

## III

THE FIRST CENTURY OF URDU POETRY  
IN DELHI (A.D. 1730-1830)

THE Emperors Akbar, Jahāngīr, Shāhjahān, and Aurangzeb reigned one after another from 1556 to 1707. After the death of Aurangzeb the power of the Mugal Empire declined, and within a few years there were two wars of succession. In 1707 Aurangzeb's eldest son defeated his brothers and came to the throne, taking the name of Bahādur Shāh. His short reign of five years was disturbed by war with the Sikhs whose military power had been consolidated by the tenth Guru, Govind Singh (1675-1708). On Bahādur Shāh's death in 1712, another war of succession took place. Then Jahāndār reigned for 11 months (1712-13) and Farrukhsiyar for six years (1713-19). For the next twenty years the country round Delhi enjoyed at least comparative peace, which was rudely broken in 1739 by the invasion of Nādir Shāh, 'the greatest warrior Persia ever produced.' Muḥammad Shāh came to the throne in 1719 and retained his position till 1748. He was not a great or good ruler, but he was a patron of the arts, and during these twenty years of peace, poets assembled in Delhi.

The empire however began to break up. During 1724 Āṣaf Jāh made himself independent in the Deccan, founding the dynasty which still rules there; and in the same year Oṛdh (Avadh) practically ceased to recognise the authority of the capital. Shortly afterwards the Panjab and Bengal passed out of the Emperor's control. Aḥmad Shāh reigned from 1748 to 1754 when he was blinded and deposed; he was succeeded by Ālamgīr II who was murdered in 1759. Shāh Ālam reigned without power from 1759 to 1806.

Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī of Persia (not to be confounded with his namesake the Emperor) invaded India repeatedly between 1748 and 1761. The Marathas were at the zenith of their power in 1758, and between that year and 1804 made frequent attacks on Delhi or the Panjab. The exodus of poets from Delhi, several times alluded to below, will be understood if we realise how often it was the scene of bloody conflicts. In 1739 it was captured by Nādir Shāh, in 1756 by Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī, in 1760 by the Marathas, and in 1788 by the Rohilla chieftain, Gulām Qādir, who blinded the Emperor. General Lake defeated Sindhia at the battle of Delhi in 1803, and Holkar unsuccessfully attacked the city in 1804.

The chief Persian poets at the court of Muḥammad Shāh (1719-48) were Mu'izz ud Dīn Fiṭrat, Qazilbāsh Khān Ummed, Sulaimān Qulī Khān Vidād, Sa'd Ullāh Gulshan, Murtaẓā Qulī Khān Firāq, Shams ud Dīn Faqīr, 'Abd ul Qādir Bedil, 'Alī Qulī Khān Nadīm and Sirāj ud Dīn 'Alī Khān Ārzū. They all wrote in Persian, but occasionally amused themselves by writing couplets partly or wholly in Urdu. Sometimes one line was Urdu and one Persian, sometimes half a line was Persian and half Urdu; or the verbs and prepositions might be Persian and the other words Urdu, or the nouns and adjectives Persian and the rest Urdu. This was not true Urdu poetry. These men, therefore, are for the most part rightly excluded from our survey. One of them, however, Ārzū, deserves mention, for he was the instructor of Mīr Taqī and a number of other poets. To understand this we must remember that Urdu poetry followed the rules of Persian prosody, and a Persian might give good advice even though his knowledge of Urdu was slight. Ārzū was a learned man and wrote admirable Persian verse. He was also the author of two Urdu dictionaries, *Navādir ul Farz* and *Garāib ul Lugāt*.

Gradually a love for Urdu, the home language, grew up, and poets began to feel the absurdity of speaking one language and writing another. Further, they had heard of poets in the Deccan and seen some of their poetry. But the culminating influence was the visit to Delhi of Dakhnī poets such as Valī, Firāqī, Fakhrī and Āzād. In particular,

the importance of Vali's coming to Delhi cannot be over-estimated. He was far the greatest of the living Dakhnī poets, and he was able to show the Delhi poets not only how poetry could be written in Urdu, but to tell them that he was only one of a long line of Dakhnī writers in both prose and poetry. He appears to have visited Delhi first in 1700 and again in 1722. As we have already seen, even the street urchins used to go about reciting his verses. The Urdu poetry of north India was born very shortly after 1722; soon there were scores of poets writing it. Mīr Taqī's anthology, compiled in 1752, contains the names of 70 Delhi poets and 32 from the Deccan and Gujrat. The process of Persianisation now received a great impetus. Persian writers became the sole models. Persian words, idioms, images and sentiments were introduced, together with Persian history, geography and legends. What was called 'polishing' the language was really 'Persianising' it; poetry became more and more artificial and un-Indian. Persian gardens with Persian trees, fruits and flowers, were transplanted to India, while Persian scenery and customs, even Persian heroes and heroines, found a new home there. We had something similar in our own country, though to a very much more limited extent, when our poets wrote of nymphs, fauns, satyrs, naiads and muses, or of Olympus with its gods and goddesses, or of Elysium and celestial ambrosia.

In Urdu everything now became foreign, artificial and exotic. Urdu critics have themselves often admitted that the old Hindi poets were far truer to nature. To say that a garden was so beautiful that birds fainted in trying to fly over it conveys no meaning, but a few lines suggesting the beauty and perfume of the flowers gives a real picture of their loveliness.

This sterilising process, which had begun as far back as the time of Qulī Qutb Shāh, was already well marked in Vali's later works; poetry became increasingly artificial to the time of Nāsikh (d. 1838) and his disciples, whose writings are little more than lists of correct idioms. Since then a healthy reaction has set in, and there is reason to hope that Urdu poetry will in the future more adequately fulfil its real function. As we shall see later on, the Lucknow school

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was even more artificial than the school of Delhi. There was always a tendency to use similes and metaphors for their own sake as mere flourishes, and this was carried to incredible lengths in Lucknow.

The most serious result of copying Persian writers was the introduction of debased forms of erotic sentiment. The earlier Delhi writers were nearly all Šūfīs, or wrote as if they were. Some people perverted pure Šūfī doctrines, and Šūfī terms of strong love towards a Divine object were used by men of polluted minds with an entirely different meaning. Such writings are now condemned by all thinking Indians and belong to a past age. We do not expect them to-day.

This chapter deals with a period of approximately a hundred years (1730-1830). The first part of it exhibits the features of the previous age. Poetry continued to be simple and natural; poets wrote of what they had seen and felt; metaphors and similes were unartificial and straightforward. There was no hankering after excessive ornament, for it was realised that beauty does not require to be adorned. The figure of speech known as *īhām*, playing on words, which is so common in Hindi literature, continued for a considerable time; it ceased only towards the end of the eighteenth century.

This period falls conveniently into three parts, associated specially with the names of (1) Hātīm, (2) Mīr, Saudā and Dard, (3) Inshā, Muṣṣafī and Naẓīr; but the sections overlap, and the poets of the third were young contemporaries of the poets of the first.

**A. The Age of Hatim** is characterised by pure, chaste and effective language, by poetical vigour and fervour, and by monotonous sameness of subject, the theme of love pervading nearly all that was written. Plays on words were common; similes and metaphors were few. Most of the writers were Šūfīs.

**B. The Age of Mazhar, Sauda, Mir and Dard.** The language assumed a new power—the gold was being refined, the sapling became a sturdy tree, the boy became a man. Šūfī influence continued strong. This is the time of the 'Four Pillars of Urdu,' Mazhar, Saudā, Mīr and Dard. The

poets had nothing new to say, they therefore devoted themselves to elaborating the old subjects; they remained in their garden, not venturing outside the gates, but giving themselves to intensive cultivation within. Owing to the unscientific habit of arranging poetry according to alphabetic or other arbitrary order, it is not possible to follow the development of thought or language in the case of individual writers. When we remember that some of them lived to a great age—Mīr was 86 when he died—we realise how much we have lost.

C. **The Age of Mushafi, Insha and Nazir.** There was no real advance in this period; old subjects were re-arranged and there was much more humour. A regrettable feature is the introduction of *rekhtī* (pp 30, 54).

The greatest poets who come into this chapter are perhaps first Mīr, then Saūdā and Nazīr, lastly Mīr Ḥasan and Dard. The greatest single poems are Mīr Ḥasan's romances, *Sih̄r ul Bayān* and *Gulzār i Iram*, and Aṣar's *Khvāb o Khayāl*.

#### A. THE AGE OF ḤĀTIM

We now turn to the Age of Ḥātim, first noting the names of Afzal and Zāṭallī, two writers who lived before Urdu poetry properly began in Delhi.

93. MUḤAMMAD AFZAL (d 1625) belonged either to the Deccan or to Jhanjhāna near Meerut (Meerut). He was the author of a remarkable *Bārāh Māsā* (600 lines long) in Hindi metres and full of Hindi sentiment. It tells of Hindu life and festivals, and is entirely Indian. Yet it is permeated with Persian expressions. The picture of the lonely wife talking to her companions about her absent husband corresponds to that found in many Hindi poems. A Dakhnī poet called Afzal, possibly the same man, wrote a glowing account of the life of the saint 'Abd ul Qādir Jilānī.

94. MĪR JA'FAR ZĀṬALLĪ or ZĀṬALĪ (1659-1713) was a confirmed jester, and so was named Zāṭallī (jester) by one of the princesses. He wrote satires on nearly everybody, not sparing even Aurangzeb's sons. He accompanied one of these sons, Kām Bakḥsh, to the Deccan, where perhaps he

received his first poetic inspiration. Most of his verse is Persian, but his Urdu verses show remarkable vigour and freshness. His description of the turmoil following the death of Aurangzeb is a fine piece of writing. Though full of Persian words it does not show Persian influence in thought. His autobiographical poem, *Sulūk*, 200 lines in length, shows the same characteristics. He is also the author or collector of a number of proverbs. For his prose see No. 182. He seems to have been put to death by the Emperor Farrukhsiyar.

#### THE DEATH OF AURANGZEB

BY MĪR JA'FAR ZĀṬALLĪ

(After Aurangzeb's death his sons A'zam and Mu'azzam engaged in internecine warfare to obtain the throne; Mu'azzam was successful.)

1. Where shall we find so excellent a king,
2. Complete, consummate, perfect, knowing hearts?
3. The world is weeping tears of blood,
4. And gentle sleep to no one comes
5. Because of cannon's noise and guns,
6. Men carrying goods and guns upon their heads,
7. And fleeing here and there on every side;
8. Beds on their heads, and children in their arms.
9. Cutting, smiting on all sides
10. Wrenching, splitting on all sides
11. On all sides death and violence.
12. Turmoil, axes, daggers, poniards!
13. That side A'zam, this Mu'azzam,
14. Fighting, struggling, both I find,
15. But let me see whom God approves as king!
16. For whom the faithful offer Friday prayers.

95. AḤMAD, of whom nothing is known, is the author of the following beautiful poem, found in a MS. notebook dated 1748. The date of the poem may be put provisionally at 1650-1700.

#### A VISION OF DEATH

BY AḤMAD

1. When passed the night and came the day,  
'Twas then I understood.
2. Ere I had been one hour awake,  
Ah, then I understood.

3. When I had drunk the cup of death,  
My eyes were opened then ;
4. When on the bier my corpse they placed,  
'Twas then I understood.
5. I nothing recked of covering quilt or cloth.
6. When 'neath my head the stone they placed,  
'Twas then I understood.
7. What time my friends left me and went,  
They left me quite alone.
8. Munkir, Nakir, both questioned me,  
'Twas then I understood.
9. When came the time of my account,  
My eyes were opened then ;
10. I read the statement of my works ;  
'Twas then I understood.
11. My life was spent, the whole of it,  
No work had I to show.
12. When passed the noonday of my life,  
'Twas then I understood.
13. Save God and the apostle now,  
On Aḥmad's side was none ;
14. But when I trusted grace divine,  
'Twas then I understood.

96. NAJM UD DĪN (SHĀH MUBĀRAK) ĀBRŪ (c. 1692-1747) really belonged to Lucknow, but went to Delhi when quite young and spent his life there. His first and chief collection was lost in the Mutiny, but a shorter one, perhaps containing selections from the other, is said to be extant. He was also the author of a good romance, entitled *Man'izā e Arāish i Ma'shūq*. His importance lies principally in the fact that he led the way and had a number of pupils. He indulged in a good deal of punning, but wrote good, idiomatic Urdu.

97. MUḤAMMAD SHĀKIR NĀJĪ died in 1754 at an early age. He was a poet of great promise, whose career was prematurely cut short. Only ten lines survive out of a long poem in five lined stanzas (*mukhammas*) which used to be greatly admired. It was written just after Nādir Shāh's invasion in 1739 and vividly describes that event and the desolation it created. It pictures clearly the life of those times. Owing to the excessive use of metaphors his style is very difficult, but people like his clever, critical verses, and the work which he left acquired considerable popularity.

It has not been published. He was irritable, quarrelsome, facetious and sarcastic.

98. SHARF UD DĪN MAZMŪN (b. before 1689, d. about 1745) belonged to Jajmaū near Agra, but went early to Delhi. He was a pupil of Ārzū who called him the Toothless Poet, owing to his having lost all his teeth. Only 400 lines of his verse are extant; they are filled with out of the way words and phrases, artificial metaphors and unsavoury insinuations. He lived as a *darvesh* in a mosque, but originally was a soldier.

99. MUḤAFĀ KHĀN YAKRANG, one of the earliest Delhi poets, was a contemporary of Mazmūn. He left a volume of love-poems in the Ṣūfī style, interpreted in different ways according to the taste of the reader, and an elegy. He was regarded as a very accomplished poet.

100. **Hatim.** ZUHŪR UD DĪN HĀTIM (b. 1699, d. 1781 or 1792) was the greatest but one of the Delhi poets who preceded Saudā and Mīr. Under Valī's powerful influence he set himself to write Urdu poetry in which he was very successful. He had a clear, natural and eloquent style. His first volume, the *Divān*, which was very large, was in the old manner, full of punning. Later on he wrote another book in which he inserted selections from his first, giving it the name of *Divānzāda*, 'son of the Divān.' The subject matter is that mixture of erotic and Ṣūfī sentiment, which is found in so many of the early Urdu writers. He became famous as the teacher of others, and in the interesting Persian preface to the *Divānzāda* he claims 45 pupils, one of them being no less a personage than Saudā. He tells us about the Hīndī words and expressions which he had given up, and the Arabic or Persian words which he had employed, and excuses himself for following the popular fancies in certain spellings. He winds up with a pious hope that 'Please God, no inelegant word will be found' in the new and selected *Divān*, though he admits that in the former, larger one, he had many words and idioms which he now dislikes. It includes those elegies, romances and lyrics from his larger work which he considered most worth preserving.

101. MUḤAMMAD AḤSAN AḤSAN was a contemporary poet of whom next to nothing is known. A few lines of

his which are extant show that he used an early form of the language.

### B. THE AGE OF THE 'FOUR PILLARS OF URDU'

#### —MAZHAR, SAUDĀ, MĪR, AND DARD

102. **Mazhar.** MIRZĀ JĀN JĀNĀN MAZHAR (1699–1781) was the greatest of the Delhi poets before Saudā and Mīr. His father was in the service of the Emperor Aurangzeb, but died when Mazhar was hardly more than a boy. Until he was thirty years of age he lived in enclosures containing the tombs of holy men. It was during this time that he came under Sūfī influence. He was a man of hasty temper, but very friendly and jovial; rather faddy and very independent; after becoming an ascetic he refused all rewards, declining even large sums of money. Living as a *darvesh*, he had pupils in the art of poetry, and religious disciples who received spiritual instruction from him. His death was tragic: being a strong Sunnī he once unguardedly expressed disapproval of something in the Muḥarram procession, with the result that he was shot during the night. He lingered a day or two but refused to describe his murderer. He is revered as a *shahīd* or martyr.

Āzād calls him one of the Four Pillars of Urdu; his reputation in Urdu is surprising, for only a few score of his couplets are extant; but his language was so clear and limpid and his Persian constructions so pleasing to the people of his time that he was awarded a very high position.

103. **Sauda.** MUHAMMAD RAFĪ SAUDĀ (1713–80) was formerly considered the greatest of Urdu poets. Even now some readers of the old school would give him that rank. He is best discussed in connection with his great contemporary, Mīr Taqī Mīr (p. 49). Saudā was born and brought up in Delhi, where he lived till life became almost unbearable. Nādir Shāh's invasion was a thing of the past, but Aḥmad Shāh's repeated attacks from the north took place when Saudā was in the prime of life, and on the south were the Marathas, anxious to get all they could out of the city. Nearly all Urdu poets left Delhi, one after the other. Saudā went to Farrukhābād (c. 1665) and, on the death of the Navāb in 1771, to Faizābād where Shujā'ud Daula then lived. Āsaf

ud Daula succeeded him in 1775 and moved his court to Lucknow. Saudā went with him, was given a pension and received the title of Malik ush Shu'arā, King of Poets.

It has been said that he was the first to write odes and satires, and certainly it was he who first wrote them with power. He and Zauq are the greatest ode writers in Urdu, and no one has approached him in satire. He was a good writer of elegies and is surpassed only by those who, like Anīs and Dabir, have made a speciality of elegies. His didactic poems and lyrics are numerous, but those forms of verse did not suit his temperament; he also wrote many riddles in verse. Such riddles are common in Hindi, and some are attributed to Amīr Khusrāu. Saudā's are very good, but we cannot give the name of 'poetry' to that form of verbal juggling. Happily his example has not been followed.

Saudā's poetical works may be divided as follows: (i) over 40 odes, a majority of them in praise of navābs, about a third celebrating Muḥammad and his relatives, the rest purely satirical; (ii) nearly 100 elegies with an average of 100 lines each; and (iii) a large number of lyrics, containing perhaps 10,000 lines in all. There are also a number of other short poems in various forms.

He used to go about with a servant named Gunca who carried pen and ink. When annoyed he called at once for his writing materials, and there and then, whether at home or in the street, began a savage satire against the object of his annoyance; and there were few bold enough to risk his anger.

His odes are regarded as equal to the best Persian odes, on the ground that in force of language he is superior to Anvarī and Khāqānī, while he puts 'Urfī and Zuhūrī to shame with his delicate imagination. He was greater as an Urdu writer than as a poet. He had a power, not equalled by any other Urdu poet, of making words do his bidding; he stands alone in his manipulation of the language, which he raised to a new pinnacle. (See No. 184.)

103a. ASHRAF 'ALĪ KHĀN FIGĀN (d. 1772), a foster brother of the Emperor Aḥmad Shāh, only second rate as a poet, but very clever and witty, was famed for the excellence of his Urdu. He left one volume of poems.

104. **Mir.** MUHAMMAD TAQĪ MĪR (1724–1810) belonged

to Agra, but on the death of his father went to Delhi where he lived till 1783. When he forsook it he went by invitation to Oudh. The story that leaving home in poverty he reached Lucknow unknown, and took part in a poetical meeting with such effect that he was at once recognised and received with honour, is untrue. He remained in Lucknow till his death. His sense of his importance made him decried others. A famous dictum of his is on record that at that time only Saudā and he were real poets, Dard was half a poet, and Soz a quarter. He wrote an ode called *Ajgarnāma*, the Dragon Story, in which he represented himself as a huge serpent swallowing up other poets, who appear as rats, snakes, scorpions and centipedes. Allowance must be made for him; his life was embittered and sad, he had been disappointed in love and was very poor. Naturally proud, he was rendered still prouder by misfortune. After he left Delhi things were better, for the Navābs of Oudh were very kind to him, but he was so touchy that he quarrelled with his benefactors. Azād's stories about these matters are doubtless exaggerated, but they are not wholly false.

Mir was at his best in lyrics and romances; his lyrics, in fact, have rarely been equalled. In romances he has few equals and only one superior, viz. Mir Hasan. The impassioned *vāsokeh* may be regarded as a sub-division of the lyric. In this form of verse, which he was the first to write in Urdu, he has never been surpassed. All these suited his tender and sad nature. But he was unfitted for the splendour of the ode, and his odes are poor; elegies he hardly attempted. He was not a court poet, and like Valī, Dard and Ātish, had an aversion to writing panegyrics of great men. When Dr. Gilchrist was beginning his work in Fort William College, Mir was thought of as a possible translator, but was passed over on account of his great age.

He wrote several volumes of lyrics containing between 30,000 and 40,000 lines, and a large number of romances. Those on which his great fame rests deal with love; they are *Shu'la e 'Ishq* translated into prose by Saudā, and *Daryā e 'Ishq*; his *Sāqī Nāma* on Spring is nearly as good, though shorter, and *Josh e 'Ishq* is also good. The others do not attain the same level, most of them are short.

He was very fond of keeping animals and wrote several poems about them, but they do not reach a high standard of excellence. One was on a dog and a cat, another on a goat, another on the death of his cock, and another on a kitten called Mānī.

Some of his poems are on natural phenomena such as heavy rain, which on one occasion brought down his house, and on another spoilt a journey which he was making; one was on his search for a livelihood, and one on 'Lying'; he wrote one on Navāb Āsaf ud Daula's hunting. His *Tanbih ul Khayāl*, professedly on the greatness of poetry, is actually a personal attack on a young man. His *Ajgarnāma* has been mentioned above. Some of his love poems are inferior; such are *Mu'āmalāt e 'Ishq*, and *I 'jāz e 'Ishq*.

He wrote in beautiful, simple, almost conversational language, but he is unequal. His best is the best that Urdu possesses. One critic has said *pastash bagāyat past, balandash bisyār baland*—'his depths are extremely low, his heights very high.'

**Sauda and Mir.** These two great writers were contemporaries and lived for long in the same town, Delhi; but they were a complete contrast to each other in both character and style. Mir was sad, tender, gloomy and poor; Saudā living in comfortable circumstances, was jovial and boisterous, taking a cheerful view of life. Mir was very retiring, and disliked courts and court life; Saudā revelled in public assemblies and loved courts; he was a thorough man of the world. Mir's writing was characterised by simple language, full of pathos and emotion; Saudā wrote with vigour and grandeur. Like Marlowe, he had a 'mighty line,' sometimes his style was turgid. Mir at his best was the better poet, but Saudā was the greater master of Urdu. From these differences it follows naturally that Mir excelled in poems of love, lyrics and romances, while Saudā's best efforts were in his odes or panegyrics and in his bitter satires. Mir's sole panegyric is not worth reading, his odes are poor, and his satire, the *Ajgar Nāma*, cannot be compared with his better work; similarly when Saudā writes lyrics he is always in danger of bursting their bonds and changing them into odes, and



his romances are of inferior quality. The success of his elegies lay not in their pathos, but in their descriptions of battles and scenery.

One writer has remarked acutely that every age of Urdu has had its pair of poets: one natural, who wrote from the heart, the other artificial, writing more for effect. He mentioned the following writers, the first in each case being the natural poet: Mir and Saudā, Muṣḥafī and Inshā, Ātish and Nāsikh, Gālib and Zauq, Dāg and Amīr.

105. MUḤAMMAD ḤUSAIN KALĪM (fl. 1750) was an author who wrote both verse and prose. He translated into Urdu a difficult Arabic work called *Fuṣūṣ ul Hikm*, and wrote a little treatise on Hindi prosody and rhyme. His collection contains a large number of poems in the more usual forms. His poetry has never been popular; Mir Ḥasan says because it 'lacks salt,' but Mir says it is too difficult; the fact is he had a style of his own, and people did not like it. Practically no facts about his life are known. (See No. 183a.)

106. QIYĀM UD DĪN QĀIM (d. between 1787 and 1795) belonged to Cāndpūr, but lived in Delhi till the troubles compelled him to leave. He had several teachers and quarrelled with them all. He was a man of strong imaginative power with a good style, and by some has been regarded as nearly equal to Saudā. His poems include very many lyrics and a number of odes, some eulogistic, others satirical. He wrote also some romances such as *Masnavī i 'Ishq i Darvesh*, *Hairat Atzā* and *Ramz us Ṣalāt*. His pupil, Kamāl, put him as second only to Saudā among the poets of the century; Shefta, however, regards that statement as absurd. He was the author of a Persian anthology of Urdu poets, entitled *Makhzan i Nikāt* (1754). Perhaps his greatest success was in quatrains. His poems were published in 1927.

107. **Dard.** MĪR DARD (1719-1785), one of the Four Pillars of Urdu (p. 41), and one of the greatest of Urdu poets, was a Ṣūfī who wrote only religious lyrics and other poems of that type. He never wrote odes, romances or satires, and he avoided all praise of men, for his life was one of absorption in the duties of religion. All through the period of trouble which lasted forty years, he remained in Delhi, the only well known poet who did so.

He gave up soldiering to become a *darvesh*. When a mere boy he began writing religious prose tracts. We know the names of a dozen of his prose works, mostly dealing with matters of religion. Like many Ṣūfīs of the time he was musical and one of his tracts is entitled *Ḥurmat i Ginā*, the Honour of Singing (not *Ganā*, wealth, as sometimes stated). These tracts are all in Persian. As a lyric writer he has perhaps never been surpassed in Urdu; his verses were so keen and trenchant that they were likened to sharp swords, and were it not that he wrote almost altogether in one style he would rank with the two or three greatest poets in the language. When he died, one of his disciples said, 'Alas! gone from the world is God's beloved.'

108. MUḤAMMAD MĪR SOZ (1720-98) belonged to Delhi, where he was brought up. He first called himself Mīr, but changed his name to Soz because Mīr Taqī was already known as Mīr. He was noted for his strength of arm, his archery and his calligraphy. In his youth he was extremely worldly, but when he was about 57 he completely changed his mode of life and thought. He was very poor and made several unsuccessful attempts to secure a regular income sufficient to live upon. He left Delhi in 1777 and after wandering from place to place, settled in Lucknow in 1797 where he died the following year. He cannot be called a great poet, though he had a considerable command of language, chose his words well and always wrote very pure, idiomatic and simple Urdu. His poetry is a collection of beautiful and charming words, with little thought behind them; *vox et praeterea nihil*. He did not write much; about 7,200 lines are extant. Apart from his lyrics he left between 40 and 50 quatrains which are in the same style and marked by the same excellence. His two romances are inferior.

He was a wonderful reciter and his voice was full of pathos; as he recited he acted with intense realism. On one occasion he so vividly acted a passage referring to a snake that the audience rose up in alarm, and on another he was so overcome by his self induced emotion that he fainted on the floor.

109. ṢANĀ ULLĀH KHĀN FIRĀQ was a pupil of Dard (No.

107) and belonged to Delhi, but his dates are not known exactly. He was a physician in his youth and acquired great fame in this connection. When he took up poetry he made very rapid progress, so that soon his name was as well-known for poetry as for medicine. Like most poets of those days he spent more time in polishing his verse than in developing his thought.

110. AḤSAN ULLĀH KHĀN BAYĀN (d. 1798) belonged to Agra, but was born in Delhi. In old age he went to Haidarābād, where he was employed during the last few years of his life. He was a poet who had a considerable flow of smooth, good, idiomatic language, not marked by much poetic power. There are several MS. copies of his poems.

111. MĪR MUHAMMADĪ BEDĀR (d. between 1793 and 1797) belonged to Delhi and was a well-known member of the Cishtī sect. Only a little of his work has come down to us; it consists of lyrics of some merit.

112. BAQĀ ULLĀH BAQĀ (d. 1791) was born in Delhi, though he came of an Agra family. He is better known for his quarrels with Mīr and Saudā than for his poetry, but his poetry, which is largely religious, shows him to have been no mean poet.

113. Mīr Hasan. MĪR GULĀM ḤASAN ḤASAN (b. about 1736, d. 1786) is one of the great names in Urdu poetry. He was born in Delhi, but during his boyhood went with his father to Faizābād, a place to which he became greatly attached. Some years later he went to Lucknow where he remained till his death. He is famous for his romance, *Sihr ul Bayān*, often called simply *Maṣnavī e Mīr Hasan*, the most popular romancé in Urdu. This was written within a year of his death. In idiomatic, simple and beautiful language it tells the story of the loves of Prince Benazīr and Badr Munīr. The idiom is strikingly like that of to-day. Largely on account of this poem, Mīr Ḥasan is considered the greatest romance writer in Urdu. He wrote ten other maṣnavīs, the best of which is *Gulzār i Iram* which praises Faizābād and satirises Lucknow; there is another on the same theme. Next after *Gulzār i Iram* in poetical power is the poem on the marriage of Aṣaf ud Daula. Two others speak of

Javāhir 'Alī Khān; one is on various kinds of Indian food; one, *Rumūz ul 'Arifīn*, is religious; it is not of any poetic value. Most of his poems are comparatively short, but *Sihr ul Bayān* is 4,442 lines long.

He wrote seven odes, panegyrics on navābs and other prominent men of the time; their poetic merit is small. He was, however, a good lyric writer; his collection of lyrics contains nearly 10,000 lines and has the same characteristics as his romances. He was also the author of an anthology in Persian which deals with 300 Urdu poets; in many points it is inaccurate. He had a great flow of language and a remarkable command of the best idiom; his style was sometimes ornate, but always clear.

#### C. THE AGE OF MUṢHAFĪ, INSHĀ, AND NAZĪR

114. **Mushafi.** GULĀM HAMADĀNĪ MUṢHAFĪ (1750-1824) belonged to Amrohā, but went as a young man to Delhi, which he considered his native place. He was a writer of extraordinary fluency who could compose verse almost as he talked. In his poverty he used to compose on the spur of the moment and sell his poetry at so many lines a penny according to the willingness of the purchaser to pay. He wrote much more than has come down to us. If he had given more time to his composition he might have been a great poet, for in some of his writings there are signs of greatness. It has been said that he had an all-embracing mind, and could, when he chose, write like Saudā, Mīr, Soz, Inshā or Figān. He enjoyed a great reputation and had numerous pupils. He left no less than eight volumes of poetry. He was at his best in lyrics, but wrote also odes and romances. In the simplicity of his style he resembled Soz or Mīr, in his idioms Saudā. His purity of language was such that even to-day people turn with pleasure to read extracts from his works. His verse, which is very even in quality, is free from the obscenity which characterises so much of the verse of that age. Considering the circumstances of his writing there is a surprising amount of vigour and terseness in it. His last years were spent in quarrels with Inshā, but he found time in 1794 for the compilation of an important Persian anthology, dealing with 350 Urdu poets.



115. **Insha.** INSHĀ ALLĀH KHĀN INSHĀ (d. 1817), the great rival of Muṣḥafī, was one of the most remarkable figures in Urdu literature. He was a very clever man with an extremely good memory, and wrote in several languages. Until near the end of his life, when he was depressed by misfortune and poverty, he treated life as a joke; nearly everything he wrote was full of humour and sparkle. He was not so much a great poet as a brilliant writer. Born and brought up in Murshidābād, he went in 1786 to Delhi where the blind Emperor held his phantom court. Dissatisfied with his prospects he proceeded to Lucknow and there the Emperor's son, Sulaimān Shikoh, gave him assistance, and later the Navāb, Sa'adat 'Alī Khān, and he became bosom friends. But his inveterate habit of joking was the cause of his undoing. In 1810 he ceased to be *persona grata* at court, indeed he was turned out of Lucknow, though afterwards permitted to return; and he spent the rest of his life in semi-confinement. Āzād's account is exaggerated; Inshā did not become insane or suffer the extreme poverty related, while the famous poem, which we are told fell like a bombshell in the Lucknow poetical assembly, was in reality written years before, in Delhi.

He had disagreements with other poets in Delhi, but when after his arrival in Lucknow he ousted Muṣḥafī as companion to Sulaimān Shikoh, a quarrel of great intensity broke out; the two poets abused each other in unmeasured language, while their patrons incited them to still greater efforts. Muṣḥafī was the natural poet, Inshā the clever, if somewhat artificial versifier (p. 50). Court life degraded his poetry, made it cleverer and more artificial, and took away its life. Yet when he liked he could write in a different style; his striking prayer beginning 'O merciful God! have mercy!' is an example of this. It is worthy of note that after he was ejected from the Lucknow court his poetry improved in sentiment and feeling. His writing is always characterised by brilliance, humour and versatility.

His chief collection is between 8,000 and 9,000 lines long; some of the lyrics are good, but there is little poetic feeling. His *rekhtī* poetry is extremely interesting, and, strangely enough, it is not obscene. Its linguistic value is considerable.

He was perhaps at his best in his odes, nine in all. The most famous of them is that on the Jubilee of George III, 1810. He wrote also some satirical poems which are not of great merit.

One of his most famous works is a Hindi prose story called *Kahānī Theth Hindī Men*, in which no Arabic or Persian word is employed. His most striking work is contained in *Daryā e Laṭāfat* written in Persian. Part I, a treatise of the greatest interest on the Urdu language, is by Inshā, the second part, on prosody, is by his friend, Qatīl. We are here concerned only with Inshā's part; it is the first grammar of Urdu written by an Indian. He discusses not only Urdu grammar, but Urdu sounds and dialects, even individual peculiarities of pronunciation. Thus there was a certain Mir Gafr Gainī who had a defect of speech; he used a uvular trill in place of the three sounds *r*, *ṛ* and *l*, and there is a long letter in which Inshā has written all the sounds as he pronounced them. In one respect Inshā was a century, and a quarter ahead of his time. He recognised that the correct form of foreign words in Urdu, such as words from Arabic, is that used by ordinary men in daily conversation, not that found in the original language. (See No. 204.)

116. JA'FAR 'ALĪ ḤASRAT, who died between 1791 and 1802, had many disciples, the most famous of whom was Jur'at (No. 117). He wrote with much simplicity and pathos. He was the author of two good sized collections of verse, about half given up to lyrics, and the remainder to odes, romances and shorter poems. One collection is much superior to the other. Āzād who seems to have read only the inferior one, speaks slightly of him, saying that his poetry was like a tasteless sweet drink. He belonged to Delhi, but went to Lucknow. Near the end of his life he became a *darvesh*. He finally returned to Delhi and died there.

117. QALANDAR BAKHSH JUR'AT (d. 1810) belonged to Delhi, but was brought up in Faizābād. He went to Lucknow in 1810, when Inshā's quarrel with Muṣḥafī was at its height. He was essentially a *bon viveur*, and threw himself heartily into the life of the court. He wrote a large number of lyrics containing conventional descriptions of love, the kind of verse that one would expect from the life of

conviviality which he then lived. The language of the lyrics was elegant, but the sentiment was worthless. He did not write much, perhaps 20,000 lines in all. In addition to the lyrics and other poems of that kind he wrote some *maṣnavīs*, one of some length on the coming of the rains in summer; another, half as long, called *Maṣnavī e Husn o 'Ishq*, a clever but artificial account of an amour.

118. SA'ĀDAT YĀR KHĀN RANGĪN (1756-1834) was a prolific writer in Urdu. He is notorious as the first writer of *rekhtī*, the language used by women, especially women of no reputation. *Rekhtī* verse has been described as a debased form of lyric invented by a debased mind in a debased age. The word '*rekhtī*' is not employed for the *natural* speech of women; its usual meaning is Urdu verse written by a man as a *tour de force*, with the words and idioms common to women, including feminine genders; the man writes as if he were a woman, and in nearly every case does so with an evil motive. Urdu writers of to-day condemn *rekhtī* as a deplorable product of the past, now fortunately never seen. It has been claimed that others wrote in *rekhtī* before Rangīn, but Inshā definitely asserts that Rangīn was the originator of it. Three names are associated with this kind of verse—Rangīn, Inshā and Jān Sāhib (d. 1897). The last named exhibits it in its worst form, while the least objectionable *rekhtī* is to be found in Inshā, indeed in his case it has a real literary value. (See No. 54.)

Rangīn's works extend to many volumes. The following is a list. (1) *Nauratn i Rangīn* consisting of six collections of poetry, one being in *rekhtī*, and three prose works, one of which is Persian. (2) Several collections of *maṣnavīs*; he claimed he had written 46 with a total of 40,000 lines. The most famous of these is *Maṣnavī i Dilpāzīr*; one was a treatise on the use of seven different kinds of weapons, another described the defeat of the Mugals by Mādhojī Sindhia, and another was on horses and their diseases. (3) Three prose works, viz. *Imtīhān i Rangīn* (1820), which is an attempt to prove that he is the greatest of Urdu poets, and two collections of anecdotes about himself, valuable on account of the light they throw on the life of the time. One of them, *Majālīs i Rangīn*, is in Persian and relates

65 stories, the other, *Akhbār i Rangīn*, in Urdu (1819), contains 93 stories. (4) Two odes translated from Arabic and a poem on Islām. (5) An ode transcribed from Saudā to which he added what he believed to be improvements. In his style there is polish and glitter, but not true poetic feeling. (See No. 205.)

119. IN'ĀM ULLĀH KHĀN YAQĪN (d. about 1850) is a poet who appears to have met with a violent death during the reign of Aḥmad Shāh (1748-54) at the age of 25. He was a great friend of Maḡhar, and some have said that the poetry attributed to Yaqīn was largely due to Maḡhar, but Kalīm, who knew them both, denies this. It is more probable that the excellence of his poetry made people think that so young a man could not have written it. He was the author of a large number of very short lyrics in which love subjects are well handled. His language and thought are so attractive that some critics have believed he would have excelled Mir and Saudā if he had lived longer.

120. **Asar.** MUHAMMAD MĪR AṢAR, was the brother of the famous Dard (No. 107). Like his brother and father he was a religious man and bore a great reputation for saintliness. He wrote many lyrics and a romance entitled *Khvāb o Khayāl*, which is very good.

121. HĪDĀYAT ULLĀH KHĀN HĪDĀYAT (born c. 1730, d. 1800) was a poet much esteemed in his time. He has left nearly 20,000 lines of lyrics and some romances, the best of which is that in praise of Benares. He wrote also a short tract called *Cirāg i Hidāyat*.

122. QUDRAT ULLĀH QUDRĀT (d. 1790) was born and brought up in Delhi, but left it in later life for Murshidābād, where he was very well received and enabled to live in comfort. Mir thought very little of his ability, but others have spoken of him as a powerful writer.

123. ZĪYĀ UD DĪN ZĪYĀ of Delhi was a well-known poet who composed a highly esteemed volume of verse. He wrote lyrics, but did not care for odes or romances. He wandered from Delhi to Faizābād, Lucknow and Patna, where he was living near the end of the century. The exact time of his death is not certain. He was a very friendly man who entered fully into the joys and sorrows of others.

124. GULĀM 'ALĪ RĀSIKH (1748-1822), who had not much connection with Delhi, comes in naturally at this point. He belonged to Patna, but moved about from place to place, visiting Gāzīpūr, Calcutta, Delhi and Lucknow. In 1807 he returned to his native place where he lived till his death. He wrote fourteen romances and many odes and lyrics; his style, though much admired for its simplicity and purity, is a little monotonous. Much of his writing gives expression to Šūfī doctrines.

125. NAZĪR. VALĪ MUHAMMAD NAZĪR (1740-1830) was thought little of during his lifetime, and for many years after his death, but thanks to a change in critical taste is now given a place in the first six or seven Urdu poets, ranking alongside of Saudā. Compared with the poets of his time he is unconventional, and does not follow the usual Persian methods; rejecting the images loved of Persian poets he prefers to describe the country he lives in with its people and their interests. The use of recondite Persian conceits and unnecessary Persian words was to him anathema. He freely employed Hindi words and spoke of Hindu as well as Muhammadan affairs.

Not much of his work has been printed; he never wrote long poems; the longest in his first volume has under 450 lines, and nearly all have under 200 lines. He was a man who loved his country and people and gave himself to describing daily sights and scenes. At one time he was a schoolmaster, and several of his poems deal with subjects of interest to boys. Among these may be mentioned, in addition to those on boyhood and kite-flying, poems on animals such as the young squirrel, the bear cub, the wild buffalo and the little bird, the crow and the deer, keeping pigeons, the story of the goose and the birds, bulbul-fighting, and finally the short poem with the names of many birds which night and morning offer praise to God. A number of poems speak of festivals, chiefly Hindu; natural phenomena, especially dark nights and rainy days; articles of food; common objects like cowries or pice or household utensils; everyday subjects such as poverty, money, flattery, good and evil, old age, youth, swimming, dreams, death, generosity; ordinary people like *faqīrs*, astrologers or merchants;

some describe scenes in Agra; one deals with the boyhood of Krishna; lastly he has eleven poems on Muslim religious subjects from which lines are often quoted by *faqīrs* to this day.

In early life he was licentious, but as he grew older he changed and became the thoughtful moralist whom we now know. He was not a courtier, he neither eulogised the rich nor lampooned those of humbler station. As a poet of the common things of life he stands alone, for he writes of practically nothing else. King Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh does indeed speak of everyday matters, but he also writes a good deal in a more conventional style. Saudā and Mīr have a few things that remind us of Nazīr, and Inshā is very unconventional when he likes, but his subjects are far removed from Nazīr's. To borrow an Urdu expression, Nazīr 'can be compared only with himself.'

126. NAṢĪR UD DĪN SHĀH NAṢĪR (d. 1838) belonged to Delhi and used to recite his poetry in Shāh 'Ālam's court. He twice visited Lucknow, first during the time of Muṣḥafī and Inshā, when he was received with great honour, second when Ātish and Nāsikh were at the height of their fame; this time his welcome was less effusive. Several times he went to Haidarābād, where he became the head of a school of poetry. He was known for the splendour of his vocabulary and for the novelty and difficulty of his similes and metaphors. His fondness for old words is regarded by Indian critics as a bad fault. His work is generally rather insipid. He was the teacher of the famous poet, Zauq.

127. SHĀH 'ĀLAM ĀFTĀB, King of Delhi (1759-1806), was seized and blinded by the Rohilla chieftain, Gulām Qādir, in 1788; his account of what he suffered at the hands of his enemies, in which naturally he expressed deep feeling, is the best of his writings. Another of his works is a romance called *Maḡmūn i Aqdās*. He also wrote a number of lyrics.

128. NIZĀM UD DĪN MAMNŪN (d. 1844) was in high favour with Akbar Shāh II of Delhi, in which city Mamnūn was born. He left a collection of poems consisting chiefly of lyrics, but containing also elegiac poems on the death of his relatives and friends, odes on religious subjects, and a few other poems. His reputation stood very high in his time.