2:5 The Impact of the Musaddas

The Musaddas certainly seems to have had the desired impact on its 'onlie begetter', to judge from the letter which Sir Sayyid wrote to Hali on 10 June 1879 from the Park Hotel in Simla, to thank him for sending five copies of the First Edition (Ahmad Khan 1924:166; trans. based on Naïm 1981:111):

From the moment the book reached my hands I could not put it down till it was finished, and when it was finished I was sorry that it did. It would be entirely correct to say that with this Musaddas begins the modern age of poetry. It is beyond me to describe its elegance and beauty and its flowing quality. I am amazed that this factual theme, which is devoid of lies, exaggeration, and far-fetched similes—things that poets take pride in, has been expressed by you in such an effective and eloquent manner...

Modestly objecting only to the fulsome praises lavished upon himself in the Introduction, Sir Sayyid does go on to acknowledge his role in the poem's inspiration:

I was the cause of this book, and I consider that my finest deed. When God asks me what I have done, I will say: nothing. But I had Hali write the Musaddas.

The opening paragraph of Hali's Second Introduction describes the more general enthusiasm which the original Musaddas aroused so widely in the community in the early 1880s, in an excited summary account whose credibility is increased by Hali's natural modesty. Even the perhaps unlikely seeming claim of this quite abstract poem being acted out in dramatized performances is solidly confirmed by Sir Sayyid's report in his Safarnama-e Punjab of 1884 (Sandilavvi 1960:263-4):

The Muslims of Amritsar had actually built a theatre like the Parsis. There is a dramatic representation of the Muslims' decline, one part of which is extremely affecting. A curtain is opened to reveal the sea moving and a ship with a sleeping crew caught in the storm and sinking. Then this passage of the Musaddas is sung 'There is a boat caught in the whirlpool.'

The man or woman who sings these stanzas (i.e. M275-M276) indicates at each point how the ship is on the point of sinking. Such an atmosphere is created that people burst into tears.

32 The Musaddas

Although much work would be needed to establish just which groups of Muslims outside the immediate circles of Sir Sayyid's followers and admirers were affected by it, it does appear that for a few years at least a quite unprecedented phenomenon was unleashed in northern India. For this mass Musaddar mania to have spread as it did, in a way clearly quite different from the elite's reception of earlier Urdu poetry, many factors needed to be in place. They included the rather recent changes to the education system, to communications and to publishing, as well as the more general cultural and ideological shifts among the Indian Muslims in the decades immediately following 1857. But the mania would not have happened at all had the Musaddas not had for a new public the rare quality of articulating a whole new vision which is possessed by only a very few literary works in any generation. Some reflections upon this quality, which was indubitably possessed by the Musaddas for all its indubitable flaws, may be found in the pages briefly devoted to it from diverse, not always very sympathetic viewpoints by historians in English of Urdu literature.37

More vivid testimony to the impact of the Musaddas is yielded by the numerous parodies, imitations and parallel exercises which it inspired. These derivative poems—and very many more were certainly produced and published than the fourteen examples illustrated below—collectively demonstrate the extraordinary speed and power with which the Musaddas created an entire new poetic universe of its own, within which writers from often quite surprisingly diverse sections of Indian society felt it natural to explore issues which Hali had opened up in the verse format he had created. This inspiration continued for at least a quarter of a century, until the Musaddas finally became very dated, following the great changes in Indian political climate and concomitant literary fashions after the First World War.

The earliest imitations (Sandilvievi 1960:277-85) in some ways remain the liveliest. They were produced as counterblasts to its 'nature-ism', the term so loaded at the time with both theological and aesthetic implications. Soon after the publication of Hali's poem, one Maulavi Salim ud Din Jaipuri 'Tashim' completed his own Musaddas, with the chronogrammatic titles Hadidat ul maghab 'The Garden of Religion', 'Urų ij un naiz 'The Zenith of poetry', etc. (all yielding the year AH 1301 = AD 1884). Published in 1887, this craftily mixes the old language of rhetoric with a parody of the new style which it criticizes (ibid.:278):

Tasamuh ke lafz men hai jā ba-jā kāl Ma'ānī men hai pfike-pañ kā lagi kāl Āda bad-tavāra hai tarkāb mukhtal Tayaqqun nahīn hai to sunye mufassal

Hali’s Musaddas

"Ki har lafe-o misra’ na’e rang par hai
Har ik shi’r-o bina jude dhag par hai"38

A similar stance is adopted in the anti-Musaddas published in 1901 by another cleric, Qazi Muhammad Farooq Chiyakoti. Entitled Musaddas-e ‘Avâlî, following the usual practice of naming these productions after their author’s pen-name, this manages to work in a quotation (from M249) into a combined attack on Hali’s understanding of both poetry and religion (ibid.:279):

The shi’r ap ke pesthar silk-e gauhar
Hu’e ãj sandâs se kyoon vo badar
Jab aine taqî us men bad-bâ-e nehar
Hu’e ek dam men vo garde sardar
Vo ash’är ta’vâ-e dî hirz-e jân hain
Jo islam ke wâs-f-o madh-khâwân hain39

The Musaddas-e Hâziq of 1906 by a Professor Ghulam Hazrat Khan is on a much simpler scale than either of these. Indeed, its 360 stanzas make it longer than Hali’s Musaddas itself, and allow the poet to launch his attacks on ‘nature’ and all its execrated works across a very broad front. The ‘nature-ists’ are themselves mocked for their supposed mocking rejection of the basic practices of Islam (ibid.:280):

Dimâqhot men paidâ huâ ye khâlâ hai
Ki kâhá har ik nehar mutâqal hai
Tâmâkshiy kë gâb-il namâz aj kal hai
Muhazzab ko’l us pa karâ ‘aman hai
Ruka’ñon men do hâth ghutâпо pa dharnâ
Surti jânâ-b-e charâh sidon men karna40

When it comes to ‘natural poetry’, Haziq is particularly scornful of Hali’s disregard for the old niceties of rhyme. While rounding off a nicely contrasted pair of idioms, the clumsy rhyme of the final couplet is an unmistakable dig at the way so many of Hali’s stanzas seem to end with this type of rather plodding and anti-climactic over-emphasis on weak rhyming phrases (ibid.:281-2):


38 Words of uncertain meaning are awkwardly used everywhere, and the meanings are ambiguously conveyed. The expression is clumsy and the construction confused. If you don’t believe this, listen to it in detail. Every word and parenthesis is in a new style, every verse and stanza is in a manner apart.
39 Before you arrive, verses were necklaces of pearls, so why have they today become worse than a cesspool? / It was when it became filled with the stink of ‘nature’ that they suddenly became so foul.—Those verses which praise and eulogise Islam are a taunt of the heart and an anvil of the soul.
40 Their brains have become deranged, so that every wretched nature-ist says / ‘Prayer is a joke these days. Does any civilized man perform it?—/ Putting two hands on the knees in the actions of kneeling, and raising the bottom to heaven in the actions of prostration’.

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The Musaddas

Qavâfî ki jin par madâr-e sukhân hai
Unshî se hû’i in ko pâdî jalan hai
Qavâfî hain urâd ghar shi’r tan hai
Na hû’i gar qavâfî to loy kéhâkh fan hai
Jame khâkh ash’är men rang un kâ
Qavâfî se hai gâjîya tang un kâ41

Nor does the specific content of Hali’s Musaddas escape attack. Haziq uses Hali’s own notorious infatuation with Western ideas to combat his criticism (in M235) of the way Muslim philosophy continues to be based on Plato and Aristotle, beginning with a few choice ‘Hindi’-isms (ibid.:282):

Sanbhâlo garâ chorneh yâtân-e nehar
Na já’o nïkâl pî’e-jâmê se bâhâr
Falûtân kâ hikma mat men thâka kum-sar
Aristî se thâ jâmâf kaun bej-kar
Unheî sârâ Yûrap bhi mâne hu’ë hâi
Jâhân un ke rube ko jêre hu’ë hâi42

Not all Hali’s early imitators were inspired by the wish to detract from his poem, although there was less pressure upon supporters to compose amplifications of its grand statement than there was on opponents to contradict or belittle it. Within the immediate Aligarh circle, one graceful supplement was penned by Sir Sayyid’s younger disciple Shibli Numani (1857-1914). Appointed Lecturer in Persian and Arabic at Aligarh College in 1882, Shibli made a youthful name for himself as a poet, with his magnificently entitled Suhî-ye umûd ‘The Dawn of hope’ (1884). At a public performance by Aligarh students in 1890, he followed this up with a short Quami musaddas delivered in the passionate and affecting style for which he was famous. This substitutes the rather longer lines of the familiar ramal metre (fa’d-latun fa’d-latun fa’d-latun ja’iun) for Hali’s mutaaghêb. Its conclusion fills a conspicuous gap in Hali’s catalogues of the far-flung scenes of past Muslim glories with a mention of Delhi (Shibli:1892-18):

Marv-o Shirzâz-ô Safâhân ke vo zebb manâr
Bait-e Hamûri ke vo aivân vo dêvár vo dar
Mîro-ô Gharnâtû-ô Baghâdû kâ ek ik pattar
Aur vo Dîhît-e mårâm ke bostîa khândar

41 He has a burning hatred for rhymes, which are the basis of poetry. / Rhymes are the soul to verse’s body, and if there are no rhymes, then where on earth is the soul? / Maybe his verses be covered with dust—such is his style, because rhymes are too much for him.
42 Just watch your backs, you friends of ‘nature’, and keep your trousers on. / Who was the equal of Plato in wisdom, and who was greater as a philosopher than Aristotle? / All Europe—even honours them, and the world recognises their rank.
Hali's Musaddas

Un ke zarzor men chamakte hain vo jauhar ab tak
Dastanen unhen sub yad hain az-bar ab tak\(^43\)

As Shibli hands the stage over to the students, he takes his leave with a donnish reference to the 'endless tale' mentioned at the start of Hali's First Introduction (ibid.):

Un se sun ke ko'at afzana-e yarain-e vaqan
Ye dikh Tahin anekho ko vah Khwab-e kahan
Tere ki nam k"a al qaum ye gis hain bhajan
Tere hi naghma-e purdard ke argan
Puchhata hai ko'at un se nishan ke ter
Ye sund hain sab ram-kahani ter\(^44\)

Shibli's short poem is a far more graceful performance than that later achieved in the work of a former Aligarh student, the 92-stanza Musaddas-e Khasta published by Maulavi Muhammad Akramullah of Gujranwala in a cheap edition for the benefit of the general public. This author supplements Hali's catalogues of ruin with references to the rivers of his native Punjab and to the recent British victories in Egypt and Sudan (Khasta 1895:16):

Na Ganges na Jamna na Satluj na Jhelum
Na Daryaab Tagas ke matik rahe ham
Jadu ho ga'ate ham se yar-o hamdam
Huia Misr-o Suddah men kis ka ye chihram
Va kam-bahar ham hi musalman hain yaro
Ham apne ke' par pasheeman hain yaro\(^45\)

Even more provincial is the Musaddas-e 'Ulvah, published by Munshi Thahvar Ali, a police inspector from Budsan. Couched very much in Hali's plainly Arabicoizing style, the modest call to action issued in its 60 stanzas is to support the construction of a local madrasa, a project here imagined to enjoy angelic favour (Ulvah 1899:9):

Pate phir nazar tum pai jinn-o bashar ki
'Indyat ho har an kahir ul bashar ki

The Musaddas

Munavar ho har khatshi divar-o dar ki
Khalil anhken rih jin'eh shans-o gumar ki
Mala'ik kahan phir to apas meh mil-kar
Sabh-o sham dekh d'en Oldan ko chaal-kar\(^46\)

Another dimension of Hali's Musaddas, which tends to be played down by modern South Asian critics, is its outspoken loyalism to the British Empire. This loyalist sentiment remained widespread in Indian society until the First World War, during which it received crude expression in the little Musaddas-e Ahmad published as a pamphlet by Sayyid Shah Ahmad Husain of Barh near Patna. This is itself a loyal demonstration of the values of Hali's style at its most prosaic (Ahmad Husain 1916:3):

Haqiqat meh hai ye gavaranj' adil
Rah'nat-nawaz meh hai fird-e kami
Yahan 'aish-o zamin abha hai hasil
Khi hai j hoopsi bhi yahan 'aish-e kami
Piyeh pandi ik ghath par sher-o kahar
'Adlat hai aist siyast hai aist

The same attitude governs the equally short Musaddas-e 'Aziz, by Mirza Aziz ud Din Ahmad of Ghazipur. Written in Shibli's namal, though none with of his poetry, this stern warning to the Indian Muslims not to trust the Turks—the word is made to seem less friendly by here being spelt according to its English pronunciation—was published too late to affect the course of the war (Aziz 1919:4):

Turk ke namin se ab sajhi hamen nafrat hai
Kyon na nafrat ho ki Jamman se use ulfat hai
Ham musalman men Turk ki kahan 'izzat hai
Zer-agar ho gaiy Jamman ke be-gghair hai
Bha'lio Turk ye Turhah nahein Jamman hai ye
Ham musalmanen ke aarman ka dashman hai ye\(^18\)

\(^43\) Those fine vistas of Marv, Shiraz and Isfahan, those palaces, walls and gates of the Alhambra, / Every stone of Egypt, Granada and Baghdad, and the decayed ruins of our lamented Delhi— / All still have jewels glittering in their dust, all still remember their stories by heart.

\(^44\) I hear from these some story of our dear fellow countrymen, as they display to us that ancient dream. / It is to you, oh community, that they sing their hymns, as the organs of your sorrowful tale. / If anyone asks for a trace of you, they recite the whole of 'your endless tale'.

\(^45\) Of Ganges and Jumna, of Satluj and Jhelum, of Danube and Tagus we are no longer masters. / All friends and companions have parted from us. For whom is this mourning in Egypt and Sudan? / And it is just we Muslims who are wretched, friends, repenting what we have done, friends.

\(^46\) May jinn and men look on you kindly, and may you continually experience the favour of the Best of Men. / May every brick of its walls and doors be filled with light, and may sun and moon keep staring at it wide-eyed. / Then may the angels gather together and say, 'Let us go and visit Oldan [?] every morning and evening!'

\(^18\) In truth, this government is just, quite unique in looking after its subjects. / There is so much to enjoy here that even a hut here is a place of delight. / Lion and goat drink at the same watering-place, such is the justice, such is the policy.

40 41
Hali's Musaddas

After the end of the war, when atrocities like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar helped destroy loyalism’s former appeal, much of the spirit seems to have gone out of Musaddas writing too. The tradition is just kept alive by one or two last poems, like the Musaddas-e-Nimat, a sustained anti-Shia polemic by Maulavi Nimatullah Amrohi of the Muradabad Anjuman-e-Ishaat-e-Islam. This subverts Hali’s rhetoric to narrowly sectarian ends (Nimat 1920:29-30):

Agar mazhab-e rafta ba-haq hai to hazrat
Sivā chand shīr′on ke nārī hai unnat
Na mufadda two qu′ān na kāmil rīsālat
Na kuchh farā ham par na vājīh na sunnāt
Imām aur qu′ān hai donon qāhīb
To bās dīn-o inān hai donon qāhīb′ 49

The circle of inspiration surrounding the musaddas form, which began with Hali’s transfer of Shīte elegy to a larger historical stage, here reaches its wretched close. An alternative route of influences is suggested by the Musaddas-e Kausāri (Kausari 1903). This is not a true imitation at all, but a straightforward Shīte mursī′—though written in Hali’s mutaqqārī′—by one Daluram, a formerly fanatical Hindu converted to ardent Shīism while a veterinary student in Lahore.

A less complicated line of descent runs from the Hali of the Supplement to the last identified full-scale imitation. This is the Musaddas-e Lātīf by Maulana Abdul Latif from Sonepat, not far from Hali’s home town of Panipat. Its 250-odd verses are embellished with an ample panoply of footnotes to its copious Islamic references. A work of unselconscious conservatism, it goes for such obvious targets as the Western headgear still then being sported by Indian Muslims to the disapproval of the orthodox (Lātīf 1936:8):

Hu′e šāre Yūrāp pai dī se shādā
tarq-e hūdā cihon bāthce sarāpā
Libās aur šārat ko badā hūch ahā
ci zahar sab laqe ṣe bi-ku nalārā
Kamās aur pasān-o sāq ab liyā hai
Bare jābār se sar pai hai tk raḥār hai′ 50

49 If the Shīa school is right, sir, then apart from a few Shias the whole community is condemned to hellfire. / The Quran is no longer preserved, nor the former Apostleship, nor are duties, obligations and example laid upon us. / When Imām and Quran both disappear, then religion and faith both disappear.

50 Their hearts have all been filled with passion for Europe, and they have entirely abandoned the way of True Guidance. / Their clothes and appearance have changed in such a way that they have all started to look just like Christians. / They have now put on a shirt, trousers and suit, wearing with great pride a hat upon their heads.

The Musaddas

Although Hali too had much to say about Europe, albeit from a diametrically opposed perspective, his Musaddas had much less to say about India, whose Hindu inhabitants appear only as industriously charitable role models for their Muslim fellow countrymen (M134-M137). Some of these gaps were filled in the Musaddas-e Yās by Faqir Muhammad Ashiq of Jullundur Cantonment. Its extended plea for Hindu-Muslim unity finds room for suitable references to Indian history, like the religious tolerance of the Mughals (Yas 1916:12):

Yo Akbar vo Shāh-e Jahān ki hukumār
′Adālat se jīn kī thi khush-dīl ra′yat
Na ghāiron pai sahīh na qaumī rā′yat
Barabar thi qārāt kī sab par riyāsāt
Vazir un ke hindu mūsalān′ the donon
Mushir un ke hindu mūsalān the donon′ 51

Given the exclusively Muslim concerns of Hali’s Musaddas, it is perhaps most surprising of all to discover the existence of analogues written from an exclusively Hindu perspective. The later rise of Hindu causes these poems now to seem something of a curiosity. Nevertheless, they do testify most interestingly to the once far more widespread cultivation of Urdu, even of so untraditional and so communally focused a poem as Hali’s. At a traditionalist—and loyalist—Sanatan Dharm meeting held in the Chandni Chauk in Delhi in 1890, the year of Shibli’s performance in Aligarh, Lal Kidari Lal ‘Nirbhai Ram’ recited to great applause a 100-stanza poem composed in the same hazaı′ metre as Hali’s Petition. Later published as the Musaddas-e Nirbhai prakaş, this offers the assembly a diagnosis of the ills of the Hindu community couched in thoroughly familiar terms (Nirbhai Ram 1890:3):

Jalsa to khushā kā hai par aʃos yīh hai
Joi dharm kī haṭāl hai vo pashmura hui hai
Socho to sah jaaun vo hāt na’t hai
Jo vajh se ye hē haṭā sāk gā′t hai
Ai bhā′ya ghāiron kī kā sab kō ḍoṭ nahin hai
Apeh bhā ḍe kahen pari chaṭṭ kō ḍoṭ nahin hai′ 52

A much more ambitious production is the Musaddas-e Kaif or Bhārat- darpan ‘The Mirror of India’ by the then well known Delhi poet Pandit Brij

51 The government of Akbar and of Shāh Jahan, whose justice made the hearts of their subjects happy, / When there was no harsh treatment of others or partiality shown to their own community, when there was a policy of legal equality for all, / Their ministers were both Hindus and Muslims, their advisers were both Hindus and Muslims.

52 Although this is a happy event, one does nevertheless regret the feeble state of the Hindu faith. / So think to see what new thing has caused this flourishing vine to wither / Brothers, all this is not just the fault of others, and our hearts did not resolve this wound just like that.
Hal's Muzzaddas

Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi' who was associated with the Jullundur branch of the reformist Arya Samaj. Some 400 stanzas in length, this outdoes the Muzzaddas itself in the abundance of its additional materials, which include preface, marginal subject headings and notes embracing citations from Sanskrit, Gurmukhi and English sources, all reproduced in their original scripts. Closely modelled on Hal's poem, this Muzzaddas describes the past glory and the present ruin of India from an Arya Samaji viewpoint. Deploying the usual lists of evocative names to recall the golden age, the language is noteworthy for its mingling of the occasional Sanskritism (e.g. dharmatma 'righteous') with a quite skillful imitation of Hal's style (Kaifi 1903:32):

Jo râje yahân ke the dharmatma the
Na zalâm the vo parchi jangâzâ mî
dhe
Jahân-dar sach much vo zill-e khuda the
Khâlîqâ ki bhihâd par vo fidâ the
Bahut the yahân Bikram aur Ikshvâkâ
Na thâ ko't Zâhâk yân aur Hulâkâ35

In his treatment of less happy later times, Kaifi—just like Hal—particularly deplores the disunity of his community. The purpose here, however, is to establish the Arya Samaji agenda of restoring the modern multiplicity of castes and sub-castes to the fourfold class system of the Vedas (ibid:45):

Brahman na mîhmân bhrakman ke ghar ho
Na chharî ki chharî se shâr-o shakar ho
Na do vaisch kâ mel bâ-ham-digar ho
Ho chaukâ iâhar ek to ek uchhar ho
To phir qaunîyyat kais aur qaun kis kî
Bâhâgâ vo kyâ bâhâg ye gat ho jis kîarely soon after Kaifi's poem, the equally long and heavily annotated Muzzaddas-e Shafaq by Munshi Lalita Prashad 'Shafaq' was published in Kanpur, towards the other end of the Punjab—United Provinces area where the Muzzaddas fashion remained chiefly centred. This too is an Arya Samaji poem, and is actually subtitled Madd-o jaz-e Arya. Like Kaifi, Shafaq too uses quite a number of Sanskritisms, as in the second verse of his poem, on the language and cosmic function of the Vedas (Shafaq 1910:1):

35 The kings here were righteous, not tyrannical although experienced in war. / Rulers who were truly the shadow of God, devoting themselves to the welfare of His creatures. / Here there were many Bikrams and Ikshvâkus, here there was no Zâhâk or Hulâk.

34 When one Brahm finally be a guest in another Brahm's house, nor will a Kshatriya get on well with another Kshatriya. / When two Vaisakhas will not join together, when if one cooking-square is on this side, the other will be over there— / Then what sort of community identity is this, and whose is the community? How can one who behaves like this hope to progress?

33 The origin of creation and of the Vedas is one. The language of the four Vedas is quite separate from all others. / And is called the source of all languages, it is dev-bâhî, the word of God. / Truth and peace are their alpha and omega, and creation is in essence inspired by them.
composed in the native baint metre, using three lines—divided by the caesura—per stanza, so that the rhyme scheme is now -a-a-a. It is also purist in its vocabulary, thus sometimes successfully avoiding the awkward juxtapositions of different registers in Hali's original, but only at the aesthetic cost of seeming to over-domesticate the challenge of Hali's message. An idea of the structure and style may be gained from the version of M3:

Eho hul is qaus da vich dunyā
ev thik ghumman jidhā gheriā aī
Kandhā dīr te qah rāfān jhule
Hūn jādpā pār nigheriā aī
Suṭte ḍhāk mukhāntān sāne sāre
Pādā ik ne vī na pheriā aī²⁸

No literary translation into English appears to have been undertaken. In the preparation of our academic version we were unable to consult an anonymous English translation published in Karachi in 1975 (Naim 1981). Outside Urdu, therefore, the impact of Hali's Musaddas has been only somewhat feebly felt. Once it was articulated within its own literary tradition, however, the vision of the Musaddas ensured that the future would never be the same again. Hali's own later poetic oeuvre was inevitably greatly shaped by his most successful and original creation. If the artistic failure of the Supplement shows the crippling effect of too close an imitation, two other important poems show how Hali was able to return to the Musaddas form to more powerful effect, in each case with the inspiration that comes from working in a different metre.

Artistically the finest is the elegy for Hakim Mahmud Khan of 1892, which broadens into a powerful lament for the old Delhi and which is substantially Hali's own poetic swansong. Its 86 stanzas are written in the longer form of ramal (fā' tātun fā' tātun fā' tātun fā' tātun), whose stateliness is here put to fine effect (Divān, pp.218-29):

Daur-e akhir men ki tera tel tha sab jal chukkā
Bujhte bujhte tha kuchh ik tā ne sanbhālā sā lilyā
Kuchh ne yān teri phir agle vo la'ī-e be-balā
Jin se roshan ho gāyā kuchh din ko nām aṣlāf kā
'Abh-e mātt kā samān ānikhon men sab ki chāhā gāyā
Khvāb jō bhālā huā muuddat kā thā yād ā gāyā²⁹

²⁸ Precisely this is the state in the world of that community, whose boat is surrounded by a whirlpool. / The shore is far and a fierce storm rages. Just now, it seems, the whole crew is swallowed up. / Still all the sailors are fast asleep, not even one has turned over. (Compare the transliteration of the original stanza on p. 31 above.)
²⁹ In the last age, when your oil was all burnt, you just restored the dying flame. / Your earth again produced those former priceless rubies, leading a few days' lustre to the name of our forbears. / The whole period of the past again came before our eyes, and we remembered the vision we had so long forgotten.

Just as this elegy develops that aspect of the Musaddas which looks to the past with sadness, so too does the earlier Nang-e khdman 'The Shame of service' build on the didactic side which is turned towards the present with anger. Written in 1887, this addresses more successfully than the Supplement the consequences for the community of relying upon state employment. Its refusal to shape up to the self-reliance demanded by its destiny leads it into a purely utilitarian view of education, and a spirit-destroying aping of Western manners. The metre this time is the lighter version of ramal used in Shiblī's imitation (Sandilavi 1960:270):

Haq ne shā'ista-e har bāb baṭtā thi hameṁ
Ek ki dām men phāsnā na sikhāyā thi hameṁ
Rasta har kāčha-o manzil kā baṭtā thi hameṁ
Zina har bām pā chaṭṭān kā dikhāyā thi hameṁ
Asā kuchh bāda-e ḍhālīāt ne kīā māvālā
tau khdman kā līyā aur gale men dālā²⁵

A quarter of a century later, exactly the same poetic form was to be used in the first major statement of a new articulation of their destiny addressed to the Indian Muslim community by the greatest Urdu poet of the generation after Hali's. This was the Shīrva 'Complaint' recited by Iqbal at a meeting of the Anjuman-e Hijmat-e Islam in Lahore in 1911. Just as the Musaddas form of its 31 verses deliberately recalls Hali's masterpiece, so too does Iqbal's title echo that of yet another strophic poem by Hali, the Shīrva-e Hind 'The Indian complaint' of 1887 in which he used the tarkh-band form to explore once again the decline of the Muslims, this time in connection with the debilitating influences of the Indian climate. Iqbal's complaint, though, is an absolute one, grandly addressed not to India but to God (Matthews 1993:36-7):

Kyo musulmān mēn hai daulā-e duniā nā-yāb
Tērī qadrat to hoi vo jā kī na had hai na hisāb
Tā jo chāhā to uthe sīnā-e sāhā se hubāb
Rah-nāv-e dašt ho ālī-zāda-e maqī-e sarāb
Tā-n-e aqīrā hai rūsā'ī hai nā-dārī hai
Kyā tīr nām pāi marne kā 'iās khwārī hai²⁵

²⁵ God made us capable of every occupation, and did not teach us to be caught in only one trap. / He taught us the route of every street and stage, and showed us the stair to reach every roof. / It is just the wine of obliviousness which has intoxicated us, taken the collar of service and put it round our necks.
²⁶ Why do the Muslims find the riches of the world unattainable? Your power is, after all, without limit and beyond reckoning. / If You wish, You can make water bubble up from the desert, and the traveller of the sands is buffeted by the waves of the marsh. / We suffer the insults of strangers, insinuay, impoliteness. Is this wretchedness the return we get for dying for Your name?
Here at last, it may be suggested, the impact of the *Musaddas* finds its truest resonance, not in more or less mechanical imitation or translation but in a wholesale re-creation. Iqbal’s extensive stylistic remodelling of Hali’s poetic idiom successfully allow a full place to the grander register of Persian vocabulary. He was thereby able to construct a viable post-Halian rhetoric for serious Urdu poetry, through which he was able to convey an even more ambitious vision than Hali’s of the way in which an understanding of the Indian Muslims’ past might hope to remove some of the uncertainties of their present by helping to reveal the grandeur of the divinely appointed destiny again awaiting them.

3 Themes

3:1 Decline and progress

In both his Introductions to the *Musaddas*, Hali makes explicit the hortatory character of the poem. He ends the First Introduction by defining the aim of his composition:

This poem has not...been composed in order to be enjoyed or with the aim of eliciting applause, but in order to make my friends and fellows feel a sense of outrage and shame.

The Second Introduction refers to the subject matter of the poem as consisting ‘largely of criticism and blame’. Something of the didactic flavour of the poem is also conveyed by Hali’s footnotes, which explain in textbook style locations, scenes, and references. Given this conception of the *Musaddas* as an instrument of reform, it is perhaps not surprising that the poem is in part structured around a series of contrasts or oppositions. The main opposition in the poem is between decline and progress, and Hali’s vision of broad historical movements in the *Musaddas* is to a large extent based on this opposition. The depiction of time in the poem needs to be seen, at least in part, in terms of the interaction between the poem’s moral rhetoric and its rhetoric of temporality. It is to the latter that we now turn.

Something of the complexity of structure in the poem’s depiction of temporality is suggested by Abdul Haq, when he notes how Hali at the very beginning of the poem provides a glimpse of the contemporary condition, thereby preparing us for the future sections, and then immediately takes the reader to the original home of the *milt*, that is, the pivotal period of the Jahiliyya and the rise of Islam (Abdul Haq 1976:114). These broad movements of progress and decline correspond to the sections into which the poem is structured. Thus the poem opens with a brief section on the degenerate state of contemporary Islam (M3-M6) and then shifts to the past achievements of Islam (M7-M104), but this latter section contains a sub-section on the barbaric state of pre-Islamic Arabia (M8-M22). The section on the past glories of Islam is followed again by a long section on the decay of Islam, with a particular emphasis on the decline of Indian Muslims (M105-M281). Once again, though, this section contains pieces on European progress (e.g M131-M133, M171-M175), and on the progress of other Indian communities (M134-M137), as well as another point of contrast between early and contemporary Islam (M226-M228). The overall result is an interweaving of pictures of progress and its antithesis, the antithesis being either decline or the barbaric infancy of society. This interlocking of images of progress and decline is evocative of the