The aim of this paper is chiefly stylistic. I shall therefore not dwell upon the relations between Ghalib’s Persian poetry and his social environment, nor on the contribution that the study of Ghalib’s Persian poems might give to a better understanding of his age. A word should be said also on the type of my stylistic approach. All agree now in admitting that Persian, or, generally speaking, eastern poetry, cannot be studied successfully by applying to it *sia et simpliciter* the canons of our western stylistics. For this reason some of those western scholars (very limited in number) who have devoted themselves to the aesthetic study of Persian poetry have re-studied the eastern approach (Persian classical treatises on rhetoric, *ars poetica* etc.). This, I think, is a very meritorious and rewarding study; but they have often applied the oriental canons of aesthetic judgment too mechanically to the object of their study. To mention only one example, this seems to me to be the case in certain recent articles by the greatest scholar in this field, Professor J. Rypka of Prague, on Nizami.

My personal system is a middle course between the two: neither a bellettristic twanging of a pseudo-historical or pseudo-psychological character, nor a pure copy of the technical descriptive stylistic of eastern criticism, with its sharp distinction between *lafl* (word) and *madda* (meaning). (One typical instance is the study of Ghalib by Halis, in spite of all the new and modern aspects of Halis’s aesthetic doctrine.) I have tried to follow this middle course in my studies of Persian poetry and, insha’allah, this is also the course I intend to follow here.

A summary description of the Persian poetical works of Ghalib is obviously indispensable as an introduction. In spite of their great fame, the really critical and scholarly edition of Ghalib’s works has yet been published; in this he is in good company, because the same is true of many of the greatest geniuses of Persian literature. I shall therefore follow the Nawalkishor edition of 1925, comparing it here and there with the more recent (but not always better) Lahore edition of the *Kulliyat*.

The Persian *Kulliyat* of Ghalib opens (pp. 11-13), with a section comprising sixty-six *qita’s*, or fragments, on various subjects: *fakhr*, poetical criticism, satire, *mashd*, descriptions (including one of his cat), occasional and celebrative verses including a *qita* congratulating Nawab Yusuf ‘Ali Khan of Rampur, upon the grant of new territory by the British government. (zarkar-i

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1 A. H. Halis, *Yadgar-i Ghalib*, 1897 and various lithographed editions. For an appreciation of Halis’s literary criticism and of his peculiar ideas on ‘nafin’ (natural) poetry, see my article ‘Halis’s Ideas on Ghalib’, in *Charteria Orientalis*, Prague, 1936.


3 *Kulliyat-i Ghalib*, Nawalkishor edn, 1925. The latest edition I know is that of Lahore, 1965, publisher Shailsh Mahirak ‘Ali, with an introduction by the well-known Urdu contemporary writer Mihr. An attempt at a chronological arrangement of Ghalib’s verses has been made by S. M. Ikram, *Armankah-i Ghalib*, n.d. Mihir too laments the lack of real scientific studies on Ghalib and expresses the wish that somebody may accomplish what he calls ‘two important tasks’, first, a real *Kulliyat* edition, i.e. a fully comprehensive collection of all his Persian poetry, including even those scattered verses that are excluded from the traditional *Kulliyat*, first published during the life of Ghalib himself in 1863 by Nawalkishor and then successively reprinted without variations. Also the ‘prison verses’ (*sabz-zam*) of Ghalib, the so-called *Sahad-shin*, should be included. The *Sahad-zam* contains verses written by Ghalib during his imprisonment in 1847 under the accusation of having kept a gaming-house and, for reasons of expediency’, not included in the ordinary editions of the *Kulliyat*. The second task, says Mihir, should be the publication of a historical commentary on Ghalib’s Persian verses, showing the occasions on which they were composed, identifying the personalities and events mentioned, etc. We hope that the celebrations of the centenary of the death of the poet may have as one result the fulfilment of these hopes of Mihir. This study of mine is based on the generally available edition of the *Kulliyat* and excludes the *Sahad-zam* to which unfortunately I have had no access. The numbers of pages refer to the above-mentioned Nawalkishor re-edition of 1925.
returns to his former state. The narration lacks any sort of realistic detail; no names of places or of persons are given, and the characters of the tale seem abstract allegorical figures.¹ Here too the lyrical form is preserved, with the name of the poet being mentioned towards the end.

The Chiragh-i dair (‘The Lamp of the Temple’: 108 couples, metre hage) is in praise of Benares/Kāshī, and apart from the famous description of that town (reproduced also in ‘anthologies’; see for instance that of Ikrām),² is also chiefly lyrical (including the tabhālī towards the end). Ghalīb invites himself to go back to his country (Delhi) from that idolatrous place, which is however very favourably described in the first part of the poem, in the typical mystico-lyrical way. It is interesting to remark that when he speaks of Hindu objects his style is strongly ‘Indian’ and reminds one of Ghānīmat Kunjāhī.³ The beauties of Benares have:

(9th line of the couplet) (pp. 81-2),

i.e. ‘their coquetry is a rose garden intoxicated and brim-full of blandishments; their graceful walking embraces the hundred tummuls of Judgment Day’.

The Rang-u-bī (‘Colours and Scents’: 154 couples, metre sari) is again of a narrative character, and allegorical. Its chief characters are Wealth and Power (daulat), Fortune (iqbal), Magnanimity (bimmat) a generous king, and a proud beggar. The gist of the story is that bimmat is superior to daulat and iqbal. In spite of

¹ In this Ghalīb is quite different from Bedil, who used his peculiarly difficult (and for Ghalīb incorrect) style to obtain sometimes results of a proto-realistic type. See my article ‘Bedil as a Narrator’ in Jahānnameh J. Rīha, Prague, 1967.

² Shāhī M. Ikrām, Arangān-i Path, Karachi, 1953. It is a good anthology, with a critical introduction in Urdu, of the Persian poetry of India. For Ghalīb see pp. 72-4 and 299-315. An excellent anthology of Ghalīb’s Persian and Urdu poems is the Inishkhi-i Ghalīb by Jintiyās ‘Alī ‘Arshī (Rāmpūr, Bombay, 1942). This selection was prepared by Ghalīb himself in 1866. The notes are exclusively taken from Ghalīb’s own explanations scattered here and there in his ‘Letters’.

³ Perhaps one of the most Indian of the Persian poets of the subcontinent. He died in 1107 Hij./1695. His mauqīd Nīrang-i iqbal is particularly interesting for its descriptive and narrative techniques which utilize the ‘twistedness’ of the Indian style to express details of action and events in a way totally different from the neo-platonic statistics of Persian classical poetry. Some of his extremely heavy compound words seem even an echo of Sanskrit style.

The section following is devoted to strophical poems (pp. 53–68), very limited in number: one mukhaanness in praise of ‘Ali (our poet was a Shi‘a and often praises the Shi‘a imāms in his poems), three tarākh-band (chiefly elegiac: on ‘Ali, the Shi‘a martyr, and a young prince, son of the Mughal sovereign Abū Zafar) and one tarji’-band in praise of the Mughal Emperor Abū Zafar (deposed by the British in 1858). Though these few strophical poems are of a simple beauty, the small number of them shows that the ‘architectonic’ structure of the strophe poem was rather foreign to Ghalīb’s poetic taste.

Narrative art, too, seems to have been rather uncongenial to him. The section devoted to the maqāna, the instrumentum principis of poetic narrative and of description in Persian (pp. 69–160), does not contain a single ‘epic-narrative’ maqāna, and Ghalīb’s attempts at narrative style seem rather poor (e.g. in the second maqāna). The maqāna number eleven in all.

The Su‘ra-e bīnash (50 couples, metre rāmāl) is of a basically mystical character and opens with the first verse of Maulānā Rūmī’s Maqāna-i Mā‘na-i. Like some other short maqānas of Ghalīb it looks structurally rather like a qasida, with an exordium, a mardī in this case a panegyric of Sirāj-ud-Dīn Bahādur Shāh) and a central part, ending with the tabhālī of the poet.

The Dard-ud-dāgh (198 couples, metre sari) is of a didactic-narrative character. A very poor peasant leaves his home together with his old parents. In the desert they almost die of thirst. They meet a dārīgh in a hermitage. He offers them water, and after having prayed to God for them, informs them that God will grant one and only one wish to each of them.

The sweetness of these words washed their ears with waves of pearls. So the old mother asks to become a young girl, the old father expresses the desire to become rich, and the young peasant asks for success and fortune in life. After various events (told in a style that seems to me rather shallow) the conclusion is that there is nothing that can be done against Destiny (bakhsh), and everyone

(p. 74)
Ghālib's repeated assertion that he is more Iranian than Indian (to quote only one example, he says in a ghazal):


\[
\text{بود غالب عدلی از گستبان عجم}
\]

من ز غفلت طولی هندستان نامیدم .

(p. 458).

‘Ghālib was a nightingale of the rose garden of Persia, only by mistake I called him a song-bird of India’), in one of the verses of this magnum there is a saijt (play on words) understandable only to a speaker of Hindi/Urdu. It is when the proud beggar says to the king: ‘I am not begging, it is rather I that have something to sell to you.’

شاندکشت طره سوداست
با نو فروشنت كالاکم

(p. 85).

‘I am a combor of the waving ringlets of passion [sauda, also “melancholy”, “blackness”, and “trade”]; it is I that sell goods [kaīla, which in Hindi/Urdu means also “black”, like sauda] to you.’

The Bād-i mubāhil (‘The Contrary Wind’: 154 couplets, metre ḱbaṣif) is addressed to the literary critics (nukhbatparvarān) of Calcutta. (The only important journey that Ghālib ever made was that to Calcutta; he was away nearly three years, from mid-1827 to November 1829.) It contains interesting material for a better understanding of his ideas on Persian poetry. He calls himself an uninvited guest (nā-ḵhvānda miḥmān) and protests against the unjust criticism of his Persian poetry by the representatives of the new ‘Indian style’, who especially praised Qatīl (d. 1817). Bedil, though not Persian, is not so ignorant (nādār) as Qatīl:

گرچه بیند ز اهل ایران نیست
لیک تهمون کتیل نادات نیست

(p. 94).

This nādār is an interesting aspect of his criticism of the poetry of his enemies: their ignorance of Persian is such that they cannot even use it grammatically (p. 94 contains hints at the grammatical rules of ‘real’ Persian).

Those who really know Persian all agree in saying that Qatīl is not a native speaker of that language [ahā-i zahān]; he certainly is not from Iṣfahān, and therefore one cannot rely on him or follow his example. This language is the specific tongue of the Iranians, difficult for us but easy and natural for them: Delhi and Lucknow are not in Persia. . . . Why should I follow Qatīl, abandoning Asir, Ḵāzin, Ṭalib, ‘Urīfī, Nazīrī and Ŭuhūrī?’ (pp. 96 and 97).
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Every country has its own special customs [rasmi khâji]. Why do you want to destroy such customs? Yes, we too reject the customs of infidelity [rasmi-kufr] and unite justice [dâd] and wisdom [dânnî] to reject infidelity is the manner [zâ'în] of the pure [arbâb-î sofâ], but, oh foolish one [zirâ-dil], to reject the Divine Bounty is the manner of which place?...Negation without affirmation is nothing but error [zalîl]...One cannot affirm God and deny the signs [âyât] of God...' (pp. 101 ff.).

This is typically Shi'a and anti-modernistic reasoning. But this is not the place for a further study of the religious ideas of Ghalib, though this would be, I think, a rewarding subject.

The seventh, Tabniyat-i 'id-i shawâl ('Congratulations for the Feast of Shavval': 42 couples, metre sart), and the eighth, Dar tabniyat-i 'id ba-sali-abd ('Wishes for a Happy Feast to the Crown Prince': 39 couples, metre sart), are panegyrical short magnânis of no great importance; and so also are the ninth and tenth, respectively Dîbââ-ê naşr muâsim bâ bist-û-baft aftar taqîf-i hagrât-i falsâk-rif'at Shâh-i 'Ahsâb ('Preface in verse') to the prose Work "Twenty-seven Crowns" by H.H. the King of Oudh: 35 couples, metre bayzî) and Taqirq-î 'Ain-i Akhâri musâbâhâ-ê Sayyîd Âhmad

1 He was a spiritual pupil of the mystical school of Muslimî Faqhr ad-Din.

In a letter to 'Ala ud-Din 'Allî, a rebuke to a mulla in 'Allî's household who had urged Ghalib to give up drinking wine leads him on to an account of his religious position. "Tell him...he writes that there is a great difference between studying the problems of the books of Abu Hamîd, plunging oneself into hair-splitting discussions on menstruation and impurity periods of women after childbirth (hijdâ), and assimilating in one's heart the words of the gnostics (waqfâ) on the reality of the Absolute and the unity of Being (hagrât-i hajj va wâhadât-un-wâhid). Gnostics are those who confuse necessary and contingent Being. Gnostics are those who want us to believe that Mussalîna the Lâr shared the gift of prophecy with the Seal of the Prophets. Gnostics are those who consider a band of newly converted Muslims [the first three 'callers'] as poets of the Prophet of the Imâma (- 'Allî), Hâli is the final destiny of such people. But I am a pure monotheist [muwahhid] and a perfect believer. I say with my tongue: 'There is no god but God,' meaning in my heart: 'There is no being [manjîl] but God,' i.e. there is no mover of beings but God (la mu'âşir f'l-îmâma illâ-'Allî). I believe that the prophets, all of them, are worthy of veneration and that each of them was the unique legislator of his age and all had to obey him. With Muhammad prophecy ended, for Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets and a mercy to all Nations; and I believe that the sunset of prophecy was at the same time the dawn of imamate, and that the Imamate is not elective [imâmî] but by appointment from God [min Allâh] and that the imâm appointed by God are, first 'Allî, then Hasan, then Husain and so on until the promised Mahdi." (Letter dated July 28, 1862.)

It is interesting to note, in this profession of faith, the blend of Shi'a and Sufi ideas, typical not so much of early Shi'ism but rather of later post-Safavid Iranian Shi'ism. It is this sort of Sufi reinterpretation of Shi'ism that gives Ghalib his typical and remarkable 'freedom of expression' in religious subjects (e.g. in the twelfth momen). Works like that of the late Khalîfî 'Abdu'l-Hakîm, Afsâr-i Ghalîb ('The Thought of Ghalib') in Urdu (Lahore, 1934), though useful, do not seem to me worthy of too serious consideration.

GAHÂLÎB: THE POET AND HIS AGE

'But if my friends insist, let us make peace, I'll praise Qâtil!' The magnânis ends in bitterly ironic, hyperbolic panegyrical of Qâtil.

The Bayân-i munâzâr-i shân-i mubâvat u silâyat ki dar hagrât parlav-i nûrû-î amâr-i hagrât-i ulâyat ast ('Declaration of the Appearance of the Glory of Prophecy and Sanctity, that is in Reality the Ray of the Supreme Light of the Godhead': 129 couples, metre ramâl) is of a religious, or, more specifically, of a Shi'a character, and provides very interesting materials for the study of Ghalib's religious attitudes. (The importance of this aspect of him is somewhat under-estimated by some of his students.) Ghalib sets out to prove that the great Saints, and 'Ali in particular, must be venerated. Both Muhammad (more directly) and 'Ali and the Saints derive from the Divine Light. Jacob venerated the shirt of Joseph and Majnûn the dog of Lâlî, not in themselves, but because they were symbols of their beloved. The fact that one loves Lâlî is not a good reason to despise the mâynil (camel-litter) of Lâlî. In this way Ghalib even arrives - if I am not mistaken - at a patriotic revaluation of the cult of local Indian saints:

...
attributes, those of jamāl (grace) and jalāl (power) as an immense fresco in black and white. Poetry (nubhān, ‘the Word’, artistic Word) too comes only from God. The form of Ghalib’s expression is here almost pantheistic:

كنى ساز ونغامه اندر ضمير
جو نم درم و رشته اندر حري

(Thou art in the innermost of ourselves such as the humidity in the ocean, the warp in the brocade.’ In contrast to this absoluteness, is the abjectness and servitude of man, but

اگر خوار ور تاروالیم ما
باغ تو برقک کتیلم سا

(Though we are base and unworthy, yet we are the blades of grass in Thy garden.’ This concept is more graphically expressed by means of an allegorical hikayat (story). A king goes to war and comes back after winning a brilliant victory. But together with those who spread flowers under the feet of his horse and bring congratulatory gifts to the sovereign, there are those, the poor and miserable, who not only do not bring anything, but are like a black spot on the beautiful picture of that glorious day. A minister wants to chase them away, but the king says:

اژان رو را در تب زناب مبند
همان ذرو آتشاب سبند

[They too are mine:] being consumed by fever from my burning light they are the atoms of dust dancing in the rays of my sun.’

‘Do the same with us, O Lord, at the Day of Judgment [adds Ghalib] because, ultimately, our sins and our sorrows too derive from Thee. My sins are not many; perhaps the only one is wine-drinking. But I am full of sorrows, and wine is the dispeller of sorrows. Wine-drinking could have been a sin for King Bahram or King Parviz, but not for me, who am poor and constantly tormented by preoccupations and anxieties’ (p. 124). An interesting passage follows, in which, after his usual complaints about his unhappy circumstances, he says that his heart will not be able to
find rest even in the traditional 'Paradise'. The classical 'other world' is criticized in verses, the first origin of which can be retraced in a typical leitmotif of Sūfism. These of Ghālib seem, however, to possess a certain 'modernity' and originality of expression:

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'How canst Thou burn with a fire-mark in Hell a heart that finds no rest even in a garden? And, in Paradise, it is true that I shall drink at dawn the pure wine mentioned in the Qurān, but where shall I find again the star of dawn I used to see on earth, and my crystal cup? Where in Paradise are the long walks of intoxicated friends in the night, or the drunken crowds shouting merrily? In that holy tavern, silent and still, how canst Thou introduce the sounds of the flute and the gay bustle of the taverns of this earth? Where shall I find, there, the intoxication of raining clouds? Where there is no autumn, how can spring exist? If the beautiful houries are eternally in one’s heart, what of the sweet thought of them? Where will be the sadness of separation and the joy of union? How could we be thankful to an unknown beauty? What will be the pleasure of a sure fruition of love, without waiting? Where shall we find, there, a girl who flees away when we would kiss her? Where will be, there, one who betrays us with false oaths of love? The beauties of Paradise will obey us and their lips will never say anything bitter; they will give us pleasure, but with a heart forever closed to the desire for pleasure. Will there be in Paradise oglings, the pleasure of coquettish glances from afar? Where will it be, in Paradise, the dear window in a well-known wall?'

The eulogy of the Prophet (narr) then follows, and after that a beautiful description of the Prophet's ascension to Heaven (mi'rāj). Its various elements are: the blackness of that night (actually more shining than day); the angel, which is the First Intellect; his dialogue with the Prophet; the extreme speed and lightness of the miraculous flight; the various celestial spheres and the zodiacal signs (each one hinted at with appropriate metaphors); the throne of God (qadr) that, though more sublime than the angels, 'can tremble for the lament of the inhabitants of this dusty earth; if the heart of an afflicted one aches, a veil of dust is deposited on those immaculate steps; the noise of the broken spine of an ant here on earth is nothing; in those holy precincts it is a roar!'

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bevd gurche berter z aflakianan

owl zerd az nālaa xākiyan
del binowī gurāyīt beh dard

nīshād bādān bāyād pāg dard

(pp. 125-6).
Then Ghālib attempts a description of the indescribable (curiously enough, chiefly with caballistic means); then comes the return from Haq (God) to haq (reality).

The eulogies of the Prophet are followed by those of ‘Ali (mangābāt), so hyperbolic that Ghālib himself adds: ‘Do not take this, however, for ghulwān. In my youth too I always loved ‘Ali, but now that I am old I should like to go on pilgrimage to his holy tomb at Najaf; may my body be buried there, where my soul already is’ (p. 145). He then expresses a sense of envy of the great poet ‘Urﬁ, who was buried there.

The extant part of the poem is closed by a Mughani-nāma ('Book of the Minstrel') and a Sāqi-nāma ('Book of the Cup-bearer'). They contain poetical concepts already well known in other compositions of this type, but these by Ghālib seem to me characterized by a sort of conscious reflection on the ideas and poetical expressions found in the older classical ones (e.g. Hāfiz or Nizāmī). In the Mughani-nāma there is what we could call a powerful hymn to Sorrow (gham) considered as a purifying, an exciting, a creating element:

In the path followed by my Thought, the guiding Khizr of my poetical journey has been Sorrow. I am not a Nizāmī, who learnt the rules of the "legitimate enchantment" of poetry from the phantom of Khizr, nor a Zulalī, who was led by Nizāmī in a dream to bedew with the crystalline rivulet of Art the garden of Wisdom... I have been influenced only by Sorrow; Sorrow made me a mourner weeping and singing at the death-bed of joy. Nizāmī spoke directly with the inspiring angel Surāsh, Zulalī was

inspired by Nizāmī, but I, alone, from my aching heart, raised the sweet lament of the ghazal. And, in the ghazal, my melody reached such a stage that you should not marvel if this Royal Hymn become a Revelation and be sent to descend — as on its Prophet upon me! ...In the dark treasure chamber of my life, in that frightful night, I requested my pure soul to give me a Lamp, a Lamp not accessible to flying moths, a Lamp away from any house, a Lamp in which you would not see a trace of oil, and whose flame would silently weep over itself; that Lamp, that I lighted without oil, was my heart burnt by the fire of Sorrow! God gave me Sorrow as the heart-enlightening Lamp of my nights and the brilliant star of my days!"

This passage is interesting also for the study of what Ghalib thought of his own poetry. In the Sādī-nāma he says further that he does not want to be led by Nizāmī out of his way, that is, of lyrical poetry and not mystical epos:

میادا نظالمی زراهمت برد
بیستان سوی خاطهات برد

(ج. 153).

(Note that Ghalib shared the opinion of some later Persian critics according to whom Nizāmī was to be interpreted mystically.) He states that his lyrics are based on a sort of humanistic immanentism: tasawwuf is not an indispensable constituent of lyrics (as many of his contemporaries thought) nor is the ghazal-form the only possible channel to express this kind of lyrical emotion:

بیش شناسایی هرچه هست
به و هم است بیشایی هرچه هست

دیوانی گل و گرگ از روی خاک
نشانی دوستی چش سرو و تاک
نوا گر گری کنی سرگ بر شاخسار
بخش آری آب در جویبار
بخوش ارج چی داری کساتی زاغ
برون از تو نبود نشایی زاغ

At the end he declares the aim of his poem: that of singing the epic exploits of, not ancient kings like Khustav or Rustam, but those of the Prophet Muhammad.

Ghalib's qasidas are rather numerous and occupy 170 pages out of a total of 340 pages of qasidas plus ghazals; in other words, their verses equal in quantity those of the ghazals, in sharp contrast with the Urdu diwan in which the ghazal and the 'fragment' are sovereign. The Khaliyat contains sixty-four qasidas. The first is of a religious character, on taubid; nos 3 and 4 comprise praises of the Prophet (nust); and the fourth includes also eulogies of 'Ali. To the praise (mangabat) of 'Ali are devoted also the four following qasidas (nos 5–8). The ninth is in praise of the martyred grandson of the Prophet, Husain; the tenth is devoted to the mangabat of the second Shi'a imām; the eleventh sings the praise of another Shi'a, a martyr, 'Abbas son of 'Ali; whereas the twelfth sings the praise of the twelfth imām, who is, according to Shi'a beliefs, 'in
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occultation' and will come back at the end of the world. Of the following sixteen qasîdas, one is dedicated to the Mughal Muhammad Akbar Shâh (this qasîda is dated 1250/1837) and fifteen to the last Mughal Emperor, Abû Zafar Bahâdur Shâh (exiled in 1858). Three qasîdas (nos 29, 30 and 31) are in praise of Queen Victoria, and another fourteen extol various British personalities in India: Lord Auckland (the qasîda is dated 1837), Lord Ellenborough, and judges, governors, etc. The last nineteen qasîdas of the collection are directed to various dignitaries of the Mughal court, to the Nawâb of Oudh, Vâjîd 'Ali Shâh and other Indian personalities (including two non-Muslims, Shiv Dhyân Singh Bahâdur and Râjâ Narendra Singh). The last one is directed to Ghâlib himself. In spite of the enthusiastic judgement of Hâli, 'The qasîdas of Ghâlib, both from the point of view of quantity and quality, are the literary genre in which he excels most... In them he sometimes follows Kâqâni, sometimes Salâmân and Zahir, or 'Urî and Naqî, and always with success: the best part of Ghâlib’s qasîdas is their tasbîb rather than the actually panegyrical section...'), I think that Ghâlib is great above all as a lyric poet, which is in a way confirmed by Hâli himself when he speaks of the especial excellence of Ghâlib in precisely the most lyrical part of the qasîda, namely the tasbîb. Here are—as a specimen—some rather original verses of the tasbîb of the twenty-sixth qasîda in praise of the Mughal Emperor Abû Zafar Bahâdur Shâh. In it Ghâlib emphasizes one of his typical motifs, that of the ‘penetrating glance’ (nazâr, nigâh) of the ‘seer’ (didâvar, dîrâbîn):

راهرون چون گهر آبِلہ با بینند
پائ را پایہ فرانتر ز تربا بینند

(p. 235).

'When the Wayfarers consider the pearls of the blister of their sore feet, they attribute to them a station higher than the Pleiads.' This is the beginning of the ode, rather uncongenial, I am afraid, to western literary taste, and almost untranslatable. The general idea, or to put it better, 'Stimmung', underlying the entire poem, is that of the positiveness of active life, expressed by means of extremely varied symbols and metaphors centred on the idea of the Way, the

1 I translate from the text reproduced as an Introduction to the above-mentioned Lahore edition (1961) of Ghâlib’s Kolilyât, p. 104.

Wayfarer, the blisters on the sore feet, the paths of the desert compared to eternally pulsating veins:

چاپدان لب تیبان در تن صحرا بینند

(p. 235).

'They see the Way as a pulsating vein in the body of the Desert,' united with the active and almost alchemic effect of the ‘glance’, which not only sees things, but also transforms them. But these didâvarîn, these ‘active seers’, are at the same time detached from that world through which they incessantly wander, and from the things that they continuously transform with their piercing glances:

دل نه بھندد به نیرنگ و درین دیر دور رنگ
هرچی بہند بعلم کھان تماشا بینند

(p. 235).

'They do not attach their heart to the magic spell of the world, and everything they look at, is, for them, a mere show and entertainment.' The entire passage is the best expression of the double position of Ghâlib, at the end of the Indo-Muslim mystical Middle Ages, and at the beginning of the new ‘modern’ world.

(Metre: ۮ۰۰۰ ۹۰۰۰ ۰۰۰۰ ۰۰۰۰ ۰۰۰۰ ۰۰۰۰ ۰۰۰۰ ۰۰۰۰ ۰۰۰۰)

راهرون چون گهر آبِلہ با بینند
پائ را پایہ فرانتر ز تربا بینند
هرچی در دیدہ عیانست نگامش دارند
هرچی در سیرہ نیانست ز بینند

رواتی از رقم صفحتہ هستی خوانند
نقش کج بر ورظ شہر عفتا بینند
دوریان از کوری چشم بلبین
هم دین جا تکرن آتھے در آنجا بینند
راز ذیدن دیسروان جوی کھ از دیسمر
 نقطہ گر در نظر آرند سویدا بینند
раه زین دیده‌ران پرس که در گرمه
جاده چون نین تن تان در تن حرا بینند
شیری را که بناگه بر چوب دهید جست
زخمه کردست بارک رگ خارا بینند
فطرا را که هر آنیه گهر خواهد بست
صورت آبیه بر چهره دربا بینند
شام در کوکه سبیع نمایان نگرند
روز در نظر خواش هریذا بینند
وحشت تفرقه در کاخ مصور سنجند
مجمع انس به نی بست زلیخا بینند
هرچه گوید عجم از خسرو و شیرین شوند
هرچه آرد عرب از واقع و عذرا بینند
نستوند آغر همی سجنون گردند
نخرشند آغر محمل لیلا بینند
خون خورند و چگر از غمه بدنان گرند
خویش را چون پر سه باهند تنا بینند
سر و تن را آگر از درد ستو کانند
جان و دل را آگر از دوست شکپا بینند
فطره آب بیلب بیست نشتر شمرند
پا به نان یک گل زیبا سیتا بینند

... ... ...

تشه را رونق هنگامه هندو خوانند
باده را چشم طبرخانه ترسا بینند

This ideal Ghâlibian Man, half old darvîsh, half modern scientist
tinged with virile sadness, is at the base of all of his verses, and is
the real protagonist of his work.

Speaking of Ghâlib’s Persian ghazals, one is naturally led to a
comparison with his Urdu ghazals. But I shall only say here that
Ghâlib’s Persian ghazals are more ‘regular’ according to the rules
of the classical ghazal, whereas his Urdu poems, as he himself
declared, are purely an intikâb, a selection, more similar to gift as
than to the classical ghazal (and this, by the way, is just what makes
them more agreeable to our taste).

Since it is not possible to ‘describe’ or summarize a collection
of ghazals, I think it useful to attempt an experiment: that
of making a list of the ‘characters’ of two ghazals selected at
random. The characters of a ghazal are — obviously — not persons,
but rather the substantive nouns included in them, a sort of pale
and fading gallery of ideas ‘at random strung’.

1st ghazal (eleven couplets):

bg-khâb rasîdân: coming back to one’s self
nâz: feigned disdain
tanâmâ: desire
dám: net
jîsm: body
pîrâban: shirt
khâr: thorn
gatî: killing
jîb: pocket
dastâr: turban
nâmîs: honour
fasnâ: legend
iâddâ: way
gāmat: stature
bāhār: spring
*gul: rose
*chāmn: meadow, garden
shāhīd: beautiful ephebe
bāzār: market
gham: sorrow
parkār: pair of compasses
kamar: waist
fanā: annihilation, or non-being
basti: being
pūd-w-tār: woof and warp
jīna: tumult
āvārag: wandering
naghma: melody
tār: string
Adam: Adam
nuqta: point
bašt parkār: seven compasses = the skies
darānīnš: creation
*nisā: glance
partau: ray
*rūkh: cheek
dīna: mirror
sarāb: mirage

and ghāzal:

and gharād: (p. 372).

dāgh (twice): fire mark, wound, scar
parakāla: patch
shagāq: anemone
jāger: liver
nāla: lament
ātishkanda: fire, temple
*jal (twice): rose
lāla: tulip
kho: manner
vāfā: loyalty

sharār: spark
bidād: injustice
*rūkh (twice): cheek
āb (twice): water, purity
dallāla: bawd
sāqi: cupbearer
qādāb: cup
bāđa: wine
*nīzā: glance
chāshm: eye
khūn: blood
masī (twice): intoxication
masākhanā: bride-dresser, tiring-maid
īlān: beauty
*chāmn: meadow, garden
qand: sugar
Bangāla: Bengal
mānī: wave
khādār: graceful walking
jaubār: pearl
anjum: stars
khurshid: sun
barg: lightning
dam: breath
shirāza: stitch
burkhāna: an idol temple
khāt: down on the cheek
rā: face
rang: colour
māh: moon
hāla: halo
nūllā: nulla
qālib: mould
khāk: dust
qezā: destiny
gūsāla: calf
rag: vein
abr: cloud
qalam: pen
zhāla: dew
(N.B. The words present in both poems are marked with an asterisk. The poems are selected at random, and these repeated words seem rather numerous; we can be sure that ‘rose’, ‘meadow’, ‘cheek’ and ‘glance’ will recur thousands of times in this sort of poetry.)

One is tempted to say: put everything into the small pot of the ghazal, add some verbs and adjectives as spices, mix together, and you’ll have the poem!

A comparative statistical inventory of such and similar key-words from different poets of different areas and periods would be, I think, a rewarding, though a rather laborious, task. Here, for instance, we find some typically Indian-style ‘characters’ not very frequent in the classical Persian ghazal (e.g. the qirāz or ‘stitching of books’, the gūlāla or ‘calf’, etc.). They are, however, only the first stratum of the different layers of which a ghazal is composed. On a higher level we could recognize the conceptual ‘motifs’ whose basic ingredients are those key-words. At this point a second type of inventory is needed, that of the motifs. Synchronical and diachronical comparisons among various of these inventories of different poets will be the only basis of a serious investigation of Persian styles. For the time being let us limit ourselves to a purely empirical tentative hint at the chief general trends of the contents of Ghalīb’s ghazals.

(1) One is the general trend exemplified by the famous Urdu verse:

‘God being absolutely beyond every limit of human perception, what people call qibla [the object of our prayers, our earthly “Absolute”] is really no more than a qibla-numā, i.e. the needle of the compass, pointing at the Absolute, not the Absolute itself.’

The same concept we have already seen in some of the Persian verses already quoted, and, to quote a further instance, in this ribā’ī:

A first purely terminological list of the key-words of the motifs of Hāfiz is being published by Amir Muqaddam in the Nosrābād-Dīnbakhpur-e A]{sh’sīyat of Tabriz (first installment No. 4, xviii, 1944/1945). It is a useful work that should be supplemented by deeper typological and historical studies.

‘There is a path from the worshipper to the presence of God, whether you take the long one or the short one. This Kausar and Tūba are signs, are a spring and a shade halfway along the path.’ I would call this motif: poetically expressed consequences of the Absolute transcendency of God. This includes relativism, the idea of the endless way, activity, etc. But these truths are recognized only by the ahl-i nizar.

(2) A second general trend is therefore that of the alchemical value of the nizar/nizār, a motif which has an ancient tradition in the Persian lyric, but is particularly emphasized by Ghalīb. A good example of it is provided by the verses on the didavarān, already quoted.

(3) A third general trend is cerebralism: personal experiences are not expressed directly (as in modern western poetry), nor through socially translatable symbols (as in the classical Persian lyric, e.g. Hāfiz’s) but rather by means of a bookish rethinking of the traditional symbols, a sort of second-degree intellectual meditation on the classical Persian poetical elaboration of reality, rather than on reality. Instances can be taken almost at random from Ghalīb’s ghazals. Let us take the first verse of the ghazal with radīf...khiyāst utilized by Hāfiz in his comparison between Ghalīb and Nazīrī:

Here a first layer (the deepest) is the simple expression of an emotion: ‘so full of difficulties and dangers is the path of my life, that I must travel on it with my inner strength or “on my breast”, rather than with my feet’.

The second layer is the symbolic filter: the sequence of the (seven or more) Valleys of the Pilgrimage, the miraculous guide Khīr with his rod (‘ajād), the sore foot of the Wanderer. But these
symbols are not directly used to express the first emotional layer; they are considered as already well-known motifs of a given imagery.

A third layer is superadded, in which Ḥālib reshapes those already-known motifs in a personal but purely cerebral, intellectual way. The result is an expression more or less of this kind:

‘In a valley in which even the rod of Khīzr is sleeping [impatient], I travel in my self [or I travel on my breast, creeping] even if my feet are asleep [tired, impatient].’ It is from this point of view that we should interpret some, at first sight, proto-realistic elements of Ḥālib’s style, e.g. the verse, at p. 10, ba-Firdaus rauzan ba-divār kū? The rauzan ba-divār is not something invented by the poet, it is a well-known element in the given set of images, or symbols, of Indo-Persian poetry. Nor is (perhaps) the way in which Ḥālib uses it as an element for a further construction.

(4) A consequence of all this, which we may also call a fourth general trend, is introspection: neither nature, nor tasawwuf, nor philosophy, nor God nor even a more-or-less clearly imagined ‘Beloved’ are the subjects of Ḥālib’s ghazals, i.e. neither a masjid nor a mandīb nor a ma’shīq. Its real subjects are the psycholgical movements of his self (mostly dissatisfaction, sadness and related sensations) analysed in detail and expressed by means of the above-mentioned poetical instruments.

But this is also, at least partly, a characteristic of the ‘Indian style’ in Persian poetry. In what sense and to what extent is Ḥālib ‘original’, not in Persian poetry in general, but in the particular background of the Indian style?

Before giving a tentative answer to this question — in the next paragraph — some words should be said on Ḥālib’s rubā’iyyāt (quatrain) that form — as customary — the last section of the Kulliyāt. They are comparatively few in number (104) and almost all show an interesting characteristic: that of being — if compared with other verses of Ḥālib — very simple. This derives partly from the fact that the rubā’i’s form cannot physically contain a too complicated imagery; but probably also from the fact that Ḥālib (like other classical poets) did not use them as a too ‘serious’ form of poetry, confining to them, therefore, those more direct and immediate expressions of feeling that for us are just the most interesting matter of poetry. Here is an instance, a simple cry of pain:

‘In the garden of my desire, by the iniquity of hail not a palm remained alive, nor a branch nor a leaf; since the house is ruined, why should I complain of floods? If life itself is a plague, why should I fear death?’

In the terms of a tentative typology of the rubā’i’s form that I have sketched in my Literary History of Persia, the majority of Ḥālib’s rubā’is are of the type that I called ‘triangular’, the most common, perhaps, and most generic amongst the types of rubā’is.

Reading Ḥālib’s work as a whole, one is struck at first sight by a curious double stylistic ‘contradiction’. One horizontal, between his Urdu and Persian works, the other vertical, between his prose and his poetry. To put it in a very simple or rather oversimplified way, his Urdu verse is more Bedilian and complicated than his Persian poetry; on the other hand his Persian prose is very much more Bedilian and complicated than his Urdu prose (noted as a model of simplicity). Before attempting an explanation or justification of these contradictions, let us say a word on the famous subject of Ḥālib’s Bedilism. In another article of mine, I tried to demonstrate that, where Ḥālib’s Urdu poetry is concerned, the idea of a passing from an initial Bedilism to a progressive rejection of Bedilian style is not accurate. This succession is more true of his Persian poetry; but here also the idea should be taken cum grano salis. The ‘salts’ consists chiefly in recognizing that this generally-accepted interpretation of Ḥālib’s style is based on judgments given by himself and by eastern critics, who used as a mīzān (balance, scales) of aesthetic judgment their own system of stylistics, and measured and defined ‘Bedilism’ and ‘non-Bedilism’ on scales quite different from ours, bearing in mind especially purely hijri and even lexical, syntactic or

1 Another, stylistically very simple, rubā’i, has been already quoted at p. 92.
2 See the chapter on Rubā’i’s, pp. 119 ff.
grammatical characteristics. A re-reading of the famous letter of Ghalib to Chaudhri 'Abd al-Ghafur, the starting-point of this generally accepted interpretation, may be useful. The letter refers to a long discussion between Ghalib and his master (pirdar-mursid), Suhb Alam, about the new style of such Persian poets of India as Qatil and Vaqif against whom Ghalib makes his strongest protests, accusing them even (an interesting point that conforms what I have said before) of 'not knowing Persian'.

'My master Suhb Alam [Ghalib says] is angry with me because I have said that the poetry of Muntaz and Akhtar is defective [nagah]. In this letter I shall take the liberty of expounding a standard [lit. 'scales', mizan] of poetry, and Hazrat Suhb is kindly requested to weigh the poetry of those gentlemen, i.e. the verses of the Indian poets from Qatil and Vaqif up to Bedil and Nasir Ali, on these scales. Here is the standard. A group of poets is that which goes from Rudaiki and Firduusi up to Khajani, Sanati, Anyari, etc. The poetry of these personalities, notwithstanding differences of small account, is based on the same style [bag]. Then Suhb was the founder of a special style [sar-i khafri]. Suhb, Jamali, Hilali: such personalities are not numerous. Fighani is then the inventor of another special art [shah-e khafri] bringing delicate images [kevayalbe-n nagah] and sublime meanings [ma'am-i buland]. Perfection in this kind of art was achieved by Zuhuri, Nazri, Urfi and Nabii. God be praised! It was as if life itself were poured into the mould of speech. This style was then given the function of a fluent simplicity by other poetical names: Suhb, Kalim, Salim, Quds, and Hakim Shifa'i are of this circle. The style of Rudaiki and Firduusi was abandoned at the time of Suhb. On the other hand, Suhb's art being of an "inaccessible simplicity" [sah-e mumtana], it never found wide diffusion. It was then Fighani's style which spread widely and, in it, new and original refinements emerged.

1 Ghalib, who, as is known, had in his youth an Iranian teacher for Persian, a former Zoroastrian, converted to Islam, Mulla 'Abd as-Samad Hormuzi, was always keenly interested in grammatical and lexicalological problems, as is shown by his famous Qaht-i Burhan, connected polynomials, and by the numerous grammatical observations strewn here and there in his Urdu letters. He felt that he knew Persian grammar and syntax like a Persian, not like an Indian. This feeling led him to the imitation of 'good Persian' models rather than to the continuation of the ur-Persian, but 'new' style of a Bedil or a Ghalib.

2 'Ud-i Hindi, Lucknow, 1945, pp. 64-6.

Summing up, there are three styles [targaft] in existence: that of Khajani and his poers, that of Zuhuri and his followers, that of Suhb, and those like him. Now tell me truly, in which of these styles is the poetry of Muntaz, Akhtar, etc., composed? You no doubt will answer me that they write in another style, and that we have to consider it as a fourth one. Well, it may be a style, perhaps even a good one; but it is not a Persian style, it is Indian. It is a coin, but not one coined in the Royal Mint; it is a false coin. Be just!

Another important statement by Ghalib himself is that contained in his own tagrig to the Persian Kulliyat. He mentions there his continuous self-correction, applying to this 'literary dissatisfaction' his own couplet (again exemplifying one of the general trends of his poetry mentioned above):

در سرکل از چر حسین آمد گذشتن دانش
کچه دیدم نقش یاده رهروان نامیدش

'On the Way, I passed beyond everything I had in front of me: I saw the Ka'ba, but I called it the footstep of an eternal Wanderer!'

And then he goes on to say (I reproduce also the Persian text in order to show the remarkable complication of its prose style, still recalling that of Bedil):

هرچند بنگ که برگذار سروست در سر آغاز نيز پندیده کو ی کرده
جوی بود اما پیشمرک از فراره روی پی ی جاده ناشناشان بر داشتی و کرده
رفت آن آن را لعیشت نستره اکششی - ناهم در آن تکاپه بیش خرائین را
به خجستی ارزش همکنسندر در من بیانختید نبرید بیجید و دل از آنوم
بدرد آمد - اندیه او ارزشی یا سن خورده و ازوروازان در من تگرستند -
شیخ علی فر قطعی زبر لبی ی پرها روپختی سرا در نظم چلوگر ساخته
و زهر نگه نهالامی و دریچه خشم عرفی صبرزی ساداد آن حزیمی ی میلواه


RGT
98/حافظ: صاحب قصيدة

Let us take, for instance, some couplets of a javāb by Ḥālib to a ghazal of Naṣīrī of Nishāpūr with the radīf ḫoṣfaṣṭ, of which we have already quoted one verse. In the interpretation - not always easy for a westerner - of these couplets, we have the guidance of Ḥālī in his study of Ḥālib’s Persian poetry.¹ The first couplet (quoted already at p. 93) corresponds to this verse by Naṣīrī:

نظر بناه و صیاد در خفا خندست
اجل رسیده چه داده بلا کجا خندست

The idea is that love is born at first sight: a hunter is ‘sleeping’ in (or concealed inside) the glance of the beloved; the poor lover - like a man near to death - does not know when the sudden end will come. It is - compared with the elaborate verse of Ḥālib - a comparatively simple, and - as Ḥālī says - ‘natural’ (nohural) expression of more or less real love.

Naṣīrī says further:

کجا ز عشقوا آن چشم نیم باز رهیم
کد فته خانمه از خواب و یا تا ما خندست

‘How could I be saved from the coquetry of the glances of a half-asleep beauty? Temptation is rising from sleep, and my foot is asleep!’

The corresponding verse of Ḥālib portrays – it is true – a more general feeling, but at the same time it uses ‘secondary’ intellectualized images:

ذکر زاینند و قرب گویه چه حفا
مرا که ناقه ز رفتار ماند و یا خندست

‘Which joy can I have from the fact that the way is sure and the Ka’ba [the final station] is near, when my camel is lame and my foot asleep?’

¹ Ḥālī compares the two poems in -খوṣfaṣṭ of Naṣīrī and Ḥālib, and also that of Zuhurī ba’tuq qālibi dinagyi khud ramand-ah with Ḥālib’s ghazal: یا یادی یادی من یت سُیسُی ba žām ndam-ah. The considerations stated by Ḥālī are especially interesting for a study of his own ideas on style and poetry. See pp. 93 ff. of the Introduction to the Lahore edn of the Khilṣṭā.
Another instance from the same poem:

Naẓīr expresses a very common feeling of lovers in this rather simple way:

کس از معانفه روز ورس حبوب دوی
که چند شب ز هم آغوش خود جدا خست

"Only he who for several nights has slept separated from his partner finds a real pleasure in the embrace of the day of union!"

Ghālib does not express the psychology of personal love, but a more general feeling of unhappiness:

درازی شب و بیداری من ای ی همه نست
زن بخت من خبر آرزو تا کجا خست

"The length of nights, my lying awake, all this is nothing; tell me rather where has my Good Luck gone to sleep?"

In the traditional symbolism, bakht-i bidar (waking luck) is good luck, and bakht-i khasta (sleeping luck) is bad luck. Here these symbols are re-employed in a 'secondary', reflected way. Further examples would render this paper too long. It is now time to say something on the historical position of Ghālib's Persian poetry in Ghālib's India, i.e. in the India of the first half of the past century.

Attempts have been made to compare Ghālib's poetry to the metaphysical poetry of English literature, or to Euphues; I have also suggested certain stylistic resemblances between Ghālib and Goongora. Though all comparisons of this kind are open to obvious criticism, they can nevertheless be useful for a better understanding of certain aspects of Ghālib's art. But those who make them seem to forget that the literary situation of India at the period of Ghālib was perhaps more similar to that of our Middle Ages than to more modern periods of European literary history.

Persian held, in Mughal India, a position somewhat similar to that of Latin in our early Middle Ages. It was not the mother tongue of anybody, and vernaculars like Urdu (to speak only of the Muslim environment) were already alive. 'Indian-style' poets are in a position, mutatis mutandis, comparable to that of certain authors of the early Middle Ages studied by Auerbach in his stimulating essays. In his 'Latin Prose of the Early Middle Ages', trying to explain the twistedness and difficulty of the style of writers like Cesarius of Arles, Gregory of Tours, and Raterius, he says that they used those specific stylistic forms not because of their inability to write in classical Latin, but simply because "the objects and the thoughts that had to be expressed, could not be expressed in the stylistic forms of the high classical culture" (p. 98 Italian edn). The 'mannerism of Raterius' language is certainly not erudite ornamentation but the peculiar form assumed by his new content" (p. 133). He thinks that his obscurity aims at a superior clarity, which, however, reveals itself only to those who make an effort to understand him' (p. 134), speaking à la Ghālib, to a zabāndān (p. 412):

بیاورند گر اینجا بود ز باندانا غرب سه سیاهی گفتند دارد

"If there is one here who knows the language, bring him to me. This stranger in the city has something to say." (Similar expressions can be found in Bedil.) Some sentences of Auerbach, in that same essay, could be almost literally applied to the situation of the 'Indian style' of a Bedil, only changing 'Latin' into 'Persian': "His [he still speaks of Raterius] peculiar quality is due not only to his temperament, but also to the linguistic materials he uses. It is a Latin [read: Persian] that had for a long time no more been enlivened by everyday usage... In order to express his own peculiar quality he had no other means than that of adding a sort of expressionistic ornamentation, operating through the disposition of words, etc.' (p. 135). This is why a Bedil, a Qatil and a Vāqīf wrote in what for Ghālib was such a 'bad' Persian. Ghālib felt it his duty to 'reconstruct' the real 'Iranian' Persian, if not that of Firdausi or Sa'di, at least that of Zuhūrī and Nazīrī. But the sixteenth century and the social, spiritual and linguistic conditions of Mughal India of that age were forever gone; this is the reason why the 'better' and simpler Persian of Ghālib seems to us not much more than a literary exercise. His public - still to use Auerbachian concepts - was the extremely restricted literary aristocracy of Delhi, and even they were not always in agreement with him, as it is shown by their criticisms."

1 In my above-quoted article on Ghālib's Urdu poetry, p. 121.
Just as he had nothing poetically new to say in Persian poetry—and therefore he could exercise himself in writing in the comparatively simple style of the ancient tradition—so too he could exercise himself in difficult Persian prose; he had no urgent need of being understood by people. Conversely, in Urdu verse he felt he had something new to say, and this new element, stylistically, in the conditions of the Mughal India of his time, could not but be the historical continuation on more modern lines of Bedil's novelty and, therefore—at first sight—difficult. But in Urdu prose he had a practical need to be understood; hence his famous clarity and simplicity. Of course he was not himself conscious of all this and, as everybody knows, he preferred his Persian verses:

فارسی بین نا بینی تفسیری رنگ زنگ
بکر زد از مجموعه اردو رنگ زنگ مست

What is rang? It is colour, ornament, conscious effort of style, exercise. In the ‘intihāb’ (selection) of ‘pearls at random strung’, without too much conscious effort of style (that is his Urdu divān), he wrote not for the public but for himself, and therefore he followed his own secret taste. Paradoxically the result was that in the last resort he identified himself with historical reality, whereas the ‘public’ for which he studied his rangs in Persian poetry was the only possible public for Persian in India, the idealized public of the century of Zuhurī and Nagīrī.

This, I think, is a fairly satisfactory explanation of the contradictions of Ghālib’s styles. Ghālib, seen from this point of view, is the last Persian poet of India, and the first ‘modern’ Urdu poet. But, being a really poetical genius, it is obvious that even in his more artificial Persian ‘exercises’ he achieves remarkable results of ‘pure poetry’.

Ghālib himself felt a clear conscience about being a ‘last’ representative of classical Mughal India; the outward power and glory of the Mughals is transformed in him into a poetical, spiritual glory:

گهر از راست شاهان عسم پر چیدن
بعض خاصی گنجی نه قلام دادند

The pearl has been taken away from the royal standard of Persia and in exchange a pearl-strewing pen was given to me. The crown has been torn away from the head of the Turks of Pashang, and the flaming Glory of the Kais was transformed, in me, into poetry!

The pearl was taken from the crown and was set in wisdom: what they outwardly took away, was given to me in secret.

And in a rubā‘ī he says that ‘the broken arrow of my ancestors was transformed into my pen’:

صد تیر شکسته نیا نکل فلم

His was not therefore a social or political poetry, but rather an intimate, ‘hidden’ one. Ghālib was what would be called now a ‘formalistic poet’. In his form, in spite of his repeated claims of ‘Iranism’, he was typically Indian, and it is not an accident that he is presently more celebrated in India than in Pakistan. The subtility of his poetical analysis of reality is characteristic of Indian style:

دیده‌اند آنکه یا نید دل بشمار دلبر
در دل سنگ بنگرد رقص بیان آزی

‘The real seer is the one that, when he analyses the psychological details of love, is able to see in the heart of the stone, the dance of the fire-idiols of Āzar’

To see what is potentially hidden in the given stony reality is the task of the poet; not that of giving more or less social messages. The wool and warp of Ghālib’s poetry is a sort of dialectical monism, transposed into poetical forms (and in this too, his Bedilian heritage is evident). It would be a fascinating subject of study—though an extremely difficult one—to retrace possible Indian sources in the stylistic trends of Indian style, of which Ghālib is one of the last examples in Persian. But since my task is
to speak of Ghalib’s Persian poetry, I can do no more here than mention this possibility. It is certain, however, that some verses of Ghalib seem to call to mind Sankara’s monism or even certain aspects of modern dialectic idealism. With one of them I close my rather haphazard considerations of him. It is particularly appropriate because it seems to invite to silence, after so many, perhaps useless, words.

بکفیار اندیشه برهم در اندیشه دل خون کن و دم سر
(p. 136).

‘Do not spoil thought with words: let thy heart bleed in thought and cease speaking!’

In considering Ghalib’s poetic achievement – and, for that matter, his achievement as a prose-writer too – it is entirely appropriate to look first at his Persian work. It is well-known that he himself took pride above all in his Persian poetry, and even on occasion expressed contempt for his Urdu verse. Thus, in much-quoted lines, he says:

فارسی بن تا بی جن تشرمهای رنگ رنگ
بگم از مجموعه اندو که بی رنگ سر است

Look at my Persian: there you see the full range of my artistry –
And leave aside my Urdu verse, for there is nothing there of me.

At the same time, one must be careful not to over-rate the importance of statements such as these. It is undoubtedly true that he regarded his Persian as his great achievement. He lamented the fact that in his day Urdu had ousted Persian from its former place as the language of poetry and culture. He knew his Persian verse was little understood and little appreciated, and this pained him. But it is also true that the most forceful of his statements contrasting his Persian and his Urdu to the great disadvantage of the latter, are made in a particular context, in a context where his Urdu verse is under attack, or where he anticipates such an attack, or where his Urdu is being compared unfavourably with that of rival poets such as Zauq. In such a context it is his standard reaction to represent his Urdu as written under some sort of external compulsion, and not from any desire of his own, and to vaunt his superiority in a field where such slighting comparisons cannot be made. The poem from which I have just