The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi,
To Mir Anis

Thou, greatest Eastern poet, sooner or later,
E'en Europe must acknowledge thee as such:
If not, then the greatest of the great,
Prophetic bards of Urdu language: much
May one speak of the most skilful touch
Of the great brush. Thee many imitate,
Thy glorious Urdu is but double Dutch;
For those who know not Urdu, that's their state.
But now when I some samples of thy speech
And thought, have into my bad English done;
So that, it may the English knowers reach,
Thus veiled and clouded, thou art yet a sun
Of dazzling light and splendour, thou shouldst teach
The world to look at thee as a great one.

AMEER ALI MA'SOOMI
(Of Iran)
Preface

Anis, an outstanding artist, ranks among the greatest in the galaxy of Urdu poets, despite the severe handicap of the basically elogiac theme that he chose. His greatness, however, does not rest with his adoption of a rarely practised verse form, the marthia. He excels his tribe in that he set in motion a new and virile trend of deviation and experimentation which created a lasting impact and permeated other poetic forms as well. He employed various artistic devices to overcome the restrictive influence of tradition in the field. He broadened the creative outlook and branched off into divergent directions, thereby conferring on the marthia a literary respectability, while still retaining a sort of folk flavour and religious base. Above all, it acquired some epic dimensions too.

The poet had undoubtedly inherited a few new traits and patterns from his trio-predecessors—Khalil, Zamir and Fash— but the finally evolved form bore his stamp and, to a lesser extent, his rival Dahir's. It was, however, Anis who dominated the scene. His personality encouraged his contemporaries and successors alike to further vary and expand the experiment. His style of expression was marked by dignity, clarity, feeling and moral fervour and it was later pressed into service by a new generation of poets to propagate socially, culturally and even politically meaningful concepts and values on an ever enlarging canvas. One can hear the echoes of his poetic modulations in Hali, Chakbast, Josh and even in the earlier phases of Iqbal. Viewed against this background a study of his works in depth assumes significance both for an understanding of the development of the marthia form and the widening horizons of Urdu poetry in general.

A good deal has been written about Anis and his art but a
lot more deserves to be done. From the first major work, *Mowazena-i-Anis-o-Dabir* by Allama Shibli No’mani, down to the latest works, few really critical studies have been attempted. These have thrown up a lot of unexplored material which calls for shifting. The celebration of the birth centenary of Anis throughout the sub-continent has produced scores of books and research papers and the process is still on.

A special difficulty one encounters while introducing Anis to English readers is the complexity of the poetic form he adopted. The term *marthia* has no exact parallel in any European language. The elegy comes nearest to it but the panegyric, epic, didactic, lyric and dramatic elements acquired by it over the last two centuries have given it an identity easily distinguishable from the elegy. Some writers have been at pains to discover similarities they believe it to share with the epic or the elegy or the tragedy and in attempting this have made the confusion all the worse. A compromise has been suggested by calling it an elegiac epic. Undeniably, the *marthia* has some elements of both, but it is a little more than this. It would be wiser to discover first the basic elements of this Urdu form and then to look for any similarities with and differences from other established forms of poetry.

Its ancestry can be traced directly to Arabic and Persian but in its totality the Urdu *marthia* stands removed from most of its ancestral traits and can well claim to be an essentially Indo-Pak form of Urdu verse. The Arabic *marthia* was a short poem lamenting the loss of a personal friend or the death of a tribal hero in war. The Arab was a devoted lover and took pride in laying down his life for the sake of his beloved. In the desert’s desolation love was the pivot on which revolved the Arab’s whole life. Jealousy and war; friendship, treaty and submission; adventure, music and poetry; the tribal courtesies and rivalries—all these often sprang from the same motivation. When the cruel hand of fate or death separated two loving souls, their grief was unbounded. The whole atmosphere plunged into mourning (*mitha*) from which the term *marthia* is derived. It is in this respect that it merges with the elegy which, in turn, is traceable to the dirges and threnody. So the similarities between the Arabic *marthia* and elegy are easily discernible but such is not the case with Urdu. In the succeeding pages an attempt has been made to delineate some of the main features of this rather unconventional form.

The reader need be told at the very outset that the Urdu *marthia* has been associated mainly with the martyrdom of Imam Husain (grandson of Prophet Muhammad) and his small band of seventy-two or so at Karbala (Iraq) in 60 AH/679 A.D. These heroes fought an equal fight, defied the terror and ferocity of several divisions of the fully equipped army of the Syrian ruler Yazid, and resolutely refused to bow to what they considered to be evil, cheerfully accosting death. The story of this struggle has a visibly religious colour. However, the Arabian story as told by Anis has a universality of approach and remains refreshingly close to the surroundings with which his Indian listeners are familiar.

The spiritual content of the *marthias* of Anis does not overshadow its great literary qualities and as such, need not worry the critic. Religion has inspired great poetry in all the world languages and has given us the mighty classics. So great has been the influence of religious literature that in many instances it attained the status of the revealed word. At the same time, many a work of art has often suffered neglect precisely on account of its religious motivation. It must be conceded that all that has been written on religious initiative has not been of a high order and part of it is decidedly below standard but with its sheer volume and the compelling devotion that brought it about, this mass of writing is noteworthy for its social, historical and linguistic value and for the information it contains about the evolution of the various literary forms adopted by writers on a spiritual theme. The modern critic, removed as he is from the social and cultural scene in which the Urdu *marthia* matured is apt to overlook the various processes of its growth. A plea for rethinking and reassessment will not be out of place. It is to fill up this gap that an explanation of the structural and conceptual aspects of the *marthia* has been offered while discussing the art of Anis and the *marthia* form.

Anis is not easy to manage in English translation, for he prefers the language of the common idiom with an unmatched elegance and purity of diction with occasional elaboration and ornamentation—a blend and balance difficult to transmit from one language to another. It would have taken me much longer
had not Professor Ahmad Ali and Dr. S.M. Ameer Imam favoured me with their translations. Maharajkumar Mohammad Ameer Haider Khan made available to me some old issues of the Muslim Review, which carried a few pieces translated by an Iranian scholar, Ameer Ali Ma'soomi who once belonged to the Lucknow University. I am thankful to them all.

Ali Jawad Zaidi

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1

Historical Background

When Anis appeared on the literary scene, India was passing through a period of unprecedented political upheavals. It saw the transformation of the social and economic order, the disruption of the central authority in Delhi by a succession of foreign invasions, internecine wars, provincial governors raising the banner of independence, the British colonialists tightening their stranglehold on large parts of India through intrigues and localised battles, and bands of adventurers overrunning the citadel. Northern India lay ruined and devastated. People shivered in fear of the tyrannical conditions of insecurity. After the death of Aurangzeb (1707), Delhi knew no stability and there was a regular exodus of poets and artists to the principalities of Rampur and Farrukhabad and later to Faizabad and Lucknow. If luck did not favour them at these centres, they moved farther east to Azimabad (Patna) and Murshidabad. The biggest haven was Avadh (Oudh) with its capital at Faizabad which later shifted to Lucknow. Anis’s family itself migrated to Faizabad in Shujaudaula’s time. The machinations of the British became uglier from Asafuddaula’s time, and the authority of the Nawabs was progressively eroded, their territories shrank and revenues declined. Day to day administration was interfered with, to the annoyance of the rulers, and made the life of the people more miserable.

As the once mighty Mughal empire tottered, the Nawab of Avadh was crowned king only to demonstrate that even the symbolic national authority had collapsed. Bahadur Shah Zafar at Delhi and Wajid Ali Shah at Lucknow were mere figureheads
and the failure of the revolt of 1857 finally destroyed whatever was left of Indian sovereignty. Blood flowed freely in the streets of Lucknow, Delhi and many other parts of India and cities and towns were overrun, as the old order faded out. Ants himself and his predecessors were eye witnesses to this tragic transition. They could perceive the utter helplessness and ineffectualness of the Indians to save their sovereignty and freedom. Despondency and gloom filled the atmosphere. Some of the symbols and imagery popular with the poets were the bulbul in captivity, the captor, the throttled cries of the captured, and the cage. These poets could foresee that the strong winds of change threatened to sweep away much of what society held dear.

Ants lived through the reigns of six rulers\(^1\) from Sa’adat Ali Khan to Wajid Ali Shah, whose deposition, extermination and arrest became preludes to the revolts of 1857. He was painfully aware of the overwhelming exploitation and harrassment of all the rulers and the reign of terror that was let loose on the people of Lucknow, Delhi and other places in northern India in 1857. He was emotionally involved in the distressing events. His own house and Imambārā in the Sitehi sector and hundreds of houses of his friends and relations were razed to the ground. Thousands lost their properties and lives. Ants himself had to flee Lucknow and seek shelter in Kākort to escape the fate of those men of status who remained in the capital. The past, swallowed by time, often stirred his soul, for he knew that the glory was never to return. British censorship was so severe that free expression was impossible to think of. Tyranny and exploitation stalked the land. One can hardly conceive of a situation more congenial to the development of the elegiac and epic form of marthia, with its devotional strain and message of struggle and sacrifice. In northern India it made its appearance first in Delhi from the time of Farrukh Siyar and later moved on to Farrukhabad and Lucknow, giving tongue to the anguished and disinherited soul of the troubled times. As local authority weakened and foreign powers started asserting their superiority, the marthia gradually started putting up an epic form as well. It

\(^1\) Sa’adat Ali Khan (1798-1814); Ghāziuddin Hyder (1814-1827); Nasiruddin Hyder (1827-1837); Mohammad Ali Shah (1837-1845); Amjad Ali Shah (1842-1847); and Wajid Ali Shah (1847-1856).

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Historical Background

Glorified bravery and lauded sacrifice for a high ideal and indirectly spurred a subjugated people to fight back, unmindful of the heavy odds. The essentially religious theme of the marthia imparted to it the emotional impact of a patriotic poem as well. Here are two rubais of Ants alluding to the agonising political changes, particularly in the post-1854 period:

**Kyonkar dil-i-ghamzadah na faryād kare**
*Jab mulk ko yun ghanim barbad kare.*
*Mango ye' du'a ki phir khadawand-i-karin.*
*Ujji hui mamlekat ko abād kare.*

**Afso s jahān se dost kyā kyā na gaye!**
*Iś bāgh se kyā kyā guł-i-Ra'īnā na gaye!*
*Thā kaunsā nakhi jis ne dehi na kherān!*
*Woh kaun se guł khile jo murjha na gaye!*  

How will the afflicted heart not cry out When the enemy destroys the country so (mercilessly)? Let us pray to Almighty, munificent that He revive the Kingdom thus ransacked.

Alas! What friends departed from the world, What beautiful flowers were thrown out of the garden, What tree there was whom autumn did not visit! What flower there was that did not wither!

**The Marthia**

It would be useful to have a closer look at the marthia at the very outset. The Arabic term Marthia is usually translated as a song of lamentation, recalling to mind the dirge or the praise of the departed and the nenia chanted in the Roman funeral processions to the accompaniment of flutes. Originally sung by the members of the bereaved family, it was later taken over by professional hired women and turned tame and insipid. Funeral orations became more respectable and genteel. The dirges in later literatures are “simple, mournful lyrics with folk song qualities”.

The elegy, another form bearing resemblance to marthia, is
more formal and elaborate as in Tennyson’s “In Memoriam”, or Milton’s “Lycidas”. The convention grew of referring to the departed as a shepherd, to pagan mythology or to all the earth mourning (even though, as in Milton’s case, the person may have died at sea). As a poetic form, it is neither profound nor exceptionally imaginative or subtle but to borrow the words of a critic, it expresses with “consummate dignity and facility the thoughts and feelings common to humanity in the presence of death and its monuments”. The marthia too is a poem of “pensive melancholy” like the elegy, but it has acquired many additional characteristics in the course of its long evolution and journey as a patently Indian form.

The epic resistance of Husain and his followers at Karbala was motivated by lofty ideals and their sacrifice remains an unsurpassable act of courage and defiance. This drama-packed content of the marthia gave it a touch of tragedy as well. The later marthia writers seem to have been conscious of it when they used elegant language to highlight the clash of good and evil and made full use of pathos, suspense and action to create a lasting emotional impact and catharsis.

These ramifications of form did not exhaust it. From Miskin and Sauda to Zamir, Fashi, Dilqr and Khaliq, newer elements continued creeping into it during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This happened not only without any contact with the Western forms alluded to above, but with no more than a remote knowledge of the existing material in other Indian languages. In addition to the basically elegiac aspects, it had borrowed the lyric, the panegyric and the didactic moods and the narrative trends of the qaṣida (panegyric) and the mathnawi (typical long narrative). It was also marked by the folk nature of the lamentations and the reverential reference to the lofty cause which formed the central theme. Despite the tragic and the loud lamentational note, its principal message to the listeners has always been to pursue higher moral values. The present form of the marthia was created through various evolutionary stages in several decades and was finally perfected by Anis.

To comprehend these stages fully, one must revert to the Arabic and Persian marthia. It was mostly personal, as already stated in the Introduction, but one does come across marthias written about the tragedy of Karbala in these two languages also. These seldom rise above the elegiac level and meet the fate of the elegy in other languages. The Urdu marthia, on the other hand, has shown great dynamism and has gone even beyond the point at which Anis had left it. The reason is not far to seek. While Arabic and Persian marthias remained tied to a rigid tradition, Urdu marthia freed itself from the suffocating limitation of custom, lore and orthodoxy. Once the barrier was crossed, the poets of later generations felt free to treat the great tragedy in myriad forms.

The story of Karbala has moved writers and poets alike through the centuries. Several maqtaas and shahdat namahs in prose and marthias, salams and naaghād in poetry, were written for recitation before mourning assemblies, specially during the first ten days of the lunar (hijra) month of Moharram to commemorate the tragedy. Muslims of all times, climes and persuasions have composed marthias. In fact, here Hindus have also joined the chorus. India and Urdu are no exception to this. The moving theme cut across denominational distinctions. Nevertheless, there does exist a misconception that the growth of the marthia is directly related to “the ascendancy of the kingdom of Oudh, several of whose rulers were zealous Shi’ites and therefore enthusiastic patrons of it”.

Similarly, in the Deccan the use of this genre on a wide scale at a particular point of history is attributed to the existence of Shi’ite kingdoms at Golconda and Bijapur. It is but half the truth. Only the naive would deny that the existence of Shi’ite regimes offered an added incentive but there the fact ends and fiction takes over. How could it be explained, for instance, that the heyday of the Lucknow marthias was the period of the dynasty’s decline, even extinction? A critic like Mohammad Sadiq also, who shares that notion is intrigued by the fact that most of the Deccani marthias belonged to the times of Vali or therearound, although both the Deccani kingdoms had been Shi’ite from their commencement. There again; it has not been the product of the ascendant times. The anomaly is too persistent to be wished away by taking refuge to the assumption that there must have been marthias before. The same writer, while taking a backward look, has

3. Ibid., p. 146.
taken note of the strange phenomenon that in Persia, which
should have been the home of marthia, it has been only in-
termittently cultivated. Instead of examining his thesis further,
Dr. Sadiq tries to overlook Delhi intervening between the
Deccan and Lucknow. The imperial capital, never ruled by Shia
kings, has seen the marthias practised on an appreciable scale.
Whereas Shiias have taken a leading part in Lucknow, Dr.
Mohiuddin Qadiri "Zore" points out that a majority of the
marthia writers in Deccan have been Sunnis. At all three
places, it is a mixed crowd. No particular sect of Islam can
claim the entire credit.

If religious motivation does not satisfactorily explain the
unusual growth of the genre at given points of time, the reason
may profitably be sought in the phenomenon of political crisis,
upheaval and instability. Incensed by the lengthening shadows
of approaching decadence and impending disaster, the popular
moor needed a message of action, hope and inspiration for
moral regeneration and, of course, to confront the political
adversary with strength if possible and with sacrifice if necessary.
Such were the objective conditions in the Deccan, Delhi and
Lucknow when the marthia stepped in with its mass appeal and
addressed itself to wider audiences not committed to territories
and creeds. That also offers a justification for the various
artistic liberties and deviations by the writers, for the whole
treatment was rather symbolic.

The Urdu marthia first cultivated in the Deccan and expanded
and diversified in Delhi, was finally developed into a major
verse form in Lucknow. In its expanded form the marthia has
"amplified and elaborated" the incidents of the tragedy of
Karbala and "come to have a tremendous moral significance".

Its episodic character has been frowned upon as it prevented
the emergence of "a unified and coherent narrative embracing
the entire theme". But does not the episodic character itself bear a very clear stamp of the totality of the theme? What
were the alternatives? The writer could either have concentrated
on Husain as the chief character and left the rest out as subsidiary characters or, alternatively, he could let every participant

- enjoy the fulness of stature to which his supreme sacrifice enti-
led him. Each martyrdom was a deliberate act of unalloyed
goodness; within its limits, it generated popular fervour. The
writers were, therefore, right in treating each episode separately.
I do not think that such a treatment militated against the main
theme.

The marthia has lately been attacked as being too tearful.
That is a legacy of desert sentimentalism and has characterised
the genre from the beginning. The womenfolk, especially, were
easily moved to tears and while it does sound excessive to a
reader whom centuries separate from the main event, the effort
at creating pathos is not entirely negative. It highlights the
barbaric treatment meted out not only to the heroes but also to
the women and children. The immediate audiences in Delhi and
Lucknow had seen bloodshed and cruelty of the worst type and
by emphasising the pathetic, the poets recreated those moments
of recent history too. It was, however, a passing phase. Modern
marthias maintain an artistic restraint. Even in the older
marthias "tearfulness" does not ignore the main objective and
retains the moral fervour. An example would illustrate the
point. Husain's eighteen year old son, Akbar, insists on being
allowed to go to the battle front. The decision has been left to
the hapless mother. In a situation so full of pathos, the senti-
ments of the mother and father have been thus expressed by
Anis:

"Now my only joy is to see him serve you;
Defend his sire, and face the spikes and spears;
And shed his blood for every drop of your sweat;
Here, I have foregone even my nursing dues;
let him offer his head.

Many times, with tears, he kneel at my feet;
Long he stood with girded loin, ready to die."

That very moment, the princely Akbar knelt before
his sire;
Clasping him to his breast; the Lord exclaimed;
"Tis hard indeed for thy father to part with thee!
But, since such is thy will, to battle thou mayest go.
It shan't take long; I too am weary of life;  
Go on, my son, I shall follow thee anon! 6

When Anis started writing, the structural form of musaddas  
(a stanza of six lines, the last two lines rhyming differently from  
the first four—a a a b b) had been finally and almost irre-  
vocably adopted for the marthia. There was no restriction on  
the use of metre but in practice not more than six metres have  
been used. The quartet, once popular in the Deccan and Delhi  
disappeared altogether.

The marthia had already begun gaining in size at the time of  
Miskin, but it took some decades for it to reach the length of  
around 250 stanzas of six lines each. Not in size alone does it  
seem to have been influenced by local religious epics. Tulsi Das’s  
Rām Charit Mānas and other Avadhi classics must have also  
fascinated our elegiasts. Anis, in particular, is very fond of local  
colour and he uses it with consummate skill. Thus, an Arab  
story reads like an Indian story and yet remains faithful to the  
Arab origin in essentials. It has been a delicate job indeed. The  
marthia in Urdu is Indian in approach and treatment only.

The final structure of the marthia as Anis practised it had  
the following components:

Chehrā : The introductory stanzas, usually in praise of God  
and the Prophet; invocation; description of nature or  
 glorification of the poet’s art

Majrā : (Metabasis) the few lines immediately following the  
chehra, allude to the coming changes in the subject  
 matter of the marthia proper

Sarāpā : (Description of the physical charm of the hero).  
 It follows the nakh-sikh varnan style of Indian  
poetry in general. Each part of the body from  
head to foot is described

Rukhsat : (Leave taking) The hero takes leave of his nearest  
relations and finally of Imam Husain to proceed to the  
battlefield

Āmad : (Arrival) Arrival of the hero on the battlefield

6. Translated by Maharaj Kumar Mohammad Ameer Haider Khan  
of Mahmoodābād.

Rajaz : (Martial bravado in poem, where the hero describes  
his great lineage, the exploits of his elders in war  
and his own prowess and skill in the martial art to  
instil fear in the heart of his adversary

Jang : (Battle) It usually forms a substantial part of the  
marthia. The description of the battle includes  
praises of the sword and the steed and the descrip- 
tion of the actual combat

Shahādat : (Martyrdom) Supreme sacrifice of the hero

Bāin : (Lamentation of the relations, especially the crying  
of women and children when the corpse is brought  
from the field)

All parts, except the majra are regarded as essential  
ingredients of the developed form of the Urdu marthia. The  
majra occurs only in the works of a few writers, and is  
otherwise also not so important as to warrant separate mention.  
Again, these parts are found only in the tahtul lafz or the larger  
marthias. The marthias written for Soze-Khwānī are not only  
short but are usually without sarāpā, jang and rajaz. Chehrā  
too is not essential. Some marthias begin directly with  
lamentation.

The general pattern of the story is that each martyr in the  
small group of followers who had clung to Husain until death  
parted them fought, individual combats against chosen  
opponents from the enemy’s army of several thousands. The  
relations of the hero take leave of the ladies of the house, the  
other elders and finally, the leader, and then set out for battle.  
The companions take leave only of Imam Husain. Though  
hungry and thirsty for three days, they put up a fierce fight. On  
reaching the battle field, they recite the rajaz to expose the evil  
nature of the war thrust on them and call upon the enemy to  
see reason and abandon hostility. An experienced enemy warrior  
comes forward and throws the challenge. In single combat, the  
hero usually wins, but he is then attacked collectively. When  
fatally wounded, he calls out for the leader. Husain goes to give  
his last blessings and carry the body from the field. The  
companions and relations offer condolences and the ladies wail  
and lament. In the battle scene the speed of the steed and the  
sharpness and effectiveness of the sword are described in great
poetic detail. The chicken heartedness of the mercenary army of Yazid is also brought out.

While every martyr commanded equal respect, Anis has his own favourites. They are:

'Aun and Mohammad, the two sons of Zainab, Husain's sister, aged hardly between nine and eleven years, who put up a great fight. Their moving story is told in several marthias.

'Ali Akbar, the eighteen-year old son of Husain, who fought extremely bravely. Both Zainab and Imam Husain loved him greatly. He resembled Prophet Mohammad.

The newly-wed Qasim, thirteen-year old son of Imam Hasan. It is in the marthias on his martyrdom that the Indian atmosphere of marriage and widowhood prevails. The solemnisation of the marriage itself is not above controversy.

'Abbas, Hussain's stepbrother and the standard bearer of his army, a devoted brother and a great warrior;

Hurr, a commander of Yazid's army who got converted to Hussain's righteous cause, left Yazid's army and was the first to go to the battlefield and become a martyr.

Marthias often refer to Yazid's army commander 'Umar bin Sa'd and some of his well-known warriors. Quite a few of them were humbled in single combats. Others appear as symbols of unrelieved tyranny. After the martyrdom of Hussain, all the children and women and the sole male survivor, Imam Zain-ul-Abidin or Sajjad, the eldest son of Husain, were taken prisoner and lodged in a Damascus prison. The severed heads of Hussain and his supporters after they were slain were displayed by Yazids army on spear heads to strike terror. But this foregone victory for Yazid was shortlived. Not long after, forces of revolution sprang up, ultimately putting an end to the rule of the dynasty. The Urdu marthia revolves round this story. Though repetitive, elegiac in character, and bounded by rigid tradition, it was converted into a forceful form of poetry by the dexterity with which Anis, his family, contemporaries and successors treated it. In recent years, a group of marthia writers have come up with new ideas and the structural basis has undergone several changes. It shows that the form is still relevant and responsive to the demands of a fast-changing world.

The well-known orientalist and linguist, T. Grahame Bailey had sufficient justification for his assertion that "there is nothing so admirable in Urdu literature as the marthia" and for referring to it as "the highest form of Urdu poetry". The writing of epics with elegiac and dramatic elements in a highly refined and elegant style in an age which had cultivated a taste exclusively for the lyric, and the re-telling of a fourteen hundred year old story with which the commonest listener is already familiar without sacrificing freshness, constitutes the admirable elements Grahame Bailey speaks about. The credit of this goes largely to Anis and his celebrated family, who took care to include a lyrical touch to give it a contemporary as well. Effervescent, elegant and grand, it remains the most original and unconventional form in Urdu.

Dr. Mohammad Sadiq who has been an unsparing critic of the marthia too admits that its "contribution to poetry also has been considerable... . The marthia writers have widened the scope of Urdu poetry, and consequently that of Urdu language; they have given it polish, vigour and elasticity. No less have they enriched the style. They are the first to add rhetoric to poetry. Here they have exerted a deep influence on the course of Urdu poetry."7

Family

Few families can boast of such a long line of literary eminence as Anis's. Six generations before him, Mir Imam Moosavi migrated from Herat to Delhi during reign of the Mughal Emperor Shahjah Sultan (1627—1658). He was an erudite scholar, a theologian and a renowned calligraphist who could write in seven styles. Occasionally, he wrote poetry too. The munificent Emperor honoured him with a title to 3,000 Zat. His son and grandson, Baratullah and Azizullah respectively, also were scholars.

9. In most printed versions of the Kulliyat (collection of poems) and Tazkirah-i-Sho'ara-i-Urdu the name is mentioned as Baratullah but Akbar Hydari has discovered the earliest manuscript of the Tazkirah which he thinks is probably in Mir Hasan's own hand,
Zāhik

Moosāvi’s great grandson, Mir Ghulām Husain “Zāhik,” a mystic by temperament and a humourist and satirist by choice, was known for a rather unusual combination of scholarship and knowledge of music. He could set *marthias* to elegiac musical tunes. On his mother’s side, his lineage traces back to the famous Deccani scholar-saint, Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz. His mystic predilections and his religious poetry are twin influences attributable as much to paternal inheritance as to his maternal lineage. Zāhik has written both in Persian and Urdu and is, perhaps, the first *marthia* writer in the family. The existence of his Divan (collection of poems) doggedly denied for long, was at last established by its discovery in the obscure archives of Betia State (Bihar). Apart from humour and satire, it comprises *salāms* (an allied form of the *marthia*) and a few pieces which can be termed as *marthias*. There are also some *ghazals* and *qasidas*. He lives in the history of Urdu literature mostly for his satirical bouts he had with his contemporary, Mirza Rafi “Saudā”. With no holds barred, these satires often degenerated into vulgar lampoons and obscenity and both earned notoriety for it. Ultimately, friends intervened to arrange a truce. But we are not concerned with Zāhik, the satirist. The mystic and the devout within him surfaced in his *marthias*, *salāms* and *ghazals*. Again, it is not because of the poetic worth of his works that he would merit mention by literary historians, but because of the contribution, he and his family made to the development of Urdu *marthia* and the *salām*.

By the time he appeared on the scene, the Urdu *marthia* had already won recognition as a literary form. Its adoption by Saudā and Mir Taqi “Mir,” the two celebrities, had swelled the ranks of those who tried their hand at this up and coming form. Zāhik, who wrote *marthias* and *salāms* under his full name Ghulam Husain or Ghulam, was not as prolific as

"Sauda" and "Mir" and, in no case, as masterly. But he headed a family of great *marthia*-writers, who blazed a new trail.

**The Family Tree**

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A glance at the family tree of Zāhik convinces one of the sustained flowering of talent and blossoming forth of the boary traditions of learning.

This family of Herati Syeds moved from Delhi to

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10. Prof. Masud Hasan Rizvi calls them *Naqshas*.

11. "Hasan" has referred to the head of his family as "Moosāvi", which in common parlance would mean a descendent of the seventh Imam, Moosi Kāzim but later family members added the suffix "Razavi" to their name which would imply descent from the eighth Imam, Hazrat Raza.
Faizabad\textsuperscript{12} at the time of Shuja’ud-daulah, the Subedar of Avadh\textsuperscript{13} and Nawab Wazir\textsuperscript{14} of the Mughal Empire (1753—1775) as it was struggling helplessly to recover from the fatal blow of foreign invasions. Driven by this state of chaos, most scholars, artists, reputed families and even artisans sought refuge in Lucknow, Faizabad, Farrukhabad, Azimabad, Murshidabad or Hyderabad. Zâhik did likewise, though it cannot be said with precision when he moved out of Delhi. Some chroniclers have recorded that his son, Mir Hasan was twelve when he left Delhi with his father. They stopped \textit{en route} at Deig and Makanpur before landing in Lucknow, where luck does not seem to have favoured them much.

They were obliged to migrate to Faizabad, one surmises, around 1755. Zâhik never sought employment. In Delhi also he had led a carefree life. He died, according to a family source\textsuperscript{15}, in 1196 AH/1782 AD at Faizabad where he lies buried. His son, Mir Hasan was too adventurous, stylish and talented for his young age. He managed to gain admittance to the court of Nawâb Sâlâr Jung and served as a courtier to the Nawâb’s young son, Nawâzish Ali Khan Sardâr Jung.\textsuperscript{16} The rest of the family which had stayed behind in Delhi joined them when they got settled in Faizabad. When Asafuddaulah shifted the capital to Lucknow,\textsuperscript{17} Sâlâr Jung and his son also followed suit, bringing with them Zâhik and Mir Hasan. They continued visiting Faizabad off and on to meet the rest of their family who had stayed behind. Possibly one of the nobles, Nawâb Nazir Jawahir Ali Khan patronised the family while it remained there.

\textit{Mir Hasan}

Mir Ghulam Hasan “Hasan” was the most outstanding figure in the family and Anis is deeply indebted to his grandfather for the rich literary traditions he inherited from him. Hasan, therefore, deserves separate mention. He was born in Delhi near the Bhojali mosque in the Syedwâra sector of the walled city, a little before 1728. His exact date of birth is difficult to determine,\textsuperscript{18} but it is safe to presume that he was born around 1140-42 AH/1727-29. He got his early education at home in Delhi and completed it in Faizabad. He was well versed in Persian but knew only a little of Arabic. Urdu, his mother tongue, was his main medium of literary expression. He started versifying while still a child and could compose poems when he was hardly ten. In the beginning he presented his compositions for correction to his father until he came into contact with a well-known poet Ziauddin “Zia” and became his pupil. But Zia’s style did not appeal to his mobile mind and he gave up. Independently he studied “Dard”, “Saudâ” and “Mir” and imbibed what he considered best in their respective styles. He died in Lucknow on Muharram 1, 1201 AH/October 24, 1786 AD, and was buried behind Nawab Qasim Ali Khan’s garden in the Mutfiganj sector of Lucknow. He left behind three sons, Msr Mustahsan “Khaliq” Mir Ehsân Hasan “Makholooq” and Mir Ahsan “Khulq” all of whom made their names in \textit{martya} writing. According to “Afsoos”, he had four\textsuperscript{19} sons.

Mir Hasan remains unrivalled as a \textit{mathnavi} writer in Urdu. Indeed, he is the family’s first literary giant. His masterpiece, \textit{Seherul Bavan}, is an example of superb craftsmanship and creative excellence. He has written a number of other \textit{mathnavis}, a whole compilation of ghazals. Famous among the other

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} The founder of the Avadh dynasty, Burhanul Mulq, built a temporary capital near Ayodhya (UP) which came to be known as Bangla. Sáfúrjung, his heir, expanded and developed it, christening it Faizabad. At the time we are talking of, the capital of Avadh was Faizabad.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Also spelt as Oudh.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Nawâb Wazir or Wazir-ul-Mama was the Prime Minister. The Avadh Subedars retained that title until Ghâziuddin Hyder assumed kingship.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Asli Mir Anis: 34
\item \textsuperscript{16} Tazkira-i-Sho’ara-i-Urdu: 85.
\item \textsuperscript{17} 1775 AD.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ashhari puts it at 1140 AH (\textit{Hayat-i-Anis}: 10); Waheed Qureshi at about 1154 AH (\textit{Mir Hasan aur Unkâ Zamân}: 190-2). It is difficult to accept Waheed Qureshi’s assumption because the contemporary evidence of Mushafi tells us that he was over sixty at the time of his death; Ashhari seems to be nearer the truth.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Masud Hasan Rizavi “Adib” thinks that “Afsoos” has confused “Mohsin” with “Makholooq”. But “Afsoos” speaks of four sons and Mir Mohsin “Mohsin” may be the fourth. Shah Kamal also mentions Mohsin as Hasan’s son (Majama-ul-Intekhab).
\end{itemize}
matnavi, or longer narrative poems, are Gulzar-i-Eram, Rumuz-ul-Arefin and Qasre Jawahir. He has written a few marithis also at the behest of his benefactors Salar Jung and Sardar Jang, particularly the former who set them to elegiac tunes for the benefit of marthia singers. Hasan's Tazkirah of Urdu poets, written in chaste Persian, is a scholarly and largely dependable reference work.

Khaliq

After Hasan's death, the family lingered on in Faizabad, 'deprived of the handsome income from his fame, and burdened with responsibilities'. Khalqi and his brother, Makhlooq, retained some connection with the court of Mirza Mohammed Taqi 'Taraqqi', the son-in-law of Bahau Begum, the Queen Mother, and Mir 'Khalq' played courtier to Darab Ali Khan. But it was only a subsistence allowance which Khalqi could manage to secure. According to Maulana Mohammed Hussain 'Azadi', he began on a paucity allowance of Rs. 15 a month. The abandoned capital was fast decaying and the flight of the local nobility to Lucknow was on the increase. Khalqi made it a practice to go out to the new capital every year in the hope of making a little extra income by reciting marithas or writing ghazals for beginners on a token payment. During these visits, he stayed at the modest locality of Pir Bukhaira and was often accompanied by one of his sons, Munis or Anis. On each recitation tour, he was able to save three to four hundred rupees. The statement of Nawab Nasir Husain 'Kheyal', quoted by many other sources, that he was employed at the department for the compilation of Urdu proverbs and technical terms at Faizabad, is unfounded. Such a department simply did not exist.

At one stage Khalqi is reported to have worked as Raja Tikait Rai's tutor in Lucknow. The somewhat better prospects in the new seat of the Avadh kingdom must have prompted Khalqi to finally give up Faizabad. He left for Lucknow in the days of King Amjad Ali Shah (1842-1847). Khalqi's grandson, 'Nafla', and his two sisters were born while the family was still

in Faizabad. It follows, that he took up permanent residence at Lucknow only towards the end of his life's long and arduous journey.

Lucknow

When Khaliq decided to take up permanent residence at Lucknow, he was accompanied by Anis and other members of the family. He hired a house, the exact location of which cannot be fixed for want of accurate information. From a statement of 'Ari', one may infer that, perhaps, the family first settled in Sitehatti. His son had grown up and they might have felt the need of separate houses. It is reported that in his old age, he spent some time with each son by rotation, but gave more time to Uns, whose dutiful wife looked after the ageing father-in-law well. However, he did not live long and died in 1844, the third year of Amjad Ali Shah's reign.

Although it was the third generation after the family left Delhi, it still prided itself upon its roots there. The language spoken in the house of Khalqi was standard Dehlavi and occasionally differed from the Lucknow idiom. Anis often boasted, 'This is the language of my house. The gentlemen of Lucknow do not speak thus.' Nasik is said to have advised one of his pupils once 'to go to Khaliq's house if you desire to learn Urdu.' Nasik, however, was not the type to concede linguistic supremacy to any contemporary and one is tempted to take this statement with a pinch of salt, even though he acknowledged the distinctive features of Khalqi's language.

Like many poets of his time, Khalqi too used to sell his ghazals to budding poets for recitation at mushairas (poetic symposium). A young poet once procured ghazal from him and took it to Nasik for correction. He was quick to discover the real writer and rebuked him: 'It is certainly beyond you to write such a ghazal. I recognise the language. It is from the same Pir Bukhara resident'.

Khalqi started composing poetry at the age of sixteen and showed his early writings to his father, but he wrote so-

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21. By that time Avadh had become a kingdom.
23. Anisiyat: 175.
fusely that his father advised him to become a regular disciple of Mushafi. Perhaps, he consulted Nasik also. Neither Nasik nor Mushafi was a marthiā writer. We can be sure that the consultations were confined to ghazals and he gave it up after compiling a divan, which is now extinct. He retains his name in literature mainly on account of his marthias. In this field, only family tradition, his own intuition or the innovations of his contemporaries, Zameer and Faseeh, were his guide.

Khalīq had established himself as a master when he came to Lucknow. Nawab Syed Mohammed Khan “Rind” and Mir Ali Ausat “Rashk” had become his pupils at Faizabad25 and, though later they switched over to “Ātash” and “Nāsikhi” respectively, they acknowledged the debt they owed to him. His other disciples were Nawab Husamuddin Hyder “Nāmi” and Munnu Lal “Nālān”.

Once Mirza Taqi “Taraqqi” assembled a Musha’ira at his place and invited Ātash specially from Lucknow for the occasion. But when Khalīq recited the opening couplet of his ghazal:

    Rashk-i-Āina hai us rashk-i-qamar kā pahlū
    sāf idhar se naaz ētā hai udhār kā pahlū

Ātash was so moved by the spontaneity of the devotional and the hyperbolic element in it that he tore up his own ghazal, saying, “When you had such a person here, why did you call me?”

Although, very little of Khalīq’s works has been printed, his fame as a marthiā writer has not dimmed over the decades. Even his worst critic dare not dismiss it as the reflected glory of Anis. Mushafi had spotted the talent in him at the tender age of fourteen and predicted that he would one day shine as a poet. While still in the comparative seclusion of Faizabad, he had matured into a skilled poet and his reputation as a marthiā writer had travelled as far as Farukhabad, where he was invited before 1824-25.27


Khalīq’s poetry was characterized by simplicity of language and style, the dextrous use of idiom and a moving elegiac quality. Of his ghazals very little remains but about 78 salāms and 170 marthiās are available in the collection of Masud Hasan Rizavi, now preserved at the Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh. Akbar Hyderi claims that he has seen at least 300 marthiās of Khalīq. At least 20 marthiās over and above the Masud collection have been identified by him in his book Avadh Men Urdu Marthiye ka Ittīqa.

Khalīq usually begins his marthiās without a formal introduction or chehrā. The description of the physical charm of the hero, or sarājā, seldom finds place in his earlier marthiās but later on he appears to have followed Zamīr. The hero’s leave taking from his dear ones and similar poignant scenes form his favourite themes to which he devotes considerable space. This element predominates in a few marthiās. The moving scene of Husain’s sister, Zaināb, bidding farewell to her two young sons ready to go to the battle field, and her recounting the exploits of their ancestors to spur their enthusiasm, are effectively told. Incidentally, this is a theme dear to Anis as well. The entry of the warriors on the battle field, their rajāz (epic verses) and the description of the battle which became popular with his contemporaries Fasih and Zamīr, do not fascinate him, while the details of the fall of the martyrs are also only briefly touched upon. In short, he sticks to the original elegiac style and does not take to the innovations of his contemporaries with relish or eagerness. If he resorts to these devices occasionally, it is to demonstrate his ability and not his preference. Pathos was his forte, and lamentations, more loud than subdued, his ultimate goal, and these he shared with others of his tribe. What brought him acknowledgment as a master was the dextrous use of words and idiom and the depiction of the mournful moods of loving relations and friends, almost in an Indian setting.

In the autumn of his life, he had become a recluse and left the poetic field for his sons, particularly Anis, whose popularity knew no bounds. Khalīq distributed his poetic favours equally among his sons.

He died in 1844 and was buried within the pelmets of the
Imāmbāzā of his son near the Gomti Railway bridge. The British razed the whole mohallā to the ground after the failure of the great nationalist uprising of 1857. At the time of his death, Khaliq was 79 or 91 of age.

Khaliq left behind three sons—Ans, Uns and Moonis—four daughters. One of the daughters, Humnuz Khānām was married to the adopted son of Zamir, a contemporary marthīa writer. The two brothers of Khaliq—Khulq and Makhloq, were also marthīa writers, maintaining what had by now been established as a family tradition.

Not only the menfolk but even the ladies of the house had received education, a phenomenon quite rare in that period. Ans's mother was moderately educated and was fairly well acquainted with elementary theological literature. She knew enough Persian to teach Jāme' Abbāsi, a secondary stage book of Shia theology. She was a pious lady and never missed her daily prayers or the month long fasts of Ramzan. She was well-known to the ladies of the royal household, who respected her for her poise, piety, dress, manner of speech, intonation and purity of language. These set the royal pattern too and were considered models for ladies of taste, good breed and station. The ladies of the aristocracy were always eager to visit her and learn from her.

28. Astāf-i-Mir Ansī: 141. The place of burial as reported by his great grandson, Urooj is open to serious doubt, for the Imambāra was built in 1271 AH/1854-55 vide Mutli Mohammad Abbas's Chronograph. He may have been buried only at the site where the Imambāra was later constructed.

29. The exact date of Khaliq's birth has not been recorded anywhere. Only Mushafi, his mentor, has stated that he started composing at the age of 16, and became his disciple a little later. This took place during Mushafi's stay at Lucknow. He visited Lucknow twice, once in 1186 AH and the second and last time in 1198 AH. Mashiuzzaman fixes the time of his discipleship around 1198 AH, while Mahmood Farooqi prefers the earlier visit. Presuming that at least a year had passed after he began writing that he came to Mushafi as a disciple, his birth can be fixed at 1181 AH according to Mashiuzzaman (Urdu Marthiye ka Irtiqa: 188) and at 1169 AH according to Mahmood Farooqi (Mir Hosan aur Khandan ke Darse Shē 'ara; Lahore Edition).

* Tarikh-i-Tafsil Khwāštān, Mohammad Razā Rāzi; quoted by Hayār-i-Ansā: 20-21, and Ansā and Shakespeare.
various branches of knowledge. Later, when he moved to Lucknow, he completed his lessons in higher Arabic with Maulana Haider Ali. Mufti Mohammad Abbas taught him the Hidayat-ul-Hikmat (Sadra, so called after its author) and the pupil mastered it well. Once when a difficult point in the book was being hotly discussed by a small group of scholars, Anis resolved it even without consulting the text.

As a student, he was more interested in the sciences of the intellect (ma'qoolat) than those of tradition (mangooolat), and of the former category he had studied all the essential texts. His personal library had some two thousand books. Once he bought an illuminated copy of the Shahnāmah for rupees two hundred. He was fond of the company of scholars and litterateurs and held frequent discussions with them on literary and scholarly subjects.

Keenly interested in matters literary and linguistic, his scholastic career was marked by a spirit of enquiry. For forty years he lived the life of an alert and active scholar, assimilating knowledge from whatever source it came and putting it to real good use in his creative works. Most Tazkirah writers speak of his erudition and scholarship, though technically he may not have completed a formal course in education. Illustrating the point, Nizami Badayuni quotes the following two lines of Anis:

Har Juzv-i-tan ko la yatajazzā banā diya
Lo kufiyo gīrā diya harf-i-thaqīl ko.

Juzv-i- la yatajazzā in the first line means “an atomic particle which cannot be split further”. The scientific concept was generally not known to the moderately educated at that time. The

2. Doubts have been raised as to which of the two Haider Ali’s was the tutor—the one of Faizabad, who was Sunni by faith and the author of the polemical Muntaha-al-Kalim written to controvert Shia tenets, or the other of Lucknow. Both were, however, younger than Anis. There may have been yet another Haider Ali. Nothing is certain.
3. Introduction to Marthia-i-Anis, by Nizami 5.
5. Antisya, 56.
6. Vaghri-i-Anis; 89.

second line alludes to the controversies between the Iraqi grammarians of Ku’fa and Basra cities over the dropping of the Harf-i-thaqīl. He was obviously conversant with these matters of higher learning. He gave yet another demonstration of his knowledge of the old sciences when his adversaries tried to find fault with the opening line of one of his marthias: “Jab qat’ ki masafat-i-shāb afdāb nē”. The objection was that the journey of the night was completed by the moon and not by the sun, as suggested in the line. When the matter was brought to his notice, Anis defended it publicly on the basis of the ancient science of astronomy and silenced his critics. That Anis’s alert mind was ever-receptive to new ideas is evidenced by his comparison of the swiftness of the steed to the quick transmission of sound over the wires: “Jis tarh se bijli ki sadā tār peh daju”. The fault-finders wondered how electricity could carry sound over the wires! Anis had a ready and valid answer and even cited a Persian couplet, probably Urū’s in his support.

These stray vindications of his knowledge of the Arabic language and the old sciences became necessary because his main rival in the field, Mirza Dābir, was an acknowledged scholar of Arabic, who had completed his formal education and took pride in exhibiting it in his works. Anis’s education was selective, informal but purposeful. There are indications that he completed his education in Arabic after coming to Lucknow, where he must have noticed the premium placed on the knowledge of Arabic in literary circles. While he displayed his capabilities occasionally to convince the unkind critics and adversaries, he never allowed his literary judgment to be blurred by these elitist considerations. His command of spoken and literary Urdu was perfect and his vocabulary extensive. He did not sacrifice simplicity, clarity or literary quality to satisfy the whims of the elite or to make a show of his knowledge.

Military Exercises

Perhaps in preparation for the handling of heroic themes and in conformity with the prevailing customs among the nobility of the day, he learnt riding and fencing with the nobles of Faizabad. He was, however, not satisfied with what he had

acquired there. He underwent a rigorous course in military training after reaching Lucknow. Mir Kazim Ali Safedposh, an established master in bān, binwat and fencing, had migrated from Delhi to Lucknow. His youthful son and disciple, Mir Ameer Ali, was also an expert in these arts. They lived in the neighbourhood. Both the father and the son taught him all the secrets of these material arts. Ants took to training very seriously and had a special dress made for the exercises and insisted on wearing it while the other trainees took the exercises only in shorts. He did not go to the arena but practised the art alone on the terrace of his house. The only other persons present were his instructors. These exercises gave Ants the feel of actual war scenes and individual manoeuvres, besides keeping him fit and alert. He maintained good health and had no major illness except towards the end of his life. He had such a high degree of proficiency in the art of binwat that with a Maddushahi or Bhopali paista (small coin) tied to the corner of a yard long piece of ordinary cloth, he could resist the attack of ten stick wielders and, except for those who knew binwat well, none could repel his attacks.

The whole family was fond of physical exercises but Mr Ants took the exercises more regularly in a secluded room. Fifty to sixty dands and the waving of the mugaris (the Indian mace) couple of hundred times was his daily routine. Even in his old age, he kept it up, though on a slightly reduced scale.

**First Flashes**

The poetic atmosphere at home had kindled in him a passion for poetry even as a child. He took delight in humming lyrical couplets from Persian and Urdu poets and knew thousands of them by heart. He could quote appropriate lines by the scores to illustrate the correct usage of words. He was also very fond of nature and spent hours outdoors observing its wonders. A place of beauty and charm could never escape his keen eyes.

Nawab Syed Mohammad Khan "Rind", a disciple of his father and some four years senior to Ants, was very friendly with him. He encouraged his young and sensitive friend to give expression to his aesthetic urges in poetry. He readily accepted the suggestion and ventured into this vast field with his first few lines when he was hardly fifteen or sixteen. But even in a poet's house, poetry was regarded as a serious distraction for a student and was discouraged at too young an age. He, therefore, kept it a secret from his father, but could not suppress for long the urge to give public expression to his poetic talent. At the insistence of "Rind", he attended a musha'ira, where his ghazal earned applause. The news of the success soon reached his father but luckily he was not too unhappy at the discovery. He sent for his son and asked him to repeat the ghazal to him. He was patted for the effort but was advised: "Ab is ghazal ko salām karo". (Now convert this ghazal into salām). There was a pun intended on the word 'salām'. It could mean both bidding goodbye to the ghazal or converting it into the form of a salām. The child knew his father's preference and decided to give up writing ghazals. Ashhari reports that a collection of his ghazals was preserved in the family, who kept it a guarded secret. Only a few ghazals and some stray couplets have come down to us and their only importance is biographical.

His early compositions were corrected by his father. In conformity with the elegiac mood of the salāms that he wrote, Ants adopted the pseudonym of "Haeeen". During one of his customary visits to Lucknow, Khaliq brought Ants along from Faizabad and took him to the doyen of Lucknow poets, Nāsikh. After a formal introduction, Ants recited a ghazal, at the request of Nāsikh and the permission of his father. The opening lines of the ghazal ran:

*Khulā ba'is yeh us bēdard ke ānsoo nikalnā kā\nDhuwan laṛa hai ṣakhon mān kisi ke ḍīl ke jānī kā*

One now knows why the love's eyes got moistened;\nThe smoke of the lover's burning heart must have touched them!

Nāsikh was pleased with this youthful attempt and blessed the boy: "The child will one day be the pride of the house. His poetry is bound to attract universal acclaim as he grows, and I would suggest his changing the pseudonym (talakkalat) to Ants!". The young poet bowed and accepted the master's suggestion.

Maiden Recitation

It was customary for a beginner to recite a small piece before the chief guest’s recital of a marthia. The custom was known as peshkhwani. These recitations gave young poets the confidence to face big audiences and also served as an introduction to discerning critics. Anis had already written several marthias and must have recited some before Faizabad audiences but he was now exposed to the critical and larger assemblies of Lucknow.

His maiden recitation in the new capital was at Imambara Ikramullah Khan in Nakhâs, where he preceded the famous marthia writer, Zamtr. The quatrain that he recited first was an acknowledgment of the honour accorded to him:

Bâlidah hun yeh auj mujhe ñaj milâ;
Zill-i-'Alam-i-Sâhib-i-Me'raj milâ.
Mîmber pa' nishast sar pa' Hazrat kâ 'Alam.
Ab Châhiye keyâ takht milâ, ñaj milâ!!

I feel elated at the heights I attained today,
Seated under the banner of the Prophet, raised to the skies.
A seat on the pulpit and Hazrat’s standard
fluttering overhead:
What more could one aspire for? I have got a throne and a crown.

He also presented a salâm and a marthia but these have not been specified. The performance was widely acclaimed.

Soon he was reciting as the chief guest at assemblies at the houses of Mirzâ Wâlâjah and Sheikh ‘Ali Abbâs and was in demand everywhere. His name travelled far beyond Lucknow and Faizabad. Invitations poured in from far-off Hyderabad in the south and Patna in the east. He caught the imagination of not only the common man but also of the elite and the high brow. Admirers flocked to Lucknow from adjoining townships and villages even from remote areas. The assemblies addressed by him now overflowed the large halls and vast courtyards. Inside the halls listeners sat cramped and late comers had to stand out in the sun, all absorbed in his enchanting recital. He has referred to it in one of his quatrains:

By His Grace, the vast concourse is so jam packed.

Lucknow went crazy about him and it was not long before a large group of fans called Ansites, was extolling him above his established rival Dabir, whose position was partially eclipsed despite the activities of the Dabirites. The special assemblies addressed by Ants were numerous but they were all held in Lucknow or nearby cities. He refused to move out of Uttar Pradesh until the annexation of Avadh by the British upset the entire cultural life of the city which had provided intellectual and economic sustenance.

The coveted Lucknow assemblies (majlises) organised by the Queen Mother Kishwar were always addressed by Ants. Husain Ali Khan “Asar” held a number of majlises around Chehlum. Anis and Dabir recited their marthias on alternate days there. In Muftiganj the rivals recited at different places one after the other—Anis at Darogha Mohammed Khan’s and Dabir at Darogha Wazir Husain’s place. Prime Minister Nawab Ali Naqi Khan was fond of Ants. He used to address a major congregation at the Nawab’s palace on the seventh or eighth day of Muharram each year. Once the Nawab wanted to skip the recital session on account of a severe headache. Ants did not relish his absence and sent word to him that if the Nawab was too ill to listen, he too was too unwell to recite. As by then a huge crowd had already gathered, Ali Naqi Khan got upset, came out of the house, apologised and sat through the whole recitation, ignoring the headache. Among other places where he used to recite in Lucknow were the houses of Darogha Mohammad Abbas and Haider Khan.

Anis would not permit any disturbance while he was reciting the marthia. Once a wealthy listener came in a little late to the assembly and wanted to force his way through to a seat near the pulpit. Ants asked him not to move further and to get seated where he was.

10. Also called Arbî’sa (the fortieth day after the tragedy of Karbala) observed on the 20th of Safar of the Hijri Calendar.
(e) Residence

The position regarding the permanent residence of Anis at Lucknow is rather confused. Even the statements of his contemporaries like Ashhari and others contradict each other.

A close relation, Mehdi Hasan ‘Ahsan’ says that his house was situated either in Sitehatti or Shidiyon ka Ehtāt and admits the existence of different versions in this regard. He quotes a statement that the first house in which Anis stayed was presented to him by Nawab Diyunat-ud-Daula. The latter had built a big Imāmbārā and a house in the neighbourhood of Anis. He requested Anis to inaugurate the Imāmbārā by reciting a marthi. Pleased with his performance, he donated the residential house to the poet. According to Mir Syed Ali “Manous” (a grandson of Anis), this Imāmbārā was constructed for Anis by the Nawab himself, who had also donated a small silver tomb (zarih), furnishings, carpets and chāndnis, etc. for the Imāmbārā. Manous puts the date of the construction of the Imāmbārā at four years before the First War of Independence (1857) that is, in 1853. Against these oral versions, we have the authentic evidence of the chronogram by Mufti Mohammad Abbas which definitely fixes the date of the construction of Anis’s Imāmbārā at 1271 AH/1854-55 AD. Surely, two Imāmbārās could not be constructed simultaneously or at least in such quick succession. Mufti Abbās has clearly stated that the Imāmbārā was built by Anis. This part of Manous’s version cannot be relied upon, as makes no mention of the Nawab at all. The donation of the house as also the furnishings for the Imāmbārā are, however, the only portions which are believable.

Another difficulty presents itself in the shape of the story of Dulāh Sāheb ‘Urooj’. His memory fails him when he says that Khaliq (d. 1844) was buried in the Imāmbārā constructed by Anis. It is highly improbable that within a year or two of his residing in Lucknow, Anis would have saved enough to invest in the construction of the Imāmbārā. Khaliq could have been buried on a plot of land which became a part of the Imāmbārā twenty seven years later.

Maulvi Abdul Ali, who had intimate connections with the house, locates both the house and the Imāmbārā in Shidiyon ka Ehtāt, adding that Anis used to live earlier in some other Ehtāt. Arif, another grandson, comes up with yet another version. According to him, before the Nawab’s donation of the house to him, Anis already had a house in the same mohalla.

It is not easy to piece these apparently divergent versions together but the assumption that he took up residence first in Shidiyon ka Ehtāt and later had a house constructed in Sitehatti, possibly a modest one, is more plausible. Later the Nawab donated a bigger house to him. As the entire locality was bulldozed by the British during the Mutiny, these houses also got demolished and no trace of them remained when Anis ended a self-imposed exile to escape the terror and dishonour. He returned to a ruined and desolate Lucknow. He had to seek shelter in far off Mansoor Nagar and then in Raja Bazar (Panjabī Tolā) in a hired house, on a rental of ten rupees a month, from Munshi Serāj-ud-Din. At last, he bought the Sabzimandi house for rupees three thousand and three hundred. It has a courtyard attached to it. In a part of it he constructed a diwan khana where he found his last resting place. The house was renovated during the Anis centenary celebrations through grants from the government. In the courtyard of the house, Anis, Nafis and other members of the family lie buried and a tomb has come up through donations. These premises have been the hub of literary activity for decades and have seen Anis achieve great success. This complex of houses has certainly seen much better days. There was a darogha or caretaker, for the management of the place and more than one attendant to do the chores. How one wishes it could be converted into a monument of national importance, the surroundings cleaned and the place made easily approachable.

(f) Anis and the Court

In defiance of the family tradition, Anis refused to be attached to a court. Wajid Ali Shāh, the last ruler of Oudh, wanted him to write the family’s Shāhnāmah in collaboration with three other poets—Barq, Aseer and Qubūl—but Anis...
excused himself.\textsuperscript{18} He never wrote panegyrics of the kings or the nobles. As a writer of devotional poetry, he thought he should sing only the praises of God and His chosen few. He considered it unbecoming for a marthia writer to praise the worldly rulers. He said so once in the presence of the Nawab.

*Ghair ki madhia karoosh shah ka sanakhwan ha kar*
*Mujraai, apni hawa khoon Sulaiman ha kar.*\textsuperscript{18}

Should I sing the praises of others, when I am the poet-laureate of the real King?
Being King Solomon of my own domain, should I allow my position to be compromised?

An invitation for the recitation of marthia was different. Its acceptance involved no sacrifice of principles. The Queen Mother Kishwar\textsuperscript{17} (or Wajid Ali Shah himself,\textsuperscript{18} at the suggestion of Miftah-ud-Daulah) decided to assemble a congregation for the recitation of marthias and she invited both Anis and Dabin. Usually the twain never met in the same majlis but royalty succeeded in getting them together. Anis extracted his price. He would not don the court dress, nor would he perform the customary court obeisance in the royal presence. The rules were waived whereupon the poet agreed to recite his marthia. Wajid Ali Shah was present in person behind a chilman (curtain) to hear him. In candid tones, he recited the two lines cited above without fear of an adverse royal reaction. His courage won him the praises of the common listeners as of the devout ruler and his noblemen. When he recited:

*Zulf-i-Akbar ka joo dekhai sare nesa pur khoon*
*Moosi sar khol diye maan ne parishooha ha kar.*

When Mother saw the locks of his son Akbar soaked in blood and raised at the point of spear, she let her own locks fall on her shoulders in dishevelled grief.

\textsuperscript{15} Yadgar-i-Anis: 86; Wergiit-i-Anis: 82-83.
\textsuperscript{16} It now finds a place in the collection of the salams of “Moonis”.
In this connection “Anis ke salam”, p. 69, is worth referring to.
\textsuperscript{17} Wergiit-i-Anis: 80.
\textsuperscript{18} Hayariit-i-Anis: 29.

The ruler turned to Fath-ud-Daulah “Barq”, a courtier and himself a poet: “Didn’t I tell you that Anis is unique as a poet? This idiom is exclusively his”. After the recitation was over the Nawab asked his Prime Minister, Ali Naqi Khan to convey his appreciation and to accompany the poet up to the main gate, an honour reserved for eminent royal guests only.

More Recitations

Apart from the fixed recitations at different places during the months of Maharram and Safar, he presented his marthias at many places in Lucknow round the year.

There were special occasions of mourning or thanksgiving when also majlis were held to seek heavenly blessings. All these have not been recorded but we have got an account of Anis’s recitation at the Chehlum (fortieth day mourning function) of Zamir’s\textsuperscript{18} wife. The listeners included Atash\textsuperscript{20} and Nasik, the two great litterateurs of the time. The marthia began with the line: “Amad hai Karbala ke nayeistaan men sher ki” (The lion-heart is about to enter the field in Karbala). As he came to the following couplet in praise of the sword:

*Ashraf kaa banoo, raesaan ki shan hai*
*Shahoon ki abroo hai, sipaher ki jana hai.*

It is the nobleman’s dignity and the aristocrat’s pride
It is the King’s glory and the soul of the soldier.

He turned towards Atash for appreciation. Raising his head, Atash said in a clear voice, “Only the naive could speak of you as a mere elegist. By God, you are a poet, a poet of poets. The sacred crown of poetry befits your head”.

Anis was content with whatever Lucknow could offer him and seldom moved out. He stuck to the resolve until the city was taken over by the British during the 1957 revolt. He was forced to flee Lucknow and remain in hiding till the announcement of general amnesty. On his return he found Lucknow...
devastated beyond recognition and its social life completely disrupted. He wrote in great agony:

Waraq ulat gayā dunyā kā yak-bayak kyon charkh
Ye' kis tarab kā zamāne ne inteqam liya.
Ulat gaya na faqat Lakhnau ka ek tabaqaah
Ants, mulk-i-sukhan mein bhi ingilāb āyā.

How did the leaves of the book of the world get thus scattered?
Oh Ants! Not only was an order destroyed in Lucknow;
Poesy's kingdom too suffered convulsions.

It was the barest truth. The nobility were the worst sufferers; looted, exploited, harassed and in consequence, pauperised and dispersed. It took them long to recover even partially. Apart from such poets as had suffered death or imprisonment during the revolt, many had migrated to Matiaburj (Calcutta) to join the deposed King’s retinue. Still others moved out to the principalities of Rampur, Benaras, etc. The entire social scene had changed and avenues of income had considerably shrunk for Ants.

Patna

In this hour of tragedy, Ants was forced to think of pastures anew. He went to Patna for the first time in 1859 and again the following year at the invitation of Nawab Qasim Ali Khan. He was treated with such great civility and honour that he agreed to a yearly visit to that city. The following year scholars, poets and noblemen from all over northern India assembled in Patna to hear him. Moonis was asked to lead the recitation. After a two-and-a-half hour recital by Moonis, came Ants’s turn. He asked of the audience for an interval to offer the noon prayers. The audience reasssembled in greater strength and sat through the recital. Ants was visibly moved by the warmth and affection of the gathering. He recited his famous, controversial marthiqa beginning:

Jab Quat’a ki masāfati-shah dāshāh ne'  
When the sun reached the end of night’s journey

Hyderabad

There had been persistent requests from Hyderabad from the time of Afzal-ud-daulah for a visit, but he had always excused himself. Now the time had changed and when Nawab Tahavvor Jung invited him in 1871 at the suggestion of Sharif-ul-Ulema Maulvi Syed Sharif Husain Khan, son of Arastu Jah, at the persuasion of Shamsul Ulema Maulana Syed Hamid Husain, he readily agreed. Leaving Lucknow on March 2, 1871, he reached Hyderabad on March 10, travelling up to Gulbarga, via Bombay and Poona, by train. Hyderabad was not yet linked by rail and he took a stage coach from Gulbarga. During the brief halt at Gulbarga he was welcomed by many respectable citizens. On reaching Hyderabad, Nawab Tahavvor Jung received him personally with his large entourage at the Delhi Gate. Owing to the strain of the long journey he was taken ill. The Nawab’s adversaries spread the rumour that Ants had not come. To scotch the rumour, the Nawab requested him to recite just a quatrains at the congregation when it assembled. Meanwhile, Dr. Mirza Ali, an allopathic physician was called in. Ants had the impression that alcohol formed an essential ingredient of all allopathic medicines and, therefore, hesitated but the Nawab assured him that the physician was a relation of his and he would take care to prescribe only non-alcoholic medicines. The treatment brought down the fever, but he was still weak. Realising the predicament of the Nawab, he bowed to the pressing requests and recited the quatrains and fourteen stanzas of the marthiqa beginning with: “Bakhuda firts-i-maddan-i-tahavvor tha Hur” (By God, Hur was a cavalier of the brave’s battle front).

In subsequent gatherings he drew large crowds, estimated to be around 8,000 for ten consecutive days. On the twentieth of Muharram he shifted from Tahavvor Jung’s house to Bagh Teepu Saheb. Tahavvor Jung and his courtiers accompanied him there and played host. On April 11, 1871 he left for Lucknow. Teepu Saheb tied guineas worth rupees five hundred on his arm and Tahavvor Jung paid him Rs. 5,000 in cash, besides defraying the expenses of the journey. He also presented a robe of honour consisting of muslin and himroo dresses and a Kashmiri shawl.

In Hyderabad too Ants refused to give up his usual dress, even when Nawab Asman Jah offered to pay Rs. 5,000, if he put
on just the Hyderabad turban.21

Once a Hyderabad noble came to listen to Ants's recitation. He was escorted through the crowd right to the pulpit by the members of the audience. Contemporaries stood up in respect but the poet remained seated and said only "Bismillah!", beckoning the noble to a seat close by. The noble mistook it for discourtesy and conspired with his courtiers not to utter a word in the poet's praise. Ants took the hint, composed two couplets on the spot and pointing at the Nawab, he said:

*Mansah-i-Jamsheid-o-Darâ-o-Sikandar ab kahân?
Khâr tak chhâñi ná qabron ke nishân paide huay;
Khâksâri ne dekhan raf'aton par raf'aton
Is Zamin se wah kyâ kyâ Âsmân paide huay.*

No longer exist the high offices of Jamsheid, Darius and Alexandar.

I sifted the dust and the desert but could not sight their graves.

On the contrary, modesty raised me from one height to a greater height.

What wonderful skies arose from this earth!22

This direct onslaught on the utter futility of the world's riches broke the nobleman's resistance and he shouted "Wah Wah" with great enthusiasm. His courtiers followed and the whole atmosphere was electrified.

In the beginning, Ants had some misgivings about the capacity of the Deccani listeners to appreciate fully the finer points of his poetic art. But when he came into close contact with them, he completely changed his views. They displayed all the powers of comprehension and appreciation. They gave him great respect too. A person of the status of Tahavvur Jung once picked up Ants' shoes and placed them on his palanquin.23

In Uttar Pradesh itself, Ants persuaded himself to visit Allahabad and Varanasi (Benaras) for reciting marthias. In Allahabad, the recitation was advertised well in advance through posters and leaflets. On the appointed day a holiday was declared in all the colleges and even court employees were permitted to leave office early to attend the function if they so wished. Officers also sought permission to avail themselves of the opportunity to hear the great poet. Shamsul Ulema Maulvi Zakaullah (Professor of Arabic at the Muir Central College) relates that on reaching the spacious house where Ants was to recite, he found it already overflowing with admirers. Many were standing in the sun listening with rapt attention. The recitation had started and he could not manage to get inside because of the great rush. He too stood among others in the sun. Ants had grown old but his powerful recitation could put the young to shame. It appeared as though an old lady of marvellous coordination was performing magic, making the people act the way she liked; inducing a laugh where she wanted and tears when she willed. Enchanted and amazed, the Professor stood there for two hours. His clothes were drenched in perspiration and his feet had got benumbed but so absorbed was he in the recitation that he felt no inconvenience so long as he kept looking at Ants.24

He stopped at Benaras enroute to Lucknow on his return from Patna. An assembly at the Imambara of Qazi Mir Yar Ali (situated in the Telyanala sector of Varanasi) jammmed the hall. Four other members of Ants's family were invited to recite their own marthias. He could sense that the listeners were fatigue. He allowed them a break of half an hour before climbing the pulpit for the recitation. The crowd reassembled and his recitation was adjudged the best.25

*The Shah Najaf Stipend*

Nawab Mubarak had ordered the payment from the Shah Najaf Trust of a monthly stipend of rupees forty to Ants, generation after generation, in consideration of a single, yearly recitation. Ants prized his poetry far above the money. On finding that market place crowds dominated the Shah Najaf assemblies and were not capable of appreciating good poetry,

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25. Ibid.
he gave up reciting there and asked his son to deputise. The trustee, Hakim Bande Mahdi, stopped the stipend to show his displeasure. Ants said in derision: "An ornamental metallic star has fallen from my slippers."

**Style of Recitation**

A few styles of reciting poetry were then in vogue. The lyrical ghazal was recited plain, with measured stresses on key words and phrases occurring in a couplet, varied according to the mood of each one. It was known as tahtul-lafz. Rarely was the recital of the ghazal accompanied by taramum (chanting) as in the case of Momin. The recitation of mathnawi was simple narrative, only rhyming breaking the monotony. A few portions which lent themselves to dramatisation did receive special emphasis and for such occasion story-telling devices were resorted to. Martha was recited in mournful tunes by the Sozechhwans or marthia khwans who had a rudimentary knowledge of music also. The sāz is a musical recitation in some melancholy Indian or Indo-Iranian rages. It developed a style of its own through appropriate adjustments and modifications. Sung in chorus, the sāz is led by a sāz khwān, who sits in the centre, flanked by helpers called bazoo's. The marthia intended for sāz recitation is short, seldom exceeding thirty to forty stanzas. The sāz as the name indicates, is purely elegiac.

The tahtul-lafz is a plain form of solo, non-musical recital, with emphasis on narration, to which Zamir added an occasional dramatic touch. Different portions were stressed to heighten the effect, appropriately illustrated through movements of hands, facial expressions and voice modulations. No longer was the marthia confined to some forty stanzas. Now with all its components it stretched to over 200 stanzas at times. It was invariably recited tahtul-lafz. In Tahtul-lafz the poet or the reciter is seated on a pulpit, placed at the head of the assembly (majlis), usually congregating in Imambaras, Imam Bargahs or Husainias or large, private hall.

Unlike mathnawi the marthia recital could not be spread over two or more sittings. It had to be a single, integrated recital, for its finale lay in the elegiac lamentation.

The two forms were in vogue at the same time and Ants wrote marthias for both the sāz and the tahtul-lafz. But Ants's fame does not rest on the shorter elegiac marthias, in which his contemporary and rival Mirza Dabir tried to excel. It is the longer marthia that Ants is unrivalled in. Himself, he recited only in tahtul-lafz, in which he developed a style of his own. His style created great impact. He could sway his audience from moods of joyous applause to melancholy and tears. A sustained recitation of some two hundred stanzas of six metric units each easily took over two hours. Considerable recitational skill alone could keep the listeners' interest alive.

Basic uniformity of the recitational style, mingled with a judicious variety of pauses, stresses and cadences was essential to capture the subtle changes of the poetic moods of the various components of the marthia—the description of nature, the eulogy of the hero, the battle scenes, the emotion-packed narratives, the dialogue, the conflict of good and evil, the logic of lofty ideals and sacrifice. The closing lament, which kneaded the hearts of the listeners, required special treatment. The marthia, thus, assumed the peculiar form of single character dramatic poetry, and the tahtul-lafz, a special variation of single character acting.

We have in the Sanskrit rūpak an example of single character acting, but there the actor is free to sojourn from the expression of the noblest sentiments to the most ridiculous and humorous. Tahtul-lafz acting has, otherwise also, been difficult, and it became more exacting in an elegiac, recitational communication through highly refined and delicate gestures and tonal modulations, which only the sophisticated art sensibility of Avadh could produce. The greatness of the holy characters the marthia portrayed and the reverential atmosphere in the assembly further limited the freedom of the poet employing tahtul-lafz as a form of dramatic communication. Ants, in particular, was averse to gesticulation or motions of the body that would deflect attention from the poetic qualities of his composition. Maulana Mohammad Husain Azad gives an eye witness account: "Rarely would he raise his hand, move his head or resort to a forced movement of eyes in the course of recitation. Instead, he used the medium of his poetry to convey to the audience, whatever he wanted".85 Ashhari and Sheik...
Hasan Raza add corresponding observations: “The manner of his recitation was a picture of moderation... without effort at creating an effect, or artifice. His aesthetic variations of mood, cadence or suggestive movements of head and eyebrows were so expressive, so full of meaning.”

Many in his own family and a long line of disciples tried to copy him but his art eluded imitation. Several other styles of tahtul-lafs were developed later and are being used down to this day by many Urdu poets for recitations in poetic symposia but none could equal his style.

Those who came to him to learn the art were discouraged by the master: “What shall I teach and what will you learn! It is not an art that can be taught. Most of my expressions come to mind at the spur of the moment. I myself do not know why I employ a form of expression on a particular occasion”. Ants’s unostentatious craftsmanship and unlaboured style of recitation drew quite a few pupils to him. Among them was the young son of a Nawab. Once Ants taught him how to recite the line:

Kherenche jo Kamari, de na aman, peeli-e-daman ko.*

He stressed the last syllable of the stressed words in a particular manner and recited the line with measured pauses to emphasise the rhythm effect, besides highlighting the three key words. But when Ants demonstrated thrice and the pupil still failed to grasp the nuance, Ants told him bluntly: “You can never learn recitation. Why, then waste my time and cause mental strain?” Another time one of his pupils, a nobleman’s son, began to scratch his belly in the midst of a practice. Ants reproached him: “It is a marthia and not dhurupad or tapa that you sing and scratch at the same time”.77 Darogha Achehhe Sahib once recited a marthia of Ants in his presence and drew great applause from the audience but Ants was not happy. “He mutilated and dismembered my marthia and violated my delicate thoughts”, he deplored.

Some have stated that Ants and his brothers used to practise recitation before a large mirror in a quiet corner of their house.

They weighed the appropriateness of each gesture and manner of recitation carefully. Mir Syed Ali “Manooz” a grandson of Ants, contends the veracity of this statement.28

In the autumn of his life, he gave up recitation, partly because by then his son, Nafts had established himself and also because he was stung that Lucknow had not done its duty towards him and compelled him to travel to far off Hyderabad to recite in his old age. Mir Manoos, however, is more exact. According to him, Ants refrained from reciting marthia after the failure of the great rebellion of 1857 and its aftermath, the ruination of the city29 at the hands of the British.

After a lapse of several years, it was Rashid’s brother, Kallan Saheb, who succeeded in persuading him to break his silence. On his insistence, Ants recited a marthia at the assembly organised to felicitate him on his recovery from illness. There he presented his famous marthia mentioned earlier:

Jab Qat’a ki masafat-i-shab asfar ne

When the sun reached the end of night’s journey.

The performance demonstrated that age had not dimmed his talent.

Last Recitation

Ashhari thinks that Ants recited his last marthia at the assembly at Sheesh Mahal at the house of Nawabs Baqar Ali Khan and Zafar Ali Khan.30 The first line of the marthia recited on the occasion was “Jati hai kis shiksh se ran me khudai ki fauq” (With what grandeur God’s army marches on to the field). Ahsan disagrees with it and he, as well as ‘Alavi, are of the view that “the last recital took place at the house of Sheikh ‘Ali ‘Abas Vakil.31 Mir Manoos, who was himself present at the mujlis supports this statement and adds that the marthia recited began with the line “Wah hasrat ka ahad-e-jawani gusar gaya”.

(Alas! The age of youth has passed away).32

29. Ibid. 57.
30. Hayat-i-Ans: 35.
32. Anisiyat.
How He Wrote

Anis’s biographers have left us an account not only of how he recited but also of his routine as a writer and the mode of his composing poetry. Fact is interwoven with fiction but it is certain that he had a daily schedule of work from which he seldom departed. As one reads of his routine one is reminded of Raja Shekher who lays down a rigid timetable for poets in his famous work *Kāya Mumāsā*. Centuries after, Anis could not be expected to adhere to the same routine but there is a remarkable resemblance in the details adopted by Anis. His grandson Mr Manoos describes it as a reliable eyewitness.

“Mir Anis used to keep awake almost the whole night and went to bed only after his morning prayers. He woke up around nine in the morning, took a heavy breakfast at ten. Thereafter he spent some time in correcting the works of Moonis (his brother) and Nafis (his son). At two in the afternoon he took a nap and got up at the time of *asr* (afternoon) prayers. The prayers over, he came out to his divān khana. After dinner, he wrote *mārthā* seated on a *talqī* (settee) in the inner verandah facing south. A large candle stick protected by a transparent glass chimney, burnt brightly in front and books lay scattered on either side of his seat. He usually sat cross-legged, his elbow rested on the thighs and cheek cupped in palm. He wrote until daybreak.”

Mir Hāmid Ali, a close friend, has filled a gap. Intimate friends were welcome from 9 or 10 p.m. to midnight. Mir Nafis and Mir Moonis would also be present occasionally. In these quiet hours of the night, their talks centred round poetry or literature in general. Good couplets, mostly of Persian and to a lesser extent of Urdu poets were recited from memory and critically discussed. Firdau’s *Shahnāmah* would often form the subject matter of talk and Anis could recite from memory large portions of it in support of his point of view. These sessions were in essence a continuation of the process of *mārthā* writing.

Tradition has it, that Anis would often lie in bed, covered from top to toe. In these hours of absolute seclusion, he was engrossed in composing a *mārthā*, repeating the lines in a clear voice for the benefit of the scribe, usually his son, Nafis. At times he would have no scribe around and took mental notes of the composition to be dictated later. But close relations and eye witnesses like Manoos have rejected this last part of the story as a figment of imagination. Although it may not have been the usual practice, as claimed by some, it is not beyond the pale of possibility that the poet composed and dictated his stanzas in that manner. He wrote very fast, fifty to sixty stanzas in a sitting. For instance fifty stanzas of the *mārthā* “*Jāb Qa’t’a kī masafat-i-shab āfīb ne*” were completed in the first half of a single night.

His younger brother, Moonis once boasted in the company of his friends that it should not be difficult for an expert to write fifty to sixty stanzas in a sitting. It was communicated to Anis by a tale carrier. He did not relish the vainglory and thought of bringing it home to his brother that boasts could be put to test also. An occasion soon presented itself. Moonis had taken his new *mārthā* for correction to Anis, who was then bathing in the *hauz*. It was to be recited at the *majlis* at Nawab Meer Husain’s. Anis took the *mārthā* and dipped it in water twice or thrice, washing away all the writing. Moonis stood stunned as there was only a couple of days left for the recital and he knew he could not complete another in such a short time. Anis asked him: “What’s there in this *mārthā* that you want to recite it at such a big assembly”. Moonis was left with no words. Later, he called Moonis to lunch and said: “Why should you worry when experts can compose fifty stanzas in a single night.” Moonis soon relented and explained that it was far from his intention to make any false claim. Anis thereupon dictated to him the important part of the *mārthā*: “*Rāmaq afgīz hai makkoor-i-wafādāri-i-Hur*”. Part of it was composed by Moonis himself.

Last Days

Mir Anis led an active and regulated life and enjoyed good health. The last few years were, however, plagued by intermittent sickness. From the letters of Moonis and Un’s written to family
friends, one learns of recurrent bouts of illness, some of them rather prolonged. The first illness, is reported in 1865 and similar reports are repeated in 1871, 1872 and 1874. In a letter addressed to Hakim Syed Ali of Dulahipur, Benaras (Varanasi), Anis himself wrote (November, 1872) that he had been unwell for the last few years. His continued illness had prevented him from writing any *martthias* with his usual speed. If we take 1865 as the year his health began failing, the period of restricted literary activity would spread to over nine years. In any case he had not kept well during the last four years. The same letter provides the information that he had given up reciting *martthias* for the “last few years” and had not cared to engage himself in writing fresh ones either. He had “written only half completed *martthias*, though long enough to recite”.

He got the best medical treatment and the best physicians in the town battled with the disease which was diagnosed as failure or inflammation of the liver and fever. An imputation that he died of tuberculosis is not backed by any reliable evidence. The end came quietly in the afternoon of Thursday, Shawwal 29, 1291 (December 10, 1874). Maulānā Bāmde Hasan Mujtahid led the *janāzah* prayers and he was buried the same night in the courtyard of his Sabzimandi house. His rival Dabir wrote the famous chronogram:

*Toor-i-Sina be Kalimullah—o-minber bi Anis.*

Moses has abandoned Mount Sinai; the pulpit lies deserted without Anis.

His death cast a gloom over the entire literary world and was universally mourned. Newspapers and magazines carried long obituary notes and several poets wrote chronograms.36 Anis was mentally alert till the very end and even as life ebbed out, he composed a couplet. A few quatrains are also the product of his last days. The couplet runs:

_Akhir hai waqt, zeest se ab dil bhī ser hai,
Paimānah bhar chukā hai, chhalakne ki der hai._

The last hour arrives and I have had enough of life,
The cup’s filled to the brim, ready to spill over any moment.

While it is almost agreed that he wrote three quatrains also, distant relations of Anis and his biographer, Ahsan mentions the following three (near literal translation):

_Dard-O-Alam-i-mamāt kyonkar guzrey?
Ye’ chand nafas hayāt kyonkar guzrey?
Pīrī ki bhi dāpahar dhālī, Shukr, Anīs!
Ab dekhēn lahād ki rat kyonkar guzrey?
Woh mauj-i-hawādis kā thaperā na raḥā.
Kashti woh hui gharq, wo berā na raḥā.
Sāre jhagre the zindegani ke, Anīs!
Jāb ham na raḥe to kuchh bākherā na raḥā._

_Aakhir, hai hayāt, kooch kartā hoojn main.
Rikh sat, ain zindgi ke marta hoojn main.
Allah se lau lagi hii hai merti
Oopar ke dam is wāste bharā hoojn main._

How the pangs of death shall ultimately end!
And how the last flickering moments of life!
By His Grace, the mid-day Sun of old age also declines
And the long night of grave stales at us, Anis.

The stormy breakers of misfortune are ebbing;
The ship has sunk; the fleet disappeared.
Life’s worries are for the living, Anis!
Problems won’t bother after we withdraw from the scene.

The end is approaching and I am about to fade out;
Farewell, O Life! I am breathing my last.
Only upward goes my gasping breath now,
For I am thinking only of the Lord aloft.37

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A son-in-law of the grandson of Anis, Mir Syed Ali Manoos, however, contends that these Ruba’is were written much earlier and Ahsan’s ascription of them to the last days might have arisen from the contents. But Ahsan is supported by an item appearing in Lucknow’s *Avadh Akhbar* (January 1, 1875) within three weeks of the poet’s death. The last ruba’i finds a place in that piece but the first two have been changed by the paper to the two translated below:

*Har ān ghati jāti hai tāqat meri;*  
*Barihi hai ghari, ghari naqāhat meri.*  
*Ātā nahin āb-i-rafa’ah phir joo men, Ants!*  
*Ab marg pa’ maugūf hai sehkat meri.*

*Na āh dahan se, na fughān niklegi*  
*Āwāz “Āli, Āli” ki hān niklegi.*  
*Jis tarh nigah chashm se bākar ho, Ants!*  
*Yun bekūkāri men tan se jān niklegi.*

My strength dwindles with every passing moment  
And each second adds to my weakness as it ticks by;  
Running water never returns to the spring, Ants!  
On death alone does my recovery depend.

Not a sigh, not a cry shall issue forth  
But surely shall I chant ‘Ali, ‘Ali’  
Ants! As sight travels forth from the eyes  
So softly and quietly will life quit the body.

Manoos too does not deny the fact that he did compose in the last hours of his life, but according to him the last was a *salām*, beginning with the line:

*sub ‘azt-o-āsmā nā āsmā ho jaange*  

All relations and friends would turn strangers.

This *Salām*, however, does not find place in any of his collections. It is difficult to believe completely the story as told by Manoos, without corroboratory evidence.

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38. One of the many names of Allah as also the name of Caliph ‘Ali.
heavy. He did not like to have favour done to him. He accepted gifts or offerings only from a few close friends. Others dared not do it lest he took offence. He remained contented even in the most trying circumstances and abhorred greed.

Generous to a fault, he was even ready to support such of his family members as were in need. Fortunately, he had no extravagant habits. He had cut down his wants to the minimum and was able to manage his household expenses within the means available to him.

He placed great value on friendship and abstained from any act which would even remotely displease a friend. He had enemies and men who envied his rise to fame but never thought of retaliating. Extremely religious as he was, he believed that God would take care of those who wished him ill.

A circle of his critics had no other business but to find fault with him. He challenged these adversaries to excel him in art instead of indulging in undignified and petty criticism.

He had a jovial nature and his repartees enlivened private gatherings but in public he was absolutely reserved. His biographers have mentioned several anecdotes of his light-heartedness. But he would not forgive people who did not conform to his own norms of conduct. He got so displeased with his own brother, Uns that he could not bear his sight even when he lay on his death bed. It was only in the last moments that the two got reconciled by Uns forcing entry into Anis's house, and disregarding the pleas of the inmates, his own cousins and other relatives not to disturb him, Uns threw himself upon him. It was a very tearful reunion.

Mufti Mohammad 'Abbás Shústari, one of the most renowned scholars of the age and a Persian poet, was very fond of him. Once tale carriers created some misunderstandings between them. Anis wrote a Persian couplet and sent to him:

_Maranjan dilam ra ke in nurgh-i-wakshi_
_Ze bānike bârkhwâşt munâskil nashinad._

Don't sadden my heart for this wild bird;
Once it fleeth from a terrace, it seldom returneth.

The Mufti wrote back a full poem on receipt of it:

_Dilat bood jāman-o-neest bâwar_
_Ke bar jîy-i-man keenah dar dîl nashinad._
_Ze khashm-i-tu migirjam-o-chashm dâram_
_Bishoyad ghübârî ke dar dîl nashinad._

Your heart was my abode and I don't believe
That ill-will can occupy that place in the heart...
I shed tears over your anger in the hope
That it washes the dust that hast settled upon your heart.¹

He disliked holding open levees. Visitors had to come to him by appointment. Even daily visitors had to give advance intimation. As long as he sat in the _divan khana_ he used to be fully and formally dressed and never moved out without a palanquin, which was the custom with the elite.² While in the inner apartments, he would not admit any outsiders and would bolt the door from inside.

Anis loved beauty, whether in human beings or in fauna and flora.³ He often walked in the courtyard or took a dip in the pool within the yard. In these hours of solitude no one except very close family members could have access to him.

**Pupils**

It was customary at the time for young poets to seek guidance from established masters in the matter of prosody, nuances of language and correct use of words and phrases. It was easier in the case of _ghazal_ writers where the poet-teacher could correct eight or nine couplets without difficulty. The _marthia_, on the other hand, a longer narrative, made much greater demands on the time of the _Ustad_ (master). From the times of Zamir, it had become a practice with the _marthia_ writer also to consult his poet-teacher. Dābir had a very large number of disciples but Anis was rather selective. Various books, specially the _Shagirdan-i-Anis_ have given the names of over thirty-one pupils, including those belonging to his own

¹. _Wâqi‘i-Anis_; 111-12;
². _Hayât-i-Anis_;
³. _Ibid_, 35
family. The names of these pupils are: Mir Nawāb 'Ali 'Moonis',
Mir Khurshid 'Ali 'Nafis', Syed Mohammed Haider 'Jalls',
Mir Mohammad 'Askari 'Rais',4 Mir Mohammad 'Salsi',
Syed 'Ali 'Manooos', Syed Haider Husain 'Khuld', Mirza 'Ali
Husain 'Rafiq', Mir Ehsān 'Ali 'Rais', Syed Riyazuddin
Hasan 'Riyāz', Syed Āghā 'Ali 'Zawwār' Zaidpuri, Shariful
Ulema Syed Sharif Husain 'Sharif', Syed Baqar Husain 'Zia',
Syed Mohammad Mohsin Zulqadr 'Mohsin', Syed Fazle 'Ali
Waqqār' Zaidpuri, Abu Mohammad Tabσlidär of Benāras,
Syed Mohammad Afzal 'Farigh', Syed Bande Razā 'Ārzo',
Syed Agha Hasan 'Azal', Hākim Mohammad 'Ali 'Hazin',
Mirza Mohammad Khan 'Zakt', Syed Serajuddin Ahmad
Sirāj Amrohi, Hākim Mohammad Razā 'Shaidā' Mohāni,
Ābid 'Ali 'Ābid', Nawab Mirza Bāqar 'Ali Khan Bahādur
'Urooj', Mir Vilāyat 'Ali 'Firdaus', Mohammad Latiff 'Lattif',
'Yūnus', Nawāb Amjad 'Ali Khān 'Huzūr', and Syed
Mohammad Mehdi 'Nigār'. Āghā Wazir Hussain Khān 'Atā'
was also his pupil but he composed only ghazals and naushees and
not marthias.

Besides these, he had taught some persons the art of reciting
marthias. They included, Darogha Achcheh Sahib, Agha Mir,
Sheikh Amr 'Ali, Munshi Amr 'Ali, Mir Salamat 'Ali, Mirza
Mohammad 'Abbas 'Aks', Mir 'Ali Hasan, and Syed Amjad
Hussain. To this may be added several members of his own
family who learnt the art at his feet and passed it down from
father to son for generations.

Works

Anis started writing very early in life and continued till the
end—a span of well over half a century. He began with the
ghazal, the most popular verse form in Urdu at that time and
wrote several ghazals. Some were recited in mushairas too. But
he soon changed over to salaams on the advice of his father.
It was a turning point in his literary career, as it diverted his
attention to marthia and rubā'ī as well. According to family
sources he still indulged in the ghazal occasionally and had, on

4. He has three or four marthias to his credit but the general impres-
sion is that these were written by Asli.

the quiet, written enough to complete a collection which he got
destroyed. A few ghazals that are extant can be found in
"Antisyāt", "Waqqār-i-Anis" but to be fair to him these
have only historical value and a search for more of his ghazals
may not be very fruitful from the purely literary angle.

Besides, he has written over a hundred salaams and over five
hundred rubā'īs. In these verse forms also, his contribution is
immense but his marthia has overshadowed them. The salām
bears a close resemblance to the ghazal not only in form but
also in its lyrical mood. The main difference lies in that a salām
invariably contains some elegiac lines as well. These occasionally
greet the holy heroes with the traditional Islamic salām in the
beginning; some start with panegyrical lines. The mystic element
is also there, with emphasis on the frailness of the human body,
the fleeting nature of man's glory, the instability of life and the
eventual destructibility of the world. The dominant mood of the
salām is melancholic and moral, even didactic at places.

In his rubā'īs, Anis adopts a philosophical approach to the
transient nature of life, the infirmity of nature, life's transcendent
unity and its moral inviolability. The basic tenets of
Islamic monism and the accompanying belief in humanism and
the universality of virtue and goodness; the devoted love of the
Prophet and his family, who symbolised all that is good and
virtuous, and respect for man and his dignity form some of the
favourite themes. A substantial number of the quatrains
revolve around the tragedy of Karbala and quite a few speak
about the poet himself and his art.

But his fame rests mainly upon his marthias, a form which
attained great heights at his hands. A modest assessment of the
number of marthias written by him puts it in the vicinity of two
thousand, though it is not easy to determine precisely the
number of marthias he wrote.

Trusting the version of his family members, Ahsan puts the
figure at a thousand and four hundred. Ashhari takes it to ten
thousand. The latter figure is obviously exaggerated, even after
making allowance for the smaller elegiac pieces intended for
sozekhwani. Hundreds of his marthias were preserved in his
family well after his death but there are indications that these
were appropriated later by his family members. According to Ahsan, many pieces left incomplete were utilised by Moonis after his brother's death.

Anis must have composed at least five hundred thousand lines, larger in volume than Firdausi's. This assessment of the volume by Aghari is shared by Alawi also. In the absence of exact statistics one can only testify to Anis being a very prolific writer indeed and it would be no wonder if his output ran into hundreds of thousands of lines.

His marthias were first published, along with those of Zamir and Fasth, in a single volume from the Islami Press, Bombay in 1852. Another joint collection of marthias was published by the Makhdoomi Press also from Bombay. The Zakhra-i-Thawab (of the Darul Sanaye' Press, Gulbarga, 1876) too was a similar anthology of elegiac poems and contained five marthias of Anis as well. He emerged from the stage of early anthologies to full authorship with the first volume of his marthias published by the Oudh Akbar (Newal Kishore) Press in November, 1876. Three other volumes followed in quick succession between 1880 and 1882. Some of the volumes had run into at least three editions by 1882. Volume V first went into print in 1895, the publishers being Ja'fari Press. Shajra-i-Gham was published in 1899 comprising mostly Anis's marthias.

The Dabdbabah-i-Ahmadi Press published volumes V and VI in 1901 and a reprint in 1914. Nizami Press of Budaun had his marthias edited by Nazm Tabatabai and published them in three volumes. In 1928 Uroos-i-Sukhan or Jawahirat-i-Anis was brought out from Rampur. Recently several volumes have been reprinted in India and Pakistan with additions and modifications. The Pakistani collections have been published by Ghulam Ali & Sons and Bookland.

The Anis centenary celebrations prompted a number of organisations and publishers to bring out centenary editions, and also look for unpublished works of the poet.

A word of caution must be sounded about the discoveries of new or hitherto unpublished marthias of Anis which are now being reported either in part or in full from several quarters. As the poet's popularity grew, the demand for his works came from several sources. Most of his marthias had remained unpublished at the time of his death and men of status and taste were ready to offer any price for his compositions. People took advantage of the situation and even the works of other contemporary writers, members of the family or some renowned predecessors were passed on as his works. The reciters of marthia had a special liking for certain types of compositions, like descriptions of battle scenes or dialogue, and quietly incorporated such portions into his marthias. Without considerable research and constructive enquiry, it is difficult to sift these spurious pieces. This painstaking work is bound to take time but is well worth the trouble.

Art of Anis

The complexities of the marthia as a verse form, in the shape it evolved when Anis started writing, have been touched upon in brief in the chapter on marthia. This, the "highest form of Urdu poetry", says Bailey, reaches its culminating point in them (Anis and Dabir). Anis was the greater and more natural poet of the two. The considered literary judgment of today would probably be that he and Ghālib and Mir are the three greatest poets in the language. He employed an enormous number of words, but preferred a simple, easy and flowing style. His family is famous for the use of pure and idiomatic Urdu. He had a wonderful power of description. This is seen best when he depicts human feelings, specially pathos and bravery, or scenes of nature and fighting. He writes as if he has been on the occasions which he describes and as if the people had spoken the very words he had put down.

This view of Anis as a poet is no exaggeration. When he began writing, Urdu poetry was a stagnant pool and the lyric ghazal and the narrative mathnawi seemed to have exhausted their potentialities. He extended the horizons of the language beyond these stagnated forms through expansion and elaboration of the new marthia which was struggling for an abiding

5. Hayat-i-Anis: 36-37

place in literature. The scope for his experimentations was seriously limited by the elegiac temper of the form but Anis was a wide-visioned artist. He prevailed over the limitations and set the pattern for a whole range of new poetry. The pioneers of modern poetry took the cue from him, and masaddas (sextain), the form which the marthia finally adopted, became a dynamic vehicle of expression for a variety of poems that were being written towards the end of the nineteenth century. It remained in vogue for more than three quarters of a century.

Bailey's was not a solitary voice either. A chorus of critics, including contemporary stalwarts like Āzād, Hāli and Shibli joined him. Hāli's assessment can be summed up thus: "Mir Anis raised this style to the highest point of excellence and Urdu poetry, which for long lay dormant like a stagnant pool was soon astir with new currents. It was like the churning of the sea. Although social pressure and competition with commonplace rivals did not always let him function as he liked . . . he gave many new styles of expression to Urdu poetry. By depicting the same episode in myriad ways and modes, he cleared the way for imaginative poetry to seek new avenues. A large part of the vocabulary of the language which had never been touched by their pens before, was poured into the hands of our poets and no longer remained the exclusive preserve of the linguists".9

Referring to the moral element in the marthias of Anis and others, Hāli writes that "the high quality of moral teachings that one meets in these works has no parallel even in Persian and Arabic poetry".10 Allāmah Shibli undertook a comparative study of Anis and Dabir in his famous book Mowazenah-i-Anis-O-Dabir”. He regarded Anis, not unjustifiably, as a better poet and craftsman than Dabir. It gave rise to a lively literary controversy and produced a crop of books supporting or attacking it. Summing up his views, he said, "the works of Mir Anis are the best possible specimens of all the forms of poetry. No other poet has made use of as many verse forms as he does in his compositions".11

Unlike Shibli, Mohammad Husain ‘Āzād’ finds himself in a fix and is reluctant to choose between the two. If he betrayed a suppressed tilt in favour of Dabir for his scholarly tone, he exalted Anis for his chastity and liveliness of expression. On the whole, he recognises that the two together extended the frontiers of the language and made Urdu poetry vigorous (in style).12 At the same time, he makes no secret of his disapprobation of the extensions they made for, in his view, they transgressed the bounds of the elegy, while the elegiac content was of the essence of the marthia. Notwithstanding his insistence on tradition, he acknowledges that with the advent of this inimitable pair in the field, "clouds of progress in the art (of the marthia) gathered with thunderous roar and rained inventions and innovations". They "established that they alone were the real and proven poets, who could weave magic by artistically deploying a vast vocabulary to communicate various kinds of ideas and thoughts and for the description of varied situations. They could make people laugh or cry or dumbfound at will". What struck Āzād most was the creativity of Anis and his rival to make the same situations look different in each marthia and he was charmed by their description of nature.13 While underlining the similarities and his own preference for the basically elegiac marthia and the grandiloquent style of Dabir, he does admit that Anis surpassed Dabir in the even flow of language and rhythm of his verses, elegant use of speech, delightful arrangement of words and deployment of idioms and phrases, graceful style, appropriateness of expression and unbroken continuity of narration.14

To Shibli, the greatest achievement of Anis is that while he uses the largest vocabulary among Urdu poets, he seldom picks up an inappropriate word or phrase. Invariably, he retains the intrinsic melody of each word, as he proceeds to build up a creative totality. He deals with diverse situations in the same marthia but adjusts his diction and style to bring it in harmony with the changing moods. He describes hundreds of events connected with the story of Karbala but never lets poetic

realism suffer. Among the modern critics, Ár易 Ahmad Surroor approvingly quotes Maulānā Abul Kalām Āzād to aver that the ghazal of Ghalib and the marthia of Anis are Urdu’s two contributions to world literature. “Anis would measure up to all the standards by which poetry is adjudged. The greatness of his poetry lies in his holding aloft the banner of the higher values of life, not with the moral material as such but with the manner it is moulded into forceful and cohesive poetry.”

Ehtishām Husain adds, “Anis handles the material of conflict between good and evil with considerable poetic liberty and creativity within the limitations of the historical and religious framework”. He laments that the poet’s art has suffered neglect because of the devotional and historical character of his theme. Ram Babu Saxena admires his description of battle scenes, swords and horses and of personal combats. “His portrayal of emotions is masterly”, he says, and asserts that for his painting of natural scenes, he would rank as “one of the best poets of the world.” Ghulām Imām’s book Anis and Shakespeare deals mainly with the dramatic aspect and the critic has succeeded in marshalling striking similarities. He looks upon Anis as a “poet of realities”, who “views nature as a man full of delight, with aesthetic rapture. He does not ignore its magnificence even while highlighting man with all his faults or weaknesses. His knowledge of human nature enables him to paint its excellence and celestial grandeur with rare perfection. Envy, greed and ruthlessness he detests and condemns. His emphasis is on the ethical urge of the human society. I have called Anis a poet of realities because he has no doctrine to preach, no revolution to convey and no interpretation of a mystic to give”. The ethical dimension of his work does not emerge from conscious effort but in the grand theme, and “the conduct of the most outstanding human models who in a paroxysm of righteousness sacrificed everything held dear by man”, to vindicate “the highest principles of freedom of conscience and liberty of thought and to give maximum importance to the virtues that rendered man the noblest creature on earth.”

Even Dr. Mohammad Sadiq, an unsparing critic of Anis, has admitted that Anis is such an important figure in Urdu poetry because he rises above the limitations of his age.

Critics have showered not only praise on him, a few like Dr. M. Sadiq have noted that he deviated from historical details and that his portrayal of characters occasionally lacked unity or that his depiction of natural scenes had a distinctly Indian colouration. Some have found fault with the excess of the elegiac content in his marthias. Anis was working on historical material but it must be realised that he was writing neither history nor biography. He endeavoured to recreate a universality of morals in an Arab setting but in a manner that was transcendental. In doing so, he did not consider it essential to be a rigid conformist. To be fair to him, a process of minor historical deflection had started much earlier in Deccan and pursued by the elegiasts of Delhi and Lucknow who had preceded him. These earlier modifications in the details of the tragedy had so stabilised in the course of time that the devout had come to regard them as settled anecdotes. The tradition regarding the marriage of Qāsim is a case in point. Its authenticity has been challenged by reputed Shi‘ite scholars as well and yet it is a recurrent theme of the traditional marthias and elegiastic orations. The ceremonial atmosphere of Indian marriages had crept into the story long before Anis but he used it with restraint and discretion.

From a purely literary point of view there is nothing wrong in imagining how the womenfolk wailed and cried when dear ones took leave one after another to march to certain death. “Ali Akbar, in the prime of his youth, seeks his mother’s permission to proceed to the battle field. She withholds neither tears nor permission:

Then holding to his skirts, she cried distressfully, “Fruit of my heart, promise to come back again.”

And suppressing a tear, 'Ali Akbar made reply:
"If death will give me time, I will come again, mother.
For willingly no one forsakes his dear ones;
But I am bound for the bourne whence no traveller
returns."

The departure of the family from Medina, leaving the ailing
Sughrā behind, provides another moving episode. Here again,
Anis recreates the situation imaginatively. Husain explains to
his daughter the hard decision he has taken and Sughrā implores
to be taken along:

"May Allah restore you to health soon, dear daughter!
The thought of his child's suffering is enough to sadden
a father.
Soon am I to embark on a desert journey full of hardship
and travail.
Only Allah knows what lies ahead of Husain;
My heart burns at your consuming fever, Sughrā;
The agony of the languishing thought is consuming.
How can I get reconciled to leaving you behined in this
state?
But taking you along would be playing with your life.
My dearest child, you know it too well;
But, parting is my fate in this helpless pass.
Separated shall I cry in anguish and bewail;
Journey's end will overwhelm me with pain".

Sughrā replies:

"For such tender love I could lay my life;
Who else will shower love and care on a dutiful daughter?
My life be your offering! Health too will be restored.
Lord's loving glance will cure all ailments.
When the world's Messiah casts a benevolent look,
Even chronic patients jump back to health."\(^{21}\)

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Akbar, who is greatly attached to his sister, is also moved to
tears at the parting but Sughrā consoles him:

"Dear brother! Let not tears roll down your cheek over,
my solitude;
God willing, you are returning to the city in happiness
and health.
Though it is hard to assume you will see me alive;
But, my life an offering for yours, do promise to return.
If the campaign prolongs call me through a letter, brother!
Verily, you won't forget me while celebrating your
marriage, brother!\(^{22}\)

For a reader, who has prior knowledge of the fate of Akbar
and others at Karbala, these ingenuous allusions to the future
add poignance to the words uttered. Strangely, Sughrā in such
speeches appears to Dr. Sadiq "far too clever, far too knowing
for her age." That would not only be a very superficial reading
of Anis but indeed of the entire episode as it took place.

**Understanding of Human Psychology**

Anis is a master of human psychology, though he wrote at a
time when psychology was yet to get organised into a regular
branch of knowledge. His characters include the saintly *Imām*,
the slaves, the soldiers, the captains, the aged and the young,
even a baby, men, women, children, friends and foes, father,
mother, son, brother, sister, uncle, nephew, widows, the newly-
weds, the leader and his followers, kind hearted people and
merciless enemies, the brave and the mercenary. He treats the
variegated crowd of people with consummate selectivity, spot-
ting peculiarities in this diversity and identifying significant
points. He has drawn very intimate pen pictures of their reactions
to a common situation and their general behaviour and demeanour.
He is superb in dialogue, where the language changes with age, sex, class and station of subjects who were bound to act in
harmony in the face of a common and imminent danger and
did not leave much room for variation.
Specimens of faithful characterisation are also to be found

22. Translation by Maharaj Kumar Mohammad Amir Haider Khan.
in the combat scenes, where the heroes are locked in bitter fight with the giants of the opposite camp. The poet brings out the contrasting abilities and qualities with uncanny insight into human nature. In mounting suspense, as in triumph and defeat how each man conducts himself gets artistic treatment.

Ordinarily, it would be difficult to delineate distinctive characteristics in situations of suspended animation but Anis does it with considerable success. The standard of Husain’s army is to emerge ceremoniously from the Chief’s tent. The comrades in faith and arms are lined up, waiting for its appearance, ready for sacrifice. The occasion is described by Anis thus:

Faces of some are flushed with the fervour of chivalry;
Some are putting on their armour with the pride of self-adornment;
Some bend forth to tighten the saddle belts;
Some try their arrows on their bow, though they are famished;
There are others tilting their spears in martial ecstasy;
Some kiss the hilts of their sword and stand erect.

The young ones embrace one another, smiling;
They are happy, as they intend going to paradise;
Their ruddy faces bursting with courage and resolution.
They pray to Almighty that their feet never leave the battlefield.
And that the love of Haider\(^{23}\) reign over their hearts even after death.
And whether they get water or don’t, may He bestow honour on them.

The aged comrade, Habib ibn Mazahir, is no less happy:

The army hailed the news with delight;
The comrades flocked to the door in respectful suspense;
Habib ibn Mazahir exclaimed “Thank God!”
Valiant soldiers! It’s our pleasure to face war ordeals.
Earn Paradise in exchange for your heads.
Let us watch who dies under this flag.

\(^{23}\) Ali.

The poet paints a scene inside the chief’s tent:

While the forces waited outside for the flag;
The Royal master was putting on his war dress
All the near relations stood ready fully armed,
Abbás, the exalted one, was in the front with the flag.
He was there in full glory of his rank;
It seemed as if Ali stood poised for the holy war.

Kinsmen offer felicitations to Abbás on his receiving the banner and his stepsister Zaináb, the mother of Aun and Mohammad joins them. Aun and Mohammad, too young to get the honour, harboured a desire to be the standard bearers. Anis makes a poetic allusion to it as Zaináb addresses Abbás:

Zaináb after fond caresses said:
“Congratulations on your elevation, the heir of the
Lord of the Valiants”.

Abbás with folded hands said:
“Take me to be just a servant of Aun and Mohammad
I hold charge of the command on their behalf
The two princes are the masters and I their steward”.

Anis proceeds to describe the child-like ambition of the sons of Zaináb to get the standard. They are sore that it has been denied to them:

They neither looked towards their mother nor towards the flag

With tearful eyes they sat, their heads bent low;
Sweat on their resplendent faces
Looked like dew drops on the roses.

The mother notices it, takes them aside and speaks:

From dusk till dawn you prayed constantly
That you find honour in death before others.
What has caused this indignation now,
With tears and frown in the eyes,
And beads of sweat on your faces?
Where is gone your vivacity and sweet speech?
The children complain:

Were we not the heirs of Jafar-i-Tayyar?
Were we not eligible for the lofty rank?
The mother pressed her finger between her teeth and exclaimed,

"Ha!"
Why talk about a fait accompli?
The wife of Abbās might overhear.

Imām Husain persuades Zaināb not to send both of her young sons to the field but Zaināb says, insisting:

I hope they will be in the vanguard of the forces.
They dare not speak in your holy presence,
So their state of lofty resolution is unknown to you.
They have the stern looks, majestic demeanour and high valour of their grandfather.

In the dextrous use of sword and shield they resemble Ali.
Although in age, they are really youngsters.

(Translations by Qurratulain Hyder)

All this is just an antithesis of the attributes of "tearfulness" and "self-pity" which Dr. Sadiq gives to Anis's compositions. Excessive lamentation has not been entirely unknown to the traditional marthia including some of the early Sozakhwani pieces of Anis. In the marthias proper, however, he has been balanced and austere. The general Aryan and Semitic customs also do not much mind lamentations, as they are taken to reflect deep familial bonds and do not smudge the heroism of the personalities concerned. This free display of human feelings rather enhances their acceptability as a kith and kin of the world.

True to type, the brave heroes are mellow of heart. H.C. Beeching refers to this phenomenon as "the allied graces of gentleness and manliness," in his assessment of Shakespeare.24 In Anis also, the brave react to a distressing situation with tender feelings and do not let the ladies and the young ones feel isolated in their moments of grief. Anis usually tries to redeem a momentary loss of self-control by an impulsive reversion to restraint and composure. The deep concern of the ladies for the safety of Husain and the preservation of ideals does not overshadow their patience and courage. Their tears are not the tears of the weak.

Apart from the devotional concepts, the human element of the marthia is important. Here is Husain standing alone ready to meet his end:

The valiant who had come with him from his home in Ḥejaz,
Lay on the sand there, speared to death, in everlasting sleep;
Fresh Flowers, cut down, withering without water in the sun;
Far from their homes they died, they got no shroud nor coffin there.
The desert sun beat down on them, no covering sheet was there;
Nor shade above! what awful, unjust times had come about.

Their leader looked weighed down with such great poignant grief.
His face, all wan and pale! his bloodshot eyes, with tears of blood,
Now sorrowing for his brother, now in anguish for his son
Now anxious that the bodies of his friends be trampled not;
And now he would advance to fight, and now he would stop short
And now he would stand up, and now by grief he would be bent.

Universalism

We know that disaster envelops the righteous and moral in the marthias and the melancholy it generates could render it unbearably dense, if Anis had confined himself to lack lustre descriptions of arid deserts. He forestalled this by brief sojourns into lyric or nature poetry, marked by touch of delicate Indian colouration. It created a proper climate for the local acceptance of his literary creations. These infinitesimal deviations saved his marthias from degenerating into historical or religious versification. Its artistically worked elegiac mood helped to fix attention on the absorbing story of how the disaster is borne with fortitude for the moral rehabilitation of mankind. The conflict of good

and evil does not always culminate in the immediate triumph of the good, though in the ultimate analysis, it might overwhelm the evil. This process may take decades or even centuries and history and the world can well afford to wait. These confrontations have a tendency to recur, not necessarily in the same place, and their message is, therefore, eternal. The universal abides after the body is perished. Against such a cosmopolitan background, a little intermingling of Arabian and Indian motifs has its own justifications, though the stern critic might still insist that the deviations should have been avoided. There are many like this writer who would contest such a stand.

We have alluded to the special form Anis was writing in, and its peculiar requirements but have yet to spell out the totality that the marthia is and aims at.

The Sotekhwani marthias are purely elegiac and, but for some of the emotionally moving pieces, their value is more devotional. The enlarged tahtul laft marthia is the Marthia proper for our purpose. It usually tells the story of a martyr, such as ‘Ali Akbar,25 Abbâs,26 ‘Aun and Mohammad,27 Hûr,28 Qâsim,29 or one of Husain’s companions like Habib bin Mazahir and Zubair bin Qain. They have been hounded out of their homes by the men of a ruler who is bent upon securing their obeisance at the point of the sword. But, they are all made of sterner stuff and braving the hardships of the struggle at unkind Karbala, starving and thirsting, they go willingly and cheerfully to face inevitable death on the battle field. Yâzid has sent a large mercenary army. Its superiority in numbers and arms does not deter this devoted band of followers who cling to the Imam until death separates them. One by one, they take leave, proceed to clash with the enemy and get killed. The night before the fatal day, Husain announced a general permission to his supporters to leave him as sure death awaited them next morning, but not a soul moved, although the lights were put out to give them the cover of darkness. Two stanzas from a marthia of Anis will suffice to illustrate it:

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25. Imam Husain’s eighteen year old son.
26. Imam Husain’s step-brother and the standard bearer of his army.
27. The two sons of Zainab, the Imam’s sister.
28. A commander of Yâzid’s army, who came over to Husain’s side.
29. The Imam’s nephew.

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That leader true of both the worlds stood at the place of prayers.
The other side beat battle drums, this side called for prayers.
Such true, devoted men whose speech was steeped in scriptural texts.
Such fighters for the cause of Truth, the very soul of faith.
So thoroughly devout, they were distinguished among saints.
Devotees true who bowed in prayers amidst the flashing swords.

O God, what wonderful comrades they were, what warriors bold.
What superb horsemen, they themselves! what matchless steeds they rode!
All praise and honour they deserved, by virtue of great deeds.
So far outnumbered, yet so steadfast in self-sacrifice,
They suffered from such searing thirst, the soul strained hard to leave.
And yet they patiently bore hardships with parched throats, dried lips.

Husain, the central figure in the marthias, is faced by an aggressor. As a leader, he has done everything to avoid an armed confrontation. He takes up arms only to defend the right of men to live honourably and in peace. Anis never shows any of his martyrs in a hustle; they do not itch for a fight; but when a fight is forced on them, they fight back fearlessly.

The effective duration of time within which all the characters have to appear and depart is only from morn till afternoon. An individual martyr has even less time to himself. Anis sets this short span of time against three days of thirst and hunger and the gruelling wait of about a week earlier. At times, he stretches it further by flashback to the period spent in the forced journey from Medina to Karbala. He, however, skips over most of the details and concentrates on the tenth day of Moharrum. It goes to the poet’s credit that he raises a grand edifice on the slender material available from the short time span fate has ordained for each hero. He imaginatively reconstructs all the relevant events through short, meaningful hints. A major part
of the *marthia* is taken up by the hero's last act of supreme sacrifice, for which Anis carefully builds an atmosphere of conscious dignity. He does well not to huddle all the heroes together to prolong the story. Instead, he devotes a full *marthia* to each hero.

The battle is over by the afternoon but not the enemy action. The Yazidites set fire to the tents of the ladies and loot whatever there is, seize and finally march them off to a far off prison. History took its revenge, for not very long after the ruling dynasty crumbled. Islam was saved from falling into the imperial trap. Its ideology of basic humanism triumphed and survives to this day.

Now, this whole story revolves round the pivotal motive, namely, the preservation of the permanent inheritance of Islam, and the Prophet's grandson emerges as a towering figure, the saviour of a great tradition. It is no particular schism of segment of that ideology for which he stakes his all. It is the universal which reverberates in the story as told by Anis and assumes the cosmopolitanism of an elegiac epic, overflowing geographical bounds, and that constitutes its strong point and vindicates some of his major innovations.

*Deviations*

Anis was writing *marthias* of modest epic dimensions and he had direct access only to the imperfect Persian patterns of the *Shāhnāmah* and the *Sikandarnāmah* to draw upon. On the elegiac and panegyric side, the decadent Arabic model was also within his reach. There is reason to believe that he was acquainted with epic material in Avadhi as well. Descriptions of the various stages of the conflict bear the stamp of *vir rasa*, *vibhatsya rasa*, *karuna rasa* and *adhyuta rasa* of the *Avadhī kavyas*. The language held sway in Faizabad and Lucknow, where Anis nurtured his literary tastes under the shadow of the regional master pieces like *Padminavat* and the great classic *Ram Charit Manas*. In all these triple sources of Arabic, Persian and Avadhi, the use of hyperbole and figures of speech was common and tradition and style had acquired a kind of inelasticity. Anis utilised the locally available material to the extent that his theme, deeply rooted in Islamic history, would allow. He could not tamper with the moral and social base of his story—a story that was real and not fictional. That it was being written some thirteen hundred years after the event and for an audience largely unfamiliar with Arab topography and climate provided the *raison d'être* for the elegiac-epic style, blending Arab, Iranian and Indian elements which the *marthia* under Anis evolved finally.

Let us not forget that all forms of Urdu poetry have drawn freely upon local traditions as time went by and deviated from the original Persian models. How could a living literature or a form of it remain unaffected by the social milieu that produced it? Otherwise also, Islam in India influenced Indian life and culture in hundreds of ways and was in turn, itself influenced to give impetus to a composite culture. Anis is a poet of this cultural interplay, although he remains an uncompromisingly devout Muslim to the last. To him, Imām Husain and other members of the Prophet's family are the repositories of all virtue and possess super human qualities but they are human too and share the feelings and sentiments of ordinary mortals. They are proud of their holy descent, of their great heritage but in human affairs, they conduct themselves like good men of all times and climes.

*Internal Unity*

The *marthia* relates the story of individual martyrs engaged in a holy war but does not defy them. They feel and act like brothers, sons, uncles and fathers too. The women have been brought up in prophetic surroundings but they behave, as they should, like mothers, sisters, daughters and wives also. In such cases, each character is treated as a symbol and, if the local colour is sharp, it serves Anis's purpose well.

Anis is capable of writing in the grand style as in simple narrative and he knows instinctively which to employ where. He has to cater to the popular literary tastes of the day, particularly in relation to the elaboration of style, ornamentation and embellishment, but he does not so much to display his skill or his preference but to demonstrate his ability to those for whom ornamentation was an article of faith. Happily, such occasions are not many. The artist within him usually resists but there is evidence of his using figures of speech and rhetorical expressions
at times to the detriment of the artistic blend he is so careful to maintain.

Dr. Sadiq’s anxiety about the absence of unity in characterisation is misconceived, for an inner unity runs through the various aspects portrayed in the marthías. There is nothing potently contradictory in the emphasis on the heroism of the characters at one place and their generosity, forbearance and forgiveness at others. Their coexistence is a fact of history and one does not see how it could mar the unity.

The human material and the dramatic potential was there for skillful exploitation by Anis to fill up the gaps from observations of every day Indian life; taking good care to retain the essentially Arab element of his subjects. True, balance had to be maintained as he was writing the story of the Prophet’s grandson, his family members and an overwhelmingly Arab following. But the family traits of courage, determination, hospitality, generosity and sacrifice for a cause were as much Arab as universal. The devotional factor also helped the poet to combine the two aspects. Whether it was Arab chivalry and tenacity of purpose or the piety and godliness of the main characters, he could afford to view them with the eyes of an Indian devotee and yet remain as close to the ideal as his art style permitted.

Husain and his followers symbolised oppressed humanity pitted against a ruthless enemy. In India, colonialism was knowing into the princely States and finally annexed Avadh. It presented a situation where the symbol held out a message of uncompromising struggle. History bears testimony to the great resistance the people of Avadh put up during the 1857 revolt. How far the marthías were responsible for rousing national feelings requires detailed probing. At this stage, one can only say that the ramble of contemporary history also sounds through this poetic form.

The Invocation

To tell the story of such a fight, Anis often prefaces his marthía with a lyrical note or a genial description of nature. An introduction (chehrā) of this type is a deliberately created imagery to help readers visualise the wide sympathies and the fearlessness of the hero he is about to introduce. The introduction part, the dialogue and elegiac situations offered several opportunities to Anis to travel beyond the confines of the conventional material. One such instance is provided by his analysis of the feelings and emotions of a traveller in a strange place:

Hote hain bahot ranj musāfir ko safar mein
Rāḥat naḥin milī koi dam āth pahar mein.
Sau Shaghl hon par deheyn ālag rathī hāi ghar mein,
Phīrti hāi Sādā shakl āzīzī ki nazār mēn.
   Sang-i-gham-i-furquat dil-i-nazuk pa girān hāi
   Andoh-i-gharībul wathāi kāahish-i-jān hāi.

Go sath mein hamrāh bhi ho rāhelah-o-zād
Jātī naḥīn afsurdagi-i-khātir-i-nāshād,
Jāb ālam-i-tanhāi mein ātā hai watan yād
Har gam pa dil mīl-i-jaras kartā hai faryād.
   Ek ān gham-o-ranj se fursat naḥīn hōt.
   Manzil pa bhi ārām ki sūrat naḥīn hōt.

Hamrāh safar mein ho agar ḥānti-o-nāstr,
Manzil pa’ kamar khol ke sote hain musāfir,
Jāb ho safar-i-khauf-o-parishānti-i-khāṭīr,
Shab jāgēte hi jāgē, hojātā hai ākhēr
   Har tanh musāfir ke liye ranj-o-ta’ab hai
   Rahīāe pas-i-qāṭila chhutkar to ghazab hāi.

The Traveller’s life is full of difficulties.
The present is no rest at night or day, no ease.
He thinks of home in spite of anxieties.
The dear loved faces dance before his eyes.
The grief of absence fills him all the time,
The cares of travel do not part from him.

Though with companions and the caravan,
Secret sorrows make him pale and wan.
And when in loneliness he thinks anon
Of home, his heart pounds loudly like a gong.
Unknown fears beset him night and day,
And follow at his heels right through the way.
If he is travelling with soldiers or with friends,  
The traveller sleeps in peace till day ascends,  
When dangers overtake him and fear sends  
Nightmares, he keeps awake till dark night ends.  
Thus many cares assail him one by one  
The most he dreads is being left alone.

He begins many of his *mahdis* with the description of night  
or of morning or the verdant green of the forests or the  
flowering of the garden or of the song of the *bulbul*. These are  
basically symbolic of spiritual fervour. The divine presence he  
implies is too obvious to be missed and dispels the sombre and  
grim nature of the immediate reality.

*Tai kar chaakā jo manzil-i-shab kār-vāni-i-subh,  
Hone lagā ufuq se howāidā mishān-i-subh  
Gardon se kooch karne lage akhtarān-i-subh;  
Har soo hui buland sada-i-azān-i-subh.  
Pinnān nazr se ring shab-i-tar hogaya  
Ālām tamām matla'-i-anwār hogayā.*

Chhunā woh māhtā'ā bā, woh subh kā zuhoor;  
Yād-i-khudā mein zamzama parāzi-i-tuyür,  
Woh raunaq aur wo sard hawā, wo faza wo noor.  
Khunk ho jīs se chashm ko aur gaal ko sūroor.  
Insān zamiān pa mahā, malak asmān par,  
Jāri thā zikr-i-qudrat-i-haq har zubān pār.

*Wo surkhi-i-shafaq ki sahār charkh par bahār  
Wo' bārwar darakh, wo' sahrā, wo' sabzāzār  
Shabnam ke wo gulon pa' guhar hai abdā.  
Phoolon se sab bharā huā dōmān-i-kohār  
Nafe khule hue wo gulon ki shāmin ke  
Āte the sard sard wo' jhonke nastam ke.*

When morning’s caravan had crossed the night,  
Appeared on the fringe of sky the signs of light,  
Marched from the heavens the stars in hasty flight,  
Sounded calls to prayer from mosque and height

The face of black night slowing vanished then.  
The whole wide world was filled with light and sun.

The moon went hiding and the morning came;  
The birds began to sing, repeat God’s name.  
Fresh blew the breeze and cool, and Nature’s frame  
Lit up, and cheered the heart and eye became.  
As men on earth, the angles in the skies,  
Were lost in wonder at Nature’s mysteries.

The red of twilight, sky of splendid sheen  
The laden tress, the desert, meadows green;  
Peers of dew on cheeks of roses keen,  
The valley full of flowers, a wondrous scene.  
Released the roses scent was all round there,  
Blew rustling gusts of cool, refreshing air.  

*Wo' subh aur wo' chhunā sitāron kī aur wo' noor!  
Dékhe to ghash kāre ‘areni’—goye koh-i-Toor.  
Paidā gulo nā se qudrat-i-Allāh kā Zuhoor;  
Wo' jā-hajā darakhtron pa' tashbih-khwān tuyür.  
Gulshan Khajil the gumbad-i-minoo esās se  
Jangal thā sab basā huā phoolōn kī bás se.*

*Thanāt hawā men sabzāh-i-shārī kī wo' lahāk,  
Sharmāe jīs se atlas-i-zangārī-i-fulāk.  
Wo' jhoomnā darakhtron kā, phoolōn kī wo' mahāk;  
Har barg-i-gul pa' qatrāh-i-shabnam kī wo' jhala.  
Hīre khajil the gauhar-i-yaktā nisār thē  
Paṭhe bhi kar shajār ke jawāhir nīgār thē.*

Qurban-i-san'at-i-qalam-i-aśfridgaar!  
Thī har wargā pa' san' ut-i-tarjī' āshkaar.  
'Ajīz hai fikrat-i-sho'ara-ī-hunar-shē'āar.  
In san'atah ko pae kāhnā 'agl-i-sadāh-kār.  
'Ālām thā mahī qudrat-i-Rabb-i-Ebād par.  
Minā kiyā thā wādī-i-minoo-sawād par.*

30. Translation by Ahmad Ali,
Eclipsed were flow'r-gardens by the resplendent vale,
The flow'r-jungles new, their perfume did exhale.

The breezes balmy cool! the waving of the lea;
The verdant satin sky, was put to shame truly.
The nodding of the trees, the fragrant flow'rs, their hue;
On every petal shone, each glittering drop of dew;
Diamonds were as abashed, great pearls were eclipsed free,
Wrote jewelled script, I kēn e'en leaves of every tree.

May we be a sacrifice for the Creator's Pen,
The ornamental art was on each page, I ken.
The gifted poet's intellect is crazed outright;
How can man's simple reason reach such a sublime height;
Whole universe was dazed by power of Lord the Great,
He had enamelled well, the heavenly vale, I state.

Such sheen, the level field, such charming spaciousness,
The peacock's cry, shrill notes of quails and partridges.
Such exub'r'ance of flow'rs, and birds' sweet melody;
Coolth to the liver gave, the moving breezes free.
Full blooming verdant trees, were neatly dressed in red,
The platforms of the trees, were florists' baskets spread.

Such verdant lea, such lawn, such gushes of the breeze;
Those lustrous dewdrops twinkling from the flower trees;
The branches nod, move up, repeatedly 'midst bow'rs,
Sits on the tree a bulbul, 'mong a thousand flow'rs.
The flow'rs of Zahra's garden, for water thirsty were,
Were filled the cups of roses, with dew so pure and rare.

Around the cypress-tree, the turtle-doves now crowd;
Some pipe "Haqq Sirvuhu," while others coo aloud;
"Subhana Rabbana;" was commonly heard this note;
All their devotional tunes and airs, were now afloat.
Not simply roses did God's praises hum and sing,
Each thorn upon the point of tongue, did praises bring.
When in the woods flashed forth that sword of fire,
Trembled the skies, took shelter from its ire;
Snakes left their caves; the tigers grassy mires,
Cries for mercy filled the world entire.

The fishes were unsettled like waves
The hearts of rocks too quaked in watery caves.

In Cairo's army rose a raging storm
Like waves its ranks were broken, lost their form,
Trapped were soldiers in this great maelstrom:
The beasts breathed not in terror of the storm.

Not only had the armies run away
The river itself changed course for dread of day.

These beautifully translated pieces, though not the most representative of the poet, serve to illustrate how he utilises nature as a backdrop to create atmosphere and takes the entire universe in his sweep. When the hero sallies forth, sword in hand, not only the enemy ranks but the entire world trembles. In this hyperbole throbs a devotee's heart, whose hero is endowed with supernatural powers and whose actions affect all living beings. Does it not echo the hyperbole of the Arabic gaṣīda? Ahmad Ali's scepticism about whether the actual battle of Karbala was being described springs from a misconception. In those days of hand to hand fights, one battle was not much different from another. Even if it were, the marthia was not concerned with the form or the art of fighting as such. What mattered was the recapturing of the battle scene, with all its grandeur and horror. In the sense, and on the success of Anis in doing this, there can be no two opinions. The battle scenes are essentially Arab, be it personal combat or mass attack. It is just a coincidence that Persia and India of those days followed more or less the same war strategy and technique, which were an expansion of the Arab war manoeuvres.

_Salâms and Rubâ'îs:_

While discussing his works, we have referred in passing to the large volume of writings in the form of _salâms_ and _rubâ'îs_. These require separate evaluation because of their volume and peculiarities of form and approach. _Salâms_ are easily divisible into

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31. Translated by Syed Ameer Ali Ma'soomi of Iran.
two—(i) the predominantly elegiac, and (ii) the lyrical-elegiac. In the matter of quatrains, each rubā'ī is a separate entity and there is little room for multiple moods or themes. Salams, like ghazals, do permit multiplicity of moods and ideas. The moral element is loud and strong in the rubā'īs, but the salām usually whispers; communication is more articulate and it does not suppress the lyrical overtones. The pervading mood is philosophical, unless where it turns lamentational. It touches upon a variety of subjects in tones which are hardly distinguishable from the ghazal. A marthia writer, who abjures the ghazal, is not hindered in the choice of themes. A few couplets will illustrate the point:

Khud naved-zindgi lāī gaza mere liye,
Sham-i-kushta hūn, fanā meīn hai baqā mere liye.

Kisi ko kiya ho dilōn kī shikastē kī khabar,
ki tunē meīn ye' shishe sada nahiīn rakhte.

Kheylī-i-Khāṭir-i-ahbāb chāhiye har dam
Anīs, thes na lag jāey ābūhīn ko.

Dar pā shahān ke nahiīn jāte faqīr Allāh ke
Sar jahān rakhte haiīn sab, wān ham qadam rakhte nahiīn.

Ye jhurriyān nahiīn hāthon pā' zo'fe pirt ne,
Chunā hai jāmāh-i-hastā kī āstāhīn ko.

Guzar gae the kāl dīn kī ghar meīn āb na thā
Magar Husain se sābir ko istērāb na thā.

Anīs, dam kā bharosā nahiīn thahar jāo
Chhrāgh leke kahūn sārne hawā kē chaheī.

Zindīgī mēīn to na ek dam khush kiya hons bol kar
Āj kyon rote hain mere āshnā mere liye.

Usī kā nūr har ek shai mēīn jahwagar dekhā
Usī ki shān nazar āgār jidhar dekhā
The goal of death is hard to reach, traveller! you are warned.
Cruel reality reveals itself when soul leaves the body.

\[ \times \quad \times \]

In everything I behold, His light outshines,
In every direction I glance, His grandeur pervades.

\[ \times \quad \times \]

My heart's secret is never revealed;
I am a river without a shore.
A flower am I whose colour differs from all others,
I am the smell that remains unseen.
I am the sweet water which knows no sourness;
I am the fire whose flame doesn't show.
The society of dervishes is different from all;
The rich have no access to their circle.

The ruba'is deal mostly with metaphysical or moral problems.
Quite a few, however, touch upon elegiac themes, while some concern matters connected with every day life.

Gulshan mein sabā ko justujā terī hai;
Bulbul ki zabān pa' guftugū terī hai.
Har rang mein jalwah ha teri qudrat ka
Jis phool ko soonghtā hun bū terī hai.

\[ Har barg se qudrat-i-Ahad païdā hai, \]
\[ Har phool se san'at-i-Samad païdā hai. \]
Sinah hai bāshar ka woh mohtīzī-sakhkār
Har ek nafas se jazro-mad païdā hai.

Jab nām-i-'Ali munh se nikal jātā hai
Gar koh-i-masaib ho to tal jātā hai.

Girte, girte bāshār sambhal jātā hai.

\[ Ādām ko ajab khudā ne rūzbā bakhshā \]
\[ Adān ā ke liye maqām alā bakhshā \]
\[ Agl-o-hunar-o-tamīz-o-Jān-o-Imān \]
\[ Is ek kaf-i-khāk ko kyā kyā bakhshā. \]

The garden’s breezes seek Thee, Master mine,
The nightingale sings eulogies divine,
In ev'ry colour is Thy Power display'd.
Whichever flower I smell, the perfume's Thine.\(^\text{32}\)

The Maker's power in ev'ry leaf I see,
In ev'ry flower eternal mystery;
Man's bosom is a boundless ocean-deep,
Each breath the ebb and flow of tides at sea.\(^\text{33}\)

When uttered forth is the name, "Ya Ali!
Troubles, a mountain mass, fade fast and flee;
The blessed nature called upon a sudden fall,
Guides faltering steps to safety instantly.\(^\text{34}\)

God bestowed on man a glory great;
The lowest attained the highest state,
Wisdom, art, discretion, life and faith,
This handful of dust got honours untold.

There is nothing extraordinary about the subject matter,
so common in eastern thought and behavioural processes. It is the general theme of the mystic poetry as well. But Anis seems to address his ruba'is, like Nazir in his poems, deliberately to the common man in the audience. High moral ideals, even philosophical ideas, are reduced to tangible, conversational idiom but the choice of words and their melodious ring distinguish them from the absolute folk forms and account for their wide acceptability and popularity.

\(^{32}\) Translated by Māh Khān.
\(^{33}\) Ibid.
\(^{34}\) Eulogies and Elegies; 10.
4

Conclusion

Anis occupies a unique place among the makers of modern Indian literature. He gave Urdu a much greater Indian element. He universalised the tragic story of Karbala and by his great art had it incorporated into the body of Indian literature. He left a vast fund of idioms and colloquial phrases which had been absorbed by Hindi and allied languages and dialects. He added a new and lively form to Indian dramatic art and literature. To Urdu he gave what can be only inadequately described as the elegiac epic. But his greatest contribution is the vigour and strength which musaddas acquired under the influence of the marthia. Whether it is Hâli’s Madd-o-Jazr-i-Islam or Iqbal’s Shikwa and Jawab-i-Shikwa, the pieces of the Ramayana from Chakhbast or patriotic poetry as that of Josh and scores of others, the voice of Anis rings through them all. The narrative form of mahtnawi had degenerated into mere versification because of the effortlessness it encouraged and the bizarre embellishment it patronised. The development of narrative, descriptive and reflective poetry after Anis can never be considered independently of the debt these owe to him.

Devotional and elegiac poetry had never attained such heights before and it is doubtful if they would be attempted on such a grand scale ever again. But they have already carved out a place for themselves in world literature. They will interest the religious, the mystic and the lover of good poetry alike. One can well close with Azâd’s assessment that the marthias of Anis are Urdu’s contribution to world literature.

5

Gleanings from a Marthia

(Translation: S.M. Amir Imâm)

Now heed what happened on that awesome day of martyrdom—What grief and sorrow and what tribulations then befell
Those thirsty, starving, steadfast souls devoted thus to God,
Who sacrificed their precious lives in service to His cause.
Each one of them was such a faithful comrade without par!
There never will be such a lord nor ever followers such!

When on the eastern sky the faint white streaks of dawn appeared
And birds began to sing in chorus their sweet praise of God
Husain1 emerged for morning prayers resplendent like the sun,
Diffusing radiance all around across the wide, vast plain.
The Truth shone forth thus from his bold countenance all around,
The dawn aside, the moon itself looked pale and struck with awe!

The cool, refreshing breeze, across that plain at break of dawn!
These waving trees and palms, enraptured by that scene divine!
Across the emerald, spreading green, the dew had scattered pearls!
The sight itself did revel in that verdorous delight!
And when the zephyr blew in from across the silent plain,
The sound of buds, as they split open could be clearly heard!

1. The grandson of Prophet Muhammad from his daughter, Fatima.
The nightingale's melodious notes, the fragrance fresh of flowers!
In hyacinth's curls the heart was caught, the senses were enmeshed!
Some ring-doves, perched on box trees, sang, "Ya hul! Ya hul!
Ya hul!"3
On cypresses some ring-doves called out, "Kul! Kul! Kul! Kul!"3
It was the time of their devotion, for His love they lived
And praised and eulogised their gracious Deity divine!
That leader true of both the worlds stood at the place of prayers—
The other side beat battle drums, this side called forth for prayers!
Such true, devoted men whose speech was steeped in scriptures' texts!
Such fighters for the cause of Truth, the very soul of faith!
So thoroughly devout, they were distinguished among saints!
Devotees true who bowed in prayers amidst the flashing swords!
O God, what wonderful comrades they were, what warriors bold!
What superb horsemen, they themselves! What matchless steeds they rode!
All praise and honour they deserved, by virtue of great deeds—
So far outnumbered, yet so steadfast in self-sacrifice!
They suffered from searing thirst, the soul strained hard to leave,
And yet they patiently bore hardships with parched throats, dried lips.

While one was equal in devotion to Salman of Fars,4
Another equalled in contentment Abu Dhar's5 insight.

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2. A shortened form of "Ya hul"—"O He." ref. to God, The poet exploits the sonic resemblance to the dove's notes.
3. A similar poetic play on sound and meaning as "O Ho." "Ku" being the shortened form of "Kuja" ("Where is the Creator?").
4. Salman of Persia, an early convert and a close companion of the Prophet of Islam.
5. Another early convert and close companion of the Prophet.

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One matched in his veracity Ammar,6 the truthful, bold,
Another, Hamza-like7 courageous or like Ashtar,8 brave!
Muhammad’s close devotees must have been such as they were!
Such men will not be born again to wage a holy war.

Although a storm of such disasters struck to dash them dead,
They died—their heads struck off—their feet steadfastly held the ground!
They held their heads high in that storm, with regal dignity,
Like a sword held high in the hand of a hero-warrior, dauntless, bold.

In all these great adversities, complain they never did,
The giver of the drink divine gave them such dignity!

These men of noble conduct, their devotions duly done,
Stood up and donned their armour ready, eagerly to die.
And when Husain was seated on his horse to give command,
‘Abbás9 stepped forth and unfurled that great standard of Husain
Whose fragrance filled the air and then pervaded Paradise—
The breeze in which it fluttered reached Empyrean’s lofty height!

‘Abbás, the standard bearer of Husain and Ali’s son,
True chivalry’s strength, faith’s light and loyalty’s trust,
illustrious prince
Of noble Ja’far’s10 virtues pure and valiant Hamza’s11 deeds
All metaphors of moon and sun in praise here fade away.
By virtue of such merits he won all that glory great,
The standard aptly went with him as merit goes with right.

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6. Yet Another early convert and close companion.
7. The Prophet's uncle and companion. Died fighting at the battle of Uhud in the defense of Medina.
10. Ja’far ibn Abi Talib, Ali’s brother and the Prophet’s cousin; died fighting as a standard bearer in one of the battles in the defense of Islam.
11. Hamza ibn Abdul-Muttalib, the Prophet’s uncle, died fighting in the battle of Uhud in the defense of Medina.
No cypress, straight and tall, could boast of such a stately form,
And Ali’s very image were his noble, manly looks,
His battle-cry struck mortal terror in the lion’s heart.
He reached the stream yet thirsted with chivalrous self-control!
And for the sake of others who were thirsty like Husain,
The standard-bearer acted as a water-carrier too!

That great and generous-hearted man fulfilled all loyalty’s trust;
So justly called the Prince of Martyrs, loyal right-hand man!
They call Husain “God’s guiding light”, Abbās, “the guide to him”.
The valiant and the brave call him, “the trusty sword of God”.
The standard-bearer and his chief— their brotherly love well-known
One was the right path’s light, the other was light’s captive moth!

Then there was youthful Akbar,12 with those qualities so rare,
His handsome face so fresh and fair, far brighter than the moon,
Narcissus was left wonderstruck to gaze at him, abashed!
So full of grace and gentleness in life, so brave in death!
To see his fair and handsome countenance ringed by black locks was
To see Muhammad in his glory on Ascension Night!13

And Hasan’s son, like Cannaan’s Joseph, matchless in good looks,
The source of solace to Husain and Hannan’s life and soul;
Possessing Ali’s strength and valour, Hasan’s graciousness!

12. Ali al-Akbar was one of Husain’s sons who suffered death and martyrdom with him in Karbala on the 10th of Moharram, 61 Hijra.
13. Ali al-Akbar ibn-al-Husain bore a very close resemblance to his great grandfather, the Prophet of Islam.
*Reference to Qasim ibn Hasan, Husain’s nephew and the son of his elder brother, Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib (Hasan, the son of Ali).

Embodiment of Hasan’s nature, Hasan’s good looks, Hasan’s mien!
Although the armour weighed upon his spare and boyish frame,
He wore it with such princely grace, it went so well with him!

Oh’ that forbidding, awesome air of ‘Ali’s daughter’s sons!14
Their wavy locks around their shining faces, lion-like;
Their short swords resting on their shoulders, like the crescent moon;
Though still not past their boyhood, they held Rustam15 in contempt!
And as they rode there, back and forth, ‘twixt those confronting camps,
They caused such great confusion in the midst of enemy’s ranks.

Their sleeves rolled up, all eagerly prepared to join the fray;
That same old awesome air of ‘Ali and forbidding mien,
With bright red faces like the tiger’s: “tiger burning bright!”
Determined so to fight and overthrow the enemy’s ranks:
Though murderous spears strike left and right and arrows thickly rain,
Let swords be soon unsheathed and let the battle soon commence!

And suddenly the war drums rolled, the war clouds thundered so
That mountains trembled, earth quailed and the forests echoing shook;
Shields rose like bank upon bank of clouds, swords flashed like lightning and
Death showed its hideous visage in that awful noise and din

15. The legendary warrior-hero of Firdowsi’s epic poem, The Shahnameh.
The sergeants in the other camp let out their battle cry
Here, in the ranks of Islam they exclaimed, "Ya 'Ali!" too.  

The heralds shouted strong encouragements, "Brave ones, go forth!
Display your skill with spears and lances and your horsemanship!
You hold the stream, surround these starving, thirsty, solitary souls!
Step forth you warriors from your ranks, you lions take the field!
O Rustams! give a good account of yourselves in the fray!
You face the children of brave Haidar on this awful day!"

The Sadat shouted, "Help! O King of Heroes—just your help!
O revered one of religion, O revered one of faith!
The venerated Prophet's source of strength and right hand man!
It is the hour of help! O pride of Solomon's glory, help!
For three days we have starved and thirsted and our strength is gone!
We seek from you all strength and steadfastness against such odds!"

"O may we not so much as say a word, complaining of
Our thirst! O may we bravely bear, while starving, spear thrust wounds!
And even if, near death, we get no drink, we waver not
But give your son our full support and so may we all die!
And while our bodies rest beside the body of Husain,
O may our severed heads be raised on spear-points with his head!"

Then all at once the enemy's serried ranks converged on them
All like a mass of dense black clouds that gather around the stars
Or like the pitch dark night that falls to veil a clear, bright day
A hail of darts and arrows rained down on the thirsty band—
The Prince of Martyrs smiled and then looked at his brother while
His faithful comrades watched him apprehensively with grief.

'Abbas submitted, "Out brave men await, all zealously,
Your word while facing volley after volley, swords in hand.
We came not uninvited yet these cruel, violent hordes
Care not! If you so please, permit us now to strike at them
And push these scoundrels back! While we hold back in silence, they
Transgress against us thus, advancing with impunity."

Husain replied, "I willingly await my martyrdom,
I have no warlike vain desires, nor vain valour's pride.
I had no wish to fight them but they forced the fight on us.
So fight back since they harass us with neither cause nor right.
Let all this cruel, hell-bent horde come up to slaughter me
For I am all prepared that they behead me for Truth's cause."

Permission granted, those brave warriors spurred their steeds and charged—
Like swooping falcons, one by one, they fell upon the foe.
Oh what a fight! What dextrous strokes! And what self-sacrifice!
A single charge by them would put in headlong flight those hordes!
They soon struck off clean every over-reaching hostile hand,
And heads and headless rolled across the bloodied sand.

The awful conflict continued from morning until noon
And with the dead and dying all the battlefield was strewn,

17. A name of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib.
18. Plural of Saiyid, meaning a close and direct descendant of the Prophet of Islam.
20. A title of Husain ibn Ali (Husain, the son of 'Ali).
21. Reference to the historical evidence that the Iraqis had invited Husain to lead them in the liberation attempt against Yazid's oppressive rule.
The dispositions and formations of the foe were soon
All overthrown. So died with glory 'Ali's valiant ones
So large a force has seldom seen such conflict with so few—
Whoever fought, they thought that it was 'Ali fighting them!

How valiantly did Qāsim, Akbar and 'Abbas fight back!
While some cried out for mercy here, there some cried out for help!
When struck, some cried out helplessly, "The world has come to its end!"
And thus those valiant martyrs fought and died so gloriously;
Though they be not here, in this world, Empyrean is their place
For to this day their name lives on in this created world.

Towards the afternoon that garden was, by Autumn wind
Laid waste, and leaf by leaf and flower by flower laid bare
despoiled—
The son was parted from the father, brother left bereaved
And Zahra's son\textsuperscript{22} was bent with grief, his right hand's\textsuperscript{23} strength was gone!
So by that afternoon Husain was all alone, forlorn!

The valiant who had come with him from his home in Hejaz,
Lay on the sand there, speared to death, in everlasting sleep,
Fresh flowers, cut down, withering without water in the sun,
Far from their homes they died; they got no shroud, nor coffin there;
The desert sun beat down on them, no covering sheet was there
Nor shade above! What awful, unjust times had come about!

Their leader looked so all weighed down with such great
poignant grief
His face, all wan and pale; his blood-shot eyes, with tears of blood—
Now sorrowing for his brother, now in anguish for his son,
Now anxious that the bodies of his friends be trampled not;

\textsuperscript{22} i.e., Fatima's son, viz., Husain, the son of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter; Zahra being another name of Fatima.
\textsuperscript{23} viz., his brother 'Abbas.

And now he would advance to fight, and now he would stop short;
And now he would stand up, and now by grief he would be bent.
The heartless foe would shout at him, challenging him to fight
And saying, "Come and show the metal of your father's sword,
The dead will not come back to life to face our spears and swords,
Once we have severed your head then our job is well nigh done!
We have a promise of reward from son of Sa'd himself
And also we have orders to set fire to your tents!"

Husain said, "Come; sever my head; I am prepared to die.
I neither shirk from fighting nor from laying down my life!
My warriors are all dead, I have no friend nor helper now—
You hold both town and wilderness, I am a passer-by!
So pillage, plunder, burn and kill, if that is good for you!
O Muslims, you know that this is your Prophet's holy house!"

"Alas! I do not wish to show my face to anyone,
Your brother yearns for death; his death is nigh, there is no time!
Sukaina's love has dragged me back here from the battlefield—
Your brother goes to die, O Zainab! show him your sad face;
But neither bare your head nor beat your face nor wail nor cry,
Forget me and remember only God, most great and high."

"O sister! God is pleased with those who suffer patiently—
With patience all the hardships here turn into blissful ease.
O sister! follow here your patient mother's\textsuperscript{24} way of life.
But I repeat, take care of my Sukaina when I am
No more—she has been brought up tenderly. Protect her from
All harm—take off her ear-rings lest she suffer injuries!"

"Convey to 'Abid\textsuperscript{25} this last message mine when he revives:
You were unconscious when Husain came and went back to die.

\textsuperscript{24} i.e., Fatima, the Prophet's daughter.
\textsuperscript{25} 'Ali ibn al-Husain, Zainab-'Abidin, was ailing and weak from high fever and was unable to participate in the struggle and the defence of the great cause in Karbala.
Then from behind the curtain, Zainab, watching him, replied, "O Zahra's son! may my own life be sacrificed for yours' Come! Let we with my mantle wipe the dust from your sad face," Husain said, "O dear sister! All my comrades are now dead: And even he whom you brought up for him too I have wept— I have just lost a dear son like my Ali Akbar, hero."

"I am Muhammad's grandson," boldly he proclaimed, "Know who I am, for I am known to our Creator too! I have no fear of being wounded, nor of being killed. For three days in this awful heat I have been thirsty and Here not a moment's ease or comfort I have known, yet I Do not complain, enduring all these torments patiently."

"I am the son of 'Ali who on Judgment Day will slake Your thirst with Kawthar's drink, who conquered Khaibar's great stronghold, Whose dauntless courage won for Islam Badi's battle too; The son of him to whom the Prophet gave his daughter's hand; He also got the Prophet's holy throne and crown and sword; On Prophet's shoulder he achieved Ascension's honours high."

This flow of fine address had not yet reached its final phase When arrows started raining all at once on 'Ali's son; Husain unsheathed his sword and kissed its handle, then he called

30. A spring of sweet water in Paradise.
32. The first battle between the Muslims of Medina and the Quraysh of Mecca, fought on the outskirts of Medina.
33. Fatima, the Prophet's daughter and the mother of Hasan, Husain, Zainab and Umm Kulthum, Ali's children.
34. The throne refers to the pulpit, the crown to the Prophet's turban, and the sword which the Prophet gave 'Ali at the Battle of Ohod.
35. See above.
36. See above.
37. Refers to the tradition according to which the Prophet raised 'Ali on his shoulder to pull down an idol after the surrender of Mecca to the Muslims.

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O dearest son be not perturbed, imprisoned though you be! Endure, with trust in God, all torments on your way to Shám. The boat is caught in strong cross currents and such storm-tossed waves! And saying this, he turned his steed towards that host of Shám. The ladies' cry of lamentation went up from the tent, And as he charged across the battlefield towards the foe, The hearts and bodies of those hardened soldiers quaked with awe;

His recitation of heroic verse astounded them:

"There are some ladies in these tents, of Prophet's holy house, Their high place and position is well-known to all the world, They have no guardian, no protector now beside myself, So when I die, just spare a tent for them, for they, you know, Are Prophet's progeny and worthy of respect from you, Let them have shelter where they may, in all seclusion, weep."

If I write what those enemies then said in reply to this, The very heart and core of stones would melt away with grief! Husain's heart, with forebodings, sank, he could endure no more,

And heavenwards he looked, with thoughts all high, sublime and pure;

A heart that is pent up with pain, in tears it finds relief, He went to shed tears at the entrance of the Family's tent.

And then he called aloud, 'O Zainab and O Umm Kulthum! Husain, this suffering, sole survivor bids you all farewell! This evil host must seek to kill me now and I must die. If innocent Sukaina be unconscious due to thirst, Revive her and tell 'Abid, who with fever ails, that I Now go to die and never shall return to meet you all.

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26. Shám, the old Arabic name for the major part of what comprises modern Syria.
27. The Prophet's Holy Family.
28. Husain's daughter.
29. Husain's only surviving son, who succeeded him as the fourth Imam of the followers of the Holy Prophet's Holy Family.
Aloud, "Beware! for now the sword of ‘Ali flashes forth—
‘Ali, the victor of Hunain and of Siffin,“ I am
His son—so line up all your ranks and stop me for now I
advance!"

The Zulfiquar39 unsheathed, flashed forth and struck disaster on
That host; Empyrean’s firm foundations shook as Doomsday
dawned;

Truth’s triumph and faith’s victory advanced to greet Husain;
The glory of great martyrdom too followed in his wake;
While awful majesty stepped forth to kiss holy feet,
Ascendant fortune walked respectfully in front of him.

He sat up in the saddle and his steed pricked up its ears
And raised its head and looked towards that host to charge at
it;

While straining at the rein it curved its neck, its tail stood up.
Then proudly it fell into a canter, turning now to the right
And now to the left, as lightly as the morning breeze and with
The ease with which a fairy flies, it passed through hostile
ranks.

The Prince of Faith fought hundred thousand mounted men
alone,

Without a shield, all fearlessly, he faced the pikemen’s lines,
Like ‘Ali he too fought against transgressing tyrant’s hordes;
One cannot fight against two but he fought against such odds:
If anyone could triumph over thousands, then it was
He only who was heart and soul of ‘Ali—his great son!

Three days of thirst and hunger he endured yet fought God’s
foes—
His throat was parched, his mouth and lips all dry with scaring
thirst;
The fresh green plants had dried up in the burning desert sun;
The heat of the scorching wind was such that even stones would
melt—

40. Yadulīshah, literally the Hand of God, a title of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib,
    Husain’s father.
41. The Prophet’s daughter, Husain’s mother.
42. Reference to the tradition of how Gabriel spread his wings to save
    the world from the stork of the miraculous sword Zulfiquar,
    wielded by ‘Ali in the battle of Khaibar.
From that big host the cry went up, "O Lord, have mercy now! We have seen what destruction your swift dextrous strokes have wrought!

We have received due punishment for fighting against you! You do good even to those who are bad and do you harm! We throw down now our swords and in repentance tie our hands!

So now forgive the failings of these people of your creed!"

An unseen caller's voice was heard to say, "O most sublime! What superhuman courage after starving for three days! O Grandson of Muhammad and O Leader, Leader's son! The name is inscribed on the guarded tablet for all time! You are no more to fight against these hell-damned brutal hordes!

Now is the time to fulfil all what you had pledged to God!"

On hearing what the voice did say, Husain held back his hand And spoke, "This humble offering of my head, accept, O God! It would be joyous 'Eid if evil-doers slaughter me! Where is the cruel Shamr? Let him unsheathe his dagger now! The Lover true is he who is prepared for sacrifice! My triumph and my victory rest only in God's will!"

And saying this he calmly sheathed his sword, resigned to die. Then to his steed he made a sign and said to it to halt. The loyal steed reluctantly stopped short and then stood still From all around they started showering arrows on Husain—By spears he was encircled as the rose is by its thorns; The Prophet’s grandson was surrounded by blood-thirsty swords.

His body was pierced right through as those arrows rained on him. And then that heartless, howling horde thrust spears into his sides. They struck upon his head with swords; his forehead bled from wounds; His bright and noble countenance turned gory with his blood; His body and his coat of mail were all cut into bits; His turban's coils when cut, became uncoiled stained with his blood.

The guards along the river's bank thrust at him with their spears; Where could a forlorn soul find rest amidst those upraised swords? His body was all covered with more than a thousand wounds Which made those who beheld him quake with terror and despair; His holy countenance, sacred like the Book, all steeped in blood! His body slashed into as many parts as there are in the Book! The reins slipped from his hand, his feet slipped off the stirrups too; Now, he sat up and now bent over, weak from loss of blood; While blood flowed freely from the wounds and gashes in his sides, There was no one to help him in that lonely, helpless state; He got no respite from those cruel sabre strokes, alas! Those ceaseless efforts aimed to bring the ka'ba crashing down!

Then Zahrā's voice was heard to cry, "Alas! my son Husain! My lonely, forlorn, sad and sorely suffering son, Husain!" And at the tent's door Zaināb cried, "My brother, dear, Husain! Oh! who can save you from these swords and bring you safely back! Do you hear mother's lamentations, full of heartfelt pain? Oh! may I come and stand beside you and give you support?"
And when he could no more stay in the saddle, faint with wounds, That star of God’s Empyrean fell upon the dusty earth; And after a while when’ Ali’s son came to again and rose, The cruel Ibn Anas thrust a spear into his chest— The spear-point passed right through his chest to come out from his back, His sister, watching from the tent, emerged, barehead, barefoot.

And as that accursed mercenary pulled out the bloodied spear The Prince of Martyrs bowed his head in gratitude to God. The hell-bent, brutal Shamr unsheathed his dagger and advanced— The heavens shook, the earth quaked seeing such foul, odious acts. How can I say how Shamr put the dagger to his throat— It was as if he trampled on the Holy Book itself!

His sister’, Ali’s daughter, covered then her face and cried “O my beloved brother, you are being slaughtered while I watch so helplessly!” And then she heard the cry, “Great God!” She fell, face downwards on the ground and swooned from grief, And when she rose again and ran, saw an awful sight— The head of Holy Prince of Martyrs, raised upon a lance!

And there she stood beside that lance lamenting bitterly, “O great Husain, my martyred brother, they rejoice while I Can hardly see from shock of grief, the world has turned all dark! I could not reach you in those sad last moments of your life! Oh look at me how I am caught in this clamity I stand barehead, barefoot amidst these fierce and faithless foes!”

Ants, thou canst not write of Zainab’s lamentations more! The body of Husain lay there, unburied, in the sun; Alas, the Prophet found no peace in his last resting place! His holy progeny imprisoned and his house burnt down! How many homes Husain’s death left all ruined, desolate! The Prophet’s progeny, thus never prospered after him.
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