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Mahfil interviews

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*Leading Pakistani poet  
speaks out on modern  
Urdu literature*

*Mahfil*: Although your name is intimately associated with the "new" poetry of Urdu, you are not considered a "Progressive" poet. How would you describe your poetry, especially in contradistinction to the Progressive poetry of the late Thirties and Forties? In much of your poetry, you show a definite Western influence. Which Western poets influenced you most and why?

*Mr. Ráshed*: The movement for the "new" poetry with which I am associated was in the first instance a step towards the liberation of Urdu poetry from the tyranny of form; and, secondly, it aimed at bringing poetry closer to the realities of modern life. The *ghazal*, the most common traditional verse form, had served a very good purpose over the centuries, but had largely become inert both in form and content. It was on the one hand a prisoner of rhyme and meter; and, on the other, was hidebound by certain standardized symbols, images and myths, which continued to repeat themselves from poet to poet. In the *ghazal*, it was always the same hungering lover talking of his unending suffering to an ever-indifferent, cruel beloved, and in this seeking his personal catharsis. The beloved, in turn, was sometimes a harlot (who could ever talk of his love to a noble woman relegated to the harem?), and more often a male companion in a homosexual relationship; a feudal lord on whom the poet largely depended for his existence; a spiritual leader; or, when the poet soared a little higher, a male-God, with the usual Quránic attributes of the Divine Being, ranging from the profoundest love and kindness to extreme injustice and unkindness.

A part of the symbolism of the *ghazal*, built around the imaginary "love affairs" of the *bulbul*, or nightingale, and the rose, and the moth and the candle, and around the relationship between the *saqi*, or the cup-bearer, and the ever-thirsty drunkards, had, over this long period of time, become an extravagant cliché. The myths, mostly drawn from stories of the Qurán, which are practically the same as those of the Bible, or from other Islamic lore, constantly repeated themselves; the Fall of Adam; the passion of Moses; the iconoclasm of Abraham and his defiance of Nimrod; Christ as a super-healer; the Virgin Mary as a paragon of chastity; Joseph's masculine charm and the illicit love of Potiphar's wife for him; Mansúr Halláj, who was hanged for declaring himself "the Finite Truth"; the love of Majnún for Laila, the Arab beauty; the love and sacrifice of Farhád for Shírin, the

Persian queen; and so on and so forth.

These myths and symbols had together lent some semi-ethical texture to the traditional poetry; and the traditional poets, in their discourses about their suffering souls, had also evinced some understanding of the psychology of love and jealousy and its influence on man's spirit - alternately sublimating and corrupting - and had developed some kind of humanistic approach to life, which should rank some of them, such as Ghálib, among the world's great teachers.

But this complex of myths and symbols, as I have already said, had already become jarringly repetitive, and had rendered Urdu poetry out of tune with the times, as even Hálf, the first "modern" Urdu poet had felt, more than half a century ago. Particularly, it no longer helped in an interpretation of human equations in the light of modern experience, or in relating poetry to the newly emerging social, political and economic problems. The problem of the "new" poet thus was, firstly, to write "as himself," or as an individual rather than a type; and, secondly, to talk about the suffering soul of mankind as a whole, rather than of a chronically unhappy lover. New sources of knowledge had opened up new themes and new visions of reality, and the new poet was obliged to bring his new sensitivity to bear on them. Any other course would have been utterly unrealistic.

I have talked at some length about the nature of our traditional poetry so that you would understand the nature of the "revolt" of the new poet against it. This new spirit in Urdu poetry was inevitable, as much as it was inevitable in the poetry of any other language. It simultaneously threw up three poets, who in their different ways sought to interpret modern life. Mírají made bold experiments with form, brought the language of poetry closer to everyday speech, and unravelled some of the mysteries of the subconscious in the light of the new psychoanalytical discoveries; Faiz, using most of the traditional clichés, symbols and myths, even as Iqbál had done, evinced a new emotional response to current human problems in line with the socialist doctrine; and I, in my small way, experimenting with new rhyme arrangements, tried to stress some of the current problems, the foremost among them for me being the alien rule, religious dogmatism, moral repressions, etc., which had continuously dwarfed the Asian soul; and to achieve this, I drew upon my personal experience alone, rather than the experience of others or on any ulterior doctrine.

Since we three began to write, a large number of other poets have carried forward the new trends in different measure - some stressing the form, some the diction, some the content. But, while the *ghazal* still lingers, the efforts of the new poets have largely rid Urdu poetry, even the *ghazal*, of most of its traditional trappings, giving it a new lease on life, a fresh air to breathe in and a courage to explore new paths.

Without any attempt to provide a solution for them, I have tried to respond to the modern Asian's problems, both emotionally and intellectually, through an esthetic and moral release from the past, even a rejection of it. The Progressives, as a rule, were not directly concerned with a breakaway from the past as such; and secondly, they insisted on a single-minded ideological

purpose of poetry, as a truth unarguable and evident. Some of my poems, both in *Māwara* (That Which Is Beyond), the first collection, and in *Irān mēn Ajnabi* (A Stranger in Iran), the second collection, have no doubt some points of resemblance in their content with the poetry of the Progressives; but the main point of difference lies in our approach to life and its problems.

While they stood for a complete suspension of choice on the part of the writer, in favor of a preconceived doctrine, I believed that a poet who is honest to his craft, must write in the light of his individual perceptions alone. My poetry is not devoid of a personal ideology and an intense sensitivity to human situation, but it is not linked to any political doctrine imposed from outside. While the Progressives had a single yardstick to measure every human situation, I preferred to react to them in the light of my personal experience and the sense of values born out of that experience. I believe that reality has more than one shade, and their reflection in literature must depend entirely on a writer's own super-sensibility. The most manifest streak of my poetry is thus the confidence in individual perception, even in the aberrant, erratic self of man, which, I think, more than his righteous self can provide answers to human questions.

Furthermore, unlike the poetry of Faiz, there is no profusion of sensuous effects in my poetry, because I feel that such effects either distract from the main theme or obscure the reader's vision. Also, unlike Alí Sardár Jáfri, another well-known Progressive poet, I neither harangue, nor preach; nor do I indulge in common sentimentalism, as many lesser Progressive poets did. I try to achieve my communication through concrete images contained within a poetic substance. Some poems, particularly those about Iran during the War, were even deliberately bare and austere in comparison with the poetry of Faiz and a few others.

As regards your question about the Western influences on my poetry, I suppose many writers of my generation could not avoid them: in fact, it is surprising that we could retain some of the Eastern influences! It is difficult to say which of the Western poets influenced me most, and even more difficult to say why. I do not claim any special erudition in Western poetry, but I have nibbled at many English poets, and at some European poets in their English translations. Ironically, though, the Western poets I have read the most have influenced me the least. It is, therefore, a wrong presumption that in order to get to the meaning of a poet, one should first examine his reading list. The Western influences on our society and literature did not enter through Western literature alone: the movies, the radio, the newspapers, and most of all the Western system of education, played a large role in our personalities and our way of thinking and thus our literary creations. All this brought about a new consciousness among us which went a long way towards transforming our classical oriental sensitivity into a modern, rather semi-Western sensitivity. I cannot blame any Western poets for my failings. I just had them.

*Mahfil*: Your works, particularly *Māwara*, have come under fire from the Progressive camp. What is the nature of their criticism of your works?

Mr. Ráshed: The criticism of the Progressives against my poetry largely stemmed from my independent attitude towards literature and life, but most of their criticism was based on certain poems in my second collection, *Irán mén Ajnabi*, rather than exclusively on poems in *Máwara*. It is difficult to believe that in my condemnation of alien rule, or moral and social repression and of religious dogmatism, the Progressives did not discover some elements in their own way of thinking. In fact, until the publication of the second collection, in which I had criticized some of their most cherished idols, many Progressives even claimed me as one of them. But, they soon realized that I was not talking in their terms, nor in their language. Some of the poems in *Máwara* and many in *Irán mén Ajnabi* were outspokenly opposed to the Progressive thought; in these I had read tendencies towards totalitarianism and regimentation. It was thus inevitable that I should become *persona non grata* with them as a group and make it easier for them to lash me for my other failings. Yet, it goes to their credit as well as my own, that our friendship has always continued on an individual basis.

Beginning with Krishan Chandar, who had otherwise contributed a useful introduction to *Máwara*, many dubbed me as "escapist." Krishan was at least generous enough to call it a "negative escapism," implying that it was a kind of "strategic retreat" on my part in order to continue the "fight." But other Progressive "critics" conveniently dropped the qualifying word. Even Krishan Chandar's verdict was based on four or five poems, particularly *Raqs* (A Dance), *Bekarán Rát ke Sannáte Mén* (In the Endless Silence of a Boundless Night), and *Khudkushi* (Suicide).

Now these poems were no escapist poems at all in the sense that they were neither autobiographical (in spite of the use of the first person singular), nor were they intended to provide any justification for escapism. At their worst, they were dramatic monologues, in the manner of Browning, let us say, which, in voicing the thoughts or describing the plight of three escapists of different type, were designed to bring out the sadness of escapism. To describe an "evil" is not to adore it. They were thus a part of the grotesqueness of the Indian situation under an alien rule, partly to show loss of man's communication with nature, as in *Raqs*; and partly to point out the breakdown of esthetic and spiritual values, as in *Intiqám* (Revenge) and in *Khudkushi*, in which an office worker's routine rapport with existence ends up in an abrupt disillusionment; and even the breakdown of sexual communication, as in *Bekarán Rát ke Sannáte Mén*. These poems and others must be read as a unified metaphor of the Indian life in those days, when the alien rule was corroding our souls, and social and moral repressions all around us were stunting our spiritual growth.

Another point of criticism of my poetry was related to its style and diction. Some critics, both Progressive and non-Progressive, have regarded my poetry largely esoteric, and have found my expression ambiguous, even obscure. One reason for this perhaps is that I was not born to the Urdu language, my mother tongue being Panjábí. For me the problem of language is thus nearly the same as it must have been for Joseph Conrad, let us say. When you are not born to a language and have to use it for your literary expression, you often miss the colloquial flavor. I received most of my education in Persian

and Arabic, and it was but natural for me to be influenced by these two languages, which have many common features with Urdu; but their excessive use in an Urdu work can easily render it beyond the reach of the common man. Another, and to me more plausible, reason for this obscurity was the intensely personal nature of my experience, which expressed itself without the usually familiar trappings of Urdu poetry. I would have indeed been more easily "understood" if I had talked in terms of the clichés of Urdu poetry. Still another reason could be my own inability to find the right word for the right poetic thought. I do not rule out an occasional breakdown of communication on my part.

A few other critics, again from both groups, have discovered elements of "obscenity" in my poetry. I look upon obscenity as a problem of the moralist or the judge, rather than of the creative writer. Yet, except for *Intiqām*, there is hardly a poem in my two collections which would be morally or legally reprehensible. Even in that poem there are no four-letter words. As I have said earlier, in my poems I talk of love in terms of normal, natural love between man and woman, and in order to do so, I occasionally use imagery verging on sensuality. Indeed, one of my points of departure from the tradition was the freedom to treat themes of love in an uninhibited manner and as a healthy passion - as against the morbid, unattainable desire of the traditional poet. I am no believer in mysticism or in a hypocritical camouflage of emotions, as the traditionalists were, and as even some of the Progressives are. Love in my poetry is desirable and attainable. Nevertheless, in a part of the world where even the word "kiss" is tabooed for all practical purposes, it is not impossible to find obscenity in the slightest show of emotion and the minutest reference to physical love.

Such criticism as I have just mentioned does not disconcert me, because I feel that it is at least honest and justifiable. But there have been and are critics who are either ignorant or dishonest or dogmatic in their approach to poetry. For example, Hayâtullah Ansâri, possibly a Progressive, published a full-fledged book on my poetry some twenty years ago and with an amateur, rudimentary knowledge of modern psychoanalysis, he was at pains to unearth psychological complexes - sadism, masochism, Oedipus complex, and so on and so forth.

Another young critic, in a completely irrelevant reference to my poetry in an essay on Akbar Allahâbâdi, ruled out my poetry as "soulless" and a "complete farce" - a harsh view, which if not dishonest and prejudiced, must be regarded as perfunctory. Still another critic, who is notorious for his dogmatic and astounding views on poetry without being a poet of any consequence himself, said, "Urdu *ghazal* is a semi-barbaric form of poetry," etc., and he lashed at my poems for an imagined lack of brevity and coherence and ridiculed every word used by me, while he had himself failed to read those poems in a coherent manner and had missed the nuances of many words. Such critics exist in all languages, and Urdu is no exception.

On the other hand, there are critics like Dr. Wazîr Agha, who made a brilliant study of the elements of revolt in my poetry; or Aftâb Ahmad, who in two serial articles analyzed my themes; or Salîm Ahmad, who in his book

*Nai Nazm Aur Pura Adami* (New Verse and the Complete Man), proved how, in rejecting the traditional romanticism, I had sought man's fruition in physical love, and how love in my poetry was the search for the harmony of what he called "the upper and lower parts of the body," against the traditional poet's love which strove to destroy both.

*Mahfil*: What is the nature of your criticism of the Progressives? Do you think that they have outlived their effectiveness?

*Mr. Rashed*: The Progressive movement in Urdu began some thirty years ago with the publication of a "Manifesto" by a small group of young Urdu writers in London. This was followed by the publication in India of a collection of short stories, *Angare* (Sketches, or Hot Coals?), contributed by some dozen writers. This book was banned forthwith, because it was considered to contain many "obscenities" and its attitude towards religion was flagrantly offensive. In spite of this, I must say, the book did not create much sensation. If at all, it should have been banned for its banalities rather than for "obscenities."

The Progressives had basically two aims in view: firstly, to write for and on behalf of the proletariat, rather than for the élite; and, secondly, to use literature for creating hatred against the upper classes, feudal lords, and the clergy. The early writings of the Progressives failed to make any profound impression on our literature, because, I guess, some of the giants of Urdu literature, such as Ghálib, Háli and Iqbál, had already brought about a revolution in thought, which was too strong at the time to yield to any other influence. Nevertheless, gradually, a group of writers, who were influenced by the Marxist ideology as preached by the Progressives, began to emerge and to receive encouragement and approval. A Progressive Writers' Association was formed, and a group of publishers found that the literature produced by these writers enjoyed ready market, especially among young readers who were looking for shocks and sensations.

I have never been a member of the Progressive Writers' Association, but, as I said earlier, have had very close relations with many Progressives individually. As you would recall, I dedicated my first collection to Faiz, and when his first collection, *Naqsh-e-Faryád* was published, I contributed an introduction to it. Then, Krishan Chandar wrote an introduction to my first collection, *Mawara*. Upindar Náth Ashk, who is not a writer of the same calibre as Krishan Chandar, and is perhaps only a half Progressive, dedicated one of his novels to me.

My criticism of the Progressives springs from the view that literature is not and should not be produced under external direction, to serve a specified ideology or a specified group. In fact, dictating the course of literature through party manifestos always dismays me. To me it means that a certain group of people, whose *bona fides* are not clear to me, have taken it upon themselves to tell me what to write and how to write it, so that my literary productions may serve their purpose, however laudable.

This is to me a denial of my freedom to write, even of my freedom to think for myself. This makes "Progressivism" a misnomer; for literature, in order to contribute to human sublimation and progress, spiritual progress if you like to call it that, must be written under conditions of utmost freedom. No politician is wise enough to lay down the course of a writer's thoughts and emotions to others. I do not value anything more than the ability to view and interpret the world around me and life as a whole, if I wish to, and to react to human problems in their universal context or in my personal context, as I may choose. In so far as the Progressives strove to draw writers out of their cocoons, and stressed that they must have a social responsibility beyond their normal literary responsibility, the Progressives served a useful purpose, for literature and life are interrelated, and one cannot exist without the other. Literature cannot be created in a vacuum and cannot exist to serve a vacuum. But, in so far as they preached that the writer had no personal will and he must suspend his choice like characters in a melodrama, they aimed at creating literature to fit a pattern. Thus, I have no quarrel with the Progressives in so far as they believe that literature should reflect a social consciousness, but I do differ with them when this social consciousness in their view must be completely impersonal. This is indeed the denial of the whole creative process and of the *raison d'être* of all creative activity.

Nevertheless, among the Progressives there are good writers and there are bad writers; there are those who perceive life in its entirety, and those who miss it completely; there are those who bring new wisdom to bear on their interpretation of man's destiny, and those whose finer senses are blinded by slogans; there are those who sublimate as well as edify, and those who merely harangue. This, however, provides no criterion for judging what you call their "effectiveness," or for finding out whether they have outlived it or not.

The effectiveness of the Progressives, in my view, lies in the "proliferation" of their movement, because it is as a consequence of their movement that writers today, even many *ghazal*-writers, cannot afford to close their eyes to their social environment and to the problems of man as a whole. No doubt, the Progressives did not succeed in lining up every writer to promote the Marxist doctrine or the cause of the proletariat, as they saw it; but their movement has gradually spread enough consciousness of the existing human situation that any writer today who wishes to write for himself alone or to indulge in self-pity or a morbidly personal nostalgia, must feel a sense of guilt in doing so. It was more than a coincidence that the two movements in Urdu, one for the change of form and idiom and the other for the change of content, arose together and then converged to produce the "new" writer of today.

Today, it is no longer fashionable for anyone to call himself a "Progressive," with a sense of superiority, or to dub anyone a "Reactionary" in an obviously derogatory sense. Today, no writing can produce much echo unless it is directly or indirectly related to the life of the people. At the same time, there is a growing resistance to the theory that literature can be dictated, and many writers have successfully defied all pressures from outside groups trying to direct them. Most theorists among the Progressives have gone the way of all theorists; the few who linger are often a little apologetic about their "Manifesto" and about the production *Angārē*, written directly to prove the dicta of the "Manifesto."

*Mahfil:* Would you care to comment on the poetry of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, who is generally considered the foremost Progressive poet, and whom you mentioned as one of the three pioneers of modern Urdu poetry? How did the Urdu literary community react to his winning the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962? What were your personal reactions?

*Mr. Rāshed:* Beginning with my introduction to Faiz's first collection, a great deal has been written on his poetry. While the old masters of Urdu verse, Jōsh Malihābādī and Hafīz Jallandhari are still alive and prospering, Faiz remains the most popular Urdu poet today who, after Iqbāl, is the best known abroad.

My opinion that "Faiz stands at the junction of romanticism and realism," which I expressed some twenty-five years ago, still largely holds true. Faiz has inherited the wistfulness and sadness of the disappointed lover of the traditional *ghazal* in a large measure (this may be one reason why he feels very much at home in the *ghazal* form); and, to this, I presume, must have been added some influence of the English romantic poets, particularly Shelley and Keats, (who were a part of our discipline at the University), because they seem to have left a clear mark on his imagery. His soft sentimentalism and his repeated reference to "pain" immediately remind one of the two great English romantic poets. From the Persian and Urdu *ghazal*, he has borrowed the whole complex of symbolism, myth and even phraseology which, in spite of his apparent contemporary consciousness, render him a mystic in line with Hāfīz and Saadī, who were no less conscious of their own immediate environment.

But, in using the traditional parlance, he does not always seek his personal catharsis alone, as the traditional poet did. His method is to awaken first within himself and then in the mind of his reader a pain and pathos which would link his experience with the experience of mankind as a whole. Thus, he enables the time-worn clichés of the Persian and Urdu *ghazal* to acquire a renewed sensitivity and to be recharged with meaning, so that the solitary suffering of the disappointed romantic lover is transformed into the suffering of humanity at large. The traditional poet was often a mere lonely prowler, but Faiz stalks his quarry, using the same old weapons of the *ghazal*-writer, with a clear awareness of a multitude behind him. This explains his constant reference, even appeal, to "comrades" and "friends" in his poetry.

The symbols of wine and the tavern, which were used by the traditional poet to express "spiritual ecstasy" or the state of communion with the spiritual leader or with the Divine Being, are in Faiz's poetry the symbols of the new urge and the new aspirations of man; the allusion to the Cross, which in old poetry represented the personal affliction of the lover, is the suffering and sacrifice of the common man for a supreme cause. In the *ghazal*, the cruel, indifferent beloved was referred to as a "murderer;" in Faiz's poetry, this beloved, the murderer, is frequently the constantly illusory goal of struggling humanity, or the persecutors of the new crusader - the colonial rules, repressive laws, the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms etc., etc. There is no special emphasis in Faiz's poetry on sex, but he constantly employs many sex symbols - eager red eyes, snow-white bodies, tall feminine figure, smiling lips, etc. - which lend an element of "juiciness" to his poetry where no subtle political meaning is intended.



Faiz is a Progressive poet, no doubt, but what distinguishes him from the ordinary Progressive is that he has not turned his poetry to serve a functional purpose. He does not directly cater to the proletariat, and does not indulge in the usual oratorical outbursts of the Progressives. His images are largely ornate, but together they combine to create a single emotional experience. By retaining the familiar symbolism and phraseology of the *ghazal*, he has facilitated his approach to the reader, which the other Progressives would perhaps achieve either by using the idiom of everyday speech, or by more direct expression, or by simple oratory.

Faiz approaches his reader at two levels at the same time: the level of the ordinary lyrical poet, with a direct emotional appeal; and the level of a socially conscious poet, in terms of a political metaphor. His reader has thus to make a slight mental adjustment to arrive at the underlying meaning of his poetry, particularly when Faiz's poetry is not a poetry of intensely subtle personal experience, which the ordinary reader would find difficult to share with him.

As the time goes, however, Faiz is becoming increasingly repetitive, and his poetry which in the past only echoed some of the traditional emotions in traditional phrases, now echoes itself back and forth. The themes have begun to circle around one another, and the silky words in which they were clad have become even fluffier. His technique of lulling his reader into a euphoria, by the use of constantly repeating sensuous effects so that he might see the visions of man's future, has turned his poetry into an extravaganza which is beginning to weaken its impact. Unless Faiz permits a widened personal experience, a renewed understanding of human psychological processes and a new philosophical outlook on life to refertilize his poetry, my feeling is that it might turn into a paper-white narcissus or calendar art!

I am afraid I am not aware of the reactions of the Urdu literary community to Faiz's winning of the Lenin Peace Prize. I, however, imagine that it must have been a mixed one. While many must have felt proud that a poet of the Urdu language was thus honored, some must have inevitably looked upon it as a political award. I personally do not believe in literary awards and prizes: the greatest awards for a writer are the freedom to write and the creation of such social and political conditions as would enable him to reach the largest number of readers in unfettered freedom. Literary prizes do not essentially lead to better creativity; in fact, often they lead to a complaisance on the part of the writer thus honored. Some official and para-official prizes even have an element of regimentation, and are motivated by a desire to corrupt writers, to line them up with a political ideology to the exclusion of any independent thought in the name of common survival. It is unfortunately often difficult to perceive this influence.

*Mahfil*: Another figure who, like yourself, is - or rather, was - highly influential in Urdu poetry, and like yourself a spearhead of modern Urdu poetry, but also not a Progressive, was Mirajī. What do you think of his works? How would you describe his influence on the most recent poets?

*Mr. Rāshed:* I have so far gone along with you in making a distinction between "Progressive" and "non-Progressive" poetry, but I suppose we have now reached a parting of the ways on this. This distinction is all too artificial and perfunctory, and I believe that it merely serves the purpose of camouflaging the political intent of a certain type of poetry in order to mislead the naïve. To call poetry "communist" or "leftist," which this type of poetry in fact is, would have naturally limited the desired psychological impact. I believe that any poet who represents modern consciousness, in one way or the other, is Progressive, and thus Mírají, whose themes originated in certain aspects of modern life, must rank as a Progressive above all. Considering, however, that over a period of time, the leftists have themselves modified their stance over many poets, including Ghálib and Iqbál, I have reasons to be optimistic that Mírají too would some day be included among their ranks. It would not help Mírají, but it might enrich the Progressives.

I look upon Mírají as the most remarkable poet of our time - most ingenious, most prolific, most individualistic - and the most maligned. The leftists rejected him outright, investing him with all the sinister qualities which he never possessed - negativism, defeatism, morbidity, eroticism, obscenity, ambiguity, etc., etc. All this because there was no drumfire in his poetry to advance the leftist cause, or any cause, for that matter.

Mírají was, in the first instance, a poet who gave up formal prosodic devices, not for the sake of mere experimentation, or for a conscious breakaway from the past, or to *appear* new and modern, but because his subject-matter demanded an entirely new structural basis. Without a freedom in lining, diction, and the deployment of language in general, which is possible in free verse alone, he could not have turned his abstractions into the vivid pictures and sensations that enrich his poetry. Also he employed the dramatic monologue technique extensively, using the first person singular for the character portrayed in each poem. Careless critics have interpreted his poems - as well as some of mine, as I said earlier - as mere autobiographical accounts, forgetting that the special advantage of the dramatic monologues is that they enable the poet to stand at a convenient distance from his characters, without identifying himself with any one and without getting involved in their "affairs."

Undoubtedly, Mírají's dramatic monologues were born out of the complex of his own personal experience, as much as all poetry is, and also represented his individual philosophy of life. But accusing him of a penchant for personal experiences for erotic purposes is doing him less than justice. Since his purpose was never to persuade or to arouse any intense emotional reactions, and in talking of sex he even talked *sotto voce*, almost stifling his voice under highly personal covert symbolism, it is wicked to say that he was morbidly obsessed by sexual themes or was deliberately obscene. Although his poetry is rich in sensuous effects, he scrupulously avoided the ornamental trappings of the conventional verse, on the one hand, and even the semblance of sensationalism, on the other. There are no extravagant sex scenes in his poetry, and while sex no doubt was his principle subject for poetry, he does not evoke any voluptuous responses, as, for example does the poetry of Jósh Malihábádi, a more or less officially recognized Progressive, nor does he indulge in juicy words and phrases, even like Faiz. He does not use any rhetorical devices to dazzle the reader, as Ali Sardár Jáfri does;

and his language is so close to its Hindi genus, as well as to modes of common speech, that, except for the subtlety of his symbolism, he is far closer to the proletariat than any "Progressive" poet.

There is also no morbidity in his treatment of sex or its various aberrations. Fundamentally convinced as he was that the secretiveness and the prudery surrounding sex were at the root of the disintegration of modern man, or so-called civilized man, his poetry was an attempt at delivering man of the filth and ugliness and vice which his subconscious had accumulated over the ages. Mirají's poetry is a protest against the havoc which moralism has played with the spirit of man, turning his subconscious into a mere "ghostland." His poetry is not moralistic, of course, in the established sense of the word, yet in so far as it challenges the hazards of conventional moralism, it is an attempt at remoralization of man. In order to save man from any further disintegration, he calls him back to himself and to Nature, where his primitive self used to be. In one of his essays, Mirají has viewed this inner disintegration of man as the root-cause of the present-day international tensions and conflicts, which lead to great wars - thus justifying his own crusade against it. But, he was no poet of crusades, conscious, pre-planned crusades, which are the pastime of the leftist writers alone.

His poetry symbolizes the eternal quest of Man, as a pilgrim and not as a citizen, for the discovery of the lost Self, through a renewed rapport with himself, a harmony within and without. It is thus no matter of surprise that he draws most of his symbols from Nature - the sea and the clouds, brooks and fountains, hillocks and mounds, forests and gardens, trees and wind, etc; and for his imagery he reverts to the ancient India of Krishna and the *gopis*, its dark forest nights, caves, temples, witches, ghosts and cobras - the days when Man, in his primitive existence, was closer to Nature, and thus to himself, than he is today.

Yet, psychological complexes as a problem of the modern man are his favorite subject, and he uses them to illustrate how modern civilization, the super-creator and nurturer of these complexes, has reduced man to a mere fraction of himself. Sex, which is the symbol of man's whole existence, can, in his view, resilé and sting back like a cobra when an attempt is made to cover it under the lids of romanticism, platonic love, or hypocritical moralism.

It is true that many readers still find it difficult to understand Mirají's poetry, for his poetry cannot be measured by the normal conventional standards, nor by any preconceived notions about the purpose and place of poetry in life. Some knowledge of modern psychology and, more than that, some respect for the great discoveries made by Freud and other great psychologists of our times on the relation of sex and the subconscious, are indeed necessary to build a response to this unusual poetry. Undoubtedly, Mirají always writes from intensely personal experience, but in poems like *Sumandar ka Buláwa* (The Call of the Sea), *Uncha Makán* (A Tall Building), *Chal-chaláo* (The Passing Show), *Ek thi Aurat* (There was a Woman), etc., this experience transcends beyond the poet's person and is immediately linked with the spiritual destiny of the modern man, which is the attainment of complete harmony with Nature and himself, more with himself than with Nature, to save himself from disintegration and death.

While many younger poets, among them Ziá Jallandhari, Mukhtár Siddiqí, Majíd Amjad, Muhammad Safdar and others, most of them members of Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, of which Mírají was the founder, share Mírají's method and technique in different measure, particularly the use of run-over lines, his rhythmic patterns, his preoccupation with mythology, and his independent spirit, few of them possess his super-sensitivity, his peculiar philosophy of life, or his dexterity in the treatment of sexual themes within an intricate pattern of symbols and images. For single-minded moralists, Mírají will perhaps always remain a security hazard, and will always be kept out of the textbooks by the virtuous schoolmen, but his impact on Urdu poetry will always be keenly felt.

*Mahfil:* You have said that Mírají was, among his other great qualities, the founder of Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, which, I understand, means "The Circle of Men of Taste," and which is supposed to have stood for the independent spirit of the writer. What is your opinion of this society? What do you think of its recent tendency to function as the apologists for the Islamic religion in an Islamic state? Isn't it rather unusual for an "art for art's sake" school of literature to transform itself into a school of religious apologetics?

*Mr. Ráshed:* I have always held Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, or Halqa for short, in the highest esteem. I was closely associated with it when it was first founded in Delhi some twenty-five years ago, more or less as a substitute for the so-called Delhi Cultural Society, which I had rather unsuccessfully tried to form with a similar purpose - the independence of the writer - but to be comprised of writers in all the available languages. Mírají wisely saw that it was difficult to bring writers of different languages together under the same roof, particularly those of Urdu and Hindi. He, therefore, concentrated on a society which would be devoted to the cause of the Urdu language and literature alone, and thus succeeded in forming the Halqa.

I look upon the Halqa as a society of what one may call "the well-rounded men of Urdu letters," as against the men of letters cut to a measure; men who believe that the cause of literature is best served by a writer who under all circumstances is willing to maintain his spirit of independence, and who does not sacrifice his individuality for the sake of a political creed externally imposed upon him, or for any political expediency. It is, therefore, a mistake to take Halqa for a mere "art for art's sake" school in the sense of an Ivory Tower. While retaining their independent spirit, members of the Halqa have at all times shown vital interest in life and its problems, and have according to their individual lights, reflected them in their literary productions.

The doors of the Halqa have indeed been kept open to all varieties of writers and writings - esthetic, leftist, religious, mystical, traditional, modern, and so on and so forth - as long as it happened to be good literature. The society has many special features: it has no regular president, no permanent executive, no membership fee and no business office. Everything is done on an *ad hoc* basis: the president is nominated for each meeting; an executive

is formed when needed; members are individually called upon to subscribe when a specific program needs financial support; and the private house or office of a member may be "requisitioned" as business office for a specific transaction. More than that, the Society has never sought official favors or monetary help, and has seldom cared for or received an official frown - except perhaps once, when its Ráwalpindi chapter was ordered closed down because it was felt that the weekly meetings were being crowded by political extremists. Despite this, the Halqa has functioned well for these twenty-five odd years, with its Lahore chapter having proved the most active, while the other ones in Delhi, Karáchi, Ráwalpindi, Pesháwar, Dacca and London, operating rather spasmodically.

One must, however, admit that the record of the Halqa's accomplishments has stayed all too on the humble side: regular Sunday afternoon meetings, which to this day follow the same pattern as laid down by the illustrious founder; annual meetings, accompanied by a *musháara* (poetical symposium) attended by special invitation; a rather sporadic publication of "annual" poetry selections - to which have lately been added similar selections of short stories, essays and discussions.

What lends the Halqa its intrinsic worth is not its output, but its emphasis on modernity in literature, its encouragement of all experimentation, and its inveterate "weakness" for free and frank criticism. One rule of the game which the Halqa has scrupulously observed throughout its existence has been that no writer, however great or influential, who cares to present his work in any of the Halqa's meetings, will be spared criticism and that that criticism will be honest and objective. This rule has no doubt chagrined many an established writer who is accustomed to solicitous compliments or polite comments, which are common in my part of the world; but has, on the other hand, turned the Halqa into a training ground for the younger writer who must inevitably get some "spanking" from his seniors before he can either realize his worth or fall by the roadside.

As regards the second part of your question, frankly, I am not aware of any somersault on the Halqa's part: in fact, such somersaults somehow do not fit into its pattern at all. How could it ever, as an organization, become one thing or the other? As I have already pointed out, it is not right to take the Halqa for a mere Ivory Tower, because it has at all times shown a dynamic interest in life and its problems. But, it cannot, at the same time ever go to the extent of issuing a "manifesto" calling upon all its members, to write on one theme or the other; or in one way or the other, for the simple reason that this would not fit into its pattern of approach to literature. Much less would it call upon its members to become apologists for Islam or for any purpose for that matter.

I can well imagine that some members of the Halqa, as well as certain other writers, today write on Islamic themes, and whether they do so as apologists or not, it is their own business. Islam, after all, is an important dimension of the life of an average Pakistani. The majority of Pakistan's population is Muslim. The country has inherited a culture which has its roots in the Islamic way of life. Thus if a writer views life from the Islamic angle, he is only reflecting life the way it appears to him. When you say apologists for the Islamic religion, I hope that you do not mean religious fanatics, because that would indeed be a disaster. Otherwise, if a Pakistani writer treats Islam, let us say, in the same manner as scores of Western writers

from Dante and Milton down to T. S. Eliot, have treated Christianity, it does not amount to an apologia for Islam. There are references to Christian lore even in the poetry of Auden and Dylan Thomas in English; and in Urdu we have already writers like Halí, Akbar and Iqbál, who have written directly about Islam, while no Urdu poet of the past has written poetry without allusions to Islamic myths.

It is not clear to me what you base your conclusion on, when you say that the Halqa has transformed itself into a school of religious apologists. I am aware that there are quite a few Urdu poets today who draw upon Islam for their themes - Islamic religion or civilization or history. For example, Jílání Kámran, who has introduced a neo-romantic attitude towards Islam, a certain kind of wistfulness for Islamic personalities and places, with such poems as *Panjsúre-vála* (The Colporteur), or the poems in which there are extensive references to Fátima, the Prophet's daughter, or even some of his poems directly inspired by the Indo-Pakistan conflict of September 1965; or Mukhtár Siddíqí, whose *Síharfí* (Poem of Thirty Letters) is an attempt at reinterpreting Islamic mysticism, and whose other poems have a close bearing on Islamic civilization and its different facets; or all those poets who several years ago brought out a spate of "war poetry" - partly patriotic, partly religious.

I admit that this last variety of poetry, which was not even a good apologia for Islam, mostly represented patriotic fervor or religious fury, and with the exception of Ahmad Faráz's poem, *Main kýón Udás Hún?* (Why Am I Sad?), which read a universal grief in the tragedy of Indo-Pakistan war, a grief which is of all mankind and which transcends national sentiments as well as national boundaries, there was hardly a good poem produced that year. Most of the other poems which I happened to read were oratorical outbursts poured out in hackneyed phrases. For instance Jáfár Táhir's long "war poem," which was in fact a series of poems, stood out for its lack of sincerity, for its mechanical use of torrential words, in the manner of the old *marśá* (elegy) writers, and for its overtones of religious frenzy. I am referring to these instances to show that even if you are "an apologist for the Islamic religion in an Islamic state," as you say, you have to be a good writer, first and last, and I trust that the Halqa has not decided to judge literature by any different standard. Nevertheless, these individual efforts which aimed at prevailing "Islamic" sentiments provide no indication that the Halqa has undergone any metamorphosis. I hopefully believe that its official policy still is and will always be to strive for unfettered independence of the writer.

*Mahfil:* Your answer to my last question happily answers a part of the question which I was going to ask now. I would, however, like to have your views on this subject in some detail. What do you, then, think the ends of poetry ought to be, particularly from the point of view of a citizen of an Islamic state?

*Mr. Ráshed:* I am afraid your question is based on certain presumptions which are not proven. When you ask what the ends of poetry ought to be, particularly from the point of view of a citizen of an Islamic state, you presume in the first instance that poetry *has* specified ends - ends which can be spelled out in advance; secondly, that ends of poetry, if there are any, must change

from place to place or that they must be geared to the policies and programs of a state; thirdly, that the point of view of a citizen of an Islamic state, on matters of literature, must be different from that of a citizen of a non-Islamic state; and lastly that Pakistan - for we are talking of Pakistan in the context of Urdu poetry - is a state with an explicit religious denomination.

I am not sure, therefore, that I can handle this question to your entire satisfaction. Although it seems to me to be irrelevant to our discussion on the ends of poetry as such, we must get clear on the nature of Pakistan as a state. I would prefer to call it a Muslim state, rather than an Islamic state. A majority of its population professes the faith of Islam. Islam is the main cohesive force between its various regions and provides the moral basis and justification to its existence. The country has inherited a national culture, which is the product of a fusion of Arabic, Persian and Indian elements, which themselves were influenced by Islam in different measures. But to call it an Islamic state is to call it a theocratic state, which Pakistan does not claim to be. Religion is not practiced any the better or any the worse in Pakistan than in any other country of the world. The laws made by the State are related to religion only in their broad moral and social substance. More specifically, the Islamic penal code is not administered there.

But, I do not wish to stretch this point too far; for, as I said, it is largely irrelevant to our discussion on poetry. The main question to which we are seeking an answer is whether a poet owes any responsibility to the state of which he is the subject; and whether that state has any right to interfere with or influence literature in any way, irrespective of the nature of that state.

In the first instance, I believe that the ends of poetry do not and should not differ from country to country and state to state, and should not be geared to national political policies and programs, because national policies and programs are shifting sands, while it is in the nature of a poet's craft to follow more durable purposes of the wider humanity. Secondly, the people of one country, whether it is an Islamic state or not, are no different from the people of another, in so far as they all expect that their loves and hates, hopes and fears, sorrows and delights and weaknesses and strong points will be reflected in their poetry, and in so far as they all understand and enjoy poetry better when it draws for inspiration upon the elements in their culture with which they are most familiar and which they most cherish. I imagine that this is the normal pattern of response to poetry in all parts of the world, and an Islamic state - whatever that expression may mean - should be no exception. Thus, I consider it natural for a Pakistani poet - irrespective of the nature of Pakistan as a state - to reflect the life around him as it exists, or as he sees it, or as he may wish to see it. If religion or any other element of thought happens to be the predominant passion of the people of a country, it indeed becomes inevitable for its poets and writers to link their personal experience as well as their loves and hates, hopes and fears, with that passion, and to reflect it in their writings one way or the other.

This does not, however, mean that a poet, even if he lives in a country dominated by a single passion, cannot have his own vision - a vision of the future or a vision of things as they should be rather than of things as they are, a vision transcending his immediate national surroundings. A poet anywhere is indeed better-off when he can write more about a life that is to be, than about life as he finds it around him, because then he can create an illusion, which is the essence of all poetry. Yet, ironically enough, even a vision cannot take off from nowhere. All visions are rooted in the present and immediate reality - a fact that makes them vision, and thus worthwhile, is indeed this contrast with the present and immediate reality. Finally, on the nature of a poet's vision depends the relationship of the illusion and reality emerging from his poetry as well as its worthwhileness in the context of human values.

But who decides the nature of a poet's vision for him? Does he depend upon others, his friends, relatives, political groups, governments etc., to provide a ready-made vision? Or, is it manufactured in those invisible workshops of poetical inspiration which are beyond normal human reach? It is indeed in the nature of a poet's vision that it should be personal and individual, and that no other individual, however great or influential, no group, no state, should lay down rules for shaping that vision, for the simple reason that it then ceases to be a vision. It can be a political or social forecast based on the available data, but it cannot be a vision.

The poet is thus the sole architect of his own visions and must always remain so if he is to be honest to his craft, and if he cares to produce the best poetry that lies in him. Basically, a poet writes because he has the urge to do so; and that urge, in seeking expression, gathers a great deal of moss around it - the moss of all kinds of emotions and feelings and notions about life and its problems, notions about things past, present and future - it then dresses itself in words, and words begin to form rhythmic patterns, and acquire new meanings, often layers and layers of them, with all kinds of shades and colors, which make them powerful, and sometimes even deadly weapons. Deadly, indeed, because they are capable of engendering manifold emotional responses in others, which are further multiplied depending on the sensitivity of the recipient; and these responses are known to have led to strange actions.

Now, it is this action which many states are concerned about and even dread, the action resulting from what began as an innocent vision of an insignificant being, but soon transformed itself into words in a poem, and acquired a new meaning saturated with emotions, which created responses and reactions. At this stage, the state, acting in sheer self-preservation, steps in either to suppress the poet's vision or to mold it in a manner that it would no longer endanger social order as conceived by the custodians of the state, or the system of government established and nurtured by them. Thus the state feels even happier if the poet's vision would help preserve the social order and promote the political system for which it stands, rather than subvert it.

It then all depends on how immaculate a poet wishes his vision to stay, and how far he can go to resist the system which strives to suppress it or dilute it. The choice clearly rests with the poet himself, depending on the confidence he has in the truth underlying his vision, on his sense of responsibility to mankind, on his broad awareness of human destiny, as well as his



strength and ability to sustain his vision against all odds.

The subject of the freedom and responsibility of the writer has been discussed threadbare, and I am more or less repeating what others have said before. Still I do not imagine that I have provided you with a final answer to your question. The final answer is that there is no final answer. There are no ends of poetry, yet there are. There is no special point of view of a citizen of any state on poetry, yet there is. The states do not like to curb the freedom of the writer, yet they do. And so on and so forth. The situation is pretty well confused. Yet, I can say that I am clear about one thing in my own mind. No state, whatever its political denomination, has the right to tell a poet to talk about violets and stars, until it has created the conditions which make the violets bloom and the stars shine.

*Mahfil:* How would you describe the literary scene of West Pakistan today, particularly in the light of what you have just said? Who are the major talents among the younger generation, i.e., those who have made their debut since, say, 1951?

*Mr. Ráshed:* I suppose in our discussion so far, we have already pretty well covered the literary scene of West Pakistan today. We have discussed at some length the leftist movement in Urdu literature which, for lack of an organization of its own, has more or less frittered away, and Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, which is still functioning and, hopefully, still stands for the writer as independent spirit. We have as yet made no reference to the Writers' Guild, which came into being in 1959, under direct state encouragement and patronage with the declared object of "uniting Pakistani writers under the present regime for the greater glory of Pakistan." Whatever the nature of the Guild's affiliations and whatever its objectives may be, one remarkable achievement of this organization has been that it has brought writers of all denominations and beliefs under its wings, irrespective of the languages they use for their writings, and has thus opened the doors for a new dialogue between them.

With its resources far better than those of any other literary organization in the country, it has also launched an elaborate publications program. Furthermore, the Pakistani writer had never before seen so much "affluence," in the form of prizes and awards, as the Guild through its influence with the moneyed classes has made possible for him today. Some of the routine activities of the Guild have closely followed the pattern set by other literary societies, such as weekly meetings and occasional "Evenings with So-and-So." The Guild has also been promoting special sales of books autographed by the authors on the spot. It publishes a monthly magazine which is a kind of literary miscellany of poetry, fiction, criticism, and news of the literary world.

But, I imagine that I am going too far afield from your question, while without some mention of the Writers' Guild, the literary scene of Pakistan cannot be considered complete. I guess, you wanted to know about some of the more prominent contours of the literary scene of West Pakistan, particularly in the field of poetry; and besides what we have already gone over,

you are interested in the new generation of poets that has come into prominence since 1951. I do not understand the significance of this date, except that with this begins the second half of the present century!

Before we come to talk of this new generation, it might be useful to mention that there are still two eminent poets of the oldest generation flourishing, namely Jósh Malihábádi and Hafiz Jallandhari - who are the antithesis of each other both in personality and poetry. We have little time to discuss their respective personalities, nor is it perhaps entirely germane to our present discussion. As far as their poetry goes, Jósh once wrote fervently patriotic and humanistic verse, but now at a ripe age, almost as an afterthought, seems to have become hopelessly nostalgic of his youthfully playful past; Hafiz, on the other hand, began as a poet of youthful lyrical exuberance, and is ending up as a religious revivalist - his magnum opus being *Sháhnáma-e-Islam* (a history of Islam in verse) - and as a patriotic poet who has permitted his talent to be extensively used by the Government for the exhortation of the people in general, and the armed forces in particular, to a realization of their national responsibilities.

Of the Progressives, we have talked in detail, particularly of Faiz and his poetry. As a supplementary note, it may be said here that there are a few others of them, who, for lack of a common platform, have got mixed up with the Writers' Guild and other literary societies, and most of them have ended up as kind of brinkmen. One of the more significant leftist poets, after Faiz, however is Ahmad Nadím Qásimí, who has retained his leftist fervor along with some objectivity in the treatment of his subjects. The most distinguishing feature of his poetry is an intense moral anguish felt over the contrast between the urban and rural way of life, and the social and economic exploitation of the peasant by the townsman. His poetry lacks drama and wit, but his speculations on the relationship of man and nature, man and God, and man and man, lend some philosophical strain to his verse. The conflict between the Muslim mind on the one hand and the communist ideology on the other, is very obvious in his poetry, but it has saved it from the usual leftist fanaticism. Among the younger leftist poets, one who has made a mark is Ahmad Faráz, who has succeeded much better than others in balancing sentimentalism with a broad humanism and an oriental sensitivity with Marxist ideology.

Among those who developed under the shadow of Mírají and Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, the more prominent poets are Yúsuf Zafar, who has now turned what you like to call "an apologist for the Islamic religion," Qayyúm Nazar, Mukhtár Siddíqi, Ziá Jallandhari, Muhammad Safdar and Majíd Amjad, all representing what one may call the middle generation of the living Urdu poets. It is difficult in this brief discussion to go over their individual characteristics, but their common features are absolute individualism, subjectivity and intense preoccupation with the conflict between life and death and with nature, both as a creator and destroyer. Except for Mukhtár Siddíqi, who is a revivalist and a metaphysical poet, the rest of them show an original searching mind, constantly seeking a philosophical answer to the natural phenomenon in relation to man. While all these poets have more or less carried forward the tradition of the independent spirit, they

have also been accused of maintaining a blissful non-involvement in the current human scene in their search for the larger human question. Consequently they ignore the problems both in their immediate society and beyond it. Some of them now seem to be "compensating" for this non-involvement by writing about the conflict of a few years ago.

Now, coming to the more recent generation of Urdu poets who have appeared on the scene during the last ten or fifteen years, in spite of their own claim that they are in revolt against everything that has gone before, they are by and large the followers of the traditions laid down by Mirají and his immediate followers. Whatever the nature of their revolt, I consider it most encouraging that a group of poets has arisen with a courage to challenge some of the existing rules of poetry and to provide a new appraisal of them in the light of their personal experience.

The main purpose of poetry, as stated by some of their apologists, is the personal delectation of the reader. Poetry, according to them, must entertain before it can sublimate or edify, and this alone can guarantee that whatever they write will eventually join the mainstream of literature and civilization. They believe in no tradition, although some of them have advocated the revival of the *ghazal* form, and they believe that no ethical values, religious concepts or philosophical thought can compensate for the basic purpose of poetry - enjoyment. Most of them use the language of common speech, so that the distance between the poet and the reader be minimized, and some of them have succeeded in this admirably well too, one of them being Mádhó, who has written little so far, but has already shown a startling gift of observation and wit; yet, his poetry is not devoid of a thoughtpattern, in so far as he has written brilliant satires against humanism. There is an extensive tendency among them to write symbolically, and to draw their symbols from the so-called "dream world," which often hampers their communication; for dreams, in spite of their roots in the world of reality, have an intimately personal character and their dimensions are in a constant state of fluidity.

This newly emerging poetry still largely remains low key, but the signs of revolt in it are self-evident. It is a challenge to the humanism of both the Marxists and the oriental metaphysicists, to the wistful sentimentalism of Akhtar Shirání and of Faiz, to the intellectualism of Iqbál and Ghálib, and to both the former esthetic poets and the poets of social responsibility. In many of the new poems, one can read a passion for life and for human civilization, but without any sense of the acceptance of responsibility for either. Some of the poets of the new generation, such as Zafar Iqbál, Akhtar Ahsan, and Mádhó, whom I mentioned earlier, are gifted with extraordinary human understanding, and thus it is surprising that they tend to treat life as a mere passing show.

Another poet, Iftikhár Jálíb, who is endowed with a vision of human civilization, still keeps his mind separated from normal human concerns. Poets like Munír Niází, Sáqí Fárúqí and Anís Nágí are largely victims of self-love, and the scenes of violence and fear which they portray can only lead to a sordid view of life, born out of neurotic minds. They are basically poets of a disorder which threatens the ruin of civilization, rather than poets of a new order which would replace the existing chaos. Their poetry is the poetry

of what one may call "the social subconscious mind," as against the poetry of Mirají, who drew his images and symbols from the subconscious mind of the individual.

The age of grand poetry has passed away in Pakistan, as it has in other parts of the world. The poetry of the new generation of Urdu poets has considerably reduced its weight. What they are writing today is largely chatty and frivolous, but one may hope that when their present mood of self-assertion at any cost passes away, more solid and sturdy works may emerge.