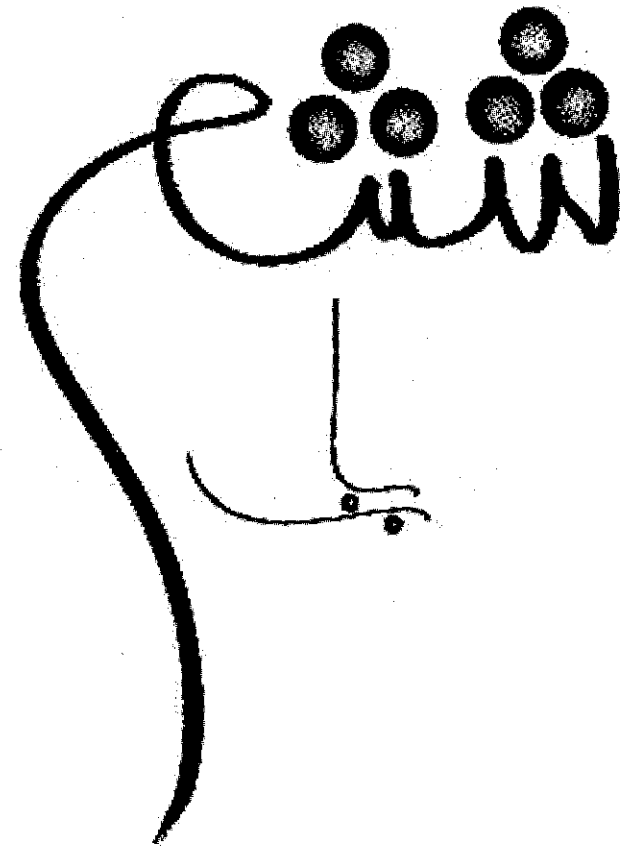


If the prestige and popularity of Persian retarded the growth of Hindī / Reḳhtah literature in the North, the influence and power of the Indian-style Persian poetry nevertheless had salubrious effects on Reḳhtah / Hindī poetry and theory when Reḳhtah / Hindī came into its own in Delhi in the late 1600's. Shāh Mubārak Ābrū (1683/5-1733) is the first major poet in Delhi in the new century. He must have begun writing poetry late in the seventeenth century, and is generally regarded as having adopted *ihām* extremely early in his career. We have seen Khusrāu claiming to be the inventor of a highly elaborate kind of *ihām* in poetry. But the immediate influence on Ābrū seems to have been Sanskrit through Braj Bhāshā and 'Indian-style' Persian poetry. Even Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, who blamed Urdu poetry for being too Iran-oriented, acknowledged that *ihām* must have come into Urdu poetry from the Sanskrit.<sup>29</sup>

Ābrū, and indeed whoever entered upon the business of poetry in Dakanī / Hindī / Reḳhtah in the early eighteenth century, came under the influence of Valī, and in many ways Valī has been the poet of all Urdu poets since the first decade of the eighteenth century.

<sup>29</sup>Āzād, *Āb-e hayāt*, p. 99. It should be noted that Ābrū came from Gwalior, an important area in the geography of Braj Bhasha.



## Chapter Six: A Phenomenon Called 'Valī'

According to an estimate in 1966, there were extant at that time sixty-five dated manuscripts, and fifty-three undated manuscripts, of Valī's *divān* in libraries and similar collections. In addition, there were thirty-three manuscript anthologies that contained substantial selections from Valī. Nūr ul-Ḥasan Ḥāshimī, the leading Valī expert of our time, says that these numbers, though huge by ordinary standards, are still less than the actual corpus of Valī's extant manuscripts. For example, he says, the inventory of 1966 records only one manuscript *divān* at the Asiatic Society Calcutta; actually, there are two there. The Khuda Bakhsh Library at Patna has four, the Raza Library at Rampur has two, and the State Archives of U.P. library at Allahabad has one; these manuscripts of Valī's *divāns* are not recorded in the 1966 list. Ḥāshimī himself has two, and there are others in other private collections. (Prof. Shamīm Ḥanafī of Jamia Millia University, New Delhi, recently told me that he has a beautifully illuminated manuscript of Valī's poetry that seems to be from the early eighteenth century.) Thus a really full list of substantial manuscripts of Valī could itself be the size of a whole book.<sup>1</sup>

Valī was born around 1665/7 and he died most probably in 1707-08. However, dates as disparate as 1720-25, and even 1735, have been proposed as the actual time of his death. In fact, determining a late date for Valī's death is a political, rather than scholarly, issue. For one of the most famous stories about Valī is that he was advised by Shāh Gulshan, a saint and poet who lived in Delhi, to adopt the style and the themes of

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<sup>1</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, pp. 13-14. The list was prepared by Muḥammad Ikrām Chaghtā'ī, and published in *Urdū* (Karachi), July-Oct. 1966. See Ḥāshimī's introduction to the *Kulliyāt*, p. 14.

the Persians. Thus the longer Valī lived after Shāh Gulshan's putative advice to him to follow the Persians and give up Dakanī ways, the greater the chance of his poetry's being proved to be Persian / Delhi inspired, thus reducing by that much Valī's status as an original poet who influenced the poets of Delhi.<sup>2</sup>

Zahīr ud-Dīn Madanī gives Valī's date of death as 4 Sha'bān, 1119 *hijrī*, and says that the year corresponds to 1709.<sup>3</sup> This is quite clearly incorrect. The date '4 Sha'bān 1119' corresponds to October 31, 1707. Madanī doesn't give the source for '4 Sha'bān', but the year is based on a famous and--naturally--much-disputed Persian chronogram that gives the date of the death of a person called Valī as 1119. Madanī quotes the chronogram too, so we may regard the 1709 mentioned in Madanī's text as a typographical error. The year 1707-08 seems to be the most likely as Valī's year of death, because the oldest extant manuscript of his *divān* is dated 26

<sup>2</sup>Jamīl Jālibī has a long discussion aiming to show that Valī died around 1720-25. Some of his arguments are: if Valī died so soon after his meeting with Shāh Gulshan, how did he complete a sizable *divān* [in the 'new' style]? Valī's friends and peers, and Shāh Gulshan himself, lived until long after 1700, so how could Valī not have done the same? (See *Tārīkh-e adab-e urdū*, vol. 1, pp. 534-39.)

Interesting evidence of Delhi's continuing bias against Valī is provided by the letters of Ḥabīb ur-Rahmān al-Ṣiddīqī Merathī, who was a man of erudition and came from an ancient and distinguished family of Meerut. In a letter to Zakā Ṣiddīqī dated August 15, 1967, he wrote, 'Valī has been given too much of a *boost*; he needs to be *debunked*' (italicized words in English in the original). Two weeks later he wrote to the same correspondent, 'Valī learned [proper] Urdu when he came to Delhi; it's not that he taught [proper] Urdu to the people of Delhi'. It should be noted that al-Ṣiddīqī regarded his own speech as that of Delhi. In October 1967 he wrote to Zakā Ṣiddīqī, 'My problem is that I've forgotten Dihlavī, and I never did master Dakanī' (Ḥabīb ur-Rahmān al-Ṣiddīqī, *Makātib-e ṣiddīqī*, pp. 153, 155, 160).

<sup>3</sup>Ṣmat Jāved, in his '*Valī kā sāl-e vafāt*', has refuted Jālibī's arguments about Valī's date of death.

<sup>3</sup>Madanī, *Sukhanvarān-e gujarāt*, p. 86.

Rabī' ul-Avval, 1120 *hijrī*, which corresponds to July 15, 1708. This manuscript contains all the poetry that we at present know to be Valī's. It stands to reason therefore, that he wasn't around for much longer after that date to compose poetry. For a poet to have such a large number of manuscripts of his work available nearly three hundred years after his death is remarkable in itself. It would be still more remarkable if he had lived and composed poetry after 1708, and yet no manuscripts at all had recorded the poetry he composed after that date.

We know that in his poems Valī mentions numerous Persian contemporaries and three Dakanī ones. But he does not mention a single Urdu poet from the North. The reason for this could very well be that in Delhi, Rekhtah / Hindī poetry became a major presence only after 1710, and Valī, having died by that time, couldn't have known about the new epoch that his poetry had inaugurated in Delhi.

So we may take it that Valī died in 1707-8. He was extremely lucky, or extremely popular, or both, to have more than a hundred of his manuscript *divāns* extant through nearly three centuries of political and social change. His popularity should obviously be attributable to the quality and the influence of his poetry. For he was not a Sufi or religious leader whose works and words would have been lovingly and carefully preserved by his followers. Judging from the number of male (and maybe female) friends and lovers that he celebrates in his *divān*, he must have been a man of the world, and of his time--a time when expression of physical love in poetry was much less inhibited than became the rule from about the mid-nineteenth century in the Urdu culture.

What and who was Valī, then, and what did he actually do? Valī was a poet, a man of learning, and man of the world; he was from Gujarat, or Aurangabad, or both. He revolutionised Urdu poetry. Standard Urdu literary historiography and thought have tried their best, over the last two and a half centuries, to diminish the achievement of Valī--for he was an outsider, and a Dakanī to boot, and it must have been gall and wormwood to the 'Mirzās' and the *ustāds* of Delhi to have to acknowledge the primacy, and the leadership, of such a person.

It is interesting to note that many even of the earliest of Delhi poets, who most felt the positive impact of Valī, also felt

a strong ambivalence about him, and acknowledged their debt to him in equivocal language:

/Ābrū, your poetry is  
Like a Prophet's miracle,  
And Valī's, like the miracle  
Of a mere saint/.<sup>4</sup>

/Were someone to go and recite  
Nājī's verse on Valī's grave,  
Valī would rip open his own shroud  
And spring from his resting place  
Crying, 'Well said!'/.<sup>5</sup>

/Hātīm is not all that insufficient  
To give peace to my heart,  
Yet Valī is the true Prince  
Of poetry in this world/.<sup>6</sup>

In Persian poetry, [Hātīm] is a follower of Šā'ib, and in Reḳhtah, considers Valī the *ustād*.<sup>7</sup>

Zafar Aḥmad Šiddīqī, in his essay 'Ābrū kā thām', quotes two *shī'rs* from a longish poem—a *tarjī' band*—of Ābrū's that seem to him freely to acknowledge Valī as his model and mentor. Actually, the acknowledgment is not all that free, and can be read even as a tentative assertion of independence:

/Valī is Master in Reḳhtah,  
So who can write  
An answer to him?

Yet, to write with  
Diligent care and search  
Gives success, given

<sup>4</sup>Ābrū, *Dīvān-e ābrū*, p. 271.

<sup>5</sup>Nājī, *Dīvān-e shākīr nājī*, p. 349.

<sup>6</sup>Shāh Hātīm, *Intikhāb-e kalām-e hātīm*, p. 58.

<sup>7</sup>See Shāh Hātīm's own preface to his *Dīvān zādah* (compiled in 1755-56), p. 39.

A little inspiration/.<sup>8</sup>

'Diligent care and search' is my translation of *tatabbu'*, which is Arabic for 'following after, diligently and carefully searching.' In modern Urdu, *tatabbu'* almost always means 'to follow after', but this meaning was not so well established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the meaning 'diligently and carefully searching' was reasonably well known even in the early twentieth century. Mīr uses *tab'iyat meñ* (from the same root, *tā*, *bā*, 'ain) to mean 'following after, imitating'.<sup>9</sup> Note that Ābrū says *se* ('with'), and not *meñ* ('in'), *tatabbu'*. Even if we translate *tatabbu'* as 'imitation, following after', we have 'inspiration' and 'imagination' to contend with in the next *shī'r*. 'Inspiration' is *faiz* (literally, 'flow'), and 'imagination' is *fikr* (literally, 'thought'). The former is vouchsafed by God, perhaps through a mediator, and the latter is innate. So all in all, the two *shī'rs* are handsome enough as a tribute, but can hardly be called unequivocal in their acknowledgment of Valī's superiority.

We thus see that Shah Hātīm, most generous of poets, is the only one whose tribute to Valī is not left-handed. The later masters, particularly Mīr (1722-1810) and Qā'im Chāndpūrī (1724/25-1794), took the lead in belittling the achievement of Valī by introducing the story of Sa'dullāh Gulshan's advising Valī to 'appropriate' themes and images from the Persians, and thus enrich his own poetry. In sum, the story is as follows:

1. Valī came to Delhi in 1700 and met Gulshan, who advised him as above.

2. Valī apparently took the advice seriously and implemented it successfully.

3. When his *dīvān* arrived in Delhi in the second regnal year of Emperor Muḥammad Shāh [the second regnal year began in October 1720], it took Delhi by storm, and everybody, young or old, adopted Valī's style of poetry.

<sup>8</sup>Ābrū, *Dīvān-e ābrū*, p. 295.

<sup>9</sup>Mīr, *Kulliyāt*, p. 711.

The first assumption is based on Qā'im's statement that Valī came to Delhi in Aurangzeb's forty-fourth regnal year. Since Aurangzeb came to the throne in 1068/1658, forty-four *hijrī* years bring us to 1112, which commenced in July 1700. Since there are no suggestions or indications to the contrary, it is quite safe to accept this date. There is fairly firm ground for accepting the third assumption, since it is supported by Muṣḥafī who heard the facts from Shāh Hātim, an eyewitness. Muṣḥafī says in his *Tazkirah-e hindī* (completed 1794-95): 'One day he [Shāh Hātim] mentioned to this faqir that in the second regnal year of him who rests in Paradise, Valī's *divān* arrived in Shāhjahanābād, and its verses became current on the tongues of young and old'.<sup>10</sup>

By 'him who rests in Paradise' is meant Muḥammad Shāh, who ascended the throne of Delhi on September 30, 1719, and ruled until his death in 1748. What Hātim said to Muṣḥafī about Valī is just about the most that anyone can say by way of tribute to an older poet, particularly one who came from outside. But Hātim wrote no *tazkirah*, and Delhi's chauvinism found a smokescreen in Shāh Gulshan, a minor Persian poet and Sufī from Burhānpur, which was then a part of Gujarat. He spent his time between Burhanpur and Delhi. The first *tazkirah* of Urdu poets, Mīr's *Nikāt ush-shu'arā* (Subtle Points about Poets), has this to say about Valī:

[Valī is] from the land of Aurangābad. It is said that he came to Delhi too, and presented himself before Miyān Shāh Gulshan, and recited [before him] some verses of his own. Miyān Šāhib observed, 'There are all those Persian themes lying unused; bring them into use in your own Rekhtah; who is there to challenge you if you do this?' And Miyān Šāhib appreciated and praised his poetry.<sup>11</sup>

One is bound to wonder why Shāh Gulshan should have waited for somebody, or even Valī himself, to come from outside Delhi in order to become the recipient of his somewhat unethical advice. Delhi at that time--as at any time in fact--was

<sup>10</sup>Muṣḥafī, *Tazkirah-e hindī*, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup>Mīr, *Nikāt ush-shu'arā*, p. 91.

home to numerous poets. Most of them wrote Persian, and also tried their hand at a bit of Rekhtah. They were perfectly fluent in Persian, and knew Persian poetry as well as Shāh Gulshan did. Shāh Gulshan was not among the major Persian poets in Delhi at the end of the seventeenth century. Mīrzā 'Abd ul-Qādir Bedil (1644-1720) and Muḥammad Afzal Sarḥhush (1640-1714) commanded greater respect and a larger following than anyone else. Bedil was in fact at the apogee of his illustrious career during the 1700's, and since he wrote a bit of Rekhtah himself, was perhaps the best person to offer such advice to a visitor. We must also remember that Gulshan himself was Bedil's follower, or perhaps even pupil, in Persian poetry.

To be sure, Valī must have called on Shāh Gulshan, if the latter was in Delhi at the time Valī came there. There is a strong possibility that Gulshan and Valī had been acquainted with each other from before. Gulshan came from Burhānpur, Gujarat, and came at least once to Ahmedabad, where Valī may have met him. There is a small Persian prose tract called *Nūr ul-ma'rifāt*, composed by someone called Valī who describes himself as a pupil of Gulshan. The tract itself is in praise of a seminary called 'Hidāyat Baḥsh' that was established in Ahmedabad in 1699-1700 by Shaikh ul-Islām Ḳhān, chief of Gujarat province at that time.<sup>12</sup> Since the oldest known manuscript of this work is dated only to 1853-54, doubts have been expressed about its authenticity as a production of our Valī, the poet.

All that one can say at the moment on this issue is that it would be a little much of a coincidence for Shāh Gulshan to have had two Valīs among his disciples, or for there to have been another Valī and another Gulshan in Gujarat, contemporaneous with our Gulshan and our Valī. Zāhīr ud-Dīn Madanī asserts Valī's discipleship of Gulshan as an accepted fact, for he mentions no disputes about it. According to Madanī, the master-pupil connection between Valī and Gulshan would have been for Persian, and would have first occurred at

<sup>12</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 40.

Ahmedabad, or Burhānpur.<sup>13</sup> Hāshmi, 'on the basis of internal evidence', regards Valī as the author of *Nūr ul-ma'rifāt*.<sup>14</sup> On balance, the likelihood of Valī having known Gulshan from before his visit to Delhi in 1700 is strong enough to cast serious doubt on the stories narrated by Mīr and Qā'im about Valī and Gulshan.

I say 'stories' because the details of Qā'im's version are very different from Mīr's. Qā'im completed his *tazkirah* in 1754. He is reputed to have been at the task earlier than Mīr. Nevertheless, neither Mīr nor Qā'im was even born when Valī came to Delhi, so neither had any more personal knowledge than the other. Qā'im tells an even more curious tale. Recognising that a poet who had attained the mature (by the reckoning of the time) age of thirty-three or thirty-five--Valī was born around 1665-67--wasn't a very likely candidate for the patronising, somewhat avuncular advice putatively (and gratuitously) tendered by a comparative stranger, Qā'im stipulated that Valī wasn't a poet at all before that momentous meeting with Gulshan. Qā'im says:

[Valī] used occasionally to compose a couple or so of Persian *shi'rs* in praise of the beauty of [a young Sayyid called Mīr Abu'l-Ma'ālī]. On arrival here [in Delhi], when he gained entrance to the presence of Ḥazrat Shaiḫ Sa'dullāh Gulshan, the latter commanded him to compose poetry in Rekhtah, and by way of education, gave away to him the following opening verse that he composed [there and then]:

/Were I to set down on paper  
The praises of the beloved's  
Miraculous beauty, I would  
Spontaneously convert the paper  
Into the White Hand of Moses/.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Madani, *Sukhanvarān-e gujarāt*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>14</sup>From Hāshmi's introduction to Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup>It is a beautiful *shi'r*, but unfortunately impossible to render satisfactorily in English. The 'White Hand of Moses' refers to a miracle granted to Moses by God at Sinai. He was asked to put his right hand under his collar. It came out entirely white, 'without stain, or evil' (Qur'ān 27:12).

In short, it was due to the inspiration of the Ḥazrat's tongue that Valī's poetry became so well-loved that each and every *shi'r* in his *divān* is brighter than the horizon of sunrise, and he wrote Rekhtah with such expressive power and grace that many ustads even of that time began to compose in Rekhtah.<sup>16</sup>

This tale could seem a little more plausible than Mīr's, but for the fact that we know Valī to have already been a substantial poet when he visited Delhi in 1700. While it is impossible to date all his poetry accurately, references to contemporaries who died before 1700 clearly establish the fact of his having been a serious Rekhtah / Hindī poet before 1700. There is, for example, the following agonistic reference to the famous Indo-Persian poet Nāṣir 'Alī, who died in 1696:

/Were I to send this line  
To Nāṣir 'Alī, he would upon  
Hearing it, spring up excited  
Like a streak of lightning/.<sup>17</sup>

Lachmī Narā'in Shafiq Aurangābādī is a major historian, poet and *tazkirah* writer of the South. In his *tazkirah* called *Chamanistān-e shu'arā* (Poets' Garden, 1762), he says nothing about Shāh Gulshan in his account of Valī.<sup>18</sup> Mīr Ḥasan of Delhi, in his *tazkirah* compiled around 1774-78, says nothing about Gulshan's advice to Valī, but avers that the *tavajjuh* of Shāh Gulshan made Valī popular.<sup>19</sup> (*Tavajjuh*, in Sufi terminology, is favourable concentrative attention directed towards a disciple, sometimes in his absence even, for the disciple's spiritual well-being.) This seems plausible enough, as a statement of faith and reverence. Abu'l-Ḥasan Amrullāh Ilāhābādī wrote his *Tazkirah-e masarrat afzā* (Delight-enhancing narrative) around 1778-80, partly as a corrective to

<sup>16</sup>Qā'im, *Makhzan-e nikāt*, p. 105.

<sup>17</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 196.

<sup>18</sup>Shafiq Aurangābādī, *Chamanistān-e shu'arā*, pp. 82-84.

<sup>19</sup>Mīr Ḥasan, *Tazkirah-e shu'arā-e urdū*, p. 204.

Mīr, and partly as a supplement, especially with regard to poets of Allahabad and further east. He clearly disbelieves Mīr's story about Shāh Gulshan and Valī. After summarising Mīr's version in his own words, he sneers, 'Let the truth or falsehood of this statement be on the original narrator's head'.<sup>20</sup>

It is extremely unlikely that Valī's poetry owes anything to Shāh Gulshan's instruction or example. But Valī was not *sui generis*. No great poet is. Valī had the Dakanī tradition and language in his blood, and Gujrī also played a part in his nurture. Most important, he had Ḥasan Shauqī (d.1633?) as his exemplar. Shauqī was in Ahmad Nagar, then in Golconda. But his reputation seems to have been widespread. The main characteristics of Shauqī's poetry are a richness of sensuous imagery, and a language comparatively free of hard Telugu and *tatsam* Sanskrit influences. The extreme case of such influences was Faḫr-e Dīn Niẓāmī; a more moderate, but still fairly heavy, instance was Nuṣratī, perhaps the greatest Dakanī poet. Valī's language had a greater tilt toward the Persian-mixed Reḳhtah of Delhi. Most of the 'Dakanī' component of Valī's language is *tadbhav*, and a good bit of it is to be found in Delhi's register as well.

It appears that a strain of Dakanī / Hindvī developed in and around Aurangabad after Aurangzeb and his vast armies established a presence there. This happened even before he took the throne at Delhi. His campaigns in the Deccan continued through his long reign (1658-1707). 'Abd us-Sattār Ṣiddīqī, perhaps the greatest modern comparative linguist in Urdu, says:

It seems clear that by the end of the tenth century *hijrī* [1590/1], there were two forms of the Hindustani language in the Deccan. One, which was current in Dravidian [-dominated] areas of the Deccan, outside the territory of Daulatabad, and found few opportunities to renew its connections with the language of Delhi....The other form of the language was that which was prevalent in Daulatabad and its surrounds. The Mughals turned towards the Deccan in the beginning of the eleventh *hijrī* century [end of the 1590's in the CE], and their influence grew fast. They also made Daulatabad their headquarters, and Aurangzeb too

<sup>20</sup>Amrullāh Ilāhābādī, *Taẓkirah-e masarrat afzā*, p. 123.

established the city of Aurangabad just a few miles from there. People from Delhi came to Aurangabad in very large numbers in the times of Shāhjahān and Aurangzeb, and brought Delhi's high Urdu with them. It renewed and refurbished the language of the territory of Daulatabad, and the Aurangabadis happily adopted the new language of Delhi. And that is the language that we find in Valī; and but for some minor differences, it was the language spoken in Delhi in Valī's time.<sup>21</sup>

'Abd us-Sattār Ṣiddīqī may have simplified the case a bit, but his broad picture is accurate. Shafīq Aurangābādī writes about Nuṣratī that his poems come 'heavy on the tongue because of their being in the mode of the Dakanīs'.<sup>22</sup> Ḥasan Shauqī's poetry is comparatively gentler on the Aurangabadi ear. Maulvī 'Abd ul-Ḥaq, who spent a substantial part of his life in Aurangabad, says that in the first half of the eighteenth century, the language registers of Delhi and Aurangabad were practically indistinguishable. Once the Deccan became more or less independent of Delhi in the 1750's, the language of the Daulatabad-Aurangabad area lost touch with Delhi, and gradually tilted back to the main Dakanī mode.<sup>23</sup> Ḥasan Shauqī is the only Dakanī poet whom Valī mentions as a rival, or worthy of comparison with himself:

/It's quite proper, oh Valī  
If Ḥasan Shauqī should come  
Back from the dead, eager  
For my poems/.<sup>24</sup>

All the others whom Valī ever mentions as equals or inferiors--and he names quite a few--are Persian poets. In a remarkable ghazal, he fits the names of numerous Persian poets

<sup>21</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, pp. 61-62. 'Abd ul-Sattār Ṣiddīqī wrote a preface for the 1946 edition of Hāshmi's *Kulliyāt-e valī*. It was reprinted in the 1996 edition, from which I am quoting here.

<sup>22</sup>Shafīq Aurangābādī, *Chamanistān-e shu'arā*, p. 80.

<sup>23</sup>See 'Abd ul-Ḥaq's preface to Tamannā Aurangābādī's *taẓkirah*, *Gul-e 'ajā'ib*, p. ze.

<sup>24</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 243.

in a series, using them, through wordplay, as words of praise for the beloved. Apart from Shauqī, the only Hindī / Reḳhtah poet whose name he brings in is Shāh Gulshan, and he can be described as a Hindī / Reḳhtah poet only by courtesy. The poets are:

1. Mashriqī (Mashhadī)
2. Anvarī (Abīvardī)
3. (Shaikh) Jamālī (Kanboh)
4. ('Abd ur-Rahmān) Jāmī<sup>c</sup>
5. Firdausī (Ṭūsī)
6. Hilālī (Chaghātāī)
7. (Imām ud-Dīn) Riyāzī
8. (Sa'dullāh) Gulshan
9. (Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī) Dānā
10. (Nāṣir) 'Alī (Sarhindī)
11. (Mirzā Hāshim) Dil
12. (Mīr Mu'izz) Fiṭrat
13. Faṣḥī (Hiravī)
14. (Mīr 'Abd uṣ-Ṣamad) Suḳhan
15. Zulālī (Khvānsārī)
16. Faizī (Akbarābādī)
17. (Muḥammad Jān) Qudsī
18. Ṭalīb (Āmulī)
19. (Mullā) Shaidā
20. Ahlī (Shīrāzī)
21. Kamāl (Ismā'īl Isfahānī)
22. Badr (Isfahānī)
23. Ghazālī (Mashhadī)
24. (Amīr) Ḳhusrau
25. (Mīr) Raushan Zamīr
26. (Mīr Hādī) Raushan
27. Ṣā'ib (Tabrīzī)
28. Shaukat (Bukhārī)
29. (Mirzā 'Abd ul-Qādir) Bedil
30. (Mullā) Ṭuḡhrā
31. Viṣālī (Dihlavī)
32. (Ḥasan) Shauqī
33. (Quṭb ud-Dīn) Mā'il
34. (Ni'mat Ḳhān) 'Alī

35. Ḳhiyālī (Kāshī)<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly enough—and I see it as Valī's symbolic rejection of the Reḳhtah / Hindī poets of Delhi—Valī does refer to two of his junior Dakanī contemporaries, namely, Firāqī Bījāpūrī (1685-1732) and Faqīrullāh Āzād (d.1735/6). One reference to Firāqī may even betray a certain pique, if not anxiety.

/Your verses, oh Firāqī  
Are not at all such as would  
Arouse Valī to envy.<sup>26</sup>

So what did Valī do? Quite simply, he showed conclusively, and for all time, that Reḳhtah / Hindī was capable of great poetry, just as Gujrī / Hindī and Dakanī / Hindī were, at their best. Valī also showed that Reḳhtah / Hindī could rival, if not surpass, Indo-Persian poetry in sophistication of imagery, complexity and abstractness of metaphor, and *mazmūn āfirīnī*, that is, creation of new themes. Historically, perhaps his most important contribution was to infuse among Reḳhtah poets the sense of a new poetics—a poetics that owed as much to the Indian-style Persian poetry, and through it to Sanskrit too, as it did to his Dakanī predecessors:

/Oh Valī, the tongue of the master poet  
Is the candle that lights up  
The assembly of meanings.<sup>27</sup>

/The Beloved has made her place  
In Valī's heart and soul

<sup>25</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 292. I am tempted to present the ghazal itself for the reader's delectation, but its enjoyment is ineluctably bound up with understanding the entirely untranslatable wordplay.

<sup>26</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 195. Other references include the incorporation of a *miṣra'* of Azād's into a *shi'r* of his own (p. 108) and the similar incorporation of a *miṣra'* of Firāqī's (p. 244). Incorporating a *miṣra'* or line of another poet's into one's own work, called *iqtibās* (quotation), was a form of high praise.

<sup>27</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 286.



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Like meaning in the word/.<sup>28</sup>  
/The way for new themes  
Is not closed;  
Doors of poetry  
Are open forever.

The beloved  
Whose Name is Meaning reveals  
Herself, bright, when the tongue  
Removes the curtain from  
The face of Poetry.

Poetry is  
Unique in the world, there is  
No answer to poetry/.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Vali, *Kulliyat-e vali*, p. 203.

<sup>29</sup>Vali, *Kulliyat-e vali*, p. 177.

