THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE LANGUAGE OF TOLERANCE:
AMĪR KHUSRAW AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDO-PERSIAN CULTURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

BY
ALYSSA GABBAY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 2007
For Professor Heshmat Moayyad

بنده پیر مغانم که ز جهلم بر هاند
پیر ما هر چه کند عین ولايت باشد
حافظ

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest thanks must go to the members of my dissertation committee: Heshmat Moayyad, mentor par excellence; John Woods, who instilled in me an abiding love of history; and Muzaffar Alam, who led the way. All have been unfailingly generous with their time and advice and have patiently endured a series of transmutations as this dissertation fitfully decided upon its final shape. I am also greatly indebted to friends who read drafts of multiple chapters, including Maurice Pomerantz, Grace Huang, Jack Brown, Smadar Winter, and members of my dissertation writing group. Their companionship, good cheer, and keen observations helped see this project from difficult inception to birth.

Many professors, friends, and colleagues in the United States offered valuable suggestions and/or moral support, among them John Perry, Wadad Kadi, Holly Shissler, Richard Eaton, Fred Donner, Bruce Craig, Paul Losensky, Sunil Sharma, Rajeev Kinra, Joy Beckman, and Ruth Moayyad. I am grateful to them all.

In India, I benefited from the expertise of professors Sharif Husain Qasemi, Yunus Jaffery, S.R. Faruqi, S.A.H. Abidi, and Chander Shekhar. Staff members at the libraries and manuscript divisions of the University of Delhi, Aligarh Muslim University, Visva Bharti University, the National Museum of India, and the Iran
Culture House took great pains to track down manuscripts and other resources for me. Additionally, the United States Department of Education provided me with a Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fulbright-Hays fellowship, without which I could not have conducted my research in India.

I would also like to express my profoundest gratitude to my parents, Wilma and Albert Gabbay, and my sister and brother-in-law, Suzanne Gabbay and Ben Quiseng, for their unflagging love and support, not only during the writing of this dissertation, but throughout my entire graduate school career.

Finally, a big thanks to the people of India, Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Bahá’í, who showed me many kindnesses during my stay in their country.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the formation of a language of tolerance within the works of the medieval Indo-Persian poet and historian Amīr Khusraw (d. 1325). Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of frontier studies and deconstruction, this study conceptualizes the manner in which a pluralistic rhetoric emerged in the works of Khusraw, the shape it took, and its influence. In particular, it argues that the multicultural conditions of India’s Delhi Sultanate period, pervaded by what the historian Marshall Hodgson has termed a “unitive metaphysic,” infused the writer with a decidedly mixed attitude toward prevailing hierarchies in the greater Islamicate world, causing him to invert and drain them of significance even as he preserved and promoted them. Such inversions and manipulations generated a multiplicity of meanings and, in many cases, led to the pluralistic ethos so evident in the poet’s work. They also played a significant role in the shaping of a new culture, one with its own distinctive characteristics.

Although Khusraw has been viewed before as an icon of tolerance, until now no work has closely examined the mechanics of how the poet’s pluralism developed, nor thoroughly explored its relationship to Indo-Persian culture, even though these measures are critical to tapping his potential as an exemplar of ecumenism. In particular, this study addresses the paradoxical and contradictory
elements in Khusraw’s rhetoric and reveals how these aspects are intrinsic to its
development. Moreover, this dissertation’s linking of the poet’s use of lexical
ambiguity to an ethos of tolerance serves to demonstrate the inseparability of style
and content.

In highlighting the notion of a language of tolerance as exemplified in the
works of Khusraw, this dissertation offers an important corrective to present-day
notions of how medieval Muslim communities interacted with other societies. It
also brings to the forefront fresh awareness of medieval Islamicate contributions to
the development of pluralistic ideologies. By affording a more penetrating
understanding of how a rhetoric of tolerance emerges and operates, moreover, this
work promotes a greater ability to identify and encourage such discourses in the
present, where they are badly needed.
A Note on Transliteration, Translation, and Dates

For the sake of consistency, and notwithstanding its deficiencies, I have followed the Library of Congress transliteration system for Arabic, Persian, and Urdu terms, except for people and place names widely known with an alternate spelling. In those instances where a term could conceivably be accurately transliterated according to the conventions for any one of these languages, I have, with a few exceptions, chosen to follow the Persian system. The exceptions tend to comprise words or phrases better known according to their Arabic pronunciations and spellings. Hence the reader will find Ibn al-‘Arabi’s famous “unity of being” doctrine rendered wahdat al-wujūd, but the collection of sayings by the Sufi saint Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’, Fāvāʾīd al-fuʿād.

I have striven to translate Amīr Khusraw’s poetry with a certain degree of meter, rhyme, and naturalness of expression. At times this has meant sacrificing literal accuracy in order to avoid awkward constructions or those that fall out of the realm of idiomatic speech in English. For the reader conversant with Persian, the originals of those passages personally translated by me have been provided in an appendix.

All dates refer to the common era unless otherwise noted.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I.1. “O Wind, Tell the Demons and Fairies”: Amīr Khusraw and the Reconciliation of Dualities

In the year 1287, in Muslim-controlled northern India, the nobleman Ḍūghrā Khān Maḥmūd (d. 1291) took up arms against his son, the newly enthroned Sūlṭān of Delhi Kayqūbād (d. 1289). Perturbed that his youthful, pleasure-loving offspring had been chosen to head the monarchy rather than him following the death of his father Balaban, Ḍūghrā Khān brought his army westward from Bengal, the province over which he had recently declared himself sūlṭān, and struck camp at Awadh on the banks of the river Sarjū, a tributary of the Ganges. In response, Kayqūbād’s army moved eastward from Delhi to position itself on the other side of the river, within view of his father’s camp.¹

Such a standoff might ordinarily be expected to have a bloody outcome. But in this case, its resolution was peaceful. Messages, gifts, and nobles traveled back and forth across the river; the father and son themselves met; advice and explanations were offered; tears were shed; and a reconciliation was effected to

¹ For a full account of the story and the events leading up to it, see Khusraw’s Qirān al-sa’dayn (The Conjunction of the Two Auspicious Stars), ed. Mawlāvī Muḥammad Isma‘īl Meraṭhī (Aligarh, 1918), hereafter cited in text as QS; and Ziyā’ al-Dīn Bārī (d. circa 1356), Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī, ed. Sir Sa‘yīd Aḥmad (Aligarh, 2005), 127-56 (hereafter cited in text as TF).
great celebration. Giving up his claim to the more powerful throne, Bughrā Khān retained his position in Bengal, which henceforth functioned as an independent sultanate.² Kayqubād remained sulṭān of the larger and far more significant Delhi Sultanate until his death at the hands of a Khaljī noble less than three years later.³

Bearing witness to the event was the 34- or 35-year-old poet Amīr Khusraw (1253-1325), then attached to the court of a minor nobleman. To celebrate the occasion and further his own budding career, he wrote an elaborate ode bursting with hyperbole:

Happy the realm when two sulṭāns became one (yakī shud); happy the era when two promises became one.

The son an emperor, and the father also a sulṭān:
Behold now the realm in which two sulṭāns became one!

Two royal umbrellas raised their heads from two directions, and from those two pearl-scattering clouds, the earth between them became one.

One, the Helper of Time and Maḥmūd Sulṭān,⁴ whose command in the four corners of the world became one.

To possess and rule the world,
the two world-protecting kings became one.

The other, the Glory of the World, Kayqubād,⁵ under whose control, Irān and Turān became one.

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² See Peter Jackson, The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

³ See TF, 173.

⁴ The phrase “the Helper of Time,” nāsir-i ahd, refers to Bughrā Khān, who had adopted the name Nāṣir al-Dīn after proclaiming himself the sulṭān of Bengal.

⁵ The phrase “the Glory of the World,” muʿīz-i jahān, alludes to Kayqubād’s title, Muʿīz al-Dīn.
Listen to this story: Jacob and Joseph
became one in this realm, without the torment of brothers.

O wind, tell the demons and fairies:
the two inheritors of Solomon’s realm have become one.

The Turks now do not travel to China
Hindustān is superior, since two emperors became one.

The duality has disappeared from Turk and Hindu
For Hindustān and Khurāsān became one …

Although the poem stands as an excellent example of the dutifully
bombastic panegyrics required of court poets in medieval Islamicate society, it is
far more remarkable for the manner in which it illustrates its subject. By
synthesizing two terms that often were previously antagonistic – including “Turk
and Hindu,” “Khurāsān and Hindustān,” and “Irān and Turān” – in verse after
verse after verse with the refrain “became one” (yakī shud), the poem ultimately
succeeds in creating several small reconciliations of dualities long entrenched in
Islamicate societies in a manner that suggests a much larger and more far-reaching
unity. Moreover, thanks to the deliberate abundance of lexical ambiguity
(polysemy) occurring in the poem, at the same time that the work affirms the
importance of oneness, it interrogates and even fractures the meaning of
singularity by creating multiple interpretations for each verse. As a result, an ode
that on the surface appears to be about the resolution of a rather pedestrian matter
ultimately carries larger connotations of diversity, unity, and peace, and even bears

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6 Wasta al-hayāt (The Middle of Life), ed. Mawlānā Fazl Ḥāfiz (Aligarh, 1920), 63-4
(hereafter cited in text as WH). The very same event was immortalized to far greater fame in Qirān
al-Sa’dayn, written by Khusraw in 1289.
faint echoes, with its repeated emphasis on oneness, to the fundamental unity of God to which Muslims daily attest.\(^7\)

In a sense, the reconciliation of the warring father and son offered the ideal subject matter for Khusraw, one that allowed him to explore themes that were to preoccupy him throughout his long and highly prolific career. A Muslim who traced his geographical ancestry to both Central Asia and India, the poet often engaged in playfully manipulating and reconciling dualities. It is this dissertation’s contention that, taken together, these literary acts constitute a rhetoric of tolerance, one that was to have a lasting impact upon the culture of medieval northern India and beyond.\(^8\) Drawing on the conceptual frameworks of frontier studies and deconstruction theory, this study will graphically demonstrate the manner in which such a language emerged in the works of Khusraw, the shape it took, and its

\(^{7}\) Fascinatingly, the poem faintly foreshadows the famous *tarji‘ band* of the eighteenth century Iranian poet Sayyid Ahmed Hātif Isfahānī which attests to the oneness of God no matter who is worshipping Him. Its refrain reads, “For He is One and there is none but He/He is alone, no god but He” (*kih yakī hast va hich nīst juz wāhda hu la ilāha illa hu*). See Hātif Isfahānī, “The Continent of Love” (*iqīm-i ʻishq*), in *Ganj-i sukhan*, ed. Zabih Allāh Šafī, 7th ed. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Quqnūs, 1363/[1984]), 154-9.

\(^{8}\) The word “tolerance” was not one easily arrived at to describe the mood and attitude of much of Khusraw’s poetry, for it is an inherently problematic term; yet, for lack of an alternative, it has been pressed into service. Tolerance can be conceptualized, on the one hand, as a kind of hazy, all-encompassing amiability toward differences or even a diluting of them; or, on the other, as a mere show of forbearance toward someone or something whom we strongly dislike but nevertheless refrain from persecuting: “I tolerate dogs but I do not like them.” Indeed, according to the political philosopher Susan Mendus, the presence of “disapproval or hostility” is a condition of tolerance; as she writes, “We are genuinely tolerant of others only when we disapprove of them, or of their actions and beliefs, but nonetheless refrain from imposing our own view.” Here its meaning, as will be explained below, lies somewhere between these two extremes: tolerance as deployed in this dissertation constitutes the recognition of differences between two categories (without necessarily a desire to erase the distinctions, although sometimes that does come into play) with the underlying awareness of the greater similarities that unite them; and the sentiment of true friendship toward and acceptance of the “other.” See Mendus, “My Brother’s Keeper: The Politics of Intolerance,” in *The Politics of Tolerance in Modern Life*, ed. Susan Mendus (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 3.
influence. In particular, it will argue that the multicultural conditions of India’s Delhi Sultanate period, pervaded by what the historian Marshall Hodgson has termed a “unitive metaphysic,” infused the writer with a decidedly mixed attitude toward prevailing hierarchies in the greater Islamic world, causing him to invert and drain them of significance even as he preserved and promoted them. Such inversions and manipulations generated a multiplicity of meanings and, in many cases, led to the pluralistic and inclusive ethos so evident in the poet’s work. They also played a significant role in the shaping of a new culture, one with its own distinctive characteristics. That is, just as the specific societal conditions of medieval northern India caused a certain form of cultural production to arise in the works of Khusraw and other poets, one representing reinterpretations, synthesizings, and reorganizations of Indic and Islamicate elements, this form of literature was to exert an impact upon society and future cultural production.

In fact, the development of Indo-Persian culture is closely tied to the patterns and processes evident in Khusraw’s works. Scholars typically trace the rise of traditions combining Indic and Persianate influences to the arrival of Muslim “Turks” steeped in Persian culture to northern India in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Throughout the rules of numerous dynasties, a new culture arose that saw the production of history, poetry, political theory, and Sufi

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10 See Chapters Two and Five for a long discussion of the medieval Islamicate connotation of “Turk.”
writings in Persian but acclimated to an Indian environment. Due to the vast
ressures presented by the encounter with an enormous non-Muslim population,
Islamic patterns – already transformed as a result of their exposure to the
Persianate world – underwent an even more drastic sea-change, becoming indeed
something rich and strange. The collisions of Indic and Islamic traditions thus gave
birth to fresh understandings of what Islamic culture could be, including
refinements and elaborations of aspects formulated in the central lands of Islam. A
pluralistic ethos is strongly associated with these developments.

That Khusraw is already seen widely as a poet of tolerance as well as one
of the major progenitors of Indo-Persian culture – and, moreover, that this broad-
mindedness is his primary legacy in the Subcontinent – is a widely-attested fact.

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11 Architecture also underwent significant transformations that parallel those of literature,
especially during the Tughlaqid period. See Anthony Welch, “Architectural Patronage and the Past:

12 Examples of the manner in which the poet has been figured as an icon of tolerance will
be presented in the paragraphs below and in Chapter Five. In acknowledgement of Khusraw’s role
in the formation of a new culture, see Faiz Ahmad Faiz, who writes that the period in which the
poet lived saw the birth of a new civilization through the fusion of Muslim West-Asian and
indigenous South-Asian peoples: “This cultural synthesis found expressions at different levels in
language and literature, in music and the decorative arts, in social and religious practices and in the
idiom of every day living. Amir Khusrau was one of the main catalytic agents in this ferment and
strode like a colossus over this vast panorama of social, political and cultural changes.” Faiz,
preface to *Amir Khusrau: Critical Studies* (Islamabad: National Committee for 700th Anniversary
of Amir Khusrau, 1975), i. Elsewhere in the same collection, Ahmad Hasan Dani writes that the
poet “sets the pace for a new cultural integration and himself becomes the foremost exponent of the
new tendencies.” Dani, “Amir Khusrau’s Influence on Contemporary Culture,” in *Amir Khusrau:
Critical Studies*, 89. The influence of this culture as expounded by Khusrau has likewise been
broadly acknowledged. As a court poet and musician whose works were widely read, sung,
illustrated, and imitated both in his time and in succeeding generations, not only in South Asia but
in the Middle East and Central Asia, Khusrau set into motion trends which were to have lasting
reverberations. See, for example, Sharif Hussain Qasmi’s “Amir Khusro in the Court of Herat,” in
*Amir Khusro Dehavli: A Seminar Report*, ed. Tanveer Ahmed Alvi, Pradeep Sharma Khusro, and
Irshad Naiyier (New Delhi: Hazrat Amir Khusro Academy, 2004), 11-13, which addresses the
writer’s influence upon poets and rulers such as Jāmī (d. 1492), the Timurid sultan Husayn Bāyqarā
(r. 1470-1506), and the sultan’s courtier and trusted helpmate, Mir ‘Ali Shīr Nawā’ī (d. 1501), also
Thanks to the poet’s mixed ancestry and his effusive remarks about Hindus and Indian culture, he is often styled today as an exemplar of ecumenism in the Indian Subcontinent, much as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273), another poet who wrote in Persian and to whom Khusrav is often compared, is regarded worldwide.\footnote{On Rūmī’s ecumenism and the manner in which he is constructed as an emblem of modern-day tolerance, see Franklin Lewis, \textit{Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi} (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 3, 10, 406, 414-5, 489, 509-11.} Indeed, he is well-known for statements such as these:

\begin{quote}
Before men of insight, that lover is blind – blind indeed
\end{quote}

And:

\begin{quote}
It matters not to me whether love of God is found in the \textit{qiblah} or the idol-temple
For the lovers of God, no difference exists between faith and unbelief.\footnote{\textit{KG}, 1:362:190.}
\end{quote}

\footnote{A well-known poet; Paul E. Losensky’s \textit{Welcoming Fīghānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal} (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1998), which addresses, among other issues, Khusrav’s impact upon the Shīrāzī poet Bābbā Fīghānī (d. 1519), whose career straddled the Timurid-Turkmen and Safavid-Mughal periods; Shamsur Rahman Faruqi’s \textit{Early Urdu Literary Culture and History} (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001) and his “A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of Sabk\textit{-}i Hindī,” \textit{The Annual of Urdu Studies} 19 (2004), \url{http://www.urdustudies.com/pdf/19/04FaruqiPoetics.doc.pdf} (accessed March 6, 2007), which make note, respectively, of Khusrav’s influence upon Urdu literary culture and upon the sabk\textit{-}i hindī school of Persian poetry; and Muzaffar Alam’s \textit{The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200-1800} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), which likewise discusses the poet’s contribution to sabk\textit{-}i hindī as well as to the poetics of Mughal-era India.}
Indeed, later attempts by Mughal rulers to cultivate a "non-sectarian and open-ended cultural politics, with the endeavour of balancing the conflicting claims of different communities. ..." have been traced in part to the influence of Khusraw and the Indo-Persian culture that he helped to foster. As the scholar Saeed Ahmed Akbarabadi has opined, "... Khusrau has shown the way of mutual understanding, concord, sympathy and tolerance to be practiced by communities of different denominations living together." 17

Until now, however, no work has closely examined the mechanics of how Khusraw's pluralism developed, nor thoroughly explored its relationship to Indo-Persian culture, even though these measures are critical to tapping the poet's potential as an exemplar of ecumenism. In particular, a rigorous monograph is lacking that brings to bear on his work theoretical frameworks such as frontier studies and deconstruction, and that, moreover, firmly links issues of literary style (such as the use of polysemy) to an ethos of tolerance. 18 Moreover, past studies have insufficiently attended to the paradoxical and contradictory characteristics of Khusraw's work, which sometimes have led him to be cast as a poet of intolerance rather than one of tolerance; as a result, the images produced have been less than

16 Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 168.


18 Scholars have suggested such a link with regard to Amīr Khusraw's works, but it has not yet been fully explored. See Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 121-2; and idem, "The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan," in Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 180-1.
nuanced. Developing a better understanding of the nature of Khusraw's particular brand of tolerance – which, in turn, can afford a securer grasp of how languages of tolerance emerge in general – therefore necessitates this sort of study. In particular, this dissertation will seek to demonstrate that, under certain conditions, a rhetoric of intolerance may grow up side by side with one of liberalism without necessarily diluting or negating the pluralistic idiom's impact or significance. Conflict and sectarian strife may, in fact, prove to be necessary and intrinsic elements in the development of a more liberal language; at the very least, their frequent association with that development must be acknowledged.  

This analysis potentially offers multiple benefits to a variety of audiences. First and foremost, it builds upon other studies that have sought to complicate notions of Hindu-Muslim interaction in the medieval Subcontinent; and, concomitantly, offer important correctives to present-day notions of how Muslim communities interacted with other societies. In highlighting the notion of a language of tolerance as exemplified in the works of Amīr Khusraw, it adds a

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19 To give but one example, the historian Peter Hardy writes that an examination of the poet's language "suggests the great part he played in maintaining the cultural unity and distinctness of the Muslims in Hindustan." See Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historian Writing* (London: Luzac, 1960), 93.

20 This type of approach is one supported by the likes of Shahid Amin, who believes an exclusive focus on syncretism of multi-religious cults, for example, "without taking on board the narrative refashions of conquest that these invariably entail, is to miss out on the creation of India's vaunted composite culture as a process." Amin, "On Retelling the Muslim Conquest of North India," in *History and the Present*, ed. Partha Chaterjee and Anjan Ghosh (London: Anthem Press, 2006), 24.

21 On the polarization that has been projected onto the past, see Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 16-24.
voice to those demonstrating that medieval Muslim societies (or, at least, individuals within them), often engaged in significant dialogue with other cultures and sought to emphasize the similarities uniting them rather than the differences. Moreover, it offers a signally fresh approach in its conceptualization of how such a language developed.

Equally important, this study provides an example of the development of a composite society and its influence upon cultural production as reflected in the works of one poet, and opens a window into the growth of linguistic and ethnic identities. More specifically, it helps to shed light on the nature of the spread of Islamicate civilization during the Early Middle Period and the transformations generated by its encounters with other well-articulated civilizations. Such transformations in other regions such as Central Asia, Anatolia, and Iran, have been documented at length in general studies of medieval Islamicate history, but India has often been neglected when this phenomenon is discussed.

Additionally, this study offers a depiction of the alteration of traditional Persian literary mores and motifs in an Indian environment and the adoption of

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22 In its presentation of this point of view, this study will be careful to negotiate the pitfall of portraying medieval Indian society as a harmonious utopia in which people of all ethnicities and religions happily coexisted. No such claims will be made; the dissertation’s sole purpose is to explore a tendency of tolerance in one poet’s language: how it developed, what form it took, and what its influence may have been. Similarly, this project will not consider the question of the degree to which tolerance and pluralism are supported by Islamic revelation and tradition; for lengthy discussions of that matter, see Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, “Freedom of Conscience and Religion in the Qur’an,” in David Little, John Kelsay, and Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, eds., Human Rights and the Conflict of Cultures: Western and Islamic Perspectives on Religious Liberty (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 53-90; Khaled Abou El Fadl, The Place of Tolerance in Islam, ed. Joshua Cohen and Ian Lague (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); and Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism, ed. Omid Safi (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003).
new (and sometimes specifically Indian) motifs, themes, and poetic conceits, such as an extensive use of *ihām*, or double entendre. The effect of these transformations was to be felt in the cultural production of the Subcontinent, the Middle East, and Central Asia. It is to be hoped that this analysis will help to contribute to a reevaluation of the position of Khusraw within the Persian literary tradition, where, regrettably, he has often received short shrift.23

Last but not least, this project aims to have more universal applications, for, as suggested above, it proposes that the elements characterizing Khusraw’s language of tolerance can be discerned in other such languages, no matter where or when they appeared. Gaining a more penetrating understanding of how such a rhetoric emerges and operates therefore affords a greater ability to identify and encourage such discourses in the present, where they are badly needed.

A few warnings and caveats may be stated. To speak confidently of the Indian Subcontinent as the birthplace of a language of tolerance, given that region’s long-standing embroilment in communal violence and hostility, is, one sometimes feels, a parlous proposition, notwithstanding the many others (including Gandhi and Nehru) who have advanced similar claims. Nevertheless, as Khusraw said when he dared praise India to the greater Islamic world, “This is the intent I have in mind,” and, as stated previously, I believe that exploring the development of such an idiom with full attention to its intrinsically paradoxical

tendencies, including its frequently intolerant aspects, will serve to complicate and flesh out the matter sufficiently. Second, the danger is great of reading present-day mores upon Khusraw’s works and of casting him as a modern-day liberal with regard to religion, ethnicity, and even gender, just as Rūmī has been figured as an idealized version of contemporary political correctness. This study will make every effort to avoid such a misrepresentation by placing great emphasis upon the contextualization of Khusraw’s works within the milieu from which they emerged. In that manner, the terms and concepts deployed by him can be understood as closely as possible according to the currency they held at that time. Third, owing to the amount of research already conducted in this area, this work offers few biographical details about Amīr Khusraw and, for those who desire more information about the writer’s life, is meant to be read in accompaniment with works written on a more comprehensive scale such as Sunil Sharma’s Amīr Khusraw: The Poet of Sufis and Sultans. Fourth, anyone remotely familiar with Khusraw’s voluminous oeuvre, and, indeed, the multiplicity of roles that he inhabited – among them courtier, Sufi, musician, historian, poet – will be well aware of the impossibility of any critical examination addressing the entirety of his

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24 As Franklin Lewis observes, the poet and his writings have been subjected to heavy distortion, from those who would see Rūmī as a glorifier of homosexual love to those who would use him as a salesman for high fashion. See Rumi: Past and Present, East and West, 1-4. But one should also not make the mistake of supporting the opposite extreme, which is to say that, for example, the tolerance valued today is a thoroughly modern notion, or at least not one that would have been valorized during the time of Rūmī or Khusraw. Bernard Lewis, for example, writes that “for Christians and Muslims alike, tolerance is a new virtue and intolerance a new crime.” See Lewis, The Jews of Islam (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3-4. This dissertation will argue that there are many examples of poems and other texts constituting evidence that tolerance was, indeed, regarded as a virtue in pre-modern times.
work. My decision to focus upon one specific aspect of his writing, exemplified in a few representative samples, is made in the belief that even a thin slice can yield relevant and illuminating results.

1.2. Theory and Methodology

A Definition of Tolerance

How, then, may we productively study the formation of a language of tolerance in the works of Amīr Khusraw and arrive at a more informed understanding of its nature? The first business at hand involves developing a working definition of tolerance. Tolerance may assume many guises depending on whether it is regarded from the perspective of the individual or that of the state; from the point of view of ethnicity or that of religion, gender, or race. For the sake of clarity, the following understanding will be adopted in this study: tolerance is that state of mind which both accepts diversity and is able to see the unity underlying it. Rather than privileging one group above another, or seeking to suppress or change one group’s activities for reasons of nonconformity to normative standards, the tolerant mind seeks to recognize or even establish an equitableness between various categories of people, regarding outward differences as of less importance than intrinsic resemblances.

A language of tolerance, then, is one that communicates and fosters these attitudes, often in an eloquent or poetic form. We find fluent expressions of religious tolerance in the writings of Rûmî, who averred, “Although the way may
differ, the goal is one. Don’t you see that there are many roads to the Kaaba?”; and “... love for the Creator is inherent in the whole world and in all people—Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians—all creatures.” That aspect of tolerance which stresses the unity underlying all of humanity is powerfully evoked in the famous poem by Sa‘dī (d. 1292):

All Adam’s sons are limbs of one another,  
Each of the self same substance as his brother.  
So while one member suffers aches and grief,  
The other members cannot win relief.  
Thou, who are heedless of thy brother’s pain,  
It is not right at all to name thee man.  

But a pluralistic idiom need not be as thematically forthright as that which appears in the above examples. Indeed, tolerance is capable of manifesting in far more subtle forms, and exploring these veins affords a richer and deeper understanding both of what tolerance is and how it comes into being. Specifically, as will be seen, a “tolerant” language can be one that seeks to reorder or otherwise disrupt hierarchies, including linguistic hierarchies, and to unite or balance them. It can also take the shape of polysemy: the use of a term or set of terms in such a way that it yields multiple interpretations, all of which are equally “right.”  


27 For a interesting discussion of ambiguity in classical Persian texts, see Bo Utas, “Ambiguity” in the Savadnī of Ahmad Ghazālī,” in Bert G. Fagner et al., eds., Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1995), 701-10. Utas notes the prevalence of ambiguity (both deliberate and accidental, but almost always bewildering) in Persian and questions the impact of such a prevalence, especially in
of tolerance is abundantly present in Khusraw’s work, and many examples of it will be set forth in future chapters.

Whereas the tie between the “linguistic tolerance” described above and its more typical incarnation – also amply evident in the writing of Khusraw – may seem tenuous at best to those accustomed to more straightforward definitions of the word, it will be argued that such a link indeed exists. That is, it will be posited that the mind that seeks to make puns and create double entendres (including those that work between various languages) is also one that often displays a tolerant ethos, and that the appearance of such tendencies may be linked to a composite, multicultural society. ²⁸

Three Conceptual Frameworks

Three conceptual frameworks will be drawn upon to investigate these claims: frontier theory, deconstruction, and what I will call “unitive metaphysics” in a term borrowed from Hodgson. Because no one of these systems is sufficient in and of itself for addressing the matters at hand, this trio will comprise the

²⁸ The argument made here bears distinct similarities to that set forth by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych in her masterful work on the development of the bādi’ style of poetry in the eighth and ninth centuries. Stetkevych convincingly demonstrates that the conceptual and analytical tenor of Mu’tazilite thought – and, indeed, the “whole cultural and intellectual framework of the era of Mu’tazilite hegemony,” played a crucial role in shaping the bādi’ style. See Stetkevych, Abū Tammam and the Poetics of the ‘Abbāsid Age (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 8-9.
complementary and interlocking lenses through which the problems and issues of Amīr Khusraw’s writing will be viewed.

Frontier theory, which deals with regions in which more than one society or culture interact, will prove the most essential to this study; for that reason, Chapter Two has been devoted to it in its entirety. However, it may be stated here that this form of theory, which is increasingly relied upon in studies of South Asia, offers penetrating explanations for the peculiar characteristics of cultural production emerging from frontier conditions.⁴⁹ According to this system of thought, composite societies such as that in which Khusraw lived often give rise to enormously contradictory and innovative cultural production, as well as a “middle ground” in which two or more cultures may come together in an amicable way. Poems, inscriptions, and other works are frequently characterized by plural loyalties, as well as a sense of tension between that which was “old” and that which is “new.” As will be seen, these qualities appear in abundance in Khusraw’s work.

Complementing the framework of frontier studies will be that of deconstruction theory, which is particularly useful for homing in on the mechanics of the development of a language of tolerance. In particular, this study will draw upon that element of Derridean thought which emphasizes the prominence of binary constructs in language and texts and the results gained from their undoing.

To be more specific, the notion that human thought and language relies heavily upon what are essentially arbitrary and artificial dualistic constructs—strong/weak, light/dark, good/evil, to name but a few—is one that largely began with the nineteenth century linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (d. 1913) but was greatly elaborated upon by Jacques Derrida.\(^\text{30}\) Language, according to the postmodernist perspective, is a system of signs that work only in relationship with each other. However, both the systems and the relationships are often mistaken for a reality that either does not exist or cannot be grasped. An implicit danger lies in investing these dualities with too much significance, for not only are they unreliable, but one of the two terms tends to dominate the other in a manner that is limiting and, for lack of a better word, unhealthy.

As Derrida writes,

in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment.\(^\text{31}\)

Deconstruction theory, then, is engaged in the inversion of hierarchies or the demonstration of their essential meaninglessness and emptiness. Such an act is essentially creative, for it allows multiple meanings to flourish in a text and opens


up the potential for new concepts to emerge. Rather than conceiving of texts as closed, formalized systems which admit of only one “real” meaning, one “correct” interpretation (often that is supposedly proffered by the author, and discerned by the perceptive critic), deconstruction theory provides for what Derrida calls an “irreducible and generative multiplicity.”

Normally, deconstruction is seen as both the task and the province of the literary critic, who engages in the “careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text” in order to demonstrate that the hierarchies set forth by the writer are not, in fact, valid. But some works are more accessible to acts of deconstruction than others. Some authors, indeed, openly deconstruct their own writings and those of others. Such is the case with Amir Khusraw. As will be graphically demonstrated in this study, the poet is, to a large extent, engaged in manipulating inherited dichotomies. By this is meant simply that the author, when encountering a traditional binary construct in which one term is usually deemed superior to the other – for example, “Turk/Hindu,” “religious scholar/poet,” or even “man/woman” – tends both to preserve the construct and to upturn it. Ultimately, the two terms are balanced or even united.

32 Derrida, Positions, 42.

33 Derrida, Positions, 45.

34 Culler, On Deconstruction, 213.

35 As J. Hillis Miller writes, “Great works of literature are likely to be ahead of their critics. They are there already. They have anticipated explicitly any deconstruction the critic may achieve.” It is therefore up to the critic to “identify an act of deconstruction which has always already, in each case differently, been performed on the text by itself.” Miller, “Deconstructing the Deconstructors,” Diacritics 5, no. 2 (1975): 31.
For example, Khusraw might first maintain the classical dyadic construct of Turk/Hindu by affirming that the Muslim Turk is superior to the Hindu. He will then invert the dichotomy and declare that the Hindu is superior to the Turk. Such an act may be followed by a "flattening" in which Turks and Hindus are seen as equal; or even by a merging of the two categories. Such acts result in the generation of a multiplicity of meanings as well as in the aforementioned contradictions and paradoxes. Moreover, the fresh concepts they produce can be seen as contributing to the development of a new culture, as will be explored at greater length in future chapters, and to an ethos of equitability.

Although deconstruction theory will prove helpful in this study, it will be sparingly applied. As espoused by Derrida, this form of theory disavows the assignation of any meaning whatsoever to a text, or even the envisioning of a work as "expression" or "illustration."\textsuperscript{36} Such a radical stance is, I believe, unproductive for an examination of this sort; for it precludes the possibility of identifying a text or series of texts as part of a movement or trend in history and understanding the interplay between a text and the development of a culture. For these reasons, this dissertation will avoid a too-heavy reliance on deconstruction theory, but instead will incorporate a judicious use of its methods, models, and insights.

A third, and related, system of thought that will come into play is that of unitive metaphysics, those aspects of or trends within religions which emphasize the presence of a fundamental unity within the phenomenal world (or manifested

\textsuperscript{36} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, 45.
universe) and as well as, in some cases, a continuity between the phenomenal and
spiritual worlds. The relevance of this concept to, and, indeed, in some cases,
congruence with, tolerance should be abundantly clear. Many varieties of doctrines
of unity exist, and interpretations of those that appear in Islam alone diverge
widely. Naturally, a full exposition of these concepts lies far beyond the scope of
this study. We may only note that, notwithstanding their differences, a major
tendency of these doctrines in both mystical Islam and the religion now known as
Hinduism is their tendency to minimize distinctions in the material world, seeing
all as part of a harmonious whole. Concomitantly, one finds a traversing,
invertong, and even a transcending of hierarchical dialectics, including those of
gender, religion, and ethnicity, in processes that often bring to mind contemporary
acts of deconstruction, as well as philosophies of tolerance.

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37 For another treatment of doctrines of unity and their relationship to Amīr Khusrāw’s
poetry, see M. Safdar Ali Baig, “Ameer Khusraw, His Beliefs and the Sufi Tradition,” in Ansari,

38 See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of
presentations of some of these interpretations. In particular, these authors deal with the question of
whether or not such doctrines may properly be called pantheism or monism. The Bahá’í author and
religious figure ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (d. 1921) also offers a succinct and penetrating discussion of these
matters in the work *Some Answered Questions*, trans. Laura Clifford Barney, 4th ed. (Wilmette, Ill.:

39 The notion that all people were united in one religion prior to division into various sects
and groups is prevalent in Islam. See the Qur’an, 2:213 and 10:19; also, Friedmann, *Tolerance and
Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

40 Similarly, distinct parallels have been drawn between deconstruction theory and aspects
of Taoism, particularly the reversals in Lao-tzu, the long philosophical poem that appeared
sometime between the sixth and early third centuries B.C.E. See A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the
In Islamic mysticism, one sees seeds of such doctrines early in the development of Persian poetry, which was often imbued with Sufi thought. We witness poets challenging value-laden dichotomies such as sober man/drunkard, Muslim/unbeliever in a manner that inverts the constructs or otherwise blurs the distinctions between the categories. A verse from a *tarkīb band* of the great Persian poet Sanā’ī (d. c.a. 1150), is typical: “For how long will you knock at the door of the mosque of debauched ones?/Be a man, and knock for a while at the wine-merchant’s door.”

By associating debauchery with the mosque and manly virtue with the wine shop, and by encouraging the reader to affiliate himself with wine-drinkers, the poet defies our expectations, and transforms the unbeliever into the true worshipper, and the outwardly pious man into the hypocritical unbeliever. Elsewhere, Sanā’ī embraces so-called faithlessness even more openly: “I’m bound to the rogue Friend/I’m drunk and an unbeliever from those two eyes of His.”

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42 Sanā’ī, *Dīvān-i Sanā’ī*, ed. Mudarris Razavi (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Ibīn Sīnā, 1962), 719. See also Mīhrān Afšār, “Sāyīr dar qalandarī surūdah-i Sanā’ī” (An Excursion into Sanā’ī’s Qalandarī Composition), *Irānshinās* 27 (Summer 2005): 344-53. The question of whether or not this form of mystical poetry actually encourages defiance of Islamic norms such as the avoidance of wine is one that emerges repeatedly in discussions of this genre. Often the partaking of wine is read symbolically as a relinquishing of the hypocritical outward practices of piety and the imbibing of true spirituality. See also Encyclopaedia Iranica, s.v. “Hafez and Rendi.”

43 Sanā’ī, *Dīvān-i Sanā’ī*, 358. In a somewhat similar vein, a verse from another poem by the same author reads, “Both infidelity and religion are seeking You, declaring, ‘He is One, He has no partner.’” Idem, *Kitāb-i hadīqat al-haqqat va shari‘at al-farqat* (The Enclosed Garden of the
The verses imply that the infidelity spoken of here is a more authentic version of true piety than that practiced in the mosques; and, in fact, the mystical term *kafr-i haqīqī*, true unbelief, is equated with true Islam and faith.\textsuperscript{44} An extreme version of such sentiments appears in the words of the renowned mystic Abū Sa‘īd ibn Abī al-Khayr (d. 1049), who, speaking in the voice of *qalandars*, a radical sect of mystics, says, “Not until every mosque beneath the sun/Lies ruined, will our holy work be done;/And never will true Musalmān appear/Till faith and infidelity are one.”\textsuperscript{45}

As should be seen from the above examples, by calling into question one of the primary binary constructs within Islamic civilization – that of believer/unbeliever – poets such as Sanā‘ī present an image of a world in which the ordinary distinctions between people no longer apply. To what degree the concept of tolerance as we have defined it is present at this stage is a matter of debate; but it was later to prove an important element in unitive metaphysics. Such is especially the case in the writings of the great mystic and philosopher Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240), whose *wahdat al-wujūd*, or the “Unity of Being,” is the most well-known expression of a Muslim doctrine of unity. *Wahdat al-wujūd*


demonstrated that "[I]love is the essence of all creeds: the true mystic welcomes it whatever guise it may assume."\textsuperscript{46} As Hodgson has observed,

A unitive metaphysic, in which every created thing formed part of a harmonious whole, could not help but soften lines drawn between person and person and between act and act, reinforcing any antinomian inclination. The Wujūdī position, in particular, which could seem to imply that all differentiations in actual life were virtually illusory, seems to have been adopted by those who denied the Šari‘ah applied to the ‘ārif ēlīte. Again, the Wujūdī position, or indeed any admission of a unitive metaphysic as an integral part of Šūfism, was congenial to a related point of view – that which saw the mystical disciplines within all religious communities as essentially at one. When the Šūfī life could be seen as almost a logical consequence of a unitive metaphysic, the inevitable similarities to be found in other unitive metaphysics, each with its own divergent supporting disciplines, encouraged an identification across communal lines. Like considerations led to the notion of sulh-e kull, ‘universal conciliation’ among sects and viewpoints as well as among persons and factions, as a primary Šūfī ideal.\textsuperscript{47}

Indeed, an oft-quoted poem of Ibn al-‘Arabī expresses sentiments of a decidedly pluralistic character:

My heart is capable of every form,  
a cloister of the monk, a temple for idols,  
a pasture for gazelles, the votary’s Kaaba,  
the tables of the Thora, the Koran.  
Love is the creed I hold: wherever turn

\textsuperscript{46} Nicholson, Mystics of Islam, 105. Dualism which ultimately is reconciled in Oneness through the ultimate triumph of Ahura Mazda is also, of course, a prevalent theme in Zoroastrianism, which is closely associated with early branches of the religion now known as Hinduism. See Mary Boyce, Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 1-16, 20-21.

\textsuperscript{47} Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 2:465. As implied earlier, the identification of Sufism with antinomianism is one that is open to much debate. It would likely be hotly contested by those who see certain versions of Islamic mysticism, including Sufism in its most ascetic forms, as encouraging an extremely close adherence to Muslim norms and laws. Such adherence would not necessarily preclude the ability to see value in other religions and parallels between them and Islam.
His camels, love is still my creed and faith.\footnote{Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam, 270-1. As mentioned previously, the poetry of Rūmī is replete with such ideas; indeed, some have interpreted his great Masnavi in the light of Ibn al-'Arabi's doctrines. See Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, s.v. "Ibn al-'Arabi."}

In earlier Hindu sacred literature, one finds similar themes espoused.\footnote{For discussions of unitive doctrines in Hinduism and their relationships to Islamic doctrines, see M. Saqdar Ali Baig, “Ameer Khusrau, His Beliefs and the Sufi Tradition,” 202-3; Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, 1:322-96. Advaita, the philosophy of non-dualism, is of especial significance. It was not only in Hinduism, of course, in which such ideas took hold. The Mauryan king Ashoka (r. 273-232 B.C.E.), a Buddhist, based his plea for pluralism on the concept of an underlying unity between all religions and sects:}
The Beloved of the Gods [i.e., Ashoka] ... honors members of all sects, whether ascetics or householders, by gifts and various honors. But he does not consider gifts and honors as important as the furtherance of the essential message of all sects. This essential message varies from sect to sect, but it has one common basis, that one should so control one's tongue as not to honor one's own sect and disparage another's on the wrong occasions; for on certain occasions one should do so only mildly, and indeed on other occasions one should honor other men's sects. By doing this one strengthens one's own sect and helps the others, while by doing otherwise one harms one's own sect and does a disservice to the others. ... Concord is best, with each hearing and respecting the other's teachings. ... \footnote{Quoted in William Theodore De Bary, Sources of Indian Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 151.}

The Rig Veda, whose estimated date of composition ranges from 4000 to 1500 B.C.E., declares that "There is one God; He is known by many names."\footnote{Rig Veda: 1:164.46.}

Moreover, in the Bhagavad Gita (believed to have been composed in the fourth century B.C.E.), we find Lord Krishna instructing the prince, Arjuna, "All beings, from their very birth, O Bhārata, are deluded by the spell of the pairs of opposites arising from desire}
and aversion.”\textsuperscript{51} It is the wise person’s task, he tells the young prince, to “[b]e free from the pairs of opposites.”\textsuperscript{52}

Centuries later, mystical Hindu groups such as members of the Shaivite Nath cult, influential among qalandars and Sufis in northern India, Central Asia, and Iran from the eleventh century of the common era on, placed great emphasis on the transcending of dialectics as the proper goal of human beings; dualism was only an appearance, whereas Oneness was reality.\textsuperscript{53}

As a member of Indian Sufi circles, where strands of both religions intertwined, and as a faithful devotee of Persian poetry, Khusraw would no doubt have been acted upon by doctrines of unity of both the Islamic and Hindu variety. Indeed, the very inversions, transversings and mergings of which we have been speaking can be traced at least partially to the impact of a unitive metaphysic. Although it is improbable that the poet would have been directly influenced by Ibn

\textsuperscript{51} The Bhagavad Gita, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1944), 195.

\textsuperscript{52} One aspect of this transcendence is expressed in the manner in which one deals with the three gunas, or modes in which energy operates. These gunas consist of rajas, characterized by activity and restlessness; tamas, marked by darkness, inertia, and ignorance; and sattva, associated with goodness and harmony. The wise person is instructed to “be always established in sattva,” the equilibrium between tamas and rajas. The Bhagavat Gita, 86.

\textsuperscript{53} Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, 1:334, 338, 368. Hodgson also writes at length about the “firm tradition of universalism — the idea that all the various religious forms represent diverse paths to the one Truth, paths which are all in some degree valid” in Indic religious thought. He writes, “Such a universalism was, of course, not unique to India; many Sufis had admitted the abstract principle at least, in the Earlier Middle Period. In India it became a practical ground for interpreting the relations among religious communities.” Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 2:68.
al-‘Arabī, the concept of such a metaphysic, as expressed in both Islamic and Hindu mystical thought, is nonetheless critical in understanding the processes witnessed in Khusraw’s work and the emergence of his own brand of tolerance. Methodology

The fundamental frameworks of inquiry that will undergird this study have now been set forth. The question of methodology arises. Because the inversion of hierarchies is so crucial to this dissertation, its primary mode of inquiry will consist of an examination of these constructs as they appear in various poetic writings of Khusraw. Its practice will be to ask the following series of questions when approaching a dichotomy or series of dichotomies:

1. What does the dialectic consist of, and what is its historical and/or literary context? Prominent examples to be examined include the dichotomies of religious scholar/poet, man/woman, and Turk/Hindu.

2. What sorts of manipulations does the dichotomy undergo in the text in question, including preserving, inverting, balancing/flattening, and uniting? How might we understand these processes? What factors may have influenced them or contributed to them?

3. How have these processes been analyzed in the past, and what sorts of problems or issues have they generated in analyzing Khusraw’s work?

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54 By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the concept of wahrat al-wujūd had apparently not penetrated very far into Indian Sufism. See Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, 1:217.

55 One work of prose, the Dībāchah-‘i divān-i ghurrat al-kamāl, will be examined, but the work itself is largely concerned with poetry and is filled with verse.
4. Finally, how can careful study of these processes within the frameworks at hand assist us in better understanding the development of Indo-Persian culture, the elements of pluralism within it, and the manner in which a language of tolerance resonated in the Subcontinent and beyond?

I.3. Sources

Primary

Although this study will draw upon examples and quotations from many of Khusraw’s works to illustrate its arguments, including Qurān al-sa’dayn, Duval Rānī Khizr Khān, Majnūn va Laylī, and his many dīvāns, or collections of poetry, it will concentrate on close readings and analyses of the following three texts, which will be carried out in, respectively, Chapters Three, Four, and Five:

• Dībāchah-‘i dīvān-i ghurrat al-kamāl (The Preface to the Poetical Collection of the Prime of Perfection). This preface to Khusraw’s third dīvān of poetry, completed in 1293/94, is an extraordinary document rich in examples of the above-mentioned processes. In setting forth the author’s views on poetry, language, and ethnicity, it exhibits both the contradictory qualities that are typical of his work as well as its explicitly inversive traits. For example, it makes radical claims about the superiority of Indian Muslim scholars over those residing in the

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56 Amīr Khusraw Dīhlavi, Dībāchah-‘i dīvān-i ghurrat al-kamāl, ed. Vazīr al-Ḥasan ʿĀbidī (Lahore, 1975), hereafter cited in text as D.
more traditional lands of the Middle East. In the author’s embracing of indigenous Indian dialects and his effusive praise of his homeland, it suggests the nascent formation of a new Indo-Muslim identity, one that, as will be demonstrated, is often closely linked to a pluralistic ideology.

- *Hasht bihisht* (Eight Paradies). A romantic epic modeled on Nizāmī’s *Haft paykar*, this work deals with the life and loves of Bahrām Gūr, the Sassanian king (r. 420-438), and serves as a prime example of the manner in which Khusraw adapted a classic of Persian literature to an Indian environment in the well-entrenched tradition of literary imitation. My analysis of this work will address in particular the male/female dynamic as it is portrayed in two separate sections of the work: the words of advice to his young daughter, ‘Affifah, which appears in the *Hasht bihisht*’s introductory sections, and the story of Bahrām Gūr and his slave girl Dilārām. By calling attention to the blurring of distinctions between the categories of “man” and “woman” in, especially, the latter story, it will demonstrate how the poet manipulates that dyadic construct – formally a violent hierarchy – in creative and significant ways.

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57 It should be noted that it is not this study’s object to ascertain the accuracy of such claims, only to report their inclusion and possible significance in Khusraw’s works.


59 For a thorough discussion of imitation in the Persian literary tradition, and examples of the manner in which Khusraw himself was later imitated, see Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānt*, 100-33.
• *Nuh sipihr* (Nine Skies).\(^{60}\) This historical epic, written for the Delhi sultan Qutb al-Din Mubarak Shah (r. 1316-1320), is of great relevance in its dramatically innovative treatment of the binary construct of Turk/Hindu, which may be regarded as one of the most intrinsic dualities in the Persianate literary tradition. It demonstrates the manner in which Khusraw both denigrates Hindus and praises them; how he erases the distinctions between Turks and Hindus; and how, finally, he posits a symbolic union between the two categories. In so doing, he sets forth a drastically restructured vision of the dichotomy, one with far-reaching implications.

Other primary sources that will be consulted to help to contextualize Khusraw and his time include (but are not limited to):

• *Favāʿid al-fuʿād* (Morals for the Heart), compiled by Amīr Hasan ‘Ala’ Sijzī Dihlavī (d. circa 1338).\(^{61}\) This collection of utterances is ascribed to Khwājah Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’, the famous Sufi saint with whom Khusraw was closely associated and whose views he held in the highest esteem. As such, it comprises a valuable source of influences upon the poet.


• *Lubāb al-albāb* (The Cream of the Crop), by Muḥammad ‘Awfī (d. circa 1232-3). This biographical compilation of Persian poets provides an invaluable image of the literary hierarchies prevailing in the Islamicate world during the age of Khusraw.

• *Kitāb al-Hind*, by Abū al-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048 or 1050). This classic work, known in English as *Alberuni’s India*, represents one of the first and most comprehensive attempts of Muslims to understand and document Indian philosophies, traditions, and religions.

Also to be relied upon to a great extent are works of poetry by an array of authors writing in Persian, including Firdawsī (d. 1020 or 1026), Niẓāmī (d. 1209), and Saʿdī (d. 1292).

*Secondary*

With regard to secondary sources, many works scattered over a broad spectrum of disciplines have been consulted; only a sampling of them may be listed here. We will begin with works that deal with the writer himself. Three reliable biographies of Amīr Khusraw will supply background information for this study. Of these, the most comprehensive is Mohammad Wahid Mirza’s *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, published in 1962. It contains lengthy and careful

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descriptions of the poet’s life, his close relationship with the Sufi saint Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’, his service at the courts of various sultāns, and analyses of his poetry and prose. The aforementioned Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sultans and Sufis, by Sunil Sharma, provides an overview of the same matters in a more compact form; it also competently distills issues of Khusraw’s presence in the contemporary culture of the Subcontinent. Mohammad Habib’s Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi, although somewhat anachronistic in its wholehearted enthusiasm for its subject (it was first published in 1927), nevertheless evinces great and relevant familiarity with the poet’s milieu.65 Various articles dealing with the writer, his works, or times will also prove useful, including Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi’s “India as Sung by Ameer Khusrau,” Mushir-Ul-Haque’s “Ameer Khusrau: A Social Rebel,” and S.A.A. Rizvi’s “Socio-Religious Dimensions of Amir Khusrau’s Delhi.”66 Heshmat Moayyad’s “Dar madār-i Nizāmī: Hasht bihisht-Haft akhtar” (In Nizāmī’s Orbit: Eight Paradises-Seven Stars), a comparison of works by Nizāmī, Khusraw, and the 16th century Safavid poet ‘Abdī Big, will provide groundwork for a comparative study undertaken in Chapter Four, as will Muḥammad Ja’far


Maḥjūb’s “Hasht bihisht” va “Haft paykar” (Eight Paradises and Seven Beauties), published in 1976.67

More general works on medieval South Asian history, especially those that address issues of identity, Sufism, Indic-Islamicate interaction, and historiography, will be drawn upon to contextualize and historicize Khusraw’s works. Particularly useful will be Muzaffar Alam’s “Competition and Coexistence: Indo-Islamic Interaction in Medieval North India,” and his The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200-1800; also to be consulted will be Richard Eaton’s The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760, and the collection edited by the same author, India’s Islamic Traditions, 711-1750.68 Azīz Ahmad’s Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment, Yohanan Friedmann’s “Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions,” and Peter Jackson’s The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History, will also serve to provide general overviews of the period.69

On doctrines of unity, the first volume of S.A.A. Rizvi’s A History of Sufism in India, Carl Ernst’s Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center, and David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence’s collection,


Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia, will provide information about Islamic mysticism in the Subcontinent, its parallels to Hindu forms of mysticism, and its influence upon cultural production.⁷⁰

In the area of theory, Chapter Two’s explication of frontier theory will rely upon sources ranging from Richard White’s The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 to David A. Chappell’s “Ethnogenesis and Frontiers” to Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay’s Medieval Frontier Societies.⁷¹ For Chapter Four’s consideration of male/female dynamics, I will consult Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity and Joan Wallach Scott’s Gender and the Politics of History.⁷² For deconstruction theory throughout the study, I will make use of Jacques Derrida’s Positions and Jonathan D. Culler’s On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism.

In the field of literary criticism, Julie Scott Meisami’s Medieval Persian Court Poetry and her “Fitnah or Azadah? Nizami’s Ethical Poetic” will be drawn upon to supply a framework for a discussion of Amīr Khusraw’s romantic epic,

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Hasht bihisht, while Annemarie Schimmel’s “Turk and Hindu: A Poetical Image and its Application to Historical Fact,” will offer a preliminary analysis of the issues discussed in Chapter Five’s examination of Nuh sipihr.\textsuperscript{73} Shamsur Rahman Faruqi’s Early Urdu Literary Culture and History, which traces the roots of this culture in part to Amīr Khusraw, will provide insights into the poet’s literary style and the manner in which it resonated in the Subcontinent.

Finally, Marshall Hodgson’s three-volume opus, The Venture of Islam, will inform the overall perspective of this study, if not its particulars. As Hodgson so perspicaciously writes, “The culture of Muslim India can be seen with equal legitimacy as a chapter in Indic history and as a chapter in Islamicate history, according to the sorts of questions one is asking”; and Amīr Khusraw cannot be properly studied without, at the very least, being aware that both sorts of questions can and should be asked.\textsuperscript{74}

A final note on aesthetics. This study is not one that seeks to appraise the literary merit of Amīr Khusraw’s work; its focus is on other matters. But a few of the characteristics that invest Khusraw’s writing with its great charm and have permitted it to survive these many years may be noted here. One finds in it, in addition to the aforementioned tolerance, a wonderful playfulness, a great


\textsuperscript{74} Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 3:60.
melodiousness, and a humor and intelligence that shine across the centuries. Above all, it is, one may speculate, the personal quality of Khushraw’s writing that lends it its greatest appeal. One feels, when reading his works, that the man is speaking before you, stating with great candor whatever thought is running through his quicksilver mind at the time, whether it is anger at being underappreciated (“If you will not give me justice, O friend/The bag of musk itself tells its story from inside the skin,” he writes at one juncture), pride, humility, concern for his children’s futures, or indignation at serving a king who is “no better than he.”  

This apparent sense of transparency is, no doubt, to be acutely mistrusted; one cannot assume that he “knows” Amīr Khushraw through his writing; but it nonetheless awakens in the reader a feeling of a common humanity that transcends time and geography, a sentiment of which Khushraw himself would no doubt have approved, and which is fully congruent with the precepts put forth in this study. It seems appropriate to end this introduction with the following ghazal, in which the writer speaks both to himself and across the centuries to those who will read his works when he himself is no more:

Sorrow not, O heart, for once again days of joy shall arrive; to every place that now aches in pain, in the end shall balm arrive. Between a man and that which is his goal – even if the path’s one hundred years, at its time, it comes at once. …

Friends, I’m your dust; when you drink the wine of joy

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pour a draught for my dust too, that it may revel in its dew. Be not sad, Khusraw, that days of joy have passed away: set your heart upon God, for the desired joy will also come.\footnote{\textit{KG}, 2:474-5:69. This ghazal is striking in its resemblance to a much later one by Häfiẓ with the \textit{radīf}, “Sorrow not” (\textit{gham makhur}), and may well have partly inspired it. See \textit{Divān-i Häfiẓ}, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī and Qāsim Ghanī, 6th ed. (Tehran: Asāfīr, 1377/[1998/9], 228-9.}
CHAPTER II

FRONTIER STUDIES AND THE POETRY OF AMĪR KHUSRAW

II.1. Introduction

One of this dissertation's fundamental contentions is that the frontier setting in which Amīr Khusraw lived – that is, the multicultural, composite society of medieval northern India – contributed in a significant way to the peculiar characteristics of his work, including its often pluralistic and inclusive ethos, its frequent use of polysemy, and its creative manipulations of dualities. Such a contention is grounded in frontier studies, which suggest that cultural production emanating from these types of societies is often marked by its contradictory qualities, novelty of expression, and, frequently, deployment of motifs from multiple communities. Since frontier studies are so intrinsic to this study, this chapter will examine that subject at some length. It will begin with a general survey of the field and with the transfiguration of the concept of frontier, from its original envisioning by Frederick Jackson Turner as uncharted wilderness steadily encroached upon by adventurous settlers, into a zone of "transformative interaction between [cultural] systems."¹ Later, it will turn to an examination of

the frontier circumstances of medieval South Asia, and, in particular, the Delhi Sultanate based on the assumptions and understandings developed earlier. Finally, these understandings will be deployed as a means of analyzing Khusraw’s works and the historical context in which they appeared.\textsuperscript{2} In particular, this chapter will demonstrate that, under the right circumstances, frontier settings can yield enormous cultural innovation and pluralistic systems of thought.

II.2. Investigating Frontiers

The term “frontier” to describe an historical dynamic was, apparently, first substantially elaborated upon by Turner in 1893 to describe the westward settlement of the United States and its impact upon the development of the nation; and it has been located chiefly – but not exclusively – in the domain of history since then.\textsuperscript{3} Turner conceived of the gradual mastering of the “savagery” of the “free land” of the continent as a key factor in shaping the peculiar characteristics of the quintessential American:

This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating the American

\textsuperscript{2} It may be asked, what does frontier studies have to do with literature? I would like to argue that historicizing the context in which it appeared is crucial to properly understanding the contribution and development of Amīr Khusraw’s poetry. The social and historical dynamics of the periods and settings in which various works and schools of Persian poetry emerged clearly played a large role in the shaping of themes, genres, and other literary norms over the centuries.

\textsuperscript{3} Robert I. Burns, “The Significance of the Frontier in the Middle Ages,” in Bartlett and MacKay, \textit{Medieval Frontier Societies}, 328.
character ... In this advance, the frontier is the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization.4

At first, Turner writes, the wilderness masters the colonist:

It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick, he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in the orthodox Indian fashion.5

Little by little, however, the colonist transforms the wilderness; but the outcome, Turner significantly affirms, “is not the older order ... The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.”6 And this “new product” was to exert a profound influence not just upon the more settled Atlantic coast but upon Europe as well: “Steadily the frontier of settlement advanced and carried with it individualism, democracy, and nationalism, and powerfully affected the East and the Old World.”7

Over the years, Turner’s thesis has undergone great debate and significant transmutation as some groups have sought to discredit his argument entirely and others – known as “neo-Turnerists” – merely to improve upon it. Most noteworthy,

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as the historian Robert I. Burns writes, has been the rejection of his characterization of the American frontier as the settlement of an uninhabited, savage wilderness:

An important element of this broader approach is the substitution of zones of intercultural contact for Turner’s winning of a wilderness, a substitution effected by a generation of historians, with contributions from anthropology and the social sciences.⁸

Concomitantly, the term “frontier” has undergone considerable metamorphoses and broadened tremendously. We can now speak of “geographical frontiers – lines of demarcation, say, between two kingdoms or of “non-linear, cultural” frontiers.”⁹ Some are militarized zones; some are not. Some scholars have come to see the frontier as primarily a zone in which people of “different cultures struggle with each other for control of resources and political power”¹⁰; others see them as places producing great cultural creativity and opportunities for osmotic exchange.¹¹

But some elements have remained constants in present-day conceptualizations of frontiers. They tend to be envisioned as zones of interaction of two (or more) systems: a “colonist” system which has been transplanted from elsewhere and whose members are attempting to replicate the forms of its

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⁸ Burns, “Significance of the Frontier,” 310.

⁹ Bartlett and MacKay, introduction to Medieval Frontier Societies, v.


¹¹ Burns, “Significance of the Frontier,” 315.
homeland; and an “indigenous” system whose members are trying to preserve their old forms. Since colonists conquering new areas cannot represent their own, original societies perfectly, their encounters with new peoples “impel a mutual selection and adaptation of traits to fit the new circumstances.”\textsuperscript{12} Thus these societies become “distinctive from their parent metropoles because of their partial, processual nature.”\textsuperscript{13}

In his study of medieval Valencia, previously Muslim-ruled but seized by Crusaders representing King James of Aragón in the thirteenth century, Burns describes the attempts to transfer and replicate the “homeland” through the establishment of, say, Gothic cathedrals or a European grid of streets. But these institutions necessarily took on different forms; they could not be exact replicas of those in the northern reaches of Spain. As he writes, “The frontier can now be expressed as a dialectic of the old and new, or as a constricting and releasing and reshaping of the old by the new conditions and needs, or perhaps as a creation of the new with older materials …”\textsuperscript{14} The old forms, “translated to a distant frontier,” underwent changes of scale, and these changes then influenced the “homeland”: for example, “…the expansion here of commercial and tax revenues … even altered the activity and psychology of the realms at large.”\textsuperscript{15} While not necessarily

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\textsuperscript{12} Chappell, “Ethnogenesis and Frontiers,” 271.
\textsuperscript{13} Chappell, “Ethnogenesis and Frontiers,” 271 (my italics).
\textsuperscript{14} Burns, “Significance of the Frontier,” 325.
\textsuperscript{15} Burns, “Significance of the Frontier,” 325.
\end{flushright}
the “new product” envisioned by Turner, transmutations and adaptations do occur—or, in the words of acculturation specialists, reorganizations, reinterpretations, accommodations, and syncretisms.16

An even more dramatic transformation—and one that perhaps bears more similarity to Turner’s “new product”—is envisioned by Richard White in The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815. In this study of interactions between French fur traders and Algonquian Indians in the pays d’en haut, the land upriver from Montreal, White proposes that Europeans and Indians initially saw each other as “alien and virtually non-human”;

16 My use of these terms is undertaken with an acute understanding of the perils inherent in doing so. To give just one example, although it may seem benign, the term “syncretism,” nicely defined by Judith A. Berling as the “borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols, or practices of one religious tradition into another by a process of selection and reconciliation,” has come to be seen as a highly charged category. Barbara Metcalf, while acknowledging that use of the word is “virtually irresistible” for scholars studying Muslims in South India (she remarks that the “persistent fascination with what is taken to be ‘syncretism’” is a “central theme in the study of Islam in India”), argues that what is called syncretic often does not live up to the definition of the term; and that, in fact, the word should be seen as part of the subject matter, not as a term of analysis. Peter van der Veer emphasizes the greatly ambivalent nature of the term (it can be used in an extremely positive or a pejorative way, depending on the context) and also questions whether syncretism, as is often suggested, is truly conducive to tolerance. In some contexts, he suggests, the reverse may apply. Richard Eaton calls “syncretism” and “orthodoxy” “...probably the most over-used but under-theorized terms in the entire lexicon of religious studies” and remarks that “[t]he idea of ‘syncretism’ presupposes two or more self-contained and static essences, when in fact religious systems can be neither self-contained nor static.” Although I agree that it is necessary to problematize “projects” seen as syncretic, and have no argument with the modes proposed by the likes of Metcalf, I believe that there are instances where the terms “syncretism” and “accommodation” do apply, especially in a South Asian context; and therefore am reluctant to banish them from the vocabulary of this study. See Berling, The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 9; Barbara D. Metcalf, “The Study of Muslims in South Asia” (lecture, University of California at Santa Barbara, December 2, 2005; available online at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00isamlinks/ikram/part0_metcalfintro.html; accessed April 9, 2007); van der Veer, “Syncretism, Multiculturalism and the Discourse of Tolerance,” in Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis, ed. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (London: Routledge, 1994), 196-211; and Eaton, introduction to India’s Islamic Traditions, 19.
they then came to construct a “common, mutually comprehensible world.”17 This world, which White calls the “middle ground,” consisted of “new systems of meaning and of exchange,”18 ones designed to break down barriers between these groups and which incorporated elements from both but “fully corresponded to neither.”19

For example, the French at times came to adopt certain Algonquian customs such as generous gift-giving (without expectation of reward) and mediating of quarrels. For their part, when the Indians protested the planned execution of a French warehouse keeper and murderer with whom they had formed bonds, they both explained the Algonquian view of murder and connected their argument to French culture and Christianity, offering the calumet, a symbol of friendship and alliance, as a final gesture. Their efforts yielded success; the man was freed.20

What allowed this new world, this middle ground, to emerge? White posits that it was largely due to a balance of power between the two groups. Needing Indians as “allies, as partners in exchange, as sexual partners, as friendly neighbors,” the whites could neither dictate to the Indians nor ignore them.21 “The middle ground grew,” he writes, “according to the need of people to find a

17 White, Middle Ground, ix-x.
18 White, Middle Ground, x.
19 White, Middle Ground, 93.
20 White, Middle Ground, 92.
21 White, Middle Ground, x.
means, other than force, to gain the cooperation or consent of foreigners.”

This middle ground was always a fragile enterprise, and when the balance of power changed, it collapsed.

Other factors affecting the rate and depth of acculturation, or cultural change as a result of contact with other cultures, can include the make-up of the systems themselves and, particularly, the relative permeability of their boundaries. In “Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation,” the authors use biological analogies to create typologies of systems as either flexible, soft-shelled, invertebrate organisms that are more susceptible to change upon contact; or hard-shelled, vertebrate ones that employ boundary-maintaining mechanisms (i.e., “techniques and ideologies by which a system limits participation in the culture to a well-recognized in-group”23) to stave off outer influences. These variable properties may be relevant in gauging degrees of acculturation, they suggest.

The degree of contrast between cultures has also been seen as a factor in acculturation as well as the creativity resulting from it. In fact, the clashing of differences in cultures may provide “a kind of catalyst for cultural creativity.”24

This notion is echoed by the scholar N.S. Gorekar, who writes somewhat optimistically that:

[Footnotes]

22 White, Middle Ground, 52.


Culture is a co-operative enterprise. The history of any contributary culture is the history of continuous exchanges of ideas and techniques with other cultures and more often with contrasting cultures ... Cultural interchanges may be momentous, releasing fresh creative power on both sides. ... [N]ew contacts are sure to summon a vital response, waking up fresh energies for the realization of great results otherwise unattainable, which ultimately indicates that capacities are complementary, aptitudes are mutually corrective, contrasts are mediated through a common understanding, that the ideal of one nation finds its fulfillment with the aid of the technique of another, and that the art of either nation acquires substance and individuality through the mutual influences of their languages, religions and cultures.”

No matter what factors influence it, ongoing contact between two systems, as Gorekar suggests, can be a highly creative process, one which stimulates a great deal of literary, artistic, and other types of production. At one extreme, it engenders – similar to White’s middle ground – a new, third system that contains elements of both and exhibits the “attributes of uniqueness and autonomy possessed by parent systems.” At the other, there can occur a sort of hardening of cultural barriers and redefining of self vis-à-vis the other which facilitate division, not cohesion. Chappell notes that frontiers “offer revealing insights into the process of ethnogenesis, by which a cultural community distinguishes itself from perceived ‘others.’” Frontier societies can “generate new ethnicities”; new identities, including nationalities, emerge. As he writes,

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26 Social Science Research Council, “Acculturation,” 275.


"In many cases, it is precisely contact with strangers that awakens communal identity by testing it against the competition."\textsuperscript{29}

But what is probably more characteristic of frontier societies when studied over the long term is, in fact, what Chappell refers to as their "partial, processual" nature: the presence of both hostility and conciliation, of acculturation and hardening of identities, of a sort of double-movement as cultures strive both to preserve (or replicate) the old and to assimilate the new. This multivalent, contradictory quality – characterized at times by "a greater freedom, feelings of self-reliance, social fluidity, a fragmented society and multiple loyalties,"\textsuperscript{30} – will be especially relevant to the study of frontiers in South Asia, as will the notion that, at particular times and for reasons that may not be immediately discernible, new systems of meaning can emerge that incorporate elements of both cultures. Such systems, as will be seen, often by their very makeup symbolize a deep ethos of tolerance and pluralism, even when they seemingly promote the opposite.

\section*{II.3. The South Asian Context}

When raised in the context of Islamic history, the word "frontier" inevitably conjures up the extended meeting of Islamic and Byzantine civilizations at the crossroads of modern-day Turkey. By far the most widely

\textsuperscript{29} Chappell, "Ethnogenesis and Frontiers," 268.

studied frontier explored by scholars of Islamic history, most notably by Paul Wittek, this interaction has yielded and continues to yield provocative material about the Muslim-Christian encounter.\textsuperscript{31} But the centuries-old encounter between the Indic and Islamicate civilizations also clearly constitutes a frontier situation – or, rather, many frontier situations; and a small but thriving amount of scholarship is also growing up around this matter.\textsuperscript{32} To briefly recapitulate the tale in the way in which it is most usually told, beginning in the seventh century of the common era, waves of Muslims began arriving in India: first, groups of Arabs sent by various caliphs, and later, from the tenth to early thirteenth centuries, “Turks” steeped in Persianate culture and bent on plunder.\textsuperscript{33} As time went on and political situations in the west deteriorated for such ruling groups as the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids, members of these dynasties increasingly sought their fortunes in India. In 1206, Ghurids established the first independent Muslim state in India, the so-called Delhi Sultanate. The rule of the Delhi sultāns spread until Muslims dominated the Subcontinent in the fourteenth century, their rule lasting in one shape or

\textsuperscript{31} See Wittek, The Rise of the Ottoman Empire (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1938), esp. 16-32. A comparative study of the frontier conditions of Seljuk Anatolia and the Delhi Sultanate, with special focus on the literary production emanating from those societies, would be a project well worth undertaking. In particular, an examination of a few of the works of Amir Khusraw and Rūmī that applies the conclusions drawn in this study would be particularly interesting.

\textsuperscript{32} As Hodgson writes, “We know a great deal less about the frontier with India than about the frontier with Europe, though for Islamicate civilization in the long run the passage into India was the more important of the two.” The Venture of Islam, 2:275.

\textsuperscript{33} Here the term “Turk” refers to those migratory, Turkic-speaking peoples from the central Asian steppe that began filtering into the eastern Iranian world in the sixth and seventh centuries of the common era.
another for the next 400-odd years. At every stage, naturally, "frontier-like" interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims took place, increasing in time as the entrenchment of Muslims grew.

Although the basic parameters of this outline are usually agreed upon, modern-day historians have reached consensus on little else about these encounters. A very brief summation of the sorts of divergent historiographical trends characterizing the study of these interactions will be undertaken here.

As Muzaffar Alam has written, contemporary scholarship of medieval Indic-Islamicate relations has tended to take one of two forms, neither of which is wholly satisfying. In the first view, religion played a relatively small role in the interactions between Muslims and Hindus, who tended to see each other not in terms of their faiths but rather in terms of their languages or ethnicities; commonalities between the groups were emphasized and their encounters produced interesting forms of composite cultural production. This society culminated in the reign of Akbar in the Mughal Empire and the great achievements of Indo-Persian culture, only to collapse with the advent of British imperialism. The second view conceptualizes India as a battleground for the collision of two monolithic and mutually hostile societies, one of them – the Muslim, of course – taking the menacing shape of an alien group that imposed itself on Indian soil. Religion is seen as of paramount importance in both group’s identities. As Alam avers, many of these historical writings are

... avowedly geared to explain the growing Hindu-Muslim discord since the early nineteenth century. Prejudices, thus, have operated not only in
interpretation, but also in the selection and incorporation into argument of even the known facts, often with little care for the criteria and critical standards valid for the time and the people.\textsuperscript{34}

Similarly, in "The Islamic Frontier in the East: Expansion into South Asia," historian J.F. Richards remarks upon the tendency of historians to deemphasize the military struggle between Muslims and non-Muslims "in favor of attempts to stress more peaceful modes of Muslim expansion and the relatively tranquil rapprochement achieved between the two communities once Muslim domination had been established."\textsuperscript{35} Such attempts, though motivated out of a praiseworthy desire to defuse communal hatred, must give way to a "more objective view of the extended military and political struggle which did last for centuries."\textsuperscript{36}

The incorporation of frontier studies into these examinations over the last thirty years or so has helped to yield a more complex, balanced picture. For example, as Richards demonstrates, each of the phases of Muslim incursion into Indian territory did involve military struggles, many of which were prolonged. A military frontier was established as far back as the seventh century, and the "line of interaction moved east and south gradually."\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} Alam, "Competition and Co-Existence," 37.


\textsuperscript{36} Richards, "Islamic Frontier in the East," 92.

\textsuperscript{37} Richards, "Islamic Frontier in the East," 93.
Once the Muslims were established in India, a complicated portrait of a multivalent society emerges. Many attempts to replicate forms from the “homeland” took place, whether it was the use of Persian as an administrative and literary language, administrative tools such as the *iqṭā‘*, or the diffusion of technical devices such as the Persian wheel.\(^{38}\) The interaction did have its creative aspects as well: Richards points out that the rajput caste may have been created among Hindus as a result of their encounter with the Muslims.\(^{39}\) But on the whole, he conceives of the encounter as one more dominated by force than by peaceful coexistence or the sort of middle ground envisioned by White. For example, Richards does not discount the role that slavery and war captivity played in the conversions of many indigenous peoples to Islam, a notion put forth by K.S. Lal in his *Growth of Muslim Population in Medieval India*.\(^{40}\) Even though the idea of mass conversions by the sword has been rejected, “we should not overlook the powers of persuasion of the Muslim state, especially in view of the fact that we have little evidence for widespread or systematic proselytizing on the part of Muslims.”\(^{41}\) The holding of power by Muslims was thus an important factor in these conversions.

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38. The *iqṭā‘* system parcels out land and its revenue in exchange for services rendered to a state. The Persian wheel is a system of buckets and pulleys used to extract water from wells.


In a somewhat different take, the historian Richard Eaton emphasizes both the creativity often produced by frontier settings and a sort of “double-movement” inherent in Islamic traditions that develop in these settings in *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier*. Here, medieval Bengal emerges as a society conducive to great literary production and the sorts of “reinterpretations” and “reorganizations” discussed earlier. Rather than conceiving of either the Muslim or Hindu systems as static and monolithic, Eaton depicts them as diverse and capable of great change and modification—and even the engendering of what could be termed new “systems of meaning” that incorporate elements of both cultures and speak to audiences of both.

The *Nabī-Bamša* (Family of the Prophet), a national religious epic for Bengali Muslims, is a case in point. Written by Saiyid Sulṭan, a poet and Sufi of the Chittagong region in Bengal in the sixteenth century, the work is, in effect, an effort to “situate Muhammad within a wider ‘family’ of Bengali deities and Hebrew prophets”42, rather than “repudiating Bengal’s older religious and social worlds … the epic served to connect Islam with Bengal’s socioreligious past, or at least with that part of it represented in the high textual tradition of the Brahmans.”43 At the same time, the work seeks to *disassociate* Islam from the earlier traditions by “proclaiming the finality and superiority of Muhammad’s prophetic mission,” in essence displacing all of the other local

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divinities from Bengal’s religious milieu.\textsuperscript{44} In effect, the epic attempted to define the cultural identity of Muslims vis-à-vis non-Muslims, as well as to establish Islam’s claim to primacy.

Even though the work does aim at a particular end, its recognition of the indigenous past indicates a willingness among Muslims to allow their traditions to change and adapt.\textsuperscript{45} The peculiar circumstances of medieval Bengal clearly played an important role in allowing these transmutations to emerge. The period in which the \textit{Nabī-Bamśa} was written was one in which “religious and social boundaries were very much in flux and where Islam, though politically dominant, was new and demographically dwarfed by a majority of adherents to much older creeds.”\textsuperscript{46} Muslims therefore felt it necessary to define their own identity vis-à-vis the “other” through cultural production such as the \textit{Nabī-Bamśa}. The relative balance of power between Muslims and non-Muslims – perhaps not wholly dissimilar from that of the French traders and the Algonquian Indians in White’s \textit{The Middle Ground} – also led to the need for an acknowledgement of indigenous forms and even a limited acceptance of them, if only to serve the final purpose of asserting Islam’s superiority.

\textsuperscript{44} Eaton, \textit{Rise of Islam}, 290.

\textsuperscript{45} Eaton is careful to refrain from calling the work “syncretic”; as he points out, “on fundamental points of theology, the poet clearly drew on Judeo-Islamic and not on Indic thought.” \textit{Rise of Islam}, 289.

\textsuperscript{46} Eaton, \textit{Rise of Islam}, 286.
Eaton also suggests that Islam, contrary to usual perceptions, was more of a “soft-shelled” than a “hard-shelled” system in Bengal, as it was elsewhere:

... the idea of Islam as a closed system with definite and rigid boundaries is itself largely a product of 19th and 20th century reform movements, whereas for rural Bengalis of the premodern period the line separating ‘non-Islam’ from ‘Islam’ appears rather to have been porous, tenuous, and shifting.47

Still, it must be borne in mind that even as Islamic cultural forms such as religious epics underwent extensive changes and modifications in an Indian setting, they still maintained a link, however tenuous, to the Qur’ān or to the traditions of the Prophet.48 To some extent they addressed both an “Indic” and an “Islamicate” audience – that is, the wider Muslim world. Thus these traditions, as Eaton writes, are characterized by a sort of “double-movement” which allows them to be interpreted in a variety of ways, and which again points to the contradictory quality so prevalent in works produced in frontier societies:

On the one hand, one clearly sees their interaction with, and embeddedness within, particular sub-cultures of South Asia, such that by [1750] Islam had become as Indian as any other religious tradition of the subcontinent. Yet at the same time one sees their connectedness with a worldwide religious community, such that Indo-Muslim culture emerged in this period as authentically Islamic as anything to be found in the Middle East.49

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49 Eaton, *India's Islamic Traditions*, 27.
Frontier studies also play an important role in Cynthia Talbot’s “Inscribing the Self, Inscribing the Other: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India.” Talbot argues that a failure to contextualize the “development of Hindu and Muslim identities within the historical processes of migration and a moving frontier” has led to the prevalence of a “static and simplistic view of identity formation in South Asia.” Bringing frontier scholarship to bear on the subject allows her to develop a more nuanced view. Focusing on Andhra Pradesh in the southeastern peninsula, 1323-1650, Talbot notes that the frontier setting in which Muslims and non-Muslims encountered each other led to such phenomena as intensification of self-identities, occasional demonizing of the “other,” and ethogenesis, as well as some conciliation and cooperation. In frontier societies, she writes, initial violent confrontation often gives way to equilibrium, collaboration, acculturation, and accommodation, marked by occasional spikes of the opposite. Some Sanskrit inscriptions and literature, therefore, attest to the entrenchment of Muslims in society, showing that they were an “integral component of the political order.” Others characterize Muslims as wicked barbarians. Because the medieval Hindu-Muslim encounter was a process occurring in a frontier zone, she concludes, it was characterized

50 Cynthia Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,” in Eaton, India’s Islamic Traditions, 109.

51 Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self,” 99. Talbot also delves at length into the question of identity and to what degree religion played a part in it. She challenges the notion that Muslims were seen primarily in terms of their faith rather than their ethnicity or language.
by a great deal of flux, diversity, and contradictions, including both denigrating and tolerant representations at any given phase.\textsuperscript{52}

Sunil Sharma’s \textit{Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān of Lahore} also presents a careful examination of a South Asian frontier society, here Ghaznavid-dominated eleventh and twelfth-century northern India. Sharma points to the decisive impact of the frontier setting on the work of the poet Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān (1046/49 – 1121) and on that of other poets writing in that period in India. For one thing, the purely military aspects of a society in which “Turks” were often fighting against “Hindus” found their ways into the poet’s work with great frequency, and even influenced the genre of poetry employed by him and others:

Writing at a time when \textit{ghazā} or \textit{jihād} was the driving force of the Ghaznavids in India, the careers of professional poets who lived in frontier cities like Lahore were primarily dedicated to extolling this cause, in addition to maintaining Iranian courtly values associated with the festivals of nawrūz and mihrābān. The chief vehicle of this martial and courtly poetry was the Persian victory ode, the \textit{qasida}.\textsuperscript{53}

Yet another impact was a psychological one: aware that the center of power for the Ghaznavids was elsewhere (i.e., Ghazna), and that he was excluded from it; imprisoned for eighteen years after having undergone a smear campaign by jealous rivals, Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān experienced a sharp sense of alienation that is markedly present as a theme in his poems, particularly those

\textsuperscript{52} Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self,” 107-8.

\textsuperscript{53} Sunil Sharma, \textit{Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier}, 2.

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composed in the *habsiyāt* (or prison-writing) tradition. Sharma argues, in fact, that the poet was driven by “one chief consideration: how to innovatively utilize and expand the literary tradition of Persian poetry that he inherited in order to gain access to and recognition in the courtly circles from which he was absent.”

In many ways, the image of Muslim society at the Indian frontier derived from Sharma’s discussion of Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān’s poetry – or, “Indo-Persian culture,” as it can now be called -- is primarily that of a “hard-shelled” rather than a “soft-shelled” system: as a representative of this society, the poet seemed interested less in absorbing indigenous cultural traditions than in celebrating the conquest of the peoples who practiced them; and his main preoccupation was a vain desire to gain status in a lost homeland. If certain genres or themes, such as the *qaṣidah* or alienation, receive greater emphasis in his poetry than they were in, say, the works composed by poets of Ghazna, this “creativity” served only – one might conjecture – to harden boundaries between the Indic and Islamicate societies, rather than to facilitate dialogue between them.

But such factors form only part of the picture. Other elements present in Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān’s poetry, and that of other poets of the same era, indicate that a kind of cultural exchange was, in fact, occurring. For example, the poet wrote a cycle of poems which bear close resemblance to an Indian vernacular

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genre, the bārahmāsā, which are organized according to the months of the year and describe the qualities of each season. Moreover, there are suggestions of other innovations and even of a "changing poetics" which have been attributed to the imbibing of an Indian influence. Although Sharma does not embrace this notion as fully as do other scholars (most notably De Bruijn, who posits that these innovations were to have "a lasting effect on the history of Persian poetical style"), he does agree that there is some degree of innovation to be found in Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān’s work, consisting of "a departure from established trends and the introduction of new poetic forms into the existing repertoire as a response to new situations facing the poet." It is this departure, engendered by the strange and peculiar exigencies of a frontier society, that was to reach fruition in the Delhi Sultanate, where new systems of meaning took shape not only in society but in the vast oeuvre of Amīr Khusraw.

II.4. An Advancement of Dialogue: The Delhi Sultanate

Before beginning to explore the development of a new cultural system in the Delhi Sultanate, a few caveats are necessary. First, this discussion largely concerns the impact of the frontier setting on Muslim society and its cultural production, even though the indigenous society (to make a gross

55 Sharma, Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier, 116-7.


57 Sharma, Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier, 27.
understatement) was obviously affected by the presence of Muslims and
deserves a hearing. Second, whenever one is dealing with the study of the
interactions of two societies, especially interactions that occurred over a long
stretch of time, the pitfall of essentializing is always close at hand. How can
one avoid constructing and reifying the image of two supposedly separate
cultures encountering each other at a certain point in time when in reality these
societies may have been much more heterogeneous and diverse than hitherto
acknowledged, their commonalities greater, and when there may have been vast
differences among their interactions even within short stretches of time? Just as
one observation, the primary cultures involved here – Persianate and Indic – are
deeply related and intertwined. As N.S. Gorekar writes,

The ancestors of Persians and Indians emerged from a common racial stock
and migrated from a common homeland, sharing a common linguistic and
racial past. Ancestors of Indo-Persians lived together in the Oxus Valley
with a common language which later developed in comparative isolation
into Sanskrit and Persian. The grammatical forms of the language of the Rg
Veda and the roots of verbs in the Avesta show they have a common
ancestor.\textsuperscript{58}

Although to delve into these ideas any more deeply would be skirting
another, perhaps even more giant pitfall – that of the Semitic vs. Aryan issue
that is a pernicious element of genetic racism, and is associated, somewhat
inaccurately, with the writings of French litterateur and Orientalist Joseph
Arthur de Gobineau (d. 1882) – it is possible, in fact, to identify many
linguistic and other similarities between the Persianate and Indic cultures and

\textsuperscript{58} Gorekar, \textit{Indo-Iran Relations}, 4.
to make the cozy assumption that, if Persianate culture of the twelfth, 
thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries were shorn of its Muslim veneer and 
returned to its roots of Zoroastrianism, the cultures could be seen as what they 
originally were: brothers. Such a tempting but dangerous assumption will not 
be assayed here; the point to be made is only that any conceptualizing of the 
“frontier” here as two monolithic and utterly oppositional societies knocking 
against each other must be looked at with some wariness. This issue is 
exacerbated by the relative scantiness of textual sources from this period, a 
problem well-documented by Peter Jackson in *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political 
and Military History*. It is therefore bearing these conditions in mind that this 
study is carried out.

The establishment of an independent Muslim state in India in 1206 can 
be regarded as a turning-point in the development of the nascent Indo-Persian 
culture. As during previous eras, Muslim elites, “Turks,” continued to 
transplant and employ the traditions of the homeland – whether they were 
administrative forms such as *iqṭāʿ*, *vazīr*, or *muḥtasib*, or use of Persian genres 
in courtly poetry, which was primarily written in Persian, of course. *Ghazā*, or 
warfare against the infidels, certainly continued, and the *qaṣīdah*, or victory 
ode, was a dominant genre. But a new sort of blending was nevertheless 
occurring, and even the creation of new systems of meaning that involved both 
cultures.
These changes are evident on many levels, both elite and non-elite; administrative, religious, societal, and cultural. Militarily speaking, even though the official duty of a Muslim sultan was “to plunder and extort tribute . . .” and to “eradicate infidelity and humiliate his Hindu subjects,” considerable military cooperation existed between Hindus and Muslims. During Balaban’s reign (1266-87), “Hindu infantrymen, known as pāiks, formed a royal guard,” Hindus also served in fighting against the Mongols, and Indian slave officers gained power under ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī (r. 1296-1316) As Ernst notes, from ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī’s time onwards, “the sultans realized that Indianizing their administration was a sound governing policy.”

Administratively, Hindus played important roles in the Sultanate as clerks and craftsmen. Khusraw Khān, a Hindu convert to Islam, acceded to the throne; even though it is generally assumed that he was hated by Muslims, some evidence points to the contrary. And there was some sense that Hindus

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59 For a more thorough discussion of this topic, see Mohammad Mujeeb, The Indian Muslims (1967; repr., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2003), 230-1 and passim.

60 Jackson, Delhi Sultanate, 278-9.

61 Jackson, Delhi Sultanate, 62.

62 Ernst, Eternal Garden, 40-1.

63 Ernst, Eternal Garden, 279.

64 For example, the Sufi saint Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’ may have supported his accession. See Jackson, Delhi Sultanate, 158-9.
were “merited a place in the divine dispensation when compared with other pagans” and also that they were far less offensive than the Mongols.  

Indeed, as Jackson observes, some Muslim rulers took pains to cultivate their Hindu subjects. Hindus did receive *dhimmi* status if they submitted to Islamic rule, and some reconstruction of Hindu temples was allowed.  

Muslim efforts at conciliation included the adoption by some sultāns of distinctively Indian practices – “riding elephants on ceremonial occasions, consulting astrologers and taking horoscopes in advance of important occasions like enthronement.”  

Conducting their “public lives in an ‘Indian idiom’ may have facilitated the acceptance of Muslim monarchs by Hindu chiefs.”  

Changes in cultural production mirrored those occurring on other levels. As Marshall Hodgson writes, “…by the fourteenth century already, Muslims and Hindus made music in common forms.”  

Persian, the elite language of the era, began to manifest Indic influences as Hindavī words crept in as well as indigenous images, a process abetted by the translation of Indian texts.  

The early fourteenth century saw the adaptation into Persian, under the name *Tūlī*

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65 Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, 290.

66 Some regimes even supported donations to temples. See Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, 48.

67 Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, 281.

68 Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, 281.


Nāmah (Book of the Parrot), a classic Sanskrit collection of tales told by a “loyal parrot to the unfaithful wife of his master who is away on a journey, to keep her mind occupied all night in order to save her from adultery.”\textsuperscript{71} The collection “retains the Hindu milieu and customs in some stories, while in others names and places have been Islamized and anecdotes of prophets woven in.”\textsuperscript{72}

Sufis are often identified as key actors in the advancement of dialogues between Muslims and non-Muslims and in the creation of texts that speak to both audiences and draw on influences from both cultures.\textsuperscript{73} The Chandāyan, composed in Hindavi by the Sufi Mullā Dawud in the second half of the fourteenth century, incorporates Hindu themes in a.magnavi form. The story of a romance between a married Rajput princess and a man of another caste, the Chandāyan was “recited even from the mosque pulpit in Delhi.”\textsuperscript{74}

From these and other works – especially those written by Āmr Khusraw, which will be considered shortly – it is evident that widespread

\textsuperscript{71} Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture, 219.


\textsuperscript{73} It should be noted, however, that the tolerant Sufi/intolerant religious scholar is yet another dichotomy imposed on medieval India whose validity has been debunked. See, for example, Eaton, introduction to India’s Islamic Traditions, 27.

modifications were occurring in traditional Persianate and Islamicate forms and that a sort of middle ground was, in fact, being created.\textsuperscript{75}

Allowing these accommodations to arise, it has been speculated, was a new, generous spirit of tolerance that was gradually emerging in India, a sort of non-sectarian catholicity that infused both Muslims and Hindus with a desire to look beyond their differences. According to one argument, this spirit, inscribed in Persian poetry, supported doctrinally by the Sufi concept of \textit{wahdat al-wujūd} as well as by \textit{akhlāq} texts by the likes of Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī (d. 1274),\textsuperscript{76} became even more widespread after the brutal Mongol incursions into Islamicate lands and their arrival in the Delhi Sultanate in 1241; as the argument goes, sickened by violence and bloodshed, particularly that based on creed or ethnicity, poets and mystics embraced notions of pluralism and leaned towards syncretism.\textsuperscript{77}

But this manner of looking at the issue very likely offers only a partial explanation for the phenomena arising in the Delhi Sultanate. Another approach takes similar factors into account but attributes the rise of tolerance to

\textsuperscript{75} Interestingly, a similar process seems to have been taking place in Seljuk Anatolia at around the same time, with similar ramifications for its esteem in the eyes of more traditional Islamdom. As Wittek writes, the Seljuk state was, in regard to cultural development "only a march at the end of the Moslem world. For although mosques were erected in the high style of Islam in the towns of the sultanate of Rām, and a great number of theologians expounded their learning in the medreses, though Moslem law and Moslem financial administration were established, even though Persian poetry was cultivated at the court of the sultan, and imposing caravanserais were built along the trade routes for the safety and comfort of this state the Moslem merchants who poured in from distant countries, yet this state displayed only too plainly the features of a mixed culture." Wittek, \textit{The Rise of the Ottoman Empire}, 28.

\textsuperscript{76} Akhlāq texts consist of theoretical statecraft and advice to rulers. See Alam, \textit{Languages of Political Islam}, 46-80.

pragmatic rather than idealistic impulses. Here again, a relative balance of power between systems takes center stage in the argument. Even though Muslims held power in the Delhi Sultanate, their grasp was somewhat tenuous. As Jackson notes, outside of Delhi the Sultanate consisted of a “collection of subkingdoms, some ruled by Hindu potentates who periodically rendered tribute, others by princes of the sultan’s dynasty or by Muslim amirs and muqta’s”\textsuperscript{78}, “[v]ictory did not necessarily entail the displacement of Hindu rulers.”\textsuperscript{79} Within Delhi itself, it is safe to assume that Muslims were greatly outnumbered by Hindus, with whom they lived in apparently close quarters.\textsuperscript{80} Such a discrepancy must have been the cause of a sense of insecurity among Muslims, which then led to a desire to conciliate the indigenous populations.

Internal and external threats may also have contributed to this tendency. As has been previously noted, from 1241 onwards the Sultanate was being attacked fairly regularly by Mongols; many Muslims in India had also taken refuge there from Mongols. Moreover, the Muslim elite also had to deal with rebellious members of their own creed, reinforcing a need to create a counterweight with Hindus.\textsuperscript{81} As Alam writes:

While on the one hand [early Muslim conquerors] were surrounded all around by a hostile population in India, the Mongols, on the other, had

\textsuperscript{78} Jackson, \textit{Delhi Sultanate}, 87.

\textsuperscript{79} Jackson, \textit{Delhi Sultanate}, 19.

\textsuperscript{80} Jackson, \textit{Delhi Sultanate}, 126.

\textsuperscript{81} Jackson, \textit{Delhi Sultanate}, 294.
torn apart the fabric of Muslim power in Central Asia. Many members of the ruined ruling dynasties, the noblemen, the saints and the scholars looked up to North India to settle there in peace. The rulers of newly-gained lands in India could not thus have afforded any policy or action which could reinforce the position of their foes. ... In a bid to reduce to the minimum the local Hindu hostility, they emphasised that their conflict was only with those who challenged their paramount political power and control over revenue. With the rest of the local population they had no quarrel. A liberal and tolerant attitude to the religious and social practices of the local Hindus was adopted nearly compulsively.82

Because Muslims could not dominate Hindus by force on a regular basis and, rather, needed their cooperation, a sort of "middle ground" was created that found its most potent expression in cultural production. Indeed, the situation closely resembles sixteenth-century Bengal where, as has been earlier noted, "religious and social boundaries were very much in flux and where Islam, though politically dominant, was new and demographically dwarfed by a majority of adherents to much older creeds."83

Yet the shape that this middle ground took must be carefully examined. Even as indigenous imagery was incorporated into cultural production, Muslims still were greatly concerned with their place in the larger Islamicate world and with distinguishing themselves from the "other" – in this case, Hindus. Acknowledgment of local practices and personages often went hand-in-hand with assertion of Muslim superiority. The "double-movement" spoken of by Eaton – in which traditions develop that are both embedded in India and

82 Alam, "Competition and Co-Existence," 44.

83 Eaton, Rise of Islam, 286.
maintain links with the “homeland” – is therefore very much in evidence, as are attempts to define the cultural identity of Muslims vis-à-vis non-Muslims.

For example, elitist features of Indo-Persian society, such as an ever-present desire of Muslims in India to prove they had either Iranian or Central Asian lineage as a means of elevating their standings among their peers, are widely present and find their ways into cultural production. And even as literature created by Muslims attempts, at some times, to conciliate Hindus, at other points it is brutally dismissive of them and their culture, especially in qasidahs and magnavīs concerning military campaigns and filled with the rhetoric of war. This “partial, processual” and contradictory nature is, as has been seen, highly characteristic of frontier societies. The shape it took in India has been articulated by Yohanan Friedmann, who, like others, identifies two common approaches of the Indian Muslim community: the “intense desire to preserve Islam in its pristine purity and to protect it assiduously from any encroachment of Indian customs and beliefs,” and, on the other hand,

the attempt to find a common denominator for the two civilizations, to establish a mutually acceptable modus vivendi for their respective adherents, and to argue that all religions are essentially the same though their external and accidental features are diverse.\(^{84}\)

This conciliatory trend, he concludes, “was always weaker than the orthodox one.”\(^{85}\) Still, the conciliatory trend was strong enough to allow early


\(^{85}\) Friedmann, “Islamic Thought in Relation to the Indian Context,” 51.
medieval India to produce what may be termed a new, composite culture and a literature of its own, one often characterized by a pluralistic ethos. For the Persian poetry written in India was not, as Gorekar asserts,

an offshoot of the Persian genius thrust by the caprice of historical evolution into an alien land but an original product with an individuality of its own, and, consequently, evolved against the background of the land of its birth and with the history of the age.\textsuperscript{86}

This notion is borne out by the life and works of Amīr Khusraw, to which this chapter will now, finally, turn.

\section*{II.5. Khusraw as a Locus of Cross-Cultural Influences}

Many of the frontier society characteristics of the Delhi Sultanate came to fruition in the works of Khusraw, who can be envisioned as a locus of cross-cultural influences. Not only did he trace his ancestry to both Turks and Hindus,\textsuperscript{87} but he was intimately familiar with many crucial aspects of both Islamicate and Indic life, ranging from their languages and poetry to the more abstruse elements of their cultures. Moreover, he was active in virtually every level of elite life: he served at court, was a Sufi disciple, and belonged to literary assemblages. In all of these circles, and in his wide-ranging travels, he had dealings with peoples of diverse origins and was exposed to a multiplicity

\textsuperscript{86} Gorekar, \textit{Indo-Iran Relations}, 147.

\textsuperscript{87} Khusraw’s father, a Turk, married the daughter of ʿImād al-Mulk, an important official during the reigns of several Delhi sultāns; although Muslim, ʿImād al-Mulk was likely of Indian ancestry, a reality to which Amīr Khusraw alludes at various junctures. See Mirza, \textit{Life and Works of Amīr Khusraw}, 29 n. 5. Chapter Five contains a lengthier discussion of this subject.

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of attitudes towards the same. Given the sorts of understandings about such societies that have been established earlier, it is not surprising, therefore, that his work is characterized by contradictions and competing tensions, but also by great creativity and fecundity and, at times, by signs of the emergence of a new cultural system – one that often exhibits signs of tolerance.

There are many ways of exploring the manner in which the marks of a frontier society and the concomitant rise of a new culture can be traced in Khusraw’s work, including themes, stories, genres, diction, and poetic devices; and in the following paragraphs some of these will be reviewed briefly before we enter into an amplified discussion of dichotomies, which will be the primary means of examining the issue.

The reader of Khusraw soon becomes aware of a sense of anxiety that permeates much of his writing, one that often appears to be related to the insecure position of Muslim India, and the Muslim Indian, in the wider Islamicate world. The same sort of unease that permeates the works of Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān, such disquietude reveals itself in the rhetorical bravado of the historical accounts describing victories of Muslims over Hindus, such as Khazā‘in al-Futūh. Such grand gestures can be seen as attempts to demonstrate to the rest of the Islamicate world the power and might of Delhi sultāns and their eagerness to do warfare with the infidel, On a more personal level, this

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88 The writer Ali Yavar Jung, indeed, sees the poet’s vast travels and encounters with the great diversity of religions, races, and languages in the Subcontinent as the impetus for his singularly tolerant attitude. See Jung, preface to Ansari, Life, Times and Works of Amir Khusraw Dehlavi, 3.
anxiety becomes evident in Khusraw’s own evaluations of himself as a poet in a land far off from the center of literary power. As Khaliq Ahmad Nizami writes, “In all of the important genres of poetry – ghazal, mathnawi, qasida – the success of a poet in South Asia was measured by the extent of his approximation to the standards set by the Iranian poets.”⁸⁹ Poets of India such as Khusraw closely imitated the works of the Iranian masters even while they introduced innovations; more often than not, they felt that they did not live up to the standards established by those in the “homeland.” We can therefore make sense of these insecurities and the attempts to compensate for them through our understanding of how a frontier society operates and its peripheral quality, as will be seen later.

Elsewhere, we can see these marks of a frontier society in the poet’s selections of stories and subject matter. Rather than consistently drawing on the old, familiar Persian stories (especially those found in Firdawsī’s Shāhnāmah) to furnish subject matter for romantic magnāvī, many of the stories that Khusraw chooses can be traced to Indian or Sanskrit sources or at least can be shown to be influenced by the Indian environment. As we will see in Chapter Three, in the magnāvī Hasht bihisht, for example, modeled on Niẓāmī’s Haft paykar, the poet makes important changes to a story involving a slave girl who displeases the king, Bahrām Gūr. Although in Niẓāmī’s version, in order to win back the favor of the king the slave girl trains herself to carry a full-grown ox on her shoulders up a tall

⁸⁹ Nizami, Persian Influence on the Development of Literary and Sufi Traditions, 24.
flight of steps, in Khusraw’s account she learns to charm animals to sleep with
music. The emphasis on magic bears a clear Indian stamp, for sorcery is a
hallmark of Indian traditions. Such an example indicates a sense of adaptability on
the poet’s part and a willingness to acknowledge and even make use of the
environment around him. As Mushir ul-Haque writes,

The Persian poetry which was composed in India before Ameer
Khusrau rejected completely Indian life and landscape as valid poetical
material. It occupied itself with Transoxonian and Persian flowers—the
tulip and the roses—instead of Indian champa and lotus, ignoring Indian
birds and beasts, the aroma of Indian bazars and the fragrance of
Indian spices. It depended entirely on borrowing from a life and a
scene of which most Persian poets of India had no personal
knowledge. It was really Khusrau who created a sense of Indianness
among the poets and made them appreciate things Indian.90

Other innovations are those of genre and diction. This includes the creation
of what can be referred to as the “topical magnavi.” As Sunil Sharma has noted,
prior to Khusraw historical and romantic magnavis generally drew on old,
established stories for their subject matter; he himself employed these stories at
times as well as invented fables, as has been seen above. But the poet was unusual
in that he also used “recent historical events and his own contemporaries” as his
subjects.91 Many of his poems, therefore, deal with the “power struggles and
conquests of the various Khalji and Tughlaq sultans of medieval Delhi.”92 For


91 Sunil Sharma, “Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse,”
Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East XXII, no. 1 (2003): 112.


70
example, in Duval Râni Khîzr Khân, he writes of a real – and ultimately tragic – romance between a Muslim prince and Hindu princess.

An additional point may be made with regard to diction. Even though Khusraw generally excluded words from Hindavi (or other indigenous languages) in his Persian writings, and even though he claimed that the Persian of India was purer than that of Iran, at times such “mixings” did occur; and some scholars argue that his work represents the creation – or development – of a new dialect or diction.93 At other times he apparently composed entirely in Hindavi, which in itself is representative of the sort of dual loyalties and fluidity characteristic of frontier societies.

But it is in Khusraw’s treatment of hierarchical dichotomies that the influence of the frontier is most vividly and graphically realized; and through this lens, moreover, the aspects discussed above snap into sharp focus. That is, as has been previously noted, a pattern in Khusraw’s writing can be identified of dealing with such dichotomies in a manner that both preserves and displaces them. Let us take once again as an example the dyadic construct of Turk/Hindu, which will be discussed at far greater length in Chapter Five. These terms have a long history in Persian literature, where they are heavily loaded rhetorical devices: “Turk” usually denotes someone who is beautiful, fair of skin, and, more often than not, a desirable male slave who is both an expert horseman and the

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heartless object of the poet’s desire; “Hindu,” on the other hand, is used to denote blackness, abject slavery, and, often, ugliness (although at times it can stand for a different sort of beauty than that of the Turk.)

But one can expect words used in a certain way in the “homeland” to take on at least slightly different meanings in the “new land,” especially a country that, quite literally, was comprised of Turks and Hindus. In some ways, the original meanings of these terms became exaggerated in India, and the stereotypes more deeply entrenched. For example, when Khusraw writes in Nuh sipihr, “In the world, this custom has long held sway:/the Hindu has always been the Turk’s prey,” he is reinforcing and even developing the earlier stereotypes, and lending new strength and credence to the impression of the Turk’s superiority over the Hindu, as well as embellishing the original portrait with fresh details.

But elsewhere, the poet strives to dismantle the stereotypes and even to erase the boundaries between them. Such is the case when he writes that, at the death of a beloved prince, “Gone is both the blackness from the Hindu and the whiteness from the Turk/For both Turk and Hindu now wear deep blue [the color of mourning].” Efforts to upset the status quo are evident in sentiments found in lines of certain ghazals such as, “They see my Hindu kill in the style of Turks/they

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95 NS, 89.

96 WH, 167.

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see from her, my breast become idol and idol-house.” 97 Elsewhere, he even exalts Hindus above Turks. As the values of the terms and their relationship to one another shift, one can see the dislodging of the old hierarchy, and even the emergence of new systems of meaning and new modes of understanding “the other” that are markedly distinct from the old ones, and clearly possess a more pluralistic ethos than previous systems.

The relationship to deconstruction theory is clear. We have noted the manner in which Derrida discusses the existence of a violent hierarchy in which one of the “two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment.” 98 This inversion, “which brings low what was high,” is followed by the “irruptive emergence of a new ‘concept,’ a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime.” 99 Above all, in Khusraw’s treatment of various dichotomies we witness the emergence of such a new concept, one that can be associated with the development of Indo-Persian culture and of a more inclusive idiom.

But even as his work possesses this deconstructive quality, it also reveals the influences of a frontier society according to the presumptions discussed earlier. As we have seen, such societies can encourage both preservation and innovation,  

97 NS, 210. Many more examples of this sort will be cited in Chapter Five.

98 Derrida, Positions, 42.

99 Derrida, Positions, 42.
both a hardening of loyalties and “identities” and a loosening of them, and, occasionally, the emergence of a new culture and a new identity. It is not difficult to imagine that living in a world so acutely composed of hierarchies – but in which, for various reasons, they were constantly being brought into question – might have shaped Khusraw’s attitudes toward dyadic constructs, and, inevitably, his cultural production. While unable completely to relinquish the “old,” he nevertheless edged steadily toward the “new.”

Another example will serve to clarify this point. As mentioned earlier, a favorite poetic device of Khusraw is that of ihām, a double entendre or deliberate ambiguity that endows a poem with multiple meanings. As Alam writes, to early Persian writers such as ‘Arūzī Samarqandī, Rashīd al-Dīn Vâtâvī and Shams al-Dīn Qais al-Rāzī, it “meant the creation of doubt by the employment of a word with different meanings, one direct and immediate (qarīb), the other remote and strange (gharīb).” 100 Faruqi defines the term in this manner:

The book definition of ihām is that the poet uses a word that has two meanings, one of which is remoter, less used, than the other, and the remoter one is the intended meaning. The mind of the listener/reader naturally associates the word in question with the less remote, more immediate meaning, and is thus put into deception; or the listener doubts if he heard the verse correctly. 101

100 Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 122.

101 Faruqi, Early Urdu Literary Culture, 168-9. It should be noted here that discerning multiple interpretations of a text has a strong precedent in Qur’ānic studies, especially among those, such as the Shi’ī imāms, who were believed to have been endowed with special abilities to perceive the inner meanings of the divine words. One hadith of the Prophet reads, “The Quran has been revealed upon seven dialects. For every verse therein, there is an inner and outer meaning …”
Khusraw’s affection for this device illustrates his treatment of and attitude toward the dyadic constructs that we have been discussing. His use of a term that has two accepted meanings, and his “preference” for the remoter (or “weaker”) meaning acts as an inversion of the hierarchy of the meanings, confounding the reader’s expectations. To give only one, fairly crude, example of something that will be discussed at far greater length in the following chapter, Khusraw may refer to the “lights” (referring to stars) decorating the evening heavens; but the word for lights, sanā‘ī, is also the name of a famous Persian poet; such an ambiguity allows him to comment on a literary figure at the same time that he is supposedly delivering an ornate description of a night sky. Other usages of īhām are cross-cultural, for sometimes the term in question can be understood one way in Arabic, another way in Persian; and elsewhere the crossover exists between Hindavī and Persian.

In many ways, Khusraw’s usage of the device stands as a perfect microcosm of the sorts of processes we have been discussing and their significance. In the preference for the īhām’s “remoter” meaning, we can see the manner in which the poet inverts the prevailing hierarchies and gives greater weight to that which might ordinarily be ignored. But the poetic act of īhām consists not only of inversion: it also creates a new relationship between, in some cases, previously estranged terms. For example, a pun that plays on a term that has one meaning in Persian and another in Hindavī unites those cultures in a new and unexpected manner. And since all of the meanings produced by the īhām are
nominally correct, Khusraw’s use of the device promotes a proliferation of meanings and discourages rigid, literal interpretations of a text or attempts to delimit its meanings.\footnote{Indeed, the possibilities of polysemy, in the hands of Khusraw, seem endless. As will be seen in Chapter Three, the poet includes an example of an \textit{ıhām} in the \textit{Dībāchah} that, as he writes, generates no fewer than \textit{seven} meanings, each equally correct.}

In this sense \textit{ıhām} can be seen as the deliberate creation of a sort of open space for multiple interpretations across religious, ethnic, and linguistic lines, and even for facilitating a sort of dialogue between those interpretations. To return to a discussion of frontier studies, one can clearly see the device’s relationship to the society of the Delhi Sultanate with its enormous diversity and jostling influences. Surely under the pressure of such a society traditional Persian poetry must splinter into multiple fragments, each yielding its own meaning, each possessing a separate “identity” – forming a crystal that reflects the multifaceted structure of the society around it, but at the same time maintains an internal unity. One thinks again of Rūmī, who also lived in a frontier society, and whose work also reflects the presence of great diversity and an attempt to reconcile or address it. For him, creation is a multichrome and multiform manifestation of the single resplendent whiteness that is God. The creation is the explosion of this primal colorlessness into form and aspect, thereby producing the illusion of individuation, separation, distinction and opposition.\footnote{Lewis, \textit{Rumi: Past and Present, East and West}, 414.}

With Amīr Khusraw’s \textit{ıhām}, one might argue, the opposite circumstances obtain: one sees the appearance of unity (in form) but the reality of individuation
(in meaning). Still, the dialectic is similar enough to deserve mention. One can also speculate that these poetic devices (and the themes that accompany them) are partly derived from Hindu culture, where Sanskrit texts abound in puns and riddles, and where the notion that truth finds expression in many forms is contained in works as early as the Upanishads.\textsuperscript{104} In any event, Khusraw’s use of īhām opens up many subtle questions that defy easy answers or categorizations; at the very least, in the words of Derrida, they seem capable of an “irreducible and generative multiplicity.”\textsuperscript{105}

\textbf{II.6. Conclusion}

As has been demonstrated in this overview, the frontier society in which he lived encouraged the emergence of a more pluralistic idiom in Khusraw’s work, and setting the author’s writing within such a context helps to explain its peculiar qualities. The following chapters will examine a select number of Khusraw’s texts and will more closely analyze the characteristics enumerated in the paragraphs above. We will begin with the celebrated Dībāchah of Ghurrat al-kamāl, completed in 1293/4. In this text, Khusraw presents his own vision of himself and his place in the world, as well as his view of Islamicate society as a whole; as such, it reveals many of the tensions and tendencies raised in these pages.

\textsuperscript{104} See, for example, S. Radhakrishnan,\textit{ The Hindu View of Life} (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 27.

\textsuperscript{105} Derrida,\textit{ Positions}, 45.
CHAPTER III

AN “INDIAN TURK”: THE DĪBĀCHAH-‘I DĪVĀN-I
GHURRAT AL-KAMĀL

III.1. Introduction

“I am an Indian Turk …” Amīr Khusraw proclaims midway through his renowned Dībāchah-‘i dīvān-i ghurrat al-kamāl (The Preface to the Book of Poems of the Prime of Perfection). “Ask of me in Hindavi, that I may say something sweet.” The pronouncement may seem an unexpected one for a poet who prided himself on his writings in Persian, not Hindavi, a dialect prevalent in northern India; and who was highly invested in Islamicate civilization, with its general focus on Mecca and Medina and the Arabian culture emanating from those cities, as well as on Shīrāz, Khurāsān, Bukhārā, and Samarqand as centers of Persianate culture. But though Khusraw greatly esteemed the traditional coinage of Muslim culture, he was more than willing to mint new currency. Throughout the Dībāchah, as will be seen, the poet first acknowledges and then casts off preconceived notions about Islamicate society and its cultural production, often by inverting entrenched hierarchies. Thus the poet ranks poetry superior to religious science, or ‘ilm, Persian poetry superior to Arabic, and – perhaps most

\footnote{D, 63.}
controversially – Indian poets and scholars superior to all others. His embracing of one of the languages of India, Hindavī, and his self-identification as an “Indian Turk” therefore stand as a culmination of a series of dislodgings that ultimately results in the acknowledgement (or even creation) of a new identity – and a new culture. Bearing in mind the influences of a frontier society upon cultural production as set forth in the previous chapter, the following pages will trace these literary acts and their significance, particularly the manner in which they set the stage for the emergence of a more pluralistic rhetoric.

III.2. The Dībāchah as Autobiography

Completed in 1293/4 when Khusraw was 40 years old, the Dībāchah comprises more than 30 folios in the British Museum manuscript and precedes Ghurrat al-kamāl, his third collection of poems, although it is now often published and considered independently. This is not surprising, for it stands on its own as a unique and, in many ways, extraordinary document; and, as such, has garnered a fair amount of critical attention. Part personal history, part literary criticism, part apologia, part rant, it exudes a remarkable freedom and playfulness and is characterized by a dense and highly ornate rhetorical style that both irritates and delights. Breaking at frequent intervals into verse, and quoting liberally from the

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2 Mirza, Life and Works of Amir Khusrau, 159.

3 At least three published editions exist, although unfortunately all of them are filled with errors.

4 See, for example, Faruqi, Early Urdu Literary Culture and History, 81-105.
Qur’ān, it demonstrates the sort of “linguistic brilliance” so prized from early days in Islamicate literature, in which compositions were often decorated with “rhyming prose and resonant periods,” and “illustrated with references to obscure points of learning.”  

Although it contains sections on many different subjects, and could be classified in many different ways, I would like to argue that the Dībāchah fits most comfortably into the genre of the Islamicate autobiography as it developed from the tarjamaḥ unit of biographical dictionaries; and that, in fact, important insights can be gained from viewing it in this light, particularly with regard to the discussion of hierarchies that will be taken up later in this chapter. It is therefore largely within the context of this genre that I will consider it. Specifically, the hierarchizing and categorizing tendencies that often characterize biographical dictionaries and the autobiographies that emerged from them are also to be found in the Dībāchah; and, in fact, locating the document within the context of these works gives us access to some of the basic building blocks that composed Amīr Khusraw’s frame of mind and informed his work. As such, a short discussion of Islamicate autobiography will follow.

Autobiography has typically been regarded as an extremely rare genre in Arabic, and, by extension, most Islamicate literature. But recent efforts by scholars have effectively exploded this long-held notion. In *Interpreting the Self:

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**Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition**, the authors demonstrate that a vast number of pre-modern autobiographies written in Arabic (as well as Persian and Turkish) do exist, although for a variety of reasons they have attracted less attention from scholars than other genres. These autobiographies, the authors convincingly argue, bear closest relation not to the novel, as does the typical "Western" autobiography, but rather to the Arabic historical tradition, and, in particular, to the biographical dictionaries so prevalent in Islamicate civilization. In fact, they trace the Arabic autobiography to something known as the *tarjama*, loosely defined as "biographical notice" – that is, the individual units that comprise the aforementioned dictionaries.\(^7\)

Typically, the *tarjama* consisted of an account of the subject's life followed by a selection of his or her "best poetry, letters, and bon mots; the subject's life story and literary production were thus often represented side by side and traveled through time together as the *tarjama* was quoted, expanded, or summarized by later biographers and compilers."\(^8\) In this manner, the *tarjama*

represents a carefully categorized frame for depicting the most crucial information about a person in an intellectual context that focused on a person's value as a transmitter and contributor to knowledge and to a shared academic and spiritual heritage. The categories in which this

\(^7\) Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self*, 42-3. The authors explain that although in modern Arabic the term *tarjama* usually connotes translation or interpretation, in medieval Arabic it was also employed in the sense of giving a title or heading to a work or a portion thereof, which may have led to its connotation as a piece of writing with various titled categories. To create a *tarjama* of oneself could therefore mean both to "compile a titled work/entry on oneself" as well as to "translate/interpret oneself." See *Interpreting the Self*, 3.

\(^8\) Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self*, 43.
information was presented existed both as constituent parts of the *tarjama* itself and, when expanded, as independent literary genres that could circulate on their own.⁹

Autobiography evolved in a rather organic way from this form. For various reasons, noteworthy persons sometimes wrote their own *tarjamahs*, known as “*tarjamat al-nafs,*” or “*self-tarjama.*” These notices were either included in their own biographical dictionaries or in compendiums edited by others. Like other sorts of *tarjamahs*, which developed into independent biographies, the autobiographical ones eventually “provided a major impetus for the development of independent autobiographies and began to take on distinguishing characteristics of their own.”¹⁰

These forms began to take shape as early as the ninth century and already by the tenth and early eleventh century, short autobiographies by the philosophers and physicians al-Rāzi, Ibn al-Haytham, Ibn Sinā, and Ibn Ridwān were circulating in well-known anthologies and would have been familiar to many scholars over a large geographic expanse.¹¹

An autobiographical flowering took place in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, with works produced by the likes of Ibn Buluggīn (d. after 1094) and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111); and another in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.¹² Meanwhile, an important biographical compilation of Persian poets, *Lubāb al-albāb* (The Cream of the Crop), was completed in India by Muḥammad ‘Awfī (d.

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circa 1232-3) in about 1221; and ‘Aṭṭār’s Taḏkirāt al-awliyā’ (The Memorial of the Saints), a compilation of the lives of Sufis, was completed probably in the early thirteenth century.

It is possible to identify the entire Ghurrat al-kamāl as a response to or imitation of the tarjaman form, with which Khusraw must have been familiar via at least some of the above-mentioned texts. The Dilbāchah takes the shape of the life history and the remainder – that is, the collection of poetry itself – is, of course, the poet’s work. To elaborate: a great deal (though by no means all) of the Dilbāchah deals with Amīr Khusraw’s life and works. The names of various sections attest to the personal nature of their contents: “My Inventions,” “The Arrangements of (My) Three Dīvāns,” “My Past, My Association with Kings and Sultāns, and My Acquiring of Fame.” Other sections, particularly those dealing with such subjects as Arabic versus Persian poetry, may not be so explicitly autobiographical; but even in these instances Khusraw constantly intrudes his own opinion and “self” into the discussions. In this sense, the Dilbāchah is similar to other Islamicate autobiographies, which tend to treat a wide range of topics.\(^{13}\)

There are, of course, myriad other examples of the interpolation of the autobiographical, the opinion, and the personal into a writer’s works in Persian and other Islamicate literatures, examples which are not necessarily tarjaman-related, and any of which could have (and very likely did) influence Amīr Khusraw. Firdawsī (d. circa 1020) included snippets of his personal life, most memorably an

\[^{13}\text{Reynolds, Interpreting the Self, 2.}\]
account of the death of his son, in the *Shāhnāmah* (The Book of Kings).  

Nizāmī (d. circa 1209) begins many of his *masnavīs*, or long rhyming poems, with descriptions of how the work was written and sections which include information on his own life, though these are by no means comprehensive. Poets constantly introduce themselves into their *ghazals*, most notably with the *takhallus*, or name of the author in the penultimate or last line, though, as Paul Losensky warns us, care must be taken in conflating the “I” of the poem with the “I” of the author. Kay Kāvus, the author of the *Qābūs nāmah* (Book of Qābūs), a mirror for princes written in 1082-83, delivers a fair amount of information about himself in the context of dispensing advice to his son. So does Nāşir Khusraw (d. between 1072-78) in his *Safar nāmah* (Book of Travels), a text which gives an account of the author’s seven-year journey in Islamicate lands after having had a significant dream which led to his conversion to Ismāʿīlism. Both the *Bustān* (Garden) and the *Gulistān* (Rose Garden) of Saʿdī (d. circa 1292) are purportedly autobiographical, and constitute perhaps the closest analogues to the *Dībāchah* (there are direct references in the *Dībāchah* to both works); but they do not endeavor to tell a portion of the author’s life story in any comprehensive way;

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15. *Haft paykar*, for example, contains an address to his son which yields several valuable autobiographical nuggets.

16. See Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 56-7. This issue is, of course, a problem with any work, including one as purportedly autobiographical as the *Dībāchah*.


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rather, they merely delineate the circumstances that prompted the poet to compose the works and sprinkle in a few supposedly authentic stories of his childhood, education, and travels. Finally, Khusraw himself, like Nizāmī, included autobiographical material in the beginning of his masnavīs, especially dedications.

But in none of these do we witness such a strong link to the tarjamah form as in the Dībāchah. In fact, Amīr Khusraw’s own description of how the Dībāchah came to be written accords with the sense that the poetry would have been incomplete without the accompaniment of a description of the poet’s life, the circumstances that led him to write the collection of poetry, and a description of the dīvān itself. He relates that he was composing poetry at home one night when his close friend, the scribe ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī Shāh, entered and began entreat him to versify, compile and publish the compositions he had already written: “Do not lose what you have [already] found,” the friend warned:

... water is not always in the great river of life. Who knows for how many mountain diggers this cruel age has first caused milk to flow in streams instead of water; but after that has spilled blood atop the streams of milk? You have several Bārbaḏī melodies, each of which is a ganj-i bād āvard (wind-brought treasure) and a shādurvān-i murvārid (pearled curtain).

Before this Khusraw-killing royal arch begins the Shīrūyah ambush, take up the Bahram Chūbhīn-like pen, get to work and seat the virgin Shīrīn on the black Shabāḏīz and bring it out running in the square of eloquence, so that it will arrive at the goal of its hopes.

Poem:

Perhaps something will remain of the name of this wretched Khusraw

18 The two were on such close terms that Khusraw refers to him in this passage and elsewhere as “my brother,” leading some biographers to confuse the scribe with Khusraw’s actual brother. For more on their friendship, see Mirza, Life and Works of Amīr Khusraw, 141.
Just as the name of Nizāmī from *Khusraw and Shīrīn*.  

The friend continued his counsel:

First, write out good copies of the rough drafts that are with me. After that, add to them the previous compositions that you have forgotten about. Then unite them into a coherent whole. And after that, since you decorated the faces of *Tuhfat al-sighar* (The Gift of Youth) and *Wast al-hayāt* (The Middle of Life) with the beauties of a preface, adorn the excellent beauty of the *Ghurrat* with a perfect preface …

The poet proceeded to take his friend’s advice, compiling all of the poems and writing up the preface in the space of a mere fortnight:

Day and night I was marking the lines of my calendar with the blood of my heart until, after two weeks, I raised up that 14-day-old moon, which they call *ghurrat al-jamāl*, with perfect adornment.

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19 *D*, 44-5. This entire passage plays on the mythical stories of Khusraw Parvīz, the Sassanian king who was immortalized by both Firdawsī and Nizāmī, and whose similarity in name to Amīr Khusraw’s provides a fertile source of wordplay for the poet. Among other references, the passage alludes to Farhād, the sculptor who was in love with Shīrīn, Khusraw Parvīz’s (eventual) wife, and who, at her request, undertook the seemingly impossible task of cutting through a mountain to create a canal through which milk could flow to her castle, but who later killed himself after receiving an erroneous report of her death. Bārbad was a famous musician at the court of Khusraw Parvīz, and both *ganj-i bād āvard* and *shādūrvān-i mūrvārīd* are names of melodies attributed to him. *Ganj-i bād āvard* is also the name of Khusraw Parvīz’s treasures. The royal arch mentioned is that of the Sassanids at Ctesiphon in Baghdad; it can also refer to the heavens. Shīrīyāh was the treacherous son who killed his father, Khusraw Parvīz, and Bahram Chūbīn was the leader of a rebellion against the king that emerged from Ctesiphon. Shabdīz is the name of Shīrīn’s fleet horse. All of these references would have been readily recognizable to the educated reader of Amīr Khusraw’s time.

20 *D*, 45. *Tuhfat al-sighar* and *Wast al-hayāt* are names of two other collections of poems compiled before *Ghurrat al-kamāl*.

21 *D*, 46. As usual, Khusraw is indulging in extensive wordplay here. The term “ghurrat” can mean new moon as well as the choice or best part of anything, or ornaments. The phrase therefore means “the new moon of beauty” or “the choice part of beauty.” The phrase is also a play on the name of the book of poems, *Ghurrat al-kamāl*. Elsewhere, Khusraw writes elsewhere that a *dīvān*, to be complete, must consist of a prose preface along with various types of poems. See *Mirza, Life and Works of Amir Khusraw*, 141 n. 3.
The notion exists, therefore, that the divān would not have been complete without the "adornment" of a preface. It is possible to identify here the influence of the unit of the tarjamah, in which, as we have learned, the "subject’s life story and literary production were ... often represented side by side and traveled through time together ..."\(^{22}\)

Merely providing a sense of completeness would not have been Amīr Khusraw’s only motive for writing the Dībāchah. Often, autobiographies written both in the Middle East and in the West were (and are) composed to set the record straight and to secure one’s rightful place in history.\(^{23}\) Clearly, such reasoning played a part in Amīr Khusraw’s thinking. Not only does he write wishfully, as has been previously mentioned, “Perhaps something will remain of the name of this wretched Khusraw/Just as the name of Nizāmī from Khusraw and Shīrīn,” but in many instances throughout the Dībāchah, after mentioning a particularly witty invention or line of poetry, the poet voices anxiety that someone may steal his work or that others may fail to acknowledge it as his. For example, after making note of an exceptionally complex and clever riddle, he writes, “may God protect

\(^{22}\) Reynolds, Interpreting the Self, 43.

\(^{23}\) The notion of self-definition is also implicit in autobiography. As Robert C. Elliott writes, “The autobiographer may not express the historical truth as exactly as the pure historian might wish, but he may in compensation create another kind of truth of transcendent validity. He may, indeed, in the act of writing, create as well as discover a self.” Elliott, The Literary Persona (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 71. One can find ample evidence of such a process in the Dībāchah.
this riddle from the trickery of the blind hearted unjust ones. Amen, O Lord of the two worlds."

In a similar vein, the Dībāchah serves to provide the reader with a means of better understanding and appreciating the poetry contained within the dīvān; for in the preface

... I explained a little of the quality of intelligence that has gone into the writing of this book, which [previously] was hidden and concealed. Even though the elders have said, The best speech is that which is sparse and leads to meaning and does not weary [others], and too much speech is like the wood gatherer of the night; still, that which was scratching in my heart, [even] if it was a date, and [even] if a thorn, I could not keep it inside...

Later, he adds that in the preface he describes all of his inventions, just as he did in his other prefaces. In this respect, and in many other ways that will be discussed later, the Dībāchah fulfills one of the important roles of the tarjamit al-nafs form: that is, the establishment of the author’s status within a larger tradition. As the authors of Interpreting the Self affirm, the autobiography did not represent a unique moment for self-representation but rather a frame or summation for revealing a certain portrait of the whole, a context within which one’s work would then be placed and evaluated. In this framework it was most important to portray one’s place within the larger transmission of knowledge from respected sources of the past, through the present, into the future. ... 

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24 D, 54.

25 D, 47. The expression “the wood gatherer of the night,” hātib al-layl, refers to someone who acts blindly or heedlessly and without regard for himself or others.

26 Reynolds, Interpreting the Self, 247.
This desire to “portray one’s place” expresses itself in the intense
categorizing and even ranking that often characterizes Islamicate autobiographies,
the biographical dictionaries from which they originated, and the Dībāchah. As
Interpreting the Self says of an earlier autobiography, it
rejects the concept of ordering a life into a single narrative, a life ‘story’ in
the literal sense. Rather, it derives from an intellectual methodology in
which classification, categorization, and description were the ultimate tools
for the acquisition and retention of knowledge.27

The categorizing impulses of Islamicate civilization have been traced to the
Prophet’s injunction to “place each man in his proper rank.”28 But rather than
merely being employed as tools to acquire and retain knowledge, as the authors of
Interpreting the Self suggest, these mechanisms were also used as a form of
achieving legitimacy by those who wielded them. By creating their own vision of
the order of society and the personages therein, the authors of biographical
dictionaries attempted to gain power and legitimacy.29 This notion is borne out by
the fact that the fadā‘il, or “merits” genre of Islamicate literature, in which authors
enumerate the excellences of “things, individuals, groups, places, regions and such

27 Reynolds, Interpreting the Self, 5.

28 See Tarif Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: A Preliminary Assessment,”
Muslim World 63 (1973): 57. The hadith may be found in Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Naysābūrī,

29 Wadād al-Qādī, “Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the
Muslim Community,” publication pending, 9-11.
for the purpose of a laudatio,” is often closely associated with biographical
dictionaries.\textsuperscript{30}

Similarly, the organization of the \textit{Dibāchah} reflects the influence of the
“intellectual techniques of categorization and enumeration” and the poet’s attempt
to co-opt them for his own benefit.\textsuperscript{31} Not only does Khusraw tend to express his
thoughts in terms of lists – he speaks of the “four conditions of the master poet,”
the “three types of apprentices (students),” his own twelve inventions – but the
entire \textit{Dibāchah} betrays an acute consciousness of the hierarchies prevalent in the
Islamicate world and of his own desire to stake a claim within that world by
utilizing the very tools championed by those whose superiority he is challenging. It
is this enterprise that will be explored in the following pages.

\textbf{III.3. The Structure Of The Hierarchy}

In order to understand this undertaking, let us look a bit at the structure of
the Islamicate world in which Amīr Khusraw lived. Beginning in the early period
of Islam, as has often been related, elite intellectual society began to be divided
into various groups, all of which jostled – rhetorically, at least – for power and
ascendancy. Two important groups were those of the poets and the ‘ulamā’, and
the fact that they were often at odds is reflected in much of the literature of
Khusraw’s day and prior to it.

\footnote{\textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, s.v. “faḍīla.” See also Zayde Antrim, “Ibn ‘Asakir’s

\footnote{Reynolds, \textit{Interpreting the Self}, 247.}
This split took several different forms, including that of courtly versus religious society and ecstatic Sufi versus religious society, both of which will be dealt with briefly here. To begin with the first division, during the High Caliphal Period (692-945), what has been characterized as a rupture occurred between the world of the court, represented by adībs, or literary men, and that of religion, represented by ‘ulamā’. One explanation for this phenomenon suggests that as the Islamic empire grew and absorbed formerly Sassanian lands and peoples along with their imperial traditions, some of the more religiously-minded members of society took offense at the court’s “worldly culture of the polite classes” and withdrew from it. They saw themselves as “heirs of the Prophet” and as “the special custodians of the ideals of Islam, if no longer of its power.”

During the ‘Abbāsid period (750-945), the rift was exacerbated. Some scholars have attributed the greater division to the mihnah, or Inquisition, saying that it resulted in “the practical independence of the scholars from the state.” In any event, what Hodgson calls two “comprehensive cultural patterns” developed side by side, each giving the other only marginal relevance.

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33 Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 1:247.

34 Al-Qāḍī, “Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the Muslim Community,” 8.

*shari‘ah* law and *shari‘ah*-minded disciplines, the ‘ulamā’ were developing “a programme of Islamic culture which allowed the ‘Abbāsī caliphate at best a secondary role.”³⁶ With its insistence on the central position of *shari‘ah* law in society, this program regarded court culture as “essentially illegitimate.”³⁷ On the other hand, the members of the society surrounding the caliphal court acknowledged the ideals of the ‘ulamā’ scholars but did not take them too seriously, and they regarded the ideals of the Faylasūfs [exponents of philosophy based on the Greek tradition] as an esoteric specialty for a few. Their culture can be summed up under the heading *adab*, the pattern of cultivated living which grew up around the court and in the provincial centres and was imitated yet more widely.³⁸

This culture placed emphasis on eloquence, polite manners, and learning in a wide variety of disciplines – not just *shari‘ah*. Although in the beginning Arabic dominated literary discourse, by the Early Middle Period (945–circa 1250) it had been overtaken by Persian. The language discrepancy set court society at further odds with the ‘ulamā’, who conducted their business largely in Arabic, which, as the language of the Qur’ān, was naturally considered far more important than

³⁸ Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 1:445. Despite the divisions that did exist, the breach between the world of *adab* and that of religion cannot be seen as unbridgeable; as Sa’d Amir Arjomand notes, “In his *Maفارu{at al-Ulam* (Keys to the Sciences), written in the latter part of the tenth/fourth century, Muhammad b. Ahmad Kātib Khwārazmī included the craft of the secretaries, alongside jurisprudence (*fiqh*), among the six ‘sciences of the Shari‘at,’ in contrast to the nine sciences emanating from the Greeks and other nations. ... The two professions were not completely separated by the end of the pre-Mongol era: Nur al-Din Munshi, the secretary to the last Khwārazmshāh and the compiler of *Vasā’il al-rasā’il*, was a cleric, as had been the famous Qur’ān commentator, Zamakhshari, from whom Rashid al-Din Vatvāt had hoped to learn the craft of the secretary.” Sa’d Amir Arjomand, “Pre-Mongol Inshā” and the Principles of Statecraft with Special Reference to Mu‘yyad Baghdādi’s al-Tavassul ila’l-tarassul” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, Washington, D.C., November 2005), 9.
Persian. As one Arabist wrote in a classical response to those who challenged Arabic's supremacy: "Love of Allah and his messengers necessitates love of the Arabic language; he whom Allah guides to Islam believes that Muhammad is the best prophet and Arabic the best language; to learn Arabic is a religious duty." ³⁹

Interestingly, even though the 'ulamā' did not hold temporal power, they became the "de facto leaders of the [Muslim] community," the community’s "authentic non-political leaders." ⁴⁰ In his seminal work Islam: The View from the Edge, Richard Bulliet writes extensively about the central position that the 'ulamā' took in society though temporal authority resided elsewhere:

The main factor defining [the local Muslim community] by the end of the tenth century was scholarship, and principally, but not exclusively, scholarship in hadith. ... As a group, the ulama represent religious authority based on learning. Some were also authoritative as pietists, or ascetics, or Sufis. Some inherited a measure of religious authority by virtue of lineal descent from Mohammad’s family ... or, less importantly, from one of his closest companions. The edges of Islam bubbled with competing claims to religious authority during the first three centuries ... Yet it is hardly surprising that knowledge eventually won out ... ⁴¹

Crossover between court and religious society could and did exist, and there are examples of scholars who wrote poetry and partook in court life, and of men of the court who were steeped in shari‘ah. By the Early Middle Period especially, more dialogue developed between the traditions and the boundaries


⁴⁰ Al-Qāḍī, "Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the Muslim Community," 9.

separating them grew blurred. With the advent of madrasah systems throughout
the Islamicate world, for example, young men began to study both *adab* and *ilm*. Religious scholars began to serve at court in such regions as Mamluk Egypt
(thirteenth to sixteenth centuries), and their works were characterized by an
emphasis on *adab* as well as by their concern with religious learning.

But to some degree the essential divisions between religious scholars and
poets remained, or at least the perceptions of them, and influenced how people
regarded themselves and their positions in society, as well as the steps they were
willing to take to secure those positions for posterity. For example, ‘ulamā’, often
by drawing on quotes from the Qur’an that seemingly condemned poets and
poetry, denigrated those practicing that craft. An example of this attitude
emerges in an anecdote about al-Ḥākim al-Nayshābūrī, the renowned tenth century
*hadith* scholar, and his encounter with the famous litterateur Badr al-Zamān al-
Hamadhānī (d. 1008) upon his arrival in Nayshābūr to a crowd of admirers:

> When al-Hamadhānī awed onlookers by memorizing a hundred lines of
> poetry after one hearing and then belittled the memorization of ḥadīths, al-
> Ḥākim decided the time had come to put this bon vivant litterateur in his
> place. He approached the poet and asked him to memorize a *juz*’ of ḥadīths.
> When he returned a week later to test al-Hamadhānī, he could not
> remember the specifics of the *isnāds*.

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43 The following Qur’ānic verses are often cited in this matter: “Shall I inform you, (O people!), on whom it is that the evil ones descend? They descend on every lying, wicked person, (Into whose ears) they pour hearsay vanities, and most of them are liars. And the Poets – it is those straying in Evil, who follow them: Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley? And that they say what they practice not? – ” Qur’ān, 26:221-6. This criticism must be qualified by the fact that Muḥammad himself employed poets to propagandize for him.
Al-Ḥākim scolded him for mocking something more difficult to memorize than poetry and told him, “Know your place (i’raf nafsak).”

The division between Sufi poets and ‘ulamā’ is another dichotomy deserving of mention (although, as with the courtreligious society split, its boundaries are all too easily exaggerated; many religious scholars considered themselves Sufis and vice versa). Mystical poets such as Rūmī ridiculed or otherwise disparaged ‘ulamā’ in a variety of ways. In Rūmī’s eyes, intellectuals and pious men who followed religious law to the letter were not true devotees if they were not in love with God; and the benefits accrued by love could never be enjoyed by those who adhered only to the intellectual path. “No man of intellect will ever know the head’s ecstasy of the drunkard; no man of reason will ever know the heart’s rapture of the reason-lost,” he wrote.

Or elsewhere:

Love resides
not in learning
not in knowledge
not in pages and pamphlets
Wherever the debates of men may lead
that is not the lovers’ path

Or elsewhere:

Love is but blessing and fortune

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46 Franklin Lewis, Rumi: Past and Present, East and West, 24.
nothing but guidance and a dilated heart
Bu Hanifa never studied love
Shâfe‘i never related anything about it
The law of permissible and impermissible
pertains from now until the day of death
The knowledge of lovers is eternal.  

Even though ‘ulamâ sometimes belittled Persian poetry, they tended to take
a far more sympathetic view toward poetry written in Arabic, and, particularly,
pre-Islamic poetry, which began to play an important role in literary society.
Because it was regarded as the “only contemporary and therefore fully reliable
source for linguistic parallels to Qur‘ân and hadith,” pre-Islamic poetry was highly
esteemed. The ‘ulamâ’ saw its ascendancy as an opportunity to “inject their
viewpoint into the heart of the adab culture – and, incidentally to confirm the
breach with the Sasanian [i.e., pre-Islamic Persian] past.”

This ascendancy was challenged even at an early stage, especially by
proponents of the shu‘ûbîyah movement. Although it began in the eighth and ninth
centuries as a discussion of “how far the non-Arab Muslims’ pre-Islamic past
should be allowed to influence the development of Islam,” over the next 200 years

47 Lewis, Rumi: Past and Present, East and West, 274. The Sufi ‘ulamâ split was
specifically addressed by Niẓâm al-Dîn Awliyâ‘, the revered Sufi saint who was Amîr Khusraw’s
mentor. As recorded by the poet Amîr Hasan ‘Ala’ Siţî Diylaţî, on one occasion the saint “began
to speak about love and reason. ‘They are mutually exclusive,’ he declared. ‘The ‘ulama are the
partisans of reason, dervishes the partisans of love. The human intellect of the ‘ulama dominates
their sense of divine love, while attention to divine love among dervishes exceeds their use of the
intellect. Prophets are equally strong in love and reason.’” The saint then quoted verses urging
listeners to block the mind with cotton, for it has no ear for love. On a later date, the saint voiced
similar thoughts when he declared that a certain abstruse matter could not be resolved with reason
or inquiry; both he and Amîr Hasan quoted the Rûmî verse regarding Abû Hanîfah and Shâfî‘î’s
neglect of love. See FF, 233, 290.

48 Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 1:461.

49 Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 1:461.
the *shuʿūbiyah* campaign developed into a literary and linguistic movement that essentially questioned the degree to which Persian and other non-Arab Muslims’ native languages could play a part in Islamicate civilization, asking, “Was Islam to remain a monolingual religion and civilization or could other languages become Muslim tongues of equal rank?”

To some degree, these debates and hierarchies received expression in – and can be gleaned from – the aforementioned biographical dictionaries. Recognizing that histories were being written by court chroniclers and that they themselves received short shrift in them, ‘ulamā’ began writing these works in the ninth century, thus making of themselves, “consciously or unconsciously, the effective historians of the Muslim community, relegating the chroniclers largely to the position of the historians of the Islamic state.”

Two of the very earliest dictionaries, those of Ibn Saʿd (d. circa 845) and Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī (d. circa 846), are revealing. The first, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* (The Great Book of Classes), deals with biographies of the religious scholars who lived in the first two centuries of Islam. The second, *Ṭabaqāt fuhūl al-shuʿarāʾ* (The Classes of Master Poets), treats pre-Islamic and Islamic poets, all of whom wrote in Arabic.

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51 Al-Qāḍī, “Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the Muslim Community,” 10.

As Wadād al-Qāḍī remarks, it is meaningful that “the major figures in this genre [i.e., poetry] get their biographies recorded at the same time as the religious scholars do, right at the outset of the self-definition of Islamic civilization.”\(^{53}\) She continues:

Does one sense a dichotomy here? Only in appearance, perhaps, but not in reality. After all, our first comprehensive biographer of the poets chose the *fuḥūl* from those poets. The meaning of the word “*fuḥūl*” is ambiguous, but it must include at least two things: the artistic and the linguistic abilities of the poets concerned. The artistic component keeps us in the realm of poetry proper, but the linguistic component takes us a little out of it, into an area which brings us back to the religious sphere: Arabic is, after all, the language of the Qur’an. *This way, poetry becomes a supporting factor for the definition of a civilization which conceived of itself as primarily religious.*\(^{54}\)

The fact that dictionaries on *ḥadīth* transmitters came to far outnumber those on poets indicates that despite poetry’s significance, it held a decidedly less prestigious position than religious learning.\(^{55}\) As al-Qāḍī writes, the genre of biographical dictionaries emerged when Islamicate civilization was “starting to have a definite identity, one which was primarily religious, with a linguistic (Arabic-Qur’ānic) and poetic touch to it.”\(^{56}\)

Later biographical dictionaries reflect the changing makeup of Islamicate civilization and the emergence of other elements as important factors. The


\(^{55}\) Al-Qāḍī, “Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the Muslim Community,” 15.

aforementioned Lubāb al-albāb of ‘Awfī consists of biographies and descriptions of Persian poets. It commences with the poems of kings and viziers, but then adheres to a geographical structure, moving from region to region in a survey that includes Khurāsān, Balkh, Marv, Nayshābūr, Herat, and Iraq. The compiler then moves chronologically, looking at, in turn, the poets of Tāhirid, Šaffārid, Sāmānīd, Sabuktagin (Ghaznavid), and various Seljukid dynasties. It is significant for this study’s purposes that even though ‘Awfī, who was born in Bukhārā, composed the Lubāb al-albāb in India, the poets featured in it are almost all from the heartland of Persian poetry – a strong indication of the dominance of those poets over Indian ones.\(^\text{57}\)

III.4. Amīr Khusraw’s Response To The Hierarchies

Amīr Khusraw’s intellectual world must have been composed of these hierarchies; and in the Dībāchah, he takes up many of the debates that had already been underway for centuries and sets new ones into motion. For example, he spends nearly the first quarter of the Dībāchah defending the importance of sukhan, which can be defined as eloquent speech. Noting that the power of speech

\(^{57}\) A section toward the end does list poets from Lahore and includes Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān. Some may say that ‘Awfī is generous toward the Indian poets writing in Persian, and he does speak of many of them admiringly, but the fact remains that they are clearly on the periphery of the defined world of Persian poetry.
is that which separates humans from animals, he calls it the "choicest bounty of God."\(^{58}\)

The erudite ones know that [literary] style provides the bridges for passage over all of the seas of science ('ilm). For if the brides of the sciences were not dressed in eloquent speech, they could never appear with glory from the private chamber of the mind, and would remain in the bridal chamber, their faces veiled.\(^{59}\)

Although the discussion initially deals with prose as well as poetry, at one juncture it assumes the traditional shape of the debate of poets versus 'ulamā', or poetry versus 'ilm. Like 'Awfī, who in Lubāb al-albāb equates poetry to 'ilm, or knowledge, and the poet to the 'ālim, or religious scholar,\(^{60}\) Khusrav draws a similar analogy, and strives to show that poets are the equals of (if not superior to) 'ulamā'. Quoting a hadīth, "Indeed, there is some wisdom in poetry" (\textit{inna min al-shi'r la-hikmat}'),\(^{61}\) he writes, "The essence of poetry has perfect acquaintance with the essence of 'ilm in word and sense ... thus in this manner, the poet is an

\(^{58}\) \textit{D}, 5. The importance of eloquent speech is, of course, a favorite theme among Persian poets both before and after Amīr Khusrav. The poet Nizāmī, in particular, emphasized its power, and like Khusrav (who was undoubtedly influenced by the master poet in this matter as in so many others) likened his own poetry to the Qur'ān "as a source of clear moral guidance." See Kamran Talatof and Jerome W. Clinton, eds., \textit{The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric} (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 1-2, 59-60.

\(^{59}\) \textit{D}, 8. This statement is more clearly understood when one considers that the motif of the bride is sometimes employed to denote the inner meaning of a book or poem, which is not easily disclosed or unveiled. See Annemarie Schimmel, \textit{My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam} (New York: Continuum, 1997), 101. Cf. Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 1126), who writes, "... it is our duty to give away the virgins of meaning to the men of words in the private chambers of language ..." \textit{Savāniḥ} (Incidents), ed. Hellmut Ritter (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1368/[1989]), 2.

\(^{60}\) 'Awfī, \textit{Lubāb al-albāb}, 1:15.

\(^{61}\) The original hadīth, as found in Sahīḥ al-Bukhārī: Kitāb al-adab, bāb "al-shi'r" (90), reads slightly differently: \textit{inna min al-shi'r hikmat}, but the meaning is nearly identical.
‘ālim [i.e., scholar].” He quotes a supposed hadīth of the Prophet that calls poetry “the root” of which wisdom is “the branch” and goes on to affirm that

in this manner, poetry is superior to wisdom and wisdom is inferior to poetry, and one can call the poet a hakīm [wise man], but one cannot call the hakīm a poet. And [the Prophet] says that there is some magic in poetry, not that there is some poetry in magic. Thus one can call the poet a magician, but one cannot account the magician a poet.  

In enumerating poetry’s virtues over those of ‘ilm, he notes that divine law is too complex for most people to grasp. But poetry, because it can be grasped, remembered, and repeated more easily, and is constantly on the tongues of the people, noble and common alike, is a more efficacious tool for conveying complex concepts:

> The fact that the name of poetry prevails over the name of science I will offer proofs of that, if you so order. Whatever you repeat, people will be the masters of that And that which is an original composition, the teacher is God the most holy. Thus why, over knowledge that you learned from a human being Does not that knowledge prevail which came from God? …
> Whoever possesses not a productive nature in every art there is, Is a stump, not a plant from which grow flowers and herbs. Thus in this way, a poet who composed one special poem Is better than a crooked-natured one whose mind is endless knowledge…

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62 D, 18.

63 D, 18-9. The hadīth that mentions magic as well as wisdom is not in al-Bukhārī’s collection, though it does occur in that of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. See Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*, 93. The Prophet is described here as the nightingale of “it did not turn aside,” a Qur’ānic reference to Mohammad’s ability to see God’s signs; see the Qur’ān 53:17.

64 D, 17-8. It is necessary to note that, true to his paradoxical nature, Khusraw equivocates on poetry’s superiority to ‘ilm. At times he suggests that pure religious law supersedes poetry and that the composing of poetry by various ‘ulama’ was their lowest rank of expression. But a note of high sarcasm is paramount in such comments. See D, 16-7.
Poetry possesses certain powers that prose – which is the “product of every lip and mouth, and the effluvium of both noble and common man” – lacks.\(^{65}\) Without the ornamentation of poetry, the bride of prose “cannot enter into any hidden place”\(^{66}\); it cannot cure the grief of the heartsick, for example:

For whomever sorrow places a lock on his unfulfilled heart
There is no key to his heart except the tongue of the poet.\(^{67}\)

Khusraw also deals extensively with the accusations hurled against poetry from ‘ulamā’ who denigrate it based on certain statements in the Qur’ān. For example, the phrase “We have not instructed the (Prophet) in Poetry,” exists only to defend Muḥammad against the accusations that in “composing” the Qur’ān, he was writing fraudulent poetry; it was necessary in order to distinguish Muḥammad from the lying poets around him.\(^{68}\) But, Khusraw writes, “in poetry itself, there is no fault or fraud, because if, in the purity of those meters,\(^{69}\) there were some doubt, the rains of mercy of “We sent thee not, but as a mercy …”\(^{70}\) would not be streaming down into the ears of the soul of the world …”\(^{71}\)

\(^{65}\) D, 15.

\(^{66}\) D, 15.

\(^{67}\) D, 15.

\(^{68}\) Qur’ān 36: 69.

\(^{69}\) The word utilized for meters can also mean “seas.”

\(^{70}\) Qur’ān 21:107. The full verse reads, “We sent thee not, but as a mercy to all creatures.”

\(^{71}\) D, 19. Khusraw also cites as proof the fact that great companions of the Prophet such as ‘Alī recited poetry; see D, 22-3. This line of argument is one that is also followed by Amīr Khusraw’s mentor, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’, who, as recorded by Amīr Ḥasan, defends poetry on one occasion, saying that the hadīth of the Prophet against it are directed at “the influence of poets
In fact, poetry itself exists in the Qur’ān. For example, the lines: “By the (angels) who tear out (the souls of the wicked) with violence; By those who gently draw out (the souls of the blessed); And by those who glide along (on errands of mercy), Then press forward as in a race”; and “By the (Winds) Sent Forth one after another (to man’s profit); Which then blow violently in tempestuous Gusts, And scatter (things) far and wide; Then separate them, one from another,” are themselves, Khusraw writes, very much verses.\(^{72}\) (In the original Arabic, they possess a great deal of alliteration and rhythm.) He continues:

Even though they do not call this poetry, one can still call it verse; and the elders choose to speak of the Qur’ān as verse, not as [mere] words, according to this verse, “... nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is inscribed in a Record Clear (to those who can read).”\(^{72}\) Since all of the sciences that are in the wet and the dry are in the sea of the Qur’ān, whoever denies that the science of poetry is in the praiseworthy glorious Qur’ān is as one who has denied the words of the Qur’ān. God protect us from that.\(^{74}\)

Rather than contenting himself with such assertions, Khusraw takes the far more radical step of equating poets with prophets and poetry with divine revelation. Quoting an aphorism that asserts that if revelation came after the

\[\text{whose verse is marked by jest, obscenity, or satire. There were noble companions of the Prophet who also recited poetry. Consider the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali – may God be pleased with him – and others like him.” See } FF, \text{ 359.}\]


\(^{73}\) Qur’ān 6:59. The full verse reads: “With Him are the keys of the Unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He. He knoweth whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a Record Clear (to those who can read).”

\(^{74}\) \textit{D}, 20.
prophets, it would come to the poets and the eloquent ones,\textsuperscript{75} he in numerous instances draws this parallel, even visualizing himself at one point as having been inspired by the sacred breath of Jesus, and alluding to Jesus’s words as quoted in the Qur’an: “I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation ...”\textsuperscript{76}

As has been previously discussed, such arguments were not entirely new for Persian poets. But they indicate to some extent the great boldness and daring (not to mention blasphemy, for some readers) of Khusrav as well as the high esteem in which he held his own work.\textsuperscript{77} Still, the poet continually retreats from his stance or otherwise fails to maintain it consistently. After expending several pages in this vein, for example, Khusrav concludes that he wishes to speak more of the virtues of the poets, but because of the length to which the discussion has reached, he is obliged to terminate it here. In summing up, he writes, what virtue can be higher than this, that poetry is used to witness or testify to the [power and glory] of the Qur’an? This statement reestablishes the hierarchy of the written word with the Qur’an at the apex.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} D, 19. A much-quoted verse of the poet Nizāmī takes a less drastic stance, claiming only that poets are second in rank after the prophets: \textit{Pish u pasī sākht saf-i kibrīyā/Pas shu’arā āmad u pīsh, anbiyā’}.

\textsuperscript{76} D, 62. The Qur’ānic reference is 19:30. The poet makes a similar analogy in \textit{Ijūz-i Khusrawī} (The Wonders of Khusrav), a compilation completed in 1319/20; in it, he fancifully compares himself to the Virgin Mary upon whom the spirit of God has descended, so that he becomes “pregnant” with Jesus or holy words. See Amīr Khusrav Dihlavī, \textit{Ijūz-i Khusrawī} (Lucknow: Naval Kishor, 1876), \textit{risālah-‘i} 4, 17-8 (hereafter cited in text as \textit{IK}).

\textsuperscript{77} The Qur’an itself, of course, takes great pains to distinguish between poets and prophets, asserting that a mere poet could never have devised a work of the magnitude and prophetic power of the Qur’an.

\textsuperscript{78} D, 24. The poet also concludes the entire \textit{Dībāchah} with profuse apologies for his impudence and the “lies” within his work and other professions of great humility.
III.5. The Poet’s Defense Of Persian

Another hierarchy that Khusraw appears determined to overturn is that of the supposed superiority of Arabic over Persian as a language of poetry. The *shu’ūbiyah* controversy has already been touched on in these pages. To a great extent, Khusraw continues this debate, though not exactly with its traditional contours; and, as will be seen, extends it into other areas.

Although, as he writes, Arabic poetry outstrips Persian in that it testifies to the Qur’ān and its style of expression [*‘ibārat*] is superior, both of these qualities are related to *sharī‘ah*, not poetry, the latter of which is judged not according to religious significance but rather according to “themes and subtleties and innovations and meters [*ma‘ānī va dagāyiq va maşnū‘āt va awzān*].”

Indeed, in three aspects Persian poetry is superior to Arabic, for Persian operates with several encumbrances that Arabic lacks. First, the meters in Persian are far stricter than those in Arabic. Second, Arabic vocabulary is much vaster than that of Persian, supplying “1,000 words for every meaning”; and the playfulness and innovation afforded to poets merely by virtue of tweaking a conjugation is enormous. Third, unlike Arabic poetry, verses written in Persian commonly make use of the *radīf*.80 “Thus, from perfect justice, one must see clearly how narrow

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80 A *radīf* is a word or short phrase repeated in all lines of a poem following the rhyming word, known as the *qāfiyah*.
and difficult is the path of invention for the Persians; and for the Arabs, how easy and simple,” he writes. Nonetheless, “their most developed theme cannot prevail over our themes.”

He continues: “And if an ignorant person doubts this, I am not speaking to the ignorant people. Rather, I have this claim with those who deal with ideas [ma’ni].” If someone from the path of shari’ah defends Arabic poetry because it bears witness to the Qur’ān, and because the revelation of the Qur’ān is in that language, the poet has no quarrel with him; all talk of Persian in that arena is trifling. But if someone speaks from the point of view of poetry, the picture changes, for then

one must bring into mind the themes of Rażī and the utterances of Kamāl and the brilliances of Anvarī; and must reproach the denier [lit., he who breaks open heads], [so that] his [own] head will break open; and yet he will approve honor for the words of Ḥasan and the ideas of Aḥsan. [Rather], he must study the senses and words of Sayyid Ḥasan and Niẓāmī and Zāhīr, so that he becomes informed and just.

With proper study, he argues, the equitable reader will come to the conclusion that, thanks to its beauty of meter, elegance of meaning, and radīf, there is no limit to the beauty of Persian poetry.

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81 D, 25.
82 D, 26. The paragraph mentions several famous Persian poets, including Rażī al-Dīn Nīshābūrī (d. circa 1201/2); Kamāl al-Dīn (d. 1237/8); Anvarī (d. circa 1187), the didacticist and panegyrist at the court of the Seljuqs; Niẓāmī (d. circa 1209); and Zāhīr Fāryābī (d. 1201/2).
83 D, 26.
III.6. The Poet's Defense Of Indians

In one sense, the argument takes the shape of the linguistic *shuʿūbīyah* debate which seeks legitimacy for Persian in Islamicate civilization if not as an equal *religious* language, at least as an equal *cultural* one. In another sense the argument deals more with the question of peoples and the supposed superiority of Arabs over others, including Persians. Here again Khusraw takes the somewhat controversial step of declaring Persians superior, at least in poetic talent: if the best Arab poet travels to Fārs or Khurāsān, he cannot speak Persian correctly, much less compose poetry that possesses the subtle meanings and meters of the Persians. “No one has spoken of any Arab poet who put together two words in Persian without tying his tongue into a knot,” he writes.\(^4\) But an extremely perceptive and intelligent Persian poet can successfully compose in Arabic even in the Persian cities, and if he goes to Arabia, “the eloquent ones of Arabia themselves flee in embarrassment.”\(^5\)

Subsequently, Khusraw breaks even further with tradition in arguing that the talented men of India, especially Delhi, surpass all others in the world, since Arabs, Turks, Khurāsānīs and others who come to the Muslim cities of India and live there for their entire lives never grasp the native parlances:

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\(^4\) *D.* 27. The shape of the arguments here and elsewhere bear close similarity to the *fadāʿīl* genre mentioned earlier in this chapter.

\(^5\) *D.* 27. Khusraw specifically refers to the scholar Zamakhshārī (d. 1143/1144), a Persian *hadīth, tafsīr* and grammar scholar who spent some time in the environs of Mecca.
He speaks in the manner of his own country; that is, if he is an Arab, he is master over no more than Arabic words; and does not rightly claim another language; and that same broken speech of his bears witness to the brokenness of his tongue.\(^\text{86}\)

But the Indian writer who grew up in the cities of India, especially in Delhi, can carry on conversations in all tongues, and can also master poetry and prose in the manner of the inhabitants of every country he visits.\(^\text{87}\) Subsequently, Khusraw pushes the discussion to the next level in claiming that the Indian poets writing in Arabic, like the Persians writing in Arabic, surpass the Arab ones. “And this has become clear and proven through experience, because several of our people, without having traveled to Arabia, acquired an eloquence in the Arabic language that [even] the great Arabs did not achieve.”\(^\text{88}\) India’s poets writing in Arabic and Persian outnumber those of other regions; they are “thus in Arabic poetry that if Mutanabbi were alive, he would make the sword of the mihrāb of their tongues his ‘place of worship’ instead of Sayf al-Dawlah, and [Anvari] Abīvardī would tear up his book just like the petals of a rose.”\(^\text{89}\)

This exaggerated defense of Indian scholars and poets bears marked similarities to the shuʿūbiyah dispute, as has been previously noted; but it propels

\(^{86}\) D, 27.

\(^{87}\) D, 28.

\(^{88}\) D, 28.

\(^{89}\) D, 61. The famous Arab poet al-Mutanabbi (d. 955) was for nine years the official poet of the amīr Sayf al-Dawla at the Hamdānīd court in Aleppo. Anvari Abīvardī (d. circa 1187) was one of the greatest qaṣīdah writers in Persian history. Khusraw’s statement plays on his name, a portion of which means “roselike.” Khusraw mentions two poets who excel in Arabic: Shihāb al-Millāt wa al-Dīn and Kabīr al-Dīn Muhammad ‘Irāqī.
this debate to a new level and adds a fresh element to it. To defend Persians against Arabs was, by this period, not so startling; to defend Indians against them was far more controversial. India was typically viewed in a dim light by Muslims from the more central lands of Islam. Although al-Bīrūnī wrote sensitive appraisals of the country and its inhabitants, in general the perception was negative. India was strongly associated with idolatry for medieval Muslims; according to one Islamic tradition, “India was the first country in which idolatry was practiced and the ancient Arabian idols were of Indian origin.”90 In poetry, as has already been noted in earlier chapters and will be further discussed in Chapter Five, Hindus were portrayed as emblems of abjectness and slavery; elsewhere, they were infidels fit only to be plundered and overthrown; and, if they mounted resistance, to be dispatched to hell.91 India itself was seen as an abysmal place, one in which it was hardly worth spending time.92

90 Friedmann, “Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions,” 214.

91 See Al, 1:xxi; also Annemarie Schimmel, “Turk and Hindu: A Poetical Image and its Application to Historical Fact,” 109 n. 13, 11 n. 23 and passim.

92 This view was to continue at least through the age of Bābur (d. 1530), the Timurid from Central Asia who eventually made Hindustān his kingdom and established the Mughal empire there. He writes: “The cities and provinces of Hindustan are all unpleasant. All cities, all locales are alike. The gardens have no walls, and most places are flat as boards.” Elsewhere, he adds famously: “Hindustan is a place of little charm. There is no beauty in its people, no graceful social intercourse, no poetic talent or understanding, no etiquette, nobility, or manliness. The arts and crafts have no harmony or symmetry. There are no good horses, meat, grapes, melons, or other fruit. There is no ice, cold water, good food or bread in the markets. There are no baths and no madrasas. There are no candles, torches, or candlesticks.” He counters these complaints by praising such attributes as India’s size, the great amount of gold and silver to be found there, the freshness of the air during the rains, and the vast number and variety of workmen. But the impression is largely a negative one, and may be said to correspond to prevailing views among Persians, Central Asians, and others in the more central lands of Islam. See Bābur, Emperor of Hindustan (1483-1530 A.D.), The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 335, 352, 353-4.
A strong reaction to these types of views thus leads Khusraw to vigorously support both the country and its inhabitants, which, as we have seen, at first takes the shape of supporting Indians’ skill in composing Persian and, especially, Arabic poetry. This recognition of Indians and of the land in which he lives constitutes an important step in the evolution of Indo-Persian culture, for, in addition to expanding the purview of adab, it gives special credence to Muslims (and, possibly, others) living in India and begins to acknowledge and even to shape a distinct cultural identity for them. But, as has already been hinted at, an even more controversial notion emerges, one comparable to the earlier attempts of poets to legitimize Persian as a language of Islam with equal standing to Arabic — and that is the legitimation of Hindavi. This constitutes the most far-reaching innovation so far.

The manner in which this validating occurs seems almost accidental, and one suspects that Khusraw never intended to make such a deliberate statement, but conceived of it in a flash of poetic inspiration. It occurs within his discussion of his skill in Arabic, a subject that appears to generate a good deal of anxiety in the writer. At first, the poet confesses to a less than perfect command of the language, avowing that if there are mistakes in his Arabic poetry because of a failure of education, he has more than compensated for them in Persian:

> Even if I am not an Arabic horseman, I possess excellence in Persian
> Rûm and Khurâsân are still beautiful even if they did not go to Arabia ... ⁹³

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⁹³ D, 60.
Clever people, he concludes, should take what is clear or pure in his works and leave behind that which is muddy or dull.\textsuperscript{94}

But such humility is followed by characteristic pride, for he angrily castigates those who criticize his writing in Arabic (and who even question his ability in Persian) as “inarticulate asses” who are “caught in the calamity of stupidity”; the only answer for them is “barley and water.” Yet despite his desire to hold still, he cannot restrain himself: “I wanted to make silence my motto since the response to simpletons is silence. But the insipidity of their speech did not allow me to leave them unskinned.”\textsuperscript{95}

The answer, he writes, is that

I, along with the Persian speakers of Shīrāz, and Gavāshīr,\textsuperscript{96} and the sweet-speaking men of Samarqand and Qandahār have no bitterness; but, even if a true word is bitter one must say it, because the truth is bitter.\textsuperscript{97} In all of Hindustān, the greatest city is Delhi and its minaret is the pillar of the sky and the inscription of that minaret: “Iram, with lofty pillars, The like of which were not produced in (all) the land …”\textsuperscript{98}

The poet then launches into the discussion already referred to in which he lauds India’s vastness and the eminence of Indians writing Arabic poetry. Later,

\textsuperscript{94} D, 60.

\textsuperscript{95} D, 60.

\textsuperscript{96} The ancient name of Kirmān.

\textsuperscript{97} The phrase appears in Arabic and reads, “\textit{al-haq murr}.”

\textsuperscript{98} D, 60. The Qur’ānic reference is 89:7-8. The poet uses the verse (originally aimed at Iram in southern Arabia, the city of the people of ‘Ād, who were severely chastised by God after they transgressed against them) to emphasize the greatness of the architecture of Delhi, and, by extension, the city and its residents themselves.
however, he returns to himself, concluding that he, too, can “cook Arabic poetry in the pot of passion in the Balkhī [i.e., Persian-like] manner.” His fluency is such that “with a tiny movement it can overflow many dry Arab river valleys”; in fact, if given the right opportunity, he could have composed an “eternal volume” in Arabic; but merely that he has written five or six elementary and Persian-like verses is enough. He quotes the verses before lapsing once again into humility:

The truth is that I do not know how to do this well. But because I do not know it well, I have made these few verses that were inscribed my excuse. Perhaps the wise men will excuse me, and will forgive my ignorance, and whatever they would blame me of, will blame themselves of.

It is then that he shifts gears dramatically, writing:

I am an Indian Turk, I will answer you in Hindavī
I have no Egyptian sugar with which to speak of Arabia

and:

Since I am the parrot of India, if you ask correctly
Ask of me in Hindavī, that I may say something sweet.

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99 D, 62.


101 D, 63.

102 D, 63. The reference to Egyptian sugar cited in the first verse may allude to the preface of Sa’di’s Bustān, in which the poet explains the circumstances for writing the work: he had traveled greatly but brought back nothing in the form of souvenirs for his friends in Shirāz. Normally, he reflects, one brings sugar from Egypt; but he, though he has no sugar, possesses words that are even sweeter: “Bih dil guftam, az misr qand āvarand, bar-i dustān armaghāni barand/Marā gur tuhi bud az ān qand dast, sukhanhā-yi shīrīntar az qand hast…” Sa’di, preface to Bustān, ed. Nūr Allāh Irānparast (Tehran: Dānish, 1352 [1973]), page 11, lines 8-9.
These last two pronouncements constitute, as has already been mentioned, the most radical statements made by Khusraw thus far, for not only does the poet appear to renounce Arabic and his competence in that language, but Persian as well; and to embrace Hindavī in their stead. The innovative quality of these statements and the new standards for legitimacy that they suggest contrast sharply with the poet’s previous attempts to conform to and excel in old forms of linguistic authority. In a sense, they point to the acknowledgement of the creation of a new, complex composite identity, that of the Indian Turk who speaks in Hindavī.

The question of Muslims’ use of Hindavī (also known as Hindi) in India during the Delhi Sultanate period and after is a highly significant one, for it graphically represents the manner in which Indic and Islamicate traditions came together, and in which old forms found new expression in a fresh language. During the era of Amīr Khusraw, Hindavī was already popular in Sufi qawwālī readings, where it was seen as particularly appropriate for the expression of feelings of mystical love.\(^\text{103}\) It was, as well, a means of bridging the divide between Hindus and Muslims:

Sufi poetry written in Hindi added a new dimension to Indian mysticism and a new lyrical and colourful way by which to achieve an ecstatic state. The subtle refinement of Hindi music, combined with Persian conventions and artistry, gave fresh meaning and depth to Indian sufi thought ... Hindi offered to Sufis at that time a spiritual satisfaction they could then share with Hindu bhaktas, whose spirits equally thirsted for the higher reaches of Reality.\(^\text{104}\)

\(^{103}\) *Qawwālī* is the ecstatic performance of Sufi devotional lyrics. For more on Amīr Khusraw’s contributions to it, see Sharma, *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sufis and Sultans*, 72-9.

\(^{104}\) Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 1:399.
The use of vernacular languages was to attain great popularity among Muslim writers. Beginning in at least the fourteenth century with the composition of the Chandāyan of Mulla Dāwūd of Dalmau, Sufi poets wrote magnavīs in Hindi and other indigenous languages, in part because “such themes offered them wide opportunities to express their thoughts on mysticism. Indian imagery and symbolism were not only new but were also artistic."  

In later centuries, themes revolving around the worship of the Hindu god Vishnu became incorporated in some Sufi musical rituals where Hindavi was spoken, for the Sufis “regarded them as welcome additions to their devotional poetry to induce ecstasy.”

Khusraw is often seen as a forerunner of the Muslim literary tradition in Hindavi; and, consequently, as a figure of great influence for the Urdu tradition, of which Hindavi is a precursor. Indeed, his contribution to a “vernacular register of poetry in Hindavi,” along with his musical compositions, stand as his greatest claims to fame in present-day South Asia. As a child, Khusraw was brought up in a home where Hindavi was spoken; “from the very beginning [he] was alive to the social, cultural and linguistic traditions of his country.”

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105 Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, 1:363-4.
106 Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, 1:359.
107 Sharma, Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sufis and Sultans, 81. For more on Hindavi as a precursor of present-day Urdu, see Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture, 244.
apparently did not collect his poems in Hindavī and continued to compose mostly in Persian, and to portray himself as a Persian poet, he occasionally maintains that Hindavī is a warmer and more congenial language than Persian, say, for the expression of love and divine realities. For example, in the Nuh sipîhr (Nine Skies), as will be seen in Chapter Five, he writes at length of the languages of India, averring that “I cannot make my heart happy/from Persian or Turkish or Arabic.”

Amîr Khusraw’s statements regarding Hindavī in the Dībāchah and elsewhere, therefore, mark the poet’s willingness – even momentarily – to break publicly with the past and to throw off the ordinary trappings of prestige of Islamicate literary society, adopting instead the mores of the environment that surrounds him. In this sense it is the very embodiment of the creative implications of the frontier society that were discussed in Chapter Two, suggesting as it does a new system of meaning that draws on multiple cultures. And it clearly demonstrates the inversive movement discussed earlier, in which the more neglected or downtrodden element of a hierarchy is suddenly elevated to status equal or superior to the normally more privileged element, for Khusraw both claims respect for Hindavī and insists on its rightful inclusion in the Islamicate sphere. In this manner, he establishes an equipoise between the languages that signals a move toward a more diverse, and inclusive version of Islam.

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110 See D, 63. His Hindavī verses were given only to a few friends.

111 NS, 179.
III.7. A Closer Look at the Dībāchah

At this stage, it may be helpful to look closely at passages from the
Dībāchah and to examine the manner in which the writer sets these processes into
motion, both thematically and stylistically. An excellent example can be found in
Amīr Khusraw’s description of how he came to write the Dībāchah. It begins
thusly:

One night, at the time of evening, when the blue hunchback [sky] had
created an assembly from 100,000 lights and brilliances and lamps, and
had poured down its blacknesses before them from bags of the highest
level of heaven, and was setting out in proper order the gems of minute
points, star by star, in the expansive sea upon the paper of the evening;
Gemini had been adorned with two faces, and the Constellation of the Bear
had dispersed [itself], and the Pleiades had made an assembly; and the sun,
which is the goldsmith … was sunk down on the bed of earth… ; and
Jupiter, which is the fortunate one [who enjoys] the favorable influence of
the stars, had fallen with a happy scattering; and Cancer, which has perfect
acquaintance with the seas, had lifted up Procyon and was causing Sirius to
arrive up to the ears of the bright hearted ones; and the moon, which is both
beauty and perfection, had given rise to delicate and elevated and new
fancies …

All of the sky-dwellers had gathered
An assemblage was created of the enlightened ones.112

The passage is extraordinary for several reasons, not the least of which
throughout almost all of it – in a show-stopping demonstration of his verbal
virtuosity – Khusraw speaks on two levels at once in a way that can never be
reproduced in translation. On the one hand, as it has been translated above, the

112 *D*, 42-3. I am extremely grateful to Professor Heshmat Moayyad for his generous help
in elucidating this challenging passage.

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passage is a highly stylized, ornamental description of night and the night sky, one that resembles the formal, beautiful conjurings of nature of Sa`dī and Nizāmī. On the other, it can be read as an account of a gathering of literary luminaries in which the main action is that of composition.

To give a brief illustration:

1. “the blue hunchback had created an assembly from 100,000 lights and brilliances and lamps” – the words used for lights, brilliances, and lamps – i.e., sanā‘ī, ziyā‘ī, and sirājī – can also be read as the names of various Persian poets.\(^{113}\)

2. “had poured down its blacknesses before them” – the word for blacknesses, savādāt, can also refer to a poet’s rough drafts or initial copies of a manuscript.

3. “the highest level of heaven” – the word used to indicate this level, atlas, can also denote satin.

4. “setting out … the gems” – here Khusraw uses the phrase san‘at-i taršī, the craft of gem-setting, which is also a rhetorical device in which an author uses words in two sentences or hemistiches that are the same in their final rhyming letter and their meter.

5. “expansive sea” – the word for sea, bahr, can also be used to denote poetic meters.

\(^{113}\) Sanā‘ī is the best known of these three; he is especially celebrated for his innovations in the writing of ghazals. Ziyā‘ī may refer to Ziyā‘ī Faryūmdī, a poet who lived before the thirteenth century. Sarājī may be Sarājī Khurāsānī, a poet who lived in the twelfth century and is mentioned in ‘Awfī’s Lubāb al-albāb; or Sarājī Sījāzī.
6. "the paper of the evening" – the word for evening, shām, can also mean Syria or Damascus; thus, the phrase could be read as "Syrian or Damascene paper."

Up until this point, therefore, the passage may be read as a description of Khusraw – disguised as “the blue hunchback” – spilling out his rough drafts from a bag of satin before an assembly of great poets; and of inscribing brilliant and rhetorically complex poems with expansive meters upon fine Syrian paper. The passage continues in the same vein, with other rhetorical devices mentioned as well as the names of other poets, including Mas‘ūd Sa‘d [Salmān], which means, literally, “the favorable influence of the stars.” Also mentioned are the Arab poets, for the word for Procyon, one of the dogstars, sha‘rā-yi shāmī, can also be read as shu‘arā’-yi shāmī, the poets of Syria; likewise, the word for Sirius can be read as the poets of Yemen. The conclusion, an account of the moon and the new, delicate, and tender thoughts it is producing, refers perhaps to the poet himself, or to his new collection of poems.

In both sense and style the passage stands as a microcosm of the processes mentioned earlier. Khusraw depicts Islamicate literary culture as a constellation of peoples of different lands, and gives Indian poets such as himself a place squarely in the middle of it. He therefore balances and equalizes the various hierarchies that had previously held sway. Stylistically speaking, the extended use of īhām, or double-entendre, as already described in Chapter Two, accomplishes many of the
same goals. Confounding the reader’s expectations, the writer encourages the choice of the “farther” meaning while not completely abandoning the “nearer” one. This act generates a multiplicity of meanings and establishes new relationships between terms.

Usage of  ihtām  appears extensively elsewhere in the work, most notably in the opening pages, where Khusraw first sets off the chain of literary allusions which are witnessed in the above passage, and which serve to emphasize the importance of eloquent writing, a central theme throughout the entire work. In his praise of his mentor, the shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’, he writes the following:

After professing God’s unity and the laudable qualities of Muhammad, it is incumbent upon this servant to bless the perfect and perfected shaykh, the leader of connecting and causing to connect, the title of the seal of divine favor, and the theme of the epistle of the endless mysteries.  

Praise God, [he is] the shaykh who is [not only] a sign from the glorious Qur’ān, but [also] an authentic exemplar from the decree of, “He … has sent His Apostle with Guidance …”[115] [He is not just] the shaykh of the world, but rather the shaykh of the shaykhs of the world, Niẓām al-Ḥaq wa al-Dīn: the arrangement of the matters of the world is tied to the gems strung in regular fashion upon his rosary.

Bravo the clear-sighted one, who has inserted the secrets of “…show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee,”[116] in the true writing of “…

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[114] The terms used here for “connecting and causing to connect,” vāsil and māsil, are Sufi terminology ordinarily deployed for shaykhs who guide others upon the mystical path.


[116] Qur’ān, 7:143. The verse cited, which deals extensively with sight, reads in full: “When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, He said: ‘O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee.’ Allah said: ‘By no means canst thou see Me (direct); But look upon the mount, if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me.’ When his Lord manifested His glory on the Mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: ‘Glory be to Thee! to Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe.’

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and worship your Lord as if you see Him.\textsuperscript{117} And how excellent, the knower of the mysteries of Greatest God, who has resolved the abstruse matters of “With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He,”\textsuperscript{118} in the precedence of eternity without beginning. His compassionate heart is preoccupied with the [...] proximity of “... for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.”\textsuperscript{119} His gentle mind is dedicated to the direction of “Some faces, that Day, will beam (in brightness and beauty);—Looking towards their Lord ...”\textsuperscript{120}

What verse can the poet compose for him? [He has arrived to] a place where God's verse is his verse: “The mosque is the home of all the God-fearing and the upright.”\textsuperscript{121} On the day when all of my writings are weighed, I hope that if there is a heaviness in that scale of my scanty sayings, it will be my praises of him, God Most High willing.\textsuperscript{122}

The double entendres arise in almost every sentence; only a few will be noted here:

1. \textit{Praise God, [he is] the shaykh who is [not only] a sign from the glorious Qur’ān, but [also] an authentic exemplar from the decree

\textsuperscript{117} A Shi’ī hadīth. The full tradition reads, “Worship your Lord as if you see Him. If you do not see Him, He sees you.”

\textsuperscript{118} Qur’ān, 6:59.

\textsuperscript{119} Qur’ān, 7:56.

\textsuperscript{120} Qur’ān, 75:22-3.

\textsuperscript{121} A saying.

\textsuperscript{122} D, 3-4. Amīr Khusraw here alludes to the weighing of men’s deeds which according to the Qur’ān will take place on Judgment Day, and will determine who will go to Heaven, who to Hell: “What is the (Day) of Noise and Clamour? And what will explain to thee what the (Day) of Noise and Clamour is? (It is) a Day whereon men will be like moths scattered about, And the mountains will be like carded wool. Then, he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) heavy, Will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction. But he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light,— Will have his home in a (bottomless) Pit. And what will explain to thee what this is? (It is) a Fire Blazing fiercely!” Qur’ān, 101:2-11. See also Qur’ān, 23:101-3; “Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that Day, nor will one ask after another! Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy,— they will attain salvation: But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls, in Hell will they abide.”
of, "He ... has sent His Apostle with Guidance ..." Comparisons of
the shaykh to poetry and to verses throughout the Qur‘ān are
sprinkled throughout this paragraph in an analogy facilitated by the
shaykh’s title, Niẓām al-Dīn (literally, the Order of Religion),
which lends itself to extensive word play: the Arabic root nāzīm can form the word nazm, meaning poetry or verse as well as order
or arrangement. Here, the word for “sign,” āyat, also means
“Qur‘ānic verse”; therefore, the Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’ is depicted
not only as one of God’s “signs” but as a verse of the most holy
book. Likewise, the word for exemplar, nuskhat, can also denote
manuscript or “copy.” The shaykh is therefore both an exemplar of
Muhammad’s guidance and, in Khusraw’s fanciful imagining, a
literal “copy” of it.

2. [He is not just] the shaykh of the world, but rather the shaykh of
the shaykhs of the world, Niẓam al-Ḥaq wa al-Dīn: the
arrangement of the matters of the world is tied to the gems strung
in regular fashion upon his rosary. This phrase plays on the word
naẓm, meaning both “order” and “verse,” to portray the shaykh
as the master not only of truth and religion (al-ḥaq wa al-
dīn) but also of poetry, upon whose prayers depend all the affairs of
the world, including those of composition. Although some of the
stories are no doubt apocryphal, Khusraw often attributed his
eloquence to his affiliation with the shaykh, a notion borne out by
the following poem addressed to him:

You boast of your poverty, [but] upon the throne of speech
No king has sat like the praise of you
In eternity without beginning, the life of eloquent speech
drank water from the spring of your qualities
From that, it became linked to eternity without end.123

3. *Bravo the clearsighted one, who has inserted the secrets of*

"...show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee,," in the true
writing of "... and worship your Lord as if you see Him." The
word used for writing, *sawād*, can also mean blackness, and the
word used for "true point," *ʻayn*, can also mean "eye"; therefore,
the sentence can also be read to simulate the act of reading itself:
the verse in question enters the blackness of the eye, or pupil. This
interpretation dovetails with the central motif of this particular
paragraph, which is sight.

4. *What verse can the poet compose for him? [He has arrived
to] a place where God's verse is his verse: "The mosque is the
home of all the God-fearing and the upright." In this passage,
Khusraw plays on the meaning of the word *bayt*, which denotes
both "verse" and "house." In the first reading, the shaykh is
closely associated with the Qur'ān, God's verse, and has no need
of Khusraw's poetry. In the second reading, the poet is closely

123 D, 4.
associated with the mosque, God’s house, and has no need of any house that the poet can build for him: “[He has arrived to] a place where God’s house is his house.” This interpretation is substantiated by the succeeding line, in which Khusraw quotes the aphorism that the mosque – God’s house – is the home of the God-fearing and upright.

Indeed, throughout the Dībāchah the writer assigns great importance to the use of īḥām. He names it as one of the sophisticated rhetorical devices in his arsenal of poetry; and in a section that lists his own inventions, mentions two innovations that deal explicitly with īḥām, while others involve similar plays on words, such as the radīf of two meanings. One īḥām yields not one but seven meanings:

The talent of Khusraw has created an īḥām more glossy than a mirror, for a mirror does not produce more than one image of one face. But if you present one face to this mirror’s face, seven accurate, bright images appear. And I have called this the “multifaceted īḥām.” ¹²⁴

Grasping this īḥām requires an intelligent reader, one who “circles well around the verse”; if the key of the reader’s mind is dull or blunt, the doors of the artifice will be firmly closed against him. But for one who is perceptive, the doors are “open to the furthest limit.” ¹²⁵

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¹²⁴ D, 56-7.

¹²⁵ D, 57.
One īḥām works in both Persian and Hindī, and yet another in both Persian and Arabic, creating the sort of dialogue between languages and traditions that was mentioned in Chapter Two. As Khusraw boasts,

before me – the skillful horseman of Arabic and Persian – no one had applied this harsh discipline to the swift-footed steed of speech, which, in one race, arrives both in Arabia and in Iran. And the truth is that no one [else] can [even] start on this path. The writer will turn the blood of his heart into water from thinking before he can compose one line of this. 126

The extended use of īḥām is significant in other ways, for it also reflects the influence of the Indian environment upon Persian poetry. Compositions in Sanskrit, in which one word often yields multiple meanings, were studded with wordplay and puns; the use of īḥām – as well as other forms of complex craftsmanship – in Persian (and, later, Urdu) has therefore been traced to that language. 127 Together with khayāl, or imaginings – which can refer to very tender, delicate, subtle thoughts and concepts that merely flit across the mind of the poet, just as the moon gave rise to khayāl in the above passage – īḥām played an important role in sābk-i hindī and in Urdu poetry. 128 As Faruqi suggests, a mode of poetry later known as khayāl banātī “seems to have begun with the ‘Indian style’ Persian poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries … In Urdu, the first traces of this manner can be found in Vālī [d. circa 1707-08], ‘Abd ul-Vālī ‘Uzlat [d.

126 D, 55.


128 Faruqi defines khayāl as an “abstract, remote notion or theme, or an image or figure conceived mentally.” See Faruqi, Early Urdu Literary Culture, 164. It is also the name of a romantic school of Indian music with which Khusraw is closely associated.
1775] and Mîr [d. 1810]. By the end of the eighteenth century, it was firmly in position as the ruling mode of the day.”\textsuperscript{129} It seems to have been a term associated with Urdu poetry rather than Persian to refer to “capturing imaginary, abstract, elusive themes”; its closest analogue in Persian poetry would likely be \textit{sabk-i hindî} or Indian-style poetry.\textsuperscript{130}

As we have seen, evidence exists suggesting that elements of \textit{khayâl bandî} can be traced to Khusraw and other poets of his era. In fact, the poet again places a great deal of emphasis on \textit{îhäm} and \textit{khayâl} in a much later composition, the \textit{Ijâz-i Khusrawī} (The Wonders of Khusraw), completed in 1319/1320, which delineates various types of prose-writing. In it, he lauds \textit{îhäm} and \textit{khayâl} as “the bright jewels of eloquent speech” and describes the manner in which they yield different meanings according to the manner in which they are regarded.\textsuperscript{131}

III.8. Conclusion

We can conclude, therefore, that the \textit{Dibâchah} ultimately suggests the creation of a new poetic identity, that of the Indo-Muslim poet; and this identity ultimately is bound up with the inversion of prevailing dyadic constructs. Through stylistic devices such as \textit{îhäm}, and through direct statements regarding literary accomplishments, the work seeks to flatten or subvert the hierarchies that had traditionally held sway in Islamicate civilization, either by placing Arabic, Persian,
and Hindavi elements on equal footing and in dialogue with each other, or by claiming a superior status for Indian poets and languages. In such a manner, a vision of Islamicate culture is set forth that is more broadly inclusive and pluralistic than that which previously existed.

But in Amîr Khusraw’s works, such processes, whether stylistic or thematic, are not limited solely to the hierarchies mentioned above. The following chapter will explore the manner in which they are extended to the binary construction of man/woman. How does the poet’s inclination to break down the barriers between these categories produce multiple and unexpected meanings, even within the traditional form of the Persian masnavi?

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132 The notion that the hierarchies do not need to be subverted but simply flattened by poets is one that crops up later in the poetry of other Indian writers such as the sixteenth century poet Shaikh Ahmad Gijrâf. As Faruqi notes, “It is obvious that Persian, or Arabic, or Sanskrit, are not seen by the poet as large, hegemonic figures in or around whose shadow he is obliged to work. Sanskrit, Telugu, Arabic, Persian, are all grist to his mill, and he is not in awe of, or inclined to privilege, any particular linguistic tradition.” *Early Urdu Literary Culture*, 101.
CHAPTER IV

MALE/FEMALE DYNAMICS IN THE STORY OF BAHRĀM GŪR AND THE SLAVE GIRL

IV.1. Introduction

The previous chapter spoke of Amīr Khusraw’s tendency to overthrow fixed hierarchies, disrupt long-established categories, and otherwise introduce an element of playfulness, of multiple and shifting meanings, and even of tolerance, into a world made up of rather rigid polarities, while still acknowledging and, to some extent, preserving the general mores of that world. This tendency manifests itself in his poetry as well. One place in which it emerges in a rather unexpected fashion is in Khusraw’s depiction of the male/female dynamic in the story of the Sassanian prince Bahram Gūr and the slave girl, Dilārām, in the epic romance the Hasht bihisht (Eight Paradises). This chapter will examine how Khusraw’s inclination to resist and/or subvert rigid categorization extends even to the roles traditionally assigned to men and women; and will explore the ethical ramifications of his somewhat radical scrambling of the sexes. Among other results, his retelling of the story as originally told in the eleventh century by Firdawsī and in the twelfth century by Niẓāmī can be envisioned as a deconstruction of the binary structural opposition of man/woman established by
the earlier poets. That such a retelling would be freighted with new ethical consequences is evident given recent understandings about epic romances, to be considered below, as well as Khusraw’s own pronouncements about the significance of poetry, which we have already considered in Chapter Three. Most important, we can detect in it the nascent beginnings of a more equitable attitude toward women, the ultimate “Other” in literature of both the East and West. As such, it represents an exemplum of the development of a more pluralistic idiom.

IV.2. The Epic Romance as Ethical Vehicle

In recent years, the reputation of the medieval Persian romantic epic has undergone a re-envisioning by critics. Often regarded in positive – but slightly inconsequential – terms as a happy combination of the ghazal, or lyric poem, and the heroic epic, with a bit of mirrors for princes thrown in for good measure, it has, in the last 20 years or so, been reconstructed as a repository for a serious poetic ethic, one that conveys the poet’s “belief in an ethically ordered universe, and in the power of the word to reveal that order ...”\(^1\) Generally seen as developing out of the heroic epic, but with an emphasis on love rather than war, the romantic epic’s emergence in both the East and the West at about the same time has been attributed to various factors, including

\[\ldots\text{ an increased emphasis on the individual and on the importance of self-knowledge, together with a corresponding interest in personal relationships; a decline of reliance on traditional authority }\ldots;\text{ and a social}\]

\(^1\) Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 41.
dynamic that gave rise to conflicting codes of conduct and necessitated the
discussion and evaluation of their relative merits. Philosophical
development also played an important role, in particular the evolution of a
concept of the created universe as an ordered whole and humanity as a
microcosmic embodiment of that larger order ...²

It was, in fact, the “development of a new human image, set in the context
of a dialogue examining the given truths – intellectual, social, religious – that gives
rise to the genre of the romance, the vehicle for the literary expression of this
dialogue in courtly society.”³

In addition to acting as a means through which to examine societal mores,
the romantic epic allowed authors to employ a broad range of narrative techniques,
including dialogue, monologue, adage, song, and personal reflection. It provided a
great deal of room for rhetorical device and embellishment, as well as complexity
afforded by its use of multiple perspectives. In short, as critics and scholars have
noted, the romantic epic gave the medieval poet great leeway to flex his verbal
muscles, to develop characters and analyze them, to compose intriguing plots, and
provide moral instruction in an oblique and entertaining manner. It is no wonder,
then, that poets such as Nizāmī and Amīr Khusraw adopted it as a fitting stage on
which to display their considerable talents.

It was, in fact, with the appearance of Nizāmī that the epic romance
achieved its fullest expression, one that most critics claim has never been
surpassed. Nizāmī is famous for his Khamsah, or quintet: a set of works that

² Meisami, Medieval Persian Court Poetry, 78-9.
³ Meisami, Medieval Persian Court Poetry, 80.
consists of several epic romances as well as a few didactic poems. A master of metaphor, Nizāmī is celebrated as much for his humanitarianism, deep religious sentiment, and sympathetic portrayals of women as for his consummate verbal skill.  

Of all of Nizāmī’s works, the *Haft paykar*, or The Seven Beauties, completed in 1197, is often seen as the most accomplished. Drawing on the legendary story of the Sassanian king Bahram Gūr as presented in Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāmah*, it transforms and deepens that heroic tale into one of greater psychological significance and a richer and more complex ethic, one that portrays love as the primary educative force in the world. As Meisami writes, it demonstrates the manner in which the hero, Bahram Gūr, through the edifying power of love, “achieves a state of harmony with the cosmic order and is thus able to fulfill his mediatory role between macrocosm and microcosm …” – becoming, in short, the Perfect Man (*Insān al-kamāl*) of whom philosophers such as Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī (d. 1275) speak.  

The question of poetic imitation arises here. As critics such as Losensky have noted, imitation, which takes many forms, is prevalent in both the Arabic and

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Persian literary traditions; indeed, “[l]iterary history emerges as an active and on-going process of interpreting, revising, and recreating the poetic past in a new voice for a new age.” Based on the frequent occurrence of such imitation, medieval poetry is truly intertextual; that is, as Losensky puts it,

Writing in a given genre, drawing on a set stock of images and tropes, alluding to or imitating a previous work, the poet constantly repeats what has been spoken before. These repetitions result from the poet’s knowledge of the established standards and models that define literature as a system of signification and give meaning to each individual utterance.

Such intertextuality encourages us to study many of Persian and Arabic works not as isolated phenomena but within the rich context of their literary history. It is often only by viewing poems as responses to what came before that we are able to understand their significance and, indeed, their originality. For by retelling a story or reshaping a poem, a poet is able to offer an “interpretive response to the problem presented by the original” or even, as Meisami states, the disclosing of its “true meaning through the careful selection and disposition of material, amplification or abbreviation of details, and embellishment of rhetorical ornament.” Such matters will be crucial to bear in mind as we begin our exploration of the telling and retellings of the Bahram Gur story.

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9 Losensky, *Welcoming Fighânt*, 112; Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 43-5. The notion that a story may have a “true meaning” that can be disclosed through careful consideration is, naturally, one that would be ardously challenged by deconstructionists and their ilk. But I would like to suggest that considering these stories in juxtaposition to one another can, at the very least, reveal a changing ethic and demonstrate how different meanings and mores emerged through retellings.

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In 1298/99, Khusraw began working on his own *Khamsah* in direct imitation of Niẓāmī’s, completing it in 1301/02 with the composition of the *Hasht bihisht*, dedicated to the sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī. Of the many poets who imitated Niẓāmī, Amīr Khusraw is generally acknowledged as the best; even so, however, most critics assert that he fails to measure up to the master. One of the excuses the poet himself gives for his shortcomings is the relatively scant amount of time spent in composing the work: Niẓāmī devoted his entire life to crafting his *Khamsah*, while Amīr Khusraw completed his in less than three years.

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10 Typical of contemporary critics’ comments are those of Bürgel; he writes, “Amir Khosrow does not possess the overflowing poetic imagination of Neẓāmī, nor his faculty of subtle character delineation. A garden or a night sky is described with two or three metaphors instead of twenty. His characters are flat, but they are rich in strange and unexplainable or morally questionable actions. Their inner struggles or developments are not envisaged by the poet, let alone commented upon with Neẓāmī’s deep and engaged understanding which recalls the anxiety of loving parents for the welfare of their children. But Amir Khosrow is a good narrator; his style is straightforward, always gripping, and easily readable.” Bürgel, “The Romance,” 171.

11 At the conclusion of *Majmūn va Layīl*, for example, he writes of Niẓāmī that he:

... sought freedom from the world
and washed his hands of worldly matters.
No burden upon his heart, apart from this burden [composing poetry]
no other work than this work.
His efforts all in reflection upon writing
his mind clear of every other care...
From every king and noble
provisions for his livelihood
Without moving a foot, his wants in his hand
it is as though eloquent speech is the beloved of his heart.
[But] poor miserable afflicted me,
from worrying [lit., burning], I am like a boiling pot.
Night to dawn, morning to evening
I find no peace in a lonely corner.
For the sake of obstinacy, I’m
on my feet before someone no better than me.
Until the blood stops flowing from my feet to my head
I earn not a bit of cash ... 

If it were not for such preoccupations, he claims, “it is clear with what pearls/I would fill the skies.” See *ML*, p. 281-3, lines 58-80. Of course, at other instances, he asserts that he has mounted a
Notwithstanding the Khamsah’s overall deficiencies, the Hasht bihisht is generally regarded as the best work of the five; and one of the reasons for its more favorable reception is the fact that the poet, rather than conforming his work directly to that of Nizāmī, allowed himself a greater degree of freedom to incorporate new stories and themes.\footnote{Mahjūb, “Hasht bihisht” va “Haft paykar,” 7, 11.}

The structure of the poem itself likely contributed to this greater liberty. Both the Haft paykar and the Hasht bihisht are built around a central episode in which the king visits his seven wives in turn and hears from each an instructive and entertaining story. Some speculate that this story-within-a-story framework, which itself may have derived from Indian origins, freed the author to exercise his own imagination; and, indeed, several of Nizāmī’s stories have been completely changed – and Indianized – in Amīr Khusraw’s version.\footnote{Bürgeł, “The Romance,” 171.} For example, the use of ingenuity and cleverness in the story of the third bihisht, which tells the tale of a goldsmith who cheats a king of an amount of gold, betrays Indian influence. In the fourth bihisht, or paradise, the king hears the story of a traveler who demonstrates how to move a soul from one body to another, a concept that is clearly related to

\textit{durable challenge to Nizāmī: “My magnificence, which rose high/sent an uproar into the ears of Nizāmī... Even though the signet of eloquence placed its seal (of finality) upon him/My coin broke his golden seal.” Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, \textit{Matla al-anvār} (The Dawning-place of the Lights), ed. Tāhir Ahmad Ughfū Muḥarramī (Moscow: Idārah-i Intishārāt-i Dānish, Shu‘bah-‘i ‘Adabīyāt-ī Khāvar, 1975), 51:11,14 (hereafter cited in text as \textit{MA}). (A oft-quoted variant of the first distich reads, “My royal star, which rose high, sent a trembling into Nizāmī’s grave.”) For discussions of Amīr Khusraw’s comparisons of his writing to that of Nizāmī, see Mirza, \textit{Life and Works of Amīr Khusraw}, 190-2, and Habib, \textit{Hazarat Amīr Khusraw of Delhi}, 72-4.}
the transmigration of souls associated with indigenous Indian religions. In the
story of the fifth bihisht, a prince falls in love with an idol and, with the help of his
friends, succeeds in bringing her to life.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the emphasis on music and magic in the
Bahrām Gūr and slave girl story likely betray Indian influences; I will argue that
so, too, does the male/female dynamic that emerges in the episode. The following
section will examine the story with the goal of determining and interpreting the
changes made by Khusraw to the stories as originally presented by Firdawsī and
Niẓāmī.14

The skeleton of the story is identical in each version: Bahrām Gūr,
renowned for his prowess in hunting, brings a favorite slave girl with him to the
chase one day. In the course of the ill-fated expedition, the girl proposes to the
young prince (or, in some situations, king) that he demonstrate his skill with the
arrow and bow by shooting animals in a particular way, one that varies from story
to story but always requires nearly unmatched skill. Once he has successfully
completed the feat, however, the girl neglects to praise him sufficiently and instead
reacts either critically or dismissively. Bahrām Gūr falls into a rage and, depending
on the poet, kills the girl (Firdawsī), orders an officer to kill her (Niẓāmī), or

14 As both Mahjūb and Heshmat Moayyad have noted, this story, unlike the others, does
not take place in the context of the central episode but instead occurs previous to it; in this manner
it constitutes the first of the eight paradises. It should be acknowledged that studies comparing the
three versions of the story in a general way have already been undertaken by Bürger and Mahjūb;
Moayyad has also examined the story in his thorough comparison of Haft Paykar, Hasht Bihisht,
and Haft Akhtar, a work by the Safavid-era poet ʿAbdī Big (d. 1580). See Moayyad, “Dar madār-i
Niẓāmī,” 135-59. This chapter seeks to build on these studies by devoting attention to the specific
issue of the male/female dynamic.
abandons her (Amīr Khusraw). In both Nizāmī and Khusraw’s versions, the girl manages to save her own life and, by developing an impressive skill of her own, to win back the prince’s love and teach him an important lesson at the same time. As will be seen, the stories vary widely in theme and content depending on the author; but the male/female dynamic is an intrinsic element of each, and it is this that will be the focus of my investigation.

IV.3. Firdawsi: The Construction of Heroic Masculinity

In Firdawsi’s Šāhnāmah, the story begins when Bahrām Gūr, then 18, asks his guardian, the Yemenite king Munzir, to provide him with female companionship, expounding on the benefits accrued from associating with beautiful women: they increase a young man’s happiness and even lead him to God and to virtue. Of forty beautiful Greek slave girls proffered to him, he chooses two, one of whom – named, ironically, Āzādah, or “Free,” — plays the lyre. Bahrām falls in love with her: “She was the comfort of his heart and their desires were the same. Always upon his lips was her name.”

One day, the prince takes Āzādah, accompanied by her lyre, on a shooting expedition. When a pair of deer approaches, he asks her, smiling, which animal he


16 The word āzādah can also mean “free-born” or “noble.” It may also, as Meisami suggests, connote willfulness. Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 55.

should shoot, the male or the female. Āzādah’s answer is charged with an acute awareness of gender roles and a complicated attitude toward them: “O lion-man, men of battle do not kill [lit., seek] deer.” Rather, he should convert the female into a male by implanting arrows into her head that would resemble antlers; and the male into a female by shooting off his antlers. Then, as the deer try to escape, he should shoot a pebble at the ear of one deer so that it will bring its hoof up to its shoulder; finally, with an arrow “stitch together its head, foot and ear, if you wish me to call you the world-illuminator.”\textsuperscript{18}

Bahārm Gūr successfully completes the task, but when he turns to Āzādah for praise, he finds none. Rather, she feels pity for the animals and weeps for them. When the prince queries the reason for her sorrow, she responds, “This is not manliness; you are not a man [or, in one variant, you have turned away from manhood]; you have a demon’s spirit.”\textsuperscript{19} Furious, Bahārm Gūr throws her off his camel and drives the animal over her, drenching her breast, arms, and harp with her blood. He castigates her for trying to ensnare him, calling her a “foolish harpist”; and avers that if his aim had gone astray, “my lineage would have been disgraced from this blow (azīn zakhm nangi shudī gawharam).”\textsuperscript{20} The story

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\textsuperscript{18} SN, 7:274:177-182.
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\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{19} SN, 7:275: n. 11 (my italics). It should be noted that this verse does not appear in all manuscripts.
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{20} SN, 7:275:194-7.
\end{flushright}
concludes: “When he had trampled her under the feet of his camel, from then on he never took a slave girl hunting.”

Apart from its brutality, the story is notable for the oppositions that it sets up between men and women and the tragedy that ensues when lines between them are crossed. All authority and power are arrogated to men – in this case, Bahram Gür. Associated primarily with the hunt and with the qualities of skill, speed, and aggressiveness, he dominates those around him and ultimately controls their destinies, whether they are animals or Azadah.

As a female, Azadah occupies a far different category. She has no power; as designated by her slave-status, she is merely an object of exchange in a manner that brings to mind contemporary constructions of “woman” by structural anthropologists; she “reflects masculine identity precisely through being the site of its absence.” Her primary characteristics are her physical beauty, her skill at the lyre, and her compassion, which emerges both when she counsels Bahram Gür that it is beneath him to kill deer, and again when she weeps at their pain. Even though this compassion is somewhat ambiguously portrayed – it was she, after all, who proposed the task that she later despised – it remains her primary defining quality, balanced only by her willingness to challenge Bahram Gür, a trait that can either be viewed as foolish willfulness or bravery.

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22 The centrality of the hunt as a motif in the heroic epic is exemplified by the great length of descriptions lavished upon hunting scenes in the Shāhnāmah.

23 Butler, Gender Trouble, 39.
Thus, a dichotomy is established between masculine and feminine that ends in the trampling of the feminine – that is, the compassionate instinct. Indeed, the entire episode can be seen as an assertion of male power over the female in a manner symbolized by the hunt itself. This construction closely correlates to long-standing binaries envisioned by structural anthropologists, who draw parallels between women and nature and men and culture.\(^{24}\) Although it is somewhat problematic to make this sweeping assumption here (especially since animals in the \textit{Shāhnāmah} often possess qualities that could be seen as “masculine”), to some degree the dichotomy holds in this episode. It rings particularly true in the association of Āzādah with the deer themselves. The girl’s death, for example, in which her breast is reddened by her own blood, echoes the reddening of the female deer’s breast after antlers are implanted in its head.\(^{25}\)

The intrinsic and seemingly inevitable polarization of the sexes as depicted by Firdawsī is symbolized by the fateful sex-changing trick. Here, an attempt to break down the barriers between male and female (or, in more contemporary parlance, to deconstruct these structures) – by “changing” the female into a male, and vice versa – ends in tragedy. One of the themes that emerges from the episode is, therefore, that the boundaries defining male and female must not be blurred; that is, men should not take on compassionate, “feminine” qualities or otherwise

\(^{24}\) As Butler notes, the “nature/culture discourse regularly figures nature as female, in need of subordination by a culture that is invariably figured as male, active, abstract.” However, she notes that the post-structuralists have refuted the “claims of totality and universality and the presumption of binary structural oppositions that implicitly operate to quell the insistent ambiguity and openness of linguistic and cultural signification.” \textit{Butler, Gender Trouble}, 40.

risk allowing themselves to be emasculated (as Bahrām Gūr fears would have happened had he failed to perform the trick; this fear is even tacitly implied in the injury he worries would have come to his gawhar – birth, lineage, race, or stock – by missing the shot – azīn zakhm nangi shudi gawharam); nor should women assume assertive, “masculine” qualities (as Āzādah did in joining the hunt, or even in challenging Bahrām Gūr and therefore attempting – symbolically – to castrate him). This notion is supported by the narrator’s approving assertion that the prince never again took a girl hunting with him.

In its response to the episode’s underlying question, “What is manliness?” – an issue raised at least twice by Āzādah, first when she informs Bahrām Gūr that “men of battle do not kill deer,” and again when she accuses him of unmanliness – the story affirms that men are aggressive hunters who have license to prevail over women and crush them if they interfere with their masculine duty and honor. This implicit affirmation of Bahrām Gūr’s behavior can be seen in the narratorial stance toward him. The narrator in no way condemns Bahrām Gūr for his behavior toward Āzādah or even indicates that he was unusually cruel. Rather, the framing of the episode seems to show implicit support for the prince or, at the very least, an equating of women with chattel. In the section immediately preceding that involving Āzādah, Bahrām Gūr asks for horses to be brought to him in order that he may acquire an appropriate mount; he then chooses two horses in a way that foreshadows his choosing of the two women, Āzādah and the other Greek slave
girl, to be his companions. The juxtaposition of these acts symbolically links the women to the animals.

Moreover, immediately following the slave girl sequence, the narrator admiringly describes Bahrām Gūr’s shooting of a lion attacking an onager and pinning both the lion’s back and the heart of the prey with one arrow. In the very next story, the narrator expounds upon the prince’s display of his fabulous skill at hunting ostriches before a group of Arab chiefs. Subsequently, Munẓir, the prince’s guardian, orders the best artists in Yemen to paint pictures of his charge in order to publicize his skill. The story therefore seems to support the notion that Bahrām Gūr admirably fulfills the requirements of being a good hunter – and a good man. Āzādah, it seems to state, is wrong in declaring that Bahrām Gūr is no man: in fact, he defines masculinity, and he adheres closely to the heroic values which, above all, involve preserving one’s honor.

To what degree do the roles occupied by men and women in this episode correspond to those of the poem as whole? That is, may we extrapolate from the characterizations inherent in this episode and assert that they constitute generic categories for “man” and “woman” and their relationship to one another in the poem? Such a question cannot possibly be answered in this space, but in general it

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27 As Hodgson observes, the masculine hero of heroic and romantic epics had to be “watchful of his honour – his right to precedence – against all attacks; this honour could be sullied either through his own weakness – if he let a challenge go without silencing the challenger – or through his women, if his presumed sexual jealousy were offended.” Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 2:301.
can be said that it is wrong to assert that women are portrayed in an unmitigatedly negative fashion in the *Shāhnāma*, or even that a prohibition against crossing gender lines exists throughout. Many women are portrayed positively in the epic, and statements in which women are seen as making a helpful contribution to the spiritual development of men are also present, as has already been seen in the Bahrām Gūr story (although, given the events immediately following the statement, it takes on a highly ironic tinge). Gurdiyah, for example, the sister of Bahrām Chūbīnah, is depicted as an eloquent and just woman considerably wiser than her brother; she is both beautiful *and* intrepid, slaying her enemies fearlessly. Elsewhere, characters such as Gurd Āfarīd demonstrate heroic, traditionally “masculine” characteristics such as valor in battle without incurring any shame for their actions; indeed, they are often praised.

On the other hand, the epic is preoccupied with masculine values, and women and traditional “feminine” qualities or talents receive decidedly inferior

28 Indeed, one can propose that Firdawsi’s version of the Bahrām Gūr/slave girl story was simply a faithful rendering of the narrative he found in his sources; in general, his work is freer of the insults against women that one finds in such texts as Sa’di’s *Gulistān* or Rūmi’s *Mashā’ī*.  

29 Gurdiyah’s wisdom is lauded on numerous occasions and compared favorably with that of men (see *SN*, 9:172:2768; 9:173:2783-4); and her character’s appearance in the text provides a platform for an exposition on the numerous qualities of women, delivered by a young message-bearer:

> Of [woman’s] peacefulness and counsel and eloquent speech –  
> whether in recent times, or in days of old  
> Of the purity and abstemiousness of woman  
> who both disperses sorrow and delivers good advice  
> The young man spoke, and the chaste woman listened …


ranking in it; moreover, the characters who break through the stereotypes are more the exception than the rule. A more typical perception of women is that expressed by the character Siyāvash, who asks his father, the king Kay Kāvus: “What will I learn in the king’s harem?/Since when do women lead the way to knowledge?”

That the most admirable characteristic of a woman is pliancy to her husband’s will becomes clear when yet another of the wives of Bahram Gur tells her husband, “The best women of the world are those/who cause their husbands to smile continually/If my pure soul turns away from your will/it’s better that you look on me with disgust.”

Even though there are exceptions, then, we can posit that in many ways, the Bahram Gur/slave girl story’s depiction of male/female dynamics is in keeping with the basic characterizations underlying the entire work; as Meisami says, it “epitomizes the heroic values which inform [Firdawsī’s] epic.” Whether or not the episode can be regarded as the defining moment of male/female dynamics (or even of heroic values) is a question that cannot be answered; but it can be stated – as Meisami has pointed out -- that the episode has been received “as exemplifying

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31 SN, 3:15:165. It must be noted that the young prince is desperately seeking excuses to avoid entanglement in a plot contrived by his stepmother.


33 Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 45.
the heroic ethos” if only by the degree to which it has been illustrated and rewritten.34

IV.4. Niẓāmī: The Reseating of Fitnah

As mentioned above, the notion that the episode exemplifies an heroic ethos that deserves to be toppled is implicit in the decision of the poet Niẓāmī (and, later, Amīr Khusraw) to include it in his poem and to transform it substantially. When the slave girl story in the Haft paykar begins, Bahrām Gūr has already been made king of Iran (a role he acquires, memorably, by taking part in a contest that involves seizing a crown from between two lions). Like Āzādah, Fitnah is a beautiful slave girl and musician who is greatly loved by Bahrām Gūr. Rather than simply make note of Fitnah’s beauty and then devote most of the attention to the hunt, however, Niẓāmī expounds at length about her musical skills: “She played and sang with elegance,/and was quick-footed at the dance./When to the lute she joined her song,/the birds from air to ground would throng.” 35 In fact, unlike Firdawsī, Niẓāmī draws a clear parallel between the slave girl’s skill and that of Bahrām: “The harp her weapon, the king’s the bow/She struck up tunes, he

34 As she writes, The Preliminary Index of Shah-Nameh Illustrations “records a total of 49 illustrations of the story (especially of the trampling), a figure exceeded only by representations of heroic exploits and scenes of ritual significance such as enthronements or mourning ceremonies.” Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 65-6 n. 18.

game laid low.” In a sense, then, both are hunters of game, both employ weapons: only she hunts both animals and men (Bahrām Gūr is, in some sense, her prey), and he, animals. Thus, Nizāmī establishes greater equality between the characters and distributes similar characteristics to both.

The “trick” performed by Bahrām Gūr on the hunting expedition is a stripped-down version of that of the Shāhnāmah, one that eliminates the sex-changing operation. Noticing that Fitnah is silent with regard to his prowess, the king asks her how he should shoot the next wild ass.

The sweet-lipped maid, as was her wont –
   a woman she, and idle-tongued –
   Said, “If you’d kindle praise, then join
   its hoof to head, with arrow bound.”

After he executes the trick perfectly, the king asks Fitnah for her opinion. She responds that his act is not worthy of praise because it resulted from practice, not physical power: “The prince is quite well versed/in this; what’s hard that’s oft rehearsed? … Your royal bolt the hoof transfixed/through practice, not by strength unmixed.” Bahrām Gūr flies into a rage, but he restrains himself from trampling her, reflecting (in words that echo those of Āzādah to Bahrām Gūr in the Shāhnāmah when she advises him not to kill the deer): “For lion-brave warriors do

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36 HP, 77:19.

37 As Meisami notes, the slave girl has been elevated from “the status of one of the king’s chattels to one analogous and complementary to his own.” Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 47.

38 HP, 77:30-1.

39 HP, 78:38.
not slay/weak women; they’re unequal prey.”40 Rather, he orders his officer to perform the execution. Acquiescing to Fitnah’s entreaty, the officer does not immediately carry out the act but instead conceals her in a palace estate, where she undertakes the daily task of carrying a calf on her shoulders up a 60-step tower. By dint of practice, six years later she is still able to carry the animal, now a full-grown ox. Satisfied with her accomplishment, and longing for Bahrām, the girl asks the officer to invite the king to the hunting-ground for a feast. Once Bahrām Gūr arrives, Fitnah – her face veiled from sight – performs the feat. He is amazed, but quickly stifles his astonishment; when she demands praise for her strength, he only says:

... “This is no power;
you’ve practised this feat long before,
And, year on year and bit by bit,
though constant striving, mastered it:
Till now, without apparent stress,
you balance in your scales this beast.”41

With that,

The beauty, silver-limb’d, bowed low,
with salutations as were due,
And said, “The king a great debt owes:
‘practice’ the ox – not the wild ass?
Am I, who to the roof have borne
an ox, for “practice” to be known?
Why, when you shoot a wild ass small
should no one your deed “practice” call?”42

40 HP, 78:46.

41 HP, 84-5:68-70.

42 HP, 85:71-4.
At that moment the king recognizes her, lifts her veil, embraces her, and begs her forgiveness for his rashness and anger: “If I, headstrong, kindled a fire," twas I was burned; you have survived.” For her part, Fitnah attributes the earlier trouble to her “loving nature,” saying that the king’s enormous skill in hunting caused him to be vulnerable to the Evil Eye: “For what man’s eye has worthy found, the harmful Eye is sure to wound.” Hence, she protected him by refraining from praising him. Her words so move the king that, arrow-like, “they pierced/his soul as they shot through his heart.” He repays the officer and marries Fitnah, living with her “in love and ease, until a long, long time had passed.”

Clearly, Niẓāmī’s version displays a more humanitarian bent than that of Firdawsī. Bahram Gur himself does not kill Fitnah, and she herself is not killed; they are even reconciled and married. As Bürgel writes, it is significant that “a king acknowledges his fault and asks the pardon of a female slave”; indeed, in

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43 *HP*, 85:80.


45 *HP*, 86:91.

46 *HP*, 86:100.

portraying such an event, “Nezami has replaced royal brutality and irrevocable fate by successful human endeavor to overcome evil.”

Moreover, to a large extent Fitnah is represented in a positive manner. She is associated with the pearl, a beautiful but fragile symbol of wisdom, whereas Bahrām Gūr is the “stone” that might have shattered the pearl, had not the officer protected it. Although weak and therefore unequal prey for men, she is represented as playing an educative and guiding role in the king’s life; and, ultimately, is portrayed as wise, protective, and loving. It is through her agency that the aggressive hunting instinct is moderated and the more praiseworthy qualities of compassion, love, and justice allowed to emerge. Through her, the king is made to repent of his rashness and his too-harsh judgment.

In some ways, this process is symbolized by Fitnah’s carrying of the ox up the flight of sixty steps. In so doing she demonstrates her mastery of a huge, powerful animal and her ability to raise it to new heights, just as she eventually masters and elevates Bahrām Gūr. Likewise, her association with the onager, similar to Āzādah’s association with the doe, casts more light on her function in the prince’s life. As Meisami has pointed out, the onager is depicted as a guiding influence for the king throughout the Haft paykar; and several passages link the

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49 HP, 86:94-5.

50 The act of carrying the ox up the stairs also endows Fitnah with the masculine qualities of strength and force in a manner that crosses gender lines.
animal to Fitnah, including those which describe both the animal and Fitnah as "bright-faced" (tāzah-rū ṭ) and their "beauty, grace, and intelligence."⁵¹

Nizāmī has further complicated Firdawī’s version by naming the slave girl Fitnah. As Meisami notes, this decision introduces a great deal of ambiguity into the story, for in comparison to Āzādah, the name Fitnah carries a far wider range of connotations, derived from the root meaning of the verb (to put to the test, to tempt) and ranging from physical charm, seductiveness, and sexual temptation, to the more general sense of inciting morally reprehensible actions, encompassing civil war and sedition, and strongly associated with the supernatural, with magic and possession.⁵²

Although Meisami sees the name as emphasizing the slave girl’s "alluring seductiveness" and suggests that the shape the narration takes ultimately decides against the name’s implication of troublemaking and "moral disorder" (qualities seen as extremely maleficent in Islamicate civilization; in fact, in many occasions tyranny is seen as preferable to fitnah⁵³), the negative impression lingers, as does the mention of the girl’s "unbridled tongue," also directly associated with her femininity.⁵⁴ Dangerous femininity that must be suppressed one way or another (even after she has demonstrated her skill in carrying the ox, Bahram Gūr causes Fitnah to be seated at one point in a phrase that can also mean "put down

⁵¹ Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 57.

⁵² Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 55.

⁵³ See Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition, s.v. "fitna."

⁵⁴ Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 78.
sedition”) therefore remains an element of the poem, even though the brute trampling required in Firdawsī’s version is no longer present.55

In general, however, one can agree with Meisami’s assertion that Niẓāmi’s retelling of the story “constitutes a telling commentary on the ethical implications of the work of his predecessor,” and that Niẓāmi, by carefully rearranging the earlier treatment, has, “implicitly, surpassed not only by telling what was left half-said (‘threading the half-pierced pearl’) but by revealing the true meaning of the material utilized by his predecessor.”56 Niẓāmi’s version must not be regarded simply as imitation, but as the “adaptation of received knowledge to a purpose” – a retelling that gains in the process. As Meisami suggests, the poems are intertextual and the story gains clarity and meaning with each rendition.57

IV.5. Amīr Khusraw: The Lion-Catching Deer

Amīr Khusraw’s version of the story takes on even newer colors and more humanitarianism, and acquires additional meanings to those presented by Niẓāmi. Moreover, it advances the deconstruction of the primary categories or structures that has been witnessed thus far. As in Niẓāmi’s version, the charming ways of the slave girl – here a Chinese woman named Dilārām (meaning heart-soothing – and, significantly the same word that Firdawsī used to describe Āzādah: dilārām-i ā

55 HP, 85:81.

56 Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 45.

57 Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 45.
būd) – are described at some length. She is depicted as the ultimate enchantress, seducing and overthrowing all who come her way with just a glance. Although the metaphors used to portray her beauty are often clichéd – like many a female protagonist in Persian poetry, she possesses narcissus eyes, ruby lips, musky hair, and a roselike face – there are some rather innovative conceits as well. For example, the veins that show through her translucent skin are “just like threads within the pearl of Eden”; her blood, held inside skin like fine silk, is “like wine in a Syrian glass.”58 Unlike the earlier versions, Dilārām is, significantly, not yet a musician at the beginning of the story; she is, however, described as a “lion-catching deer,” a sobriquet whose significance becomes increasingly apparent as the story unfolds.59

Meanwhile, Bahrām is the exemplum of manly valor and hunting skill: he had “dug the graves of 100 lions with his arrows”; he “slew so many onagers in zeal/The mounds became like onager domes.”60 His shooting is so precise that he can separate the hair of a deer from its shoulder; he is so quick and strong that he can catch onagers with his bare hands. Yet his aggressiveness is already tempered by compassion: early in the episode, Bahrām Gūr decides that he is tired of killing. The contrast with the bellicose Bahrām of Firdawsī’s version of the story could not be more acute:


59 HB, 50:481.

60 HB, 50:483, 51:491.
When his mind had grown weary of slaying
He ordered his heart thus, from that day on,
Whether in the thicket or on the plain
he would not spill the blood of those dumb beasts.
When he would see a herd of onagers
he would not scratch with arrows their livers.
He would take them alive with his arm’s strength,
he would weigh them in his own scale, and then
He’d give them the ornament of a name
the brand of Bahram on the thigh of each.
When with his own sign he had made them his
from trouble’s lasso, he would set them free.  

But the martial spirit is not altogether erased. On the fateful day of the
hunt, he and Dilārām set out together and ride until they reach the hunting ground,
where they commence to shoot animals (apparently, the earlier vow has been
suspended). Suddenly several deer approach the king and his companion. The girl
— described as the “lion-throwing gazelle” — tells the king to shoot each one as she
demands, for, she claims, even though his arrow is full of skill, command of that
skill [also] belongs to another. Angered by her impudence, he replies testily,
“How could the lion hesitate to laugh/When the deer puts the lion to the test?”

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61 HB, 52-3:501-6. For the reader aware of the edicts of Ashoka, the Mauryan emperor
who ruled over much of India from 273-232 B.C.E, this renunciation of violence (as temporary as
it is) would have rung a familiar bell. After having presided over the conquering of Kalinga (a
coastal region made up of Orissa and the northern part of Andra Pradesh) in which 100,000 people
were killed, many times that number died, and 150,000 people were deported, Ashoka became
sickened by violence and declared that for all beings he desired “security, self-control, calm of
mind, and gentleness.” He also forbade the killing of animals for sacrifice and greatly reduced
those slaughtered for the kingly table: “Formerly in the Beloved of the God’s kitchen several
hundred thousand animals were killed daily for food; but now at the time of writing only three are
killed — two peacocks and a deer, though the deer not regularly. Even these three animals will not
be killed in the future.” De Bary, Sources of Indian Tradition, 146-8.


63 HB, 56:529. The opposition of lion and deer or gazelle is one that appears with some
frequency in the Persian tradition; often, the deer is portrayed with the greater sympathy. For
Since his specialty is the bow and arrow, however, he agrees to carry out her instructions. As in the Shāhnāmah, she commands him to convert a female deer into a male, and a male into a female. He complies, driving a blow at a male’s head that shears off its antlers so neatly and quickly that the animal fails to notice it has been hit. When that task is completed, he attaches two arrows and lets them fly toward the female deer, planting them so thoroughly in her head that they resemble two antlers.

When the king demands justice from Dilārām, however, she replies that his success derived from divine power; it was magic, not skill. “The point of your arrow did that, really/That one cannot do with thinking.” She warns him to keep his insight sharp; someone else may surpass him.

Unsurprisingly, her words infuriate the king, whose cheeks turn yellow with rage, and whose insides boil with bitter bile. He pours out poison in a sarcastic laugh, telling her that she is deserving of oppression and tyranny: “Don’t be impudent [lit., don’t try to catch lions], because in your hunt, You’re now a deer by the cruel lion caught.” No one could possibly surpass him – but if anyone

\[\text{example, upon hearing of a youth’s forbearing response to a neighbor who was taunting him, Amīr Khusraw’s mentor, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’}, \text{recited the following couplet: } “\text{Of many a lion You make a gazelle/From many a sickness you make a man well.” See } FF, \text{ 310.} \]

\[\text{64 } HB, \text{ 57:544.}\]

\[\text{65 } HB, \text{ 57:546-7.}\]

\[\text{66 } HB, \text{ 58:552. The line also plays on an alternate meaning for āhū, or deer: defect or fault.}\]
does, he says sarcastically, "Go to him; like me there are plenty." With that, he
stamps his foot in anger, throws her from her saddle and takes her horse.67

Unlike the narrators of the Shāhnāmah and even the Haft paykar, the
narrator of the Hasht bihishū puts a clear moral spin on the incident:

The king left, and the frail girl stayed in pain
The dragon passed on, the treasure remained.
With kings, one must not say a word against
their wishes, even though it be the truth.
Whoever spoke his mind to kings, lopped off
his own head with the rapier of his tongue.68

Abandoned, Dīlārām lies unconscious for a while; when she finally rouses,
thirsty, tearful, and fatigued, she sets out toward a nearby plain:

So full of ghouls were that plain's halting stops
she took her own shadow for a demon.
So full was the road of piercing sharp spears
her boots became like rough dust-sifting sieves.
Thorns like arrows passed into her feet's soles
just as a needle passes through fine silk.
The foot that hurts from the touch of petals
what is its fate, when it is met by thorns?
No companion had she, no guide, except
her shadow below, and the sun above.69

Finally she reaches a remote village where she encounters a learned and
virtuous dīhqān, or landowner.

The landowner was a noble young man
both a prince was he, and an artisan.

67 HB, 58:554-5.

68 HB, 59:556-8. Dragons are typically depicted as guardians of great treasures.

69 HB, 59-60:561-5.
He had studied the three types of wisdom\textsuperscript{70} till he became singular in the world. Well-versed in the science of Rum, he knew from the earth and sky, what was born, what grew. A philosopher was he, well-aware of the fine points in both math and nature. A rarity at the harp, fine singer, hand like a cloud or lightning on the rūd. The secrets of the scales, he also knew; he could make funny, sad or sleepy tunes. Of the world’s incidents, he had seen much of the sky’s warm and cold, he’d tasted much. He had turned his back on the tempting world a bird content with a grain of the field.\textsuperscript{71}

When he learns that she is a “gem from the treasury of the king,” he offers to adopt her as his own child: “If just a morsel is enough for you/I am at your service with what is here/And if your heart should desire to fly/Your heart is your heart; I will not keep you.”\textsuperscript{72} Dilārām, in gratitude, removes a fabulous pearl from her ear and gives it to him; he kisses the ground in thanks. He sets up a room for her, arranging in it candy, fruit, and wine, and, at her own instigation, sets about teaching her his arts:

\begin{quote}
Since he perceived her nature to be smart all of that which he knew, to her he taught. Of what he’d obtained, from all of the arts he poured from his own heart into her heart.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{70} This line likely refers to an ancient division of sciences that comprises arithmetic and geometry, astronomy and music. See ‘ilm-i ta’lim in Dāyirat al-ma‘ārif-i Fārsī (Persian Encyclopaedia), ed. Ghulām Ḥusayn Muṣṭāḥjib (Tehran: Firānkīn, 1345/-/1966-), 2:1759.

\textsuperscript{71} HB, 61:576-83.

\textsuperscript{72} HB, 63:598-9.
especially the scales of flute and harp.73

In particular, he teaches her how to play music that can magically kill and raise to life again.74 When she has mastered this art, she desires to leave the shelter of her home (lit., to “fall outside the veil” – khvāst bīrūn fitad zi pardah- ’i khvīsh)75 and to demonstrate her skill in public; in particular, she wishes “To weaken the argument of the king/and her own righteous claim, to prove correct.”76 Thus, one day, she ties a veil over her face and ventures onto the plain. At first, she goes on a deer-killing rampage:

The tongue of her arrow was stealing hearts of those mute animals, at her command. And when her desire for pain was slaked she comforted their tears with melodies. At first she raised up a bitter lament that from the wild beasts of the field stole rest. To kiss the feet of that young cypress, all came gamboling to her on their own feet. From all sides lined up the great and the small absent to themselves, present before her. When all of them together she had brought

73 HB, 64:609-11.

74 The skills demonstrated by the dhīqān and taught to Dilārām are reminiscent of those demonstrated in a tale widely circulated about the great philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950). It is said that he played various songs that caused members of a gathering to cry, to laugh, and to sleep. Amīr Khosrow may have based his story on that tale. See Mahjūb, “Hasht bihisht” va “Haft pəykar,” 21.

75 HB, 64:613. The wording of this phrase leaves the slave girl’s action open to a degree of ambiguity. It plays on the term pardah, which can mean both musical scales as well as veil, and also denotes the protective covering that sheltered Muslim women from the gaze of outsiders, as well as any protection or covering for secrets or mistakes – an analogue for the more well-known word “pardah” in Western culture. To leave the pardah – az pardah rafšan – means to make public; but to fall outside the pardah – az pardah əftādan – as it is stated here, can mean to lose one’s reputation. Given the musical connotations of the word as well it could also perhaps imply that Dilārām is going out of tune. The poet may therefore be adding a note of ambiguity to her deed.

76 HB, 64:614.
upon her harp, a melody she brought.
Then she played such a soporific tune
that the deer’s eyes closed shut in sleep, so well.
When in sweet sleep they had lost consciousness
into their ears, she played another song.
From *that* song, they leapt up yet again;
they were delivered, section by section.
The news spread far and wide – a magician
rare and unique, from the world’s arisen
Who calls the deer to her from the plain
kills them, and raises them to life again.\(^\text{77}\)

When Bahrām Gūr hears of the wondrous maiden who can perform this
feat, he naturally wishes to observe her. He sets forth one day to the field where
she plays and tells her of his desire to see her arts. The girl acquiesces; but first,
the two take part in a hunt to flush out animals and lead them astray from their
ordinary paths. When the king has killed many deer and onagers, she begins to
play, and “The bashful deer, with sore and wounded hearts/came forward to her on
their dancing feet.”\(^\text{78}\) But rather than praising her when he sees the magic she is
able to perform, the king showers scorn on her accomplishment, bringing “the
buyers’ jeering on the gem.” He says:

> In the world, there are many of this sort:
everyone has some share of talisman.
No expert exists in a land – but see!
There’s someone who is more expert than he.\(^\text{79}\)

Dilārām answers sarcastically, saying,

\(^{77}\) *HB*, 65:622-32.

\(^{78}\) *HB*, 68:647.

\(^{79}\) *HB*, 69:654-5.
Yes, of all I have done, that’s your response. Everyone is clever in art, yes, but they are better than us, not than Bahrām! The king, who can convert female to male, no one can do that trick better than he! And she who returns to living, the dead any person could do better than that.\(^{80}\)

Then she demands justice. The king recognizes her voice, removes her veil, and embraces her, “giving her longing soul a home.”\(^{81}\) He apologizes and asks for her forgiveness; and then, with great joy, takes her home. From then on, the narrator reports, the king’s heart is even more loving toward Dilārām than it had been before. He orders that images of the wondrous tasks both had completed, which already are on the tongues of all, be painted on the palace and throne.

In many ways, the changes made by Amīr Khusraw deepen and emphasize those instituted by Niẓāmī. As in Niẓāmī’s version, for example, the lines between “masculine” and “feminine” are not as sharply drawn as in the Šāhnāmah: some sharing of characteristics between Bahrām Gūr and the slave girl come to light even in the beginning, as evinced by Dilārām’s portrayal as a “lion-catching deer” or the king’s sympathy toward animals, or even his decision not to have Dilārām killed, but only to abandon her. That is, the characters are able to assume characteristics normally relegated to the opposite sex without extremely deleterious results – a state of affairs evident in the Haft paykār but amplified here.


\(^{81}\) HB, 70:664.
One also sees, as mentioned previously, a softening and humanizing of the heroic values set forth by Firdawsī.\footnote{The introduction of a more tender and “feminine” note to Persian poetry (not only epics but ghazals) by Amīr Khusrāw is a change that has been suggested by some critics. Waris Kirmani writes:} \footnote{See Kirmani, “The Founder of Indo-Persian Tradition in Ghazal,” in Alvi, Khusrō, and Naiyyer, Amīr Khusrō Dehalvi: A Seminar Report, 21.}

Part of this change in emphasis manifests in the parallels drawn between the king and the slave girl.\footnote{A similar trend of equalizing and balancing the male and female characters may be seen in the stories of Shīrīn and Khusrāw as depicted by Firdawsī, Nizāmī, and Amīr Khusrāw. As Abdul Aziz Mustafa Buqush writes, Amīr Khusrāw’s version of the story gives greater weight to Shīrīn as a “human being in the full sense of the word” than that of either Firdawsī or Nizāmī. “She is taken by emotions of love and hatred while a sense of self-respect makes her dislike to become a subject of humiliation by Khusrō.” See Buqush, “Story of Khusro Shīrīn Between Nizami and Amīr Khusrō,” in Alvi, Khusrō, and Naiyyer, Amīr Khusrō Dehalvi: A Seminar Report, 44-5.} As we have seen, in the Haft paykar a kind of equality was established between Bahrām Gūr and Fitnāh with regard to their respective skills: “The harp her weapon, the king’s the bow/She struck up tunes, he game laid low.” In Khusrāw’s version, both Bahrām Gūr and Dilārām use the same weapons as in the previous story to master animals – that is, the bow and the musical instrument; but the powers arrogated to Dilārām are substantially increased in this version, surpassing those even of the king. Her skills are more subtle than his, but more powerful; for rather than catching animals with her bare hands, they come to her of their own accord: “The bashful deer, with sore and wounded hearts/Came
forward to her on their dancing feet”; and, of course, she can raise them back to life after having “killed” them. Eventually, her skills allow her to master not only the animals, but the king as well; for just as the animals come to her, so does he. This mastery reflects that of the Haft paykar but takes a more graceful form than that of a woman carrying a huge animal up a flight of stairs on her back.  

Yet another transformation involves the relationship between the protective male figure and the slave girl. Such a relationship exists in Nizâmi’s version, where the officer rescues Fitnah; but it is rendered considerably more complex and pronounced in the hands of Khusraw. It has been noted that, unlike in the earlier versions, Dilârâm was not yet a musician when she first set out hunting with Bahrâm Gûr. This fact is significant, for it opens an opportunity for the poet to depict a woman undergoing education, a singularly fresh theme in Persian literature. As we have seen, the landowner, portrayed as a highly moral, learned, and compassionate man, teaches Dilârâm, imparting to her skills that allow her to have an impact on her environment, to gain control of her life (as well as of nature), and to create beauty. Thus, through the help of a fatherly figure, she is transformed from a victim, a slave, and a weak person into one who is endowed with agency. The portrayal of the landowner-Dilârâm relationship thus posits a

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84 As Bürgel notes, Amîr Khusraw’s version is “even superior to Nezâmi’s version in one respect, namely, in avoiding the somewhat incongruous vision of a girl with the muscles of a heavyweight champion and in endowing the girl with an art which is spiritually superior to that of the king: captivating animals by the tones of a lute alone is certainly subtler than changing the sex of animals by such coarse means as an arrow shot.” Bürgel, “The Romance,” 174-5.
new version of male-female – and, indeed, human – dynamics that are dominated not by power but instead by generosity and an exchange of knowledge.

Once again, the identification of the slave girl with the animal that is under pursuit in the story helps to underscore this theme. Just as Āzādah came to be identified with the doe whose breast was covered with blood, and Fitnah with the luminous onager, Dilārām is often figured as a deer in this episode. For example, as we have seen, she is referred to in the first section as the “lion-catching deer” and, later, as the deer caught by the fierce lion. As the episode progresses, however, the brute dynamic between men and women – symbolized by the hunt – is steadily transformed into a more gentle and egalitarian relationship. Bahrām Gūr vows not to kill deer anymore; the dihqān teaches Dilārām; Dilārām charms animals with her music and comforts their sore and wounded hearts. The “feminine” compassion that was laid low and trampled in the Shāhnāmah is resurrected, and even admired; and to it is added intelligence, a sense of justice, and critical capacity.

That the narrator takes the side of Dilārām is evident from the beginning: he portrays Bahrām Gūr as the “dragon,” the slave girl the “treasure,” and seeks to show the injustice of the king’s acts by remarking that “With kings, one must not say a word against/their wishes, even though it be the truth.”85 The narrator’s

85 It should be noted that the dragon, in Nizāmī, appears as a terrible enemy of the onager in another episode; the onager seeks justice from it from Bahrām Gūr and then leads him to a treasure. This is the same onager that is identified with Fitnah. It may be posited that in this version, a similar process takes place except that Dilārām seeks justice from Bahrām Gūr from the dihqān and leads him to a treasure – that is, gives him the exquisite pearl.
sympathy for Dilārām is further manifested in the torturous description of her journey through the desert, where, as he writes, “The foot that hurts from the touch of petals/what is its fate, when it is met by thorns?” Unlike in Niẓāmī’s version, moreover, suspicion is not cast on her simply by virtue of her name.

The fact that Amīr Khusraw has reinstated the symbolic sex-changing operation of the Shāhnāmāh – omitted for practical reasons by Niẓāmī\(^{86}\) -- is significant. Here, it corresponds to his willingness to overturn hierarchies, to innovate, and, especially, demonstrate a sort of playfulness with the binary opposition of male/female. The differences between two categories traditionally regarded as polarized are, here, erased or scrambled on both a symbolic and a real level; and although this scrambling initially precipitates trouble, the end result is positive.

This reversal has its limits. Despite having been partially disrupted, the primary categories linger – women are still associated with music and beauty, men with force and hunting – and the basic inequalities of the hierarchy suggested by the story remain in force. Rather than creating a new, more equitable world, Dilārām, by the story’s end, rejoins Bahrām Gūr’s hegemonic framework, in which – we must assume – she subsumes her desires and wishes to his.\(^{87}\) Her purpose, in the end, is still to educate and entertain him; the story is primarily concerned with his development, not hers. Such an ending cannot be regarded as

\(^{86}\) Onagers, as Meisami has noted, do not have antlers or horns.

\(^{87}\) In particular, the desire to acquire new mates: he takes on multiple spouses through the course of the poem.
truly “happy,” by contemporary feminist standards (if a generic version of such standards even exists); but, it must be acknowledged that, even if for a brief period, a downtrodden female character exercises agency and is able to acquire power and to use it to promote a more expansive and tolerant form of humanism than that which previously existed.

IV.6. Influences And Interpretations

The changes made by Amīr Khusraw, as has been suggested, possess a clear deconstructionist character. We witness in them the undoing of a “violent hierarchy” – for nothing could be more violent or hierarchical than Bahrām Gūr’s treatment of Āzādah in Firdawsi’s version, in which he literally throws her to the ground and tramples her. One can conjecture, in fact, that in Firdawsi’s version of the Bahrām Gūr/slave girl story, the fixed oppositions are at their most polarized; with Nizāmī, they are broken down considerably; and with Amīr Khusraw, we have the “contest of meaning,” that involves the introduction of new oppositions, the reversal of hierarchies, the attempt to expose repressed terms, to challenge the natural status of seemingly dichotomous pairs, and to expose their interdependence and their internal instability.  

88 It must be noted that the Shāhnāmah has itself been painted as a subversive document, challenging as it does the supremacy of the Arabs and, in fact, that of the kings depicted within it. See Dick Davis, Epic and Sedition: The Case of Ferdowsi’s Shāhnāmeh (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992).

89 Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, 7.

162
We also see the reinstating of the oppositions in a manner that shifts the values inherent in each and their relationship to each other in a manner that to some degree eliminates the violence inherent in the construct. For example, the hierarchy of man/woman is equalized and balanced, and the terms themselves take on new meanings. One sees parallels with A.C. Graham's comparison of Lao-tzu, the long philosophical poem that appeared in China sometime between the sixth and early third centuries B.C., to Derridean thought. This poem, although manifestly different from the Hasht bihisht (its "pressing concern is ... how the small state and the small man survive in a world of murderously competing powers,"\textsuperscript{90}) is similar in that it promotes the "reversal of priorities in chains of oppositions ... In instructing the weak in the strategy of survival, Lao-tzu regularly advises him to prefer B to A, passive to active – in the terminology soon to become standard ..., Yin to Yang."\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{90} Graham, Disputers of the Tao, 218.

\textsuperscript{91} Graham, Disputers of the Tao, 223. Graham also writes that ‘... the West has aspired throughout a wide range of oppositions (reality/appearance, nature/culture, life/death, good/evil ...) to dissolve B in the pure being, the full presence of A. One of Derrida's methods of deconstructing the oppositions is to reverse them, for example elevating writing above speech ... The affinity of Lao-tzu and Derrida is that both use reversal to deconstruct chains in which A is traditionally preferred to B, and in breaking down the dichotomy offer us a glimpse of another line which runs athwart it – for Lao-tzu the Way, for Derrida the Trace. Both use a language which already escapes the opposition 'logic/poetry', a language in which contradictory statements do not cancel out, because if made in the appropriate sequence or combination they set you in the true direction.” Ibid., 227. It is worth noting that, just as Graham has drawn parallels between Taoism and Derridean thought, parallels may also be seen between Taoism and wujūdism; see Toshihiko Izutsu, Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
The reversal, for both, however, does not ultimately aim to elevate B over A; rather, it “smashes the dichotomy of A and B.” As Graham writes, “The effect of the reversal might also be described, not as the choice of B instead of A, but as a balancing of A and B.” It is in this manner that the sage is most able to cultivate and perpetuate his own survival, “for he recognizes that surviving by yielding to a rising power is the road to victory over it when its climax is past ...” It is this balancing that also characterizes the Bahrām Gūr/slave girl story, concomitant with a playful desire to elicit as many meanings as possible from the seemingly stable categories of man and woman.

Whence does this balancing come? One can clearly identify the influence of a unitive metaphysic, one that operated in both mystical Islam and Hinduism, in Amīr Khusraw’s treatment of the story. As we have observed in Chapter One, such a metaphysic tends to break down boundaries between categories and to reverse hierarchies. As manifested in Sufism, it encouraged a nontraditional attitude toward the male/female hierarchy. Muslim practice vis-à-vis women often took its cue from the Qur’ānic injunction “… men have a status above women,” and hierarchies were ordered accordingly. But on both an actual and a metaphorical level, mystical Islam often maintained a more open and egalitarian outlook toward

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92 Graham, Disputers of the Tao, 228.

93 Graham, Disputers of the Tao, 230 (my italics).

94 Graham, Disputers of the Tao, 229. There was also a great deal of repressiveness on a real level, and this will be addressed later in the chapter.

95 See Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman, 14.
matters of gender. For example, Ibn al-ʿArabī counted women mystics among his greatest friends and drew inspiration from them. And many utterances attributed to Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʿ, Amīr Khusraw’s beloved mentor and spiritual guide, indicate he believed that a woman’s spiritual stature could be as high as that of a man. The saint speaks of the “numerous benefits that accrue from the virtue of women” and refers to a woman who was “such a model of chastity and virtue that Shaykh al-Islam Farīd ad-dīn [another great mystic]... used to say repeatedly of her: ‘That woman is a man whom the creator has sent to earth in the bodily form of a woman!’” Like Amīr Khusraw, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʿ was greatly devoted to his mother, whom he regarded as an enormously pure and spiritual soul, and saw service to women, particularly older women, as of great value. In an affirmation

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96 Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman, 15. In ‘Aṭṭār’s Taṣkīrāt al-awliyāʿ, for example, we find numerous sympathetic portraits of women, from Bīsūmī’s loving servitude to his mother to Rābiʿah’s pure and steadfast devotion. See Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, Taṣkīrāt al-awliyāʿ, ed. Muḥammad Istīlāmī (Tehran: Intishahr-i Zuvvār, 1366/1987).}

97 Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman, 45-7.

98 FF, 103. From a twenty-first century perspective, the compliment is obviously one not entirely flattering to women and seems rather aimed at men; nevertheless, to arrogate to a woman “masculine” characteristics still represents a certain openmindedness. See Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman, 20.

99 See, for example, the saint’s tale of filling the pitchers of old women who are not allowed to approach a reservoir. FF, 279-80. Amīr Khusraw mentions his own mother in a loving manner upon multiple occasions. In an eloquent elegy for her that appears in Majmūʿa Layfī, he writes, “Since my mother is under the earth/If I die [lit., if I put dust on my head], what’s the fear in that? ... In every spot in which there is dust from your foot/For me, there is a memento from heaven.” ML, 265:13, 17. (The latter, of course, is an allusion to the hadīth, “Paradise lies at the feet of thy mother.”) He also mentions her tenderly in the Dībāchah-i dīvān-i ghurrat al-kamāl, 70. In l’jāz-i Khusrawī, the poet claims that the rights due to the mother for pregnancy and childbirth constitute a burden on the child “the smallest particle of which will cause the scales of Judgment Day to become heavy ...” and adds that even if a child were to give his mother thirty cities in exchange for carrying him and nursing him for thirty months, his duty toward her would not be discharged. See IK, 2:325.
of his egalitarian stance, at one juncture he declares, “When a wild lion comes into
an inhabited area from the forest … no one asks: ‘Is it male or female?’ Similarly,
the sons of Adam, whether they be men or women, must devote themselves to
obedience and piety.”100

A similar attitude toward women materializes on a more metaphoric level.
In mystical Islam the category of “woman” took on multiple and interesting
significations. It was often identified with the soul longing to unite with God.101
For that reason, mystics often assigned to themselves feminine traits; Abū Yazīd
Bištāmī (d. 874 or 877/8), the famous Persian mystic, wrote that “The saints are
the brides of God.”102 Although the feminine soul is sometimes portrayed
negatively as “Mistress World,” the nafs that incites man to evil, at other times the
depiction of the soul struggling to purify itself and unite with God carries far more
positive connotations, as the “indefatigably seeking, unspeakably suffering, loving
woman” who yearns “passionately for the source of all beauty, for God.”103
Significantly, as Schimmel has observed, the motif of the bride-soul is widespread
in the Subcontinent, and appears in the Hindu tradition in such forms as Radha’s
longing for Krishna, or in the bārahmāsā, the “Twelve Month Poem” whose “sole
theme is the expression of the various emotional states of the virahini, the

100 FF, 103. It must be noted that on other occasions he casts women in a much more
negative light.

101 Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman, 17-8.

102 Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman, 25.

103 Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman, 23.
unsatisfied, longing woman."\textsuperscript{104} And in some cases woman is figured as God or the Beloved toward which the male soul is striving in a reversal of the standard symbolism.\textsuperscript{105}

Bringing these matters to bear on the Bahram Gür/Dilārām story helps us to develop new and deeper understandings of the poem. On one level, the tale can be seen within the context of the genre of the bride-soul longing for union with God, for Dilārām is "calling" Bahram Gür to her through her song. Such a reading casts Amīr Khusraw’s attitudes towards women in a rather positive light. And, indeed, there is more evidence to bolster the notion that he was unusually openminded vis-à-vis issues of gender (although, as will be later demonstrated, plenty of contradictory data also exists). It is quite clear, for example, that women were neither expected nor encouraged to play a role in public life during the Delhi Sultanate and in the centuries following it. The limitations of purdah, or seclusion of females by means of veiling or high walls, curtains and screens, prevented women from being seen at all in public; indeed, at least in Mughal times, "[i]t was considered dishonor if a Muslim lady of high family discarded purdah to save her life even for a temporary period," and cases have even been recorded in which

\textsuperscript{104} Schimmel, \textit{My Soul is a Woman}, 130. As Rizvi notes, this motif occurs in Sikhism as well. Its founder, Guru Nanak, "urged his followers to worship the True One with adoring love and yearn for Him as a bride for her bridegroom." Rizvi, \textit{A History of Sufism in India}, 1:393.

\textsuperscript{105} Schimmel, \textit{My Soul is a Woman}, 99.
men divorced their wives following such an incident.\textsuperscript{106} In general, education for girls was minimal at best and geared only to their roles in the home: “By education, a girl was expected to prove a devoted wife, an excellent future mother experienced in household work and, above all, punctuality in religious duties.”\textsuperscript{107}

But on occasion women managed to break through the restrictions imposed by their gender, and Amīr Khusraw’s response to such an event is telling. Rażīyyah, the intelligent and energetic daughter of the Delhi sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish (r. 1210-1236), was reportedly groomed by her father to succeed him; indeed, according to several accounts, he named her as his heir-apparent.\textsuperscript{108} After a disastrous brief reign by her brother, she was enthroned by nobles and governors in 1236 in what has been described as a “very bold Turkish experiment.”\textsuperscript{109} Amīr Khusraw’s account of her accession and rule, found in Duval Rānī Khīzr Khān, a historical magnāvī completed in 1316, is largely positive and supportive:

\begin{quote}
After that, since the son was of little worth, the men of wise counsel turned to the daughter
\end{quote}

\footnotetext[106]{Zinat Kausar, \textit{Muslim Women in Medieval India} (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1992), 293. For example, one notable divorced his wife after she broke purdah by leaping from the back of an elephant that had gone out of control.}

\footnotetext[107]{Kausar, \textit{Muslim Women}, 147.}


\footnotetext[109]{Khālid Ahmad Nizami, \textit{Royalty in Medieval India} (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997), 59. Conditions for Muslim women among Turks of India (and Mongols as well) have often been seen as slightly superior to those among other groups, and some women did hold power in Turkish and Mongol societies. But on the whole, circumstances militated against active involvement.}
Raziyyah, a girl of agreeable nature decorated the throne from a secluded place.\textsuperscript{110}

The poet even seems to applaud her decision to break purdah because it interfered with her ability to rule effectively:

For several months, her face was veiled — \textsuperscript{111} her sword’s ray flashed, lightning-like, from behind the screen. Since the sword remained in the sheath, many rebellions were left unchecked. With a royal blow, she tore away the veil; she showed her face’s sun from behind the screen. The lionesses showed so much force that brave men bent low before it.\textsuperscript{112}

Indeed, her inevitable deposition four years after her accession and subsequent death is treated sympathetically.\textsuperscript{113} It is not because she stepped

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, Duval Rānī Khizr Khān, ed. Mawlānā Rashīd Aḥmad Sālim Anṣārī and Khalīq Aḥmad Nizāmī (Delhi: Idārāh-i Adabīyah-i Dillī, 1988), page 49, lines 1-2 (hereafter cited in text as DRKK). The last \textit{misra’} refers to the way in which the queen initially ruled, which adhered to the rules of purdah. As Nizami notes, “The throne on which she sat used to be separated from the courtiers and the public by a screen. The arrangement was such that female guards stood next to her and then those related to her by ties of blood.” Nizami, \textit{Royalty in Medieval India}, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Literally, her sun was in a cloud or mist.
\item \textsuperscript{112} \textit{DRKK}, 49:3-6. The last \textit{misra’} may also be read, “that brave men became pregnant by it.” Jūzjānī describes Raziyyah’s emergence from purdah in order to quell rebellions in this manner: “... and it so chanced to happen that Sultān Raziyyat laid aside the female dress and issued from [her] seclusion, and donned the tunic, and assumed the head-dress [of a man], and appeared among the people; and when she rode out on an elephant, at the time of mounting it, all people used, openly, to see her.” \textit{TN}, 1:643.
\item \textsuperscript{113} During her reign, she was accused of partiality to an Abyssinian slave of hers; was deposed by the army; married a Turkish governor; and together with her husband led an unsuccessful revolt against her brother, who had since replaced her. She was murdered at the hands of Hindu jāts, members of a peasant caste in the northern Subcontinent who often hold military posts. See \textit{TN}, 1:644-8, and \textit{TA}, 1:76-8.
\end{itemize}
outside of the role prescribed to her by her gender that she was doomed to die; only because of divine will:

For three years in which her hand was strong
no one lay a finger on one of her orders.
In the fourth [year], since the page had turned from her matters
the pen of fate drew a line through her.\textsuperscript{114}

Yet before the dangerous step is taken of casting Khusraw as a medieval feminist, it is necessary to consider the attitude that he adopted toward his own daughter, ‘Afffah.\textsuperscript{115} A message addressed to her that appears in the introduction to Hasht bihisht has been received as a devastatingly graphic portrait both of women’s status in fourteenth-century India and of the author’s own conservative and traditional stance toward females.\textsuperscript{116} The poet begins the passage, which can be seen as a response to or imitation of Nizāmī’s address to his son at the beginning of the Haft paykar, apparently by wishing that his daughter had not survived; but then rather begrudgingly resigns himself to the fact of her existence:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{114} DRKK, 49:7-8.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{115} The highly misogynistic character of other of his works, including the two final stories of the Hasht bihisht, both of which feature treacherous women, must also be taken into account.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{116} As the critic Shibli Nu‘mānī observes of this passage, “By studying the advice given to [Amīr Khusraw’s] daughter, the great inferiority of the position of women during that period becomes abundantly evident.” See Muhammad Shibli Nu‘mānī, Shi‘r al-ajam, trans. Sayyid Muhammad Taqī Fakhr Dā‘ī Gilānī, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 5 vols. (Tehran: Ibn Sīnā, 1335-9/1955-60), 2:91. S.H. Askari writes of the passage and others like it that “[i]ncluded from modern standards, Amīr Khusrau’s views about the females of his time may be taken to be very conservative and preservative of old traditional principles and practices …” The poet, he writes, was “obsessed with the idea of privacy and seclusion. He always used the word mukhaddarat which means a virtuous woman, concealed behind the veil of chastity, true to the marriage bed, and always veiled when going abroad. He wished young virgins to be kept retired behind the curtain. They were possessed of their own property, besides the irrefutable claim of bridal gift from husband, an essential element in marriage; but they were looked down upon as of the inferior position and subordinate to man.” Askari, Amīr Khusrau as a Historian, 34-6.
\end{quote}
That which God has given, I accepted,
for that which He gave, one cannot give back.
I give thanks for all that is from His door,
for it gives to me that which is fitting.117

Belaboring, it seems, to find something positive to say, he seizes upon the
fact that women are necessary in the world, for without them, reproduction could
not take place. Fathers are not always essential – Jesus was born from the Virgin
Mary – but mothers are:

After all, my father's of mother too;
after all, my mother's a daughter too.
If the oyster veiled not the pearl, once more
the watery drop, to water would turn.
Can an unplanted seed bear any fruit?
Can the sky be of use, without the ground?118

Indeed, in her capacity as daughter, and, as Khusraw indicates, mother to
him – a probable allusion to the Prophet's own title for his daughter, Fāṭimah, as
"mother of her father," umm abiḥā, – her station is high:119

O you, to whose body my soul is joined

117 HB, 36-7:358-9. Khusraw begins the poem by wishing that his daughter had been born
at eight months, which can be interpreted to mean that he wished she had not lived; as he writes in
the introduction to Wast al-Hayāt: “In the world of mothers and the waters of the womb/Any child
born at eight months does not survive.” WH, 6. See also Mahjūb, “Haft bihisht” va “Haft
paykar,” 68 n. 1; and Chander Shekhar, “The Critical Study of the Mathnawis of Amir Khusraw
Dehlavi,” (PhD diss., University of Delhi, 1989), 188. According to Zinat Kausar, “… the birth of a
girl was always marked with [a] subdued atmosphere and displeasure” in medieval Muslim India.
Kausar, Muslim Women, 9.

118 HB, 37:361-3. It is interesting to note that in Taoism, women are also associated with
earth, men with sky. See Graham, Disputers of the Tao, 331.

119 The title was bestowed to indicate the great care and attentiveness that Fāṭimah showed
toward her father, especially when he was wounded in battle. But Khusraw, as we will see later,
expects the meaning of the words to refer to the fact that he will be “reborn” through his daughter
and live through her after he is dead.

171
for you are my mother and my daughter—
You, in this station that is yours by fate
if you place your foot on my eye, it's right.\textsuperscript{120}

What advantage does her high station grant her? Her first duty must be to
strive to obey God and to be pure, chaste, and worshipful. But the poet also sets
out a strict regimen of behavior after she is married, one that sets her squarely
within the traditional confines of purdah: she must pay attention to her spinning
and sewing; keep her face to the wall and her back to the door; open the door of
the house to no one; avoid the gatherings of women; protect her husband's money
and refrain from stealing it; and abstain from gold and other ornamentation and
from lusting after it. Far from suggesting that she can be comfortable in open
places, alone, he recommends a home without even a window, for windows are
sources of danger and gossip:

The graceful hidden partridge needs a space
resembling an egg — that is, windowless.\textsuperscript{121}
A woman always rushing to her pane
jumps, though it's merely sunshine peeking in.
Even if sized like your needle's eye, know
your body's path out, is a window.
And if from a window you wish to see
your needle's aperture, enough should be.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{120} HB, 37:366-7.

\textsuperscript{121} The association of eggs — often a symbol of fertility — with chastity may have a
corollary in the Qur'\textsuperscript{a}n, which states that upon ascension to Heaven, the true servants of God shall
"sit with bashful, dark-eyed virgins, as chaste as the sheltered eggs of ostriches." Qur'\textsuperscript{a}n, 37:48.

\textsuperscript{122} HB, 40:393-6.
Interestingly, the blurring of lines between genders once again occurs in this section, although here it is in the context of keeping the woman in her place — that is, the home:

A woman is best, who is like a man in countenance
So that, to veiled women, she’s a husband.\textsuperscript{123}
A woman, if she’s a man, and a man of prudence
The needle and the spindle are her spear and arrow
...
To leave behind the spindle and needle is not art
Because they are the instruments of covering the body.\textsuperscript{124}

Therefore, instead of transmitting his most beloved art — that of music — to his daughter, as does the \textit{dihqân} of his fictional world, Amîr Khusraw sentences his daughter to a life of virtual imprisonment in the home, her sole occupations being those of sewing and spinning.\textsuperscript{125} He directs her to withdraw entirely from society and to become a virtual nonentity.\textsuperscript{126} She must not be one of those who is continually at her window; rather, the aperture of her needle should be window enough. Her bodily chastity should be her foremost concern; and the needle and

\textsuperscript{123} The meaning of this line is somewhat mysterious; it could be interpreted to mean that, like a husband, she protects her chastity. It may also suggest that a woman should be devoid of femininity so that she may not prove a temptation to other men.

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{HB}, 39:382–5.

\textsuperscript{125} Indeed, there is some evidence that Amîr Khusraw disapproved of girls even hearing music; a means of praising girls mentioned in \textit{l}jâz-\textit{i} Khusrâwî consists of saying that they never listened to the \textit{bâng-i surâdâ}, the musical “cry” associated with \textit{samâ'}, an ecstatic performance of devotional singing. See \textit{IK}, 2:165. However, mentioned in the same \textit{risâlah} is Turmaft Khatûn, a female musician whom Amîr Khusraw helped to find a position at court and of whose great skill and ability he rhapsodizes at some length. See \textit{IK}, 2:277; also \textit{Mirza, Life and Works of Amir Khusraw}, 218.

\textsuperscript{126} Cf. Sa’dî, who writes, “May one’s wife’s eyes be blind to strangers/when she leaves the house, let it be in her coffin.” \textit{Busûn}, chapter 7, page 305, line 6.
spindle help to preserve it, both by covering her in a physical sense and by
preventing her from engaging in more dangerous occupations. Although obedience
and piety are emphasized, the acquisition of education and skills is not.

The message stands in sharp contrast to missives addressed to the poet’s
sons, in which Amīr Khusraw emphasizes the importance of education and
study. And it departs even more acutely from his depiction of the fictional
Dilārām in Hasht bihisht. In fact, it is fascinating to contrast the poet’s portrayal of
Dilārām’s encounter with the dihqān to the passage in question. Both, we may say,
are accounts of a father delivering loving instruction to his daughter, but their
content could not differ more greatly. The dihqān seeks to provide Dilārām with
useful skills that will allow her to control her destiny and even to enlighten others.
After he has taught her what he knows, she desires to leave her home and to
exhibit what she has learned in the open; when she does, she makes a name for

\[127\] For example, in an introductory passage to Majnūn va Laylī, he addresses his young
son, ‘Ayn al-Dīn Khizr, thusly:

I named you Khizr in order that
you would have life eternal, in the end.
But there can be no eternal life
if you do not aspire to greatness and loftiness [lit., stretch your head to the moon
and sun].
And he who found a crown from the jewels of learning –
his head is [level with] the sky’s horizons.
And that man who endures suffering
grasps the key of this treasure.
...
If you wish your pen to attain the heights of eloquence
it will not happen without hard work [lit., without the smoke of the lamp].

The passage goes on to contribute advice on such varied matters as poetry as a profession,
the necessity of being kind to the poor, and the proper way to behave with friends. ML, 49:10-13;
56:14.
herself in society. No shame attaches to her act; there is no sense that she has stepped out of her bounds or transgressed what is natural and proper for a woman, apart from the slight ambiguity of the phrase “to fall outside the veil.” Indeed, she seems perfectly within her rights to remain outside without the protection of a male; and her act even attracts Bahram and allows her to prove the rightness of her claim to him and reinstate herself in his good graces.

The contrast between the fictional and real worlds is underscored by the poet’s divergent use of the word pardah. In the Bahram Gûr story, the word pardah, as we have seen, is deployed in two of its various meanings: as a musical scale taught to Dilaram by the dihqân and as the shelter out of which she desires to emerge to display her newly acquired powers. In the poet’s address to his daughter, however, pardah (like its analogue, purdah), most frequently refers to the veil of chastity that women must be hidden behind: “That which I saw advisable for you/I concealed you behind it, in the way of fathers.” 128 The pardah, the instrument of Dilaram’s freedom, is the device of ‘Aftâfah’s imprisonment. 129

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128 HB, 43:427.

129 It plays a similar role in the poet’s message to his daughter in Matla’ al-anvâr, where Amâr Khusrav places great emphasis on the necessity of veiling. He writes, for instance:

Be like the sun, [veiled] in its own luminosities
Make from modesty the veil [pardah] of your own face

Elsewhere, in a diatribe on the inutility of veiling if one is impure, he writes:

When the tambourine covered its body with a veil
the veil spoke [of immodesty] with a loud cry

MA, 335:53; 336:64.
IV.7. Conclusion

One can therefore see the manner in which on the one hand, the poet upheld freedom and a preliminary sort of equality for a female character in his works, but in his life did quite the opposite. Such a contradiction is neither surprising nor unexpected; just as the plays of Classical Athens featured strong, outspoken, and powerful women, even as women of the society itself were often little more than slaves, so poets such as Amīr Khusraw and Nizāmī might be expected to uphold different standards of conduct for women in their personal and fictional worlds.¹³⁰ That Dilārām was a fictional slave girl of Sassanian times whose chastity would not, naturally, have been of great concern to Khusraw, whereas ‘Afīfah was a real upperclass Muslim girl, not to mention his own daughter, would no doubt have played a part in his divergent portraits.

But we need not entirely dismiss the fictional portrait, for it represents an openness to gender equality that stands parallel to the other sorts of egalitarianisms promoted by the poet. It is significant that, even in imagination, Amīr Khusraw allowed a slave girl to master a king. And it is no accident that the story is set in

Sassanian times, which, while offering little equality for women in reality\footnote{Among other hardships endured by women during Sassanian times, Zoroastrianism demanded the wife’s “total obedience to her husband” and kings often had enormous harems. “Elements of … Zoroastrian regulations suggest that notionally women were somewhere between personhood and thingness—as evidenced by wives being legally loaned for sexual and other services.” See Leila Ahmed, \textit{Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 19-21. The \textit{Shāhnāmāh} does make note of some female rulers, however.} — often acted as a sort of idyllic playground for poets, where their imaginations could roam free and they could escape the restrictive strictures of their own times. Like Yeats’s Byzantium, pre-Islamic times offered an ideal screen for poets such as Khusraw on which to project their images of utopian societies.\footnote{It is interesting to note that Yeats’s understanding of time is a cyclical one, as is that of Nizāmī and Amīr Khusraw: “Each age unwinds the thread another age had wound, and it amuses one to remember that before Phidias, and his westward-moving art, Persia fell, and that when full moon came round again, amid eastward-moving thought, and brought Byzantine glory, Rome fell; and that at the outset of our westward-moving Renaissance Byzantium fell; all things dying each other’s life, living each other’s death.” William Butler Yeats, \textit{A Vision} (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 270-1.} Here, even women could gain power without deleterious consequences.

And the contradictions between the two sections of the poem are not so easily summed up and explained away. A closer examination and comparison of the poet’s address to his daughter and the Bahrām Gūr episode yields surprising similarities; in fact, one can even be said to illuminate the other and to reveal meanings that otherwise would remain hidden. A surprisingly similar ethic and even similar motifs prevail, ones that transcend the linear stories of either.

One aspect of this ethic is a cyclical quality. Meisami has written that Nizāmī’s poem portrays a different attitude toward time than does the \textit{Shāhnāmāh}. Unlike the epic vision of “mortality and decay as the end of all,” Nizāmī’s vision
“establishes man’s goal as perfection” and is more entwined with cyclical time (associated with an “Iranian” and neo-Platonic” worldview) versus linear time (associated with Islam). The choosing of the circle as the poem’s unifying structure – “symbol of wisdom, truth, and perfection, echoed in the emblematic image of the pearl and in the cosmic symbolism of the seven domes – affirms the possibility of transcending the finite limitations of this world, of conquering time itself …”\textsuperscript{133}

Such an attitude may also be found in the \textit{Hasht bihisht}. Death is never death in Amīr Khusraw’s poem; it is followed by life in a seemingly endless cycle, one in which souls sometimes move from one body to another in a manner that recalls Hindu transmigration. In the slave girl/Bahrām Gūr story, Bahrām Gūr symbolically “kills” Dilārām by throwing her from her mount and causing her to lose consciousness; she regains life through her own striving and the assistance of the \textit{dihqān}; she subsequently “kills” the deer with her music and then brings them to life again; and, finally, her longing soul finds a new home in Bahrām Gūr’s loving embrace.

A similar theme emerges in the poet’s address to his daughter. As we have seen, he writes, “O you, to whose body my soul is joined/for you are my mother and my daughter.”\textsuperscript{134} Although, as has been noted earlier, the poet’s referring to his

\textsuperscript{133} Meisami, “Fitnah or Azadah,” 61. The elements of death and rebirth are pronounced in the \textit{Haft paykar}, as in the \textit{Hasht bihisht}.

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{HB}, 37:366. Likewise, in the poet’s address to his daughter in the poem \textit{Malā’ al-anwār}, he advises her to live in such a way that she will bring her relatives, including him, back to life: “So that when my fallen body drops, I’ll be born from you, for I’m your child.” \textit{MA}, 331:11-2.
daughter as his mother likely alludes to one of the Prophet Muhammad’s sobriquets for his daughter, Fāṭimah, “umm abiha,” “mother of her father,” the poet elaborates and expands upon the title, imparting to it additional meanings. These become clearer in later verses, when he writes, “Strive to be dead to your own life/So that, mysteriously, from your life./After dying, I will be born again.” These lines echo those of Nizāmī’s to his son, when he writes in the Haft paykar:

With your good name’s die stamp your coin;  
let honour raise you up to Heaven,  
So that, in my confinement, I,  
By your greatness, will be raised high.136

What may we make of these statements? It is possible that they simply refer to the manner in which parents live on through their children’s good deeds and/or good characters; sons in Persian culture are traditionally seen as giving new life to their parents’ names and keeping their memories alive. If we temporarily put aside the implications of this first – and no doubt valid – interpretation, however, a series of interesting motifs emerge. Lines between masculine and feminine are blurred, just as they were in the Dilārām/Bahrām Gūr sequence; women change into men, who change into women again; souls, apparently androgynous, move from one body to another, sometimes inhabiting a female form, sometimes a male. The similarity to some forms of Taoism, in which the opposite pairs are constantly cycling into each other, and each possesses some

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135 HB, 38-9:380-1. These lines are missing from two manuscripts of the work.
aspects or principles of the other, is striking, as is the parallel to certain aspects of Hinduism and mystical Islam, in which divinity is depicted as masculine and feminine; the feminine element is not neglected.

Such attitudes towards gender at least on a cosmological level may explain some of the attributes that are to be found in the Hasht bihisht. In the world depicted by Amîr Khusraw, unlike that in which he lived, gender is not a permanently limiting condition, even as he sets out drastic markers for his daughter. By envisioning a sort of cycling through of souls from male to female bodies, whether in fiction or reality, he breaks down the barriers between the categories of “male” and “female” and perhaps even begins on the path toward a more equitable and less restrictive world. As Graham might put it, he lays the groundwork for a subsequent balancing and equalizing of A and B.

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137 Graham, Disputers of the Tao, 224.


139 Indeed, the earlier address to Amîr Khusraw’s daughter, in Maṭla’ al-anvâr, begins thusly: “O you, whose body is the eye and lamp of my heart/The best fruit of the garden of my heart/Though your brothers are of good fortune/They are not better than you in my eyes.” MA, 331:1-2. The critic Akhtarul Wasey somewhat overstates the case by concluding that in these lines the poet “confirms his faith in gender equality as part of a general principle of equality of all human beings.” Wasey, “Amîr Khusro: An Ideal Sufi,” in Alvi, Khusro, and Naiyyar, Amîr Khusro Dehlvi: A Seminar Report, 15. However, one must also make note of a short poem appearing in Nihâyât al-kamâl which concludes that daughters are superior to sons! See Amîr Khusraw Dihlavi, Nihâyât al-kamâl (The Peak of Maturity), ed. Yâsîn ‘Alî Nizâmî (Delhi, 1332/[1913/14]), 105 (hereafter cited in text as NK).
CHAPTER V
THE NUH SIPIH: TURK AND HINDU

V.1. Introduction

The terms “Turk” and “Hindu” stand at the very crux of Islamicate, and, particularly, Persianate, culture. Neither purely historical, nor literary, nor cultural, nor ethnic, nor religious, these tropes are a deceptively sturdy and unchanging duality around which, in reality, multiple layers of meanings have coalesced and various tensions accumulated.\footnote{Cf. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence, introduction to Gilmartin and Lawrence, Beyond Turk and Hindu, 2. The book’s aim is to “move beyond a fixation with bounded categories, whether religious or ethnic, Hindu or Turk, in order to pluralize the ways that these categories operated in varying historical contexts.”} Investigations of their usages in texts, as Gilmartin and Lawrence have noted, provide a useful window into the crystallization of identities, attitudes toward self and other, and the meshing of religion, culture, and ethnicity in a multivalent society.\footnote{Gilmartin and Lawrence, introduction to Beyond Turk and Hindu, 4-5.} As this chapter will demonstrate, the manner in which Amīr Khusraw transformed this dichotomy and the values of its respective categories in the Nuh sipihr stands as a dramatic and graphic example of cultural synthesis and the emergence of a new idiom. For in the Nuh sipihr, the terms “Turk” and “Hindu” acquire new shades of meaning and the relationship between
them is emphatically altered. No longer do the good/evil, white/black dichotomies associated with the duality hold; rather, the terms are balanced and even united. That is, the poet does not simply use the tropes according to the roles they had typically been assigned in the Persian literary tradition; instead, he changes them and even suggests a reconciliation between them. His accomplishment of this feat marks one of his great contributions both to Persian literature and to the development of a pluralistic framework, both in the Subcontinent and beyond.\(^3\)

Written in 1318/19 when the poet was approximately 67 years old, the *Nuh sipihr* is one of the most celebrated of Khusraw’s works, particularly by those who seek to emphasize the poet’s conciliatory and multicultural aspects and his great love of India.\(^4\) The convoluted historical circumstances under which it was composed have been thoroughly described in Wahid Mirza’s introduction to his 1948 edition of the *masnavī*, and the reader is advised to turn to that work for more detail. Briefly, however, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī, the authoritarian and puritanical king who ruled the Delhi Sultanate for 20 years, had died; and, after the usual bloody struggle for power, his son Mubārak Khān, henceforth known as Qūṭb al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh, acceded to the throne in 1316. In contrast to his father, the new king was pleasure-loving, liberal with prisoners and suppliants, and openhanded with crown monies:

\(^3\) It should be noted that although the work has previously been lauded as an example of cultural synthesis, no study has so graphically demonstrated how such an integration occurred by examining the poet’s usages of “Turk” and “Hindu.”

\(^4\) For a thorough discussion of the poet’s age at the time of the poem’s composition, see Mirza, *Life and Works of Amir Khusraw*, 18.
The generous treatment which the Sultān accorded to the people made them happy and contented; and they had dirams and dinars in their purses again. At the same time the rules promulgated by Sultān ‘Alāuddin, each one of which had some purpose or object on which it was based, were abrogated. Although openly the use of wine was strictly prohibited, yet adultery and turbulence and crimes, and dissipation and debauchery, which had completely disappeared in the time of Sultān ‘Alāuddin, again made their appearance among the people. During the four years and four months that Sultān Kutbuddin’s reign extended, he did nothing but spend all his time in dissipation and in satisfying his desires and in making lavish gifts.⁵

Although he has been characterized chiefly as a merrymaker, as can be seen in the above account by the historian Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 1594), the sultān also possessed a strong interest in mounting military expeditions; and his inauguration was followed quickly by a campaign to subdue Hindu-controlled regions of the Deccan, which his father had also undertaken: “When he had decorated his head with his father’s crown/his desire became, like his father’s, to conquer the world.”⁶ The royal army captured Deogir, a flourishing, wealthy city which, under the leadership of Harpāl Deo, had assumed independence from the throne of Delhi; and also Tilang, ruled by one of the most powerful rajahs in south India, who had likewise ceased to pay tribute. This latter campaign was led by the king’s favorite slave, Khusraw Khān, a Hindu convert to Islam, and by many accounts the king’s lover.⁷

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⁵ TA, 1:193; see also TF, 381-7.

⁶ NS, 54.

⁷ For a scathing critique of the king’s infatuation with Khusraw Khān and a vivid portrait of the folly that ensued during his reign, see TF, 381-409.
When the victories had been achieved and the king returned to Delhi, he invited Khusraw to a gathering of courtiers who were debating the relative merits of renowned Persian poets. It was then that the king voiced his desire to shower wealth upon a poet in exchange for a chronicle praising his deeds, as past rulers had done for the likes of Khāqānī and ‘Unṣūrī: “Since it was the custom of distinguished men/to give a treasure to all worthy ones/We are not less in ambition than those great ones …” But rather than merely bestowing an elephant’s load of treasure as a reward to his chronicler, the remuneration provided to other poets, the king offered the weight of an elephant:

My father guided me on this path, for
he was giving an elephant’s weight in gold.
He whom wisdom shows the way, knows that
an elephant’s weight is more than its load.9

No doubt lured by this promise of generous recompense, Khusraw took up the challenge, and the result was the Nuh sipihr, which celebrates the king’s reign as well as expounding upon the charms of India, the birth of the king’s son, the wonders of mystical love, and the art of poetry. It consists of nine chapters, each corresponding to one of the nine cosmological spheres posited by ancient astronomers, and each of which is dedicated to a different planet and composed in a different meter. As critics such as Mirza have noted (and the poet himself remarks), the poem is innovative both in form and content. Like Qirān al-sa’dayn and other of Amīr Khusraw’s magnavīs, it deals with topical and historical matters,

8 NS, 45.
9 NS, 46.
whereas previously these types of poems (as we have seen with the *Hast bihisht*) tended to be confined to mythological and romantic subjects. The use of a different meter for each *siphr*, including some rare in Persian poetry, further distinguishes the poem. Although a deeper examination of these features is no doubt a valuable project, what concerns us here, as has been previously mentioned, is an examination of the poet’s use of the terms “Turk” and “Hindu.” Before moving on to this study, however, it must be noted that Mubārak Shāh’s reign was destined to be short-lived: he slid into corruption and was murdered in 1320 at the instigation of his beloved slave, Khusraw Khān. That usurper succeeded in seizing the throne for a short time before he himself was overthrown by the intrepid Ghīyas al-Dīn Tughluq, a Turkish malik whose accession inaugurated a new dynasty in the Delhi Sultanate.

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11 For a vivid description of the king’s descent into dissipation and his eventual death, see *Ta.*, 1:196-204.

12 A glowing account of the king’s accession is given in Amīr Khusraw’s *Tughlaq nāmah* (Book of Tughlaq). True to form, the poet does not hesitate to criticize Mubārak Shāh, the ruler upon whom he had heaped such lavish praise in his earlier work. He casts the king as a corrupt voluptuary who neglected his duties in favor of his cups and therefore was doomed to defeat:

Wine and love and intoxication and youth
pleasure and fun and dominion and gratification:
One upon whom these vanities have descended –
how can he think of the future?
Drunkenness is unworthy of the emperor
as is immersion in love and lust.
The king is always the guardian of the people;
drunkenness in the guardian is a sin.
When the shepherd becomes wasted from pure wine
the flock sleeps in the belly of the wolf . . .
No person ought to sleep while at work
for in the end, he will give audience to regret –
V.2. Turk and Hindu in History

Appreciating the manner in which Khusraw wields the terms “Turk” and “Hindu” in the Nuh sipihr necessitates an understanding of their currency in fourteenth-century Delhi, which in turn requires a brief tracing of their evolution. The term “Turk” surfaces in a plethora of ways in the religious, political, historical and literary writings of the first several centuries of Islam. It was initially employed by Muslims to refer in a generic sense to migratory, Turkic-speaking tribes from the central Asian steppe that began filtering into the eastern Iranian world – “motivated both by the prospects of plunder and a quest for winter pastures” – in the sixth and seventh centuries. The historian S.A.A. Rizvi describes their initial rise to power thusly:

The conquest of Transoxiana, between 705 and 715 by the Arabs, and the gradual Islamization of the Turkic tribes, helped them to become more absorbed into the eastern Iranian world. After the foundation of Baghdad in 762 by the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur (754-775), the Turkic ghulams (literally ‘young men’ or ‘boys’ but colloquially meaning slaves) found quarters inside the town. The employment of three thousand of them brought from Samarqand as guards in the palace and army of the Caliph al-Mu‘tasim (833-842), in an effort to balance the Khurasanian army, gradually made Turkic slaves the most powerful section of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate.

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Especially kings, who, in secret
have many more enemies than friends.


This authority was only to expand as various ninth- and tenth-century dynasties such as the Ṭāḥirids, Ṣaffārīds, and Sāmānids arose in the eastern Islamic world. Turks served as valuable slave troops to rulers of these dynasties; but they also secured power for themselves and became independent commanders, producing long-lived, influential, and far-flung dynasties such as those of the Ghaznavids, the Seljuks, and, of course, the Delhi sultāns.¹⁵

Although Turks were at first regarded in a rather unflattering light,¹⁶ they quickly developed a reputation for good horsemanship and valor in battle that was immortalized by al-Jāḥīz (d. 869) in his epistle known as “The Merits of the Turks”:

Neither the Khārijites nor the Bedouins are famous for their prowess as mounted bowmen. But the Turk will hit from his saddle an animal, a bird, a target, a couching animal, a marker post or a bird of prey stooping on its quarry. His horse may be exhausted from being galloped and reined in, wheeled to right and left, and mounted and dismounted: but he himself goes on shooting, loosing ten arrows before the Khārijite has let fly one. He gallops his horse up a hillside or down a gully faster than the Khārijite can make his go on the flat.¹⁷

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¹⁵ Detailed information on all of these dynasties may be obtained from Clifford Edmund Bosworth’s excellent The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Several negative hadiths regarding Turks exist, including “Leave the Turks and Abyssinians as long as they leave you,” and a hadith that associates the end of time with combat with Turks who are “wearing shoes made of hair,” who are “broad-faced” and “whose faces will look like shields coated with leather.” See Arent Jan Wensinck, A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition (Leiden: Brill, 1927), s.v. “Turk.” For an identification of the apocalyptic Turks with the Mongols, see Jackson, Delhi Sultanate, 113.

¹⁷ Pellat, Life and Works of Jāḥīz, 93.
The Turks’ prowess in war is unmatched:

Their are the glorious days, the famous battles, the vast conquests. Without them there could be no squadrons or battle formations. They it is who carry the standards and banner, the kettledrums, bells and trappings. Theirs are the neighing, the dust flying, the spurring on, the cloaks and weapons flapping in the wind, and the thunder of hooves; they are the unerring in pursuit, the unattainable when pursued.\(^{18}\)

Indeed, though Turks were sometimes regarded as ruffians, louts, and drunkards,\(^{19}\) they more often aroused admiration in their onlookers; and in India, members of the court and those surrounding it were frequently eager to claim Turkish ancestry.\(^{20}\) An exemplar of the high esteem in which Turks were held in India emerges in the thirteenth-century historian Fakhr al-Mudabbir’s remarks on their suitability for serving Islam: he writes that there is no kind of infidel people

\(^{18}\) Pellat, *Life and Works of Jāhiz*, 95. It is interesting to note the association of Turks with bravery, boldness and, to some extent, destructiveness has carried forward into modern day Urdu and Persian usage. One connotation of the word “turkī” in Urdu is bravery or rough boldness; to give tit for tat is to answer turkī with turkī; and to have one’s courage spent or pride broken is described in terms of the depletion of one’s turkī. See Dil Muhammad, *Lughāt-i Urdu*: *Ma’rif bih Gulzār-i ma‘āni* (Lahore, 1955), s.v. “turkī bih turkī jāvāb dēnā” and “turkī tamām hūnā.” In Persian, *turkāzī* (“Turk attack”) denotes an assault made suddenly, without prior warning and with the objective of plunder. See ‘Ali Akbar Dīhkudā, *Lughat Nāmah*, CD-ROM, version 2.0 (Tehran: Intisārat-i Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān), s.v. “turkāzī.”

\(^{19}\) Schimmel, “Turk and Hindu: A Poetical Image and its Application to Historical Fact,” 116. The concept of the uncouth and often destructive Turk is one that has carried forward into contemporary times. In his 1929 introduction to *The Travels of Ibn Battūta*, Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb writes of the centuries of rule by Turk-dominated dynasties: “The scepter had passed from the hands of the supple Arab and the cultured Persian to those of the violent and illiberal Turk. For more than two centuries after the year 1000 the ambitions of Turkish generals and chieftains had torn and retorn the body of Islam, devastating its lands by their misgovernment and continual warfare more effectively than any foreign foe.” It was this mismanagement, Gibb suggests, that caused the land of Islam to be vulnerable to the Mongols in the thirteenth century. Gibb, introduction to *The Travels of Ibn Battūta*, trans. Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (1929; repr., New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2004), 16.

\(^{20}\) For the imaginative ways in which Delhi sultāns traced their Turkish ancestry, see Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, 40.
which is brought over to Islam and does not look with longing at home, mother, father, and kindred: for a time they are bound to adopt Islam, but in most cases they apostasize and relapse into paganism. The exception is the Turkish race, who, when they are brought over to Islam, fix their hearts in Islam so firmly that they no longer remember home or region or kinsfolk ... The Turk is like a pearl that lies in the oyster in the sea. For as long as it is in its habitat, it is devoid of power and worth; but when it emerges from the oyster and from the sea, it acquires value and becomes precious, decorating the crown of kings and adorning the neck and ears of brides.  

At some point the connotation of the term “Turk” broadened, so that we can no longer be sure, when encountering it, exactly to which people the writer was alluding. As Mirza remarks,

... the term has been indifferently used by the Persian historians in a dual sense. It is sometimes employed in an ethnographical sense and denotes a certain race which apparently inhabited parts of Central Asia, Transoxiana, Khorasan, etc., at the time of the Mongol invasion and supremacy, and which in physiognomy and other personal and social features and characteristics differed considerably from the Mongols. On the other hand the term is very often used in a sociological sense and covers all the nomadic people of Central Asia who lived in steppes and hills, as opposed to Tājiks or Tāzikhs, the civilized town-dwellers.  

Often, the word “Turk” was merely used to mean soldier; thus Mars, the God of War, is often called “turk-i falak,” “the Turk of the Sky.”

Similarly, at an undetermined date (though probably during the tenth century as Persian literary activity began to reawaken in Khurāsān), the term “Turk” began to be incorporated as a literary trope in Persian poetry, an event that considerably complicated and expanded its semantic range. The origin of this

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21 The remarks from Fakhr-i Mudabbir’s Shajarat al-Ansāb (35-7) are quoted in Jackson’s Delhi Sultanate, 64-5.

22 Mirza, Life and Works of Amir Khusrau, 6-7.

23 Mirza, Life and Works of Amir Khusrau, 6 n. 5.
usage has been traced to the fact that masters often availed themselves of their good looking Turkish slaves to gratify their sexual desires; this reality was reflected in the works of such early poets as Rūdakī (d. 940-1) and Farrukhī (d. 1037/38), who themselves likely benefited from these arrangements.²⁴ (The love-affair between the famous Ghaznavid sultan, Maḥmūd (r. 998-1030), and the Turkish slave Ayāz, stands as an exemplar of this sort of relationship.) Though the term retained some of its original connotations, it became exaggerated and frozen into an “ideal of manliness,”²⁵ so that Turk transformed into a metaphor for someone with “a fair complexion, beauty, and military virtues, which are qualities befitting the lyrical persona of the Beloved … with its combination of attractiveness and cruelty.”²⁶ Later, in mystical poetry like that of ʿAṭṭār (d. 1221) and Rūmī, the Turk came to symbolize an angel, or even God.²⁷

It was at precisely the same moment, according to Schimmel, that the term “Hindu” evolved into a literary trope with the opposite connotation of “Turk,” and frequently juxtaposed to it in Persian poetry.²⁸ Again, this usage represents a


²⁵ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Hindu.”

²⁶ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Hindu.” See also comments on the term “Turk” used as both a symbol of beauty and an ethnic designation in the ghazals of Ḥāfiz in Mahdi Šadrl, “Nāgūftah-ha’t az yak ghazal-i Ḥāfiz” (Things Left Unsaid about a *Ghazal* of Ḥāfiz), *Āyīnah Mīrāg* 4 (Winter 1382/[2004]): 40-52.

²⁷ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Hindu.”

considerable evolution. The term Hindu derives from the ancient Persian word for river (sindhu in Sanskrit) and was employed by outsiders to refer to the Indus river and the region around or beyond it; eventually that land became known as "Hindustān" and its inhabitants, "Hindus." It later came to denote, in Persian, both an "inhabitant of the Indian Subcontinent as well as a follower of Hinduism." The term did not correspond to any self-conception or self-appellation, either geographical or religious, among those at whom it was directed.

According to Schimmel, the term Hindu initially enjoyed a somewhat positive connotation in the Islamicate world, a state of affairs that she attributes in part to the "precocious wisdom of Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim, the seventeen-year-old commander of the Muslim army who subjugated the Indus valley up to Multan ..." As she observes, al-Qāsim "considered the Hindus to belong to the ahl al-kitāb ... and imposed upon them, as upon Buddhists, only the jizya, refraining from treating them as idol-worshippers." Early Arab writers tended to remark upon the blackness of the Hindus’ complexions, but in addition acknowledged their scholarly achievements in such fields as medicine, mathematics, magic, and

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30 Encyclopaedia Iranica, s.v. "Hindu."


philosophy; in fact, as Schimmel remarks, “The Hindu ḥākim [philosopher] becomes a standard type.” Certain Indian products, such as perfume and swords of finely tempered steel, also attracted the admiration of Arab and Persian writers.

But with the Ghaznavid conquest, the term underwent a metamorphosis. Schimmel attributes the change in part to Alberuni’s *India*, which, despite the great respect it generally evinces for the inhabitants of India and their learning, stresses the enormous divide between Hindus and Muslims; it was perhaps partly due to this emphasis that the term Hindu, as a literary trope, came to represent the polar opposite of the Turk, she suggests. It was also at this time that the term began to acquire a religious connotation rather than a primarily ethnic or regional one,

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35 *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. “Hindu.”

36 In introducing his study and addressing the particular difficulties of Muslims in approaching Indian subjects, al-Bīrūnī writes, “For the reader must always bear in mind that the Hindus entirely differ from us in every respect, many a subject appearing intricate and obscure which would be perfectly clear if there were more connection between us.” *AI*, 17. He later writes that “…they totally differ from us in religion, as we believe in nothing in which they believe, and *vice versa.*” *AI*, 19. However, it is interesting to note that the scholar later suggests that at its essence Hinduism is a pure monotheism. As Friedmann writes, “… al-Bīrūnī comes virtually to the conclusion that there is little substantial difference between Hinduism and the religious traditions called monotheistic. The difference rather lies between elite and the common people, whatever their religious affiliation may be. The elite in all religious communities, including Hinduism, worships God alone. On the other hand, all uneducated common people, even those who adhere to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, need concrete objects of worship and their religious leadership must take their susceptibilities into account.” Friedmann, “Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions,” 215.

according to Ernst. In any event, "the stereotype of the Hindu developed into an element of lyrical imagery which had little to do with reality. It appears also in the works of poets who had no actual experience with Indians at all." Most references were negative, with the Hindu seen as "ugly, mean and blackish," and, above all, the slave to the Turkish master. In ghazals, for example, lovers are often figured as miserable Hindus enslaved to beautiful Turks. Schimmel dates the first prominent usage of this poetic pairing to the work of Nizāmī; it subsequently became fully developed "in the mystical poetry of ʿAṭṭār and in the imagery of the Kubrāwiyya order around 1200." As we have seen, in their mystical incarnations Turks were associated with angels and even with God, whereas Hindus were aligned with devilry, demons, and materialism:

In a mystical context … Hindustan becomes an apt symbol for the material world of clay and water, as against the Turkestan of spiritual being. … The Hindu is also the night, which is engaged in combat with the Turk of daylight. In astrology the dark and inauspicious planet Saturn is frequently called the Hindu of the Firmament.

38 Ernst, Eternal Garden, 24.

39 Encyclopaedia Iranica, s.v. "Hindu."


41 For example, Saʿdī writes, "Lift your veil, my Turk/for I am your Hindu (i.e., your slave.)" Ghazalhā-yi Saʿdī, ed. Ismāʿīl Șārīmī and Ḥamīd Muṣaddiq (Tehran: Nashr-i Alburz, 1376/[1997]), page 355, line 10.


43 Encyclopaedia Iranica, s.v. "Hindu."
In fact, Saturn became thought of as “the black doorkeeper of higher spheres to whom all evil influences of Hindu magic were ascribed”; and the Hindu was “mythologized as the demonic resident of hell.”

The connotations were not wholly negative. Because the term “Hindu” was frequently used as an adjective to describe anything black, it often appeared in descriptions of the Beloved’s beautiful black tresses, mole, or eyelashes, all of which could have mystical or divine connotations. And at times the Hindu was even figured as the Beloved: “Anwārī (d. 1189 or 1191) ... complained of a Hindu who burned the poet’s soul as if it were a Hindu,” and Farrukhī “has a lovely qīṭa pertaining to the difference between a Hindu and a Turkish slave” and that claims that “the docile Hindu is easier to kiss and to love than the obstinate and cruel Turk.” Such usage, at least in the case of Farrukhī, may reflect actual encounters with residents of India, many of whom were captured during the

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45 Ernst, Eternal Garden, 23.


campaigns of Sulṭān Maḥmūd.⁴⁹ Even Niżāmī, who is unlikely to have had contact with residents of the Subcontinent, refers to the learned hakīms of India in such works as Iskandar nāmah and Makhzan al-asrār.⁵⁰ But by and large the associations were derogatory, and will be of significant relevance in our discussion of the Nuh sipihr, to which we will now turn.

V.3. Amīr Khusraw’s Use of the Terms

How, then, does Khusraw deploy these terms? As mentioned in Chapter Two, as a resident of India, where “Turks” and “Hindus” co-existed on a literal level, rather than a merely metaphorical one, the poet might be expected to utilize the motifs in a more realistic manner, instead of allowing them to retain the stereotypical associations that they had accreted outside of India. But according to critics such as Schimmel, such is not the case. Amīr Khusraw, she asserts, “uses the inherited dichotomy Turk-Hindu, Turkish beloved and Hindu slave, in his verses exactly the way we know it from Niżāmī, ‘Āṭṭār, and innumerable others.”⁵¹ Ernst, as we will later see, even charges Khusraw and other poets and historians of the Delhi Sultanate with exacerbating the “Turk” and “Hindu” divide and of


⁵¹ Schimmel, “Turk and Hindu: A Poetical Image and Its Application to Historical Fact,” 115. She does acknowledge, however, that the poet offers praise of some Hindu customs.
intensifying the religious dimension affiliated with that polarization.\(^{52}\) These assumptions are fair, for a cursory glance at the first two *sipihrs*, which discuss among other events the campaign into the Deccan, reveals nothing but seemingly derogatory references to Hindus, ones that heh faithfully to the stereotypes we have witnessed. Yet if we look more closely, a divergent impression emerges, and even the seeds of something that will blossom into a flower of a very different sort in the third *sipihr*.

Let us begin, then, with the first two *sipihrs*, and their long accounts of Mubārak Shāh’s incursion into the Deccan. After a long, hyperbolic description of the preparations for *ghazā* warfare – complete with picturesque images of black banners, ear-shattering trumpet-blasts, furious elephants, flying dust that darkened the stars, and the road that became rippled “like the sea from the wind” from the horseshoes treading upon it,\(^{53}\) it launches into a report of the reaction of Rāghū, the fearless Hindu deputy at Deogir, who receives the king’s message that the Muslim army has arrived:

> When he learnt that the ruler of the world\(^{54}\) has brought crown and throne to Deogir – that the king desires to make a throne-stand there; to spread royal shade from black parasols; to implant light from the sun of Islam deep inside impiety’s darkness … to make manifest, the greatness of God – that stony-hearted one trembled in awe:


\(^{53}\) *NS*, 60.

\(^{54}\) Lit., “Solomon of the Horizons”; i.e., Mubārak Shāh.
he melted like mud on a riverbed.\textsuperscript{55}

This passage demonstrates the manner in which Khusraw brings into play the motifs typically associated with "Turk" and "Hindu" and even elaborates on them, although neither term is directly used in it. The Turks are allied not only with light (the caliph wishes to "plant light from the sun of Islam") and God, but also with awesome strength and imminent victory. The Hindus, conversely, are affiliated with demonry, darkness, infidelity, fear, weakness, and mud: the brave deputy shakes and melts at the thought of the onset of the Turks "like mud in a riverbed." The sense of yielding and diffusion imputed to the Hindus stands in sharp contrast to the focused, determined movement of the Turks.\textsuperscript{56}

As the poem continues, various aspects of the dichotomy receive emphasis at different moments and are combined in assorted ways. For example, the author often evokes the light/darkness theme, casting the distinction between the Turks and the Hindus as one of sunshine (or other forms of sparkling light) versus shadow:

\begin{quote}
The Hindus could not endure that attack; like shadow from sunshine, they scampered back.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{NS}, 65.

\textsuperscript{56} It is interesting to note the similarities between the characteristics of Hindus and Turks, as described here, and two of the gunas, or components of Nature or matter, as represented by the Bhagavad Gita and Sāṃkhya philosophy. The \textit{tamas guna} is associated with darkness, inertia, and ignorance. The \textit{rajas guna} is affiliated with activity and restlessness. Neither \textit{guna} is seen as positive; the aim is \textit{satītva}, the equilibrium between \textit{rajas} and \textit{tamas}, and the ideal of goodness and harmony. If, indeed, the poet was influenced by such Hindu concepts, as he may well have been, his ultimate unioning of Turk and Hindu at the end of the third \textit{sipihr} may have even greater resonance. See The Bhagavad Gita, 86-7.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{NS}, 69.
The identification is sometimes achieved by figuring natural phenomena as Turks and Hindus, rather than the opposite:

When the stars brightened in the dark gloom, like the bold army of Turks, among Hindus ... \(^{58}\)

The poet also employs the light/dark theme in the following *bayt*, but introduces the elements of activity versus stagnancy, and solidity versus insubstantiability:

Like lightning in a dark cloud, the brave Turks’ arrows leapt amid that impiety. \(^{59}\)

Thus the Turks are associated with the laser-like singular focus of a lightning-like arrow, versus the amorphousness, slow movement, and scattered turbidity of a dark cloud. A sense of dishevelment or diffusion is a frequent characterization of the Hindu, as is underscored in this verse: “In one attack upon them from the Turks/those disheveled-natured ones were dispersed.” \(^{60}\)

The strength of the Turks versus the weakness – both bodily and religiously – of the Hindus is another frequent motif. The Hindus have no power to resist the Turks, a state of affairs that is enshrined as an inevitable law of nature and affirmed as permanent and eternal in the following passage:

When the Turks’ arrows struck those pagans, they took heart and soul from body, in a breath.

\(^{58}\) *NS*, 107.

\(^{59}\) *NS*, 106.

\(^{60}\) *NS*, 93.
Two prey may butt heads in spite, but when the wolf comes, there is no sign of a fight. How sharp is the rage of cocks in war, who become like brides before the great hawk. Two deer twine their antlers in vengeance keen but before the panther, they die of fear. In the world, this custom has long held sway: the Hindu has always been the Turk’s prey.

Another association introduced in this passage is that of Hindus with weaker or more “feminine” imagery, including brides and animals such as deer versus the strong, “masculine” animals with which the Turk is affiliated, such as the hawk, wolf, and lion. Even in instances where Hindus are figured as strong, “masculine” animals or people, they become feminized in confrontation with the mighty Turks. This masculine/feminine theme recurs throughout the poem, at times more directly than others. One passage depicts the Turks’ incursion into valleys so narrow that the “morning wind became hurt within them.” The Turkish army, likened to the “radiant fire of Bukhārā,” went on, turn upon turn, making, Turklike, the plunder of Hindu.
The riders, from their formidable forms — before whom Zāl’s Rustam became woman — throwing spears that stole hearts from breasts in spite so swiftly, the breast knew not it’d been hit.63

This scene essentially figures the Turks as fiery rapists of Hindu men turned womanlike, an interesting development in light of our previous discussion.

61 Lit., their souls leap from their breasts.
62 NS, 89.
63 NS, 86.
of male/female dynamics, and one that will receive further explication later in this chapter. It is also significant that Khusraw uses the term "fire of Bukhārā" in describing the Turks, thereby further distinguishing them from the Indians and adding a regional dimension to the religious one already in use.

Yet another aspect of the Hindu stereotype evoked by Khusraw is the association with the earth and materialism. Frequently, Hindus are linked to mud—we have seen how the deputy “melted like mud”—and elsewhere, the narrator asserts, with regard to the Hindus: “A person who had no strength in his heart/his body became mud, like mud-eaters.”64 Likewise, the leaders recounting the capture of a Hindu chief remark that he had, “like Saturn/taken up a place in a tower of earth.”65 Elsewhere, in a cosmological representation of the battle between the Hindus and Turks, the poet writes: “When the sun’s dagger entered the earth’s sheath/ black night went to war with the bright sun.”66 And in many instances, just as the Hindus are affiliated with the earth, the Turks are seen as cohorts of the sky, or at least beneficiaries of its help.

Mud and earth are often directly accompanied by a connotation of evil and malevolence. When Khusraw Khān arrives on a mountain’s embankment at the beginning of an assault, he sees “a world [full] of Hindus/The earth’s face turned

64 NS, 106. That is, he died.
65 NS, 108.
66 NS, 112.
black from those black-faced ones."\textsuperscript{67} The expression employed here for "black-faced ones," \textit{rūsiyāhān}, also means sinners in Persian.

Elsewhere, the connotation of evil exists without the attending imagery of earth and mud. At one point the Turks are described as killing "...many black demons/they made full of demons, that demon lair";\textsuperscript{68} or, in a depiction of a successful battle, the poet writes: "The spear pierced through both Satan and the heart/in every breast in which Satan lived."\textsuperscript{69} On the other hand, goodness and God are firmly linked to the Turks. Fate and divine will are clearly on their side:

He who heard the voice of the \textit{ghazā} sword
heard too, from its \textit{mihrāb}, "We have conquered!"
Fate inscribed victory for the \textit{ghāzīs};
carved the lion's amulet on their arms.\textsuperscript{70}

We have seen that the relationship between Turk and Hindu is often conceptualized as a battle between light and dark, sky and earth, good and evil. In the following description of an assault of the Turks, Khusraw depicts the relationship as one that is literally hierarchical, placing the Turks above the Hindus in a physical as well as a metaphorical sense:

All at once, upon that rampart of mud
the row of stouthearted \textit{ghāzīs} mounted
Hindus in a downward slope, Muslims above
[bearing] thoughts of ruin to the tricky Hindu.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{NS}, 92.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{NS}, 108.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{NS}, 94.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{NS}, 94.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{NS}, 103.
As has been demonstrated, the battles are normally cast as religious feuds, with the so-called impiety of the Hindus supplying a major justification for the attack of the Turks as well as the means of their success. Indeed, the poet often links references to the Hindus' "infidelity" with descriptions of their deaths, as in the following verses: "A head made polished at an idol's foot was pierced, like an idol's nose, by a sword,"⁷² and "He whose life-vein was close to his sacred thread/[the Turks] severed vein and thread, together."⁷³ The constant stress on the infidelity of the enemy also gives rise to the various religiously-toned epithets given to them, including Brahmin, idol-worshipper, polytheist, and gabr, a term that usually connotes fire-worshippers and Zoroastrians, but is also used in a generic sense to mean infidel or unbeliever. This attitude will resonate in the third sipühr, where the very terms hurled as insults here, such as Brahmin, are transformed into words of praise.

V.4. Seeds of Ambiguity

As we have seen, the poet's use of "Turk" and "Hindu" in the first two sipührs builds upon and makes use of the values already assigned to these terms in the Persian literary tradition. Even in these sequences, however, seeds of ambiguity can be detected that subtly undermine the strength of the dichotomy. One of the most striking issues is the great variety of imagery used to depict the

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⁷² NS, 95.

⁷³ NS, 95. Zunndār, the term employed here for sacred thread, is often used elsewhere in Persian poetry to denote the girdle worn by Christians to identify them as such.
Hindus and its inherent inconsistency. To give a prominent example, Hindus are likened to a wide assortment of animals: deer, cocks, and crows, to name a few. But if we identify the particular qualities for which each animal is known, we see that little commonality exists among them. The deer is graceful, while the crow is known for its ugliness. The crow is black; the cock and deer are not. The cock is fierce; the deer and crow are not. This usage demonstrates the manner in which the poet simply draws on various poetic conceits depending on which characteristic of the Hindu he most wishes to emphasize, as well as those of the Turk that he desires to underscore. If the Turk is to be the strong and ravaging lion, the Hindu must be the weaker deer. If the Turk is the beautiful and eloquent parrot or peacock, the Hindu is the ugly crow. While these characteristics stand up on a superficial reading, upon more deliberate examination the negative qualities of the animals associated with the Hindus cancel each other out, and the categories composing the binary opposition are drained of significance. As the basic instability of the categories is exposed, it becomes evident that the term “Hindu” has no essential qualities inhering in it and is used in an indiscriminate manner to define and bolster the identity of the Turks.

Additionally, the poet himself crosses the boundaries and attributes characteristics typically assigned to one group to the other. For example, Hindu finery and implements such as swords and jewelry often merit high praise in the first two sipihrs, even though physical beauty is normally a provenance of the
Turks. When Khusraw Khān mounts a hill to survey the fort of Arangal in Tilang, he is overwhelmed by its lushness, which has a specifically Indian flavor:

He looked, and saw a rampart like the sky
there was not a visible end to it;
On its outskirts, a spring and two gardens
swelling the pleasure-worshippers’ delight.
Their fruits all mangoes, bananas, breadfruit
not cold like apples or cool like quince.
The scents that drifted, constantly, from there
gave off the odors of Hindi flowers.
*Chanpah* and *kiurah*, scent upon scent
...
When the exalted Khān beheld all that
he asked God most high to aid in conquest.
He turned his reins toward the fort from there
to make a merry place for the ruler.

The passage goes on to describe the lovely grass-plots, places abounding in springs, and other scenic spots observed by the Khān, concluding with a pun on the dark-blue color of the flowers that dot the landscape – they are *surmah*, a word that also denotes a material used to anoint or decorate the eyes – and the manner in which eyes brighten upon witnessing them. It is a brief moment of beauty, one that offers the reader a respite from the gore that otherwise permeates the chapter.

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74 Arangal is roughly equivalent to today’s Warangal, a city in Andhra Pradesh in the Deccan.

75 I have preferred an alternate manuscript’s version here and read it as “not cold like apples” rather than “not like apples of old.”

76 NS, 90.

77 Cf. a later ode written after Khusraw accompanied the prince Ulugh Khān to Deogir, then renamed Qubabāb in honor of the unfortunate king. He rhapsodizes at length about the freshness of its air, the beauty of its flowers, the deliciousness of its fruit (including bananas shaped like the crescent moon and mangoes resembling a golden bowl filled with milk and honey), the fineness of its cloth (so closely woven that 100 meters could pass through the eye of a needle) and
An uncanny beauty often emerges from the combination of light and dark, as in this verse: “Stars sparkled from darkness every which way/Like gleaming eyes upon a Hindu’s face.” Likewise, a long sequence describing the lavish gifts meant to placate the Turkish conquerors is replete with sumptuous and highly flattering descriptions. In describing the actions of a conquered Hindu rajah as he assembles goods from his subjects and sends them before the leaders of the Turks who have gathered for the occasion, the poem equates him with the “Hindu of the night,” strewing pearls (or stars) that cause the firmament to become a gem-filled house; the treasure itself is equated with the sun which rises and brightens the dark horizons. The gifts include “trunks full of jewels … more than can be contained in thought or mind,” the finest gold, the best Indian \( (hinduvānah) \) garments, so fine that “neither water passes through it, nor oil/nor, like a [small] drop of water, the arrow’s point,” 100 or so elephants, 12,000 Arabian horses, and plentiful amounts of fragrant sandalwood, that “lends the forest its sandalwood scent.”

On the one hand, these descriptions serve to glorify the conquest of the Turks, since the plunder begotten from it speaks well of their campaign; on the other, they succeed in disrupting the rhetorical dichotomy that assigns worthlessness and ugliness to the Hindus and the opposite characteristics to the Turks. Similarly, it is possible to identify instances in which characteristics

\begin{quote}
the loveliness of its people: “Although they are of Hindu origin, and [thus] of hell/in beauty each is a heaven, and descended of houris.” \textit{NK}, 50-4.
\end{quote}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[78] \textit{NS}, 112.
\item[79] \textit{NS}, 118-20.
\end{enumerate}
typically allied with Hindus are attributed to Turks. In a description of one battle, 
the poet depicts the army of the Turks as approaching in a cloud of dust: “The 
army came in, dust around it, like wind …”; the dust, in fact, had made the sky, 
earth.⁸⁰ Or, elsewhere:

The army rose up like dust upon Arangal; 
the Hindus crawled off to mountain and wood 
Their goal: to go under the earth, from fear 
for they saw, suddenly, earth on their heads [i.e., death.] … 
Dust rained down on their heads in such a way 
that from it they became covered with earth."⁸¹

Although, in this scenario, the Hindus are again affiliated with dust and 
earth, it is significant that it is the Turks who are the dust-bearers.

Elsewhere, ambivalence can be read into the poet’s attitude toward the king 
and the campaign in general; for example, an exhortation in the first sipihr that 
kings should be humble (“There is no disgrace in bowing the head/that God makes 
crown-bearing, before Him”⁸²) contrasts sharply with depictions of the king’s 
pride and ambition (“The caliph, his head stretched to the heavens/had raised the 
banner of the caliphate.”)⁸³ However, these moments of ambiguity occur 
infrequently in the text and must be carefully searched out. It is only in the third 
sipihr that the poet, in a nearly complete about-face, blithely and openly sweeps

⁸⁰ NS, 68.
⁸¹ NS, 87-8. The final misra’ says that the Hindus became khâksârân, which can mean both covered with earth and humbled.
⁸² NS, 63.
⁸³ NS, 59.
aside the entrenched stereotypes and, rather than disparaging Hindus, exalts them and all that is associated with them. The manner in which he executes this shift constitutes an almost point-by-point deconstruction of the earlier sipihrs, as we shall see.\textsuperscript{84}

\section*{V.5. The Third Sipihr}

The third sipihr is dedicated to a laudatory description of India, one that affirms the superiority of its peoples, climate, and languages to those in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{85} In it, the poet, as in other works, inverts and/or flattens the accepted hierarchies in a deliberate and definitive manner, including the hierarchy of Turk and Hindu. That such a project is afoot becomes apparent in the very title of the chapter, which states, “See the seventh sphere, whose portal is twinned with Saturn/you might say its message is that from Saturn, Jupiter was born.”\textsuperscript{86}

Envisioning Saturn, the malevolent planet linked to India, as the parent of the

\textsuperscript{84} As has been noted in Chapter One, the critic Miller has observed that great works of literature have “anticipated explicitly any deconstruction the critic may achieve.” It is thus up to the reader only to “identify an act of deconstruction which has always already, in each case differently, been performed on the text by itself.” Miller, “Deconstructing the Deconstructors,” 31.

\textsuperscript{85} One may locate the entire third sipihr within the “fada’il of place” genre, which as Zayde Antrim observes, began to appear in Arabic in the 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} centuries “in the form of local chronicles, local biographical dictionaries, and geographies. Many of these works ... contained introductions or individual chapters dedicated to topographical descriptions of the built and natural environment and/or to enumerations of the ‘merits’ (fada’il) of a particular town or territory, usually taken from the hadith and related exegetical, legendary, and historical material. Such fada’il treatises and topographies, usually as part of larger works although occasionally on their own, formed the backbone of the discourse of place as it matured from the 9\textsuperscript{th} through the 11\textsuperscript{th} centuries.” Antrim, “Ibn ‘Asakir’s Representations of Syria and Damascus,” 110.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{NS}, 147-8. This sphere is accounted the third from the topmost sipihr, equated with Universal Reason, or the Seat of God, and the seventh from the bottommost, which is dedicated to the moon.
illustrious planet Jupiter is in itself a radical step; and the poet continues this rehabilitation project in the first stanzas of the poem, attributing praiseworthy characteristics to the planet and essentially stripping it of its negative qualities:

There is a sphere that is third from the top
the seventh from where the moon dwells ...
Although it’s said to be linked to Saturn
that old ill-luck grew lucky from this link.
Since India’s star was always Saturn
I’ve drawn India’s qualities from it.
I am scattering subtle points, since my heart has helped –
innumerable, like gifts of Saturn.
When I draw down Saturn with such magic
I’ll bestow the luck of Islam on it.
Itself in shock at such flowing magic
the call of confessing [bâng-i shahādat] will spring from it …  

That the planet is rehabilitated partly through the “luck of Islam” and, in the end, confesses to belief in that faith – with the accompanying implication that India will convert to Islam – is not unexpected, but it does not seriously detract from the basic movement of the poem, which is explicitly inversive with regard to Islamic hierarchies. For example, the poet, once he has concluded the discussion of Saturn, observes that his project will elicit jeers from regions such as Rûm, Khurāsān, and Khutân, who will say that India does not deserve to be described. But, he writes, “since I’m the magician of this land/this is the intent I have in mind.” He will not leave it on earth from attaining the heights; rather, he will

\footnote{\textit{NS}, 147.} \footnote{\textit{NS}, 148.}
cause it to become the "highest heaven." Such an enterprise is a test of his poetic skill, for "That which is praised, what is the praise in that?/What need has beauty for heavy paint?" But when one can conjure beautiful noises of the organ from the harsh clang of the bell, praising indeed becomes an art. Although the tendency remains to see the country and its inhabitants in a derogatory manner – Hindus are still depicted, occasionally, as evil or destined for hell in this sipihr – this strain is greatly diminished as the poet carries out his explicit aim of exalting that which is lowly.

The poet's first exercise involves demonstrating that India is a paradise on earth. One of his proofs centers on a legend declaring that when Adam was ejected from the Garden of Eden, he landed in India. If India did not resemble paradise in its attributes, the poet reasons, Adam could not have survived there. Its holiness is further attested to by the fact that when Adam left India to search for Eve, he

89 NS, 148.

90 NS, 148. There are two alternate readings for this line, "Anchih sutūdah ast, sitāvish chih dar ăn?" First, "Why should a poet be praised for praising that which is already acknowledged as beautiful?"; and, second, "How can additional praise be heaped upon that which is already adulated?"

91 NS, 148.

92 For more information on this legend and its significance, see Ernst, Eternal Garden, 28. Interestingly, the same legend was drawn on centuries later by Husayn Ahmad Madani (d. 1957), the Muslim religious scholar, in his challenge to Hindu nationalism. As Barbara Metcalf writes, Madani trumped claims that India was "a Hindu land, sacred only to Hindus and not to so-called 'foreign' Muslims and Christians," by arguing that "India was in fact a holy place, second only to Mecca, for the simple reason that Adam had arrived from paradise on earth precisely at Sri Lanka's 'Adam's Peak,' part of larger India, thus making India the site of the first revelation, the first mosque, the first place where the eternal light of Muhammad was manifest, and the first place from which pilgrimage to Mecca was performed." Metcalf, "A Muslim Nationalist in Independent India: Husain Ahmad Madani, 1937-57" (Paper delivered at the South Asia Seminar of the University of Chicago, February 10, 2005).
waited until he reached Syria to relieve himself of the manna he had eaten in
heaven; India’s ground was too sacred for so lowly a function:

The heavenly bounty in his belly
departed his belly, in that region [i.e., Syria].
That which poured out from him became a hill
exactly like a mountain rising up.
The same’s Ghūṭah of the Damascan plain;
everyone knows it from that time and age.93
Although it was a heavenly bounty,
he could not expel it in India.
He guessed it was another Paradise:
traces of this matter would be bad here.
If India is not heaven, then why
was that burden illegal in its bounds?94

This section can be seen as part of a host of efforts by both Khusraw and
other Indian poets to make India “central in the Islamic cosmos. In this
perspective, India is no longer the hostile frontier of paganism; India plays an
essential role in the drama of Islam.”95 Other proofs offered of India’s heavenly
nature include its paradisial climate and its fragrant flowers and fruit. But it is not

93 Ghūṭah is a series of gardens surrounding the city of Damascus.

94 NS, 154.

95 Ernst, Eternal Garden, 29. Cf. Qirān al-sa’dayn, where the poet writes, in a similar
vein,

Excellent Delhi, the protection of religion and justice
It is the garden of Eden; may it flourish forever.
It is like an earthly paradise in its qualities –
May God guard it from all calamities! …
If Mecca but heard of this garden
It would circumambulate Hindustān.
The city of the Prophet takes oaths by it [i.e., rather than people taking oaths by
Mecca];
The city of God became deafened from its fame.

These lines promote the notion that India replaces Mecca as the geographical pivot of
Islam. QS, 28-9. In fact, the Nuh sipihr expands upon many of the themes of Qirān al-sa’dayn;

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until we reach the third section of the sipihr that Khusraw sets about rehabilitating the reputation not merely of India, but of its residents. Here, as though the image of Hindus set forth in the first two sipihrs were a joke or meaningless rhetorical exercise, the poet largely divests them of their demonry and other inauspicious qualities, and acknowledges in them many positive characteristics. Lauding their religion, languages, and learning to the highest degree, he declares that limitless knowledge in all of the branches of wisdom – whether logic, astronomy or theology – exists in India.\textsuperscript{96} Indeed, there are Brahmans so sagacious that their learning and wisdom “tear up the book of laws of Aristotle”\textsuperscript{97}; unfortunately, the rest of the world is unaware of their acumen. But he, Khusraw, has made inquiries, and was not turned away from their doors.\textsuperscript{98}

Most significantly for our purposes, the poet – rather than stressing the divide between Muslim and Hindu – strives instead to dismantle the dichotomy and to emphasize the similarities between the peoples. This step represents a movement in a direction antithetical to that witnessed in the first two sipihrs:

Even if he [the Hindu] is not devout like us
in many ways, his beliefs are like ours.
He confesses [God’s] unity, existence,
preexistence; power to create from nil –
[His] giving of sustenance to good and bad
Bestower and taker of life for all
The Creator of actions, good and bad:

\textsuperscript{96} The only science missing is that of fiqh, which, “as a reward of the religion of salvation, does not exist here.” NS, 162.

\textsuperscript{97} NS, 162.

\textsuperscript{98} NS, 163.
His wisdom and command are eternal …

The Hindu, the poet continues, is far superior to that vile group, the atheists, who do not believe in God; for the Brahmin confesses to His existence. The Hindu is also not of the Christians who believe in God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; nor is he an incarnationist, or one who worships stars, or the four elements, or the anthropomorphists who compare God to things in the world, or those who worship light and dark; he holds himself apart from all such heresies, and adheres firmly to belief in one God.

And that which is the Brahmin’s idol
he admits that this is not God’s equal
Stone and horse and donkey and sun and plant –
all that they worship, sincerely or not –
He said they are created by God, but
they’re also demons or demons’ shapes – yes

That is, the Hindu admits that the objects of his worship are not identical to God and are, rather, created by God, and even that they are a bit demonic. In short, blind imitation of their ancestors is the only reason for the Hindus’ erring; they cannot leave the past behind. As Khusraw puts it, in an echo of the imagery from the first two sipihrs, “Darkness, by itself, cannot become light.”

99 *NS*, 163-4. Cf. al-Bīrūnī, who writes, “The Hindus believe with regard to God that he is one, eternal, without beginning and end, acting by free-will, almighty, all-wise, living, giving life, ruling, preserving; one who in his sovereignty is unique, beyond all likeness and unlikeness, and that he does not resemble anything nor does anything resemble him.” *AI*, 27.

100 *NS*, 165.

101 *NS*, 166. This phrase echoes beliefs espoused by Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’, who declared that only constant contact with a good Muslim could induce a Hindu to change his religion. As Amīr Hasan reports, upon one occasion a disciple brought a Hindu friend to visit the shaykh: “He
The poet then sets forth ten proofs of the Hindus’ superiority, among them their limitless learning; their proficiency in languages; the fact that scholars from every part of the world have sought learning in India, but that “the Brahmin did not depart India for other regions,” for it was not necessary for him to do so.\textsuperscript{102} One such example of a visiting scholar is Abū Maʿṣhar (d. 886), the Balkhī astronomer, who, according to Khusraw, studied ten years in India under Hindu scholars, profiting from many of their discoveries. Indeed, all of the writings or calculations that Abū Maʿṣhar produced are from the “blacknesses of the Hindus” – that is, either from their writings (blackness here can refer to ink) or from the people themselves.\textsuperscript{103} Such a statement succeeds in putting Hindu “blackness” in a far more positive light than that in which it appeared in the first two sipihrs.

A similar rehabilitation of the word “Hind” can be seen in the poet’s description of the invention of the mathematical science known as hindasah in India.\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{flushright}
introduced him by saying, ‘This is my brother.’ When he had greeted both of them, the master – may God remember him with favor – asked that disciple, ‘And does this brother of yours have any inclination toward Islam?’ ‘It is to this end,’ replied the disciple, that I have brought him to the master, that by the blessing of your gaze he might become a Muslim.’ The master – may God remember him with favor – became teary-eyed. ‘You can talk to people as much as you want,’ he observed, ‘and no one’s heart will be changed, but if you find the company of a righteous person, then it may be hoped that by the blessing of his company the other will become a Muslim.’” \textit{FF}, 285-6.
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{NS}, 167.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{NS}, 167-8. The \textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam} makes no mention of Abū Maʿṣhar’s stay in India but claims that indirect influences from India can be witnessed in his work. See \textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., s.v. “Abū Maʿṣhar.”

\textsuperscript{104} As Mirza notes, the system referred to here is apparently arithmetic rather than geometry, more frequently known as handasah. See Life and Works of Amir Khusrau, 184 n. 2.
This science’s founder was named Asā; he was a Brahmin; in this there’s no doubt. Since from him, the name became “Hind Asā” the wise men shortened it to hindasah. You see his invention was of Brahmins; Greek philosophy came to need this.105

Thus the term “Hind” (and, by extension, “Hindu”), so replete with negative connotations in the earlier sipihrs, here comes to exemplify the highest forms of knowledge. Indeed, in addition to mathematics, India is responsible for producing great works of art such as the book Kalīlah wa Dimnah (translated into many different languages); the game of chess; and music so beautiful that its power is magical. The poet writes:

The ninth proof is that, from a fresh song
an arrow strikes the deer in the heart.
When the happy cry enters her ear
that sound overwhelms the unaware deer.
When the Hindu sees her, standing transfixed
he bids her kindly “Go away from here!”
Since she can’t move from her unaware state
sharp music takes her by an arrow’s flute.106
Pierced by a croon, without arrow and bow
she gives up her life at once from that blow.107

Not only does this description afford a positive impression of Hindus, but it reintroduces some of the motifs that were discussed in the previous chapter – that is, music, magic, and deer. Far from the evil, malevolent magic normally ascribed

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105 NS, 168.

106 This bayt, “Q chū nayārad shudan az hikhabarī az nay-‘i tīr avaradash zakhmahgari” represents a considerable play on words. The word for playing, zakhmahgari, can also denote wounding (zakhmah can mean wound as well as plectrum or bow); therefore the deer is taken both by wounding and music.

107 NS, 171-2.
to Hindus, this spell-working is of a more wondrous, positive sort, and inevitably brings to mind the story of Bahram Gur and Dilaram. A discussion of the implications of this similarity will be taken up later in the chapter.

The languages of the Hindus receive the poet’s laudatory attention in a separate section dedicated to them. In an echo of a similar discussion in the Dibachah of Ghurrat al-kamāl, the poet begins the section with a description of the three principal languages of Islamicate civilization: Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Each of these has become like a precious pearl, he writes, and although they emerged from specific regions, they are now in use throughout the entire world. There are other languages, too, each of which has its own particular characteristics; and everyone tends to think his own language is best: “Each is lost in his own cup; no one says, sourly, there’s vinegar in my vat.” The poet then writes:

In short, I cannot make my heart happy
From Persian or Turkish or Arabic.
Since I’m from India, it’s best that one
lift up a breath from his own region.108

These words, which constitute an implicit rejection of the traditional languages of Islam, are strongly reminiscent of similar statements in the Dibachah. But the poet expands the argument here to include a closer examination of the languages prevalent in India. Khusraw remarks upon the many regional dialects in use in India, including Sindi, Lahurî, Kasmīrī, Tilangî, and others; and writes that

108 NS, 179.
in Delhi and its environs, the prevalent language is the same Hindavī that has been used from long ago. There is, he writes, another language “preferred for use by all the Brahmans/Sanskrit is its name, from ages bygone.” With its complex grammatical system, this pearl-like language is inferior to Arabic, but superior to Persian (Darī); although Persian is sweet, the charm of expression (zawq-i ‘ibārat) is no less in Sanskrit. “If I possessed the power to speak it, I would applaud the king in it as well,” he writes. Such statements display a clear respect for the sacred language of Hinduism.

Even the supernatural powers of Hindus earn the poet’s approbation. In another section, Khusraw admiringly describes the ability of Hindus — and, particularly, yogis — to bring the dead back to life, to foretell the future, to fly, to become invisible, and to live hundreds of years by preserving their breath. Although he admits that these stories may be fables, one thing cannot be denied: the willingness of the Hindu to sacrifice his or her life for that which is deemed a worthy cause:

There’s the wonder of the Hindu dying for faith: dying cruelly from sword or flame. The woman burns in yearning for her mate the man, for an idol or leader — no more. Although this is forbidden in Islam yet, like many acts, see that it is great.

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109 NS, 180.
110 NS, 181.
111 A reference of course to the custom of sati.
112 NS, 194-5.
The following two sections of the sipihr return to the battles of the Deccan and describe the capture of the Hindu Harpāl Deo, the son-in-law of Rāmdēo, the ruler of Deogir, and the return of the army from Tilang with two hundred elephants loaded with treasure. Although the derogatory rhetoric of the first two sipihrs is brought back into play, there are also sympathetic recastings of motifs typically associated with Hindus and even a final reconciliation of Turk and Hindu. For example, a long description of a moon-filled night and the approach of dawn incorporates the themes of light and darkness, but in a less antagonistic mood than we have previously witnessed:

All of that blackness of the dark night
turned white, from the power of the pen of God.\footnote{NS, 203. \textit{Har chih savād-i shab-i tārīk liqā'gasht bayāz az qalam-i sun-i khudā.}} One sees striking parallels in an extraordinary poem by Khusraw about his grandfather, ʿImād al-Mulk, who was apparently of Indian origin and, possibly, of Hindu ancestry. The poet writes:

\begin{quote}
I’m the offspring of the black Ṭūrīz, that isn’t hard to grasp
for I gave signs of my origin, one by one.
He was a black one, that most elegant face of the state;
my blackness is from the point of his expressive pen.
I drown the vile parts, and I give value to the pearl
See, from that black cloud, the rare sea that was born — I!
\end{quote}

The use of the word Ṭūrīz produces considerable opportunities for word-play, all of which are exploited throughout the poem. In one sense, it is used to denote Khusraw’s grandfather’s title — Ṭūrīz means cavalry supervisor, a position held by ʿImād al-Mulk. The word also means “cheek” in Persian as well as a cloud that casts a black shadow. Thus the poem’s first line can also be read, “I’m the offspring of the black-cheeked one,” or, “I’m the offspring of the black cloud.” Likewise, the word for “black one” in the second line, savādī, can also mean one who is learned; therefore, Khusraw implies that both his blackness and his learning have been inherited from his grandfather, who frequently entertained scholars and poets in his home; the same phrase can be taken to connote that Khusraw is a “copy” of his grandfather or that his grandfather, in essence, “wrote” or otherwise created him. For the poem in Persian, see Mirza, \textit{Life and Works of Amir Khusraw}, 29 n. 5. For more references to Khusraw’s grandfather, see \textit{D}, 67.
This seems to refer to the Islamization of Hindus.

Or:

The night-seeker, much trimmed by day
like two brothers who are born together.\textsuperscript{114}

Night and day are, then, brothers here, rather than enemies at war.

The sipihr's conclusion is especially significant. Like each sipihr, it ends with a ghazal; here, the poet introduces that poem by wishing the qualities of India upon Rûm and Khaṭā\textsuperscript{115}, and then bidding his sāqī, or cupbearer:

\begin{quote}
Serve wine, but not from another country;
this country's wine, my wine of sugarcane.
Play the sitar sweetly, Hindu minstrel …
Your music's burning steals sorrow from me.
O friend, medicine for the wounded heart!
give peace to my heart with a melody.
If we [are to] arrive at a ghazal's delight [or, music]
sing this, my Persian, in the Hindu style.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

The concluding ghazal shows us what the poet means by "Indian wine," for it is shot through with references to Hindus that upturn the traditional hierarchy of Turk/Hindu with a vengeance.\textsuperscript{117} Rather than using the concept of the Turk as the

\textsuperscript{114} NS, 204.

\textsuperscript{115} Rûm refers to Anatolia; Khaṭā is the name of a city in Turkistān known for its beauties and its musk. The poet's statement represents yet another swipe at the supposed superiority of those regions to India.

\textsuperscript{116} NS, 210.

\textsuperscript{117} The "Indian style" referred to by the poet may indeed mean replacing the Turkish beloved with a Hindu one; it may also mean singing it as an Indian rāga. See R. Nath and Faiyaz Gwaliari, India as Seen by Amir Khusrav (in 1318 A.D.) (Jaipur: Historical Research Documentation Programme, 1981), 115.
beloved, it places the *Hindu* in that role in a manner that consciously plays on the reversal of the stereotypes. It also casts the poet as an unrepentant idol-worshipper, with such lines as

They see my Hindu kill in the style of Turks they see from her, my breast become idol and idol-house. \(^{118}\)

As we have seen in Chapter One, it was not unusual for *ghazal* writers to identify themselves as idol-worshippers, drunkards, and infidels; such literary acts of rebellion often served to disrupt traditional expectations and, in oxymoronic fashion, to represent *kufr-i haqiqi*, true infidelity. The innovative element of this poem lies chiefly in the inversion of the Turk/Hindu motif. Indeed, all of the motifs typically associated with Turks in the *ghazal* form – the narcissus eyes, the temperamental nature (sometimes angry, sometimes joking, sometimes flirting), and the lack of compassion, are here assigned to a Hindu; and, similarly, the sacrificing of the narrator’s life for the sake of his beloved:

> [Even] if dying before idols has no relish they see the pleasure of the moth in its own burning. \(^{119}\)

The latter verse inevitably evokes both the custom of *sati*, in which a Hindu woman burns herself on her husband’s funeral pyre – an act that, as we have seen, attracted the poet’s admiration earlier in the *sipihr* – as well as the more

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\(^{118}\) NS, 210.

\(^{119}\) NS, 211. It is worth noting that in many other *ghazals*, the poet deployed the term “Turk” in precisely the manner in which it was stereotypically used. To cite just one example (which, incidentally, foreshadows the famous *ghazal* by Hafiz which offers to trade Samarkand and Bukhārā for his beloved Turk’s mole), he writes, “O Turk of the arched brows, I have been slain by your eyebrows/I would not trade all of China and India for one of your locks.” *KG*, 1:241:124.
typical Sufi motif of the moth that burns from love of the flame. As such it stands as a perfect example of cultural synthesis, and demonstrates the author’s drive not only to invert hierarchies but to unite and blend the disparate elements of the society in which he lived, particularly those of Turk and Hindu. For the narrator is, in fact, a Turk – Khusraw not only called himself the “Indian Turk,” but was nicknamed the “Turk of God,” Turk Allah, by Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’ – who desires union with the Hindu. Moreover, the singing of Persian in the Hindu style stands as a definition of the new, emerging Indo-Persian culture. The ghazal therefore represents not only a stunning reversal of the traditional hierarchy but a symbolic coming together of Turk and Hindu, of Islamic and Indic cultures, in a fitting conclusion to the third sipihr.

V.6. A Motif Replayed

In fact, Khusraw’s oeuvre presents us with a great number of examples of poems that consciously play on the Turk/Hindu dichotomy and on matters traditionally associated with Hindus, and which incorporate in a positive way motifs indigenous to India.\(^{120}\) In many instances, moreover, a sense of overt

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\(^{120}\) Other ghazals exist in which Khusraw styles the Hindu as the beloved in a similar manner as in the above poem and himself as a sun-worshipper or an idol-worshipper. For example, in a poem that rhapsodizes over the lovely Hindu boys of Delhi, he writes:

My heart’s turned to sun worship from these saucy young Hindus
These noble Hindu boys have made me drunk!
Tangled in their curly hair,
Khusraw is like a dog in a collar.

\(KG, \ 4:95:1716.\)
religious tolerance accompanies and/or emerges from these transmutations. For example, a well-known and particularly beautiful ghazel voices the following sentiments:

For me, it matters not whether love of God is found in the qiblah or the idol-temple
For the lovers of God, no difference exists between faith and infidelity. 121

The ghazel concludes, significantly, with the following lines:

O Brahmin, give refuge to this rejected one of Islam
Or is there no refuge even before idols for an errant one like me?
How often they say to me, “Go, tie on a sacred thread, O idol worshipper.”
(But) in the body of Khusraw, which vein is not (already) a sacred thread? 122

121 Significantly, a similar notion appears in ‘Ishq Nāmah, a magnific recounting the ill-fated love of two Hindus penned by Khusraw’s contemporary and close friend, Amīr Ḥasan Sījzī. At the poem’s close, its composer reveals that he has been criticized for having told the story of “infidels”; in self-defense, he writes that true love is exempt from considerations of faith and unbelief:

If you say, “Why did you tell this story?
[For] speaking of the love of faithless ones is a sin –”
[I would respond that] speaking of love is not a matter for every tongue
when it is performed by a pious one, there is no harm.
One can moisten the tongue with a hundred springs
and yet, love is another ocean entirely.
For the matter of love is a matter of the soul:
its deep spiritual meanings stand apart from “unbelief” and “belief.”

Amīr Ḥasan Sījzī Dihlavī, Dīvān, ed. Nargis Jahān (Delhi, 2003), 100.

122 KG 1:362:190. Similarly, in another ghazel, he writes, “I am love’s infidel; what need have I of Islam?/Every vein of mine has become a fiber, I have no need of a sacred thread.” Quoted in Waris Kirmāni, “Khusraw and the Tradition of the Persian Ghazal,” 172.

Many other ghazals of Khusraw seek to de-emphasize distinctions between religions and sects in a manner that is typical of mystical Persian poetry and displays an underlying unitive philosophy. Because they are less markedly associated with Indo-Persian culture and the Turk/Hindu dichotomy per se, they have received less emphasis in this study; but they nevertheless clearly constitute a rhetoric of religious tolerance. The following distichs represent merely a few examples of such an idiom:

The qiblah of the Muslims in the world is the ka’bah
The qiblah of the lovers is naught but the curve of the eyebrows of the Beloved
While such statements may hardly be taken at face value, we may
nonetheless see in them the poet's willingness to invert the typical motifs of his
age; and, concomitantly, to display an openness toward Hindus not commonly
manifested by Muslims.\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{quote}
I've quitted all religions, because for the pīr of the monastery
Attachment to religion [derives from] the differences between sects.

\end{quote}

In the first ghazal, the Beloved, in a typically ambiguous manner, may be interpreted to be
either God or a handsome patron; but, as with so many ghazals, this one readily admits a mystical
reading.

Even though the question of religion is predominant in this discussion, reversals of a
similar type but with a greater emphasis on geographical, ethnic, or cultural associations also
appear in Khusrav's poetry. In \textit{Dauwal Rāni Khīr Khān}, for example, he writes:

\begin{quote}
The Khurāsānī who takes the Hindī for a dupe
[In reality], knows one who is a man of life
For him, the betel leaf – the best relish of the soul
is no more than a bit of straw.
\end{quote}

Or, in the same work:

\begin{quote}
I'm a young fatling deer from Hindustān
who conquered Turkistān with one amorous glance.
\end{quote}

\textit{DRKK}, page 43, lines 7-8; 90:10.

The latter is an interesting case of an inversion not of Turk/Hindu, but of
Turkistān/Hindustān in a manner that plays on some of the stereotypes affiliated with each region
and its peoples. The speaker, a woman, is associated with both India and a deer; yet she is capable
of conquering Turkistān, the land of bold, warrior, lion-like Turks. Similarly, upon the death of a
beloved prince, Muhammad, son of the sultan Ḡiyāṣ al-Dīn Balḥan (r. 1266-87), the poet declares,
"'Gone is both the blackness from the Hindu and the whiteness from the Turk/for both Turk and
Hindu now wear deep blue [the color of mourning].'" This comparison in effect serves to undo the
stereotypes and even to erase the boundaries between the terms, effectively uniting them, as noted

\textsuperscript{123} A famous and oft-illustrated example of Khusrav's openness to Hindus appears in
\textit{Matla' al-anvār} in the story of a man bound on pilgrimage to Mecca who encounters a Hindu
pilgrim crawling toward Somnath in a manner that tears open the skin of his chest. When the
Muslim inquires why the Hindu does not walk when he possesses legs, the Hindu responds that he
has given his heart up to his idols, and his legs as well. The narrator concludes: "O you who taunt
the Hindu for his worship of idols/learn [true] devotion from him!" \textit{MA}, 137:8.
Once again, then, a clear pattern may be discerned that hews closely to the basic deconstructive movement as set forth by Derrida. In a single poem, Khusraw both inverts the violent hierarchy of Islam and “idol-worship” by rhetorically embracing idol-worship in place of Islam; and erases the boundaries between these formerly distinct categories. The result is an equipoise or even a rhetorical unity between these elements that displays an receptivity toward both.

V.7. A Question of Paradoxes

Yet the question is not as simple as it may appear. We cannot so easily dismiss the derogatory portrayals of Hindus, not only in the Nuh sipihr but in many of the author’s other works. To name just a few examples, Khusraw criticizes Hindus for worshipping dung, believes that they should be denied too-extensive power, and compares them to crows. Elsewhere, perhaps even more damningly, he praises India for its supposed homogeneity, claiming that it

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124 Derrida, Positions, 41.

125 See Mirza, Life and Works of Amir Khusraw, 234. For example, he writes in Nihayat al-kamāl: “Count not the Hindus among human beings/for sometimes they take cows to be sacred/The crow, which caws at defeat/they consider superior to parrot and starling/Amazing donkey beings, who from ignorance/read a fair omen in the braying of an ass.” NK, 102. The negative portraits are not limited to the writer’s historical narratives dealing with warfare against Hindus. As S.H. Askari observes, “One feels tempted to compare what Amir Khusraw writes in his Masnavi or Qiran-us-Sa’dain, ‘Ishqia [sic], and particularly Nuh Sepahr [sic] with what one finds in Miftah, Khaza’in, and much more in Rasa’il [i.e., the I’jāz-i Khusraw]. One can understand and also make some allowance for what the Amir writes about Hinduan-i-palid (of impure faith) and Dauzakhi (hellish) in Miftah and Khaza’in for they deal with wars and campaigns against the infidels, but it would not be so easy to explain the highly derisive language used in the Rasa’il which does not deal with campaigns and conquest in a country dominated in number by the unbelievers. It does not look well for the great patriot and sincere lover of India which he took to be a paradise on earth, to refer to it as an abode of darkness (Zulmat-i-Hindustan) and to the Indians as men of bad faith (bad kish), crow-faced (zaghru), with hearts as hard as iron grown rusty (dīl-i-ahanin zangar girefia).” S.H. Askari, Amir Khusraw as a Historian, 24-5.
deserves notice for precisely that reason.\textsuperscript{126} As the historian S.H. Askari writes, rather charitably, “[t]he Amir, sometimes, fails to furnish proofs of his broad-minded views of toleration.”\textsuperscript{127}

That this study regards Khusraw as, ultimately, a poet of tolerance has been made abundantly clear. But, given the contradictory evidence, how can such a conclusion be made? Could not his work lead to the opposite supposition? Why, in short, favor the “tolerant” element of the equation?

Clearly, the data can be mined to highlight different aspects of the poet; and, indeed, it has been in the past. Khusraw’s contradictory depictions of Hindus have given rise to a number of divergent assumptions about the poet’s true views and even about his role in contemporary communal conflict, with historians and literary critics staking out positions on both sides. Exploring the perspectives held by other critics vis-à-vis Khusraw’s tolerance or lack thereof, as well as his legacy and role in contemporary communal conflict, can help to provide a vivid portrait of the issues at hand as well as a backdrop against which to present this study’s own conclusions. Therefore, such an examination will be undertaken in the present section.

Both of his major biographers – and, indeed, popular opinion in the Subcontinent today – hold Khusraw as predominantly tolerant in outlook. Nurtured by the open-minded views held by his mentor as well as by the unitive doctrines

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{126} See \textit{DRKK}, 46:7-15, 47:1-11.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Askari, \textit{Amir Khusraw as a Historian}, 25.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
pervading the Subcontinent, this narrative runs, the poet bore no prejudice toward Hindus and, in fact, secretly decried their destruction whenever it occurred.

Indeed, in stories often quoted by literary critics and historians, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’ is reported as having treated Hindus kindly and directed his disciples to behave likewise. In one such account, he is described as “strolling with Amir Khusrau on the roof of the jama’at-khana from where he sighted a group of Hindus at worship. Greatly impressed with their devotion, he remarked to the Amir: Every community has its own path and faith, and its own way of worship.”¹²⁸ Elsewhere, the shaykh appears to espouse the belief that Hindus may possess spiritual and virtuous qualities. He told the following story about an encounter with a yogi:

“I asked him: ‘Which path do you follow? What is the basis of your spiritual discipline?’ He replied: ‘In our science it has been set forth as follows: In the soul of man there are two worlds. One is the higher world, the other is the lower world. From the forehead to the navel is the higher world, from the navel to the feet is the lower world. The practical guideline is this: In the higher world sincerity, purity, high morals, and good conduct prevail, but in the lower world watchfulness must be exercised to ensure purity and chastity.’” The master – may God remember him with favor – added: “His explanation pleased me greatly.”¹²⁹

In another instance, the shaykh comforts the poet Amīr Ḥasan, who is in financial straits, by relating the story of a wealthy Brahmin who was suddenly reduced to utter poverty after his possessions were confiscated by a magistrate. When a friend inquired into his condition, the Brahmin replied that he was well and happy. “‘How can you be happy,’ retorted the friend, ‘since they have seized

¹²⁸ Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, 1:166-7.

¹²⁹ FF, 178.
everything that you possess?’ ‘With me still,’ replied the Brahmin, ‘is my sacred thread …’\textsuperscript{130}

Such stories are balanced by others in which the shaykh indicates that Hindus are essentially misled and, barring God’s mercy, may be doomed to Hell,\textsuperscript{131} but critics who support the view of Khusraw as a poet of tolerance tend to discount these examples, as they do the poet’s own negative statements about Hindus. Indeed, according to this faction, the poet’s derogatory portrayals were inscribed only to satisfy extremist Muslim factions and are patently insincere. Mirza suggests, for example, that a critical remark about Hindus in the \textit{Dībāchah} was made only because the poet was affected “by the ‘fashion’ of his age. His bitterness against the ‘infidels’ is palpably feigned. In fact the [remark] would seem to be an afterthought added to deceive his too ardent Muslim readers.”\textsuperscript{132}

Both Mirza and Habib argue that the author was forced by the exigencies of court and society to articulate certain anti-Hindu views in his writings; the perceptive reader, they aver, will be able to detect the hints and insinuations indicating the poet’s true opinions. Habib, when discussing battles against Hindus depicted in all their brutality in \textit{Khazā’in al-futūh}, an ornate prose account of the victories of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī in the Deccan that was completed in 1311/12, claims that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} \textit{FF}, 145.
\item \textsuperscript{131} \textit{FF}, 236.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Mirza, \textit{Life and Works of Amir Khusraw}, 30 n. 7.
\end{itemize}

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Khusraw could never truly have rejoiced in the death of Hindus and the destruction of their temples. The poet's keen sense of the religious and the poetic element in life could not but revolt against the senseless vandalism of the Deccan campaigns. Hence the gruesome realism of his sketches. He may or may not have wept tears of blood over the fall of an ancient civilization; but his mode of expression leaves little doubt that the greed of gain, and not the service of the Lord, was the inspiring motive of the invaders.¹³³

Some of the critics who embrace such views tend to divide the poet into two public selves, that of court poet and Sufi poet, and to claim that when he speaks critically of Hindus he is espousing the views of the state, whereas his more positive comments represent his "true" views as a Sufi.¹³⁴

Other factions, however, take far different stances, suggesting, for example, that Khusraw's praise of Hindus and India lacked sincerity, rather than his criticism. The historian Aziz Ahmad questions whether the poet was serious when he set forth his ten proofs of India's superiority in the Nuh sipihr; he speculates that Khusraw Khān’s powerful presence at court, and the fact that the sultān’s favorite was a convert from Hinduism, may have made it "politic and fashionable at that juncture to praise India."¹³⁵ Elsewhere, Ahmad proposes that the poet maintained "an irresistible attraction to the life and landscape of India,

¹³³ Habib, Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi, 109-10.

¹³⁴ The tendency to portray Khusraw strictly as a Sufi poet is one espoused enthusiastically by certain critics (and is supported by devotional practice in today's India), but it has been authoritatively rebutted by the likes of Waris Kirmani in “Amir Khusro: The Founder of Indo-Persian Tradition in Ghazal,” 18.

¹³⁵ Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture, 116. This view is likewise supported by Askari; see Amir Khusrau as a Historian, 20.
and an implacable hostility to Hinduism and to the political and military resistance of Hindu India to the Muslim rule." Peter Hardy posits not so much hostility as a sort of indifference toward Hindus; most Muslim historians, he writes, saw Hindus as

[t]he furniture and properties for the stage on which the drama of the Muslim destiny and Muslim political achievement in Hindustan is played … Even Amir Khusrau, who in his Nuh Sipihr showed considerable interest in the languages, music, and sciences of the Hindus, does so more to illustrate the interesting environment in which the Muslim in Hindustan lives than to understand Hindu civilization. Even he cannot resist pointing out that Hindus live, metaphysically, in error and in ignorance of the truth.137

Indeed, like others, Hardy, who sees Khusraw as a man who “never looked beyond the Islamic revelation for an explanation of the meaning of life,”138 concludes that the writer is partly responsible for the perseverance of a strong and separate Muslim identity in India, largely because of his willingness to compromise the integrity of his work for aesthetic purposes and to play to the sentiments of his Muslim patrons:

a casual examination of his language in his historical poems suggests the great part he played in maintaining the cultural unity and distinctness of the Muslims in Hindustan. This he did … not by a critical examination of the historical events in which Muslims were concerned, but by appealing to imagination and emotion and to his patrons’ own vanity and vain-glory.139

136 Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture, 115.
137 Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 114.
138 Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 93.
139 Hardy, Historians of Medieval India, 93.
Even Schimmel, who acknowledges Khusraw’s appreciation of Indian and Hindu customs, identifies him as an exemplar of poets whose use of the entrenched stereotypes of ‘ruling Turk’ and ‘enslaved Hindu’ served to contribute to the ‘Muslim feeling of superiority in the Subcontinent.’\textsuperscript{140} Schimmel likewise questions ‘how much we should take [the poet’s] lavish praise [of India] at face value.’\textsuperscript{141}

Along somewhat different lines, Carl Ernst attributes the negative concept of the Hindu as ‘anti-Islamic’ to ‘the poets and historians who formulated the imperialist ideology of the Delhi sultanate’ in the post-Mongol era — and singles out Khusraw as one of the main perpetrators of such an ideology. He identifies Khusraw’s ‘triumphalist poetic epics’ as perpetrators of ‘the most extravagant negative treatment of Hindus,’ depicting them as ‘mythical incarnations of evil, a foil for the implausibly righteous conquests of a disinterested ruler.’\textsuperscript{142} These depictions, Ernst suggests, damagely and misleadingly emphasized religion rather than ethnicity as defining factors in identity even though, in reality, ethnic factors likely prevailed during the medieval era.


\textsuperscript{141} Schimmel, “Turk and Hindu: A Poetical Image and Its Application to Historical Fact,” 118.

\textsuperscript{142} Ernst, \textit{Eternal Garden}, 25-6.
V.8. A Futile Quest

As has been noted in the foregoing paragraphs, one of the major projects undertaken by past critics is that of discerning Khusraw's true feelings toward Hindus. Such a quest relies on the (unwritten) premise that an authentic and unchanging inner "Khusraw" existed who, by dint of sufficient effort, may be uncovered; and who held a set of permanent and unvarying views toward Hindus — views that were sometimes expressed openly, and that sometimes remained repressed. Or, to put it differently, that the poet wore a number of different masks in his work, such as "Sufi" or "court poet," some of which reflected his genuine self more accurately than others; and that if only the critic strives with due diligence, he may discover which mask is the most accurate or even remove it altogether to reveal the likeness underneath.

Such a supposition is one tempting to embrace, especially when dealing with a writer such as Khusraw whose works seem to brim with sincerity and who often makes strong and seemingly personal statements. But without embracing the extreme stance of those who would altogether deny the existence of something called a "self," it is necessary to acknowledge that writers' selves are neither unchanging nor one-dimensional and that one person is capable of holding, simultaneously, multiple and seemingly paradoxical views toward a single issue.143

Without considering the political factors that may have shaped his rhetorical

143 For a lengthy discussion of issues such as sincerity and critical attitudes toward the existence of a "self" and its potential expression in literary production, see Elliott, The Literary Persona, 13-18, 36, 93-7.
stances, Khusraw, it may be conjectured, was perfectly capable of feeling admiration for Hindus on one day and contempt on the next, or even a bit of both at once; and it should not be seen as remarkable that all sorts of opinions surfaced in his work. Indeed, such paradoxical attitudes may have been encouraged by the makeup of his environment; for, as we have seen, frontier societies tend to promote disparate and conflicting views.

Moreover, many of the arguments presented by those who, say, would divide Khusraw into various public selves, such as Sufi and court poet, fail to stand up to close scrutiny. For what then may we make of a ghazal that incorporates motifs of idol worship in order to praise the beauty of the sultân? It is a poem written for the court, but at the same time it makes use of indigenous religious elements (and mystical elements) in a manner flattering to them and to the king; is it then to be considered a poem of Khusraw the Sufi or Khusraw the court poet? Equally spurious is Ahmad’s confident claim that Khusraw enthusiastically embraced Indian land and culture but detested Hinduism, for if we are to take the poet’s ugly remarks about Hindus as sincere, we have no choice but to accept his flattering comments in the same spirit.

It is therefore this dissertation’s position that even if such a thing as Khusraw’s “true views” toward Hindus existed, they could never be definitively discovered, nor are they of the utmost importance. Indeed, the only statement that may be made with impunity is that the categories of “Turk” and “Hindu” were loosely figured enough in the poet’s mind that he was able to manipulate them,
upturn them, and demonstrate their essential emptiness and/or lack of distinction, even — as in the case of Nuh sipihr — in the same text in which he brings them into play in their traditional way. And this looseness, which may be attributed to the impact of a unitive metaphysic and a multicultural, frontier society — produced a language that was, at times, distinctly tolerant. That at times it produced an intolerant language is not in dispute; nor is the fact that it may not perfectly match contemporary notions of tolerance. Khusraw’s poetry may sometimes not have been very far along on the spectrum of pluralism, but it nevertheless represented an improvement over that which came before, one that had a distinct impact.

We are now brought to the question of legacy, in some ways the more important of the two issues. Again, no definitive answer may be reached as to whether Khusraw is culpable in the separatism that so unfortunately characterizes the Subcontinent today; or, conversely, whether his many positive statements about Hindus and India lay the groundwork for conciliation between Muslims and Hindus. But some hypotheses may be assayed. Certainly, sufficient evidence exists to charge Khusraw with the exacerbation of religious conflict, if bringing him posthumously to trial is our desire. His anti-Hindu statements, his characterizing of the campaigns in the Deccan as ghazā warfare carried out for the sake of Islam (even when, as many historians agree, they were likely executed for plunder), his evident rejoicing in the gory scenes of Hindu defeat, and the figuring of the conflict as good versus evil, all serve to cast him in the role of communalist. Yet one balks at the accusations hurled at him. The terms “Turk” and “Hindu,” it may
be observed, were already polarized by the time he encountered them, and the polarization – no matter how “ethnic” or “religious” it was – already included a substantial dash of good versus evil. Can he truly be assigned the blame for the conceptualization of the Hindu as the antithesis and enemy of the Muslim? Moreover, one can find regional elements to the identities he conjures up, as in his associating of Turks with the “fire of Bukhārā.”

Additionally, the notion that post-Mongol views encouraged a more negative attitude toward Hindus which was formulated in the works of the likes of Khusraw is problematic. Delhi sultāns tended to maintain distinctly paradoxical attitudes toward Hindus – sometimes persecuting them and at other times seeking to conciliate them by such gestures as giving “endowments and exemptions to Brahmans and temples when it suited their political purposes”\textsuperscript{144} or by incorporating Indian language and symbolism in their coinage, both of which were a means of legitimizing their reigns in the eyes of non-Muslims.\textsuperscript{145} It therefore appears as though the explicitly contradictory attitudes that we see in Khusraw’s work were present in society at large and even in sultanic policy.

On the other hand, sufficient evidence exists to support the notion that even if Khusraw did, in fact, contribute to a separate and distinct identity for Muslims in the Subcontinent, he also helped to father a more conciliatory strain of thought that transcends the confines of religion and even helps to unite Indic and

\textsuperscript{144} Ernst, \textit{Eternal Garden}, 48.

\textsuperscript{145} Ernst, \textit{Eternal Garden}, 52-3.
Islamicate cultures. And it is for this strain that he is best known today, a matter in itself not insignificant.

Indeed, one can see the manner in which this conciliatory mode of thought reverberated in the Indo-Muslim poetry and culture of the region throughout the following centuries, especially as the doctrine of wahdat al-wujūd took greater hold in the Subcontinent. In later mystical folk poetry one sees patterns of acknowledging and then transcending distinctions that strongly resemble those of Khusraw’s work, and may well owe something to his influence. Christopher Shackle has written penetratingly of the Sufi lyric that

The existence of worldly identities, rooted in the realities of everyday life, is essential for its structure and message. These identities – whether of religion, ethnicity, occupation, or class – provide the critical backdrop that creates the literary form ... And yet it is central to the genre – and to the qissa, the Panjabi love lyric ... – that such identities are repeatedly transgressed by love.146

As Shackle observes, love between Hindus and Muslims is a frequent theme of these poems, as is the crossing of boundaries, including those of class and creed (and sometimes, in the case of verse romances, even gender).147 For example, the Qādirī poet Bullhe Shāh (1680-1758), a Sufi lyricist of the later Mughal period, wrote in Panjabi:

Neither Arab am I nor man of Lahore
Nor Indian from the town of Nagaur
Neither Hindu am I nor Turk of Peshawar.148

146 Christopher Shackle, “Beyond Turk and Hindu: Crossing the Boundaries in Indo-Muslim Romance,” in Gilmartin and Lawrence, Beyond Turk and Hindu, 58.


The poet concludes another poem with the verse, “Bullhā, once God filled my thoughts, Hindus, Turks, I quit both sorts.”

These poems and songs were often written in the local indigenous languages that to their poets – as to Khusraw – often appeared more conducive vehicles for conveying the feelings of “a heart filled with divine love.” But similar themes can be found in the more elite Persian poetry associated with the Mughal court. As Alam observes, the poetry of Fayzī (d. 1595/6), ‘Urfī (d. 1590/1), and Sirhindī (d. 1696) tended to promote a transcendence of religious and other boundaries and an acceptance of Hindus (as well as a significant use of īhām, the rhetorical device so beloved by Amīr Khusraw):

The idol (but) was to them the symbol of divine beauty; idolatry (but-parastī) represented love of the Absolute; and, significantly, they emphasized that the Brahman should be held in high esteem because of his sincerity, devotion and faithfulness to the idol.

Likewise, Mughal emperors such as Akbar (d. 1605) and Jahāngīr (d. 1627) often showed their own leanings towards these types of conciliatory views; the latter, after great discussion, came to believe that “the Vedantic philosophy of

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149 Shackle, “Beyond Turk and Hindu,” 57.

150 Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, 1:327. For a lengthy discussion of cultural production that possesses syncretic characteristics, see the same work, 1:322-400; for a discussion of the manner in which Sufi romances written in Hindavi incorporated composite cultural forms, see Behl, “The Magic Doe,” 180-208.

151 Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 137.
the Hindus, and the Sufi thoughts of Muslims, were more or less identical.”¹⁵² And the doomed prince Dārā Shukūh (d. 1659) attempted to reconcile Sufic theory with that of the Vedanta in his work Majmaʿ al-bahrayn (The Confluence of the Two Seas). Such tendencies also found expression in the perspectives promoted by the likes of Abū al-Fażl (d. 1602), the historian at the court of Akbar and the sultan’s close confidante, who promoted amity among people of all religions and appreciation of each other’s faiths and traditions.¹⁵³ Such policies, which normally come under the rubric of sulh-i kull (universal peace), did not necessarily stray from Islam. As Hodgson observes:

The universalist sort of cultural and moral life which Akbar fostered, and which was largely accepted as the basis for court life by Muslim and Hindu officials alike, was not in itself inconsistent with Islam. Indeed, it was cast in Islamicate terms, and attracted its most explicit support chiefly among Muslims rather than among Hindus. But it presupposed an alternative interpretation of Islam, as it bore on life and culture, which excluded the more particularist, communalist, interpretation of the Islamic mission in the world which had always been upheld by the Shari‘ah-minded.¹⁵⁴

Thus, centuries later we can clearly identify the imprint of the particular strain of tolerance that appeared in Amīr Khusraw’s works. It is hoped that the foregoing expositions have demonstrated in an explicit manner how that tolerance is closely associated with the preserving, inverting, transgressing, and uniting of

¹⁵² Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 95.

¹⁵³ Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 48, 61-4. Alam proposes that these ideas were at least partially influenced by the earlier Persian akhlāq texts of Naṣṣr al-Dīn Ṭūsfī, who suggested that it was possible for the “ideal city to be composed of people with diverse social and religious practices.”

¹⁵⁴ Hodgson, Venture of Islam, 2:80.
hierarchical dichotomies, as well as with lexical ambiguity, for this feature of Khusraw’s work has not heretofore been sufficiently analyzed, nor supported with theoretical arguments.

V.9. Conclusion

In conclusion, let us compare for a moment the Bahrām Gūr/Dilārām story of Hasht bihisht to the portrayals of Turks and Hindus in the Nuh sipihr. Both episodes depict a clash of two different character types: one who is a skilled musician, is likened to a deer, and has the ability to charm deer; and the other, its enemy, a fierce, lion-like character known primarily for its martial prowess. Like the Turks, Bahrām is associated with the planet Mars; Bahrām is even the name of that planet in Persian. These characters are, in fact, formulaic types that recur in Khusraw’s works (as in those of others writing in Persian); and their conflict and its resolution is one of the underlying themes of his narratives. In both depictions, the deer-like figure is initially trampled by the lion-like one but, in the end, is resurrected with the assistance of a compassionate musician and wise man. (In the Hasht bihisht, this role is filled by the dihqān; in the Nuh sipihr, by Khusraw himself.) The deer-like character is ultimately portrayed as more sympathetic than its foe; it is valorized at the expense of the lion-like character; but ultimately they are reconciled in a classic thesis-antithesis-synthesis model. The reconciliation is embodied in a literal sense in the Hasht bihisht by the marriage of Bahrām Gūr and Dilārām, and, more metaphorically, in the Nuh sipihr, by the pains the poet takes
to show the similarities between Turk and Hindu, rather than the differences; and, in the final ghazal of the third sipihr, in the imminent union between Turk and Hindu. Such a reconciliation can be read in multiple ways: as a uniting of human beings, of human beings and God, and even of the different elements of God as envisioned by both Islamicate and Indic mystical traditions. And, in all cases, the union is a generative act, one that results in the emergence of something new in the precise manner described by Derrida:

By means of this double, and precisely stratified, dislodged and dislodging, writing, we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new ‘concept,’ a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Derrida, Positions, 42.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE SUBCONTINENT AND BEYOND

At a concert hall in New Delhi, a group of white-garbed men and boys sits on the stage, their faces beaming. As two of them thrum out the beat on tabla and dholak drums, and another plays a harmonium, they sing out in full-throated voices about the unity of God and faith.

What did we start out to do and what are we doing?
Sometimes we have built temples and other times we have built mosques
Better than us are the birds
who sit sometimes on temples
and sometimes on mosques.

Qawwālī, the ecstatic renditions of devotional Sufi lyrics, often encoded with ecumenical themes, is Khusraw’s most well-known legacy on the Indian Subcontinent today. One only has to attend such a performance, especially those taking place at the tombs of Khusraw and of his beloved mentor, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’, to inhale the perfumes of pluralism that often characterized their thought and to witness the distinct form of cultural production that has endured to this day. Songs are sung in Urdu and Persian that attest to the unity of humankind as Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs listen in rapt enjoyment; men and women of all

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religions burn incense and lay flowers and candy as offerings at the tombs in a manner that represents a true blending of traditions.

Traces of this legacy are visible elsewhere in today’s India. The words of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d. 1898), the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, scroll across that institution’s website, declaring statements congruent with that leader’s assertion that “side by side with love based on community of faith (ḥubb-i-īmānī), there could be love based on common humanity (ḥubb-i-insānī).”¹ In a bookshop in a swanky neighborhood in New Delhi, glossy coffee-table books of poetry by Ghālib (d. 1869), the late Mughal-era poet known for his tolerant views toward all religions, stand side by side with biographies of Hindu gurus.² At a lecture on ancient Hindu shrines in the Deccan, a deeply religious Muslim professor of Urdu and Persian demonstrates great reverence toward the subject. It is not difficult,

¹ Quoted in Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, 451. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān is regarded as a founder of a form of “neo-Muʿtazilite modernism” and as an ideological descendant of Shāh Ṭalḥa Allāh (d. 1763), whose “attitude to other religions was quite tolerant,” and who “admitted that the essence of all religions was the same; and all of them enjoined similar basic social codes. But a religion could become corrupt by the practices and innovations of its followers; and then it was superseded by another.” See Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture*, 205, 209; also Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 172-3.

² A few samples of Ghālib’s tolerant poetry:

God is One, that is our faith:  
All rituals we abjure.  
‘Tis only when the symbols vanish  
That belief is pure.

And:

The real faith is constancy, the Brahman  
Who in his temple lives and dies is worthy  
Of honoured burial in the House of God.

then, to encounter the spirit of Maulānā Āzād (d. 1958), who exhorted Muslims to realize the unity of all humanity:

You have one Father (Rabb), you all repeat the name of the same God, all spiritual leaders have shown you one and the same path. Is it not, then, the extremity of misguidedness, the murder of common sense, that every group is the enemy of every other group, and every man hates every other man, when there is one basic relationship, one purpose, one path? In whose name and for whose sake is all this dissension and war? Is it not in the name of the one God, and of the religions revealed by this one God, which have made all bow at the same threshold, and united all in the same bond of brotherhood?³

Naturally, a more conservative strain of Indian Islam, that characterized by Ahmad as “isolationist, self-confident, conservative, ... and insular in its contact with other civilizations,” is also readily found; and there are those scholars who insist – perhaps correctly – that this strain is dominant in the Indian Subcontinent today.⁴ But one may also identify the pluralistic and tolerant ideology; and, without insisting that it constitutes the more powerful tendency, recognize its antecedents.

What of the notion, however, that the ideology of pluralism was transmitted elsewhere? In Chapter Two, it was observed that old forms, when “translated to a distant frontier,” often undergo widespread changes which subsequently influence the so-called “homeland.”⁵ That India has for centuries had

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³ Quoted in Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims*, 262.

⁴ Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture*, 189.

⁵ Burns, “Significance of the Frontier,” 325-26. As Hodgson writes, traditional Islamicate forms “suffered strange sea changes” when adopted in new lands; “sometimes the new forms were reflected back into the higher culture itself.” See *Venture of Islam*, 2:63. This position is also
a substantial intellectual, cultural, commercial and religious impact upon Iran, one
that today is not sufficiently appreciated, is affirmed by scholars well-versed in
both South Asia and Middle East studies. Can we identify the influence of the
particular vision of Amīr Khusraw, and of the Indo-Persian culture he helped to
foster, upon the more central lands of Islam?

No definitive answers can be given here; only a few speculative ideas will
be sketched out. To begin with, many scholars have identified sabk-i hindī, the so-
called “Indian style” of Persian poetry that was practiced from the sixteenth to
eighteenth centuries in both the Subcontinent and Iran (as well as Central Asia and
Turkey), as existing in a nebulous form in the work of Khusraw. This type of
poetry is often characterized by its wordplay (including its frequent use of
ambiguity) as well as its ecumenism. Moreover, Khusraw’s influence upon poets
and rulers such as Jāmī (d. 1492), the Timurid sultān Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (r. 1470-

articulated in Richard Bulliet’s View from the Edge, which elucidates the manner in which the
“edges” of the Islamicate world influenced its center.

See, for example, Juan R.I. Cole, who describes the Indian subcontinent as one of the
“most prominent areas of Persian cultural efflorescence and notes that “India had an important
cultural, commercial, and intellectual influence on Iran ... an influence now largely forgotten.”
and William L. Hanaway, special issue, Iranistan Studies 31 nos. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1998): 583.

See Faruqi’s “A Stranger in the City,” 30-2; Annemarie Schimmel, A Dance of Sparks:
Imagery of Fire in Ghalib’s Poetry (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), 10; Ahmad,
Studies in Islamic Culture, 229; Ḥāfiz b. Ḥāfiz, “Būftaq-yi Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī” (The
Poetics of Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī) (Paper delivered at “Amīr Khusraw: A Delineator of Strong
Cultural Bonds of India with Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran,” a conference held at Jamia Millia
Islamia, New Delhi, 21 March 2006), 1, and Aziz Ahmad, “The Formation of Sabk-i Hindi,” in
Iran and Islam: In Memory of V. Minorsky, ed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 136-8.
1506), the sultan’s courtier and trusted helpmate, Mir ‘Alī Shīr Nawā’ī (d. 1501),
the Shīrāzī poet Fighānī (d. 1519), and the Safavid-era poet ‘Abdī Big has also
been amply demonstrated elsewhere.9 It is also highly probable that some of
Hāfiz’s poems were written in response to those of Khusraw; certainly the later
poet’s love of ambiguity owes a debt to the Indian master.

Broadening the scope of discussion beyond the purely literary, and beyond
Khusraw himself, Islamic notions of ecumenism, it has been suggested, were
transmitted in the Early Middle Period of Islam from the Middle East to India with
Persian poetry and akhlāq texts as their vehicle;10 it appears quite possible that
these ideas (and some of their concomitant literary forms) filtered westwards once
again centuries later, albeit having been developed in the crucible of the Indo-
Islamic frontier. Once retransplanted in regions such as Iran, one can speculate,
young they experienced an even greater florescence.

Historical evidence for such an influence must still be established. But
there are plentiful examples of cross-fertilization between these regions which
suggest such an influence could easily have taken place. The history of the Ni’mat
Allāhī Sufi order stands as an excellent prototype of such phenomena. Founded by
Shāh Ni’mat Allāh Nūr al-Dīn b. ‘Abd Allāh Walī (d. 1430-1), a Sufi shaykh who
was born in Aleppo but later settled in Iran, the order eventually moved to the

9 See Qasmi’s “Amir Khusro in the Court of Herat,” 11-13; Losensky’s Welcoming

10 Alam, Languages of Political Islam, 14, 61-80, 135-6, 139-40. Of course, pluralistic
ideas existed in India centuries before the advent of Islam, as was noted in Chapter One.

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Deccan, where it remained for several centuries. In the late eighteenth century, an emissary by the name of Maʿṣūm ʿAlī Shāh Dākkanī (d. 1797) reintroduced the order to Iran, where it attracted a large following and contributed to a diffusion of a brand of Shiʿī/Indian Sufism in that country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such a dissemination helped to bring about a heightened protomessianic atmosphere; it fed into the air of expectation that culminated in 1844 with the appearance of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad (the Bāb), the forerunner of Bahāʾu’l-Ḥāmīd, the prophet-founder of the Bahāʾī Faith. Branches of the order itself continued to attract considerable numbers of followers until the Islamic Revolution of 1978-9, when all such activities were banned.

It is interesting to note that both the Niʿmat Allāhī order and the Bahāʾī Faith place a great emphasis on tolerance, egalitarianism, and unity. For example, one of the precepts of the Sufi order is “warm respect for persons of every faith and ethos, while one’s life is devoted to kindness towards God’s creatures”; as well as “advocacy of peace, fraternity and equality” among the Sufis themselves.

Similarly, the Bahāʾī Faith instructs its followers to “Consort with the followers of

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12 For more information on the Shiʿī/Sufi ferment during the Qājār period in Iran, see Abbas Amanat, Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 70-4.


all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship” and denounces all divisions and prejudices based on ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, and religion.\textsuperscript{15}

To say that India played a major role in shaping the egalitarian and tolerant precepts either of the Ni`mat Allāhī order or the Bahā’ī Faith is a difficult claim to prove, and would require at the very least another dissertation to investigate properly. Concepts of religious tolerance, ecumenism, and liberalism had arisen in Europe during the Enlightenment, and certainly some of these may also have had an impact upon religious movements in Iran, as well as on more political trends such as that resulting in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11.\textsuperscript{16} But it is not outlandish to suggest that the pluralistic ideologies of the Indian Subcontinent – including those cultivated by Khusraw – may have provided a model or template for similar notions that later came to fruition in Iran. As Khusraw himself put it, “Bravo the radiance of that high sun/which from the East throws a ray to the West.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Bahá’u’lláh, \textit{Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh}, trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1976), 95.

\textsuperscript{16} The origin of contemporary Western religious pluralism is often associated with the philosopher John Locke (d. 1704), whose works on tolerance such as \textit{A Letter Concerning Tolerance} and the \textit{Two Treatises of Government} were highly influential. For the impact of the European liberalism on the Middle East, including Iran, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Rashid Khalidi, “Historical Precedents for Middle East Democracy” (Keynote address, “Democratizing the Middle East?” a conference held at Tufts University, Medford/Somerville, MA, January 26-7, 2006), and Nicki R. Keddie, \textit{Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 37-72. For an Islamist attempt to reconcile Western liberalism and Islam, see Muhammad ‘Abduh, “Al-risālat al-tawhīd” (The Theology of Unity), in \textit{Modernist Islam: 1840-1940}, ed. Charles Kurzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 54-60.

\textsuperscript{17} NS, 32.

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APPENDIX

Persian text

As noted elsewhere, I have primarily relied upon the 1975 edition of the *Dībāchah-’i dīvān-i ghurrat al-kamāl*. Where deemed necessary, variants from the 1489/90 National Museum of India manuscript appear in brackets.

Chapter One:

(pages 2-3)

زهى ملك خوش چون دو سلطان یکی شد
زهى عهد خوش چون دو پیمان یکی شد
پسر پادشاه و پدر نیز سلطان
کنون ملك بین چون دو سلطان یکی شد
دو چتر از سو سر بر آورد و از در
زمن زان دو ابر در افشان یکی شد
یکی ناصر عهد و محمود سلطان
که فرمانش در چار امکان یکی شد
ز بهر جهانداری و پادشاهی
جهان را دو شاه جهانبان یکی شد
دگرش معز جهان کیقباد آن
که در ضبطش ایران و توران یکی شد
بدین قصه بشنو که یعقوب و یوسف
درین ملك بی رنگ اخوان یکی شد
به دیو و پری گوی ای باد اینک
دو وارث به ملك سليمان یکی شد

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کنون روی در چیز نیازند ترکان
به هندوستان چون دو خاقانی یکی شد

برون شد دونه از سر ترک و هندو
که هندوستان با خراسان یکی شد ...

نیزیدیک اهل بینش کور است و کور بیشک
عاشق چه که پیش چشمش رنگین صنم نباشد

ما و عشق یار اگر هره در قیبله و در بتکه
عاشاقان دوست را با کفر و ایمان کار نیست

تا کی از تردامنیها حلقه در مسجد زنی
خوی مردان گیر و یکنده در خمار زن

بسته یار قلندر مانده ام
زبان دو چشمش مست و کافر مانده ام

(pages 35-6)

غم مخور، ای دل که باز ایام شادی هم رسد
هر کجا دردی ست آن را عاقبت مرهم رسد
در میان آدمی و آنچه مقصود وی است
گر بوت صد ساله ره، جون وقت شد، یکدم رسد

DOTAN، خاک شماریم چون می شادی خوردید
جرعه رزیدی تا این خاک را زان نم رسد
خسرو، ناخوش مشو، کاپیام شادی در گنشت
بر خدا دل نه که خوش خوش کام شادی هم رسد

Chapter Two:

(page 72)

جهان ای کامد این رسم و پیشه
که هندو بود صید ترکان همیشه
هم سیاهی شد د هندو هم سبیدی شد ز ترک
بسکه میبوشید کونو هم ترک و هم هندو کبود

(pages 72-3)

هندوئ مرا کشتن ترکانه به بینند
زو سینه من چون بنت و بخانه به بینند

Chapter Three:

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ترک هندوستانیم...
زمن هندو پرس تا نگز گویم.

(pages 85-6)

گم سمن باری آنچه یافتته
همه وقت آب در شهرهای حیات نیاشد. که داند که این روزگار شاورپیشه چند
کوهکن را اول بجای آب شیر در جوی روان کرده است، و بعد از آن هم بر سر
جوی شیر خون ریخته. چندین نواحی از نارنجی که [هر] یکی گنج یاد اورد و
شادوروان مروریدن است داری. بیش از آن که این طاق کسری [کش] که سیز در
سیز ست کمین شیرهوی بهکارهاش بهرام چوب را بگیر [و] کارفرما و بکر
شیرین خود را بر شبدیز سوا مشترک و در میدان بلاغت به جولان در آر - تا
به مقصود امیدش بررساند. بیت:

مگر بیاند ازین نام خسرو مسکین
چنانکه نام نظامی ز خسرو و شیرین

او سوارانی که بر من است بر بیاض نقص کن، بعد ازان منشآت بیشینه که از
منسیات شده است بدان پیوند. پس ضابطه و رابطه بر آن پاین. و بعد [از] آن
نانچه روز نتحه الصغر و وسط الحياة را به محاسن دیپاچه مزین گرداشته، جمال
غزای غرّه را نیز به دیپاچه کمال بیارای...
روز و شب تقویم خویش را به خون دل جدول میکرد، تا بعد از به هفته آن مه
چهارده را خوش جمالش میخوانند به ارستگی تمام بر آوردم.

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و خدای این ممعا را از تعمید کور دلان بن انصاف نگاه دارد. امین، یا رب العالٰمین.

کیفیتی کفایتی که درن کتابت بر کتابت رفته است، آنچه خفی و مخفی بود رشحی
در شرود اگر چه کاملان گفته اند خیر زبان ماقل و دل و لم بیل [و] المکتار
که حاطلب الیل اما آنچه در دل خار میکرد اگر خرما بود و اگر مغیال نتوانسته که
کانون سینه نگاه دارم...

سنن غزیده ترین نعمت خداوند است...

متبجران دانیاند گه [همه] دریاهای علم را گذر بر معبر عبارت است که اگر عرایس
علوم را لباس سنن نباید هر گز از خلوتگاه ذهن تجلی نتوانند نمود و هم در حجیه روی
پوشیده بمانند.

ان من الشعر لحكمة.

و عین شعر با عین علم بلغه ومعنى آشنایی تمام دارد... پس درین صورت شاعر
بمعنى علم بالاشد... پس درین صورت شعر بالاتر از حکم باشد و حکم در ته شعر
داخل بود و شاعرا حکم توان نوست و حکم را شاعرا نتوان نوشت و سحرا را از بیان می
فرماید نه بیان را از سحر. پس شاعرا ساحرا از توان گفت و ساحرا را شاعرا نتوان شرمو.

آنچه نام شعر غالب می‌شود بر نام علم
حجت علی درین من گویم گر Fortune بود
هر چه تکرارش کنی مردم بود استاد آن
و آنچه تصنیفی است استاد ایزد بیان بود
پس چرا بر دانشی که آموختی ناابن آن غالب که تعلیم وی از پزدان بود

هر کرا طبعی نه زاینه در هر فن که هست
کنده باشد، نی نهالی کش گل و ریحان بود

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پس درین صورت یکی شاعر که نظامی خاص اوست
به زکر طبیعی که پایان علم به پایان بود...

و نثر چیست زیان زده هر لب و کام و برون افگنده خاص و عام...

به هیچ پرده درون سر درون نیارد کرد
عروس نثر اگر نظم زوروش ندهد

هر که قم قفل نهد بر دل بی حاصل او
جز زبان شعرام نیست کلید دل او

در عین شعر عبن و غنی نیست که اگر در پایان آن بحور شبهه بودد باران رحمت و ما
ارسلناک ار رحمة در گوشهای جان جهان فرو نریختی...

اغر چه این را شعر نه گویند اما نظم نیز توان خوانند و اختیار مشابه آن ست که ترکیب
قرآن را به نظم یاد کنند نه بلطف بل حکم این ایت و لا یلو و لا یابس ایفا کتاب شیبین,
چون جمله علم که در تری و خشکی است در دریای قرآن است. پس هر که بگوید که علم
شعر در کتاب حمید مجرد نیست گونه از قول قرآن منقر شده باشد. نعوذ بالله من ذلك.

[پس از عین الصاف معاینه باید کرد که طریق بریست طریق پارسیان چه تنگ و دشوار
باشد و عربیان را چه سهل و آسان. و همین معنا نیست اینه هر کدام که بالغ تر باشد نتواند
که بر معنی ما غالب اید و اگر نادانی را درن شبهه رود با نادان مرا سخن نیست، اما این
دعاوى با اهل معنی دارم.]

معنی مرضیه رضی و کلام کمال و انوار انوری را در نظر باید اورد و سر باید زنده را
چنان در زبان باید کرد که سر او پاره شود و لیکن معزی را برای لفظ حسن و معانی
احسن تحسین می فرماید. معنی و لفظ سید حسن و نظامی و ظهیر را مطالعه باید کرد تا
مطلع گردد و هم خود منصف باشد.

(پیش از عین الصاف معاینه باید کرد که طریق بریست طریق پارسیان چه تنگ و دشوار
باشد و عربیان را چه سهل و آسان...)

هجی شاعر عرب را کسی نگفت که در پارسی دو لفظ را گره بر هم زد که زبانش گره نشد.

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اغر آن شاعر پارسی با وجود تعلم و فضل در عرب رود، خود فصحای عرب راه بیابانها
گیرند.

_WAIT_ (page 108)

البته سخن به طریق ولايت خویش گوید. چنان‌که اگر خود اربیست خود مالک
کلام عرب بیش نیست و در دعوی زبان دیگر درست نیاید و همان زبان شکسته او
بر شکستگی زبان او گوگاهی درست دهد.

و این بتجرب معلوم و میره‌ن شده است که چندین خلق ما بی‌آن‌که سوی عرب غربی کنند
زبان عرب به فصل‌اتی کسب کرده که بلغای عرب بدان نرسیدند.

... در شهر عربی چنان‌که اگر مقتبی زنده بودی بی‌باید محرابی زبان ایشان را بجای سيف
الدوله مسجد خود ساختی، و ایبودی دفترا خود را همچو اوراق گل پاره ب پرده کرده.

_WAIT_ (pages 110-1)

تازی سوار اره‌چه نیم در پارسی دارم هنر
روم و خراسان هم خوش است ار در عرب نیوگذر
میخواستم که سکوت را شعار خود سازم که جواب احمقان خاموشی است. اما خنکی سخن
ایشان نگذاشت که پوست شان بیرون کنند بگذارد.

جوای این است که من با پارسی گویان شیراز و گواشیر و شیرین سخنان سمرقند
و قندیار تلخی داردم، اما سخن راست اگر چه تلخ به‌ایش بیان گفت، که الحق مر. در همه
خطه هندوستان سواد اعظم دهی است و مناره او ستون آسمان و کتابه آن مناره ارم‌زدای
العماشی که نم یلقل می‌لگیا در پیام‌های.

_WAIT_ (page 112)

شعر عربی هم بلخ که در دیگ سودا توانا پخت.

میانمان که طبع در روایی چنان هست که به وادک جنبش بسیار وادی عرب را در
تواند رسد.
حقیقت اینست که این طریق را نیک نمی‌دانیم. اما از برای آن‌که نیک ندانم، این چند بیشتر که ثبت افتادن جوان مغزی خود کرده آم، شاید که دانایان معجزه‌دارند، و بر نادانی من بیشترید و هر چه بیشتر از خواهند گرفت بر خود گیرند.

ترک هندوستانی، من هنوز گویم! جواب
شهر مصری ندارم که عرب گویم! سخن

جوان تلخی هندم [ار] راست پرست

ز من هنوز پرس تا نگر گویم

الفرص از پارسی و ترک و عرب

به‌هده باشند که کنم در بطری

شپه‌های وحشی که ازرق کوزپشتی از صد زهار سناتی و ضیاتی و سراج‌انجمنی کرده

بود، و سوادهای خوش را بیش از این ماری از خریطه اطلس فروپریخته و جواهر منظم دفاعی را

به صنعت تریسر بر بستر بر کاغذ شامی نجم نهم بپرود می‌داشند، جزوّا صنعت

دوالو توجیه موشک کرده بود و بنان دنیز اشلات ساخن و ثریا مجموعه پرداخته و

خورشید چه جوهری زرگر است... در نخسته [خاک] فرو شده... و مشتری که مسعود صعید

است بانی‌تره خوش افتاده بود و سرخه که با بحرها اشنانه‌دارد شعرای شامی را بلند

کرده و شعر پیمانی را به گوشه‌های روشان دلان به بالا می‌رساند و ماه که هم جمال است

و هم کمال خیال باریک و نه نو انجیخته بود...

جمع شده جمله فلکی منزلان

انجمنی گشته روزان دلان

بعد از توحید احده و محامد محمد آنچه بر بند فرض است خوانند دعاً

شیخ كامل و مکمل و مقدّم و اصل و موصول و عنوان توقیع عثبات الهی و

موجب نامه اسرار نامتناهی است. سبیح الله شیخی‌ای که آنی است از مصحف

مجید، بدر نسخه صحیح از مشوره‌ای رسوله بهله‌ی، شیخ عالم بلک شیخ

شیوخ عالم نظام الحق و این که نظم کار عالم به جواهر منظم سبیحه ای بر بسته

است. زهی بین‌های صادق، که مکونان اردنی انگرالیک را در سواه عین و اعد

ربک کانک تراه تضمین فرموده است، و جهی دانای روز خداوند اکبر که معلقات

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و عده مفاتیح الغیب لا یعلمها الا هو در سیق ازل حال کرده. دل رحیم بسگفت تقربین ان رحمة الله قریب من المحسنين مشغول. درونه لطیفتش به طرف زمان وجوه بیومنز ناصردآهی راهی ناظرة مخصوص.

شاعر از برای او چه بیت سازد، چای که بیت الله بیت اوسط المسجد بیت کل تئی و بر. دران روز که همه گفتار ما سنیندند، امیدوارم که در آن میزان اقوال رگیک مارا گر وزنی باشد مدائح و محامد او باشد، انشاء الله تعالی.

 تو بدووشی نازان و بر اورنگ سخن هیچ سلطانی چون مدخت تو ننشسته است در ازل آب ز سر چشم هم اوصاف تو خورد زندگانی سخن زان به ابد پیوسته است

طبع خسرو ایهامی وضع کرد موجه تر از آنیه، زیرا که در آنیه از یک صورت یک خیال بیش در نظر نیایید، اما این آنیه است که اگر یکی روى در روی هنی هفت خیال درست و روشن روی نماهید، و این ایهام را ایهام نام هنویه نام کردم.

بينندی میلادی که گرد بیت نیکو بگردد، و اگر درین باب اغلاقی [او را] باشد آن از کنی کلید خاطر او بود که ابوب برست به غایت ملعق و محکم است و آنگه در آمد و بیرون شد مصارع ها را در یاقته است بر وی به غایت کشاده است.

پیش از من که شهسوار [ناتی] و بارسی ام باد یائ سخن را کسی این ریاضت نداده بود که به یک نگ هم در عرب رسد و هم در عجم. و حقیقت است که کسی درین طریقت شروع نتواند کرد. و سخنوری به فکر خون دل را یک کنند تا یک سطر ازین نتواند نوشته.
وانگه زجهان فراغ جُسته
وزشغل زمانه دست تشتست
باری نه دبل مگر همین بار
کاری نه دگر مگر همین کار
کوشش همه در سخن سگالی
خاطر زهر الافات خالی

... از هر ملکی و نیک نامی
اسباب عموی را نظامی
بیچنش پایی کام در دست
مینغوی سخن چو کام دل هست
چندین سیب مراد باهم
چون نایدش آن سخن فراهم
مسکین من مستمند بی توش
از سوختگی چو دیگ در جوش
شب تاسح و زمین تا شام
در گوشه غم نگییر ارام
باشم برای نفس خوددرای
پش چو خودی ستاده بر پای
تا خون نرود زیای بر سر
دستم نشود زای بر سر

... با چندان شغل خاطر اشک
چندین بر نو دهم زیک چوب
گر از تک و پوی اب و نام
بودی قدیر خلاص جان
روشن گشته که از چین در
افاق چگونه کرمی بر

دیده من که بر آمد بلند
غلغه در گوش نظامی فگند

... گرچه بر او ختم سخن مهر بست
سگه من مهر زرش را شکست

دلارام او بود و همکام اوی
همیشه بلبل داشتی نام اوی

بعد گفت آزاده کا شیر مرد
بافوهنیون مردان نبرد
تو آن ماده را نز گردن بیتیر
شود ماده از تیر تو نز پیر
وزان پس هیون را بر انگز تیر
چو اهو زجنگ تو گیرد گریز
کمان مره انداز تا گوش خوش
نهد هم چنان خوار بر دوش خوش
هم انگه مره بخارش گوش
بی آزار پایش بر آرد بدوش
به پیکان سر و پای و گوشش بدوش
چو خواهی که خوانم گیتی فروز

ابا شاه گفت این نه مردانگیست
ز مردی ترا خوی دیوانگیست

چنین گفت کاهی بی خرد چنگ زن
چه پایست جستن من بر شکن
اگر کنند بودی گشاد برم
ازین زخم نتگی شدی گوه
چو او زیر پای هیون در سرد
بنخجر زان پس کنیزک برد

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( page 141, note )

ز پیوند وز پن و نیکو سخن
چه آن چه از روزگار کهن
ز پاکی و از پارسالی زن
که هم غمی نست و هم را ی ازن
جوان گفت و آن پاک دامن شرد
...
چه اموزم اندش شیبان‌تیان شاه
بندانش زنان کی نمایدن راه

به‌هین زنان جهان از تود
کرده‌هی هم‌اره خدان به‌ود
اگر پاک یاد زیبیمانت تو
به پیچد به بی‌زارم از جان تو

رگ نموده برون زلفه‌بند
همچون رشته درون در عدن
خونش در پوست در تنک سبیل
همچون می در زجاحه حلقی

داستان میلی تمام در نخچیر
گور صد شیر کنده بود به تیر
گور چندان فکنی از سر شور
که شدی پشت ها چو گنبد گور

چون زکشتنت ستوه شد رایش
دل چنان گشت کار فرماش
که از آن پس به بیشه و هامون
زان دهان باستگان نریزد خون
گله گور کاپش بنظر
نده‌ده از ناواکش خراش چگر
زنده گرد بزور بزریخی خوش
کندش وزن از ترازوی خوش
بخشند انگه زبور نامی
ران او را زداغ بهزامی
چون بتوتوخ خوشی کرکش خاص
دهش‌زان کنف قله خلاص

که لب شیر چون بخندد دیر
که کند آهو ازماشی شیر
کلک تیرت براسنستی آن کرد
که باندیشه راست نتوان کرد

بين که تا نفکنی زبنش پيش
بينش خويش را به بينش خويش
کاتچ ازین کرهى به نگز نمود
نيز آزین نگرزند بود

شيرگيري مكن که در نخچير
گشتي از شيرى زهاره آهو گير

ور پندات بى از من است کسي
نژد او روه که جون من است بسي
این سخن، یگند و پي بکين افشد
او فکندش ززين و مركب بردد

شيه شد و نازنين برنج بمانند
اژدها بر گنستند و گنج بمانند
با شاهان هر چه بر خلاف هواست
نتنوان گنست اگر چه پاين راست
هر که شد راستگوي داور خويش
زند بتيخ زيان جود سر خويش

بسکه منزل بشدشت غولان داشت
ساياه خويش ديو ميندشيرت
بسکه بر پنظام تيزش بود
موره غربيل خاك بيزش بود
از كف پاي خارهاي چو تير
ميگنشتش چو سوزني زحرير
پا که از بزگ گل فکار شود
چون شود چون بزير خار شود
کس نه همراه و رهمنش مگر
سايه در زير و افتاب زى
(page 153-4)

بود دهقان جوانی آزاده
هم هنرمند و هم ملک زاده
کرده علم سه گانه را تعلیم
تا یگانه شده بهفت اقیام
سبق حکمت برو مکره درست
کز سبهر و زمین چه زاد و چه رست
فیلسوفی بد آگه از تنی می
در طبیعی و در ریاضی نیز
ظرفه بربط زنی گرده سرود
دست جون ابر و برق بر سر رود
باز دانسته پرده ها را راز
مضحک و مبکر منوم ساز
واقعات زمانه دیده بسی
گرم و سرد فلک چشیده بسی
گوشه گیر از جهان فتنه سرخت
مرغ قانع شده بدانه کشت

گر قناعت کنی بخشک و تری
حاضر دختم بما حضری
ور دلت راست جانبی پرواز
دل دل تست من ندارم پار

(pages 154-5)

چو مزاجش بزرگی دریافت
در سرش ریخت آنچه در سر یافت
از هنرها که بود حاصل او
از دل خوش ریخت در دل او
کرد استاد کار در همه جای
خاصه در رده بريشم و نای

(page 155)

حجبت از سوى شاه مست کند
دعوی خوش را درست کند
ژان دهان استگان پرفراش
دل رودهی زبان بیپکانش
واندکی آزار بر گرفتی کام
بنوازش گرش قدره رام
بر کشیدی نخست ناله زار
تا رودی زوحش دشت قرار
همه در پای بوش سرو جوان
آمدنی پای خوش سوان
سو بسو صف زندی از کم و بیش
غاب از خویش و حاضر اندر بیش
همه را چون بهم در آورده
نغمه در بیطرف آورده
پس منوم چنان زندی بصواب
که شدی چنین آویزان در خواب
چون شندهی زخواب خوش بیهوش
بازشان جسته زندی در گوش
که از آن جسته باز یستندی
رسته بر رسته باز رستندی
ابن خبر شهره گشت در آفاق
کز جهان جادونی بر آمد طاق
کاهی از دشت خود خواند
کش و باز زندگینو گرداند

آوهان رمیده با دل ریش
پای کوبان در آمدن زیبیش

کاین چنین ها بسی است اندر دهر
هر کسی دارد از طلسمی بهر
کاردانی بخشوری نبود
که اژو کاردانتری نبود

در شکر خونه شد بت شیرین
گفت آری از آن مأه ایدن
زیرکان در هنر بوند تمام
لیک بهتر زمان نه از بهرام
شک ماده نیاز کرده
به این هیچکس نداند کرده
وانگک او مرده زندگان گزیده
به این هر که هست بتواند

چون مادر من بی‌پوز خال است
گر خالک بسر کنمم چه باکست
...
هر چا که زیات تو غباریست
ما را زیبشت یادگاریست

خصوصاً حقوق حمایته امه کرده و وضعته کرده حملی ست و از مادر فرود آمد و
بسر فرزند بار شده که ذرده از آن میهان قیامت را کرکان گرداشته

از آن یس چون بسر کم بود شایان
به خاترین گشت راپر نیکراوان
رضیتی دختری مرضیه سیریت
سریر آرایست از جائی سیریت

میهی جناد افتیاش بود در میغ
چو بر از پرده میزد پرتو تیغ
چو تیغ اندر نیام از کار میماند
فروان فتنه بی آزار میماند
برید از صدمة شاهی نقاش
زیرده رؤی بنمود افتیاش
جیان میراند زور ماده شیران
که حامل میشدند از وی دلیران

سه مالی کش قوی د پنجه و مشت
کسی بر حریف او ننهاد انتقش
چهارم چون زکار او ورق گشت
برو هم خانه تقدير بگذشت
من یاذب می‌دانم آنچه یاد داد
کان‌های او یاد بز نوان داد
شکر بی‌پی که از در اینجا
کان دهد بنده را که در دور اوست

پدرم هم زمادار است آخر
مادرم نیز دختر است آخر
گر نه بر در صد پنجه شدی
قطره آب باز آب شدی
دنده بر گشت کج دارار آید
آسمانی چه مین چکار آید

در عالم امانت و آبای شكم
هر طفل كه هست ماهه زاید نزید

ای تنت را بجان من ییوند
که هم مادری و هم فرزند
تو بدن پایه کر قضا داری
گر نهی آی بیده جا داری

کیک پنهان خرم را بوطن
حجره یادی او بی‌پی ببیا بی روژ
زن که در روزنگشت بود
به‌عد گر چه آفتان بود
رونزه‌ها چه‌چشم سوزه نست
دانگ‌های برون شدن تن تست
ور تمام‌های روژن‌های هموست
رونزه‌چشم سوزه نه بست

زن چنان به که مردروی بود
تا زنانی که بهره شوی بود

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زن اگر مرد و مرد تدبیر است
سوزن و دوک نیزه و تیر است
...
دوک و سوزن گذاشتن نه فنست
کالت برده بوشی بدن است

خضر از پی آن نهاده‌مت نام
کت عمر اید بود سرانجام
لیکن نیود حیات جاوید
تا سر دکشی به و خورشید
و انراست بارچ آسمان سر
کر جهور علم یافت افسر
وان خواجته برذ کلیه این گنج
گو بر تن خویشنن نهذ رنج
...
خواهی گلمل بحرف [پا، چرخ] ساید
بی دود چراغ راست ناید

آنچه من دیدم صلاح در ان
کردمت برده بوشی پردازن

پاش چو خورشید در انوار خویش
کن زحیا برده رخسار خویش
گشت چو دف بر تن خود برده بنده
پرده مخ رگت پیبانگ بلند

عیش چنان ساز که از شان خویش
زنده کنی نسبت خویشن خویش
تا چو بریزد تن افتاده ام
من زتو زایم که ترا زاده ام

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مرده باشی یزندگانی خویش
تا من از یزندگانی تو براس
از پس مرگ زنده گرم باز

ای تن تو چشم و چراغ دلم
خوبترین میوه زیبای دلم
گر چه که اخوان تو بیک اخترند
نی زتو در دیده من بهترند

Chapter Five:

ز تاج پدر چون بر اراست سر
هوس شد جهانگیریش چون پدر

چو این بود رسم گران مايگان
که دادند گنجی بهر شایگان
نه ما زان بزرگان بهم هست کمیم ...
مرا خود درین ره پدر شد دیلی
که میداد زرهم ترازوئی پیل
شناسند کسی کلئ خرد رهمنون
که از بار پیلست وزن فروون

شراب و عشق و مستی و جوانی
نشاط و عیش و ملك و کرامتی
کسی کین بدھاوم افتاد در خویش
کی اننیش کدن ز اننیش پش
نشاید پاداش را مست بودن
نه در عشق و هوس پوست بودن
بود شه پاسبان خلق پوست
خطا باشند که باشد پاسبان مست
شبان چون شد خراب از پاده ناب
رهم در معده گرگان کند خواب

نشاید هیچ مردم خفته در کار
که در پایان پشیمانی دهد بار
خصوصاً پادشاهان را که در پوست
بود نشمن بسی افزونتر از دوست

چو دانست کاورد تاج و سریر
سیمین آفاق در دیو دگر
برانست کاچنا کند تختگاه
شود سایه گستر ز چتر سیاه
ز ظلمات کفر اندران تا بدور
نشاند ز خورشید اسلام نور

نهبیب خدا آشکارا کند
برزید ازان هیبت آن سنگل
گذازند شد چون تو چشم، گل

نیاورد هندو دران حمله تاب
رپیدند چون سایه از آتیاب
چو روشان شد انجم بظلمات تیره
چو بر هندو دان خلی ترکان خیره
همیجست پیکان ترکان چیره
در آن کفر چون برق در ابر تیره

بیک حمله کامد ز ترکان بر ایشان
شندند آن پرشان مزاجان پریشان

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چو زد سهم ترکان بران سست کیسان
بزد در دم از تن دل و جان ایشان
بسختی زند سر دو نخچیر با هم
چو گرگ آی آن حمله ناید فراهم
چه تند است در جنگ خشم خروسان
که گردن در پیش شاهین عروسان
بهم شاخ پیدا دو آخر بکینه
ولی پیش بوزش پرد جان ز سینه
جهانیا قنیم آمد این رسم و پیشه
که هندو بود صید ترکان همیشه

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کسی را که زوری نبوده است در دل
تنش بود گشته چو گل خورده‌گان گل

...

زحل وار چا کرده در برج خاکی

چو مشمش خور در یکی زمین شد
شب تیره با مهر روشن یکین شد
جو بیند چه بیند جهانی ز هندو
زمین گشته زان روسیه‌ان سیه رو

بکشتند بسیار دیو سیه را
پر از دیو کردن آن دیوگه را
هر آن سیبه کابلیس را بوده منزل
سنن سقته در وی هم ابلیس و هم دل

ز تیغ غزا هر که اوا شنیده
ز محرابش ان فتحنا شنیده
قضا غازیانرا مظفر نوشته
بازوی شان حرز حیر نوشته

بیگیار بالای آن باره گل
بر امد صف غازیان قوی دل
مسلمان زیر هندوان در تشبیه
بلا در سگانش بهندو فربه

سری کو ته پای بیت گشته سوده
زتیغی چو بینی بیت شد دروده

کسی کش رگ جان و زنار همدم
بریذند زنار و رگ هر دو باهم

نگه کرد و دید آسمان وش حصاری
نه پیدا میان زمینش کناری
به پیرامنش چشمه و باغ و بستان
فزاینده عشیرت پرستان
همه میوه اش نزگک و موز و کتفل
نه چون سیب پش [سرد] و خندک چون سفرجل

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خواکب ز ظلمت برخشیده هر سر
جو چشم درخشنده بر روی هندو

میانی از اندازه بیرون نه انده
یک‌ایک بعرش وریدند یک یک
جو مهر تهیه گردیده گردیده
برون زانه‌گنجن به‌زن و تصویر
دو صد دور در ساز که در گوه‌ه
چکانده خوی اب و صشمه خور
زن سیرزه ماهه زان پیش بارش
که کردن نجوان سیرزه مه عبارش
ازان گوه و نر بانباره و خرمن
زمین هامه گشته و کانه‌ها سترون
میهم جامه ابریشمین هندوانه
که یک گر شوید ده کشن اردانه
زب‌ب لطف ده گر بی‌بیع بگنجد
که دیده گچنین آن نرنهند
نه زو گنگرد گر گز آبی نه چرپی
نه چون قطره آب پیکان حربی

ز صندل نه انده که یکشئت و جنش
که زو جنگلی بوری گیرد چو صندل
درگرفته‌ها لاند تخیت شاهان
طب جز چون نانه بیگاهان
صد و اند بیل دوان سبک رو
بسان بروج فلک در دوا دو

ده و دو هزار اسپت تازی که هر یک
بجفتله دل کوه کرده مشباب

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در آمد سپه گرد گردش چو باد ...

بر آمد چو گرد سپه بر ارگنگ
خزان گشت هندد به‌که‌کار و چندگ
بزر زمین شان باد از بیم مقصد
که دیدند ناهه زمین بر سر خود
چنان گشت بر فرق شان خاک پاران
که زان خاک گشتند آن خاک‌اران

سر را که یزدان کن تاجدار
نگون سر شدن پیش از نیست عار

خليغه بگردون سر افراخته
لوائ خلافت بر افراخته

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بين سپه هنطفین کاپوانش با کوانست جفت
معنی آز حرفش تو گروی کر زحل برجپس زاد

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هست سپهری که سپهر شد زبر
هفت از آن چا جا که قصر کرد مقر

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لیک چو من جادوی این ناحیه
هست ازنان گونه به خاطر نیتم
کش ز بلندی نگارم بزمین
هم فلکش سازم و هم خلدرین

انچه ستویه است سناشی چه دران
خوب چه محتج بلگونه گران

نعمت فردوئس که بودش بشکم
از شکمش گشت دران ناحیه کم
انچه فرو ریخت ان جلست تلی
رست چو بر رفت می بلا جبلی
غوطه صحرای دمشق است همان
هر همه دانندش ازان عهد و زمان
گرچه که این نعمت فردوئس بدش
در زمیه هند نشان نشندش
برد گمان کاست مگر خلد دگر
بد بو تا انجا ز چنان ماه اثر
گر نه بیشتم است همه هند مرا
در حکسی آن بار نیفتاد روا

حضورت دهلی کنف دین و داد
جنت عدن ست که آباد باد
هست چو ذات ارم یاد صفات
حسسها الله علی الحادثات

گر شنود قصه این بوستان
مکه شود طاف هندوستان
شهر نبی را بر ای قسم
شهر خدا گشتیه زرصیش اصیم
برهمی هست که در علم و خرد
دفتر قانون ارسطو بدرد

(پرگامون ۲۱۱)

نیست هنوز ارچه که دیندار چونما
هست بسی جای باقیار چون ما
معترف وحدت و هستی و قدم
قدرت ابجاد همه بعد عدم
رازق هر بر هنر و بی هنری
عمر بر و جان ده هر جانوری
خالق افعال به نیکی و بندی
حكمت و حکم‌شن ازلف و ابدی

(پرگامون ۲۱۱-۲)

وانچه که معبدا برهمی بفرق
معترف است او که نه مثلی است زحق
سنگ و ستور و خو و خورشید و گیا
هر چه پرستند باخلالص و ریا
گفتیه‌که مخلوق خداپاست وی
دیو و یا صورت دیو است بیلی

خود نتواند سیحی نور شدن

(پرگامون ۲۱۲)

لیک بتحصیل حکم بهر شرف
برهمی از هند نشذ هنیه طرف

(پرگامون ۲۱۳)

واضح این تخته اسی نام یکی
بوش برهمی که درین نیست شکی
ہند اسی شد چو از را نام عدد
هنده شکفیف شد از اهل خرد

(پرگامون ۲۱۴)
وضع وی از برهم و نادره بین
حکم‌های یونانی شده محتاج به بیان

حجت‌نه انست که از نگمه‌تر
تیر خورد آهوی صحرا بجگر
رفته چو در گوش‌های درون بانگ ترش
dر سر و نه که نیاوشد خبرش
دیده چو هندوکش که او مانده‌ز دو
ایندق‌تری گوییش از مهر که رو
اور چو نیارد شدن از بیخضر
از نیا تیر آوردش زخم‌ه مغزی
دوخته زمزمه بی تیر و کمان
جان دهد از زخم‌ه از هم برمان

هر کسی اند یاد خود شده‌گم
کس نه ترش رو که مرا سرکه بخم
الغارت از پارسی و ترک و عرب
به‌هده باشند که کم دل بتراب
من چو ز هندویان تحریر که کسی
از محل خویش بر آرد نفس

لیک‌زبانیست دگر گز سخنان
انست گزین نزد همه برهمان
سنسرت نام ز عهد کهن‌ه...

علم بود گر بحث آن سخنم
مدح شهناسی بدان نیز کنم

هست عجب مردن هندو بوفا
مردن‌ه از تیغ و ز آتش بقفا
زن چه مرد بر هندو بوسا
مرد ز بهب را یا منعم و یس
گر چه در اسلام روا نیست چنین
لیک چو بس کار برگشته بیبان

هر چه سواد شب تاریک‌قا

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گشته بیاض از قلم صنع خدا

( واضعیت داده من آن نسخت معنی
کراصل خویشتین یک یک نشانی باز داده من
سساده بود آن نازکترین دیباچه دولت
ز نوک کلک تقدیرو بیان آن سوادمن
خسانرا میکنم غرق و گهر را می‌دهم عبره
از آن ابر سیاه بین طرفه دریانی که زاده من

( شب جوی از روز به پرایه نه کم
چون دو برادر که شود زاده بهم

( باده ده اما نه از ملک دگرم
با هم ملک می‌نشکرم
مطرپ هندوئیلانون زن خوش
تار رگم از بیان ساز کش
زمزمه کن که دل آن به برد
سوز سرود تو غم از من برد
پای یادم ای بدل خسته دوا
رام گری کن دل ما را بنوا
گهر بطره‌های گز مرسم
خوان بره هندوئی این پارسیم

( هندوئی مرا کشتند ترکانه به بینند
زو سرنه من چون بیت و بتخانه به بینند
در بیش بتان مردن اگر نطق ندارد
در سوزش خود لندت پروانه به بینند

( ای تركی کسان ابرو، من کشتین ابرویت
ملک همه چین و هنده، ندزم به یکی موت

( خورشید پرست شد دل ما

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زین هندوکان شوخ ساده
کردن مرا خراب و سرمست
هنده بچگان یاک زاده
بریسته به موهاشان چو مرغول
خسرو چو سکی ست در قلاده

ما و عشق یار اگر در قیله و در بکه
عاشقان دوست را با کفر و ایمان کار نیست...
ای برهم، بار د رد کرده اسلام را
یا چو مرنامه را در پیش بته هم بار نیست
چند گویدن که رو زنار بند، ای بت پرست
از تن خسرو کدامین رگ که آن زنار نیست

اگر گویی که این گفتتن چرا بود
بيان عشق بی دینان خطا بود
بيان عشق کار هر زبان نیود
چو قابل زنده دل باشد زبان نیست
توان کردن بصد چشم زبان تر
و لیکن عشق دریاپست دیگر
که کار عاشقی کاریست جانی
ز کفر و دین بروندت آن معانی

قبله اسلامیان کعبه بوود در جهان
قبله عشقی نیست جز خم ابروی دوست
ترک مهد مذهب گرفتم، زانکه نذر پیر دیر
نذر مذهب لا ابالمزاحلة مذهب است

خراسانی که هندی گیرش گول
خسی باشد به نزدش یا گرد تنبل
شناسان آنکه مرد زندگانی است
که ذوق یا گرد خای نوق یانی است

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هر سیاهه شد ز هندو هم سپیدی شد ز ترک
بسکه میبوشند کنون هم ترک و هم هندو کبود

ایکه ز بیج طعنعه بهندو بری
هم زوی آموز پرستشگری

هندانرا مشمر ز آدمیان
که گه گاو تبارک گیرند
زاغ که خوار بهنگام شکن
بهرت از طوطی و شارک گیرند
بولعجب کون خرائی که ز چهل
بانگ خر فال مبارک گیرند

Chapter Six:

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>N</td>
<td>_____, <em>Nihat al-kamāl</em>, ed. Yāsīn ‘Alī Niẓāmī (Delhi, 1332/[1913/14]).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TF  Žiyāʿ al-Dīn Barnī, Tārīkh-i Firuzshahī, ed. Sir Sayyid Aḥmad (Aligarh, 2005).

TG  Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, Tughlaq nāmah, ed. Hāshimī Farīdābādī and Muḥammad Ḥasan (Aurangābād, 1933).


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