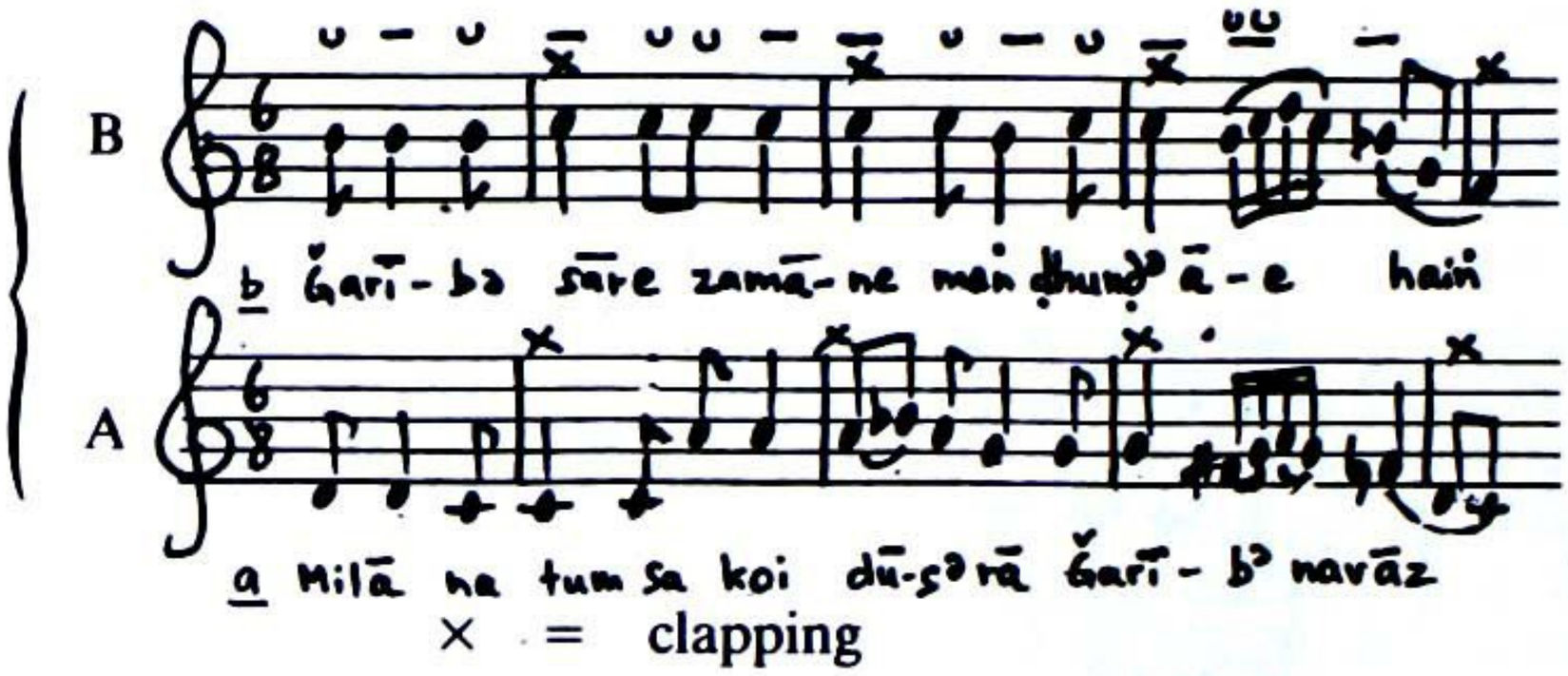
A clearly articulated religicus ideology permits the function of *qavvālī* to be identified as the presentation of poetry with the aim of arousing mystical love in listeners with diverse spiritual needs.

The most obvious musical features with a meaning specific to the function of *qavvālī* are those linked to emotional arousal: first and foremost the stress-intense musical metre — played on the loud *ḍholak* and reinforced by clapping. Sufis identify it with *zarb*, the heartbeat, which witnesses *zikr*, repeated invocations of God. This is the one purely musical feature that lacks any direct link with the ghazal text. Hence there is a concomitant need for a structural-acoustic means to keep the textual message dominant. Thus the music functions consistently to highlight both the formal and the rhythmic structure of the ghazal. As for the acoustic articulation of the words, group singing makes possible a high volume of vocal delivery and the continuity of the verbal utterance through responsory delivery, so that the drum is never heard without text.

The third functional requirement, to address an audience with diverse

and changing spiritual needs, calls for a musical structure that maintains continuity, yet allows for the isolation and manipulation of textual units, especially their repetition. The result is a segmentation, not only of the *ši'r* but even of an individual *misra'* into short text phrases which are then subjected to alternation, repetition, and even amplification through inserted verses (*girah*). However, according to traditional rules, each *misra'* of a *ši'r* must first be sung in its entirety and then linked together, so that the full message of the couplet is conveyed before its parts are subjected to manipulation.

Fig. 4: *Qavvālī* (Islām Ajmervāle)



5) *The ghazal art-song: the ghazal sung in the mahfil or mujrā*

The traditional context for the ghazal art-song is the *mahfil* or *mujrā*, a feudal salon concert which was ideally presented by a courtesan singer and her accompanists. Within this setting, the ghazal-song serves the performance of ghazal poetry in order to evoke sentiments of love in sophisticated patrons.

Here no less than in the chanted ghazal, the word dominates, despite the acoustically overwhelming presence of 'pure' music. Hence the musical setting must first and foremost reinforce the textual presentation, both structurally and acoustically, so as to give the textual message primacy. This purpose needs to be emphasized, for to achieve it is essential to being a good ghazal singer, as against being just a good singer. No less than the poet in the musha'ira, the ghazal-singer is sharing a poem with her — or his — listeners, but she is conveying it as a total acoustic experience, by means of music.[15]

Despite textual precedence, in the ghazal art-song music is also acknowledged as an artistic medium for imparting the poetic experience. In functional terms this takes place at two levels, one general, the other specific. At the general level, music serves to activate the mood of the poem by means of melody and also of rhythm. 'Mood' applies both to the sense of heightened emotion not specific to particular poetic content, and

to the particular emotional flavour conveyed by a poem in its opening verse or verses. (As an aside, it may be added that poems chosen for ghazal singing are often those whose individual verses revolve around a single thematic complex, typically that of unfulfilled love.) The musical resources employed to create the generalized mood of intensified emotion are the melodic resources of art music, in particular light ragas of amorous sentiment.

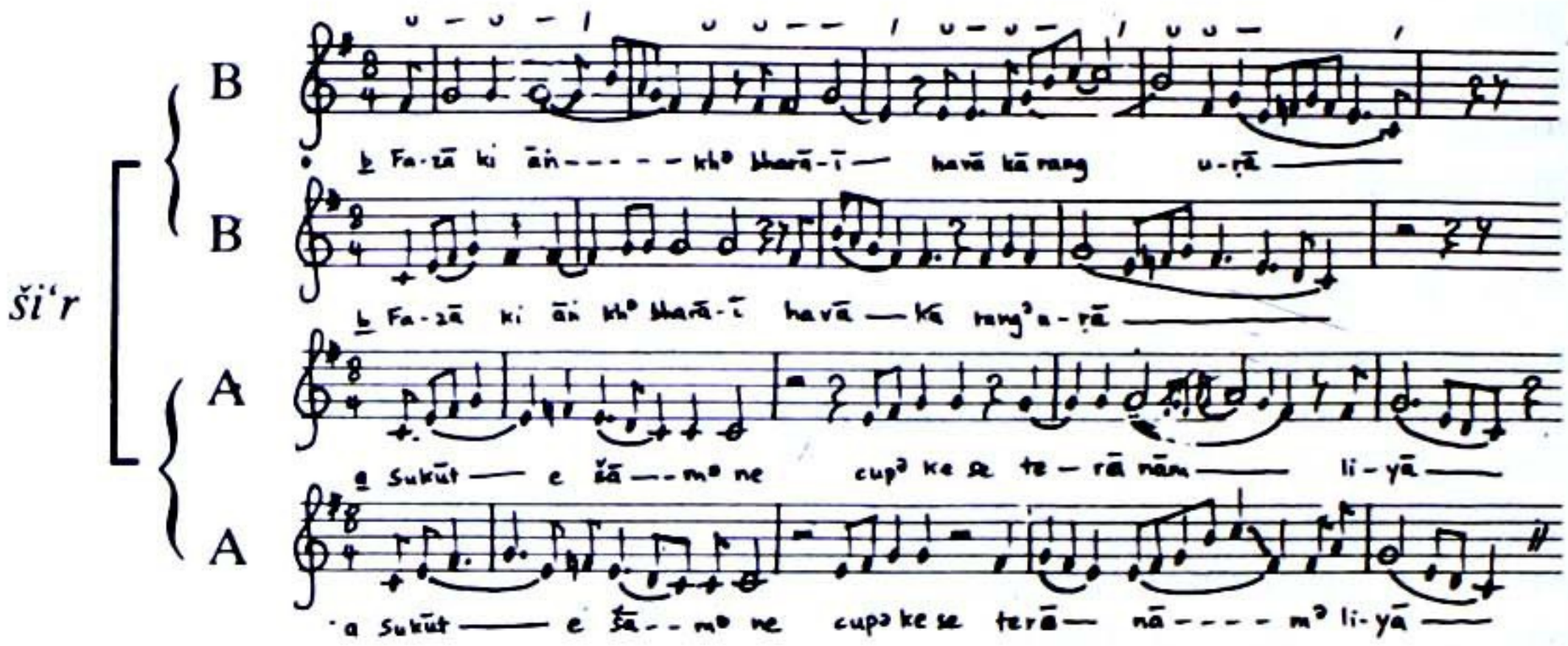
This comes to the fore even more strongly at the second, specific level of expressive function where music serves to intensify the impact of a particular line or text unit. Using raga-patterning to give expressive shape to individual melodic phrases is a purely musical procedure which the ghazal singer places in the service of poetic content. And since the symbolic-metaphoric idiom of the ghazal renders it particularly rich in multi-level meanings, a single verse line can be given various melodic interpretations to highlight different shades of textual meaning (see Fig. 5).

From this text-oriented expressive *musical* rendering emerges a second, *person*-oriented dimension of the function of music in the ghazal art-song which arises directly from the context of its performance. Through musical expression the singer creates a personal identification with the text message, making the text her own utterance, and conveying her own emotional response through melodic structuring of individual phrases as well as through visual expression, by facial miming and gestures. These very 'actions' — the term is used also in Urdu — help the audience interpret the musical expression of text content in a personal way. In addition, since the poem so often addresses, or refers to, a beloved 'other', and since the singer traditionally is female in a male audience, a second kind of identification naturally results in which the listener becomes the character of the beloved in a poem who is being addressed by its protagonist, the singer. This second identification becomes part of the dialogue the singer establishes with her patrons, not just collectively but individually — a special characteristic of the traditional ghazal-song performance.

Herein perhaps lies the musical essence of the ghazal art-song, where all its characteristic musical features get pulled together into a composite, yet unified musical communication, unified by the ghazal text. For what such a dialogue requires is first of all 'freedom of speech', the flexibility to articulate the poem musically with all its structural, acoustic and semantic nuances. Musically, this necessitates a structure akin to that of ghazal-chant as defined for the musha'ira, including also declamatory freedom. At the same time creating communication through the ghazal-song rests on the singer's ability to use musical resources in order to convey the mood and emotional content of the poem. An ongoing melodic character and rhythmic pace established for this purpose cannot be interrupted by declamatory needs; in other words there is a need for declamatory freedom as well as for musical continuity. This is where the true function

of instrumental accompaniment in the ghazal lies: to maintain the melodic integrity of the tune or raga requires both ongoing melody and, most of all, an ongoing articulation of the metric framework. A close examination of the way ghazal accompanists both support and fill the gaps between text utterances shows the functionality of their contribution to the enterprise.

Fig.5: Ghazal art-song (Begum Akhtar, ghazal by Shāz Tamkanat)[16]



6) *The recorded ghazal, sung for 'playback'*

The ghazal-song of the traditional *mahfil* is hardly alive today, because the institution itself has faded out, and because in the meantime a new performance context has developed for the ghazal, the 'playback' of recordings. After being in existence for several decades, the recorded ghazal comprises great musical variety, including adaptations of existing 'live' performance styles (from the *tarannum*-like ghazals of Muhammad Rafī', to the *mahfil*-like ghazals of Iqbāl Bāno and Malka Pukrāj). In turn, the popular recorded ghazal has begun to influence the music of the ghazal sung in traditional performance contexts.

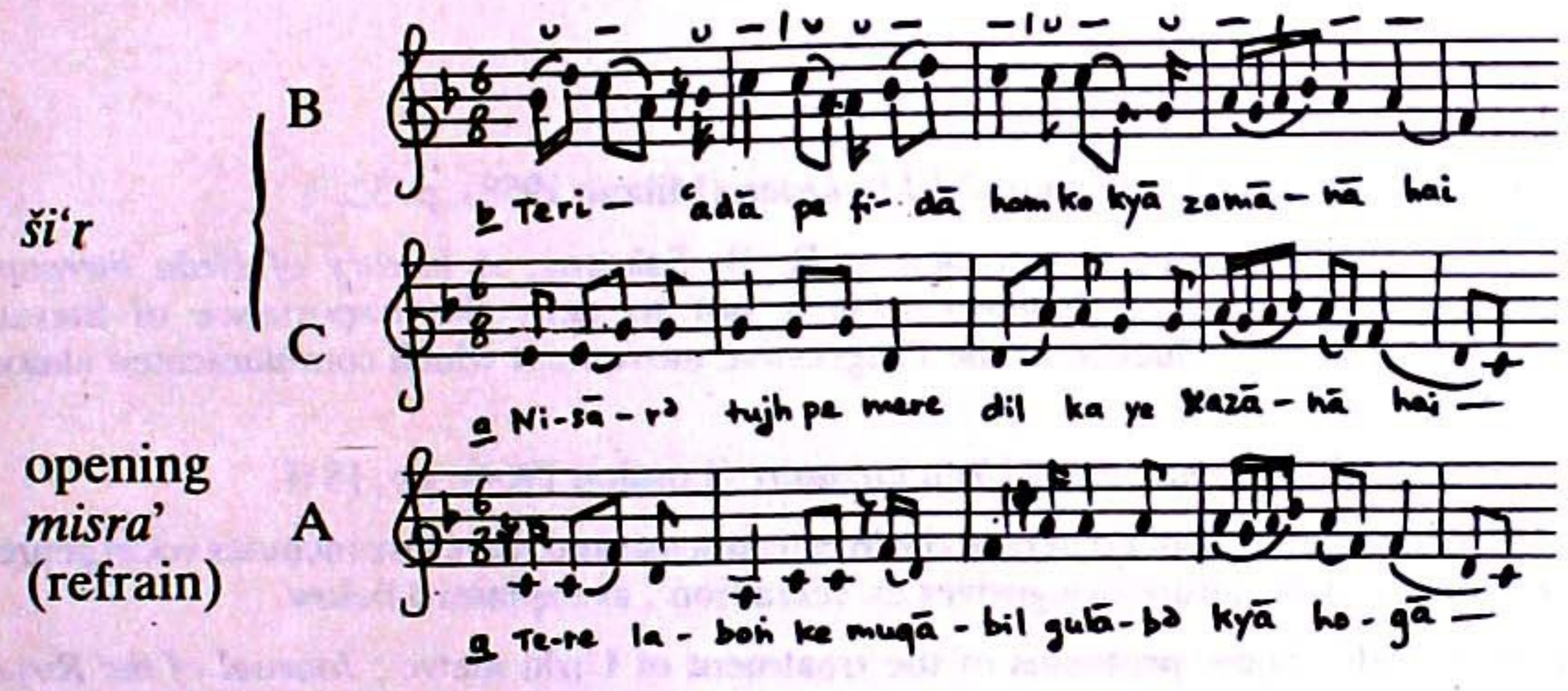
Examining the function of music in the ghazal song recorded for 'playback' on gramophone or tape-recorder suggests that it is to arouse emotions of love, and of pleasure generally, in an anonymous audience whose attention and patronage need to be won.

Music in this genre continues to serve the poetry structurally, both as to form and metre. Acoustically too, it does so as far as enunciation goes, although the microphone has resulted in a changed vocal ideal, which is documented on recordings in the difference between the full-throated voices of early *mahfil* or *mujrā* singers to the effortless, soft, even

crooning voices of professional recording-artists singing ghazals. Another notable feature of structural adherence to the common standard of ghazal music, despite time constraints and entertainment needs, is the consistently slow pace of the singing, even where the demand for popular entertainment results in a fast-paced musical metre displayed prominently by the drum.

The music also continues to serve the function of expressing and evoking emotions contained in the text, but this is embedded in a more general purpose of creating a pleasant, memorable experience that induces re-listening and fame for the recording. Given the standard three-minute time-limit on traditional recordings, in addition to the diffuseness of place and of audience, there is a need to shorten the ghazal-text and to present a musical package, with a good memorable tune, often repeated as a refrain.

Fig. 6: Recorded ghazal (Mukesh)[17]



Ghazal poetry has generated a wide variety of musical performance genres, yet among all these a remarkable consistency obtains in the way poetic and musical structures are related. In both chanted and sung genres, music leaves intact, nay enhances and articulates, the poetic structure in its principal elements. This is obviously a cultural constant which even the recorded *filmī* ghazal is remarkably faithful to. At the most general level, then, there are certain features which are 'distinctive' to the ghazal vocal forms collectively.[18] The most distinctive of all these shared features is no doubt rhythm. Indeed, the amazing constancy and consistency of the rhythmic correlation between Urdu verse metres and North Indian musical rhythm leaves no doubt that the ghazal has considerably influenced the entire domain of light music.[19] In the realm of form, too, the correspondence between distinct tune-sections and verse-lines is significantly consistent. Acoustic articulation, finally, is distinctive in its adherence to the priorities of spoken declamation.

From the perspective of the poem, what all this amounts to is an aural enhancement of structural features — i.e. poetic constants — in the performed ghazal. This reinforcement of poetic constants facilitates the apprehension of the particulars of content, a process common to all ghazal performance genres. Considering now the distinctive features of individual performance idioms, their impact points to content rather than form. Content, less in the semantic than in the connotative sense, is directly invoked by melodic as well as rhythmic means, especially in the religious genres and in the ghazal art-song. In each idiom, however, such reference to content is associated with the function or purpose of the ghazal performance — in other words with the context in which the poetic content is to unfold its full meaning.

Because in performance content is inseparable from context, the relevance of the contextual dimension to the apprehension of poetic content is more easily recognized. Is it too bold to suggest here that to consider a written text as a blueprint for performance, with an implied context, might add to our understanding of the Urdu ghazal?

NOTES

[1] A. Bausani, *Storia della letteratura del Pakistan* (Milano 1958), p. 52.

[2] For Ārzū Lakhnavī this is recorded in R. B. Saksena, *A history of Urdu literature* (Allahabad 1927), p. 95. However, this is not to deny the importance of literary publications, nor the influence of the Progressive movement which communicated almost exclusively through print.

[3] Muhammad Sadiq, *A history of Urdu literature* (London 1964), pp. 18 ff.

[4] The term 'musical' is applied here in the Western sense and therefore includes vocal genres which Indo-Muslim culture categorizes as 'recitation', as explained below.

[5] Ralph Russell, 'Some problems of the treatment of Urdu metre', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1960), pp. 48-58.

[6] *Mujtas* is one of the most widely used metres in ghazals. All but one example here have been chosen from settings of this *bahr* in order to facilitate comparison.

[7] For a detailed consideration of this genre see Regula Qureshi, 'Tarannum: the chanting of Urdu poetry' *Ethnomusicology*, 13, 3 (1969) pp. 425-454.

[8] Josh, famous for his outstandingly powerful *taht ul lafz* (spoken declamation) which he later practised exclusively, could nevertheless be persuaded in 1969 to demonstrate the *tarannum* he had himself used in his youth.

[9] *Maidān* of course also means a place of contest or battle, most appropriate for poets competing for approbation.

[10] For a detailed consideration of this genre see R. B. Qureshi, 'Islamic music in an Indian environment: the Shi'a Majlis', *Ethnomusicology*, 25, 1 (1981), pp. 41-71.

[11] Reference to the related form, the *soz*, is deliberately omitted here because its poetic forms differ from the ghazal, although in other respects *salām* and *soz* are quite similar.

[12] This status derives from the dominant role played in the development of Shi'a practice by the Avadh dynasty and other Shi'ā ruling élites.

[13] This reveals a clearly discernible leaning toward Hindi song forms.

[14] For a detailed discussion of this genre see R. B. Qureshi, *Sufi music of India and Pakistan* (Cambridge 1986).

[15] As we know, originally this experience included the kinetic dimension, with the singer using dance and expressive mime as well. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* has a long history in India!

[16] Recording: ECSD 2776 (LP).

[17] Recording: TCCKDA 10003 (cassette).

[18] Since similar features extend also to other forms of Urdu poetry (all minor in comparison with the ghazal and closely related to it in poetic form, metre and idiom).

[19] Some Indian writers see this influence extended to classical music, cf. O. Gosvami, *The story of Indian music* (Bombay 1957).

16

'This new work': Ralph Russell and Urdu in Britain

MARION MOLTENO

Ralph Russell has been described as 'the leading Western scholar of Urdu literature'.[1] He is best known for translations and studies undertaken with Khurshidul Islam, presenting the work of Mīr, Ghālib and other major poets to an English readership. He has also produced outstanding prose translations, and critical articles which give unusual insight into the attitudes expressed through literature. He has always looked beyond an academic audience, hoping to remove the barriers which make it difficult for English readers to approach Urdu literature.

Among Urdu speakers he is regarded with esteem as one of the few English people who has learnt to speak their language with complete facility. From 1950 to 1981 he taught Urdu at the School of Oriental and African Studies where he inspired generations of students to share his enthusiasm for Urdu. He is one of the few scholars of literature who considers language learning a worthwhile aim in itself, giving a great deal of time to the preparation of course materials.

I have written elsewhere about his contribution in these fields.[2] In this article I want to describe an aspect of his work less well known to Urdu scholars. This is his response to what he described as 'a new, major and unexpected development,'[3] the arrival and settlement in Britain of many Urdu speaking families. His pioneering work in this field provides a good example of the qualitites that have made his contribution to Urdu so special — not only his scholarship, but also the values and lifelong commitment that underlie it, which he described as follows:

> I learnt Urdu during the war years because I wanted to communicate, in the fullest possible sense of the word, with those who could not communicate through any other medium. I took it as axiomatic that they, like every other language community in the world, would have things to teach me. They did. That they and their literature have taught me more than I could have ever expected has been a bonus on top of that. I want to help others, at *every* level, to have access to what Urdu speaking people can give them, and a means of communicating what they in turn can give to Urdu-speaking people.[4]

For twenty years his work to realize this desire was necessarily confined to a university setting. After 1947 few British people had any practical need to learn Urdu; those who studied it at university could have extended contact with Urdu speakers only if they visited India or Pakistan. But from the late 1960s changes began to take place in British society which had far-reaching implications for anyone studying or teaching a South Asian language. Urdu, Panjabi, Gujarati and Bengali speaking families came to Britain to settle, and by the mid 1970s there were sizeable South Asian communities in many cities. English speaking school teachers, social workers, health workers, policemen, etc., for the first time came into contact with people whose language, style of life and cultural values were different from their own. Ralph observed two common reactions: one was incomprehension, or even open hostility:

> ...there is generally a lot of racism here, and it is continuing to grow. Along with this, there is a growing number of people who sympathise in the true sense of the word with Indians, Pakistanis and people of other minorities.[5]

His first contact with such people was with school teachers, who approached SOAS sensing that they needed some background knowledge about South Asian culture in order to respond adequately to the needs of their new pupils. Far from considering such requests a distraction from his academic work, he welcomed them, convinced 'that SOAS, and I personally, had an important part to play in providing for the new needs to which this situation gave rise.'[6]

He hoped his colleagues would share his desire

> ...that those of us who have been enabled to acquire the language and other expertise that is needed, should put it at the disposal of those admirable men and (still more) women who give of their time and energy to help South Asian immigrants in the many (and increasing) problems which they face in this country.[7]

His concept of the kind of help that he could offer evolved gradually:

> Initially, I felt that the demand would be simply for information about the background of the immigrant communities, but in 1972 I came to feel that perhaps there was now enough demand to make possible the arrangement of short courses to teach language too. I pursued this idea actively, and in the summer of 1974 taught such a course at Bradford.[8]

The idea was a novel one to most people. In a society traditionally monolingual, most teachers thought of the first languages of their Asian pupils simply as obstacles to the learning of English. That there might be some benefit in their learning their pupils' language was a startling idea. Yet once suggested it seem to open up rewarding possibilities. The first Urdu course was enthusiastically received, and was followed by a series in Burton-on-Trent; then others in Huddersfield, Blackburn, Sheffield and many other places. By 1978 he was getting requests from so many cities that he could no longer cope with the demand.

By now he felt that there should be some response from SOAS as an institution. He obtained agreement to start each academic year with a short intensive course designed not only for new undergraduate students but for anyone with no previous knowledge of the language. The SOAS authorities agreed to pay for teaching materials and travel costs to enable him to continue running short courses in other parts of the country. For the next four years he devoted as much time as he could spare from university teaching to this work:

> That I can increasingly [share my knowledge] not at an elite or specialised level, but at a level which enables, e.g., English speaking school teachers to communicate with people of Pakistani and Indian peasant stock, makes me very happy.[9]

He knew that many of his colleagues might 'wonder that I... should attach so much importance to the developments I have described.'[10] Teaching which was continuously restricted to the beginner level carried with it very little status in academic eyes. Moreover the new courses needed new teaching materials; by giving priority to preparing them he put back by many years the work on translating Ghālib's poetry that he was engaged on with Khurshidul Islam.

But no one who knew him personally was surprised that he chose to put his energies into this new and much less prestigious project. From the beginning he had conceived of his work for Urdu as a question of changing people's attitudes, inherited from the days of the Raj:

> When the relationship between two peoples is not that of independence and equality, but of ruler and ruled, sympathetic interest in the culture of the subject people never flourishes in the ruling nation.[11]

This new work offered him, in greater measure than ever before, the opportunity to teach 'the kind of people who want to communicate with Urdu speakers on terms of mutual respect.'[12] He compared the motivation of students on his new type of courses with his own forty years earlier:

> ...when I first became interested in India and Indian independence,

> that feeling only arose in people who had some political consciousness. Now I see that there are many ordinary people who have no special interest in politics, who genuinely and wholeheartedly support what one might call inter-racial friendship, who are working consistently towards this and will continue to do so... I honour those people deeply — people in whom there is really no racism, or if there is, they try to get rid of it... *These* are the people that I want very much to help.[13]

In 1981 he decided to take early retirement, to give to this new work the time it required. He has given not only time, but a whole-hearted devotion which has made a deep impression on his new students. They now far outnumber those he taught in all his thirty-two years at SOAS; through his writing on teaching Urdu as a community language he has influenced thousands more, sharing with them — directly and indirectly — the values which have inspired his life-long commitment.

From the first course in 1974 until his retirement in 1981, a major priority was to devise suitable materials. He began by using extracts from his university level course, *Essential Urdu*. But he knew they would need adapting as he had always believed that language teaching materials should reflect as closely as possible the needs and interests of students. His new learners faced obstacles his university students had not known. Many of them lacked confidence, for it was years since they had studied anything consistently; now they were trying to fit in study on top of full-time jobs and family commitments. However relevant *Essential Urdu* might be in terms of content, it was too detailed and required too many hours of work for the new kind of student. He began to plan a course for learners who

> ... have only a limited amount of time to spare and... want above all to understand and speak the language rather than learning how to read and write it... a course which would teach them as quickly as possible to say and understand the things which come within the range of everyday conversation, covering all the essential structures of the language without moving outside that range.[14]

Needless to say this was a difficult aim to achieve; yet it was achieved. By the end of an intensive course of twenty hours his students were able, in simple but largely correct Urdu, to give and ask for personal information about themselves, their families, where they lived and had previously lived, etc. Once each new sentence pattern had been introduced, explained and practised, students were catapulted into personal conversation, with Ralph asking questions that were carefully controlled linguistically yet covering a surprising range of topics. They were always real questions, in whose answers he had a genuine interest. He was unusually skilled at making such conversations lively and entertaining while keeping strictly to what a particular group of students

had learnt to say in Urdu, thus achieving the maximum of practice with the minimum of frustration. He believed firmly that

> There are few people who, in a relaxed atmosphere, cannot be given the necessary self-confidence to take the plunge and start speaking... It is possible, if students are prepared to make the effort, to get them speaking fluently right from the start, and I think that this is the most important thing a teacher has to do...[15]

Once he had tested the new materials on several successive courses, he prepared them for publication. Part I of the new course appeared in 1980 and was eagerly bought, not only by the groups of students he had been teaching across the country, but by many others. There were several unusual features of the course. First, he entitled it *A new course in Hindustani for learners in Britain*, using 'Hindustani' instead of 'Urdu' because learners would be in contact with speakers of a range of South Asian languages, not just of Urdu; they would, therefore, get most practical benefit from learning the everyday speech common to both Hindi and Urdu, and understood also by many speakers of Panjabi, Gujarati and Bengali. At the level of language taught in the course there was little divergence between Urdu and Hindi; where there was, his colleague Rupert Snell worked with him to supply the appropriate Hindi words. The revised edition (1986) is called *A new course in Urdu and in spoken Hindi*.

A second unusual feature is that Part I teaches spoken language only. Because time was a major constraint he had decided it would be 'a desirable economy to leave the learning of the script until later,'[16] using instead a simple transcription of sounds designed by Professor Firth for South Asian languages, differing only a little from ordinary English letters. In Part IV of the course he gave Urdu script parallels for all the sentences they had learnt to say in Part I, but this was designed as a teach-yourself guide, spelling out every detail that students might need to ask a teacher. He remained adamant that 'To insist on teaching it [in class] is to spend valuable time that most classes can't afford...'[17]

Perhaps the most striking thing about *A new course* is that it is an extremly personal book. It has an atmosphere quite unlike that of any conventional coursebook, retaining to a far greater degree the type of impact a teacher can usually have only through personal contact. Much of the first edition of Part I appeared in what is almost a drama script of Ralph teaching a class. Throughout he chats to the learner in print, admonishing, advising, encouraging, just as he does in face-to-face teaching. He seems as vividly present as if he were sitting next to the reader — a real person who might at any moment appear to have a real conversation. The result for those using the book is that the common barrier of fear or embarrassment about speaking in a new language is minimized.

Within a few years of publication, *A new course* had already had a dramatic impact. Learners who had attended short courses could now use it and its accompanying cassette to consolidate what they had practised in class, and an increasing number began to achieve a confident command of basic spoken language. Their working relationships with Urdu speakers were transformed. Colleagues saw this happening and began to think that they, too, should learn an Asian language. In a number of cities adult education institutes now offered their own classes in minority languages, but they often ran into difficulties. Organizers of classes could find people prepared to teach their own language, but few with relevant experience; in most cases the organizers did not know the language concerned and felt it was not their place to dictate teaching methods. Typically, teachers began with the script and lacked techniques for giving carefully graded spoken practice; students' progress was slow, and class numbers usually dwindled. By contrast, students using *A new course* were taught in a way that enabled them to start speaking from the first lesson. They emerged from an intensive weekend exhausted, but amazed at how much they had learnt to say, and full of enthusiasm to learn more. Demand for more courses using 'Ralph Russell's approach' snowballed.

Even before the book's publication Ralph had been unable to meet all the requests for teaching. Now, though he had retired, there was still a limit to what he could undertake, for there were pressing tasks in other areas, particularly in developments aimed at meeting the educational needs of children in Urdu speaking communities in Britain, in which he had taken a lead since 1979. The demand for ever more courses for adults was welcome, but he had known from early on that he would have to find ways of ensuring that their continued success did not depend on his personal participation at every stage. With this in mind he had designed the materials to follow Part I as self-study books, thus enabling those who had completed a basic intensive course to continue using the same approach even if no further courses were available. He ensured that both content and language level matched the needs of his learners by basing the materials on short passages which he had encouraged students themselves to write (using the transcription learnt in Part I)

> ...on themes which [they] have wanted to talk about... Most are corrected, and only slightly modified, versions of what they have themselves spoken or written. It follows that the expression is, here and there, more simple... than that which a native speaker... would have used; but... [with the] invaluable help of... Dr K. H. Qadiri... I have taken care to ensure that there is no sentence which a native speaker might not very well use.[18]

The passages and study notes were collected in Part III, with the accompanying Part II acting as a reference book, explaining and giving further examples of structures that occurred in the passages. By 1982 all

parts of the course were published. To ensure against a limited book-learning approach, he encouraged students to meet in pairs and groups in the intervals between courses to practise speaking, monitoring each other by referring to the books and cassette where necessary. He urged them to enlist the help of local Urdu/Hindi speakers, but to be prepared to guide them as to the kind of help they needed.

Another approach was to recruit new teachers from among his own ex-students: for, as he wrote 'From the very beginning it had always been my hope that many learners of Urdu would also see themselves as potential teachers of it.' [19]

Having been taught by him, his students needed no convincing about this methods; several were soon running courses under his guidance, including Sughran Choudry in Waltham Forest, Ian Russell and Richard Harris in London, Alison Shaw in Oxford, Marion Molteno in Chorley. With more recent learners he adopted the 'barefoot doctor' approach, insisting that anyone who had mastered Part I could, and should, teach others what she or he had learnt. He assured his nervous new recruits that a preparedness to use appropriate methods was as important a qualification to teach as fluency; many of them were in any case teachers of other languages, and being Urdu learners were well aware of the needs of others like themselves. As for language competence, all they had to do was to confine themselves strictly to teaching what was in Part I, not attempting to move outside the range of what they themselves had mastered. The approach caught on; study groups were formed in several cities by learner/teachers, and through them many more people were able to start learning Urdu.

But the long-term solution was to find native (or near-native) speakers of Urdu/Hindi able and willing to teach by these methods — and that implied training. This need had been prominent in his mind when writing Part I:

> It is generally accepted now that people of English mother-tongue who want to teach English as a second language need to be specially trained to do so. People of Urdu or Hindi mother-tongue need, ideally, similar training if they are to teach their language effectively to foreigners. Very few Urdu or Hindi speakers have had such training, and in this course I have therefore tried to give them as much as possible of the guidance they need. In other words, this course is designed not only to tell students what they need to learn but also to tell their teachers how to teach it to them. I know that this is an unusual feature in a language course, but it seemed to me to be the best way to help in the situation I have just described.[20]

The take-up was somewhat haphazard. A number of Urdu/Hindi speakers discovered *A new course* without having had personal contact with Ralph or his co-workers, recognized its advantages, and proceeded

to teach from it. Where regular courses are held — for instance in Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Chorley — Urdu/Hindi speakers have been invited to observe Ralph and his colleagues teaching and have subsequently been drawn into regular co-teaching. But in most cases existing teachers have not had the time to undertake the training of new ones. The first real breakthrough came in 1984 when funding was obtained for a five-year teaching/training project in Oxford, with Alison Shaw as project officer, to run Urdu courses for English-speaking adults; and to train teachers (mainly from the Urdu speaking community) to teach on them.[21] In assessing the work of the last four years Ralph has described this as 'perhaps the most important development of all.'[22] Though now unfortunately at an end, the Oxford project suggested a model which could be used in many other cities; if it is, the pioneering work begun by one Urdu scholar at SOAS can be carried on by Urdu speakers in each local community, trained to teach their language effectively.

At the time of writing (1987), it is now thirteen years since the first course in Bradford, and six years since Ralph retired to devote more of his energies to this work. A great deal has changed in that time. In many parts of the country local authorities now accept the idea that an introductory language course is a relevant form of inservice training for staff who work with people in minority communities. In a few areas there has been an ongoing commitment of time and resources: one example is Lancashire, where the Local Education Authority has for the past five years released teachers in work time to attend Urdu courses twice a year. There are by now scores of teachers in the county who have become fluent at a simple level, and can use Urdu effectively in their work. Throughout these years Ralph has stressed that he sees what is being achieved for Urdu as a model for what can be achieved for all the other community languages of Britain, and has willingly given time to help those concerned.

While racism continues, there is also in many quarters an increasing appreciation of how British society is enriched by the languages and cultures of all communities. Such awareness has many sources, but there is no doubt whatsoever that Ralph Russell's work has been one of the most important. At a time when almost everyone in the field of multi-cultural education thought only in terms of teaching English to speakers of other languages, he had the vision to see the benefit that could result if English speakers were given the chance to learn Asian languages. Before anyone else with the relevant skills was prepared to give time to the experiment, his untiring efforts showed that it could work. And by the time the idea had begun to spread, his course book was available (and was indeed the only relevant book available) to help those who wanted to learn and to train those who were willing to teach. Over 5,000 copies have been sold. It has been used, as he always wished it to be, as a model in preparing materials for Panjabi, Gujarati and Sylheti/Bengali. It is one of

those rare books which, having been designed in response to changing social needs, has itself brought about further significant change.

The 'new, major and unexpected development' which took Ralph Russell's teaching out of the university into the community has highlighted the close connection between his work for Urdu and his personal values. Had it not been for his skill as a language teacher the new courses would not have been so appropriate, and hence so influential; yet their significance lies in the values that underlie his teaching. His work has offered thousands of people a means towards opening up new horizons, and changing the way they interact with those of other cultures.

NOTES

[1] D. J. Matthews and C. Shackle, *An anthology of classical Urdu love lyrics* (London 1972), p. 1.

[2] M. Molteno,'Ralph Russell: teacher, scholar, lover of Urdu', *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 6 (1987), pp. 11-32.

[3] R. Russell, *The pattern of my life and work* (London: the author, 1974), p. 3. Subsequently referred to here as Russell (1974).

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Translated from tapescript of interview with Khalid Mahmud for *Jang*, September 1981.

[6] R. Russell, 'Urdu teaching, immigrant communities and SOAS' (1978, unpublished), p. 1.

[7] R. Russell, *A new course in Hindustani for learners in Britain, part I* (London 1980), p. i. Subsequently referred to here as Russell (1980).

[8] Russell (1978), p. 1.

[9] Russell (1974), p. 9.

[10] 'Urdu in Britain: a note', *Pakistan Studies*, 1, 2 (1982), p. 63.

[11] 'The British contribution to Urdu studies', *Oriental College Magazine centenary number*, 50, 1-4 (1974), p. 197.

[12] *Essential Urdu* (London: written 1971, published by the author 1974), p. i.

[13] Tapescript of interview (1981) [see n. 5 above].

[14] *A new course in Urdu and in spoken Hindi* (London 1986), I, p. 1.

[15] *Essential Urdu*, p. iii.

[16] *A new course in Hindustani, part IV* (London 1982), p. 7.

[17] Russell (1980), p. 1.

[18] *A new course in Hindustani, part III* (London 1981), p. 5.

[19] *The last four years of Urdu in Britain, a personal statement* (Islamabad 1986), p. 2.

[20] Russell (1980), p. 2.

[21] Russell (1986), p. 2.

[22] A. Shaw, 'Urdu in Oxford', *Urdu Teaching Newsletter* (1985), p. 16.

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