

SHAMSUR RAHMAN FARUQI

Conventions of Love, Love of Conventions: Urdu Love Poetry in the Eighteenth Century*

NEXT to our own, the eighteenth century is the most exciting, vibrant, and productive century in more than five hundred years of literary production in Urdu. Perhaps the most remarkable thing that happened in Urdu literature during that time—traditionally represented by British historiography-influenced writers as a period of decay and disintegration—was the consolidation and discovery of a poetics, of a whole new way of charting out a course for literary creativity in a language that, in Delhi at least, was still a little tottery on its legs in the field of literary production. Delhi, even in the middle of the eighteenth century, boasted of Persian as the *zabān-e urdū-e mua'llā-e shāhjahānābād* (the language of

*Original texts of the Urdu and Persian *she'rs* quoted can be seen in the Appendix. All translations from Urdu and Persian are by me. Following the convention of English literature, I have translated the poems depicting the beloved as female, though that may not be necessarily the case in the actual text. In the actual text, the beloved's gender would often be indeterminate; in many cases, the beloved's grammatical gender would be male, but the beloved himself/herself could well be read as female. In some cases the gender is specifically male. Where the gender, and not only grammar, is clearly male, I have allowed for it in the translation, trying to make the gender aspect as unobtrusive as the demands of translation authenticity would permit. Always provided that in very many cases the poem could sustain a sufistic interpretation, the beloved's gender notwithstanding.

This paper deals only with the *ghazal*, but many of the ideas suggested here can be applied to non-*ghazal* love poetry of the period in question.

I must thank Nasir Ahmad Khan of the Jawaharlal Nehru University whose persistent reminders made me collect my ideas on this subject and attempt this paper.

the exalted city of Shajahanabad). It described Sanskrit as *hindī-e kitābī* (learned *hindī*=Indian), and the city's common, spoken language, was known as plain *hindī*. Very little literature in *hindī* was produced in Delhi during the period 1600–1700—and hardly any during the four preceding centuries—and the literary form of *hindī* in which the literature was produced was called *rēkhta* (mixed, poured, cement-and-mortar, etc.). The term Urdu as a language name came into use much later. *Rēkhta*/Hindi remained the universal name for the language until the end of the eighteenth century.

Rēkhta may have begun independently, as a pidgin. It is more likely that it began as a kind of macaronic verse in Hindi, and gradually assumed a life of its own, so much so that the pidgin element was eliminated, giving room to a literary Hindi, such as was already being written in the Deccan, particularly Aurangabad, under the name of Dakani and/or Hindi. However, Delhi, with its cosmopolitan cultural environment, long continued to look upon *Rēkhta* with a faint air of disapproval, as something different from, and inferior to Persian. There is a famous verse by Qā'im Čāndpūrī (1724–94):

Qā'im, it was I who gave
To *Rēkhta* the manner
Of the *ghazal*. For otherwise
It was just a feeble thing,
In the language of the Deccan.

This tendency for the word *ghazal* to be taken to mean only Persian *ghazal*, continued until quite late in Delhi. Thus we have Ghulām Hamadānī Muṣḥafī (1750–1824), writing around 1820:

Muṣḥafī, I compose *Rēkhta*
Better than the *ghazal*. So why
Should now one be
A devotee
Of Khusrau and Sa'dī?

Delhi's *Rēkhta*/Hindi acquired a literary status and a sophistication that was soon to surpass, or equal, the best achievements of the past three centuries in Gujarat and the Deccan. This happened mainly due to Valī (1655/7–1708), an Aurangabadi by birth, who came to Delhi in 1700. At that time, he was a substantial poet in his own right, regarding only the

Persian poets—Iranian or Indo-Persian—as worthy of his mettle. There is a story about Vali being advised at that time by Shāh Gulshan in Delhi to appropriate the rich store of themes and images in Persian and thus introduce a new depth and space in his Hindi/Dakani. There are reasons to disbelieve this story. There is however little doubt that Vali’s full *Dīvān* arrived in Delhi in 1720. According to Muṣḥafī, Shāh Ḥātim (1699–1783), who was an eyewitness to this event, told him that Vali’s poetry took Delhi by storm, and became instantly popular with young and old, rich and poor.

It is this *Dīvān* which provided a jumpstart to *Rēkhta*/Hindi poetry in Delhi, not only by providing an active model, but also by introducing new theoretical lines of thinking about the nature of poetry, and about how to make poems. In short, Vali seems to have provided both the model, and the theory that went with it.

There is an interesting *she’r*, again by Muṣḥafī, in his third *Dīvān*, compiled in 1794. He says:

Oh Muṣḥafī, I have,
In this *urdū* of the *Rēkhta*
Introduced a thousand new things
Of my own making.

There is a certain piquancy in the phrase “*urdū* of the *Rēkhta*.” (Does it mean Urdu language as derived from the *Rēkhta*, or does “*urdū*” mean “royal court, camp, camp-market”? “Royal court” seems the more likely meaning.) Yet what is most notable here is the bold assertion of invention, the poet’s confidence and assurance in his own rôle as a “maker,” and not just “imitator” of things in poetry. Judging from the fact that this proudly soaring self-belief is of a poet who wasn’t even born in Delhi, and was not a witness to the momentous arrival, more than sixty years ago, of a new wave of poetry in Delhi, it is easy to see that *Rēkhta*/Hindi poetry in the North came of age within a very short time, and the tree of invention in *Rēkhta* continued to give off new shoots for a long time to come.

The major discovery in the theory—we first hear about it in the Deccan, in *‘Alī Nāma* (1672), a long poem by Nuṣratī Bijāpūrī—was in the concept of *ma’ni*. Nuṣratī speaks of *mazmūn*, and *ma’ni*, as two separate entities. Classical Arab-Persian literary theory spoke only of *ma’ni*—a word now universally translated as meaning—in the sense of the “content” of a poem, the assumption being that a poem meant what it “contained.” Nuṣratī, however, uses *mazmūn* in the sense of theme,

content, the thing/object/idea, which the poem is about. The term *maʿnī* he uses to connote the “meaning,” that is, the inner, deeper, or wider signification of the poem. Valī too uses the two terms in the senses described above. After him, all *Rēkhta*/Hindi poets in Delhi constantly make use of the distinction for making points about the nature of poetry.

Since the “theme/meaning” distinction doesn’t occur in Arabic or Persian, it is strongly probable that Nuṣratī, a man of great learning, picked it up directly from the Sanskrit, or from Telegu and Kannada, languages which he would have known, and whose poetics is almost entirely derived from Sanskrit. Or he may have come across this idea in the Persian poets of the “Indian style” (*sabk-e hindī*) who themselves may have developed it through their direct and indirect contact with Sanskrit language and literature from mid-sixteenth century on. These contacts, by the way, remained very strong in the eighteenth century all over the Subcontinent, and their effects permeated *Rēkhta*/Hindi poetry as well.

Many advantages accrued to *Rēkhta*/Hindi from this discovery about the dual nature of meaning. For our purposes, the most important seems to have been the change in the ontological status of the lover and the beloved. Now, the lover in the poem need not have been the poet himself, nor did the beloved necessarily have to be “real” or a “real-like” person. In the Deccan, Dakani/Hindi poets often spoke in the female voice—poets like Hāshimī Bījāpūrī (1635–1697/8) consistently adopted the female persona in the *ghazal*. Others moved freely from one persona to the other.

The recognition of the poem being splittable in “What is it about?” and “What does it mean?” meant that the poet could assume any persona—now it was not, for instance, Valī the person, who was speaking in the poem, but there was a voice, and Valī the poet was only the articulator of that voice. Again, if the poem could mean something else, or more, or different, from what it was about, the person or object or thing about whom, or as a result of transactions with whom, the poem came into existence, need not be fixed in any particular gender, for that would tend to limit the “meaning” aspect of the poem.

Ghālib made the point nicely, more than two centuries later. Qadr Bilgrāmī, a pupil of his, sent him a *ghazal* for correction. The *maṭlaʿ* (opening verse) can be translated as follows:

You brought me into the world
And gave me the poison
Of mortality. What a pity!

You cheated, leaving me alone
In this maze.

Ghalib wrote back,

Tell me, who is it you are addressing here? Except for Fate and Destiny none else, no boy, no woman, can be imagined to be the addressee.... So I changed the person of the verb to plural ... now the utterance is directed equally to the worldly beloveds, and Fate and Destiny.

The contribution of Vali in the development of the new ontology is that in his case, the beloved is occasionally female, often it/he is male, and in many cases indeterminate. The significance of this is that the notion—articulate or inarticulate—of the protagonist or the speaker in the poem assumes a critical importance. The protagonist-lover could now be just a notion, an ideal lover, whose gender was not so important as the ideas that could be expressed and realized in the poem by whatever metaphorical construct lent itself conveniently at the moment. Just as the woman/man lover was not actually a woman or a man, so the woman/man/boy beloved was not actually a woman, man, or boy.

Since the convention of having the “idea” of a lover or beloved instead of an actual lover/beloved freed the poet-protagonist-lover from the demands of “reality,” or “realism,” love poetry in Urdu from the last quarter of the seventeenth century onwards consists mostly—if not entirely—of “poems about love,” and not “love poems” in the Western sense of the term. This is true of almost all of Indian style Persian poetry too—for obvious reasons—and even a lot of other Persian poetry of earlier times. But the distinction between poet—the person, who actually wrote the poem—and protagonist—the person, or the voice, which articulated the poem—was nowhere so seriously adduced and practiced as in the Indian style Persian poetry, and Urdu love poetry of the eighteenth century.

The *ghazal* is often described by West-oriented Urdu critics as a “lyric,” and the main quality of the *ghazal* as “lyricism.” Modern Urdu critics invented even a new term *taghazzul* (*ghazal*-ness) to describe this quality. It comes as a surprise, if not an incredible and unpleasant shock, to modern students to be told that the term *taghazzul* does not occur in any work or document extant to us from before 1857, the time when a great discontinuity began in our literary culture through colonialist interventions.

There are serious flaws in the proposition that a *ghazal* is a lyric, and that a rose by any other name, etc. While there is no one, hegemonic, seamless image of the lyric in Western poetics, the lyric is generally understood there to be a poem in which the poet expresses “personal” emotions and “experiences,” and does not, in the nature of things, assume an external audience for his poem. Both these assumptions are false for the *ghazal*. We just saw how new developments in Urdu poetics split the poet-poem-as-one notion, in which a main line “lyric” poem would seem to be anchored. As for the audience, since the *ghazal* was intended to be recited at *mushā‘iras* and public gatherings, and was in any case largely disseminated by word of mouth, the whole proposition of the *ghazal* as a “personal-private-no-audience-assumed” text becomes ridiculous.

The idea that the *ghazal* is a poem in which oral performance plays a great part has other important consequences. One consequence is that a *ghazal* may perhaps be expressive of “emotions,” in the ordinary sense of the term. But these are not necessarily the poet’s “personal” emotions “recollected in tranquility” (Wordsworth), or “the spontaneous expression of the powerful feelings of the heart” (Wordsworth), or the “lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake” (Byron). It was the “verbal contraption” in the poem, to use Auden’s phrase, which became the chief object of the poetic exercise. Poems needed to make sense of the experience, or the idea, of love, and in terms that made sense to the audience as a whole, and not a specific individual, beloved, or friend.

Byron was nearer the mark when at another place he said that the poet was “the most artificial” of the artists. But the ideas about the nature of poetry—all poetry—that won the day in Urdu through the efforts of the great modernizers of the late nineteenth century were those of the “lava of the imagination” type, and echoed writers like Wordsworth and Hazlitt, who insisted that a certain lack of “art” and an overflow of “passion” were the hallmarks of poetry. Hazlitt, one might recall, said that there was a natural and inalienable connection between passion and music, and music and poetry. Then he went on to say, “Mad people sang.” Small wonder that phrases like *shirīn divānagī* (delectable madness) became the stock in trade of our modern critics when they spoke of the kind of *ghazal* they admired.

The distinction between *mazmūn* (theme, motif) and *ma‘nī* led to the recognition of the fact that there was a universe of discourse particular to the *ghazal*. Certain kinds of *mazmūns* were admissible in this universe of discourse; others were not. Thus while *mazmūns* were infinite in theory, each *mazmūn* had to have affinity with other *mazmūns* before it could be

considered a proper subject for poetry. Thus one major convention—common, by the way, to Sanskrit, Indian style Persian poetry, and Indian style Turkish poetry—was that *mazmūns*, even words and images, already used, should be reused, though in a new way or with a new slant. “Personal” or “personalized” narration was by no means barred, but was not to be encouraged, and preferred only when it made sense in general terms.

One of the recurrent themes in the eighteenth-century Urdu *ghazal* is the poet’s self-denigration as a “writer of elegies,” and not of poems proper. Here are some examples:

Nothing falls from the lips of Qudrat
But lamentation. He’s no poet
But an elegist for his own heart.
(Qudratu ’l-Lāh Qudrat, 1713–91)

It’s a whole age
Since Mazhar has been pouring
His lamentations into meter,
And yet in the beloved’s mind,
He doesn’t speak like a poet.
(Mirzā Mazhar Jān-e Jānān, 1699–1781)

The above verse is in Persian; Mazhar was a major Sufi and an important Persian and Urdu poet in Delhi, and is described as having influenced a great many Urdu poets, especially in the first half of the century.

Don’t describe me as a poet, Oh Mīr,
I collected numerous griefs and sorrows
And made up a *Dīvān*.
(Mīr, 1722–1810, in the first *Dīvān*,
compiled around 1754)

I just don’t know
If my *Dīvān* is a book,
Or an elegy, or
Anything at all.
(Muṣḥafī, in *Dīvān* I, c. 1785)

I am not really a poet, Oh Muṣḥafī,
I am an elegy-reciter;
I recite the *sōz*, and make

The lovers weep.
(Muṣṣḥafī, Dīvān III, c. 1794)

In fact, we can see this convention in action even in the nineteenth century. Here is Saiyad Muḥammad Khān Rind (1797–1857):

Those of a lovely temperament
Often weep while reading them;
Indeed, the poems of Rind
Are not poems, but elegies?

Poetry thus was basically a quest for themes, and love was just another theme, not an event in the poet's real life; only that in the *ghazal*, love was the most important theme. And the core function of love was to soften the heart, to make it receptive to more pain, which ultimately made the human heart a site for the Divine Light to be reflected upon and into it. Pain, and things that caused pain, had a positive value. The lover's place was to suffer; the beloved's function was to inflict suffering. This was a sufistic formulation, but was regularly taken by the *ghazal* poet to be true for the *ghazal* universe. Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, a leading Indian Sufi of the early seventeenth century, wrote that the lover should desire that which is desired by the beloved. Since the lover suffered pain and grief, it is obvious that that was what the beloved desired for the lover. To ask for, or long for, comfort was therefore unlovely.

All this was *mazmūn* for Urdu love poetry in the eighteenth century. The poet suffered pain also in search of *mazmūns*. Or he wept for a *mazmūn* that was lost, or couldn't be realized, or which was experienced for a moment, and then lost. One is reminded of Shelley's characterizing the creative process as being

conscious of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with a place or person, sometimes regarding our mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden....

So the poet toiled to get the lost visitations back, or mourned at their departure. Mir said:

You have neither grief in your soul
For the *mazmūn*,
Nor is your heart soft with pain.

So even if your face was pale like
 parchment,
 What of it?
 (Divān IV, c. 1794)

The lover-protagonist and the beloved-object both live in a world of extremes: supreme beauty, supreme cruelty, supreme devotion—all things are at their best, or worst, in this world. The beloved-object is not a passive recipient of the lover-protagonist's tribute of love, or a helpless non-entity unable to alleviate the lover's pain or ameliorate his condition. The beloved's "cruelty" may be real, or act as a metaphor for his/her indifference or physical distance from the lover. But the indifference of the beloved is an active stance, it makes a point. The lover-protagonist would prefer death at the hands of the beloved to his/her indifference. Or if one does find oneself to be lucky enough to be killed by the beloved, there are degrees of merit and distinction in death, too. The lover-protagonist is the only true lover: all the rest are false, and given to *havas* (lust), rather than *shauq* (desire), or *'ishq* (love). There is a famous Arabic saying: *al-'ishqu nārun yuhriqu mā sivā al-maṭlūb* ("ishq is a fire that burns down everything but the object of desire). The rival, the Other (*ghair*) doesn't burn with that fire; even if the beloved kills him, he earns no distinction:

There's the difference of earth and sky
 Between the death of the *ghair*
 And my giving up the ghost:
 Doubtless, she killed us both, but me
 She killed with torture.
 (Mīr, Divān V, c. 1789–1803)

Also even if there are other true lovers—though not really possible, such a state can at least be imagined—the lover-protagonist of the *ghazal* deserves special treatment:

She ought to have maintained
 My distinction at the moment
 Of killing. What a pity, she
 Trampled me into dust, roiling me
 With others.
 (Mīr, Divān II, c. 1775–8)

She was heard telling someone
 The other day: I'll kill someone.

Well, there's no one who so deserves
 To die, but me.
 (Muḥammad Rafī' Saudā, 1706?–1781)

It should be obvious that in such a scheme of things, “success in love” is not a valid, or powerful, category of thought. No doubt, eighteenth-century Urdu *ghazal* contains some extremely erotic poetry, and these poets are more conscious of the body and its pleasures, and the transactions that give rise to or lead to such pleasures, than their nineteenth-century successors. Yet success in terms of this universe is unsuccessful—the greatest success is therefore death. This poetry is thus quite naturally more occupied with dying than most love poetry that one is likely to encounter in other cultures. It reverberates throughout with the terror, and the ecstasy, of dying. Death, in spite of all its uncertainty and unfamiliarity, is an achievement, a respite, a transition:

I hacked through life in every way,
 Dying, and having to live again
 Is doomsday.
 (Shāh Mubārak Ābrū, 1683/5–1733)

From being to non-being
 The road is just a few breaths
 It's not much of a journey—
 Passing from this world.
 (Saudā)

It thus follows that so long as Death doesn't come to him, the lover-protagonist seeks, or gets, suffering and ill luck, disapproval of the “worldly,” loss of honor and station. Madness and banishment, or imprisonment or general “ill fame,” are the functions of true love: the stronger the madness, the farther the wandering, the blacker the ill fame, the truer and deeper the love. All this is often expressed with the subtlest of word plays, in the most vigorously metaphorical language, and occasionally, with extremely vivid but generally non-carnal realizations of the beloved's body. Since the beloved-object is the ideal in physical beauty too, his/her body can be evoked freely, but because the idea of the beloved is not anchored into any particular person or gender, the narration, though bold, is rarely physical in the modern sense of the word.

Evocation, rather than description is the rule in the *ghazal*. This is also true of all other characteristics, circumstances, transactions, of the

lover and beloved. The only items somewhat firmly anchored in quotidian, recognizable reality are the “other.” “Others”—friends, advisors, preachers, censors, the devout, and the priestly—that is, all those who are in principle not in favor of the lover throwing his life away, or destroying his faith by following the course of love rather than that of the world, and of God, as seen by the worldly and priestly. The lover rarely listens to them, and generally holds them in contempt, regarding them as benighted, materialistic, and mundane, having no understanding of the inner life. The phrase “*abl-e zāhir*” (the people of the obvious and apparent) sums it all up. The world of the *ghazal* is one world where the Outsider is the Hero, where non-conformism is the creed, and where prosperity is poverty.

In spite of its idealistic and unworldly air, the poetry of the *ghazal* wears an air of delight, of enjoyment, in making up poems through words, in making the language strain its limits, and yet remain *ravān* (flowing, felicitous, smooth in reading aloud, easy to remember: all these things are denoted by the term *ravānī*). All poets, in even conventionally “sad” narration, employ word play to the best of their power. A certain restraint in physicality, and a certain exuberance in execution, mark much of the best Urdu love poetry from the eighteenth century:

In the Time’s garden, Oh how well
My fortune sleeps. I am verdant
And prosperous like the green grass;
But it’s a sword that’s crushed
To sleep by the feet that walk
Upon it.

(Khvāja Mīr Dard, 1720–85)

The verse turns on a play on “*sar sabz*” (verdant, thriving), *sabza* (greenery), and *khuftalkhvābīda* (sleeping) whose subtlety can’t really be conveyed in any translation or explication. Most modern Urdu readers, brought up on false notions of “naturalness” of expression, are taught to feel disappointed and let down to see a “serious” poet like Dard indulging in the “frivolity” of word play. Yet the poets knew better. They knew that word play infuses new life into old themes, expands the horizon of meaning, and often makes for an ambiguity of tone which enriches the total feel of the poem. Here is an almost exact contemporary, using the same image, to a different effect:

Like the grass
 That grows on the roadside,
 I was trampled off
 By the multitude
 In a single sortie.
 (Qā'im Čāndpūri, 1724–94)

It is a powerful verse, but lacks the additional energy of meaning that Mīr gives to the same theme by word play:

I was grass newly sprung
 On the roadside. I raised
 My head to be crushed down
 By feet.
 (Divān I, c. 1754)

The word play revolves around “*nau rastā*” (newly liberated, newly sprouted, newly sprung), “*sar uṭḥānā*” (to raise one’s head, to rise in rebellion), and “*pāmāl hōnā*” (to be trampled under foot). It is obvious that Qā'im’s verse lacks these dimensions which are afforded to the poem by word play.

As we can see, “sadness” of theme or “authenticity” of emotion is not the point here. The poet and the audience both know that it is in the nature of certain themes to be sad, and they are not interested in how “sad” is “sad.” Their primary concern is to renew, and refashion, and thus demonstrate and realize the potential of the language. Intertextuality, imagination, audience expectation, all play their part. Obviously, eighteenth-century poets did not have twentieth-century Indian readers in mind.

Let’s now examine how “erotic” is erotic in this kind of poetry. Word play is important here, too. But other devices like all kinds of sensuous imagery, metaphor, and a sense for dialogue and drama also come into play. An epistemological convention almost always respected here more than most is that things are expressible by their essence, or epitome. There is an essential “itself-ness” in each thing, and it is this, rather than specific points, which needs to be indicated by the poet. Ghālib (1797–1869), though not of the period we are discussing, put it best:

The rose, the poppy, the eglantine
 Are all of a different color.
 In every style, every color

One needs to affirm the spring.

Thus the rose is the essence of all roses, and since the beloved is the essence of all beloveds, so “*gul*” (rose) is often employed to mean “beloved.” The central image of the rose generates an almost infinite complexity of metaphors, but the human body beats it all:

How can the rose
Have the clearness, the finish
Of your body? And then,
There is the bride-like fragrance
Of good fortune,
Poured into it to the full.

(Shaikh Jur’at, 1748–1809)

This is based on Shāh Ḥātim, and reading Ḥātim’s verse, one can see how great a difference the suggestive memory has made in the case of Jur’at:

You whose body is like a rose,
How exciting are the waves
Of fragrance from your perspiration,
Roses are now perfumers, and
The breeze is ever so pleased.

(Shāh Ḥātim)

Doubtless, Ḥātim is more earthy in talking of the perspiration as a heady perfume, and his globalization of the perspiration-as-fragrance is piquant, but the verse feels bookish when put beside that of Jur’at.

Morning, she rolled her sleeves
Up to the elbows—
The nakedness of her body, entire,
Was drawn into the hands.

(Muṣḥafī, *Divān* III, c. 1794)

How closely it clings
To her gold-like body,
There’s someone whose
Sulfur-colored dress burns
My heart with much envy.

(Mīr, *Divān* I, c. 1754)

Mir and Muṣḥafī both use the image of the clinging dress over and over again, and always to great effect:

If you would always wear
Dresses of this design
I for one would never say,
“Please put off your dress.”
(Muṣḥafī, *Divān* III, c. 1794)

My heart is torn to pieces
Envyng her clinging dress
How tightly the dress
Hugs the body.
(Mir, *Divān* VI, c. 1809/10)

Consider the date: Mir was nearly eighty-eight when he put together this last, sixth *Divān*. Also consider the word play: the heart that tears, and the dress that clings. It should be clear that the verse wouldn't have had much to do with Mir's “real life” at that time. It is the play of imagination on a favorite theme, the life of the mind, and the poet boldly writing and rewriting on the palimpsest that enables such vivid and “naughty” poems to be made.

The question that most bothers western readers (and, unfortunately, now a number of native readers too) is that of the beloved's gender. The fact that in many *ghazal she'rs* the lover and beloved can be construed as male, or the beloved can be construed to be a boy, was seen by the modernizing Urdu critics of the late twentieth century as an embarrassment, if not an indictment of the whole *ghazal* culture. It never seems to have bothered anyone else before. Many reasons are offered by the modern critics for this “lapse of taste” committed by the eighteenth-century Urdu poets: an almost universal vogue of various kinds of same-sex love—from homoeroticism to open pederasty; segregation of women in the society; influence of Iran; “corrupt” practices prevalent in religious and Sufi institutions; general decline of “moral” values, encouraging every kind of dissolute life; and so on.

No one, of course, seems to have asked the “accused” if they had any explanation or defense. All of us were in the greatest hurry to apply the moral standards of Victorian-Colonial India to a culture that was nowhere near being colonized at that time. In fact, during a great part of the eighteenth century, the boot was on the other leg: it was the English who were trying to adopt what they thought was the Indian lifestyle.

Throughout the eighteenth, and through much of the nineteenth century, Indians looked down upon the English as essentially uncivilized. A white complexion was not yet a thing of universal praise and desire.

One who, in preference
To those of a dark-complexion,
Hankers after the white ones—
Regard him as heart-dead.
(Shāh Mubārak Ābrū, 1683/5–1733)

Let me go hunt the Dark-
Colored Beauty. Why die
At the hands of the light-weight
White ones?
(Muḥammad Shākīr Nājī, 1690?–1744)

The point that I want to make here is that by late nineteenth-century standards, fairness of complexion was the greatest of merits in a person, but poets of the eighteenth century should not be blamed for holding a different opinion. Similarly, questions about the beloved's gender didn't bother the poets of that time because they weren't practicing "realism" or writing autobiographical poems. The beloved was, first and foremost, an idea, and that idea could be represented in one of many ways. The beloved's anthropomorphic character was often left vague, especially by poets inclined toward Sufism. The general literary feeling was, anyway, in favor of ambiguity and richness of interpretive potential.

Once the beloved was no longer anchored in any given entity, it became possible to play with all kinds of possibilities. Man, woman, boy, God himself, all, or none of them but a general sense of "belovedness" became possible. The "you" of the *ghazal* assumed a life of its own. There is no question but some of the poems are clearly homoerotic or even pederastic. Also, there is no question but in many such poems it is very hard to determine the tone—ironic, self-mocking, or just conventional, or maybe all of this rolled into one. Similarly, the *she'rs* in which the gender or the identity of the beloved is so vague as to encompass both "profane" and "sacred" love would perhaps outnumber all other kinds of *she'rs* put together in the eighteenth-century *ghazal*.

What is really important here is not the question of who or why, and how bad or good a light it reflects on the poets. Literature is a system in its own right; it needs to be understood and judged, first and foremost, in its own terms. Is the system coherent? Do all its parts make sense sepa-

rately or collectively? These questions are more valuable than those of “moral soundness” or “political correctness” in regard to the literary output of a culture.

The matter of real importance thus is to understand the poetics which enabled poems to be written where the poet could be heterosexual, sufistic, homoerotic, or pederastic at the same time, and where the beloved could have characteristics of both man and woman in the same poem, often in the same *she’r*. This is how it came about.

The liberation of the beloved from the constraints of gender identity enabled the poet to use all possibilities as it suited him. For example, let the beloved be a boy. Now the convention is that the beloved is always assumed to be youthful in age and appearance. Since intensification is a common device in this poetry, the age of the beloved became gradually so reduced that he could be imagined, without any sense of incongruity, as little more than a baby. Little children everywhere love to ride a short staff, or the cane-reed, pretending to be expert horsemen. In Urdu, the word for such children is *nai savār* (cane-reed rider). Now this is Mīr:

Well, love is a terrible thing indeed
Even Mīr, much given to lamenting
Ran on and on, like a petty servant
Yesterday, alongside the cane-reed riders.
(Divān IV, c. 1794)

There is a bit of word play here, but it’s not a great *she’r*. Still the great thing about it is that Mīr carries off the image of a grown up person running hot like a footman behind a reed-riding child. Even in English translation the poem doesn’t sound risible. In Urdu it sounds entirely appropriate. Here is a *she’r* by Muṣḥafī:

Wearing my heart on my sleeve,
I was always there, around him
Even in the days when he played
Marbles with the urchins of the street.
(Divān I, c. 1785)

The Muṣḥafī *she’r* does not have the *ravānī* that Mīr’s has, but the point, I think, is clearly made by the two examples: the poet-protagonist-lover is not a pedophile. It is the convention—the *écriture*, to use a fashionable word—that’s doing the writing here. And by the same token, if the beloved is assumed to be a grown up man, he is conventionally seen as

a boy or adolescent on whose face the down has not appeared, or is just appearing. All these are again full of possibilities for *mazmūn*-making. It is quite common, for instance, to say that the appearance of the down on the face has made the beloved more beautiful, hence more cruel, less truthful, and more prone to break promises. The word most often used for “down” in such cases is *khaṭ*, which also means writing, and therefore, *a written agreement or letter*. Mīr Ṭāhir Vaḥīd, a noted Iranian poet of the Indian style, makes the point beautifully:

How can Vaḥīd claim his heart
Back from you now?
The day he gave it to you,
There was no *khaṭ* between us.
(Mīr Ṭāhir Vaḥīd, d. 1708)

In the following verse, Nājī (1690?–1744) implies that the bearded face of the beloved is more devastating than a clean one. Unfortunately, my translation loses a delightful word play. Anyway, here it is, for whatever it is worth:

For how long the practice
Of tyranny, dearest?
Cut your hair short,
Shave off your beard.

Taking advantage of the fact that the beloved’s hair is occasionally described as the rays of the sun, and the sun’s rays are supposed to kiss the dew drops on the rose. Nājī says:

If you desire union with
The sun, keep your eyes wet
With tears, like the dew.

The two eighteenth-century poets who are most given to *mazmūns* of boy-love, homosexuality, homoeroticism, and so forth are Shaikh Mubārak Ābrū (1683/5–1733) and Muḥammad Shākir Nājī (1690?–1744). It is not clear that their interest in these themes was based on an actual propensity, and if so, how far this propensity entered their real life. Ābrū never married, and if the following verse from him is taken as a true statement of personal preference, he looked down upon heterosexuality as improper and unlovely:

One who passes by a boy
 And loves women
 Is no lover. He is
 A man of lust.

We know that there were many women in Muṣḥafī's life, yet he claims—again, if the poem is accepted as true personal evidence—a certain proclivity for bisexuality:

Though the catamite gives pleasure
 Of a sort, I didn't find
 The true pleasure of love
 But in Women.
 (Divān IV, c. 1796)

In any case, such verses, whether true testaments or false, would not have shocked their audiences in the eighteenth century. Indian society has never looked upon homosexuality with the horror and anxiety that have characterized western responses to it since the early modern period. K.J. Dover tells us that among the Greeks, homosexual transactions were intercrural, and anal penetration was not permitted, at least in theory. If some of the Indian eighteenth century accounts are to be believed, while there were any number of professional boy-beloveds in Delhi at that time, even touching and kissing were considered improper and were to be discouraged strongly.

The story is told, for instance, of the poet Āftāb Rā'ē Rusvā's love for a boy. Rusvā came from a well to do family, and was gainfully employed when he fell in love with a boy. He gave up his job, began to wander naked in the streets of Delhi, mad and uncaring. Once he found his beloved holding court, surrounded by friends and admirers. Apparently there had been no physical contact between Rusvā and the boy up until then. Finding him in open company, Rusvā was overwhelmed by passion, and boldly kissed his beloved. This lapse of decorum so enraged the boy that he fatally stabbed Rusvā who refused medical aid and all other succor. He recited the following verse (apparently his own) as he died:

Though my master may not
 Sew up the wound in my heart,
 What of it if I die,
 Let my master live.

Ābrū has left us a long poem in the *maṣnavī* form, addressed to a young male who wants to set up as a beloved. Detailed instructions about toilette, make up, hairstyle, deportment, and speech are given. He is also advised to retire as soon as his beauty starts declining, though not immediately after the down appears, or even the whiskers grow stiff, necessitating their removal: for the down also is “the secret of beauty and goodness.” It is God’s “artistry on the face.” Coquettish behavior is okay, but things should never be allowed to become physical:

Be sure that among your lovers
There’s none that is vulgar,
Lustful, unchaste, filthy hearted

You already have beauty, now
Look for sophistication,
A bad living person is
No beloved at all.

Choudhri Muhammad Naim has an excellent analysis of the poem, and the issues involved in it (see Bibliography). The interested reader is referred to it. My limited concern here is to show that however much rooted in the social mores of the eighteenth century, boy-love and man-love, as depicted in this poetry are, for us, not “social” but literary issues. These themes, and their treatment in the extant form, became possible due to literary reasons. And in any case, since poetry then was not expected to reflect social reality (as if there could be one seamless, omniscient social reality which poetry could catch hold of), but deal with *mazmūns*, the issues of the beloved’s gender, age, profession, and social status never arose, and we would be doing serious injustice to this poetry if we raise such issues now.

Mīr described *adā bandī* as one of the qualities of his poetry he was particularly proud of. This term, vague in itself, is hard to translate. It means something like “depiction and narration of the beloved’s coquetry, dress and manners, speech and body language.” Mīr, no doubt, excels here, as he does in many things. But he does much more. The depths and intensities of experience, coupled with the fullest possible vocalization of the mysterious power of love, that Mīr is able to achieve are not seen elsewhere in this century, or in any century for that matter. In Mīr’s poetry, the dimensions of both loss and gain are infinite, and yet the poems are strictly earthly, not abstract or cerebral. A great deal of Urdu love

poetry can be interpreted as sufistic, but Mīr retains the everyday, human dimension even while suggesting things best seen on a cosmic scale.

The thing that immediately strikes the reader's mind from the eighteenth century—as compared to the nineteenth—is the human relationship aspect, the *adā bandī*, the rare meetings and closeness, the all too frequent partings, and the distressing distances between lover and beloved, that the eighteenth-century poetry highlights for us. Mīr was thus quite correct in giving *adā bandī* such importance in his scheme of things.

It is largely because of *adā bandī* that the beloved in the eighteenth-century *ghazal* is not the passive, hiding-behind-the-purdah, slightly tubercular, recoiling from the slightest physical contact, shrinking-violet type of little girl much touted by modern critics as the optimal beloved in the *ghazal*. This image gained currency through modern “classicist” poets like Ḥasrat Mōhānī (1875–1951), and attempts continue to be made to fit all *ghazals* to this image, but even a brief look at the *ghazal* of this period will demonstrate the falseness of this image. Here is Ḥātīm:

Our bodies and souls were one
There were no cracks
But both our hearts longed
Just for a word or two.

I still remember that heart enticing
Hint of yours, making up
A little *pān* from a filbert
Leaf, and flinging it toward me.

At that time, right then
My heart was in your firm grasp
When you let your hand
Touch with mine.

(Shāh Ḥātīm, composed 1736–37)

Scooting over a little bit, bit by bit
You came to sit right next to me
What skittishness, effrontery,
Self-assurance!

(Shāh Ḥātīm, composed 1743)

The beloved here is a conscious participant, and since gender is not specific in any of the four *she'rs* I quoted above, the lover-protagonist here

need not necessarily be male, just because the poet is male. In fact, in the general scheme of things, even though the lover/beloved became essentially genderless, the lover-protagonist inherited some of the qualities from the original, female protagonist in the *ghazal*. That is, many qualities which are generally identified in Indian society with women—steadfastness against the (male) beloved's fickleness, being given to copious weeping, growing thin and wasting away, being patient and self-surrendering—came more and more to be the mark of the lover-protagonist in the eighteenth-century *ghazal*. I have discussed the “female” aspects of the lover-protagonist's personality elsewhere (see Bibliography). One might recall here that Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Askarī, Urdu's most distinguished modern critic, identified Mīr's greatest strength and poetic quality as his ability to fully and unconditionally surrender his lover's self to the beloved.

We'll now look briefly at one point relating to the epistemology of metaphor, and close this necessarily brief discussion of a wide and difficult subject. Non-native readers, and now most of the native ones even, are shocked and even revolted by the image of the beloved and the lover as presented in the *ghazal*. The beloved seems mindlessly given to bloodshed, kills countless people at one stroke, lets rivers of blood flow in the streets, cuts the lover up into pieces, is deliberately and sadistically cruel, and so forth. The lover is apparently the most wretched of persons, partly or wholly mad, reveling in being denigrated, often groveling in the dust or mud in the beloved's street, and so on. These things are true, except that they are seen in the *ghazal* universe as positive, not negative, characteristics, and the reason for their being where they are is again literary, not the social or mental backwardness of our poets.

Metaphors are also to be understood in their “literal” sense, before they can start making sense as metaphor. ‘Abdu ‘l-Qāhir Jurjānī held that in some cases, rejection or deferment of the literal sense would lead to losing all the sense contained in metaphor. Schleirmacher made a very similar point seven centuries later, when he said, “Words used in the figurative sense retain their proper and specific meaning, and achieve their effect only through an association of ideas on which the writer depends.”

One implication of the “literalness” of metaphor was on the epistemological level: metaphors do not represent facts; they are facts. Thus a metaphor could be treated as a fact, and another metaphor drawn from it. From that metaphor again, another one could be derived, and so on. Instead of the frightening “infinite regress” of meaning that one finds in Derrida, here was an exhilaratingly infinite progress of metaphor, and

each metaphor was a fact in its own right. Consider the following:

The lover obviously loves the beloved more than he loves his own self. This leads to the metaphor/idiom: *kisī par marnā*=to die for someone. Or there is the metaphor/idiom: *kisī par jān dēnā*=to give up one's life for someone. This leads to the proposition: The beloved can cause death. This is followed by the proposition: The beloved can kill. This is followed by: The beloved is a killer. Now a new line of metaphorical reasoning takes over: The beloved kills—with a look. Her eyes therefore are daggers, or swords, or a weapon of killing. Now swords, etc., need to be sharpened; so kohl applied to the eyes is a sharpener. But why should only the eye be the sword/dagger, etc.? The beloved's coquetry can also kill. So another set of metaphors comes into existence. Then since the beloved has a number of lovers, and all lovers by definition get killed, so the beloved can kill a whole host of people in one glance=blow. Then, killing with a dagger or similar weapon causes blood to flow. Hence the beloved's street is a place where one smells blood, like Cassandra, anticipatively, or actually. If a number of people get killed at the same time, rivers of blood flow in the city, and the beloved can be seen riding his/her/its charger in triumph.

Then, the beloved doesn't necessarily kill; she may inflict a wound or two and stop at that. The lover can now react in any number of ways, given the "fact" that the wounds are real wounds. For example: The lover writhes in pain, ecstatically, hoping to "enjoy" the moment for as long as possible; the lover may complain to the effect that the beloved was casual, and not in earnest; or worse still, she was deliberately casual and intentionally delivered only a glancing blow, so as to deprive (because she is perceived as perverse by definition) the lover of the pleasure and honor of dying. The lover may plead for the killing blow, or feel angry and disappointed at being reprieved.

A casual blow, or refusal on the beloved's part to kill the lover, may also involve a value-judgment: the lover is poor material, not fit to kill. This may again be due to one of many reasons: the lover is qualitatively inferior; he is not a good enough lover, or distinguished enough as a person to deserve killing at the hands of the beloved. Or, it may be that the lover has grown "pale, and spectre thin," has wasted away, and is therefore not worth the trouble of killing. Or maybe the beloved or her sword—yes, even the sword, because the shine and sharpness of a sword is described as its *āb*=water—may perspire out of shame at having to kill such a wretch who is more than half-dead.

And if there are wounds, then there are doctors, surgeons, expert or

inexpert sewers up of the open wound. The lover should, by definition, refuse any kind of aid, medical or spiritual. This gives rise to another set of metaphors. Or the lover's wound may have been sutured, but the sly lover knows his job. He has fingernails to pick at the stitches or reopen the wound.

The wounds may be self-inflicted in a fit of frenzy, for instance, but not with a view to suicide. Or the wounds may have been inflicted by the street arabs, who harass and torture the mad lover and pelt him with stones. The lover actually desires this, because loss of dignity, honor, and station, being insulted by the meanest, and treated with contumely even by street urchins, ensures the death, or at least the suppression, of his own self, and thus makes him more suitable for "dying" in the beloved. Negating his own being, he affirms the being of the beloved, who alone is sufficient as life and as life-giver. So the lover actually desires and welcomes the rocks thrown at him by naughty children. In a *she'r* of Mir's, the protagonist-lover heaps rocks and stones in his street so as to make it easy for the street arabs to throw them at him. A seventeenth-century Persian poet of the Indian style put it most piquantly, summing up a whole culture of love, madness, and self-effacement, in this couplet:

The madman goes his way,
And the children go theirs;
Say, friends, does this city of yours
Have no rocks or stones?
(Saiyad Husain Khālīṣ, d. 1710)

All this, and much more, could become possible for the simple reason that in the poetics of Indian style Persian poetry, and all classical Urdu poetry, the metaphor of dying is treated as a fact from which another metaphor can be generated, and the resultant metaphor, in turn, treated as fact generates other metaphors. What sounds bizarre or distasteful to minds untrained in this poetics, falls quite naturally into place as proper and desirable—in fact unique in all poetry since early modern times—once it is seen as a rhetorical system which permits metaphors to be made both paradigmatically and syntagmatically.

Western poetics has generally treated metaphor as a paradigmatic device, which is true as far as it goes. But the picture changes drastically once metaphor and fact are treated as interchangeable, as in the Urdu and Indian-Persian poetics. Now metaphors can be generated syntagmatically as well. Thus: if *p* is the same as *q*, then the characteristics of *q* also apply

to *p*. The lover is a captive (of the beloved or of love.) Birds also are made captive, so the lover is a bird. A captive bird is kept in a cage, so the lover is in a cage. In order to be made captive, the bird has to be captured; the person who captures a bird is a hunter=*ṣaiyād*. So the protagonist-lover-bird was made captive by a hunter. But the bird-protagonist is the lover, too. And the person who captured the lover is the beloved, who thus equals *ṣaiyād*, and so on.

Syntagmatic thinking makes for an infinity of metaphors, because the metaphors generated by it do not depend on similitude between two apparently dissimilar objects (which, Aristotle said, was the soul of metaphor), but on association. Western philosophers have long held that there are no rules for metaphor making. This is quite true, so long as metaphors are seen hinging upon similitude. Once that barrier is broken, a simple rule emerges: metaphors can be made by the power of association, so long as each metaphor is taken as the fact itself, and the substitute for that fact. A delightful example of this procedure is that the eyes of the beloved are often described in this poetry as *bimār*=ailing, indisposed. Apparently there could be nothing more dissimilar to the beloved's eyes than ailment or indisposition. Syntagmatism makes this possible, thus: *ānk^b uṭ^bnā/uṭ^bānā* is for the eyes to be raised. Those who are ailing cannot rise. So the eyes cannot rise, so they are indisposed. Thus, the more indisposed or ailing the beloved's eyes, the better it is, for it affirms both her status and chastity as beloved.

Going back to the status of the beloved as the rightful taker of lives, it is natural that there are no suicides in the eighteenth-century *ghazal*, or any classical *ghazal* for that matter. There are countless deaths and woundings, burials and half-burials, but no one ever kills himself. For that would deprive the lover of the merit of being killed by the beloved, and worse still, by killing himself, the lover would presume to occupy the space that can be occupied only by the beloved. There is scarcely any talk of suicide in this world, and Mīr, who has a few delightful verses on this theme, makes it do more work than its nature (and the nature of the *ghazal* universe) would seem to imply. The following is from *Divān* II, put together around 1775–78:

Don't leave sword or ax
Anywhere near Mīr;
Lest he waste himself.

The idea here is not so much to emphasize the act of Mīr's killing

himself, as his character: Mīr is no wilting lily, or an adolescent in the throes of calf love. The other point is that by killing himself, he would be wasting himself; he is too valuable to be wasted. The ambiguity of the verb used to indicate the act of suicide permits two meanings. The other *she'r*:

I said to her: I am
 Out of patience, entirely:
 What should I do,
 Kill myself? She said,
 “Oh yes, man must
 Do something.”
 (*Shikār Nāma II*, c. 1790)

The ironical dimensions of this verse can only find a match in the miraculous economy of the diction. The two-line *she'r* in the original though in a meter of normal length, that is a meter that requires four feet to a line and not three, contains eighteen words, of which fully eight have only one syllable. Of the rest nine are disyllabic; there is only one trisyllabic word. Those who read Urdu would know that Urdu favors disyllabic and trisyllabic words. Words of four syllables, too, are quite common. A verse having a heavy preponderance of unisyllabic and disyllabic words, and packing so much meaning in it, is a rarity, even in Mīr.

The final impression that a major eighteenth-century poet's *ghazal* leaves on us is not that its protagonist (and some tend to identify protagonist with poet) is a person much given to wine and love, but who is essentially a helpless slave to social power or sexual desire, battered and defeated. Instead, we are left with the feeling that we have been in close touch with a vigorous, complex intellect, a mind capable of self-mockery and introspection, a body and spirit that have suffered and enjoyed, and are still prepared to suffer and enjoy, a soul that is no stranger to the mystic dimensions of existence, an outsider and nonconformist who cannot be patronized. An invitation to pity is nowhere to be found in his vocabulary. □

Select Bibliography

- Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Ābrū, Shaikh Mubārak. *Divān-e Ābrū*. Ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan. New Delhi: Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu, 1990.
- Abu 'l-Ḥasan Amru 'l-Lāh Ilāhabādī. *Taẓkira-e Masarrat Afzā* [1780-1]. Abridged and translated by 'Aṭā Kākvi. Patna: Azimushshan Book Depot, 1968.
- 'Askarī, Muḥammad Ḥasan. *Majmū'a-e Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Askarī*. Lahore: Saig-e Mīl Publications, 1994.
- . *Takhlīqī 'Amal aur Uslūb*. Ed. Muḥammad Suhēl 'Umar. Karachi: Nafis Academy, 1989.
- Cowl, R.P., ed. *The Theory of Poetry in England*. London: Macmillan, 1914.
- Faruqī, Shamsur Rahman. "Expression of the Indo-Muslim Mind in the Urdu Ghazal." *Studies in Urdu Ghazal and Prose Fiction*. Ed. Muhammad Umar Memon. Madison: University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1979. (A slightly enlarged version of this article appears in Faruqī. *The Secret Mirror: Essays on Urdu Poetry*. Delhi: Progressive Book Service, 1981.)
- . *She'r-e Shōr Angēz*. Vol. III. New Delhi: Bureau for the Promotion of Urdu, 1993. (All four volumes were reprinted in 1998.)
- Ghālīb, Mirzā Asadu 'l-Lāh Khān. *Ghālīb kē Khuṭūṭ*. Vol. IV. Ed. Khaliq Anjum. New Delhi: Ghalib Institute, 1993.
- Ḥasrat Mōhānī, Maulānā, ed. *Intikhāb-e Sukhan*. Vol. I. Lucknow: U.P. Urdu Academy, reprint of the original 1929 [?] edition. (The selection from Ḥātim is particularly valuable.)
- Ḥātim, Shāh Ṣahūru 'd-Dīn. *Intikhāb-e Ḥātim*. Ed. 'Abdu 'l-Ḥaq. New Delhi: Delhi Urdu Academy, 1991.
- Jān-e Jānān, Mirzā Maẓhar. *Divān*, with *Kharīṭa-e Javāhir*. Kanpur: Maṭba'e Muṣṭafā'ī, 1855. (The Saiyad Ḥusain Khālīṣ and Mīr Ṭāhir Vaḥīd *she'rs* are taken from *Kharīṭa-e Javāhir*, an anthology of Persian poetry put together by Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-e Jānān.)
- Jur'at, Shaikh Yaḥyā Mān (Qalandar Baksh). *Kulliyāt-e Jur'at*. Ed. Nūru 'l-Ḥasan Naqvī. Aligarh: Litho Colour Printers, 1971.
- Mīr, Muḥammad Taqī. *Kulliyāt-e Mīr*. Vol. I. Ed. Ṣill-e 'Abbās 'Abbāsī. Delhi: 'Ilmī Majlis, 1968.

- . *Nikātu 'sh-Shu'arā'*. 1752. Ed. Muḥammad Ilāhī. Delhi: Idāra-e Taṣnīf, 1972.
- Muṣḥafī, Shaikh Ghulām Hamadānī. *Kulliyāt-e Muṣḥafī*. 5 vols. Ed. Nūru 'l-Ḥasan Naqvī. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqī-e Adab, 1968–83. Vol. I.
- . *Kulliyāt*, Dīvāns VI and VII. Ed. Ḥāfiz 'Abbāsī [?]. Delhi: Majlis-e Ishā'at-e Adab, 1975.
- . *Dīvān-e Muṣḥafī*. [The Eighth Dīvān.] Ed. 'Ābid Razā Bēdār. Patna: Khuda Baksh Oriental Library, 1995.
- . *Tazkīra-e Hindī*. 1794–5. Ed. Maulvī 'Abdu 'l-Ḥaq. Aurangabad: Anjuman Tarraqī-e Urdū, 1933.
- Naim, C.M. "The Theme of Homosexual (Pederastic) Love in Pre-Modern Urdu Poetry." *Studies in Urdu Ghazal and Prose Fiction*. Ed. Muhammad Umar Memon. Madison: University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1979.
- Nājī, Muḥammad Shākir. *Dīvān-e Shākir Najī*. Ed. Fazlu 'l-Ḥaq. Delhi: Majlis-e Ṣubḥ-e Adab, 1968.
- Nuṣratī Bījāpūrī. *Alī Nāma*. 1672. Ed. 'Abdu 'l-Majīd Ṣiddīqī. Hyderabad: Salar Jung Dakani Publishing Company, 1959.
- Qā'im Čāndpūrī, Shaikh Qiyāmu 'd-Dīn. *Kulliyāt-e Qā'im*. Vol. I. Ed. Iqtidā Ḥasan. Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqī-e Adab, 1965.
- Shelley, P.B. "A Defence of Poetry." 1821. *English Critical Essays*. Ed. Edmund D. Jones. London: Oxford University Press, 1919.
- Wordsworth, William. "Poetry and Poetic Diction." *English Critical Essays*. Ed. Edmund D. Jones. London: Oxford University Press, 1919.
- Yūsuf Taqī, ed. *Murshidābād kē Čār Klāstī Shu'arā'*. Calcutta: published by the author, 1989.

Appendix

Persian and Urdu originals of the verses quoted in the text:

Qā'im main ghazal taur kiyā rēkhta varna
Ik bāt lačār sī ba-zabān-e dakanī t'ī (p. 4, above)

Muṣḥafī rēkhta kahtā hūn main behtar ze ghazal
Mu'taqid kyūn ke kō'ī Sa'dī-o-Khusrau kā hō (p. 4)

*Lā ke dunyā mēn hamēn zehr-e fanā dētē hō
Hā'ē kis bhūl-bhulaiyān mēn daghā dētē hō* (pp. 6–7)

*Lab qudrat sē juz faryād kuč^h rēzish nahīn kartā
Ye kuč^h shā'ir nahīn hai apnē dil kā marṣiya-khvān hai* (p. 9)

*Nāla mauzūn mī-kunad 'umrīst amma pīsh-e yār
Nīst Mazhar dar shumār-e shā'irān gōyā hanōz* (p. 9)

*Ham kō shā'ir na kahō Mīr ke sāhab ham nē
Dard-o-gham kitnē kiyē jama' tō dīvān kiyā* (p. 9)

*Ma'lūm nahīn ke apnā dīvān
Hai marṣiya yā kitāb kyā hai* (p. 9)

*Kuč^h main shā'ir nahīn aē Muṣḥafī hūn marṣiyā-khvān
Sōz par^h par^h ke muḥibbōn kō rulā jātā hūn* (pp. 9–10)

*'Ashiq-mizāj rōtē haiṅ par^h par^h kē bēshtar
Ash'ār rind kē na hū'ē marṣiyē hū'ē* (p. 10)

*Gham-e mazmūn na khāṭir mēn na dil mēn dard kyā ḥāsil
Hūvā kāghaḥ namaṭ gō raṅg tērā zard kyā ḥāsil* (pp. 10–11)

*Ghair kē mērē mar jānē mēn tafāvut arz-o-samā kā hai
Mārā un nē dōnōn kō lēkin muj^h kō kar kē sitam mārā* (p. 11)

*Rak^hnā t^ha vqt-e qatl mirā amtiyāz hā'ē
Sō khāk mēn milāya muj^h sab mēn sān kar* (p. 11)

*Kahtā t^ha kal kasū sē karūngā kisī kō qatl
Itnā tō kushtanī nahīn kō'ī magar ke ham* (pp. 11–2)

*Zindagānī tō har tarah kāṭī
Mar kē p^hir jēvnā qayāmat hai* (p. 12)

*Hastī sē 'adam tak nafas-e čand kī hai rāh
Dunyā sē guzarnā safar ēsā hai kabān kā* (p. 12)

*Ham gulshan-e daurān mēn aē khuftagī-e ṭāli'
Sar-sabz tō haiṅ lēkin jūn sabza-e khvābīda* (p. 13)

*Us sabzē kī tarāḥ sē ke hō rahguzār par
Rauṇdan mēn ēk khalq kī yān ham malē ga'ē* (p. 14)

*Sabza naurasta rahguzār kā hūn
Sar uḥḥāyā ke hō gayā pāmāl* (p. 14)

*Hai raṅg-e lāla-o-nasrīn judā judā
Har raṅg mēn bahār kā iṣḥāt čāhiyē* (pp. 14–5)

*Kahān hai gul mēn ṣafā'ī tirē badan kī sī
Bḥarī suhāg kī tis par ye bū dulhan kī sī* (p. 15)

*'Ajab lapāṭ hai pasīnē kī gul-badan tērē
Ke gul hai 'iṭr-farōsh aur hū'ī ṣabā mahzūz* (p. 15)

*Āstīn usnē jō kuhnī tak čarḥā'ī vaqt-e ṣubḥ
Ā rahī sārē badan kī bē-ḥijābī hātḥ mēn* (p. 15)

*Uskē sōnē sē badan sē kis qadar časpān hai hā'ē
Jāma kibritī kasū kā jī jalātā hai buhat* (p. 15)

*Ham tō kabḥī kahēn na ke kaprē utāriyē
Pahnā karēn gar āp isī vaḥ' kā libās* (p. 16)

*Jī pḥaṭ gayā hai rashk sē časpān libās kē
Kyā taṅg jāma liptā hai uskē badan kē sātḥ* (p. 16)

*Qadrān ḥusn kē kahtē haiṅ usē dil-murda
Sānvrē čḥōy kē jō čāh karē gōrōn kī* (p. 17)

*Namkīn ḥusn kā shikār karūn
Kyūn marūn halkē-pḥulkē gōrōn sē* (p. 17)

*Čāhat burī balā hai kal Mīr-e nāla-kash bḥī
Hamrāh nai-savārān dōṛē pḥirē nafar sē* (p. 18)

*Ham dil ba-kaf nihāda tabḥī uskē gird tḥē
Vo jin dinōn ke kḥēlē tḥā larḥōn mēn gōliyān* (p. 18)

*Imrōz bā tū da'va-e dil čūn kunad Vaḥīd
Rōzē ke dāda būd khaṭṭē darmiyān na būd* (p. 19)

Zulm kī mashq kab talak pyārē
Mū qalam kar kē khaṭ kō ṣāf karō (p. 19)

Khurshīd-e khaṭ-e rukh sē tū cāhē ke hō'ē vaṣl
Shabnam kī niman čashm kō anj'vān satī nam rak^b (p. 19)

Jō lōndā č'ōṛ kar randī kō cāhē
Vo kō'ī 'āshiq nahīn hai bulhavas hai (p. 20)

Har čand ke amradōn mēn hai ik rāh kā mazā
Ghair az nisā valē na milā cāh kā mazā (p. 20)

Gō zakhm-e dil mirē kō na sīvē mirā miyān
Main mar gayā tō kyā hūā jīvē mirā miyān (p. 20)

Par khabar rak^bnā kō'ī khanda na hō
Bulhavas nāpāk dil ganda na hō (p. 21)

Husn hai hī mīrzā'ī kar talāsh
Vo nahīn ma'shūq jō hō badma'āsh (p. 21)

Sab jān-o-tan milā t^hā na t^hā kuč^b khalal magar
Dōnōn kē dil us ān tarastē t^hē bāt kō (p. 22)

Vo ramz-e dil-farēb tiri ab talak hai yād
Bīrā banā kē p^hēnknā bēri kē pāt kō (p. 22)

Us vqt dil mirā tirē panjē kē bič t^hā
Jis vaqt tūnē hāt^h lagāyā t^hā hāt^h kō (p. 22)

Ṭuk ik sarak sarak kar ā bēṭ^hnā baghal mēn
Kyā ačpalā'iyān haiñ aur kyā d^hiṭā'iyān haiñ (p. 22)

Dīvāna ba rāhē ravād-o-tijl ba rāhē
Yārān magar in shahr-e shumā sāng na dārad (p. 25)

Tēgh-o-tabar rak^hā na karō pās Mīr kē
Aēsā na hō ke āpkō zā' vē kar rahēn (p. 26)

Main nē kahā taṅg hūn mār marūn kyā karūn
Vo b^hi lagā kahē hān kuč^b tō kiyā čāhiyē (p. 27)