

Raha, 1956.

ALTĀF ḤUSAIN ḤĀLĪ'S IDEAS ON GHAZAL

ALESSANDRO BAUSANI
ROMA

THE IMPORTANCE of Maulānā Altāf Ḥusain Ḥālī in the evolution of Urdu literature is sufficiently known, and we don't need to emphasize it here again.¹ It is sufficient to say that his *Muqaddama*, or "Introduction" (originally intended as a rather long preface to his *Divan*, published in 1893) was and still partly is considered the modern *ars poetica* for Urdu poetry. "Ḥālī and Šiblī² were the two great literary dictators of their age; — writes Dr. Vahīd Quraišī in the preface to his valuable re-edition of the *Muqaddama* published by the *Maktaba-e Jadīd* in Lahore with interesting notes and appendices³ — they studied the old and new literary criticism and

¹ I don't know however of any important study of Ḥālī by European Orientalists, who generally devote to Urdu literature an amount of work far inferior to the importance of this Muslim language, written and spoken by a far greater number of persons than Arabic itself. Especially modern Urdu literature — with personalities as those of Ghālīb (d. 1869), Ḥālī (d. 1910), M. Iqbāl (d. 1938), Faiz A. Faiz (a living progressive poet presently in jail in Pakistan) etc. — is a subject of study perhaps more repaying than that of contemporary Persian literature. A summary bibliography on Ḥālī (see Dr. Vahīd Quraišī's edition of the *Muqaddama* quoted below) is the following:

- Amīn Zubairi. *Tazkira-e Šamsu'l-'ulamā' Ḥ'āja Ḥālī marhūm*. s. I. 1925.
Šaiḥ Muhammad Ismā'il Panīpatī. *Tazkira-e Ḥālī*. Panīpat, 1935.
M. Tahir Jamil. *Ḥālī's Poetry. A Study*. Bombay, 1938.
Sādiq Quraišī. *Zikr-i Ḥālī*. Lahore, 1949.
Maqālāt-i yaum-i Ḥālī. Ed. Naših Zaidī. Karachi, 1951.
A. H. Ḥālī. *Muqaddama-e šī'r u šā'irī* ed. Dr. Vahīd Quraišī. Lahore, 1953.
M. 'Abdu 'l-Ḥaqq. *Čand ham-āšr*. Karachi, 1953 (pp. 144—163).
Dr. Abū 'l-Laiš Šiddīqī. *Tazkira-e Ḥālī*. 'Aligarh, s. d.
Šāliḥa 'Abid Ḥusain. *Yadgār-i Ḥālī*. 'Aligarh (Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū) s. d.
Šrī Javālā Paršād. *Ḥālī aur un-kī kāviya* (in Hīndī) s. I.

There are of course numerous articles on him (often rather poor) in Urdu literary magazines. Especially interesting are the *Ḥālī Numbers* of the same. Particularly valuable that of the magazine *Urdū*, organ of the *Anjuman-i taraqqī-i Urdū* (Karachi, April, 1952); see also the *Ḥālī Number* of the periodical *Zamāna* (Dec. 1935) and the article devoted to Ḥālī in the "Personalities Number" (*Šahsiyāt Nambār*) of the elegant and valuable magazine *Nāqūš* (Lahore, 1954) by Ḥ'āja Gulāmu 'l-Ḥusain (pp. 26—35).

² Šiblī Nu'mānī (d. 1914) author of famous critical works on Islamic literatures. His *Šī'ru' l-'ajam*, a History of Persian Literature in Urdu in 5 voll., was amply utilized by E. G. Browne.

³ It constitutes the second number of a splendidly printed (in movable characters, which is still rather an exception in Pakistan and Muslim India) collection of "Urdu Classics" (*Urdū Klāsiki Adab*). The *Maktaba-e Jadīd* is one of the best new publishing houses of Lahore, and gives particular attention to young and progressive writers.

after having clearly fixed the limits of the old frame they tried to pour into it the leaven of Western ideas". Such first attempts to create a fusion of Eastern and Western ideals in Art I consider extremely interesting both for their theoretical value (nobody can possibly know the intricacies and depths of the Muslim poetical style as much as an oriental poet) and their practical results. From the latter point of view it is sufficient to say that Ḥālī is considered the renovator of modern style in Urdu and a bridge between the great Ghālib⁴ and the national Poet-Philosopher of Muslim India and Pakistan, Muḥammad Iqbāl.⁵

As far I as know, Ḥālī's *Muqaddama* was never translated into any European language, and, since not many students of Persian Literature and stylistics know Urdu, I think it useful to condense and study the most important passages of Ḥālī's lengthy "Introduction" concerning the "renovation" of the classical *ghazal*. Ḥālī's *Muqaddama* (I follow Dr. Quraiṣī's edition quoted in note 1) covers more than 200 pp. in 8': the part on *ghazal* consists of 54 pages.

Ḥālī starts saying that the *ghazal*, together with the *rubā'ī* and the *qit'a*, is particularly well adapted to the artistic expression of momentary and fugacious emotions or ideas brought about by this or that event of everyday life. This is why a reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of the *ghazal* is urgently needed: the *ghazal* is moreover extremely popular even among illiterate people and children. According to Ḥālī those who more than any other contributed to render the *ghazal* so popular were the so called "men of God" (*aḥlū'llāh*) and esoteric (*ṣāḥib-i bāḥin*) poets including Sa'dī, Rūmī, Amīr-i Ḥusrav, Ḥāfiz, 'Irāqī, Maḡribī, Aḥmad Jām, etc. Ḥālī however, like many Oriental thinkers of the modern school, expresses his doubts as to the love that they described being really *majāzī*.⁶ In any case his opinion is that, especially in Iran, the *majāzī* love became more and more the generalized subject of the *ghazal* style, whereas in Urdu literature not more than half of the *ghazals* treat this subject, another good half being devoted to the description of true love and emotions in a natural and simple way.⁷

⁴ It is really astonishing (and another proof of the scarce value wrongly attributed by European Orientalists to Urdu literature) to see that no European Orientalist — at my notice at least — devoted a monograph to this poet, in my opinion the greatest Muslim poet of the XIX century.

⁵ Bibliography on Iqbāl is enormously growing especially now that the Poet is recognized by Pakistanis as the spiritual originator of the Pakistan movement and their national poet-philosopher. For an essential bibliography on him see A. Bausani. *Il Poema Celeste*. Roma, 1952; id. *The Concept of Time in Iqbāl's Religious Philosophy in Die Welt des Islam*, Leiden 1954 pp. 158—186; id. *Satana nell'opera filosofico-poetica di M. Iqbāl* in RSO (Roma) vol. XXX (1955) pp. 55—102.

⁶ Ḥālī in his "Life of Sa'dī" (*Ḥayāt-i Sa'dī*, pp. 188—192) quotes passages to demonstrate that the Persian poet did often exactly the contrary, i. e. adorned with the garment of *majāzī* love a real (*ḥaqīqī*) love.

⁷ This idea of Ḥālī, together with that expressed by him some pages further (see notes 17 and 23) amounts to say that in general Persian poetry is more artificial

The proposed reform of the *ghazal* includes in his opinion the following four points, which he treats in detail.

1. The range of the love-motifs ought to be extended so as to include not only the real or mystical love of the Leilā-Majnūn and Šīrīn-Farhād type, but also the love between God and man, children and parents, brothers and sisters, husband and wife, masters and servants, kings and subjects; love among friends, love of man towards animals, of man for his home or town, or country, folk, family and so on.

Concerning this first point of his reform Ḥālī particularly insists on the fact that the *new ghazal* writer ought to avoid such words as may reveal whether the object of such a generalized love is male or female, as for instance *kulāh* (a man's hat), *čīra*, *dastār* (turban), *jāma*, *qabā* (different men's coats), *sabza-u-ḥāḥ* (down on adolescents' faces), *muṭrib pīsar* (the young minstrel), *muḡbača* (the young Magian), *tarsā-bača* (the young Christian) etc. or, on the other hand, *maḥram* (spouse), *kurtī* (a part of a woman's dress), *ārsī* (mirror) etc.

Concerning the famous question of the "gender" of the Beloved in *ghazals*, Ḥālī — in order to save his great classical Iranian and Urdu predecessors from the accusation of homosexuality — maintains that the use of words indicating female dresses or female beauty was considered indecent owing to the old *parda* custom: so the poets used to speak of their beloved as young boys. This soon became a "style" with the chrims of classicity, but ought to be absolutely avoided by the new *ghazal* writer. Actually classical Urdu *ghazal*-writers made this habit even worse, since the Urdu language — differently from Persian, where no grammatical gender exists — knows the masculine and feminine genders: in this language even the general ambiguity of the Persian style (which Urdu poets imitated) is spoiled, and to the Beloved the masculine gender is openly applied. Strangely enough the use of the masculine gender was so generalized in Urdu poetry as to be applied even to unmistakably feminine subjects, as e. g. in this verse by Zauq (d. 1854):

jhānkte the voh hamen jis rauzan-i dīvār-se
vāe qīsmat ho usī rauzan men ghar zanbūr-kā

than Urdu poetry, and can hardly be shared by a knower of Persian literature in its historical development. Actually — seen from an Indian perspective — (the maximum of Persian influence on India being exercised in the Mughal period, XV—XIX cc.) this opinion can become understandable, if not approvable. Persia influenced India just at the beginning and during the course of its literary and moral decadence. So the so-called Indian style of the Persian poets of the Mughal court was born, a style famous for its bombast and exaggerated subtleties and bad taste. This style on its turn influenced the Urdu literature of the Delhi and Lucknow periods, while the original Deccan Urdu was one of great simplicity and freshness.

["Oh how fortunate the wasps's nest in that hole in the wall wherefrom they (evidently pretty girls) were peeping at us!"] Here the subject of *jhānkte* the ("they were peeping") is clearly feminine, but the verb is in the masculine gender.

2. The second important subject of *ghazal*, after love, is what could be synthesized in the word *hamriyāt*, including both anacreontic praise of wine, cup-bearers and accessories, and the scornful reproach of Muslim orthodox *mullās*, *faqīhs* and ascetics including even praises of *kufr*,⁸ in the most exaggerated ways. This style, according to Ḥālī, ought to be abandoned by the new *ghazal* writers. It owes its origin to the fact that — the *ghazal* style having been popularized especially by *ṣūfī* poets, who criticized partly rightly the hypocrisy of the *mullās*— their innumerable imitators carried this tendency to its extreme limits, often in a quite artificial way. Ḥālī partly accepts (to save his great predecessors from the accusation of *kufr*) the metaphorical and symbolical interpretation of such verses, quoting Rūmī's justification:

huštar ān bāšad ke sirr-i dilbarān
gušta āyad dar ḥadīs-i dīgarān

But, in a rather rationalistic and quite exoteric way, he distinguishes between a "just" protest against the hypocrisy of the *zuhhād* and the *mullās*, like the one embodied in this verse of Zauq:

rind-i ḥarāb-ḥāl-ko zāhid na cher tū
tujh-ko parā'i kyā parī apnī niber tū

("O ascetic! Don't censure the profligate libertine, what hast thou to do with others' sins, think rather of thine!")

where the reproach is addressed to a well defined evil quality of the reproached, and this other verse of the same author:

Zauq zībā hai jo ho rīs-i safed-i šaiḥ-par
wasma āb-i bang-se mahindī mae- gulrang-se

("O Zauq, how nice it is when on the white beard of the *šaiḥ* the *wasma* is made of hashish and the *mahindī* of rose-red wine!")

where the shaikh *qua* shaikh is reproached and scorned, even if he might possibly be faultless.

⁸ An article on *kufr* in classical Persian and Urdu poetry can be read in a recent number of the Pakistani literary magazine *Urdū Adab* (Aitāb Ahmad. *Šā'irī meḡ kufr* pp. 19—24 of n. 1, s. d. but prob. 1954).

3. If a deepening and an extension ought to be achieved by the new *ghazal*-writers in the field of love and *hamrīyāl*, which are the two chief subjects of the classical *ghazal*, the themes of the new *ghazal* must acquire a new scope also in other directions. Ḥālī invites the poet to express his feelings of joy and sorrow, repentance, thankfulness, lament, patience, resignation, contentment, trust in God, hate, passion, clemency, justice, wonder, love of his country, social problems etc. In this point Ḥālī is clearly a forerunner of modern "social" art, which he himself successfully endeavoured to realize especially in his simple and dignified *Musaddas*⁹. He admits that a full realization of such a social art is rather difficult, but, he says, a revolution is now necessary: "Nowadays the situation of the world resembles that of an old tree in which new young sprouts are germinating and old branches are withering away and falling... Old peoples are giving place to young peoples, and this is not like a flood of the Ganges or the Jumna which is only covering a few nearby villages with its waters; no, it is like a great Ocean flood which expands its waters over the entire globe. If one looks at this, and understands it, hundreds of exemplary images will occur to him from morning to night, so that an entire life will not be enough for a poet to describe all their details... What other material could be more interesting than this for *ghazal*-writing?... The ecstasies of love were beautiful for happier times; now that time is gone. The night of pleasure and joy has passed away, the dawn has come".

New *ghazals* must, in other words, be descriptive of new social and political realities also. And this in a more congruous way too, Ḥālī tells us. He criticizes the well-known incongruity and looseness of the classical *ghazals*, and invites new poets to compose *ghazals* in which e. g. the description of a season of the year, or the grace of a moonlight night or of a forest at spring-time, or the sadness of a cemetery, or the love for one's country, may be expressed by means of a continuous flow of congruous verses.

The *ghazal*—he says—resembles now those boxes of English sweets where the bonbons are in the most different shapes (round, oblong, rectangular, triangular etc.) but have all one and the same flavour and taste. To demonstrate this he brings an interesting example from the *divān* of a contemporary poet, whose name he does not mention: he succeeds in extracting from the *ghazals* of that *divān* 23 different ways of expressing the same classical metaphor of the *čāk-i girībān* "the rending of the collar" (in despair, but also told of blossoming rosebuds etc.) well known to every student of Persian, Turkish and Urdu poetry. Together with the *čāk-i girībān* image.

⁹ The famous *Musaddas* of Ḥālī (so known by antonomasy. Its title is *Madd-u-jazr-i Islām*, "Ebb and Tide of Islam") represents really something new in the classical Muslim literature, both for the dignified simpleness of style (sometimes even falling into shallowness) and for its epic inspiration (rather rare in Islamic literatures).

he puts other time-worn, ever repeated concepts, which formed the stock-in-trade of every classical *ghazal* writer, such as *jaḡā-e yār*, *rašk-i aḡyār*, *šauq-i vaṣl*, *ranj-i firāq*, *zulf-i parešān*, *čašm-i fallān*, *but-parasī*, *tauba-šikanī*, *rindī*, *bāda-ḡārī* etc. etc.

If we concentrate—Ḥālī says—all the concepts used by the classical *ghazal* writers, leaving apart repetitions and reinterpretations, it will result into something like a long “condensed” *ghazal* of a few pages including all the themes of the classical style of poetry.

This does not mean, however, that imitation (*taqlīd*) has to be absolutely forbidden and avoided. In his opinion imitation is justified only when the imitator fills some gap or perfects or corrects some “defect” of the original. So the famous verse of Ḥāfiẓ:

šab-i tārik u bīm-i mauj u gardābi čunīn hā' il
kujā dānand ḡāl-i mā sabukbārān-i sāḡilḡā

is imitated from Sa'dī's

az varḡa-e mā ḡabar na-dārad
āsūda ki bar kinār-i daryā-st

but it seems that Ḥāfiẓ has filled some conceptual gap in Sa'dī's verse (... *is mazmūn meḡ goyā us kamī-ko pūrā kar-diyā hai, jo šaiḡ-ke bayān meḡ rah-ḡāi thī*). Naẓirī expressed the same concept in the following form:

ba-zīr-i šāḡ-i gul af'ī-gazīda bulbul-rā
navāḡarān-i na-ḡurda -gazand-rā čī ḡabar?

Ḥālī's comment on this verse is interesting. He says that though Naẓirī has not added anything new to the concept, so that it may be said that he vanquished (*chūn liyā*) Ḥāfiẓ, he however expresses the concept in so new a style (*badī' uslūb*) that it seems altogether new.

Ghālīb however succeeded in improving even on the verse of Ḥāfiẓ, adding in the second *mišrā'* a less explicit but artistically more graphic image of the neglectful friends:

havā muḡālīf u šab tār u baḡr tūfān-ḡez
ḡusista langar-i kaštī u nāḡudā ḡuḡt-ast¹⁰.

¹⁰ This verse of Ghālīb is quoted more than once in the *Muḡaddama* and evidently Ḥālī liked that image very much: he openly imitated it just in the first stanzas of his *Musaddas*.

As I consider these comparative aesthetical judgments by an Oriental particularly interesting, I shall quote some more. The Persian *mutā aḥḥir* poet Šifā'i of Iṣfahān¹¹ in his verse

*maššāta-rā bi-gū ki bar asbāb-i ḥusn-i dūst
čizī fuzūn kunad ki tamāšā ba-mā rasād*

wanted to express the idea that the ordinary appearance of the Beloved is not sufficient for us, and a *maššāta* ("bride — adorer") is needed to add something to the beauty of the Beloved, because it is now our turn to have a look at her. Ḥālī discovers in this verse three defects: a) it is not *ṣaḥīḥ* to call *dūst* a person who is not in love with him (the poet); b) it seems that that person had no original beauty of her own if she needs so much a *maššāta* to be really beautiful and attractive to the poet, and this is not nice. c) Love is born always involuntarily and as by chance: on the contrary the poet seems here to see love as something which can be directed at will.

But look — now Ḥālī says — at the way Ghālīb expresses this same concept, though in a quite different way:

*zamāna 'ahd meḥ hai is-ke maḥv-arā' iš
banenge aur sitāre ab āsmān-ke lī'e*

("Destiny has lost — in this Epoch of His — all his adornments: new stars are now needed for the sky.")

In this splendid *madḥ*-verse Ghālīb intends to convey the idea that the cosmos has no more ornaments (*arā' iš*) for the Praised one: so it shall be necessary that new, "other" stars be created in the sky (to adorn the Praised One, the old stars being insufficient and unworthy). The idea is more or less formally the same (something must be added to adorn the person loved or praised in perfect way) but all the three defects present in the verse of Šifā'i are here absent: the praised Person is here introduced as already perfect, but even the stars must be renewed to show themselves to him (or her) in a way worthy of his (or her) Perfection! Ghālīb perhaps imitated Šifā'i, but this kind of imitation is not only allowed, it is a recommendable perfectionment.

Let us take now the concept of the unfathomable depth of esoteric "meanings" hidden even in the simplest objects of Nature.

*Urfī of Širāz says:

*har kas na šināsanda-e rāz-ast ū gar-na
īn hama rāz-ast ki mā'lūm-i 'avām-ast*

¹¹ The well known poet and physician of the court of Shāh 'Abbās. Cfr. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*. Cambridge, 1951—53, vol. IV, p. 256.

And Ghālib on the same subject:

*maḥrām nahīn hai to hī navā-hā-e rāz-kā
yān var-na jo hijāb hai parda hai sāz-kā*

("There is no confident here of the melodies of the Arcanum; otherwise what is the veil (*hijāb*) is in reality the true *parda* of that mysterious Music", where *parda* means both "veil" and "musical tune".)

Told in plain words, what 'Urfī meant is that those things which seem well-known to everybody, to the vulgar, are in reality mysteries. Ghālib's imitation is very clear (even in the outward form, in Ghālib's verse there is a *var-na* exactly corresponding to the *gar-na* of the original Persian) but Ghālib succeeds in "adding" something to that, saying that those things which seem to be impediments to the revealing of the Mystery, are in reality the revealers of the Secret themselves, and at the same time the *parda* (play on words!) of the arcane music. The original idea is, of course, in its turn, much older than both poets and Ḥālī retraces it in the Qur'ān (XVII, 44).

Thus for Ḥālī there is progress in Art, there is a „better“ and a „more complete“ in aesthetical expression, though this is meant from the point of view of mere content. In order to enrich the stock of classical imagery and to improve on the *mutaqaddimīn*, the new *ghazal*-poet ought to imitate, eventually, not only Persian and Arabic poets, but also European literatures (Ḥālī speaks especially of English literature) in which poetry and even more prose¹² are extremely rich in new and various images, concepts and subjects for poets (this "richness in subjects" seems to impress Ḥālī more than anything else, in comparison with the thematic poverty of the classical Persian *Bildschatz*). Also Sanscrit and *bhāṣā*¹³ can be highly useful for this purpose.

All this introduces the problem of "poetical translation", which Ḥālī solves very simply, saying that it is a difficult task but a task worth undertaking: some verses can even be better in translation than in the original, as for instance the following verse of Saudā (d. 1780):

*kaifīyat-i čaṣm us-kī mujhe yād hai, Saudā
sāgar-ko mire hāth-se lenā ki čalā main*

("There came to my memory the form of His eye, o Saudā; take the cup away from my hand, I am gone!")

¹² Ḥālī did not know English: what he knew of English literature and literary taste was through translations or through oral information obtained from English knowing friends. See Vahīd Quraīṣī op. cit. p. 67 ff.

¹³ By *bhāṣā* is meant here *Braj Bhāṣā lato sensu*, perhaps including all the post-sancritic literature in Western Hīndī.

translated from Nazīri's¹⁴

*bū-e yār-i man az īn sust-vafā mī-āyad
gul-am az dast bi-gīrīd ki az kār šudam.*

Criticizing this from the point of view of *balāḡal*, Ḥālī says that the idea of substituting the perfume of the rose with the comparison of the red-wine goblet as the intoxicated eye of the Beloved one is a far more *qarīn qiyās* and, above all, the *az kār šudam* of the Persian original is much heavier and out of place in its precision, than the vaguer *čalā main* ("I 'm gone", "it is finished with me") of the Urdu translation.

Here are two more examples of "translation better than the original".
Unknown Persian author:

*dar maḥfil-i ḥud rāh ma-dih hamčū-manī-rā
aḥsurda-dil aḥsurda kunad anjumanī-rā*

Urdu by Ḥāja Mīr Dard (d. 1785):

*na kahīn 'aiš tumhārā bhī munḡaṣṣ ho-jāe
dosto, Dard-ko maḥfil meṇ na tum yād karo*

("O friends! Don't even mention the name of Dard in your assembly, so that your pleasure may not be spoiled!").

The merits of this "translation" (rather an adaptation) are, according to Ḥālī: a) To have nicely introduced his *taḥalluṣ* (Dard = Sorrow) in this verse, shifting it from the *maḥlā'* of the *ghazal* (as it was in the original) to the *maḡlā'*. b) The substitution of *rāh ma-dih* with *yād karo*, thus emphasizing the hyperbole. Moreover *yād karnā* has in Urdu also the meaning of "to call" (especially of a superior calling an inferior): so also the sense of the Persian *rāh dādan* is preserved, but in a more refined way. c) The first *miṣrā'* of the Urdu verse is *lighter* than the second *miṣrā'* of the Persian text, of which it is the rendering, because the Persian *miṣrā'* (*aḥsurda dil aḥsurda kunad anjumanī-rā*) is a too sharp and absolute statement, whereas the Urdu verse gives the idea "so that one may not say their pleasure is spoiled..."

Sa' dī:

*dūstān maṅ kunand-am ki čirā dil ba-tū dādam
bāyad avval ba-tū guṣtan ki čunīn ḥūb čirā'ī?*

¹⁴ Nazīri (d. 1612—13) is one of the numerous Persian poets (he was of Nisapur) who emigrated to Mughal India. He still enjoys a far wider popularity in India and Pakistan than in Persia. For a *miṣrā'* of a *qaṣīda* by Nazīri Iqbāl (see his *Payām-i Maṣriq* p. 188) would have given all the reign of Jamshed.

Mir (d. 1810):

piyār karne-kā jo ḥūbān ham-pa rakhte haiṅ guṅāh
un-se bhī to puṅhīye "tum itne kyūṅ piyāre hū' e?"

("Those beautiful maidens who ascribe to us as a sin our having them dear — or "loving them" — one ought to ask them "why have you become so dear"?)

Even in this case Ḥālī gives the palm to the Urdu poet-translator (or imitator): the reason he gives is that the question of the second *miṣrā'* must be unanswerable. Now this is not the case for Sa'dī, as, strictly speaking, an answer to the question "why are you so pretty" could perhaps be given, whereas the really unanswerable question is that of Mīr, who asks the person dear to him (*piyār*) "Why did you become, or why were you, so dear to me?"

At the end of this paragraph on translation, Ḥālī emphasizes again its utility, stating that the only cause (sic!) of the superiority of the Europeans in literature in modern times is that they did not leave untranslated any of the great works of foreign literary geniuses of all ages.¹⁵

4. But the new *ghazal* needs a widening of shape still in another field: I mean the linguistic field. Not only its contents but its language too must be renewed. The present classical *ghazal* — Ḥālī says — utilizes only a very limited *Wortschatz*. In its centuries-long process of formation the *ghazal* created for itself a fixed language: any expression or word strange and foreign to that fixed style was felt as *gair mā'nūs*, "unfamiliar" and rejected. This is one of the causes of the birth of the *ṣūfī* metaphors, as the *ṣūfī* poets were compelled to utilize the already codified *'iṣqīya* and *ḥamrīyāl* *Wortschatz* of the *ghazal*. It is true that in the first times the Urdu *ghazal* of the Deccan type used a much wider range of words and expressions (often of a colloquial and natural kind unusual in the classical Persian), but after, in the late Delhi period and still worse in the Lucknow school,¹⁶ the persianization of the lexicon became extreme. It can seem rather curious that Ḥālī (as well as the majority of the Urdu critics of the new school) attributes all the faults

¹⁵ This and other instances that we have already remarked (e. g. the reasons given for the "homosexual" form of classical *ghazal* poetry etc.) are good examples of the illuministic naiveness which remained until recently a characteristic of certain Muslim progressive thinkers. This is rightly and exactly admitted and emphasized by Dr. Quraishī in his already quoted and really remarkable introduction to his re-edition of the *Muqāddama* (pp. 95—96) where he also criticizes the *manṭiqī muḡālite aur uljhāve* ("logical misunderstandings and confusions") of the first Muslim modernists of India such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad and other collaborators of his magazine *Tahzībū' l-aḥlāq*.

¹⁶ I suppose in the reader a general knowledge of the evolution of Urdu literature. See T. G. Bailey. *Urdu Literature*. Calcutta-London, 1932.

connected with a swollen and bombastic style to the Persian influence, whereas this kind of style is generally known in Persia as "Indian style".¹⁷

In order to achieve this linguistic and formal renovation Ḥālī recommends attention to the following points:

A) Revolution in *ghazal* must be gradual. The language of the *ghazal* must remain *ma'nūs* (familiar), also for practical purposes: the vulgar like presently the old language, and we need *ghazals* first and foremost to influence their ideas.¹⁸ The sudden introduction of unfamiliar and "strange" words, as done by certain contemporary poets, must be avoided: even the language of the Qur'ān made use of metaphors of the ancient classical pre-Islamic poetry. Language is more conservative than ideas, a revolution in ideas is *not* generally followed by an immediate revolution in language. The following paragraph is an interesting example of the cautious revolutionism of Ḥālī:

"Let us consider that a time has come when the progress of human science has finally demonstrated the falsity of such concepts as the fixity of the earth, the existence of four elements, of a miraculous world-reflecting Cup of Jamshed, of the Water of Life hidden in the land of Darkness, of the *Simurǧ* and *Devs* and *Parīs* etc. The task of the poet is not that of avoiding mentioning such objects any longer, nay, his perfection will consist in declaring and explaining realities, facts and true and natural ideas *just by means of* those mistaken and unfounded concepts, used as embellishments: they are a magic charm created by the Ancients, a charm which must in no way be broken, otherwise the poet will soon notice that he has lost a powerful spell to captivate the hearts of men."

This page could be considered — and is in fact — the aesthetic manifesto of the modern Urdu writer, so different in this from the Persian.¹⁹

In order to inculcate that "truth" Ḥālī quotes numerous instances of well constructed and efficacious "classical" *ghazal*-verses in which no perfectionment through new and unfamiliar words is needed. Examples are taken from the divans of Ḥāfiz, Mīr, Dard, Saudā, Zauq, Ghālīb and Shefta.

I quote only a couple to show the literary taste of Ḥālī: a) Look — Ḥālī says — at the way this very simple and sound concept (*mazmūn*): "God dwells in the hut of the poor" can be expressed in a classical form in this verse by Shefta:

¹⁷ See note 7.

¹⁸ This shows another basic component of Ḥālī's aesthetic thought: he is clearly in favour of the poetry *à thèse*, and against the concept of *adab barā'e adab* ("Art for Art's sake"). This is also very clear from the verses quoted at the end of this paper.

¹⁹ It seems to me that contemporary Iranian poetry did not yet succeed in reaching a formal and contentistic equilibrium between classical heritage and modernism. It oscillates between pure aestheticism and total imitation of some kind of Western revolutionary art.

*fānūs u šīša u laḡan-i zar-se kyā ḡuṣūl
voh hai vahān jahān nahīn rauḡan čirāḡ-men*

("What is the ultimate use of lanterns and glasses and golden vessels? He abideth where there is no oil for the lamp!").

b) And here is how Saudā expresses the idea: "those who speak of the ephemeral state of the things of the world are neglectful of their own ephemerality"

*bhalā gul lō lō hanastā hai hamārī be-sabāfi-par
batā roī hai kis-kī hastī-e mauhūm-par šabnam?*

("The rose is laughing on our ephemeral state. But tell me: On whose evanescent Being is the dewdrop weeping?").

As we see, Ḥālī is far from denying importance to the classical tropes, *isti'āra*, *kināya*, *tamṣīl* etc.²⁰ He however distinguishes between a minority of objects and situations, poetical in themselves and which need none of the embellishments taught in the treatises of *'Ilmū l-bayān*, and the majority of them, which would remain lifeless without a good use of the *isti'āra* etc. But Ḥālī, with his characteristic equilibrium, hates the "bad" metaphors, i. e. those in which the intellectual effort of the poet is too apparent, or the two objects compared are conceptually too far from each other. As for instance this, worthy to be called a *čistān* (enigma) rather than a comparison, embodied in a verse by Šāh Naṣīr:²¹

*čurā'ī čādar-i mahtāb šab-i mai-kaš-ne Jaiḡūn-par
kaṡorā ṣubḡ daurāne laḡā ḡuršed gardūn-par*

("The drunken night stole the veil of the Moonshine over the Jaiḡūn river; at dawn the sun began to let the golden goblet run around in the firmament").

Ḥālī finds that "stealing the veil of Moonshine" to express the idea of "revealing the beauty of the full Moonshine" is *ba'īdu'l-fahm*; the same reproach is addressed to those poets who compare the sun with an *āhū-e māda*, the stars with the *ašk-i Zulaiḡā*, the letters of the alphabet with the *barg-i banaṡsa*, the cup with *āb-i ḡušk* etc. In any case the *isti'āra*, Ḥālī rightly remarks, is at the basis of many everyday idioms (*muḡāvarāt*) so that it can be said that the metaphor is not only a living element of poetry, but also of the colloquial language.

²⁰ All these matters too I consider known to my readers. Otherwise consult the pp. 19 ff. of the above quoted *History of Browne*.

²¹ A poet of Delhi (d. 1840) famous for his elaborate style.

B) This section, for us comparatively less interesting, is devoted to a discussion of the real meaning of the terms *muḥāvāra* and *rozmarra*, the first translating English *idiom*, the second used in the sense of the English word *colloquial*. *Ġam khānā* ("to eat pain" i. e. "to be sorrowful") is an idiom, *rofi khānā* ("to eat bread") is a colloquial expression. The idiom, Ḥālī thinks, renders often poetry "higher" and more efficacious, whereas colloquial expressions are rather unfit for it. Some instances follow (as customary, single verses of poets) as this verse of Mu'min (d. 1851).

kal tum jo bazm-i ġair meḥ ānkheḥ čurā-ġā'e
khō'e ġā'e ham aise ki aġyār pā ġā'e

("Yesterday when you stole your regards — from me, feigning neglect and disdain — in the assembly of strangers, I was so shameful and confused that the strangers guessed it").

Here there are at least three idiomatic expressions: *ānkheḥ čurānā* (to steal the eyes, i. e. to pay no attention) *khoyā jānā* (lit. "to be lost" i. e. "to become abashed and confused") and *pā jānā* ("to guess" as Persian *pai burdan*). This simple and idiomatic verse is, according to Ḥālī, better (there is more *ṣafā'i* in it) than the more persianized verse by Ghālīb, from which it was taken:

ġar-či hai tarz-i taġāful parda-dār-i rāz-i 'išq
par ham aise khō'e jāte haiḥ ki voh pā jā'e hai

("Though the style of feigned neglect is the curtain-holder of the secret of Love, I was so confused that he guessed all the matter") in which, however, two of the three above mentioned idioms are also present.

C) About literary artifices (*badā'i'* and *ṣanā'i'*) Ḥālī recommends a *natural* (this word, in English, *nečural*, recurs very often in the *Muqad-dama*) use of them. In other words they have to come as if spontaneously, *be-takalluḡ*, as in this verse of Ḥāfiḡ:

ba-zīr-i dalq-i mulamma' kamand-hā dārand
dirāz-dastī-e in kūtah-āstīnān bīn

where, in the contrast *dirāz-kūtūh* we have a *ḡibāq* and in the play of *dust* with *āsfīn* a *murā'āt-i naḡīr*.

On the contrary *badā'i'* and *ṣanā'i'* are not in good taste in this verse of a "famous poet" (*ek mašhūr ṣā'ir*, probably a contemporary of Ḥālī):

murğ-i dil-ko loregī billī lere darvāze-kī
raht-i tan-ko katregā čūhā tumhārī nāk-kā

("The cat of thy door will tear to pieces the bird of my heart, my body will be gnawed by the mouse of thy nose!").

Here the *murā'āl-i naẓīr* (cat — mouse) is extremely forced and artificial.

Ḥālī also attempts an explanation of the fact that the moderns (*muta'ahḥirīn*) use *badā'ī'* and *ṣanā'ī'* much more and often more artificially than the ancients (*mutaqaddimīn*). He says — rather naively indeed — that the moderns saw that some verses of the ancients, in which they had used plays on words, were very much liked by the people, and mistook the cause of this acceptance as due to those plays on words rather than to the forcefulness of expression; and so they began to imitate that part of the ancients' style.²² It is also difficult to follow him when he says that the Urdu literature is comparatively safer from such plays on words than the Persian. It depends, evidently, on the historical period chosen for the comparison.²³

D) The last of Ḥālī's recommendations for a renovation of the form of ghazal is of a metrical and prosodical character. The new poet — Ḥālī says — ought to avoid the "heavy" (*sanglāḥ*) and difficult metres (*zamīn*). The rhyme — though a powerful means to embellish poetry — is sometimes too *taṅg*, it imposes too strict limits to fancy, especially when, as in *ghazals* and especially Urdu *ghazals*, it is accompanied by the *radīf*. Ḥālī seems to have a special dislike for the *radīf*, or, to put it better, for an excessive generalization of too long *radīfs*. Sometimes *radīfs* force the poet to rather ridiculous coupling of images, as for instance:

...*taqrīr pušt-i ā'ina*—...*naḥčīr pušt-i ā'ina*—...*tadbīr pušt-i ā'ina*— etc.

He mentions the fact that European poets — to be rescued from the difficulty of rhymes — adopted the *blank verse*, but he gives no judgement on it, though he rather seems to approve of the European system.

²² See note 15.

²³ See note 7. Ḥālī's criticism of Persian poetry and his appreciation of Arabic and Hebrew poetry (this last known by him in translations from the Bible), have been inherited by the younger generations of Indo-Muslim thinkers (including Iqbāl). During my recent visit to Pakistan I had occasion to remark how much the study of Persian language and culture has lost ground in that country, whereas the study of Arabic is much more fostered. For Ḥālī Arabic (especially old Arabic) and Hebrew poetry possessed in high degree a quality which is, in his opinion, of first rate importance in poetry i. e. *još* (passion) (See *Muqaddama* pp. 160 ff.) For him perhaps less clearly and less consciously, for others (especially Iqbāl) in a more determinate way, a return to Arabic "passion" means a reevaluation of Semitic absolute monotheism as against the neo-platonic "deterioration" of Islam typical of Persian aesthetical taste.

Summing up, Ḥālī thinks that a renovation of *ghazal* must be achieved on the line of an amplification of its subjects (*mazāmīn*), *ʿiṣqīya* and *ḥam-rīyāt*, adding especially social and patriotic themes and avoiding useless imitation from the Ancients. Formally, a gradual revolution in style must be accomplished on the line of enlarging the *Wortschatz* and using metaphors and tropes in a more natural, moderate and simple way; introducing idioms of the common language and avoiding unnatural and cumbersome complications in rhyme and rhythm.

The importance of Ḥālī's work and personality has been extremely great in Muslim India (he is considered with Ghālīb and Iqbāl one of the Big Three of Urdu Literature) as he, with both his *Ars Poetica* and his own poems (first and foremost his *Musaddas*) introduced something resembling a Romantic revolution into the classical crystallized Urdu literature. As an Italian I feel him very much akin to some of our Risorgimento poets, so enthusiastically content-conscious but often alas so incapable of understanding the deeper reasons of artistic phenomena.²⁴ Actually Ḥālī in his long and detailed analysis of the *ghazal* fails to understand fully three points:

a) The only causes of the alleged *fauqīyat* of European literature is *not* abundance of translations, nor simply the fact that it is more natural and straightforward etc.

b) That highly interesting artistic phenomenon which is the classical *ghazal*-style, with its imagery, its metaphors, its *Leit-motive* has deeper roots than those imagined by the over-simplifying mind of Ḥālī (we saw above some rather childish "historical" interpretations of the reasons of metaphors etc.).

c) A renovation of the *ghazal*, from the point of view of "natural art" from which Ḥālī seems to start, is possible only through the abolition of the classical *ghazal* itself: classical *ghazal* is a highly *unnatural* form of Art.

We observe:

Regarding point a): Modern European lyrics is different from the classical Muslim *ghazal*-style chiefly in that European poetry is not based on a bidimensional decorative²⁵ visual play, but has a dynamic dimension which

²⁴ What Ḥālī wanted poetry to be, could perhaps be expressed by those famous words of Milton (*Tractate of Education* ed. Morris. London 1895, p. 18) "... poetry... being... more simple, sensuous and passionate" words enthusiastically approved by romantics as Coleridge as a fitting definition of Poetry. Ḥālī indirectly knew something of those Miltonian ideas of poetry.

²⁵ Actually, though Ḥālī here and there states that form (*lafz*) and contents (*ma'nā*) are in the relation of body (*jism*) to soul (*rūh*), he more often remains attached to the old canon of Muslim literary criticism, which sees rather this relation as one of body to "garment" (*libās*). His sharp and artificial distinction of *lafz* and *ma'nā* is one of the greatest handicaps of Ḥālī's literary criticism and shows him partly still a follower of the classical "decorative" taste.

seems unknown to classical Muslim style. A couple of examples will suffice to illustrate what I say (of course to *connoisseurs* of the classical Persian *ghazal* only: a tentative description of what *ghazal* is would be out of place here). Let us take e. g. Rilke's verses:

Uraltes Wehn vom Meer
welches weht
nur wie für Urgestein,
lauter Raum
reißend von weit herein...

That "lauter Raum reißend von weit herein" is an action totally absurd for an Oriental *ghazal*-poet. Somebody would object perhaps that even an action as that described by Ḥāfiẓ,

dūš dīdam ki malā'ik dar-i maiḥāna zadand

is equally absurd. But it is very easy to realize how different the two absurdities are. The fact of angels knocking at the tavern door is simply a moral absurdity, an exaggeration (a *mubālaḡā*, to use the well-known technical term) whereas in Rilke's expression a new physical plane, as it were, is introduced to suggest a new emotion. This "curving", this possibility of moving not only on a linear-visual plane but also freely in other directions, is what renders modern European poetry so *rich in new images and subjects* (a fact which Ḥālī rightly remarks without explaining its deeper reasons).

The same could be said of this other verse by the same German poet:

Der Heilige hob das Haupt und das Gebet
fiel wie ein Helm zurück von seinem Haupte...

It is quite improbable that to an Oriental *ghazal*-writer would ever occur the idea (for him) extremely strange of comparing a "prayer" to a "helmet". What unites the two terms of comparison in the European poet is a common *action*, in the Oriental poet it is a common (visual) *form*. It is clear that a comparatively limited number of things have a more or less clear common form, whereas the number of things to which the fertile imagination of a poet can give a common *field of action* is practically infinite.²⁶ So it happens that though oriental metaphors are often very strange to our taste, if we go deeper, we will easily see that a certain

²⁶ See interesting remarks on this in H. Ritter's *Über die Bildersprache Nizāmīs*. Berlin-Leipzig, 1927.

reasonable similarity of shape, of static linear form between the two objects compared is always preserved: so the moon is compared with a face, or possibly a omelette, or even, as we saw above, a nose to a mouse, but the moon is never brought into action, in a mythical way, as a personified entity, e. g. walking with its (or her) feet on the clouds etc.²⁷

To point b): Actually we have to look for the reasons of this difference deeper, into that metaphysical background of Art which is, for the *ghazal*-style, a sort of a visual antimythical neo-platonic *išrāq*. So when Shelley sings, in his wonderful ode *The Cloud*, of the moon among the clouds:

...that orbèd maiden, with white fire laden
whom mortals call the Moon,
glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor
by the midnight breezes strewn;
and wherever the beat of her unseen feet
(which only the Angels hear)
may have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof
the stars peep behind her and peer...

he is instinctively still connected with a *pagan* mythologizing world. Every orientalist knows how many thousands of *ghazal* verses include metaphors and comparisons having as chief ingredient the moon, but I think everybody will agree when I say that nowhere in the infinite number of classical *divāns* we could find such a moon-image as in Shelley's *Cloud*. The moon breaking the woof of the cloud's tent by the gentle touch of her feet is an absurdity to the *ghazal* writer — because the moon has no feet! The moon can only be compared with more or less round objects, or luminous objects, or possibly yellow objects, or, when it is *hilāl* with ships and vessels, but cannot *walk*: this, for a *ghazal*-writer would amount, consciously or not, to *but-parastī*. And all this, we would add, cannot be renewed or reformed without in the same time renewing or reforming neo-platonic Islam itself.

To point c): So the logical issue of Ḥālī's pleading for a "natural" reform of poetry would be the automatic annihilation of the *ghazal* itself and ultimately (though he is prudently opposed to all "excesses") the

²⁷ One of the consequences of all this is that an Urdu poet can write poetry in a foreign language (as Persian) more easily than, say, a German poet in Italian or vice-versa. It is interesting that Ḥālī had remarked that in his book on Ghālib (*Yādgar-i Ghālib* p. 388 ff.) where he maintains that one of the differences between European and Asiatic (sic!) art is that the first aims at "interpretation of Nature" (*neḥur-kī tarjumānī*), the second is a purely verbal perfectionment — brought to extreme degrees of *nazākat* — of a certain given world of images (those first "invented" by the *mutaqaddimīn*). In this way-Ḥālī says-for an Asiatic poet it is not so difficult as for a European to compose poetry in a foreign language(as Ghālib masterly did in Persian).

introduction of that simple *blank-verse*-style which is now attempted also in Muslim countries by some modern progressive writers. Hālī would mark so the starting point of an evolution in Art quite different from that initiated, *inside* the *ghazal*-style, in a masterly way, by Ghālib. The idea often expressed by Eastern and Western historians of Urdu literature that Hālī is a link in the evolution Ghālib-Hālī-Iqbāl is only partially true. The real renovator of the *ghazal* style is Ghālib, who succeeds in this in a way quite far from the *natural style* advocated by Hālī (Ghālib is one of the perhaps *less natural* Urdu poets). When Ghālib writes verses like

jādda cū nabz-i tapān dar tan-i ṣaḥrā binand

("they see the Road as a pulsating vein in the body of the Desert") or

*har qadam dūrī-e manzil hai numāyān mujh-se
mere raftār-se bhāge hai biyābān mujh-se*

("At every step I see the distance from the Station deeper and clearer: deserts have run away under my gait") or when in some perfect verses in his *masnavī Abr-i gauhar-bār* he expresses his dislike for the "fixed" and eternal paradise of lights of the traditional religions, he shows both a complete mastery of the old style and a taste for dynamic images unknown to his predecessors. Of course Ghālib's system for the reform of *ghazal* is the "narrow path": Ghālib is one of the most *difficult* poets of the Urdu-Persian literature. Hālī, as a romantic oversimplifier (his *Musaddas* could be translated by an able versifier into European stanzas with great ease) is rather in sharp contrast with Ghālib. The core of all his *Ars Poetica* could be poetically summarized with the following verses taken from his *Divan*:

If poetry is not charming (*dil-fareb*) don't be sad,
regret you must feel if poetry is not heart-melting (*dil-gadāz*).
The entire world can be allured by Art,
when it comes from your sincerity (*sādagī*) not from play (*bāz*)
If in thy personality (*zāt*) there is the pearl of Truth (*rāstī*)
Time will praise thee spontaneously (*be-niyāz*);
Gone are the days in which Lying was the faith of Poets,
don't pray any more with thy face turned towards that Qibla!