MUHAMMAD HUSAIN AZAD

Excerpts from *Ab-e Hayat*

Except One: The Effects of Persian and Arabic on Braj Bhasha

How Persian metaphors and similes came and changed the complexion of the language

From the above discussion you will have seen in brief how, although the tree of Urdu grew in the ground of Sanskrit and Bʰāshā, it has flowered in the breezes of Persian. Although indeed the difficulty was that the time of Bēdil and "Nāṣir" 'Alī had just passed away. Only their followers were left, and these followers were intoxicated with the pleasure of metaphor and simile. Thus it was as if the color of metaphors and similes too came into the Urdu vernacular [*bʰāshā*]—and came very swiftly. If this color had come only like cosmetic paste rubbed into the face, or like collyrium in the eyes, it would have enhanced both attractiveness and vision. But alas—its intensity caused severe harm to the eyes of our power of expression. And it made the language merely a show [*svāṅg*] of imaginary effects and illusions.

The difference between the literature of Bhasha and Persian

As a result, Bʰāshāand Urdu became as different as earth and sky. I want to juxtapose examples of both and place them before you, and point out the difference. But before this, two or three things need to be kept in mind. First, the young man of poetic Urdu, who had been nourished on the milk of Persian, had in his temperament many lofty ideas and much exaggeration of themes. Along with them came situations and national customs and historical references that were specifically connected to Persia and Turkestan, and were naturally opposed to the temperament of Bʰāshā Along with all this, the delicacy and innate refinement of Persian made Urdu's ideas often extremely complex. Because they have been

falling on our ears and settling in our brains from childhood onwards, they don't seem difficult to us. But if an illiterate, ignorant, or non-native speaker hears them, his jaw drops in stupefaction: "What did he say?" [p. 50] Thus it is incumbent upon every reader of Urdu to have some knowledge of Persian literature.

A subtle point

There is a subtle point about the difficulty of Persian and Urdu literature, and the easiness of Hindi literary style—and it is a point worthy of attention. The point is that whatever thing the Bʰāshā language mentions, it explains to us with every detail the features that are encountered in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching that particular thing. Although this description lacks the force of exaggeration, or the pomp and grandeur of tumult and tempest, the hearer receives the same pleasure that he would have received from seeing the real thing itself. The poets of Persia, by contrast, never show clearly the good or bad features of anything they depict. Rather, they compare it to some other thing that we already know to be good or bad of our own knowledge, and describe the first thing by applying to it the necessary attributes of the second thing. For example, a flower, with its delicacy, color, and fragrance, is a comparison for the beloved; when they want to show the style of beauty the beloved has in the hot season, they will say that because of the heat, the sweat of dew began to drip from the cheeks of the flower. And in the same style the poet Khvāja "Vazīr" says,

> I am the nightingale who, when you slaughter it in anger,
> Would leave its soul as fragrance, in the rose of your cheeks

An important warning

If these similes and metaphors are not farfetched, and are derived from things before the eyes, then they produce extreme subtlety and delicacy in poetry. But when they range very far and become highly rarefied, difficulty develops. Thus our poets of "delicate thought," when describing some king's high fortune and wisdom, don't content themselves with merely praising him as an Alexander of Greece in fortune, and a second Aristotle in wisdom. Rather, they say instead that if the [kingmaker] Humā bird of his wisdom should cast its shadow from its height of fortune, then everyone would become an Alexander and Aristotle of the realm of wisdom and wealth. Or rather, if the ocean of rational arguments in his breast should become tumultuous, it would drown the realm of

Greece.

First of all, the Humā's [kingmaking] quality itself is a baseless fancy, and then too it belongs particularly to that country [of Persia]. And on top of that, to create a "sky of skies" of ascendant fortune, and then to discover its apogee—and then, the arrival of their [p. 51] imaginary Humā at that point! Then look at how on the land under this imaginary sky, they've established a Greece of ingenious contrivances. Then look at how they've made the blessing of this imaginary Humā so widespread that all the most ignorant people in the world will go to this imaginary Greece and become Aristotles.

And as for the second phrase: first of all, the Indian men of learning never believed that a "deluge could spring out of the oven."[1] And on top of that, for the realm of Greece to be destroyed because of the evil opinions in its philosophy, and so on, are matters and legends that may be our ordinary ideas, but other communities, and even our own common people, are ignorant of them. Thus they won't understand without explanation. And when you've said something, and then you have to explain it, where's the pleasure in speech? And even apart from that, where's the emotional effect? True pleasure is when half the thing has been said, half is still on the lips—and the listener is moved to delight. "The string sounded, he guessed the *rāg*."

The concepts of Persian are very far from the understanding of speakers of other languages

The result of those florid fancies and unreal subtleties was that even things that are immediate and apparent to the feelings become entangled in coil after coil of our similes and metaphors, and they too are flung into the world of abstract thought. Because in presenting our thoughts, we first of all suppose lifeless things to be alive—or rather, in fact, to be human. After that, we endow those lifeless things with the properties suitable to living and intelligent creatures, and generate the kind of ideas that usually have specific national or religious connection with the lands of Arabia, or Persia, or Turkestan.

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[1]In Islamic story tradition, Noah's flood is said to have begun this way.

Surprise

It's surprising that these concepts, and similes from those lands, acquired so much popularity that they entirely effaced comparable ones from here. Although indeed, here and there in the poetry of Saudā and Sayyid Inshā these [indigenous similes] can be found, and in their place they give the greatest pleasure.

Regret

In short, our literature is now an ancient memo book of such similes and metaphors—which have been the well-used handkerchiefs of our ancestors for hundreds of years, and have come down to us as an inheritance.

When our later poets longed for new applause, the extraordinary thing is that, sometimes through adjective after adjective, sometimes through metaphor upon metaphor, they made their poetry narrower and darker. If their great effort achieved anything at all, it was only an illusory delicacy and an imaginary subtlety that must be called a jumble of paradoxes. But the regrettable thing is that instead of their poetry having an emotional effect on the hearts of great and small, to capable people it offered a complex puzzle on which to test their wits, and to ordinary people it presented a deceitful labyrinth. To which the poets' reply is: "If someone understands, let him understand; if he doesn't understand, let him remain in his barbarous ignorance."

Look at the verdure of the garden of Bhasha

Now, in contrast to those, look at how the writer of Bʰāshā literary style arranges his garden in the rainy season. Groves of trees are scattered around, with their dense foliage and deep deep shadow. Berry-tree branches and mango leaves intermingle. *Kʰirnī* branches extend into the *fālsa* tree. Moonlight-vines wind themselves around the *kamrak* tree. The ivy climbs up the celsia plant; its branches hang down like a gliding snake. Clusters of flowers sway back and forth. Fruit and seeds kiss the ground. The greenness of the *nīm* tree's leaves, and the whiteness of its flowers, are at their height. From the buds of the mango tree comes the scent of its blossoms. The delicate deep fragrance pleases the heart. When the tree branches sway, a rain of mimosa [p. 55] flowers pours down. A heavy shower of fruits rains down. A light, light breeze, permeated with their fragrance, moves along the paths. The branches quiver as though a girl is rambling along, intoxicated with her own youth, playing fanciful games. From one branch, the sound of black bees; from another, the buzzing of

flies makes a different sound entirely. The birds are calling in the branches, and frolicking around. In the artificial pond, a sheet of water falls so forcefully that even a voice speaking into the ear can't be heard. From there, when the water goes rippling into many small channels, it creates an extraordinary springlike effect. The birds come down from the trees, and bathe, and quarrel among themselves. They ruffle their wings, and fly off. The grazing animals move in leaps and bounds as they wander. From one side, the "Cuckoo!" of the cuckoo bird; from another side, the voice of the kokila bird. Amidst such a crowd the afflicted lover too is sitting alone somewhere, diverting himself, and enduring with pleasure the pain of his separation.

Look at the glory of the rainy season

When they describe the rainy season, they say that a black cloud mass, swaying, loomed up overhead. The cloud mass is a billow of smoke. Lightning comes flashing along. In the blackness, the white rows of cranes and herons are showing their splendor. When the clouds thunder and the lightning flashes, the birds sometimes huddle and hide among the branches, sometimes settle close to the walls. The peacocks call out with one voice, the *papīhā* birds with another. When the mad lover enters the thicket of jasmine vines, cool breezes shake the branches and a stream of water begins to fall. In his intoxication, he sits down right there and begins to recite verses.

Look at the description of the evening

Describing the excellence of a city, they say that when you arrive at a place just as evening is falling, the mountains are green and verdant. All around are well-settled, thriving villages amidst flourishing fields. Below the mountains, pure water is flowing in the river with the *āb* [= water, luster] of pearls. In the midst of it all is the city. When its tall houses and balconies are reflected in the river, [p. 56] their pinnacles sparkle in the water, and another city can be seen. At the edge of the river, the rains have invigorated the trees, bushes, and foliage, to provide grazing for the milk-cows and goats.

Look at the description of the bleakness of the night

When they show the state of bleakness and affliction, they say that it's the dead center of the night. The jungle is desolate. The wilderness is dark. In the burning ground, for a long way there are piles of ashes and burnt wood scattered around. Here and there in the pyres, flame glim-

mers. There are the frightening faces of ghosts and goblins, and their terrifying forms. One of them, tall as a palm tree, staring red eyes wide open, long fangs protruding, a garland of skulls around his neck, stands roaring with laughter. Another runs off, with an elephant bundled under his arm. Another stands there chomping on a cobra like a cucumber. From behind a clamor arises: "Grab him, grab him, kill him, kill him, don't let him escape!" In the space of a breath these ghosts and goblins vanish. The tumult and confusion cease. Then the burning ground is silent. The leaves rustle in the breeze. The soughing of the wind, the rush of water, the hooting of an owl. The keening of jackals and the wailing of dogs. This is such desolation that even the former fear is forgotten.

A comparison of the literary style of both languages

Look—both these gardens are spread out before you, facing each other. Have you compared them? What's the difference in their style and manner? The eloquent Bʰāshā-speaker doesn't, even by accident, take a step toward metaphor. Whatever enjoyable sights he sees with his eyes, and whatever agreeable sounds he hears, or whatever agreeable scent he smells, are exactly what he very clearly describes in his sweet language, spontaneously, without exaggeration.

Indic literature too is not incapable of exaggeration

But don't think that in India exaggeration had no popularity at all. The writer of Sanskrit literary style, if he grew the least bit angry, would make the mountains into wrinkles on the forehead of the earth, and cause the mouth of the cave to start grinding its boulder-teeth. Looking at these themes, first of all we remember the universal rule that the literature of every country is a picture of its geographic and physical condition—and in fact even a mirror of its customs and habits, and its people's temperament. The reason for this is that whatever is habitually before the eyes of a poet or a writer of literature [p. 57] becomes the material for his similes and metaphors. Second, it seems that just as in the lands of Iran, Khurasan, and Turan the spring season makes hearts blossom, here the rainy season gives rise to relish and desire. There, the nightingale with its thousand tunes appears in spring; here, the *kōyal* and the *papīhā*. The writers of Braj Bʰāshādepict the pleasures and moods of the rainy season extremely well. Jahāngīr, in his *Tuzuk,* has rightly said, "The rainy season of India is our springtime, and the *kōyal* is the Indian nightingale. In this season she sings with extraordinary art and delight, and abandons herself to play. And if there's any springlike pleasure here, it's in the scenes and

sights of the spring season, when the colors of Holi fly through the air. Squirters come into play, bowls of red color are thrown—these are not the things that the Persians do in springtime."

The thanks due to Persian literature

In any case, we ought to be grateful to our ancestors for this verbal device: that while in the Hindi language words are conjoined by [the possessives] *kā, kē,* and *kī,* the use of the Persian *iẕāfat* construction made for more compression. Moreover, metaphors and similes were little used in Bʰāshā—perhaps because it was not a language of books or literature, or perhaps because just as the constant occurrence of *kā* or *kē* made the language unpleasing, so also the addition of words brought about by many similes caused its poetry to fall from the level of eloquence. Now our ancestors introduced Persian into it, and adorned it with metaphors and similes. As a result, in delicacy of concepts, and ripeness of constructions, and power of poetry, and sharpness and quickness, it advanced beyond Bʰāshā And many new words and new constructions created breadth in the language as well.

The excessive use of metaphors and similes destroyed the power to express meanings and represent truth

Along with this pride, there is a regret always in my heart, that they threw away for no reason a natural flower scented with its own perfume, vibrating with its own color. And what was that [flower]? Effectiveness of speech, and expression of truth. Our people of "delicate thought" and subtle sight [p. 58] began to create idea upon idea—through the colorfulness of metaphors and similes, and a passionate enthusiasm for wordplay. And they grew unconcerned about conveying real facts. The result of this was that the style of the language changed. And it came about that if they try they can write, in the style of Persian, *Panj Ruqʻa* and *Mīnā Bāzār* and *Fasāna-e ʻAjā'ib*. But they can't write about a national affair or a historical revolution in such a way that readers could learn how the event took place and how it reached its outcome; they can't show readers how the occurrences of the time and the circumstances of the day were such that what happened could happen only in this way, and no other outcome was at all possible. And it is impossible for them to write a thought about philosophy or ethics with a clarity of speech that would draw people's hearts toward that thought, and with arguments that always clearly show their brilliance behind the curtain of beautiful expression, and that can move people to pledge assent, or can win complete obedience from their

hearers when the writers want them to stop doing something or to risk doing something else. Only "delicate thought" created this fault: the modes of metaphor and simile, and synonymous phrases, rose to the tongue of our pen like pillows for our speech. Undoubtedly our ancestors, seeing such colorfulness and refinement, forgot—or perhaps, never understood—that this imaginary style crushes our true temper into the dust. This is the reason that today we are very deficient in writing in the English style, and in translating their articles completely. No, not we! Our indigenous literature is deficient in this pursuit.

The general principles of English writing

The general principles of English writing are these: that whatever situation or inner state you write about, you present it in such a way that you cause the same feeling or the same mood to pervade the heart—the same joy, or grief, or anger, or compassion, or fear, or fervor—as would be aroused by experiencing or seeing the thing itself.

Undoubtedly our style of writing, with its trim phrases and its rhythmic flow of rhymes, [p. 59] attracts the ear. Through its colorful words and subtle themes, it gives to ideas the pleasure of piquancy. Moreover, through its exaggeration of speech, its pomp and circumstance, it turns the heavens and the earth upside down. But if you look for the true aim—that is, an effect on the heart, or a conveying of information—there's not even a trace. Some themes feel very fluent on our tongues. But the truth is that we don't succeed even with them. For example, if we praise someone's beauty, we don't content ourselves with calling her the envy of the *ḥūrīs* and the pride of the *parīs*, but make her into a figure built of impossibilities and paradoxes. But the God-given beauty of a beautiful person has an atmosphere of its own: whatever we see with our eyes goes straight to our hearts, and only the heart knows what it feels. Well then—why don't we depict beauty in such a way that the hearers too will feel their hearts turn over?

The style of a handsome youth

If we praise a strong young man, we'll fill pages with calling him [in *Shāh Nāma* style] a Rustam, an Unconquerable, an Isfandyār, a Bronze-body, a Lion of the Jungle of Battle, a Crocodile of the Ocean of War, and so on, and will blacken page after page with such epithets. After all, his long neck, his well-developed upper arms, his broad chest, the roundness of his arms, his slim waist—in short, his whole attractive body and harmonious proportions—speak in a style of their own. His personal

courage and innate heroism, which have made him distinguished in his time, also count for something. Why don't we depict them in such a style that morbid thoughts will acquire a firm tone, and drooping hearts will be filled with spirit?

The verdure of a garden

In praising a garden we will sometimes scar [with jealousy] the heart of the green garden of the skies and the garden of the stars; sometimes we will call it a Faraway Paradise or a Paradise on Earth. In fact, we'll blacken many pages praising, in all different styles, its each and every flower and leaf. But the swaying of its greenery, the radiance of its flowers, its sweet smells, the rippling of flowing water, its well-pruned trees, the blooming of the flowerbeds, the scent of the air, the call of the parrot, the cry of the *papīhā*, the voice of the *kōyal* that affects the human heart with spiritual joy—we [p. 60] don't describe these things in a way that portrays them before the reader's eyes. If it's a battlefield, then we hurl the regions of earth up and destroy them in the heavens, and cause rivers of blood to flow from one country into another. But the emotional effect that, in itself, causes hearts to see the heroism of a hero and then feel inspired with love of country and self-sacrificial devotion to a comrade—that is not there.

The virtues of learning and the learned

Turning down another street, when we set out to praise learning, we say that its blessing creates *pīrs*, prophets, divine messengers, angels. If only, instead of all that, we would mention some of its clear, obvious benefits, and arouse a desire for it in everyone's heart! So that all people would understand that if they remained ignorant, their wretchedness and lowness would ruin both their worldly and their religious life. Our writings don't even mention this. And the pity is that even up to the present we still haven't paid any attention to it. There are many thoughts and themes in English that our language cannot express. That is, the enjoyment they produce in the English language can't be fully conveyed in Urdu. Which in reality is a result of the weakness of the language, and this is a cause of the greatest shame for its native speakers.

Why has our literature remained in such a bad state?

If the literature of civilized peoples should ask why Urdu literature has remained in this afflicted state, then Quick-wittedness will immediately speak up: Because a people's literature corresponds to that people's

condition, and its thoughts correspond to the state of the country and the country's education. As was the education and civilization of India, as was the judgment of its kings and nobles, just so was its literature. And the last word on the subject will be this: that no bird can fly higher than its wings will carry it. Its wings were Persian, Sanskrit, Bʰāshā and so on—so how could poor Urdu have gone and perched in the palaces of England or Rome or Greece? But in truth, the knot of this question is tied into another twist as well. Which is this: that in any land, every affair progresses to the extent that the affair in question [p. 61] is connected to the government. In the countries of Europe, by longstanding custom, the internal and external power of the government was dependent on the innate and intellectual capabilities of the people. And all the government's arrangements, and all its affairs of every type, were established through its people's participation and their exhausting labors of management. It is also clear that their plans were based on the powers of learned and intellectual and historical experience. Then, the aforementioned capabilities were not merely limited to hundreds of people, but were spread among thousands. Here [in Europe] where there are many other matters of importance to government, one of them was that every matter at issue was decided by the agreed opinion of the general assembly, through writings and speeches. On the right occasion, when one individual stood up and made a case in front of the general assembly, he turned the world entirely upside down. Then when the other side answered him, refuting him with equal strength, they made the eastern sun rise in the west. And even now, merely by the force of speeches and writings they make hundreds of thousands of people change in concert from one opinion to another. We ought to reflect on what kind of power their speech has, and what kinds of force their language must possess. In contrast to India: for in our language, if anything was achieved, it was the volumes of some poets praising the victorious fortune of a king, which are suitable only for diversion and amusement. It's a difference of heaven and earth! That true essence was not achieved—nor did anyone wish to achieve it.

The victorious fortune of Urdu

Despite all this, the victorious fortune of Urdu, and its wide popularity, are enviable. Because its source Braj Bʰāshā was, even during its youthful prime, only the bazaar language of a district. Urdu itself emerged from Delhi—and its lamp ought to have been extinguished with the kingship of Delhi. Nevertheless, if you stand in the midst of India and call out, "What's the language of this land?" then you'll hear the answer,

"Urdu." If you go from one border—for example, Peshawar—then first of all there's Afghani. If you get down at Attock, then they claim that Pothvari is something different. As far as the Jhelum, then on your right Kashmir is calling out, "Yōr valā, yōr valā"—that is, "Come here." On your left, [p. 62] Multan says, "Kit^{h}ē g^{h}annyā"—that is, "Where are you going?" If you go ahead, there's that speech especially called Punjabi. On its left, Pahari is a language different from all the rest in both writing and speech. If you cross by the Sutlej, there is less Punjabi-ness, so that a difference begins to appear in people's behavior and dress as well. If you get to Delhi, it's another state of affairs entirely. If you go beyond Meerut, then in Aligarh, mixed in with B^{h}āshā̧ the Eastern style has begun. From Kanpur and Lucknow to Allahabad this remains the case. If you go off toward the south, then from Marwari the language turns into Gujarati and Dakani. Then if you come back up, ahead lies Bengali. And if you reach Calcutta—it's a teeming world, full of God's creatures in God's world—to categorize it is beyond the limits of the power of conjecture.

Why is Delhi the mint for the Urdu language?

My friends, you know that for everything, there is usually some one place for establishing its genuineness and its goodness or badness, as for coins there is a mint. What is the reason that, in the beginning, Delhi was the mint of the language? The reason is that it was the seat of government. Only at the court were the hereditary nobility and the sons of the élite scholars in their own right. Their gatherings brought together people of learning and accomplishment, and through their auspicious influence made their temperaments the mold of the art and refinement and subtlety and wit of everything. Thus conversation, dress, courtesy and manners, polite behavior—every single thing was so well-measured and pleasing that it spontaneously found acceptance in everyone's heart. For everything new forms were always being shaped, and new improvements, so that new inventions and creations emerged from there. And since people from all the cities were present in the seat of government, those delightful inventions and improvements quickly became common in every city. Thus, up until before the time of Bahādur Shāh, Delhi remained the authority for every matter. And through those same qualities, Lucknow too obtained the honor of authority.

Lucknow too can now make this proud claim

When you look at Lucknow, you should realize that creating delight-

ful inventions and inventing colorful things is not the function of a city's bricks and stones. Indeed, where cultivated and lively people gather, and the materials for attractive pursuits are available, right there is where those flowers will begin to bloom. Thus when the ruin of the kingship and the settlement of Lucknow had caused those people of Delhi and their offspring to move there, within a very brief [p. 63] period just the same kind of forms began to emerge from there. Lucknow became a seat of kingship. And as a side effect of this, the language too became free of allegiance to Delhi. Accomplished persons like Nāṣikh, Ātish, Ẓamīr, and Khāliq laid the foundation of its freedom. And Anīs, Dabīr, Rind, Khvāja Vazīr, and Surūr brought it to its completion. They developed the language considerably. But a number of them were such that they set out to clear the jungle, but instead they opened a floodgate. That is, instead of cleaning up the language, they created a shower of [new] words.

Until Time turned the page of Lucknow as well. Now the sun is the symbol of our Queen [Victoria] of the Universe, and it has not been allowed to stray outside the border of her empire. The post coaches and the railroads, running from east to west, have confined all kinds of animals in one cage. Delhi is destroyed, Lucknow desolate. Some of their authoritative people are under the ground, some wandering helplessly from door to door. Now Lucknow is like other cities, like cantonment bazaars; Delhi is the same, or even worse. No city remains whose people's language is generally capable of being used as an authority. Because in a city the choice and select individuals who make the city capable of authority are only a few, and are produced by the labor of hundreds of years of time. Many of them have died. Some old man may be left, like a dying autumn leaf on a tree. That old man's voice can't even be heard amidst the clamor of committees [*kamīṭī*] and the drum-rolls of newspapers. Thus now if we consider the language of Delhi to be authoritative, then how can the language of every person there be authoritative?

What the complexion of our language will be in the future

The path of the wind and the flow of a river are not in anyone's control, nor does anyone know which way they will turn. Thus we cannot say what complexion the language will now assume. We're a ship without a pilot [*nākhudā*], and we sit here trusting in God [*khudā*]. We see the revolutions of time as changes in the color of a garden; we say, Āzād,

So far, we have seen what was written in our fortune,
Now let's see what else we are going to see

Excerpt Two: The Third Era—
Mirza Muhammad Rafi' Sauda

How the pamphlet '*Ibratu 'l-Ghafilin* came to be written

THE PAMPHLET *'Ibratu 'l-Ghāfilīn* serves as a stairway for the poet's temperament. It shows that Mirzā was not merely a poet by temperament, but also a master of the roots and the branches of this art. His [p. 157] Persian work too shows his vitality and liveliness, along with his knowledge of language. There is a story about how the pamphlet was written, and it's worth hearing. At that time, there was a man of good family named Ashraf 'Alī Khān. Using Persian anthologies and the volumes of the *ustāds*, he worked for fifteen years to arrange a selection. And to have the errors removed, he took it to Mirzā Fākhir "Makīn," who in those days was the best known of the Persian poets. He, after many refusals and protestations and insistences, took the selection and began to examine it. But in many places he thought the *ustāds'* verses meaningless and struck them out, in many places he wounded them with the sword of correction. When Ashraf 'Alī Khān Ṣāḥib learned of this state of affairs, he went and, after much to-ing and fro-ing, took the selection away. The manuscript had been disfigured by the corrections, which caused him much grief. He brought it in this state to Mirzā, told him the whole story, and asked for justice. And he also said, "Please remove the errors yourself."

Mirzā said, "I'm not a practicing Persian poet. I simply string together a few words of Urdu, and God knows how they've managed to receive the robe of honor of acceptance in people's hearts. Mirzā Fākhir Makīn knows Persian and is masterfully accomplished in Persian. Whatever he did, he must have done for a reason. If you want correction then there's Shaikh Āyatullāh 'Ṣanā,' the pupil of the late Shaikh 'Alī 'Ḥazīn'; and there's Mirzā Bʰaččū, with the pen name of Zarrah, the pupil of Mīr Shamsu 'd-Dīn 'Faqīr.' There's Ḥākim Bū 'Alī Khān 'Hātif' in Bengal. There's Niẕāmu d'-Dīn 'Ṣāni'' Bilgrāmī in Farrukhābād. There's Shāh Nūru 'l-'Ain 'Vāqif' in Shāhjahānābād. This is a task fit for those people."

When Mirzā mentioned the names of these renowned Persian scholars, Ashraf 'Alī Khān said, "Mirzā Fākhir wouldn't give them the time of day." In short, because of his insistence Mirzā accepted the selection. When he looked at it, he found that the verses of accomplished poets,

poets who have been taken as fully authoritative masters from ancient times to today—those verses all lay wounded and writhing. Seeing this state of affairs, Mirzā too was grieved. Appropriately to the [p. 158] circumstances, he wrote the pamphlet *'Ibratu 'l-Ghāfilīn* [Advice to the Heedless], and with regard to the principles of literature he suitably exposed Mirzā Fākhir's foolishness and misunderstandings. Along with this, he cast an eye over Makīn's own volume as well, and described its errors; and where it was possible, he provided suitable correction.

Mirzā Fākhir learned of this. He was very much alarmed, and wanted to wash out these stains with oral messages. Thus he sent Baqā'ullāh Khān "Baqā" to speak with him. Baqā was Mirzā Fākhir's pupil, and a very practiced and knowledgeable poet. Mirzā and he had various full discussions, and certain of Mirzā Fākhir's verses, the objections to which had reached Mirzā Fākhir through rumors, also came under disputation. Thus one of his [Persian] verses was:

In this company my heart was constricted like a wine-glass,
The bloom on the wine's face made me blossom out

Mirzā's objection was that it was inappropriate to speak of a wine-glass as having a constricted heart. People of literary style had always used for the wine-glass the simile of a blooming flower, or that of laughter, because a wine-glass must necessarily be open. Baqā, in response, shed a great deal of the "sweat of pupilship." And at length he brought in a [Persian] verse of Bāżil's as an authority:

What pleasure would wine give to me, desolate without you?
Because the wine-glass is like a constricted heart without you

When Mirzā Rafī' heard this, he laughed heartily and said, "Tell your *ustād* that if he's going to keep studying the verses of the *ustāds*, he should also try to understand them. For this verse supports my objection: that is, although the wine-glass is proverbial for laughter and bloomingness, and the wine-glass is part of the equipment of pleasure, even it itself has the attributes of a sad heart."

In short, when this scheme didn't succeed, Mirzā Fākhir took another tack. He had many pupils in Lucknow, especially the Shaikhzādas, who at one time had been the rulers of the land of Avadh; the fever of impertinent aggressiveness and arrogance had still not left their minds. One day Saudā, all unaware, was sitting at home, and they forcibly invaded his

house and surrounded him. They placed a knife against his stomach and said, "Take along everything you've written, and come before our *ustād*, so things can be decided." Mirzā [p. 159] knew very well how to make the roses and flowers of themes, and the "parrots and mynahs" of discourse, but this was quite a new theme! He was completely at a loss. The poor man gave his folder of poems to a servant, and himself climbed into the palanquin and went with them. That Satanic crew was all around him, he was in the middle. When they reached the Chauk, they wanted to dishonor him there. After some argument, they again began to quarrel with him. But who can dishonor him to whom God has given honor? By chance Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān and his entourage came by that way. Seeing the crowd, he halted; and inquiring about the circumstances, he seated Saudā with him on his elephant and took him away. Āṣifu 'd-Daula was in the ladies' apartments, having a meal. Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān went in and said, "Dear brother, it's an awful thing—while you rule, such a calamity in the city!" Āṣifu 'd-Daula said, "What is it, brother, is everything all right?" He replied, "Mirzā Rafī', whom Father used to call 'Brother' and 'Kind and affectionate friend' when he wrote letters to him—whom Father used to beg to come, but who never came—today he's here, and in such a state that if I hadn't come along the ruffians of the city would have dishonored the poor man!" Then he told him the whole matter.

The angelic-natured Āṣifu 'd-Daula was distressed and replied, "Brother, if Mirzā Fākhir did this to Mirzā, it's as though he had dishonored us too. When Father wrote to him as 'Brother,' he became our uncle." Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān said, "There can be no doubt about that!" At once Āṣifu 'd-Daula came out. He heard the whole story. He was very angry, and ordered that the whole neighborhood of the Shaikhzādas should be torn down, and they should be expelled from the city, and that Mirzā Fākhir should be brought, in whatever condition he was found. Saudā's lack of malice is worthy of note: he folded his hands and petitioned, "Your Excellency, our battles naturally settle themselves in the field of pen and paper. Let Your Lordship not enter into them. It would bring your servant into ill repute. The help that Your Lordship's powerful fortune has given me is enough." In short, Mirzā Rafī' took his leave with honor and prestige. The Navab sent soldiers with him as a precaution.

When his rivals found out about this, they ran to the nobles of the court. The decision they arrived at was that [p. 160] the matter was not one of money or estates: they should all take Mirzā Fākhir and go to Mirzā Rafī''s house and obtain his pardon. The next day Āṣifu 'd-Daula summoned Mirzā Fākhir before the full court and said, "This has been

very unbecoming misbehavior on your part. If you're a champion in the field of verse, compose a satire right now in Saudā's presence." Mirzā Fākhir said, "Far be it from me!" Āṣifu 'd-Daula said angrily, "Very good! That is far from you, but this you can do: send your devils down on the head of the poor helpless Mirzā! They dragged him out of his home into the bazaar, and wanted to trample his honor into the dust." Then he gestured to Saudā. On his side, without the least delay, he recited an extemporaneous [Persian] quatrain:

You are the *fakhr* [pride] of Khurāsān, and the *fē* is not in it.
You have a *gauhar* [pearl] in your mouth, and the *rē* is not in it.
Day and night I pray to God the Most High
That He may give you a *markab* [steed], and the *bē* is not in it.[2]

This incident passed off, but they continued to abuse each other from a distance in satires. The entertaining part is that no one even knows the satires of Mirzā Fākhir; while whatever Saudā composed against him is on the lips of thousands.

Excerpt Three

Sayyid Inshā reached Lucknow

In Lucknow, the generous deeds of Āṣifu 'd-Daula had put the name of Ḥātim to rest. And there the people too so ardently sought out accomplishment that anyone who left Delhi never came back. Thus he set out in that direction. The moment he reached there, through the force of his learning and greatness, and through the tumult of his accomplishment, he arranged such a cannon-battery that all the *mushā'iras* reverberated. And due to his family's long service, he reached the court of Mirzā Sulaimān Shikōh. Mirzā Sulaimān Shikōh was the son of Shāh 'Ālam; it was incumbent upon him to show kindness to the longtime servants of his

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[2] *Fakhr* without the letter *fē* becomes *khar* [donkey]; *gauhar* without the letter *rē* resembles *gū* [excrement]; *markab* without the letter *bē* becomes *mark* [*marg*, death].

elders. Moreover, he was a poet too; accordingly, in addition to the other Delhi people, the poets too used to gather morning and night at his place. Time had already turned the page of Saudā, Mīr Ẓāḥik, Mīr Sōz, and so on. There were gatherings of poets and judges of poetry like Muṣḥafī, Jur'at, Mirzā Qatīl, and so on. The gathering adorned by such bouquets from the garden of eloquence—how colorful it must all have been! My heart wanted me to lay out a garden of their words. But a number of the flowers are so entangled with the thorns of obscenity, that they keep ripping the paper into shreds. Thus I fear to spread them out on the page.

Formerly Mirzā Sulaimān Shikōh used to take correction from Muṣḥafī. When Sayyid Inshā arrived, Muṣḥafī's [p. 255] *muṣḥaf* [book] was placed on the shelf. I've heard from the elders, and the style of his poetry also reveals, that the prince's first ghazal from his volume, and a number of other ghazals too, were corrected—or composed—by the esteemed Sayyid. Thus the very first opening verse sheds light on the point:

> I have now put my heart into the ocean of love
> "And I put my trust in God the Most High"

Because Sayyid Inshā was a true master of such incorporations [as the famous Arabic phrase in the second line].

Khān-e 'Allāma

Although Sayyid Inshā was honored and esteemed in the courts of the prince and all the nobles and aristocrats, the eagle of high ambition never ceases to try its wings. There was a person there called Tafaẓẓul Ḥusain Khān,[a] and the title of "'Allāma" [Great Knower]—if it has been universally accorded to anyone after Abu 'l-Faẓl and Sa'dullāh Khān Shāhjahānī,[b]

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[a] Or rather, he was instrumental in getting Vazīr 'Alī Khān installed [as Navab after Āṣifu 'd-Daula], and then Vazīr 'Alī Khān's end and Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān's installation too came about through the finesse of his strategy. He had learned the English and Latin languages too; he had translated the *Differential*, and so on, of Newton Sahib into Persian. And he had been to Calcutta a number of times.

[b] He came from Chinyōṭ, and 'Abd ul-Ḥakīm came from Sialkot. Both were the sons of obscure families, and [255fn through to 256fn] they studied together. Although 'Abdu 'l-Ḥakīm was quick-moving in his early studies, Sa'dullāh's fortune turned out to be a step ahead. So much so that he rose to become Shāh Jahān's *vazīr*, and the title of "'Allāma" became the crest-ornament of the fame of

it has been accorded only to him. Because of his wisdom and brilliance of strategy, he was on the one hand trusted by the English government, and on the other hand a pillar of the dominion of Lucknow, and an intimate advisor of Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān. His companionship was a compendium of learning and accomplishment.

Sayyid Inshā reaches the court of Lucknow

Sayyid Inshā used to go to see him; Khān-e 'Allāma too, out of regard for his worth and family, gave Sayyid Inshā a place in his esteem, and reflected on how to find him some suitable opportunity. One day in the enthusiasm of speaking, Sayyid Inshā used a word that had two meanings, but in Urdu its meaning was one that was not fit to be mentioned in such gatherings. Since Inshā himself was an Aristotle at judging temperaments, he did use that word—but understanding the Khān's look, he said: "In the Marwari language, that means 'fool.'" Khān-e 'Allāma thought for a bit, then said, "Well, Khān Sahib! Now I've realized your style; something will be done quickly, if God Most High wills." The very next day he mentioned to Sa'ādat the high lineage and personal accomplishments of Sayyid Inshā, and said, "To have him [p. 256] in your company would be better than having disquisitions on logic." When the Navab heard this, he grew eager. The next day the Khān Sahib took Sayyid Inshā along. And as soon as he presented himself in the Navab's service, they became so much like "milk and sugar" that from then on, the Navab took no pleasure in anyone's conversation but his.

No doubt the fire of his natural temperament and his passion for administration had dried out the Navab's mind. But every living creature surely needs a time for entertainment, and Sayyid Inshā was the kind of person who was a bouquet in every gathering and a flower in every garden. Accordingly, he was not given any special responsibility. But he was constantly in attendance at the court. In this situation, he used to get everyone's problems solved—especially persons of accomplishment and members of his own family. Through this service he earned the wealth of virtue and good reputation, than which no treasure can be greater. He

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his learning and greatness. Sa'dullāh Khān has left—apart from his name—no trace of any written work. In the *Shāh Jahān Nāma* there is indeed a letter written by him—but it is nowhere near the quality of 'Allāma Abu'l Fażl's writing. There is a mosque in Chinyōṭ, and its minarets sway when they are pushed on; they are said to be made of sandstone.

caused thousands to attain high rank. But he himself remained only a poet; some hints about this will soon be given when I describe his circumstances.

It is the habit of Time to bring forth sickness from health, and death from life. Through this very companionship, in the midst of laughter, the Navab's opposition was brought forth—as a result of which that warbling nightingale was confined within the cage of his house.[c] And from there, he mingled with the earth in such obscurity that no one knew of it. From a chronogram by Basant Singh "Nishāt" it seems that the died in 1233 A.H. [1817–18]. The chronogram: [p. 257] [two Persian verses].

Anecdotes involving Hafiz Ahmad Yar

In Delhi, Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad Yār was a learned, sophisticated, well-known Qur'ān-reciter [*ḥāfiẓ*]. And he held a government post among the other Qur'ān-reciters. Although there was nobody in the world whom Sayyid Inshā didn't treat in a friendly way, with Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad Yār he was friends [*yār*] indeed. He composed a name-pun about him: "Khudā Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad Yār!" [God is my protector, Aḥmad is my friend]. [An anecdote involving a verse of Inshā in Ḥāfiẓ Avadʰī about a rainstorm.] [280] When the Ḥāfiẓ used to take his leave, Sayyid Inshā always said, "Allāh Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad Yār!" There were thousands of such matters that appeared in his conversation night and day.

It's a cause for the greatest grief that Sayyid Inshā 's end at the hands of Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān was not good. There are various reasons for this. The first is that although through the power of his versatile temperament he made the Navab feel familiar with him, still in reality his own opening verse exemplified his and the Navab's situation:

> Last night he said to me laughingly, "Love, my friend, is no game,
> I am a jokester and you are sober; we don't go well together

Opposition of temperaments

For example, both because of his companions' wishes and because of his own real temperament, he usually loved to attend fairs and shows. In

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[c] From Qātil's letters it appears that he was dismissed and confined to his house in 1225 A.H. [1810–11]. But it is not clear whether this was the last confinement, or whether after this he was reinstated.

short, he definitely had to go; and this was entirely contrary to Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān's temperament. It often happened that the Navab was studying state papers, and Sayyid Inshā too was present among his companions. Meanwhile, a number of anecdotes were being told. Sayyid Inshā petitioned, "Your Excellency, may this slave have leave to go?" The Navab replied, "Hmmm! Where?" He said, "Your excellency, today is the fair of the Eighth [day of Holi]." He replied, "May God protect us!" Sayyid Inshā said, "It would have been proper for Your Excellency too to visit it." The Navab said, "Inshā, who told you to go to such improper places?" He petitioned, "Your Excellency, to go there is from one point of view a personally obligatory religious duty, and from another point of view a general religious duty, and in another respect according to the Sunna." Then he gave reasons for each of these statements individually. Finally, the Navab, who had been listening while he was working, grew tired of it and said, "Get to the end of it quickly, and go away!" Then, twirling his mustache, Sayyid Inshā asked, "Who is there today besides Sayyid Inshā who can say things with reason, and holy precedents, and [Qur'ānic] verses and [*ḥadīs̤*] stories?" Often such things used to amuse the Navab—but often, because of the bent of his real temperament, he grew displeased. Especially because when taking leave, Sayyid Inshā would request expense money. Because he was not Shāh 'Ālam—he was Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān:

> [281] If you want my life, there's no harm
> But if you want money—I won't even discuss it!
> [Persian proverbial verse]

Fate! Fate!!

The disaster that occurred was that one day in court the lineage and grandeur of some nobles of famous descent were being described. Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān said, "Well, how about it, my friend—am I not also of noble descent on both sides?" Call it an accident of fate, or consider it the fruit of too great a readiness to talk, but Sayyid Inshā burst out, "Your Excellency—rather, *anjab!*" [extremely much; slave-girl's son]. Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān was born of the womb of a concubine;[d] he fell silent, and the whole court

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[d] I have learned from trustworthy people that when Gunnā Bēgam, daughter of Qizilbāsh Khān Ummīd, became famous for her beauty and charm, refinement and domestic skills, quick repartee and poetic abilities, Navab Shujā'u 'd-Daula was a young man. He wanted to marry her. The elders, according to the rule,

was stunned. Although Sayyid Inshā tried then to cover up and explain away his mistake, the arrow of fate had been loosed from the bow. The rancor didn't leave the Navab's heart—because [of the Arabic proverb] "The child of a slave-girl is the noblest."

Now the Navab's manner began to change, and he began to cast about for an excuse for harsh treatment. Sayyid Inshā tried, with various types and kinds of witticisms, to polish the mirror of favor. But the resentment in the Navab's heart didn't permit any possibility of clearing it up. One day Sayyid Inshā told an extremely piquant anecdote. Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān said, "When Inshā speaks, he says things that no one has ever seen or heard of." Then, twirling his mustache, Sayyid Inshā replied, "Thanks to Your Excellency's victorious fortune, I'll go on till Doomsday, saying things that have never been seen or heard of." The Navab was waiting for his chance; frowning, [p. 282] he replied, "Well, not so many! Tell only two anecdotes a day, but the condition is that they should be things that have never been seen or heard of. Otherwise, it will not be well for you." Sayyid Inshā understood that there was more to it than met the eye. In any case, from that day on he began to tell two anecdotes a day. But after some days he was in such a state that when he was about to go to court, he would ask whomever sat near him, "If you know any anecdote, any joke, then tell me, so I can just tell it to the Navab." His neighbor would say, "Sir, as though I would think of telling a joke in your presence!" He would say, "My friend, just tell me something you recall about a bird or a worm. I'll put salt and hot pepper on it and please him." In the meantime, one day it happened that Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān sent for him. He had gone to the house of some other noble. The herald came

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asked the king's permission. The king replied that he had other plans for him. He married the Navab to a Sayyid's daughter whom His Majesty had, for religious merit, brought up in his household like a daughter. He celebrated the wedding with such pomp and elaborateness that perhaps the like had never been done for any princess. This was the reason that Shujā' ud-Daula and his whole family held her in the greatest esteem. Her name was Dulhan Bēgam Sahib. And she was the mother of Āṣifu 'd-Daula. Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān [the son of Gunnā Bēgam], who had been called Maṅglū in his childhood because he was born on a Tuesday [*maṅgal*]—the thoughts that the Bēgam had about him sometimes even became apparent. But signs of his intelligence and wisdom were evident even from his childhood. Navab Shujā' ud-Daula always used to say, "Dulhan Bēgam, if you place your hand on Maṅglū's head, then he'll make your scarf into a flag, and with his army will plant it beyond the Narbada."

back and petitioned, "I didn't find him at home." Growing angry, the Navab commanded him, "Don't go to anyone else's place except mine!" This imprisonment without chains caused him great distress. And a fresh difficulty occurred: Ta'āla Allāh Khān, his youthful son, died. This shock affected his brain. So much so that one day Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān with his entourage passed by his house, and partly out of grief and anger, partly from his overburdened heart, he stood by the edge of the road and roundly reproached him. Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān went and stopped his salary. Now what remained between him and madness?

Sa'ādat Yār Khān Raṅgīn was a great friend of his, and his brother through the exchange of turbans. Thus Sayyid Inshā himself says,

> There are some wonderful pleasures [*raṅgīniyāṅ*], Inshā
> When Sa'ādat Yār Khān and I get together

Miyāṅ Raṅgīn used to say, "In Lucknow I have seen Sayyid Inshā in such situations that to think about it makes one feel disgusted with the world. First came that time of his ascendancy when he was [intimate] like a hair in Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān's nostril. He was sought out by everyone for his accomplishment, worth, and liveliness of temperament. At his door were horses, elephants, palanquins, and litters in such numbers that it was impossible to pass by.

"Second, a situation such that when I next went to Lucknow, I saw that outwardly things were fine. But the tree of his ascendant fortune had white ants eating away at its roots. I went to see someone. In the course of conversation, he began to complain of the faithlessness and lack of affection of friends in this world. I said, 'Indeed, it is so; but still, the time is not entirely empty.' He [p. 283] insisted even more emphatically. I said, 'There is one friend of mine, Inshā, who is ready to give his life for a friend.' He fell silent, then said, 'All right, I ask only this much. Today please go see him, and say to him, "Go yourself and bring a watermelon from the bazaar, and serve it to me." It's the fruit that's in season, and it's no great matter.' I said, 'Why, does this even count as a request?' He replied, 'My request is only this. But the condition is that he himself should bring it and serve it. In fact you can even take the small change from me to pay for it.' I at once rose and went there. Inshā, according to his old habit, ran to greet me the moment he saw me. 'I take your misfortunes onto myself. Come with great pleasure, come again and again.' I said, 'Put these airs and graces on the shelf for a while, first bring a watermelon and serve it to me. The heat is roasting me alive.' He called

out to a manservant. I said, 'A manservant won't do; you yourself go, and look for a good *shahīdī* watermelon and bring it.' He said, 'No, the man is skillful; he'll bring a good one.' I said, 'No; if I eat one at all, I'll eat one brought by you.' He said, 'You've gone mad—what is all this?' Then I told him the story. Then he heaved a deep sigh and said, 'My dear friend, he told the truth, and you and I are both proved wrong. What can I do? I'm in the tyrant's power. Except to go to court, the order is that I am not to leave the house.' "

The *third* situation: Miyāṅ Raṅgīn recounts, "In order to sell some horses, I took a group of them and went to Lucknow, and stayed in a caravansarai. When evening came, I learned that there was to be a *mushā'ira* right near by. After eating my dinner, I too arrived at the gathering. Just two or three hundred men had arrived. People had sat down, and were chatting and smoking their *ḥuqqas*. I too sit down—and I see that a person wrapped in a dirty, wrinkled cotton quilt, with a small dirty handkerchief on his head, short tight trousers on his legs, a *ḥuqqa*-bearer's large pouch around his neck, was approaching, with a crude clay *ḥuqqa* in his hand; saying, 'Peace be upon you,' he sat down. A few people asked him how he was. He put his hand in his pouch and pulled out tobacco, and putting the plain tobacco [without the plate necessary to slow its burning] in his pipe, he said, 'Brother, if there's a little fire, then put it on this tobacco.' At once voices were raised, and people began to offer him their own sophisticated and elaborate *ḥuqqas*. Becoming annoyed, he said, 'Gentlemen! Let me stay as I am; otherwise, I'm leaving.' Everyone [p. 284] agreed to what he said, and acted on it. After a moment, he again spoke: 'Well, then—has the *mushā'ira* still not started?' They said, 'Sir, people are still arriving. When everyone comes, then it will start.' He said, 'Gentlemen—as for me, I am now going to read my ghazal.' With these words, he pulled out a paper from his pouch and began to recite a ghazal:

> With their loins girded for travel, here sit all the friends
> Many have gone ahead; those who are left are sitting ready
>
> Don't tease, oh scent of the spring breeze! Be on your way
> You're in the mood for mischief, I'm sitting here disgusted
> Their thoughts in the seventh heaven, and their head on the cupbearer's feet—
> In short, just now the wine-drinkers are in a strange and powerful trance

Like the footprints of the passersby in the street of longing
I have no strength to rise—what can I do? I sit helplessly

This is my own manner now—from weakness, for hours,
I just sit down, wherever I see the shade of a wall

Where are patience and endurance—ah, what are shame and honor?
Miyāṅ, I've mourned them and lost them forever at one stroke

The nobles are in a strange state in this age, oh friends—
Whenever you ask, they say, We sit here in idleness

It's well known that the revolving of the sky gives no one peace, Inshā
It's a stroke of luck that three or four of us like-minded ones are sitting here

"He recited the ghazal, threw away the paper, said, 'Peace be upon you,' and left. But a desolate silence spread through earth and sky, and for a long time people's hearts were in a strange state, the mood of which can't be described. While he was reciting the ghazal, I too recognized him. When I inquired about his circumstances, I was very much grieved. And I went to his house and visited him again.

"The *fourth* time I went to Lucknow, I asked people the way, and went to his house. Alas—at the door where elephants used to stand swaying, I saw the dust blowing and dogs rolling around. I knocked on the door. From inside some old woman asked, 'Who's there?' (It was his wife.) I said, 'Sa'ādat Yār Khān has come from Delhi.' Since I was extremely intimate with Sayyid Inshā, the virtuous lady recognized me; coming to the door, she wept a great deal and said, 'Dear friend, he's in a strange state. Here—let me step aside, come in and see for yourself.' I went in. I saw that he was sitting in a corner. He was squatting there naked to the waist, with his head resting on his drawn-up knees. Around him were heaps of ashes. Nearby lay an old and decrepit *ḥuqqa*. Once I used to see those crowds and that pomp and circumstance, those high spirits and joyous gatherings; and now I saw this! My heart grew uncontrollably full. [p. 285] I too sat down on the ground, and I wept for a long time. When my heart was relieved, I called out, 'Sayyid Inshā! Sayyid Inshā!' Lifting his head, he looked at me with a glance full of hopelessness that said, 'What can I do—my eyes are beyond tears.' I said, 'How are

you?' Heaving a deep sigh, he said, 'Thanks be to God.' Then he put his head down once more on his knees, and didn't lift it again."

Some Greek philosophers say that the period of every man's lifetime depends on the number of his breaths. I say that just the way every man brings with him his share of breath or of sustenance, so he also brings with him, already written, his share of everything involved with happiness and laughter. The Sayyid had used up his share of laughter, which was for his whole lifetime, in a brief period. For the rest of his time, he remained deprived of it. Or it was time for his share of grief. ❒

—Translated by Frances W. Pritchett