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Mir and His Patrons*

BEING a poet was an occupation in the pre-modern times, no different from soldiering or accountancy. Poets and patrons sought out each other with certain well-understood expectations.

[Poets] provided companionship, served as confidants, wrote commemorative verses, acted as poetic mentors or *ustād*, even composed verses in the name of the patron and defended his reputation through their writings. The patron ... found pleasure and pride in the poet's company and verse and in having him identified with [him] rather than with some [rival]. There were many shared traditions between the poets and their patrons, including many implied or overt obligations to each other. Honor begot honor, loyalty received loyalty. Just as the patron assured the physical well-being of the poet, so did the poet contribute to the perceived sense of prosperity of the patron.¹

ZM not only identifies Mir's various patrons but also provides interesting information concerning his relations with them. Further information on these matters is also available in Mir's poetical works, particularly in several topical poems.

*This is a slightly modified version of "Appendix V" in my *Zikr-i Mir: The Autobiography of an Eighteenth Century Poet* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); the accompanying translated portions of Mir's narrative are also from the same. In the following, *ZM* refers to the Persian original, *Zikr-e Mir*; "Narrative A" to the first version of *ZM*, completed ca. 1773, and "Narrative B" to the final version, completed ca. 1784.

¹C. M. Naim, "Mughal and English Patronage of Urdu Poetry: A Comparison," in *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, Barbara S. Miller, ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 269.

According to *ZM*, Mīr's first patron was Ri'āyat Khān, whose father Zāhiru 'd-Daula 'Aẓīmu 'l-Lāh Khān was the cousin and also the brother-in-law of I'timādu 'd-Daula Qamaru 'd-Dīn Khān, the Vazir of Muḥammad Shāh for more than two decades. Mīr was close to twenty-six then and had been in Delhi for at least eight years. Besides being the Vazir's nephew, Ri'āyat Khān was also married to the Vazir's daughter. Consequently he must have been a fairly prominent person at the time, and his patronage sought by many, including Mīr. Mīr's own description of how he found employment with Ri'āyat Khān is too serendipitous to be entirely credible. As he tells it, he left Ārzū's house after an argument, and wandered around aimlessly until he sat down for a drink of water at a public place. Here a stranger named 'Alīmu 'l-Lāh recognized Mīr from his "crazy" looks and begged Mīr to come with him—'Alīmu 'l-Lāh hoped to find favor with Ri'āyat Khān who, according to 'Alīmu 'l-Lāh, greatly admired Mīr's poetry and very much wanted to meet him. Be that as it may, Mīr's meeting with Ri'āyat Khān most likely took place at the beginning of 1748, for the next reported incident is the campaign in early March during which the Vazir was killed.

His first job could not have brought Mīr much relief. There is a *mukhammas* by Mīr entitled "A Denunciation of Hulās Rā'ē" which most likely belongs to this time. It suggests that Mīr's monthly salary was no more than Rs. 22, and even that was withheld for months by a corrupt accountant.²

Before the end of 1748, Mīr had left Ri'āyat Khān and found service with Jāvid Khān, the new rising star on Delhi's horizon. This employment lasted four years. It is not clear, however, if Mīr actually served Jāvid Khān or merely kept the company of Asad Yār Khān, the Khān's Paymaster, who had found Mīr the job. For in September 1750 Mīr accompanied

²This poem is generally regarded as directed against a notorious official at Lucknow. My reasons to link it to Mīr's first job are as follows. The poem's Hulās Rā'ē deals with the salaries of an army, while the Hulās Rā'ē of Lucknow was employed in the revenue department of the Navāb. The poem's Hulās engages in fisticuffs with Rohillas and Chelas (Royal Slaves)—they are almost exclusively identified with Delhi. The disputed amount is quite small: one hundred and ten rupees unpaid over several months—that was the sort of salary most poets received in Delhi. Lastly, Mīr threatens Hulās by invoking the names of the Emperor, the Vazir, and someone named 'Alī Muḥammad Khān—hardly necessary in Lucknow where only Āṣafu 'd-Daula's name would have sufficed.

Ishāq Khān Najmu 'd-Daula, the Divan of Crownlands and the brother-in-law of Şafdar Jaṅg, Jāvid Khān's archenemy. Şafdar Jaṅg had Jāvid Khān assassinated in August 1752. Mīr then took employment with Mahā Narāin, the Dīvān of Şafdar Jaṅg. This employment lasted only some months. In March 1753, Şafdar Jaṅg was forced to leave Delhi, and after the ensuing civil war he was on his way to Avadh by November. His staff, of course, accompanied him.

Mīr must not have remained unemployed, for he describes himself being in the camp of Emperor Aḥmad Shāh during a disastrous campaign in April–May 1754, though he does not mention who he was with. Presumably he was already in the service of Rājā Jugal Kishōr. As Mīr tells us, Jugal Kishōr came to his house and took him home, where he asked Mīr to become his *ustād* and correct his verses. Mīr agreed, but found the verses irredeemably bad. Jugal Kishōr is mentioned in other *tazkiras* not for his poetry but for the extravagant wedding he had organized for his son much earlier. Mīr must have joined his service in 1752, or perhaps a bit earlier, but by 1753 Jugal Kishōr had fallen on bad days—the new wielders of power at Delhi, 'Imādu 'l-Mulk and Intizāmu 'd-Daula, had the Emperor confiscate his house and property in 1753 for having sided with their rival and former Vazir, Şafdar Jaṅg—and, according to Mīr, he couldn't meet Mīr's needs. Mīr's statement sounds too drastic. Jugal Kishōr's properties were later restored to him in 1754, and his sources of income in Murshidabad were apparently never affected. In any case, according to Mīr, Jugal Kishōr introduced Mīr to Rājā Nagar Mal, the newly promoted Vice-Premier and another confidant of 'Imādu 'l-Mulk. This must have occurred not too long after Nagar Mal's major promotions in late 1757. Not much later Jugal Kishōr was “accidentally” trampled to death by his own elephant, in a conspiracy that may have also involved 'Imād.³ Mīr, however, says nothing more about him.

Jugal Kishōr's introduction apparently didn't quite work, for Mīr had to gain access to Rājā Nagar Mal's eldest son, Rā'ē Bahādur Siṅgh.^h Mīr tells us that his first salary came from the son; only a year later did he receive some money from the Rājā which also included arrears. With Nagar Mal and his son, Mīr finally found the kind of employment he had long sought. Mīr's main job may have been as a companion or *muṣāhib*; he claims that he was also used for diplomatic errands; while the note,

³Prēm Kishōr Firāqī, *Vaqā'-e 'Ālam Shāhi*, Imtiyāz 'Alī Khān 'Arshī, ed. (Rampur: The State Library, 1949), p. 13.

arguably forged by Mīr himself, in the Rampur copy of Ārzū's *tazkira*, *Majma' al-Nafā'is*, suggests that Mīr's formal appointment might have been as the person in charge of the Rājā's library. Mīr did not write any *qaṣīda* addressed to Nagar Mal. This lacuna perhaps best indicates the nature of their relationship, which apparently had its basis in companionship rather than sycophancy. Mīr, however, did write a poem for the marriage of Bishan Siṅgh, the Rājā's second son, whom he also mentions in *ZM* with much affection. Mīr stayed in the Rājā's service from late 1757 until August or September 1771, at which time he says he broke his ties with him because the Rājā did not accept a diplomatic deal that Mīr had worked out on his behalf. By then, in fact, the Rājā's fortunes had declined—he had befriended some of the mortal enemies of the new Emperor, Shāh 'Ālam, who also believed that Nagar Mal had misappropriated moneys from the Crownlands under his control. Mīr, however, remained in the service of Rā'ē Bahādur Siṅgh, the Rājā's son, for another eight or nine months, until the latter's estate was confiscated too. Some months later, in June 1773, Mīr brought *ZM* to its first "completion" ("Narrative A"). Rājā Nagar Mal passed away in 1774, but Mīr did not think of mentioning his death when he made additions to *ZM* later.

There followed a stretch of at least eight years when Mīr couldn't find regular or sufficient employment with any one person, and was forced to live on the generosity of many. What hardships Mīr had to suffer particularly at the beginning of those years are described in detail in four satirical *mukhammas* and one *maṣnavī*.⁴ They describe a royal camp and an imperial capital that were devoid of security and any prospect of livelihood, a pauper Emperor whose scarlet tent was surrounded by the tents of prostitutes, a nobility of which the good men had no money while those who had plenty were given entirely to intrigues and dissoluteness, a soldiery that had not been paid for years and was resorting to plunder in order to survive, and blatantly corrupt accountants and other officials who denied the men in the ranks and other ordinary folks even their rightful due.

The list of his benefactors in those trying years that Mīr gives in *ZM* includes the new Emperor. Mīr claims that Shāh 'Ālam sent for him but he refused to go, and that the former, nevertheless, frequently helped him out. In Mīr's Urdu collection, however, there is a *qaṣīda* seventy-seven

⁴The four *mukhammas* are: (1) *Jis kisū kō khudā karē gumrāh*, (2) *Mushkil apnī hu'ī jō būd-o-bāsh*, (3) *Dastkhaṭī fard kā sunō aḥvāl*, and (4) *Qābil hai mēri sair kē aṭvār-e rōzgār*. The *maṣnavī* begins: *Ai j'bhūṭ āj shahr mēn tērā hī daur hai*.

verses long in praise of Shāh ‘Ālam—it suggests that Mīr did have at least one audience with him. Shāh ‘Ālam was fond of Urdu poets and poetry, as had been his father, ‘Ālamgīr II. He himself wrote poetry in Urdu, Persian, and Hindi, and also wrote a romance in Urdu prose. He was fond of music too. But he had neither much money to spend, nor was he apparently generous by nature. Quite possibly Mīr’s past ties with Nagar Mal did not help his cause either. Suffice it to say that Mīr failed to obtain necessary support in any regular form from either Shāh ‘Ālam or the nobility during his remaining years in Delhi.

This period of indigence and suffering ended at the beginning of 1782 when Mīr moved to Lucknow, where Navāb Āṣafu ’d-Daula received him with great warmth. The Navāb fixed an annual salary for Mīr—two hundred rupees per month, according to one report, but three hundred according to another.⁵ The first amount seems more likely. Saudā—Mīr’s senior peer, who had preceded him to Avadh and whose death in June 1781 had finally given Mīr the opportunity to come to Lucknow—had an annual service grant in 1780 that was worth Rs. 2,370.⁶ By all accounts, Mīr continued to receive his salary during Āṣaf’s life even when his relations with the Navāb cooled off after some years.

Āṣafu ’d-Daula died in September 1797. The new Navāb, the more cost-conscious Sa’ādat ‘Alī Khān, canceled Mīr’s salary. Mīrzā ‘Alī Luṭf who had known Mīr in Lucknow wrote in 1801 in Calcutta that Mīr was then living a life of extreme indigence and neglect, whereas under Āṣafu ’d-Daula he had received three hundred rupees per month even though his relations with [Āṣaf] had deteriorated.⁷ Luṭf also tells us that the English, the newest patrons of learning on the scene, had also ignored

⁵It may be useful here to have some sense of prices and salaries. A foot soldier earned ten to twelve rupees per month, while a laborer earned only two rupees. A woman servant was paid less than one rupee for the month’s work. While a single silver rupee in 1764, “a year of scarcity,” could buy 43 kilograms of wheat, the same quantity of moong dhal, 2.5 kilograms of ghee, or 8.5 kilograms of mustard oil. See Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-Daulah*, vol. II, (Lahore: The Minerva Book Shop, 1945), pp. 378–380.

⁶Richard B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British 1720–1801* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 181, Table 6.

⁷Mīrzā ‘Alī Luṭf, *Gulshan-e Hind* (rpt; Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy, 1986), pp. 152–3. Luṭf claims that Saudā used to get five hundred rupees per month. Thus, even according to him, Mīr’s salary was less than Saudā’s.

Mir—they interviewed Mir for a job at the College of Fort William at Calcutta but decided he was too old. The wits of Lucknow then concluded that the “Sahibs” at Calcutta needed a porter, not a poet.⁸ By then a generational change had also taken place. New poets, most of them originally from Delhi, had taken center stage, gaining favor with the two most important patrons of poetry in Lucknow: Sa‘adat ‘Alī Khān, the reigning Navāb, and Mirzā Sulaimān Shikōh, Shāh ‘Ālam’s son who had escaped Ghulām Qādir’s terror by fleeing to Lucknow.

Only one—Rājā Jugal Kishōr—of the above noted several patrons of Mir seems to have sought his services as an *ustād*; the others desired only the pleasures of his company and his poetry. They also patronized him because he was a great poet, and his presence added luster to their names. One of them—Rājā Nagar Mal—apparently also entrusted him with tasks of diplomacy. Mir was a professional poet. He not only expected patronage—he decried the times when patronage didn’t come forth—he didn’t hesitate to seek it out. And as the fortunes of his patrons changed, he too changed his loyalties. But Mir clearly had some terms of his own which he insisted on in these relationships. He felt insulted when Ri‘āyat Khān asked him to teach a few of his verses to a singer, and left his service. He broke his ties with Rājā Nagar Mal, because the Rājā, having entrusted Mir with a mission, failed to follow his advice. There are several stories of uncertain authenticity which put Mir’s ties with Āsafu ‘d-Daula in a similar light. Once, for example, when the two were in the Navāb’s library Āsaf asked Mir to pass him a book which lay on the floor closer to Mir. Instead of picking up the book, Mir turned to an attendant and said, “Listen to what your master is saying.” The Navāb picked up the book himself, but he was not too pleased.⁹

In Mir’s *Kulliyāt*, there are quite a few panegyric poems, mostly of a religious nature; only three, however, are not only in the formal *qaṣīda*

⁸Āzād, writing a few decades later, reports that whenever an English dignitary visited Lucknow Mir would be invited to meet him. But he always refused, saying, “Those who meet me do so out of their regard for either my family or my poetry. The Ṣāhib cares nothing for the family, and he doesn’t understand my poetry. He would give me some reward, but I would only gain ignominy.” See Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, *Āb-e Ḥayāt* (Lahore: Āzād Book Depot, 1917), p. 221.

⁹Sa‘adat Khān Nāṣir, *Taḏkira-e Khush Ma’rika-e Zibā*, Shamīm Anhōnvī, ed. (Lucknow: Nasīm Book Depot, 1971), p. 101. Nāṣir was writing some thirty-five years after Mir’s death and some fifty years after Āsaf’s.

form but also addressed to a temporal figure of authority. Of the latter, one *qaṣīda* is clearly in praise of Emperor Shāh ‘Ālam, while another equally explicitly mentions Āṣafu ‘d-Daula. The third *qaṣīda*—[*Huvā kiyē hai zibas shikva-e falak taḥrīr*]¹⁰—has a curious history. Within the text it is addressed to “the Vazir” but does not mention any name or another title. It is included in a manuscript which was copied while Mīr had not left Delhi. There it has the title: “In praise of the Vazir of the Realm” [*dar madḥ-e vazīru ‘l-mamālik*]. Modern scholarship identifies the Vazir as ‘Imādu ‘l-Mulk. In some later manuscripts, however, the same *qaṣīda* is entitled “In praise of Āṣafu ‘d-Daula.”

‘Imādu ‘l-Mulk, perhaps the most ruthlessly ambitious person of his time, had himself made the Vazir in 1754 when he was only eighteen. His deeds are mentioned in *ZM* with an air of condemnation. Mīr doesn’t mention meeting ‘Imād during the early years of ‘Imād’s meteoric rise to absolute power; in fact he says that he took to seclusion at the time. He seems to have met ‘Imād only much later in Dig, by which time ‘Imād had himself sought protection with the Jats. It is possible that Mīr wrote this *qaṣīda* at that time, for that is when he also mentions ‘Imād with many words of praise. Most curiously Mīr’s *qaṣīda* is in the exact same meter and rhyme scheme as the first of Saudā’s two *qaṣīdas* in praise of ‘Imād—[*Kahē hai kātib-e daurān sē munshī-e taqdīr*].¹¹ This couldn’t have been by sheer coincidence. Saudā had gained employment with ‘Imād early—besides the two *qaṣīdas* there is an explicit reference to that effect in an unidentified *taḥkīra* from that time¹²—but he later parted company with him and went eastward. Had Mīr earlier lost out to Saudā in some subtle competition to gain ‘Imād’s patronage? Was this *qaṣīda* meant to show ‘Imād at a later date that he [Mīr] was as good as Saudā? Even better? In any case, there is nothing in it that could have stopped Mīr

¹⁰The so-called *Qaṣīda-e Rā’iya* is included in the manuscript *Divān-e Mīr* (dated 1192 A.H.) in the library of Idāra-e Adabiyāt-e Urdū, Hyderabad. See Kalbe ‘Alī Khān Fā’iq, ed. *Kulliyāt-e Mīr*, vol. V (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqī-e Adab, 1982), p. 239; and Akbar Ḥaidarī, ed., *Divān-e Mīr, Nuskha-e Maḥmūdābād* (Srinagar: Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, 1973), p. 79.

¹¹Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafī‘ Saudā, *Kulliyāt-e Saudā*, vol. II, Muḥammad Shamsu ‘d-Dīn Ṣiddīqī, ed. (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqī-e Adab, 1976), p. 204.

¹²Quoted in Niṣār Aḥmad Fārūqī, *Talāsh-e Mīr* (New Delhi: Maktaba Jāmi‘a, 1974), p. 221. The original source is a manuscript at the Aligarh Muslim University Library.

from presenting it later to Āṣafu 'd-Daula who, after all, was Shāh 'Ālam's nominal Vazir. Such "recycling" of panegyrics was common enough among poets. Mīr himself did so in another instance which will be discussed later.

The *qaṣīda* explicitly addressed to Āṣafu 'd-Daula—[*Rāt kō muṭṭlaq na thī yān jī kō tāb*]¹—is quite modest in scale. It also contains a few lines that could be interpreted as suggesting that the poem was written in Delhi, then sent to Lucknow to be presented as a petition to the Navāb. Its third couplet reads:

Har zamān thī sātḥ apnē guftogū
Kyā karūn shahr aur mainḥ dōnōn kharāb
 All night long I kept talking to myself;
 What could I do, the city and I both were
 desolate.

For Mīr, "the city" meant Delhi. It is hard to imagine that in the above Mīr was simply being conventional or that he wrote the line in Lucknow. This conclusion is strengthened a few lines later when an angel tells Mīr that generosity still lived in the form of Āṣafu 'd-Daula, whose "threshold is higher than the heavens," and that "Mīr would puff up with pride on his good fortune *if* he gained admittance to the Navāb's presence." (Emphasis added.)

Āsmān zīna hai jis kā āstān
Naz kar ṭāli' pe jō hō bāryāb

If our first assumption is correct that Mīr sent the *qaṣīda* ending in *be* as a petition from Delhi, then it must have been the other *qaṣīda*, originally written for 'Imādu 'l-Mulk, that Mīr personally presented on his first formal audience with the Navāb. The latter is certainly grander in conception and scale, and would have met the demands of the occasion perfectly.

Āṣafu 'd-Daula was Mīr's first truly powerful and enormously rich patron, and Mīr must have tried hard to keep him pleased. That is evident just from the number and variety of other poems which Mīr wrote for him: a *qit'a* or short poem on the occasion of Āṣaf's recovery from an illness; another *qit'a* in praise of Āṣaf's horse; three substantive *maṣnavīs* entitled *Shikār-nāma*, describing with great skill and enthusiasm the Navāb's hunting tours; a *maṣnavī* describing the Navāb's annual cele-

bration of Holi; a *maṣnavī* dated 1209 A.H. on the Navāb's military campaign against the chief of Rampur; and two *maṣnavīs* concerning two marriages—one, allegedly, Āṣaf's, the other his "son" Vazīr 'Alī's.

Āṣafu 'd-Daula's principal marriage took place in Faizabad during his father's time, long before Mīr reached Lucknow. Āṣaf's subsequent numerous marriages were of no consequence. Since he couldn't have a son of his own, he was in the habit of acquiring various women in their early pregnancy, whose children were then brought up as the Navāb's own. His favorite was Vazīr 'Alī, the son of a *farrāsh* or a "carpet-spreader" in Āṣaf's service who, according to Abū Ṭālib, "had for a money consideration made over his pregnant wife to the [Navāb]." ¹³ Vazīr 'Alī's marriage in 1208 A.H. (Aug. 1793–July 1794) is described in all accounts as the grandest such event in the history of Lucknow. Abū Ṭālib estimates that it had cost more than two million rupees. Mīr was present on the occasion, and fulfilled his duty as a poet. But how do we account for the other poem, entitled "On the Marriage of Āṣafu 'd-Daula"?

Since the two *maṣnavīs* are in the same meter, one possibility is that they actually formed one very long poem, and that some confusion by copyists, or by Mīr himself, resulted in their being designated as separate poems. This is the explanation offered by Kalb-e 'Alī Khān Fā'iq, the editor of the best edition of Mīr's *maṣnavīs*. He also suggests a critical change in the second line of that poem which would make it mean "Āṣafu 'd-Daula has arranged a marriage," rather than the actual: "Āṣafu 'd-Daula is getting married."¹⁴

There is however another possibility which requires no alteration to the poem and makes equal sense. The most curious feature of the *maṣnavī* allegedly describing Āṣaf's marriage is that it shares a great many verses with the *maṣnavī* written for the marriage of Bishan Singh^h, Rājā Nagar Mal's second son. No such shared verse is found in the other poem. Given Mīr's other attempts to antedate his devotion to the rulers of Avadh, it is quite possible that he put together this poem, recycling much of an earlier similar poem, either for the above reason or perhaps for pre-

¹³Abu Talib, *History of Asafu'd Daulah*, W. Hoey, tr. (rpt; Lucknow: Pustak Kendra, 1971), p.87.

¹⁴Kalb-e 'Alī Khān Fā'iq, ed. *Kulliyāt-e Mīr*, vol. VI (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqī-e Adab, 1984), p. 261. The existing line reads: *Āṣafu 'd-Daula kā raḥā hai byāh*. Fa'iq says it should be: *Āṣafu 'd-Daula nē raḥāyā byāh*. The latter, in fact, could still mean, "Āṣaf got married."

sensation on the occasion of one of Āṣaf's numerous other "marriages."

Mīr mentions two *shikār-nāma* poems in *ZM*. The third, which describes a hunt in the region of Bahraich and beyond, must have been written a few years after the first two. It is by far the most ambitious of the lot, and contains several very fine *ghazals* in addition to colorful descriptions of the journey and the hunt. Here Mīr appears older and weaker; he is forced to travel in a palanquin rather than on horseback, which draws people's derision—they mock him, saying "Here comes a Firāngī!" As was customary, the poem concludes with a prayer for the Navāb's long life and prosperity; then, intriguingly, come two verses—as if they were a postscript added on the way back from the Navāb's court after a disappointing audience—which suggest that the poem didn't receive its due from Āṣafu 'd-Daula:

Javābir tō kyā kyā dik'hāyā gayā
Kharīdār lekin na pāyā gayā
Matā'-e hunar p'hēr kar lē čalō
Bahot lak'na'ū mēn rahē g'har čalō
 What fine jewels you displayed,
 But no customer stepped forward.
 Pick up your bounty of talent,
 Enough of Lucknow, now return.

It probably did happen that way. Āṣaf's erratic behavior is well recorded. When after years of hard work Mīr Ḥasan presented his masterpiece, *Saḥru 'l-Bayān*, to Āṣafu 'd-Daula, the Navāb rewarded him with a fine shawl from his own personal collection—but nothing more. However, as Mīr's poem on Āṣaf's expedition of 1794 against Rampur indicates, Mīr continued to present poems to the Navāb till close to the latter's death in 1797—in other words he remained gainfully employed until Sa'adat Khān became the ruler of Avadh, when his stipend stopped. Mīr's *ghazals* from that time contain many verses expressing his disgust with Lucknow and his anger at its people. It is not known how exactly he eked out a living during the final thirteen years of his life. There is one tradition which claims that Sayyid Inshā' Allāh Khān Inshā', a younger poet who for a number of years was highly esteemed by Sa'adat 'Alī Khān, interceded on Mīr's behalf and had the stipend renewed. The story deserves to be repeated as a perfect example of the posterity's view of Mīr.

By the time Navāb Āṣafu 'd-Daula passed away and Sa'adat 'Alī Khān took his place, Mīr had already stopped going to the court. No one at the

court invited him either. One day the Navāb's cavalcade was going through [the Chowk]. Mīr was seated at Taḥsīn's Mosque by the side of the road. When the Navāb's [elephant] passed by everyone respectfully stood up. Mīr Ṣāḥib, however, remained seated. The Navāb turned to Sayyid Inshā', who was sitting with him on the elephant, and asked, "Who is this man, Inshā', whose pride didn't allow him to stand up?" Inshā' replied, "Your Highness, he is the same proud beggar whose name has been mentioned before you so often. He has no means and yet this is the way he feels. Most probably he didn't have anything to eat even today." After reaching the palace, the Navāb sent Mīr the robes signifying the renewal of his position and one thousand rupees as token of invitation. When the mace-bearer brought the gifts, Mīr turned him away, saying, "Send it to some mosque [for the needy]; this sinner is not that indigent yet." Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān was amazed. When his courtiers continued to press him, the Navāb asked Sayyid Inshā' to take [the gifts] to Mīr himself. He went and reasoned with Mīr Ṣāḥib in his own special way [and eventually got Mīr to accept the gifts and start coming to the court every once in a while].¹⁵

But other reports do not confirm this. Later *taẓkiras*, however, mention many poets—none very significant—who were Mīr's *shāgird* in the art of poetry; they, as was customary, probably provided some support, as might have a few connoisseurs such as Mirzā Muḥammad Muḥsin, whose note in a copy of Mīr's verses which Mīr himself had given him provides us the exact date of Mīr's death, Friday, Sha'bān 20, 1225/September 20, 1810.¹⁶ □

¹⁵Āzād, pp. 219–20.

¹⁶The manuscript is in the library of the Mahārājā of Maḥmūdābād, Mahmudabad (Sitapur, India). See Akbar Ḥaidarī., p. 104.