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Like meaning in the word/.<sup>28</sup>  
/The way for new themes  
Is not closed;  
Doors of poetry  
Are open forever.

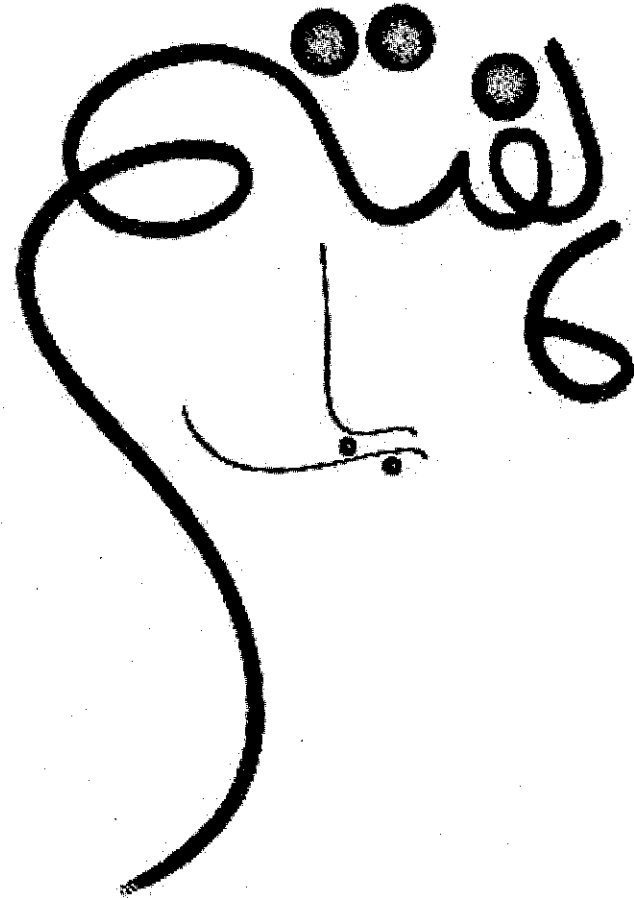
The beloved  
Whose Name is Meaning reveals  
Herself, bright, when the tongue  
Removes the curtain from  
The face of Poetry.

Poetry is  
Unique in the world, there is  
No answer to poetry/.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 203.

<sup>29</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt-e valī*, p. 177.



## Chapter Seven: The 'New' Literary Culture

It must be remembered that Hindī / Rekhtah literature did not begin in the North as the creative mode of the dominant language. It was very much a second fiddle to Persian. By the early eighteenth century, Indians--especially in the North, but also in the Aurangabad area--regarded themselves as having a native speaker's competence in Persian. (I have given some details of the confident eighteenth-century Indian Persian literary culture in a recent article.<sup>1</sup>) Most of the earliest Rekhtah writers in Delhi were Persian poets who wrote in Rekhtah on the side. That this was the case until much later in Aurangabad too is evidenced by Shafiq Aurangābādī's saying in his *tazkirah* called *Chamanistān-e shu'arā* that he began writing poetry in Persian by the age of twelve (he was born in 1745), had no taste for Rekhtah, and in fact looked down upon it. When Rekhtah poetry became extremely popular among his friends, he too turned to it, but not without considerable mental conflict and anguish.<sup>2</sup>

The new wave of Rekhtah / Hindī writers who began to arrive on the scene in the early 1700's, and whose poetry received a much needed fillip from the example of Valī, wrote more Rekhtah than Persian. Yet Persian did not become the mere second string to the Delhi poet's bow until much later. In the previous chapter we have seen Hātim (1699/1700-1783),

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<sup>1</sup>I have given some details of the confident Indian Persian literary culture in the eighteenth century in my 'Privilege Without Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India'. This paper was actually part of my then ongoing work for the project that generated the papers which are now being printed in a separate volume, edited by Sheldon Pollock.

<sup>2</sup>Shafiq Aurangābādī, *Chamanistān-e shu'arā*, p. 9.

writing in the Preface to his selected poems (*Divān zādah*, 1755-56) say that in Persian, he was a follower of Šā'ib, and in Reḳhtah, of Valī. He also has a *shī'r* to this effect. In a ghazal composed in 1753/4, he says:

/In Reḳhtah, Ḥātim is the slave  
Of India's *tūṭī*; in Persian,  
He is beholden  
To the *bulbul* of Tabriz!.<sup>3</sup>

There is a *qīṭā'* by Saudā which has been cited by some as establishing the fact of Reḳhtah / Hindi's dominance in Delhi in the first half of the eighteenth century, in the sense that Indians are supposed to have realized by then that Persian was not their *metier*, and they were better off writing Reḳhtah. In the poem, a learned person advises Saudā against taking up Persian. The poem has been titled, perhaps by the editor, 'Satire against Mirzā Fāḳhir Makīn'. In the poem, Saudā goes to a Persian expert for correction of his Persian verse, saying that there is of course another expert, Mirzā Fāḳhir Makīn, as well, but he has no time for such things. After two days' deliberation, the expert advises Saudā:

Should an Indian-language person  
Desire to be a poet,  
The Rule of Reḳhtah would be best for him;  
For, why should he  
Become the butt of Persian-knowers  
By composing falsely in Persian?

The penultimate *shī'r* of the poem is:

Thus only Ḳhusrau, and Faizī,  
Faḳīr, and Ārzū  
Are the ones whose poetry

<sup>3</sup>For this *shī'r* see Ḥaṣrat Mohānī, *Intiḳhāb-e sukhan*, vol. 1, p. 20. The word *tūṭī* is commonly translated as 'parrot', and *bulbul* as 'nightingale'. Neither is satisfactory, and 'parrot' seems especially inappropriate for *tūṭī* in such contexts. While in Persian *tūṭī* does mean 'parrot', in Urdu it refers to a small songbird much fancied for the sweetness of its voice and the extent of its repertory.

The Mughal considers worthy  
Of praise.<sup>4</sup>

The story of what passed between Saudā and Fāḳhir Makīn, I have recounted elsewhere in some detail.<sup>5</sup> Suffice it to say here that Saudā had gotten the better of Makīn in a matter relating to Persian poetry. Makīn refused to acknowledge the Indian Persian writers and found fault with even the Iranians. Saudā was able to demonstrate the errors of Makīn's ways. This led Makīn to instigate a physical attack on Saudā. The poem we are discussing here is clearly a satire against Makīn, who is represented as saying that only four Indians are worthy to draw praise from 'the Mughal', and no others can write Persian properly. Makīn's people, it may be noted, came from Central Asia; so they were 'Mughal', and not Iranian. The poem has thus nothing to do with the Indians' alleged newfound love for Reḳhtah and their realization that Persian is not for them.

It has even been suggested that the Persian 'expert' whom Saudā (the speaker in the poem) consults, is Ḳhān-e Ārzū. Yet we see that Ḳhān-e Ārzū himself is mentioned in the poem as one of the four acceptable Indian Persianists. If Ḳhān-e Ārzū were the advice-giver, he would never have put down his own name among the acceptable four; and even if he had done so, Saudā would, out of prudence, not have reported it. Also, if the poem was written, as is apparently the case, after Saudā's brush with Makīn, the 'expert' could certainly not be Ḳhān-e Ārzū, who died in 1756, two decades before the incident between Saudā and Makīn.

There was not much 'high' literary activity in Reḳhtah before the impact of Valī was felt in Delhi. As we saw in Chapter Six, 'ghazal' meant only 'Persian ghazal' until quite late in Delhi's literary culture. Young writers who were turning to Reḳhtah at the turn of the century in Delhi were perhaps more comfortable in Persian than in Reḳhtah. Thus, when poets

<sup>4</sup>Saudā, *Kulliyāt* (Āsī edition), vol. 1, pp. 403-04.

<sup>5</sup>In my 'Privilege Without Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India'.

began composing in Rekhtah in large numbers, they needed guides or mentors to put them through their paces, whence was born the institution of *ustād* (master, mentor), and *shāgird* (pupil, disciple) which is unique to Urdu literary culture, and which did not exist in even Dakanī or Gujūrī. Khān-e Ārzū provided a signal service by becoming *ustād*—formal or informal—to a number of young Rekhtah poets. In fact he became so successful at this that many Persian poets also became his *shāgirds* or obtained the benefit of his advice.

Once established, the *ustād-shāgird* institution took root and spread fast. What had begun as a need soon became a fashion, and then a minor industry. Loyalties were generated and abrogated, desertions and rejoinings took place, feuds began to occur between *ustāds*, or between *shāgirds* of the same *ustād*. Poetic genealogy became an important part of a poet's literary status.<sup>6</sup> Codes of conduct and protocols of behaviour were developed. For example, prospective *shāgirds* were expected to bring some present—usually sweets—when they first approached the *ustād*. Intercession by a senior intermediary, the father of the candidate, or a friend common between the *ustād* and the applicant's family, was a good way of approaching an *ustād*. The *ustād* expected, and got (though he rarely asked for them), goods or money for services rendered. Until authorised to do so, and sometimes even in spite of such authority, the *shāgird* didn't recite his work in open assembly without the *ustād* having vetted it. Prose was as much subject to the *ustād*'s discipline as poetry. It was expected that no *shāgird* would set up as an *ustād*, and take *shāgirds* himself, until the *ustād* permitted it.

These protocols are reminiscent of the codes of conduct prescribed for Sufi disciples, and also the pupils of professional musical families (*gharānahs*). But there were no religious undertones anywhere except that a faint air of sanctity attached

<sup>6</sup>Examples of this can be found occurring as recently as 1996. Ibrāhīm Ashk, a poet from Maharashtra, has published his poetic 'family tree', tracing, through some very obscure names, his 'descent' from Saudā (d.1781) and Dard (d.1785); see Ibrāhīm Ashk, *Āgahī*, p. 4.

to the proceedings. Leaving an *ustād* and going to another was generally bad form, but one could have two *ustāds*, one for Urdu and the other for Persian.

*Ustāds* of great reputation and ability even used to have *shāgirds* older than themselves. They would sometimes refuse to accept a person as *shāgird*. Mīr says that Rājā Jugāl Kishor, a nobleman of note, wished to be enrolled with him as a *shāgird*. 'Not finding [his poetry] amenable to, or suitable for, correction, I drew a line across much of his work'.<sup>7</sup> This happened in 1754/5; Mīr was then about thirty-three years of age. He was quite hard up and could have done with a rich patron. In *Āb-e hayāt* Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād narrates the case of Qamar ud-Dīn Minnat (1742/3-1792/3), who was of ancient lineage and a person of substance. He approached Mīr, desiring to be taken as a *shāgird* in Rekhtah. When Mīr heard that Minnat wasn't from Delhi, and wrote mostly Persian, he supposedly said, 'Sayyid Šāhib, *Urdū-e mu'allā* is the language of Delhi proper [and of nowhere else], please don't you trouble yourself in it. Go and write in Persian, that itsy bitsy tongue of yours'.<sup>8</sup>

These protocols were mostly in place by the 1760's, and soon spread to all Rekhtah / Hindī centres: Lucknow, Banaras, Allahabad, Murshidabad, Patna, Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Surat, Rampur, Madras, and so on. The later success and moral authority of the institution is difficult to explain except in terms of fashion, though there is the fact that it was a means of patronage too. In the beginning it certainly met a felt need: a literary community was giving up a foreign language in which it was comfortable, in favour of the local language whose

<sup>7</sup>Mīr, *Zikr-e mīr*, ed. Maulvī 'Abd ul-Haq, p. 75. An excellent English translation of this fascinating but difficult autobiography, with scholarly notes and appendices, has been made by C. M. Naim, directly from the Persian; see Mīr, *Zikr-i Mīr*, ed. C. M. Naim.

<sup>8</sup>Āzād, *Āb-e hayāt*, p. 263.

literary codes were seen as more or less independent, and therefore in need of being specially learnt.<sup>9</sup>

The mushairah [*mushā'irah*] had been in existence in India since the sixteenth century, but had been confined to Persian recitation alone. The new literary community of the North, gaining confidence gradually, instituted mushairahs in Rekhtah as well. The fact that they were initially called *murākhītah* (an Arabicised Indianism devised on the pattern of *mushā'irah*), suggests that poetry in Rekhtah was very much a second eleven to Persian's first at that time. It was common until the nineteen twenties, if not even later, for Persian poetry to be recited at Urdu mushairahs without the audience or the poet feeling any incongruity. Until the nineteen fifties, individual Urdu poets' collections often contained a bit of Persian poetry too.<sup>10</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century the Hindus too, who had also been concentrating on Persian, began to adopt Rekhtah. The major ones in the beginning, like Sarb Sukh Dīvānā (1727/8-1788/9), were bilingual in Urdu and Persian. As I mentioned earlier, Dīvānā established a long and illustrious line of *shāgirds* through his own *shāgirds*, especially Ja'far 'Alī Ḥasrat (d.1791/2). By the end of the century, Hindus were active participants in the Urdu creative scene, a situation that, happily, continues to obtain till this day, in spite of politically motivated efforts to alter it.

Urdu became nominally the language of power from 1772, when Shāh 'Ālam II took up residence at the Red Fort in Delhi. Since Shāh 'Ālam II himself had little political power, especially after his deposition and blinding by Ḡhulām Qādir (July-August 1788) and restoration by the Marathas (December

<sup>9</sup>The institution's full literary and cultural dimensions have been examined by Frances Pritchett in *Nets of Awareness*, and also in her article in the forthcoming collaborative volume edited by Sheldon Pollock.

<sup>10</sup>I remember Jigar Murādābādī (1890-1960) reciting one of his rare Persian poems at a mushairah in Allahabad in 1954. The last time I recited a Persian composition of mine at an Urdu mushairah was at Nagpur in 1959. *Āsmān mīhrāb*, my recent collection of poems, has some Persian poems too.

1788), Urdu cannot be said to have been a sharer in the power culture of those times. In the South and East, and in the Maratha administration too, Persian held sway for a long time. It was finally dislodged by the British in 1837. They introduced Bengali in Bengal, Oriya in Orissa, and 'Hindustani' in the Persian script over the extensive Northern Indian areas under their control.<sup>11</sup> This amounted to a patronage and promotion of Urdu, of sorts, but the power elite continued to use Persian and English, and later English alone; manifestations of power and pelf were invariably couched in one or both of these languages. Jawahar Lal Nehru's marriage invitation (Allahabad, 1916), was issued in both Persian and English.

Still, there was another, and quite real, sense in which Urdu had power. The story of Mīr and Qamar ud-Dīn Minnat reflects, even if apocryphal, the self-image of Delhi-Urdu literary culture: Rekhtah / Hindī poets had self-confidence enough to sneer at non-Delhi Rekhtah speakers, and even at Persian. Qamar ud-Dīn Minnat, however ancient and substantial of lineage and means, couldn't begin to compete with the Delhi Rekhtah speaker in finesse and elegance. A knowledge and practice of Urdu was a desirable quality from the 1750's not only in Delhi, but also in Patna, Murshidabad, Lucknow, Farrukhabad, Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Vellore, and numerous other cities of the Empire which were now under the power of semi-independent, but mostly Delhi-appointed, satraps whose cultural base was Delhi.<sup>12</sup>

Rekhtah / Hindī in fact became a central reality of elite existence over much of the subcontinent before the eighteenth century was over. One indicator of this fact is the large number of *tazkirahs* of Rekhtah / Hindī poets, and *tazkirahs* of Persian poets many of whom wrote Rekhtah / Hindī, that were composed outside Delhi during the second half of the century.

<sup>11</sup>Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, pp. 175-77.

<sup>12</sup>For some details of Urdu literary life in Vellore, and the contribution to Urdu letters of writers like Abu'l-Ḥasan Qurbī (1704/05-1768/9), see Rāhī Fidā'ī, *Dār ul-'ulūm latīfīyah velūr kā adabī manzar nāmāh*.

At a rough count, at least fifteen such *taẓkirahs* were written between 1752 and 1795, at places as remote from one another as Aurangabad / Hyderabad in the South and Patna in the Northeast. Poets mentioned in these *taẓkirahs* are in places ranging from Ahmedabad and Surat in the West to Murshidabad and Calcutta in the East, and of course there are any number of poets from the South. The classes of society that the poets represent are equally diverse: Muslim and Hindu noblemen, other Hindus--Brahmans, Rajputs, Kayasthas, Khattris, Agarwals, so forth--professionals from barber to soldier, from teacher to preacher, Sufis, rakes, kings. Women also appear, as beloveds of poets, and occasionally as poets themselves.<sup>1</sup>

One manifestation of the new Urdu culture was its almost morbid obsession with 'correctness' in language. Undue--and sometimes even almost mindless--emphasis on 'correct' or 'standard, sanctioned' speech in poetry and prose, and even in everyday converse, is one of the most interesting and least understood aspects of Urdu culture from the mid-eighteenth century onward. Persian's immense prestige ('Persian' here includes Arabic) may account for a part of this emphasis. The idea seems to have been to make Reḳhtah approximate to the Persian of a native Persian speaker. This was elitism of a sort, and may well have been meant to be exactly that.

Shāh Ḥātim is reputed to be the person with whom all this began. He did recommend using words in accordance with their original Arabic / Persian pronunciation--something which, as we have seen in Chapter Four, the Dakanīs also recommended, but never practiced. Ḥātim also suggested removal of 'Hindvī bhākhā' words from the Reḳhtah / Hindī poet's active vocabulary. But the suspicion remains that all this may have been a defensive ploy for creating a distance between the language of Valī and that of Delhi. For Ḥātim also emphasised, in no uncertain terms, the primacy of established idiom over bookish idiom. Also, Ḥātim doesn't seem to have been at all faithful to his own prescriptions. In the selection from his *divān* called *Divān zādah* (1755/6), which he made by 'purging' his older poetry of usages of which he now disapproved, one can find abundant examples of the very things that he was seeking to remove from the language of poetry.

As compared to the prescriptions, however self-contradictory, of Ḥātim, Valī's approach was freer and more relaxed: both local and Arabic / Persian pronunciation had equal right in the language; words used by the common people need not be avoided. This was the credo in Reḳhtah also, but Valī, because of his influence and popularity, was the great exemplar who was to be imitated, and also denied. This tension comes through clearly in Shāh Ḥātim's Preface to the *Divān zādah*:

This servant [Shāh Ḥātim]...during the past ten or twelve years, has given up many words. He has favoured such Arabic and Persian words as are easy to understand, and are in common use, and has also favoured the idiom of Delhi which the Mirzās of [North] India and the non-religious standard speakers [*rind*] have in their use, and has stopped the using the language of all areas and sundry, and also the Hindvī that is called the *bhākhā*; [he] has adopted only such a register as is understood by the common people, and is liked by the elites.<sup>13</sup>

One can see Ḥātim's dilemma: he wants to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare. He doesn't want to declare independence from Valī, but he does want to emphasise his Delhi-ness. He wants to use Arabic and Persian vocabulary, but only such as can be commonly understood. (Valī was quite fond of Arabic phrases.) He wants to use language that is sophisticated and secular, language used by the Mirzās (educated upper classes) and *rinds* (more or less free-living, non-religious frequenters of wine houses and market places--the educated, carefree kind of people) of the North, but the language should also be such as can be understood by the common people of Delhi (not Aurangabad). He doesn't want to use Braj Bhāshā, the language of sub-Delhi areas, whose domain lay to the south of Delhi (that is, toward Aurangabad), and from which both Dakanī and Reḳhtah had derived a number of *tatsam* words. Valī's language abounds with them.

Ḥātim's agenda was basically twofold: its negative part was his (un)conscious desire to move away from Valī; its positive

<sup>13</sup>Shāh Ḥātim, *Divān zādah*, p. 40.

part was his wish to bring the language of poetry into line with that of the Mirzās, the *rinds*, and the common people of Delhi. Balancing all these elements was a task, but great poets like Mīr performed it very well. Unfortunately, it was the least important and the least right-minded part of Shāh Ḥātim's agenda--namely, downplaying the value of *tatsam* words--that caught the eye and fancy of many later historians. What was in fact an attempt to arrive at a secular, urbanised and urbane, modern-idiomatic, literate but not overburdened language was seen, and hailed, as exclusionism and 'reformism', as if the language were a criminal or a patient who needed reform or healing, and it was the duty of the poet to perform this task.

There is no doubt that the proportion of *tatsam* vocabulary declined in Rekhtah / Hindī over the second half of the eighteenth century. But was it because of Ḥātim, or other reasons not yet discovered? Was Ḥātim describing in the guise of prescription, and was the language at that time changing faster than we make allowance for? One would need more evidence than is available at present to ascribe the decline in the number of *tatsam* words in literary Urdu to the 'exclusionism' and 'reforms' inaugurated by Ḥātim.

In any case, Urdu literary culture from the late eighteenth century onwards does place an unfortunate stress, which is also entirely disproportionate to its value, on 'purism', 'language reform', 'purging the language of undesirable usages', and--worst of all--privileging all Persian-Arabic over all Urdu. Urdu is the only language whose writers have prided themselves on 'deleting' or 'excising' words and phrases from their active vocabulary. Instead of taking pride in the enlargement of vocabulary, they took joy in limiting the horizon of language, even going to the extent of banishing many words used by literate speakers, or even by their own *ustāds*.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>One of the more blatant examples of this kind of literary gentrification is a *divān* of Muṣḥafī (1750-1824)--actually a selection from four of his *divāns*--printed at Rampur in 1878. The selection was made by Muẓaffar 'Alī Asīr (1801-81), a *shāgird* of Muṣḥafī, and Amīr Mīnā'ī (1828-1900), a *shāgird* of Asīr. They took numerous liberties with the dead master's text in order to bring his language into line with what they regarded as the standard, proper idiom, worthy of

As a result of the process described above, the order of privilege that finally emerged in the Urdu literary-linguistic culture by the third quarter of the nineteenth century--one that remains more or less intact to this day--can be depicted as follows:

Top: Iranian Persian; that is, Persian written by Iranians who never came to India.

Upper Middle: Indo-Iranian Persian; that is, Persian written by Iranian-born writers who lived much of their creative life in India.

Middle: Indian Persian; that is, Persian written by Indians, or by descendants of Iranians settled in India.

Lower Middle: Urdu, provided its Arabic / Persian component conforms as far as possible to Arabic / Persian.

Bottom: Urdu with an Arabic / Persian content that does not conform to Arabic / Persian norms and format.

In the above order of things, 'Persian' means the Persian described in the top two categories above. 'Arabic' means, generally, Arabic absorbed into Persian. 'Iran' means Greater Iran, which includes much of what is known today as Central Asia. The term also subsumed Afghanistan until well into the eighteenth century.

Why this pecking order came into existence, and why Urdu writers themselves took an active part in establishing and perpetuating it, is a question that I have addressed, though not entirely solved, elsewhere.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the power of *langue* is always greater than that of *parole*, and Urdu is no exception. Thousands of 'incorrect' or 'questionable' words and phrases entered even the literary language, despite the restrictions, and are entering even now. Yet many of the taboos that originated in the early nineteenth century are still in place. In theory, and also to a large extent in

a modern *ustād* (see Muṣḥafī, *Divān-e muṣḥafī*, Khuda Bakhsh Library reprint edition).

<sup>15</sup>For detailed discussion, see 'Privilege Without Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India.'

practice, Urdu literary idiom remains the most restrictive kind imaginable. This linguistic restrictiveness contrasts most starkly with the steady expansion of literary theory that we see from Valī (1665/7-1707) to Shāh Naṣīr (1755?-1838) and Shaiḫ Nāsīkh (1776-1838).

The first major discovery in the field of literary theory was that a distinction could be made between *mazmūn* (theme), and *ma'ni* (meaning). Classical Arab and Iranian theorists use the term *ma'ni* to mean 'theme, content.' As late as 1752, we find Tek Chand Bahār defining the word *ma'ni* as 'synonym of *mazmūn*'.<sup>16</sup> Barely fifty years later, *Shams ul-lughāt*, the next great Persian dictionary compiled in India, defines *ma'ni* as 'that which is connoted by the word'.<sup>17</sup> The idea that a poem could be *about* something (*mazmūn*, theme), and could *mean* something different, or something more (*ma'ni*, meaning), may have come from the Sanskrit. One is reminded of Mammaṭa's classification, following Ānandavardhana, of different kinds of meanings, and surpluses of meaning. This has been admirably summed up by Todorov as follows:

At some point during the twelfth century, the Sanskrit poetician Mammata (*Kavyaprakasa*) summarised as follows the prevailing ideas of his day—ideas engendered by the fundamental work of Anandavardhana, who perhaps was the greatest of all theorists of textual symbolism. Mammata identified seven differences between direct expression and indirect suggestion:

- (1) Difference in the nature of the statement: the expressed statement prohibits or denies, for example, while the suggested meaning commands or affirms.
- (2) Difference in time: the suggested meaning is grasped after the expressed meaning.
- (3) Difference in the linguistic material: the expressed meaning emanates from words; the suggested meaning may arise from a sound, a sentence, or an entire work.
- (4) Difference in the means of apprehension: the expressed meaning is understood by means of grammatical rules,

<sup>16</sup>Bahār, *Bahār-e 'ajam*, vol. 2, p. 614. Note, however, that Bahār is familiar with the new term *mazmūn*.

<sup>17</sup>*Shams ul-lughāt*, vol. 2, p. 252.

whereas the suggested meaning requires a context as well: spatio-temporal circumstances, an interlocutor, and so on.

- (5) Difference in effect: the expressed meaning brings about a simple cognitive expression; the suggested meaning also expresses charm.
- (6) Difference in number: the expressed meaning is univocal; the suggested meaning may be plurivalent.
- (7) Difference in the person addressed: the expressed meaning may well be considered to one character, the suggested meaning to another.<sup>18</sup>

While some of the distinctions made here by Mammaṭa would apply to drama alone, the rest can easily be seen in action in the poetry of, for example, Mīr (1722-1810), who is not only a master of *ihām* (item 2 above seems to put the effect of *ihām* in a nutshell), but also of plurality of meaning (item 6 above), use of plain words which, in the given context, have greater meaning or charm than would otherwise be the case (items 3, 4, and 5 above).

Discussing Piaget's theory of the processes of 'accommodation' and 'assimilation' active during the course of a reader's effort to arrive at the meaning of a given text, Todorov says that this position was first taken by Mammaṭa, who said that (in Todorov's words) 'it is necessary, first, that an incompatibility between the primary meaning of the word and its context be manifest; second, that a relation of association exist between the primary and secondary meanings'.<sup>19</sup> This clearly sets down the precondition not only for *shleṣha* but also for the much more sophisticated *ihām*, and it is also apparent that such a theory could not have come into existence without converting the unity of the text into the duality of theme and meaning, or *mazmūn* and *ma'ni*.

In Urdu, Mullā Nuṣratī Bijāpūrī (1600-1674) seems to have been the first to use the term *mazmūn* in the sense of 'theme, idea.' Since he does so a number of times, and the context is

<sup>18</sup>Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>19</sup>Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 27.



one of poetic excellence, he is doubtless making a point in literary theory:

/Reveal, oh Lord, on the screen  
Of my poetic thought  
The freshness and virginity  
Of all my themes/.<sup>20</sup>

/Your manner is new,  
And your speech  
Appeals to the heart.  
Your themes are lofty,  
And colourful/.<sup>21</sup>

/I spoke throughout  
By means of new themes, and thus  
Revealed the power  
Of God's inspiration/.<sup>22</sup>

/New, fresh themes  
Are my weapons  
To cool and kill  
My opponent's breath/.<sup>23</sup>

Nuṣratī, a man of great learning, may have known Sanskrit. Or he may have picked up a point or two from his Kannada- or Telugu-speaking literary friends, or from his own Kannada—he was originally from an area which is now in Karnataka, and so, for that matter, is Bijapur too at the present time. In any case, he would have been aware of the fact that such a distinction was being made, or assumed, by his Persian-writing colleagues. All of them wrote in the 'Indian style', and Nuṣratī himself said that he made Dakanī poetry resemble that of Persian. More importantly, he also said that there are many 'Hindī' [Indian] excellences that cannot be properly transported into Persian,

<sup>20</sup>Nuṣratī Bijāpūrī, 'Alī nāmah, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>Nuṣratī Bijāpūrī, 'Alī nāmah, p. 27. Here, he is praising the poet-king 'Alī 'Adil Shāh II.

<sup>22</sup>Nuṣratī Bijāpūrī, 'Alī nāmah, p. 425.

<sup>23</sup>Nuṣratī Bijāpūrī, 'Alī nāmah, p. 426.

and he, Nuṣratī, having discovered the essence of both, had created a new kind of poetry by mixing the essence of one with the other.<sup>24</sup>

The question whether the author intends, or in some way controls, the meanings derived from his text does not seem to have been discussed in classical Urdu literary theory. It is, however, clear that Mammaṭa's formulations allow for, or perhaps even stipulate, the author's control over the meaning(s) of his text. This position, though in general accord with the Perso-Arabic theories of meaning, does not clearly allow for the reader's autonomy: the reader is at liberty to find meanings in a text so long as he can show that the meanings are there, and have not been superposed. This became necessary in order to defend allegorical-metaphoric-symbolistic interpretations of Sufi literary texts, especially the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ.

Maulānā Shāh Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī (1863/4-1941), perhaps the greatest Indian Sufi ideologue and conservative reformer of Sufi religious practices in the first half of this century, said in a *va'z* (religious discourse) delivered on February 19, 1922:

The poetry of Ḥāfiẓ abounds in subtle points relating to the [Sufi] path. And it's not the case that we [Sufis] extract them from his poetry because of [blind] faith....The fact of the matter is that no one can bring out anything, unless it is there, inside [the poem].<sup>25</sup>

It is obvious that Thānavī is not propounding something here which he regards as original to himself alone: he is stating what he considers as a given in the traditional Indo-Islamic theory of literary interpretation. One consequence of the formulation 'if a meaning is not in a text, it cannot be found there' is a new twist given to the theory of authorial intent. If a meaning is contained in a poem, the author must have put it there in some sense, which might not necessarily be the strict intentionalist sense.

However, this theory of interpretation allowed Urdu poets of the eighteenth century to find intricacies in the poems of

<sup>24</sup>Jālibī, *Tārīkh-e adab-e urdū*, vol. 1, p. 335. The passage is quoted from Nuṣratī's *Gulshan-e 'ishq* (1657).

<sup>25</sup>Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, 'Ta'mīm ul-ta'lim', p. 80.

others--and thus make room for the same kind of discoveries in their own poems--and to talk of *ma'ni āfirīni* (meaning-creation) as a major aspect of creative writing. In *Chahār 'unsur* (Four Elements, 1704), a difficult and highly concentrated prose work containing his Sufic-intellectual thought, Bedil declared that the apparent (word) and the unapparent (meaning) are each other's states, inseparable, and yet they have different identities:

At this locus, the apparent and the unapparent, like the light from the sun, are reflective of each other's state: and word and meaning, like moisture and water, have a relationship no different than the relationship between the head and the foot. No word ever made up a cluster that a meaning then didn't make an appearance. And no meaning ever unveiled itself that wasn't a word. The ends of either thread, like those of the pearl's bright water, don't go ahead of one another, and the steps of either of them, like the two feet of a compass, don't move ahead of the other.<sup>26</sup>

One advantage of such a theory was that it enabled the poet to place a positive value on new words--that is, words which hadn't lost their meaning potential through over-use--and also on involved expressions, which needed attention and care to unravel. The poet could thereby justify trying to make the poem's creation, and also its interpretation, an intellectual exercise. Thus Mīr:

/Each utterance  
Has a multiplicity  
Of sides, oh Mīr,  
Oh what things do I say  
With the tongue  
Of my pen!/  
/Like the beloved's tresses,  
Each of his *shī'rs* is  
Full of curls and twists  
Truly, Mīr's poetry is  
Of a wondrous design/<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Bedil, *Chahār 'unsur*, p. 235.

<sup>27</sup>Mīr, *Kulliyāt*, pp. 553, 615.

Another consequence of the theory that *mazmūn* and *ma'ni* are separate (and perhaps even separable) was a new stress on the idea of the unity and equality of word and meaning. We saw Vaj'hī expressing--or rather advocating--this notion in his poem *Qutb mushtari* (1609/10). This may have been an unconscious (or even conscious) echo of the concept of *sāhitya*:

/The difficult part of the art of poetry  
Is to make both word and meaning  
Coincide/<sup>28</sup>

Now Hātim puts this idea to dual use, making a point in literary theory, and also in the beloved's praise. He says in a ghazal composed in 1752:

/Those of fine imagination  
Describe you as a line of verse  
Where word agrees with meaning;  
Spontaneous, and heart-attracting  
From head to foot.<sup>29</sup>

The continuing popularity of the notion of the unity of word and meaning can be judged from the fact that Momin (1800-1852) used it nearly a hundred years later. Writing a praise poem-cum-chronogram in Urdu for Mustafā Khān Sheftah's Persian *tazkirah*, *Gulshan-e be-khār* (Thornless Garden, 1834), Momin said that here:

/Meaning sings the praises  
Of word, and word  
Adulates meaning/<sup>30</sup>

We have, so far, examined some developments in classical Urdu literary theory which suggest that regardless of the variety of meanings that a text may contain, the author exercises a measure of control over the meaning of his text. However, once it was recognized that a text may have many meanings, it was

<sup>28</sup>Vaj'hī, *Qutb mushtari*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in Hasrat Mohānī, *Intikhab-e sukhan*, vol. 1, p. 63.

<sup>30</sup>Sheftah, *Gulshan-e be-khār*, p. 363.

but a step to assume that the reader could generate his own meanings and that the ultimate control might indeed be his, not the author's. Again, the lead toward this was provided by Sufic thought. In the *malfūz* (Conversations) of the great Indian Sufi Shaikh Sharaf ud-Dīn Yahyā Manerī (d. 1380/81), 'Ain ul-Quzzāt Hamadānī reports the Shaikh as saying:

There is no fixed norm for [explicating] a poem's meaning. The listener apprehends meaning in accordance with his own state, [and] with whatever meaning he already has in his heart. Example of this is cited from [the case of] the mirror: there is no stable or fixed way in which the image is reflected in a mirror, such that whoever may look into a mirror, may find one and the same image in it. Rather, whoever looks into the mirror will find there a reflection of only his own face. The same is [true] of poetry: whoever listens to it, listens according to his own manner. He derives meaning from the poem agreeably with the state that exists in his heart.<sup>31</sup>

This position, which is almost at the opposite pole from Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī's standpoint, does not seem to have been investigated, or enlarged, in terms of theory. Yet it must have had its effect on literary praxis, for it implies a greater possible distance between word and meaning than Mammaṭa or Thānavī would seem to allow, and this could permit the poet to take liberties with the language and indulge his taste for abstract images. These qualities became prominent in Urdu poetry with the advent of *khiyāl bandī*.

The introduction of such far-reaching distinctions between theme (*mazmūn*) and meaning (*ma'nī*) had made several more things possible. It was, for instance, recognized that while themes were theoretically infinite, very few of them were acceptable in poetry. Thus the search for new, acceptable themes, or for new ways to express old themes, became a noble occupation for the poet and was called *mazmūn āfirīnī* (creation of themes). This gave rise to a mode in which the theme's novelty or far-fetchedness, became an objective for its own sake. Far-fetched or novel themes also had, however, to pass

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in Vaḥīd Ashraf, *Rubā'ī*, Part III, pp. 3-4.

the test of acceptability. This was called *khiyāl bandī* (capturing imaginary, abstract, elusive themes) and the mode, though not the term, seems to have begun with the 'Indian style' Persian poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Poetry in this mode was cerebral rather than 'emotional', or 'emotive'. In Urdu, the first traces of this manner can be found in Valī, 'Abd ul-Valī 'Uzlat and Mīr. By the end of the eighteenth century, it was firmly in position as the ruling mode of the day.

As I said above, the term *khiyāl bandī* does not seem to occur in Persian. The terms that Indo-Persian poets routinely employed for the kind of themes that a *khiyāl band* poet might use, were *ma'nī-e nāzūk* (delicate / subtle theme) and *ma'nī-e begānah* (unfamiliar, unusual, remote theme). Šā'ib used both terms in *shī'rs* that are typical *shī'rs* of *khiyāl bandī*:

/Whoever, oh Šā'ib  
Became acquainted with  
Unfamiliar themes, drew away  
From the acquaintance of  
The common world./

/Ecstasy, for me, is to capture  
A fine and subtle theme,  
Nothing else is the new moon  
Of the 'Id for those  
Of subtle and delicate thought  
Like me./<sup>32</sup>

In Urdu, the earliest use of the term *khiyāl bandī* is, appropriately, by Nāsikh, the quintessential *khiyāl band* poet. Typically, it is also a statement of theory:

/The meaning of the *khiyāl band*  
Is right there in the poem itself,  
It's very near, that  
Which people believe to be far./<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Šā'ib Tabrīzī, *Kulliyāt*, pp. 38, 510.

<sup>33</sup>Nāsikh, *Kulliyāt*, p. 317. This *shī'r* occurs in the first *divān*, compiled in 1816/17.

This is clearly the same position that we saw in the utterance of Maulānā Shāh Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī above. But while Thānavī was making a general observation, Nāsikh is placing the question of the *khiyāl band* poet's meaning in its proper context: he is, in effect, demanding a close reading of his text. The word *bandī* assumes importance here. Its literal sense is 'tying, binding, setting'. So the *khiyāl* (abstract, remote, notion or theme, or an image or figure conceived mentally) was to be set in the poem just as a gemstone is set into a piece of metal. The poet might do violence to language, but he set down his captured thought as delicately and firmly as a jeweller setting a stone.

Praising the beloved's beauty, for instance, was a major theme. Praising the beauty of her face was a major sub-theme. Praising the eyes, lips, cheeks, so forth, were major sub-sub-themes. Praising something for which there was no space in any of the conceivable categories presented several kinds of challenge: one had to find such a thing, then one needed to imagine, or find, some praiseworthy aspect of it, and then, hardest of all, one needed to invent terms of praise that conformed to the dictates of convention. This is how Mīr looks at the beloved's pockmarked face:

/They weren't so plentiful,  
The pockmarks on your face--  
Who then has been planting  
His glances on your face?/<sup>34</sup>

This is brilliant, for it implies beauty both before and after disfigurement by smallpox. But the verse turns upon a wordplay: in Urdu, one of the ways to convey the act of looking intently at something is to say, 'to bury / embed / plant the eyes or the glances in / on something'.

Now Jur'at (1748-1809) imagines a direr situation, but doesn't quite achieve the image that could bring off the desired effect:

/The body of that rosy-Rose

<sup>34</sup>Mīr, *Kulliyāt*, p. 389.

Bathed in the efflorescence  
Of smallpox: like the action  
Of the moth on bright velvet/<sup>35</sup>

Jur'at uses the word *gul* for the beloved, which means 'rose, flower', and also 'scar, spot'. This is happy wordplay, but the image of the rose-body doesn't go well with that of velvet.

Now look at Nāsikh, greatest of the *khiyāl band* poets:

/When blisters of smallpox  
Appeared on the beloved's face,  
The bulbuls were deceived:  
Dew-drops on rose petals, surely?/<sup>36</sup>

Like Mīr, Nāsikh introduces an outsider into the story; the difference is that in Mīr, the outsider causes the harm, and in causing it, reaffirms the 'lookability' of the beloved's face. In Nāsikh, the outsider presents another's point of view, and the subtlety is that the other is the bulbul, the quintessential lover, while the rose is the quintessential beloved. Thus the beloved's ravaged face is not really ravaged, the bulbul takes it for rose petals bathed in dew. Both the *shī'r*s also affirm by suggestion (*kināyah*) the beloved's delicateness, but in different ways: in the Mīr *shī'r*, the beloved is so delicate that the onlooker's glances hurt and break under the skin like needles, pitting the face. In the Nāsikh *shī'r*, the delicate, rosy smoothness of the skin causes the blisters to glow like dewdrops.

In the *shī'r* below, Nāsikh extracts greater advantage from the double meaning of *gul* as both 'rose' and 'scar, spot':

/The Garden of Time has no roses  
But scars, left by unfulfilled desire;  
Every leaf of every tree  
Has the manner of wringing the hands  
In regret/<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup>Jur'at, *Kulliyāt*, p. 175.

<sup>36</sup>Nāsikh, *Kulliyāt*, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup>Nāsikh, *Kulliyāt*, p. 31.

Praising the beloved's tresses, and his newly sprouted or neatly styled beard, was another favourite sub-theme. Yet another was that of the lover's side or breast, ripped open by the beloved's glance as it plundered away the heart. Shāh Naṣīr found one unique image to deal with all this:

/The wound in my side, because  
Of the sutures, looks like  
A millipede. Don't tamper  
With my heart--there lies a millipede

The darkening down on that face  
Oh Naṣīr, is after the curled  
Side-lock now. The millipede  
Is out to drive the scorpion from his home/.<sup>38</sup>

It must be remembered that many *shī'rs* of *khiyāl bandī* sound faintly (or even strongly) bizarre in English translation today. One is tempted to believe that they would not sound entirely outlandish to 'thinking poets' (in Coleridge's words) like John Donne, or to other metaphysical poets whose poetry is characterised by what Dr Johnson described as 'forced thoughts, and rugged metre'. Dr Johnson went on to say:

From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose, had been rarely attempted; we had few elegances or flowers of speech, the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been judged to enliven one another.<sup>39</sup>

This passage could very well be rewritten, omitting the tone and tenor of disapproval, to read as an excellent and perceptive evaluation and appreciation of what the Urdu *khiyāl bandī* poets

<sup>38</sup>Naṣīr, *Kulliyāt*, vol. 1, pp. 268-69.

<sup>39</sup>Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets*, vol. 2, pp. 117-18. This passage is from the essay 'Dryden'.

were trying to do. Armed with the views of Johnson, let us look at a few more *shī'rs* of Nāsiḫ, and some from Ghālib:

/Those who go away from  
Their native land, have their heart  
Turn to blood. The coral is green  
So long as it lives in water.

Separated from the beloved,  
I drink, and my burning heart  
Weeps and laments,  
It is usual for the fire  
To mourn, when water touches it/.<sup>40</sup>

/It is not the down that sprouts  
On the face of that envy-of-the-rose:  
Oh my heart, it is the reflection  
On rose petals  
Of the bulbul's eyelashes/.<sup>41</sup>

Ghālib (1797-1869) was much given to *khiyāl bandī*. He was extremely cerebral, especially in his youth. He didn't look so much for the *outré* as for the abstract. He presented themes that were often very ordinary, but packaged them in images that were nearly inaccessible, and like Mallarmé, he seemed to revel in their inaccessibility. Here are three *shī'rs* from a three-part ghazal that he wrote when he was barely nineteen:

/Majnūn's imaginings are active still  
Among the wild beasts--  
The black of the deer's eye  
Reflects the beauty spot on Laila's face.

My imaging mind, to pacify my child-  
Like heart, picks flowers of pleasant  
Sights from a garden whose colours  
Of revelry are now gone.

For me, in the dark nights of separation  
From those whose beauty blazes  
Like a flame, the burning scar of the heart

<sup>40</sup>Nāsiḫ, *Kulliyāt*, p. 158.

<sup>41</sup>Nāsiḫ, *Kulliyāt*, p. 29.

Is all the lamplight there is/.<sup>42</sup>

These *shi'rs* of Ghālib also show the weaknesses of *khiyāl bandī*: the image occasionally doesn't quite fit the theme, creating the problem of insufficient 'proof'. This may have been one of the reasons for *khiyāl bandī*'s decline after the 1850's. The main reason, however, seems to have been a radical change in ideas of literary excellence, and greater stress on 'truth', and 'personally felt' emotion in poetry.

Dr Johnson said that the Metaphysical poets 'neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of the intellect', and therefore would 'without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets'.<sup>43</sup> But it is precisely these things which endear the Metaphysical poets to the modern western mind: refusal to describe the world as it appears to the common eye; straining after difficult and not easily accessible effects; novelty of image and metaphor; and a bold and sweeping brush. These things should have endeared the *khiyāl bandī* poet to the modern Urdu taste as well, had not that taste been corrupted by considerations of 'realism' and 'natural poetry' as propagated by Hālī and others.

Consideration of *khiyāl bandī* took me nearly half a century ahead in my narrative, for *khiyāl bandī* came into its own toward the end of the eighteenth century. The main mode of early eighteenth-century poets was *ihām*. If *khiyāl bandī* sought to push to the limit the poet's innovativeness (and in fact also his luck), it was the frequent use of *ihām* (wordplay generated by the intent to deceive) that betokened the first major attempt to make poems yield more meaning than they seemed at first glance to possess. This attempt was called *ma'nī āfirīnī* (creation of meanings), as opposed to *mazmūn āfirīnī* (creation of themes). 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

<sup>42</sup>Ghālib, *Divān-e ghālib kāmīl, tārikhī tartīb se*, p. 199. I would like to acknowledge the value of Gyān Chand's commentary, *Tafṣīr-e ghālib*, in helping elucidate these highly complicated *shi'rs*.

<sup>43</sup>Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets*, vol. 1, p. 26.

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. Poets of the early eighteenth century, however, did much more than this.

In the hands of Valī, and the Delhi poets, *ihām* came to mean many kinds of wordplay. They also created situations where the two meanings of the crucial word that was used to create *ihām* were equally strong, and it wasn't possible to decide which was the poet's intended meaning. Another way of using *ihām* with greater creativity than its book definition allowed for, was for the crucial word to have more than two meanings, such that all the meanings were more or less relevant to the poem's discourse.<sup>44</sup>

Let us now take a look at some instances of *ihām*. For obvious reasons, they don't fare well in translation, and I'll have to trade off excellence for translatability. The following examples are from Ābrū:

/I hacked through life in every way,  
Dying, and having to live again  
Is Doomsday/.<sup>45</sup>

I'll now supply, through brief commentary, the aspects of meaning that are lost in translation. The explications are arranged in the order of obvious to less obvious:

- I hacked...in every way: (1) I tried all ways of living a life; (2) I suffered all kinds of hardship.
- Dying...to live again: (1) To be resurrected; (2) To die by inches, again; (3) To become involved in the cycle of living and dying over and over again.
- Doomsday: (1) The day of resurrection, when all the dead will be brought back to life; (2) A major calamity; (3) A great deed; (4) A cruelty.

<sup>44</sup>For a comparatively extended examination of *ihām* and related matters, see my *Urdu ghazal ke aham moṛ*.

<sup>45</sup>Ābrū, *Divān-e ābrū*, p. 270.

Here is another illustrative verse of *thām* by Ābrū:

/I turned my heart to blood through grief,  
And then the blood to water  
And poured it forth through the eyes,  
And was only then called *ābrū*.<sup>46</sup>

Ābrū here refers to: (1) The poet's name; (2) [The heart as] honour for the face; (3) [The heart as] brightness--adornment--of the face; (4) [The heart as] water flowing down the face; (5) Dignity [as name for the heart]. The latter four meanings turn on the literal-metaphorical sense of *āb* (brightness, water) and *rū* (face), the idea being that brightness of face betokens honour and dignity, just as blackness of face betokens the opposite. The original Urdu has a happy ambiguity about the subject of 'was called': it applies both to the speaker (Ābrū), and to his heart.

Ali Jawad Zaidi says that Urdu poets of the early eighteenth century adopted the art of *mazmūn āfirīnī* and complex craftsmanship as a conscious design, and the underlying theory 'was not different from what Bhāmaha had developed in the seventh century. The tradition that travelled from Sanskrit to Persian, and from thence to Urdu, may have kept changing its form and structure, but not its spirit'.<sup>47</sup>

That there is considerable truth in what Zaidi says is borne out by the fact that Bhāmaha did place special emphasis on what he called *atishayokti*, a concept that he defined as follows: 'An utterance, transcending the common modes of speech, resorted to with some purpose, is regarded as the poetic figure, called *atishayokti*'. He goes on to say, '*Atishayokti* alone is the entire *vakrokti* which creates the charm in meaning and for which the poet should make efforts'.<sup>48</sup> R. S. Tewary says that Kuntaka defined *vakrokti* as 'an utterance characterised by wit or

<sup>46</sup>Ābrū, *Dīvān-e ābrū*, p. 103.

<sup>47</sup>Zaidī, *Do adabī iskūl*, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup>Quoted in Tewary, *A Critical Approach to Classical Indian Poetics*, pp. 162-63.

ingenuity'.<sup>49</sup> When we read the above statements with Krishnamoorthy's statement that 'Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin held the view that the common denominator of all *arthālaṅkāras* was *vakrokti* or *atishayokti*',<sup>50</sup> we can begin to understand the true nature of the *thām* practiced by the Hindī / Rekhtah poets of the eighteenth century, and its debt, direct or oblique, to Sanskrit literary thought.

The main point about *thām* was it was an intended act, and had for its purpose the following objectives: to deceive, or surprise, the reader / listener; to create a happy effect of wit; and, ultimately, to explore new dimensions of meaning, and the limits of language. Even in its most elementary form, it was regarded as *ṣaṅ'at-e ma'navī* (a figure pertaining to meaning), an *arthālaṅkāra*, and was not just a frivolity, as modern Urdu critics seem unanimously to have held. It had greater complexity than the Sanskrit *shleṣha*, for *shleṣha* seems to recognise only two senses of a word to be in operation. In fact, Udbhaṭa seems to have denied even two senses to a word, holding that in case of *shleṣha*, 'the words should be regarded as different when they have different senses, even though their forms may be the same'.<sup>51</sup>

The position of Mammaṭa was closer to the concept of *thām* as defined in the books--'two different expressions, identical in sound, uttered simultaneously',<sup>52</sup> except that in the hands of the Urdu poet, an *thām*-based utterance could convey many more than just two meanings. Also, one or more of the meanings of the *thām*-bearing text in Urdu could be irrelevant or not fully relevant, and provide only the pleasure of piquancy or play. In all such cases, Mammaṭa's formulation to the effect that 'An expression can give only one sense at a time'<sup>53</sup> seems to break

<sup>49</sup>Tewary, *A Critical Approach to Classical Indian Poetics*, p. 252.

<sup>50</sup>Krishnamoorthy, *Indian Literary Theories*, p. 168.

<sup>51</sup>Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*, p. 44.

<sup>52</sup>Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*, p. 45.

<sup>53</sup>Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*, p. 45.

down. Sanskrit theory recognizes that though the primary sense of a word, the *abhidhā*, is fixed, other contextual factors like the speaker's character, the time, the place; and so forth can make the word 'suggest various other ideas'.<sup>54</sup> But here we are in the realm of *dhvani*, rather than meaning proper, while both *thām* and *shleṣha* are primarily matters of semantics.

The major difference between the Sanskrit *shleṣha* and the *thām* as practically invented by Khusrau and perfected by the major Urdu poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lies in the ideas of the Indo-Persians about the nature of language. While Sanskrit linguistic and literary theory strongly inclines toward the notion of language as the means of (honest) communication, the Indo-Persians seem to revel in the idea that deception is one of the legitimate functions of language, or at least of creatively employed language. Thus if a text has more than one discernible meaning by virtue of *thām* or even by virtue of the less comprehensive *shleṣha*, the deception lies mainly in the fact that the listener / reader is obliged to grant that the text which by definition should convey a definite message, is seen here as conveying more than one message at the same time and is thus compromising the accuracy function of language.

Another insight pertaining to literary theory and practice was provided by recognition of the fact that there can be poems that make a strong appeal to the emotions, but the meaning of which may be, at least at first sight (and perhaps always), not very clear, or not very valuable. Reconsideration and close analysis may, in some cases, reveal the poem to be the site of possibilities or actual occurrence of significant meaning. But in all such poems, meaning, that is the analysable content, is not the most important part of the poem. The quality that made this possible was called *kaifiyat*, a state of subtle and delicious enjoyment—an enjoyment that could be of the nature of the pleasure that one derives from tragedy, or a sad piece of music. Also, *kaifiyat* does not permit sentimentality, 'sentimentality' here being held to mean an extravagance in words, words that are larger and louder than the emotion that the poem is trying

<sup>54</sup>Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*, p. 311.

to convey. *Kaifiyat* makes no overt appeal to the listener / reader's emotion. In many cases, the protagonist / speaker's own mood or state of mind may be difficult to fathom. Certainly, it is always complex enough to discourage a direct, linear interpretation.

The concept of *kaifiyat* reminds us of *dhvani* in some respects. Krishnamoorthy informs us of Anandavardhana's appreciation in a poem of 'the vital animation provided by the emotional content described in all its variety, including states of mind', in a poem. Anandavardhana cites an example provided by Bhaṭṭendurāja, in which the latter describes the physical and emotional response of the *gopīs* when they first look at Krishna in his full youth. Krishnamoorthy paraphrases Anandavardhana's comments on Bhaṭṭendurāja's *muktaka* as follows: 'For one who cannot respond to the intensity of love in this stanza, it cannot have any poetic value. There is no recognisable figure of speech beyond two common-place similes, nor any highly striking poetic gem embodying the rasa of *sṅgāra* or love'.<sup>55</sup>

While *dhvani* is a more comprehensive term than *kaifiyat*, what Anandavardhana seems to be saying here is precisely what most often happens in a verse with *kaifiyat*.<sup>56</sup> The absence of striking metaphors or images makes a *shī'r* of *kaifiyat* even harder to translate than an *thām*-bearing *shī'r*, yet I'll make an attempt, and try to convey some of the flavour of such *shī'rs*. Here are a few from a ghazal by Muṣṭafī:

/I looked at her, and sighed a sigh  
I looked at her with longing, once

When she wielded her sword on me  
I put up my hands for protection

When someone behaved arrogantly  
I wore my cap awry, rakish

<sup>55</sup>Krishnamoorthy, *Indian Literary Theories*, 193-95.

<sup>56</sup>For a good discussion of *kaifiyat*, see Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, pp. 119-22.



Mute, patient, I gave up my life,  
Oh Muṣḥafī, and made her bashfulness  
My witness/.<sup>57</sup>

It can be said that the mood of a *kaiḥfiyat*-bearing *shī'r* recalls that of an accomplished Elizabethan lyric, or song. This view would be somewhat reductionistic if applied always, and especially to a truly great poet like Mīr, whose *kaiḥfiyat* poems are found very often to hold complex meanings too. It should, however, generally hold true for poems like the one quoted above. Consider Shakespeare, in *Twelfth Night* (Act II, Scene iv):

/Come away, come away, death,  
And in sad cypress let me be laid;  
Fly away, fly away, breath;  
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.  
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,  
O prepare it!  
My part of death, no one so true  
Did share it./

Here are some further examples of *kaiḥfiyat*, from Valī to Mīr. The verses have again been chosen with a view to their amenability to translation:

/How can my Love leave my heart  
And go away?  
The prey is wounded, how  
To go away?

If my tears didn't come to help,  
How would the choking  
That afflicts my heart  
Go away?/<sup>58</sup>

This is Valī. Not much commentary is needed here, except that the original is much more subtle: The phrase 'go away' applies to both the hunter and the prey; the phrase that I translate as

<sup>57</sup>Muṣḥafī, *Kulliyāt*, vol. 3, pp. 442-43.

<sup>58</sup>Valī, *Kulliyāt*, p. 247.

'leave my heart' actually has only 'leave heart' in the original; and since in the original it can also mean 'to lose heart', one meaning of the *shī'r* could be that the beloved should not lose heart at not having brought down the prey in one clean blow, and should stay to finish the job. In the second *shī'r*, the original has the word *ghubār*, which means 'dust'; in the present idiomatic context, it means repressed unhappiness, rancour, or displeasure. For want of a better alternative, I was obliged to make an 'explanatory' translation, which does no good to the polysemy of *ghubār*; also, the wordplay between 'water / tears' and 'dust' is inevitably lost.

Let us now look at a sampling from Sirāj Aurangābādī (1714-1763):

/Hear, oh hear the account  
Of the amazement of love:  
Nothing remained, neither madness  
Nor the enchantress;  
You didn't remain you, I  
Didn't remain me. All that was left  
Was senselessness.

What a breeze it was that blew  
From the direction of  
The unapparent. The garden of joy  
Burnt down, but a bough  
Of the Tree of Pain--one would  
Call it the heart--  
Remained green/.<sup>59</sup>

Let me round off this discussion of *kaiḥfiyat* with examples from a ghazal by Mīr, in his third *divān*, compiled around 1785:

/I wept away all the blood there was  
In my heart; where is any drop left now?  
Sorrow turned me to water  
And my life flowed away,  
What is there left of me now?

Lover and beloved, all of them

<sup>59</sup>Sirāj, *Kulliyāt*, p. 667.

Became story and legend here;  
This world is a place to weep at,  
Where is Lailā, and where is Majnūn?

How full the wilderness felt  
When Majnūn was around--  
He's gone, and where is  
That brightness, that grace  
Left in the desert now?

Grieving for friends gone away  
Ate away my life,  
My heart longs for them so much  
But how can I find them now?/60

The interrogative has a rhetorical power in Urdu which English cannot match--and my translation is feeble enough. Yet if not the rhetorical power, some of the pensive, bitter-heavy mood perhaps does come through. Villon's poem 'Ballade des Dames du Temps jadis' and especially its refrain, inevitably comes to mind--'But where are the snows of yesteryear?'<sup>61</sup> Villon's tone is perhaps a little mocking. Mīr too is quite capable of mocking, but in moments such as these the poet / protagonist's voice comes through as the voice of one who has seen all weariness, all departures, and all journeys. Yet like Shakespeare, Mīr gives free rein to his instinct for wordplay even in such situations. I have not, for obvious reasons, chosen the wordplay *shī'rs*, or tried to bring out in my translation the faint nuances of wordplay that the present *shī'rs* do have.

I devote so much space to *khiyāl bandī* and *kaifiyat* because *khiyāl bandī*, if at all known to modern Urdu scholars, is one of the unmentionables of Urdu poetry; hardly any critic has had the courage to recognise that Ghālib--whom most people today regard as the greatest Urdu poet--was a *khiyāl band* to the core. As for *kaifiyat*, the term is unknown, and modern poets like Firāq Gorakhpūrī (1896-1982), some of whose poetry evinces the quality of *kaifiyat*, have been praised for entirely the wrong reasons.

<sup>60</sup>Mīr, *Kulliyāt*, pp. 556-57.

<sup>61</sup>Woledge et al., *The Penguin Book of French Verse*, pp. 122-24.

Another concept, not fully developed or realised, but clearly present in poets from Mīr to Shāh Naṣīr, and even Ghālib, was that of *shorish*, or *shor angezī*. The phrase *shor angez* has been present in Persian since at least the sixteenth century. It seems to have become a technical term by the end of the seventeenth century. The literal sense of *shor angez* is 'tumult-arousing'. That it was used in a technical sense is borne out by the presence of another term for the same effect: the term *shorish*, which simply means 'tumult, disturbance'. So obviously it was a quality of the poem, and not merely its effect on an audience, that was in question here.

Apparently a poem was considered *shor angez* if it had the quality of passionate, yet impersonal, comment on the outside universe, or the external state of things.<sup>62</sup> Mīr has often claimed his poetry to be *shor angez*. Apart from the fact that this quality of Mīr's poetry seems to be obvious even to us today, it must have been so powerfully perceived in his own day that Saudā satirized it, with apparently Mīr in mind. He has a whole ghazal, criticizing mediocre poets. In the last but one *shī'r* he makes a play upon the word *shor*, which means both 'tumult', and 'salty, of pleasantly pungent taste', and says:

/The passion-arousing quality  
of insipid poetry  
is something like the alkaline salts  
that grow on a piece of land  
where people go and piss./<sup>63</sup>

Even if it is not a satire on Mīr, or maybe in addition to being one, the ghazal is certainly a kind of statement in literary theory: Saudā regards 'meaning-creation', 'search for colourful themes', 'acceptance by the people', and '*shor angezī*', as important attributes for a good poet.

Then there were matters concerning the grammar of poetry, like *rābṭ* (connection between the two lines of a *shī'r*), and

<sup>62</sup>For a good though brief discussion of *shor angezī* see Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, pp. 113-16.

<sup>63</sup>Saudā, *Kulliyāt*, 1973 ed., vol. 1, p. 65.

matters flowing from *thām*-like *ri'āyat* (consonance) and *munāsibat* (affinity), both pertaining to the play of words in extending or strengthening the meaning in a poem--which came into prominent consideration by about 1750.

Thus a number of theoretical ideas, or refinements of existing ideas, about the nature and art of poetry, some dealing with fundamentals and some with details, were developed and promulgated in the century and a half that passed after Valī came to Delhi in the year 1700. The process stopped when the great discontinuity of 1857 occurred. Old ideas were given up, or lost, in the new literary ethos that looked to what it thought was British (or European) culture for providing both model and ratification. After 1857, classical poetics in Urdu lost prestige so fast that it had all but disappeared by the time the new century arrived.<sup>64</sup>

Urdu writers began to leave Delhi by about 1760. The exodus was not so great, nor life in Delhi so uniformly intolerable, as 'official' historians tend to describe. In fact, the century, for all its turmoils and upheavals, seems to have been a great one for writers who wanted to travel. Āzād Bilgrāmī (1704-1785) travelled to Ṭaḥṭha (Sind), Lahore, Delhi, Aurangabad, Arabia, and many other places. Qamar ud-Dīn Minnat (1733/4-1792/3) went to Lucknow, then Calcutta, then Murshidabad, then Hyderabad, and then again to Lucknow and Delhi. 'Abd ul-Valī Uzlat (1692/3-1775) travelled from Surat to Delhi, then to the Deccan. Siyālkoḥī Mal Vārastah (d.1766) is reputed to have travelled to Iran to imbibe modern Persian idiom, and so on. Tek Chand Bahār too is reputed to have undertaken a similar journey. 'Alī Ḥazīn came to Delhi from Iran, went to Lucknow, then settled in Banaras. Mīr Ziyā went to Lucknow from Delhi; then he went to Murshidabad. Even such a minor person as Abu'l-ḥasan Amrullāh Ilāhābādī travelled to Banaras, Patna, and Murshidabad to do research for his *tazkirah*.

<sup>64</sup>This process of change, along with its implications for Urdu poetry, has been studied with sympathy and understanding by Frances Pritchett in *Nets of Awareness*.

People did leave Delhi for other places, though, and many came to Delhi too, to stay for long periods or short. The most charismatic of Delhi's new writers, Ḳhān-e Ārzū, came from Gwalior at a fairly mature age. Inshā'allāh Ḳhān Inshā (1756-1817) came with his father from Murshidabad to Delhi; later, he went to live in Lucknow. Mīr came from Agra, travelled widely in modern Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, and spent the last twenty-two years or so of his life in Lucknow. Saudā (1706-1781) travelled to Farrukhabad around 1760, then to Lucknow. Muṣḥafī went from Bareilly to Delhi, then Lucknow, then Delhi, and finally to Lucknow. Sa'ādat Yār Ḳhān Rangīn (1756-1834/5) was brought by his people from Sarhind to Delhi when he was small. He travelled to Lucknow and elsewhere on business, but remained based in Delhi. Qā'im Chāndpūrī (1724-1795) came to Delhi from Bareilly. Rāsikh 'Aẓīmābādī (1748-1822) came from Patna in the 1770's to Delhi, hoping to become a pupil of Mīr's. He spent quite some time in Delhi before going back to Patna. In fact, a reasonably exhaustive list of notable writers who travelled about in the eighteenth century might occupy many pages.

On the whole, more people left Delhi than came to it. The process continued until about the end of the century. Lucknow gained the most, but others like Murshidabad, Banaras, Patna, and Calcutta (at the turn of the century) also made important acquisitions. The eighteenth century was much more aware of itself than the previous one. There was greater contact among poets. Writers from the North generally knew about those from the South, though they may not always have acknowledged them. Writers from the South knew quite well the works of their Northern counterparts. Criticisms and appreciations were constantly offered in writing or orally.

Bāqar Āgāh (1745-1808), the greatest Dakanī / Reḳhtah literary personality of the eighteenth century, though himself unacknowledged by *tazkirah* writers of the North, evinces familiarity with the works of all major northern poets of his time. He regards only Saudā as worthy of his steel.<sup>65</sup> In one

<sup>65</sup>Alīm Ṣabā Navīdī, *Maulānā bāqar āgāh ke adabī navādir*. See Navīdī's introduction, his selection from Āgāh's *divān*, and Āgāh's Preface to *Gulzār-e 'ishq* (1794), pp. 41, 77, 82, 144-147. Also see

*shī'r* he praises Dard (1720-1785) by implication, saying that after Dard, there will be no one to value and admire the poetry of Bāqar Āgāh.<sup>66</sup> He says that Saudā's admirers are everywhere from 'Hind to Karnatak', but that some people, while they place Saudā above even the Persian writers, do not acknowledge Nuṣratī, just because 'his language is not smooth'.<sup>67</sup> Bāqar Āgāh is reported to have tangled with the great Āzād Bilgrāmī when the latter found some faults in Āgāh's Persian *maṣnavī*, *Mir'āt ul-huṣn*.

The extent to which distantly placed poets kept abreast of each other's work at the time can be judged from an incident involving Āzād. Though the matter relates to Persian, it can be taken as typical for both Reḳhtah / Hindī and Persian poets. 'Abd ul-Vaḥḥāb Iftīkhār tells us in his *Taḳkirah-e benaḳīr* (1758/9) that Āzād Bilgrāmī compiled a *taḳkirah* called *Yad-e baiḳā*. While Āzād was in Lahore, Ḥākim Lāhorī, himself a prominent poet, obtained from Āzād a copy of *Yad-e baiḳā*. When Siyālkoṭī Mal Vārastah saw it, he observed that Āzād had misattributed a number of *shī'rs*. Word of this reached Āzād too. Checking up on the matter, Āzād realized that there was truth in what Vārastah said. He therefore withdrew his *taḳkirah*, and wrote that errors had occurred in it due to the unreliable nature of the texts that he worked from; should anyone find wrong attributions in the copies of the work already in circulation, they should refer the matter to the *taḳkirah* writer. Āzād was gracious, but the incident generated bad blood between Vārastah and Āzād's pupils.<sup>68</sup>

Āzād Bilgrāmī, Bāqar Āgāh, Siyālkoṭī Mal Vārastah—they are not atypical people in the century. All of them were at home

Rāhī Fidā'ī, *Dār ul-'ulūm latīfīyah velūr kā adabī manẓar nāmah*, p. 108.

<sup>66</sup>Alīm Ṣabā Navīdī, *Maulānā bāqar āgāh ke adabī navādir*, p. 98.

<sup>67</sup>Alīm Ṣabā Navīdī, *Maulānā bāqar āgāh ke adabī navādir*, p. 145.

<sup>68</sup>Iftīkhār, *Taḳkirah-e benaḳīr*, pp. 13-14.

in more languages than one—Āzād and Āgāh were excellent poets in Arabic too, and both knew Sanskrit. Āgāh knew Telugu as well. That none of them was in Delhi is significant. As Muzaffar Alam has astutely observed, the history of the eighteenth century in India needs to be studied from a non-central, non-Delhi-oriented point of view as well. 'It can be seen', Muzaffar Alam says, 'that local and regional social groups were emerging as powerful forces' in eighteenth-century India. The result of a Delhi-centred approach, therefore, is that 'one remains imprisoned within the narrow confines of Delhi to the exclusion of significant developments elsewhere'.<sup>69</sup>

Though Delhi lost a number of prominent persons to Lucknow, it retained its hegemonic pretensions, at least in regard to Reḳhtah / Hindī. Important literary centres had sprung up all over the country, and were vying for space, if not supremacy, on the literary-cultural map. Lucknow became Delhi's chief rival for many reasons. Its ruling class mostly came from Delhi, and as the eighteenth century drew towards its close, Lucknow may have begun to look upon itself as replacing, rather than representing, Delhi. Sulaimān Shikoh, Shāh 'Ālam's second son, had been managing the affairs of the state at Delhi during the period 1759-1772, when his father was elsewhere. Palace intrigues obliged him to leave Delhi for Lucknow in 1784. Thus Lucknow was well set to consider itself Delhi in miniature.

Somewhat naturally, Delhi claimed to be the pristine source of the language, and implied that the language spoken elsewhere could claim to be reliable only in so far as it conformed to the register of Delhi. Non-natives of Delhi, or even those whose forebears left Delhi long ago to settle elsewhere, could scarcely claim to be owners of standard speech. Writing in 1807, Inshā gave a certificate of correctness to the Urdu spoken by some people of Lucknow, but for political reasons: his patrons were the Navāb of Avadh, and

<sup>69</sup>Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, p. 11.

Prince Sulaimān Shikoh.<sup>70</sup> He gave short shrift to ordinary Lucknow residents:

Thus the people of Lucknow are those who pronounce *'ilm* as *'ilim*, or *'ilm*; *'aql* as *'aqal*; *tālib-e 'ilm* as *tālib-e 'ilim*; and when I say, 'the residents of Lucknow', I mean those who after the devastation of Delhi [perhaps Abdālī's invasion of 1761], took up residence in Lucknow....But the congregation of these people [of Delhi] is not proven before me in any city other than Lucknow. Residents of 'Azīmābād [Patna] and Murshidabad, in their own estimation, regard themselves as competent Urdu speakers, and regard their own city as the *urdū*...'.<sup>71</sup>

Inshā's cautious pronouncements in favour of Lucknow's Delhi-originated elite, and his rejection of Lucknow's locals, didn't win him many adherents. For the natives of Lucknow who, according to Inshā, couldn't pronounce simple Arabic words correctly, claimed authority and normativeness for their own usages, even if this entailed total or partial rejection of Delhi. Writing in 1825, Rajab 'Alī Beg Surūr scoffed at the Urdu of Delhi. In the long, colourful, and somewhat strained prose panygeric of Lucknow that he put by way of Introduction to his prose romance *Fasānah-e 'ajā'ib* (1825)--generally called a *dāstān*, although its claim to this generic status is untenable and the author himself did not so describe it--Surūr went out of his way to criticize not only Delhi's language, but also its status as a well-administered, populous city:

The speech that is current in Lucknow's lanes and alleys--let anyone who heard it elsewhere, recite it, or if they saw it written, let them exhibit the text. From the time of Bābur Shāh's rule to the reign of Akbar II, [in Delhi] it was like the saying 'the hearth fireless, and the pitcher waterless'. The city of Delhi was a wilderness, its people unhappy and dumbstruck. The [worth of the

<sup>70</sup>This point was first noted by Maulvī 'Abd ul-Ḥaq and also by Brij Mohan Dattātreya Kaifī, early editor and translator respectively, of Inshā, *Daryā-e latāfat* (see Kaifī's edition, p. 108). Yaktā, following or anticipating Inshā, made a similar point (Yaktā, *Dastūr ul-faṣāhāt*, p. 6.)

<sup>71</sup>Inshā, *Daryā-e latāfat*, 1850 ed., pp. 111-12, 116.

spoken] idiom of all kings, the intonation, the standard speech of the Exalted Court, all this can be seen from the works composed by the poets [of Delhi]. The delicacy and subtlety of [the speech of Lucknow] was never there, nor is it there yet....

Mīr Amman Šāhib has given the name *Bāgh o bahār* [Garden and Spring] to the story of the Four Dervishes, [he] has actually, chewed the thorn of jealousy, has made a meaningless fuss, insisting that this language [Urdu] is of their [the people of Delhi's] mouth alone, their allotted share from Destiny, but in comparison to 'Aḡā Ḥusain Kḥān, the original author, has tripped in a hundred places.<sup>72</sup>

An answer to Surūr was given by Faḡhr ud-Dīn Ḥusain Suḡhan Dihlavī, in his prose romance called *Sarosh-e suḡhan*:

Since Mirzā Šāhib has, in his compilation, made fun of poor Mīr Amman Dihlavī, and has directed a few harsh barbs from his tongue toward that clear-speaking one, so I also now say: Surūr Lakhnavī revised and corrected the *Fasānah-e 'ajā'ib* a hundred times, tightened and cleaned up phrases that were dull, but he still couldn't spot [all] his errors....In many places he has used the feminine gender where masculine was called for, and masculine, where feminine was needed....The truth of the matter is that one who doesn't know the language of the Exalted Court, doesn't know masculine from feminine, has never lived in Shāhjahānābād, hasn't seen the Royal Court--what face could such a person have to compose a *dāstān*?<sup>73</sup>

This was bandying words, and also defining battle lines. The dispute never became too hot, but its contours hardened; and also changed, in the nineteenth century. Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī declared that there were certain intrinsic differences between the poetry of Delhi and Lucknow, the former being less given to verbal excesses and conceits.<sup>74</sup> More than what Ḥālī actually said, it was what he didn't say that defined his biases. In his momentous *Muqaddamah* (Preface, 1893), he quoted numerous Delhi poets, often with approval, to illustrate his points, but

<sup>72</sup>Surūr, *Fasānah-e 'ajā'ib*, pp. 17-18, 30.

<sup>73</sup>Suḡhan, *Sarosh-e suḡhan*, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup>Ḥālī, *Muqaddamah-e shi'r o shā'irī*, p. 192.

rarely bothered to quote from the poets of Lucknow, except to express disapproval, or when--as in the case of Mīr Anīs (1802-1872)--he had no choice but to praise the poet. The air that pervades this most influential of books is that there are two kinds of poetry: Delhi poetry and Lucknow poetry. The former is generally superior. This led to the supposition that Delhi poetry is 'spiritual', 'sufistic', 'simple', 'not given to physical-erotic themes', and 'free from verbal and other excesses'. Lucknow poetry is 'shallow', 'given to wordplay', 'obsessed with physical-erotic themes'--in a word, 'decadent'.<sup>75</sup>

The theory of 'two schools of Urdu poetry--Delhi and Lucknow' thus came into existence. The most interesting thing to note in this more or less ongoing fiction is that appeal was rarely, if ever, made to classical canons and practices in defence or denigration. That is, no one ever stopped to inquire whether the categories of 'truth', 'realism', 'genuineness of feeling'; 'inwardness' as opposed to 'artificiality' and 'outwardness'; 'Persianism' as opposed to 'limpidity and felicity of language'; and so on, were at all the categories through which the past literary culture of Delhi and Lucknow understood itself. By the time the major modernising texts of Urdu literature came out--*Āb-e ḥayāt* by Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād (1880), *Muqaddamah-e shī'r o shā'iri* by Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī (1893), *Kāshif ul ḥaqā'iq* by Imdād Imām Aṣar (1894), and *Yādgār-e ghālīb* by Ḥālī (1897)--both time and space had quite changed for Urdu literature, and our narrative must stop here.

<sup>75</sup>For an extensive discussion see Zaidī, *Do adabī iskūl*, and Petievich, *Assembly of Rivals*.

