THE
SHADOW OF A BIRD
IN FLIGHT

Selection and translation
SHAMSUR RAHMAN FARUQI

Rupa & Co.
Introduction

Like most educated Indians, I have long kept a diary (or, a commonplace book). I record in it my favourite verses. Unlike most educated Indians today, the verses that fill the pages of my book are Persian. Recuperating from heart surgery a couple of years ago, I began to render, by way of amusement, some of my favourite (and translatable) verses from it into English. The amusement soon became a compulsive task to which I was obliged to devote most of my leisure hours on recovery. The fruit of that labour is now in your hands. If the reading of this book gives you even a fraction of the pleasure that the making of it gave me, I’d consider myself successful.

Let me emphasize that while most of the one hundred and seven pieces from sixty poets represented here are poetry of the highest order, this is not a systematic selection of Persian verse. It is exactly what its source is: an assembly of poems lovingly collected without any scheme, design or organisation. There has been no attempt to place side by side poems on similar themes, or poets of the same period. The idea is to give the reader the delight of discovery. Sometimes, chance has played its part in putting cheek by jowl poems with a strong family resem-
blance (78, 79, 80); sometimes the alert reader will detect faint echoes from earlier pieces in later ones (47, 53). But the idea is to surprise, by variety and by bringing together disparate representatives from a multitudinous tradition. A commonplace book is not divided into sections, or periods, or genres. It has an almost crazy organicity of its own. This book attempts to give you a flavour of the commonplace book of a modern Indian who acquired Urdu and Persian at home and English at school. I hope it will motivate the non-Persian knowing reader to ask for more. To the Persian knowing reader, it should be an interesting collection to browse into and to come upon many unexpected (and some expected) acquaintances from an ancient and powerful poetic milieu which is still quite alive in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and also to a certain extent in the Indian subcontinent.

There is another thing that spurred me on in my task: my desire to reflect, in some degree at least, the richness of the Indian contribution to Persian poetry. Persian literature goes back more than a thousand years, and for at least eight centuries, Indians (Muslim and Hindu) have contributed to it. The Hindu contribution reached its peak in the eighteenth century, but was by no means negligible in the seventeenth and the nineteenth. There is a whole style of Persian poetry and prose which is universally described as “Indian”, (sab-k-hindi) in Persian. I have heard some western scholars call it “Mughal-Safavid”, because of some recent Iranians attempts to claim its origins in Safavid Iran. “Oriental” historians and critics of Persian literature have done little to make the Indian-Persian writing available to their students, far less to the non-Persian speaker. I feel it is high time our place in Persian literature was recognised fully. I also believe that the main reason for the comparative sterility of Iranian Persian literature since the 1600's is the Iranians' refusal to absorb the Indian style into their canon. This little anthology, in which I have taken some pains to present, in addition to the well known ones, many excellent though little known Indian poets from the twelfth century to the twentieth, will, I hope, prove a first step towards foregrounding the intrinsic worth and the amazing variety of Indian Persian literature.

There are five main genres in Persian poetry, and all five are represented here in some measure. The most popular by far is the Ghazal. A ghazal is basically a love poem, especially of unrequited or unfulfilled love. Much of the ghazal can be interpreted as dealing with “sacred” and “profane” love at the same time. Over more than fourteen centuries in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish (and a host of other languages) the theme of love in the ghazal has acquired immeasurable depth and complexity. It is impossible, for example, to describe 27 or 83 or 102 as just love poems; yet without the deeply embedded theme of love and well-set conventions about how to deal with it, such poems could never have been created. The basic fact is that a ghazal is fundamentally a love poem, and it can at the same time be much more than, or radically different from, a love poem as understood
by a modern western(ised) reader.

In a ghazal, each verse most often stands alone in terms of tone of utterance and meaning; and each is interpreted as a separate poem. There is no unity in a ghazal in the western sense; the metre and the rhyme provide an extremely tight and highly structured formal unity and that's all that there is in a ghazal by way of unity. So it is quite proper and often desirable to pick individual verses from ghazals. Like all readers native to the tradition, I have done so freely. I have also presented two more or less complete ghazals from Khusrav (104) and Hafiz (26).

The next most popular genre in classical Persian is Qasida, a poem of medium length, devoted to praise or blame, or moral teaching and reflection. Its form is somewhat like that of the ghazal, but with greater unity of theme. A qasida is difficult to present in translation, unless given in a big chunk, and would even then not always make much sense to the reader not au fait in its conventions. I have, therefore, presented only one verse from a qasida: (23). A Masnavi is generally a much longer poem than a qasida; it is in rhyming couplets, and is most often a narrative. Since excerpting is easy from it, and some of the world's greatest poetry is found in Persian masnavis, I give plenty of space to this genre (7, 28, 46, 49, 61, 66, 72, 77). The Ruba'i (a four line poem in a special metre), and the Qita (a poem of indeterminate length, but on a single theme) are the other two most popular genres in classical Persian. The former — made famous by FitzGerald — has attracted practically all poets of any standing. Ruba'i's are not very large in number, but they have always had high prestige, and are regarded as proving ground for poets. Since a fair amount of best Persian poetry is in the ruba'i, and because I myself take great delight in the ruba'i, I have here a fairly large number of them (21, 23, 24, 41, 52, 58, 82, 90, 101, 103, 107). In addition, there are 43, 71 and 87 where I have translated only two lines of the ruba'i. The qita is represented by poem number 22.

Persian is particularly rich in satirical, comic and bawdy verse. I have eschewed the last two in deference to our somewhat Victorian view of such things nowadays. Satire is particularly hard to translate: there are two brief samples in 43 and 82. The latter could also be a serious attempt at the impossible: praise poem for a one-eyed woman. One could, of course, read 90 as a satirical love poem.

The poets included in this anthology can be conveniently placed in one of four categories:

1) **The Iranians** — Those who were born in Iran and worked wholly or almost wholly in Iran, (Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, Shaikh Abul Qasim, Shaikh Abu Sa'id Ali Al-Khair, Adib Sabit, Anvari, Asir, Firdausi, Hafiz, Kamal Isma'il, Umar Khayyam, Rumi, Sa'di, Shahidi, Va'iz). In this list, only Asir is regarded as a poet of the Indian style.

2) **The Indo-Iranians** — Those who were born in India but worked almost wholly or mainly in India (Ne'mat Khan Ali, Ashraf, Danish, Kalim, Malik Qumi, Naziri, Sa'id, Salim, Sarmad, Talib, Urfi, fitzgerald).
Zahuri). All these poets (except perhaps Sarmad) wrote in the Indian style.

3) The Indo-Persians — Those who were born in India, but wrote all or most of their work in Persian (Azad, Bedar, Bedil, Begham, Faizi, Ghani, Hasan Sijdi, Ishrat, Khamosh, Khushgo, Khusrau, Manohar, Mas‘ud Bak, Mas‘ud Sa‘d Salman, Mukhlis, Nishati, Sabiq, Sabiq, Sarkhush, Sladat, Vali, Vaqif, Varasta, Zakm). Here all but Hasan and Khusrau wrote in the Indian style.

4) The Indians — Those who wrote chiefly in Urdu, but were substantial achievers in Persian too (Asar, Dard, Divana, Ghalib, Iqbal, Mir, Momin, Sauda, Shibli). All but Shibli and Iqbal wrote in the Indian style. Iqbal used many styles and modes, depending on what he wanted to do at a particular time. He himself was very well read in the poets of the Indian style.

In light of the above lists, I need say nothing more to prove the substantial place of Indians in Persian literature. Appropriately, I have drawn the name of the anthology from Shibli, best known poet of the Indian style. The name is appropriate in another way too: a translation is nothing more than the shadow of a being which is evanescent, and alluring; it is far beyond the translator’s power to capture it. All that the translator can do is to try and make you imagine the force and the beauty of a polychromatic object from its monochromatic shadow, while the object itself seems to be always slipping away from him. Yet translations must go on. There is no other way for most of us to make sense of other times, other situations, and other paroles.

Both in school and at home, translation was an important activity in my boyhood days. In school, English was taught as much through translation practice as through textual study. At home, my father used to set me, partly for fun and partly by way of serious exercise, sentences and passages from Urdu for translation into English. At that time, all of us regarded translation as a matter of skill and expertise — more a matter of technique than intuition. I remember once my father made me read aloud from some Urdu report while he converted it into English to my reading, without asking me to pause, or repeat a word or phrase. We young and avid students of English idioms and grammar naively believed that all human beings think alike, or could think alike, if they translated from one language to another.

While things did not remain so simple for too long, my faith in the translatability of all texts remained largely unshaken. How could it be otherwise, when I found myself constantly translating (or believing that I was doing so) from English to Urdu in the hope of “enriching” Urdu literature? It was only much later that my illusions were broken. I found that translation was a problematic issue, very nearly incapable of solution. Comprehension of literary texts was itself a problematic of extra-large dimensions, because all language was contextual; and words from one language were not necessarily symmetrical with those of another,
a high school campus was a big world for me and I used to vie with my peers in finding apt English phrases for Urdu expressions. I now know, to my regret, that lucky and able translators are a rarity. Perhaps two people working together, one a native speaker of the input language and the other a native speaker of the output language, and each having full command of the other's language as well, might succeed where one person cannot. Yet, side by side with my other work, I almost always did some translation, for after all many of the world's great translations were done by individuals, not by teams. (But perhaps the greatest work of translation ever — the King James Bible — was done by a team!)

This little work is my first serious attempt to translate from a foreign language into my own. If it is a little more than moderately successful, it is because I chose only those texts which I thought lent themselves somewhat easily to translation, and also because I have tried to pay equal allegiance to the integrity of the Persian text, and the rhythms and tones of modern, not "poetic" English.

It now remains for me to acknowledge my debt to Jamila, for her interest and assistance; C.M. Naim, for solicited suggestions (many of which I actually accepted); Aslam Mahmud, for introducing me to R.R. Mehra of Rupa; my editor, Sunjoy Shekhar, for his patience and understanding; and Frances Pritchett, from whom I learnt much about the art of translation. I also thank V.N. Manchanda and D.K. Mahajan for their assistance in preparing the typescript of the manuscript.

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi
THE SHADOW OF A BIRD IN FLIGHT
1

Woe for the eye
that hasn't seen your face
or, having seen it, looked
at another's.

(Sa'di)
You said: Go away
Cut your life off
from me.
But how can I? for I
come back secured
with a hair of your head

Wherever I go

(Khusrau)
A mere dot from a word that's not desired by the heart is much too much.

A hundred pages of words that the heart desires are too few.

(Bedil)
I managed to keep alive
without you
and didn’t kill myself
for the shame of it.

My life for you, don’t
come to me now: I feel
ashamed.

(Ghalib)
My sandals
I've thrown
at the world's face

Not without reason
do I walk
barefooted.

(Azad Bilgrami)
Learn from the eyes
how to be the same
and different; the two
are apart and yet they see
eye to eye.

(Manohar)
Silence is Ocean
and speech a stream
The Ocean seeks you
Don't seek the stream

(Rumi)
What madness is this?
Far from her that I am
I've marked in my mind
numerous places on her body
To kiss.

(Shibli)
(Masud Sa'd Salam)

to perfection.

a solid block
delivered
ever heard to imperfection.

So this world

6
Her beauty grew so much, and I longing for her, grew so thin that she didn’t know me, and I didn’t know her

(Nisbatī)
11

Sweet the night
when I hold you hard
until morning
and pressed under your body
my arm should go to sleep.

(Shahidi)
12

Happy would be the time
when beautiful people come
ravaging the city.
You capture me
and proclaim
Here's my prisoner!

(Shahidi)
How can there be release from the cruel huntsman who torches the whole forest for just one prey?

(Muhammad Afzal Sarkhush)
14

How to forbid the heart to love?

Granted that the heart would listen,

But what should one say?

(Jalal Asir)
When you come to me in a dream
My misfortune
ever ready to do harm
wakes me up and says:
Your beloved is here and you
Are asleep?

(Talib)
My heart was like a child's slate --
Whatever word of hope I wrote on it
was erased.

(Shaikh Abul Qasim)
What need has wine for confection?
Pick up the glass:
Mother’s milk needs no sugar.

(Muhammad Quli Salim)
Love
is such a home breaker —
it brought you
to my house.

(Zahuri)
The sum of my life
is not more
than three words —
Green
Seasoned

Burned.

(Rumi)
20

I do not knowingly hurt anyone’s heart
for who knows?
You may have a place
there.

(Naziri)
I was a lion
the leopard was my prey
Whomever I sprang upon
was overwhelmed.

When I grasped your love
hard to my breast
A lame fox came
and chased me out of my lair.

(Abu Sa‘id Abi Al-khair)
Conversation with his Guiding Angel

I said: Tell me now about Delhi. He said it's the soul and the world its body.

I said: What about Banaras then? He said, A sweet beloved absorbed in plucking flowers.

I asked: How about Azimabad? He said, It's more colourful than a garden's air.
I said: Is the river of Paradise sweet? He said, Not sweeter than the Sone.

I asked then about Calcutta. He said, Call it the eighth continent.

I said: Who are these moon-like people? He said, The beauties of the city of London.

I said: Perhaps they have a heart? He said, yes but of steel.
I said: I've come
to seek justice
He said, Go away
don't beat your head
against stone

I said, what's then best
for me? He said
Shake the world's dust
from your feet.

(Ghalib)
You are in the world
and yet are greater
than it
Like meaning
in a text

(Anvari)
My peers took
my verses
Pity they didn't take
my name

(Ghani)
25

Tyranny’s vulture
has a wingspan darkening
the whole city

There’s no recluse
doubled up in pain
like a bow

Nor the arrow
of a sigh

(Hafiz)
26

Ghazal

My heart is the secret tent
where her love abides

My eye is the mirror-holder
that reflects her beauty

I, who never would bend
for the sake of the two worlds
My shoulders are bent
with her kindness
my friend, are absorbed
in the thought
Of the tree of Paradise
And I, in the thought of her noble stature;
Everyone thinks up
according to their reach
The age of Majnun is gone
Now it's the changing of the guard
for me.
Everybody has a time —
span of five days
for six.

(Hafiz)
They say
Paradise is eternal
comfort.

What the hell should one do
with a place where the heart
doesn't throb and burn
with the scar of your love?

(Bedil)
28

The heart without love is far from God’s grace.

Dead bodies are washed ashore by the ocean.

(Mirza Rafi Va’iz)
Tell the Mulla:
Don't be too happy at my vow to give up wine for my Declaration of Repentance hasn't yet been ratified By the wine-seller

(Mirza 'Razi Danish)
All the rest of my tribe
were priests and divines —
Your love took charge
of my education
and taught me

The art of writing poetry.

(Sa'di)
Without you
the wineglass in my hand —
like the sun
In eclipse

(Bindraban Khushgo)
You say: Let me go
I'll be back this evening
I know that's just an excuse to go away
Don't.

(Sarb Sukh Divana)
33

A whole lifetime
I scented
her fragrance from far —
In my mind
I held her close to my heart.

Now, mirror-like, when I
am in front of her
She sees herself in me and I
don’t see her.

(Mir Dard)
I'm close to you, my friend
because of friendship

I am the earth you step on
wherever you go

Is it the proper faith of love then that I
should see the world through you
but I shouldn't see
you?

(Rumi)
It's my fault entirely if you don't value me
For I chose my own buyer

(Naziri)
I know the story
of Laila and Majnun

I say:
our times
are more full of mischief

(Faizi)
They formed a committee for consultations.

They sat, they talked, they dispersed.

(Firdausi)
My heart is so much in love
with heresy
that times out of mind
I took it to the Ka'ba, yet
everytime
it came back
the same old Brahmin.

(Chandar Bhan Brahman)
To us, black of fortune
the array
of her eyelashes
did what the army
of the Deccan did
to the people
of the north.

(Anand Ram Mukhis)
Such shame!
Good deeds they found none
in my record
but a fast correctly kept
though broken
with a glass of wine

(Ghalib)
I tied my heart
to a curl
in her dark tresses
and am happy

I sat
in a peaceful nook
and am happy

All that the world had was
trouble to my soul

I broke the cup of Desire
and am happy

(Chandar Bhan Brahman)
It's me who worked profound magic
and chiselled out ice, from fire

(Paizi)
The only text that you didn’t corrupt is the Koran;
the only construct that you didn’t steal is the Ka’ba.

(Sialkoti Mal Varasta; satirizing Muhammad Quli Salim)
I've heard it said:
God's grace
doesn't close the door
in the seeker's face

The door upon the Truth
that he opens
on those who know
is never
shut again.

(Adib Sabir)
I die of jealousy —
for how long can I see
the wineglass putting
its lips upon hers,
and emptying its life
into her?

(Kalim)
Woman in the hands of man
when they meet —
like leavened dough
in the baker's hands.

He kneads her
now softly, now hard
smack, thwack
blow upon blow,
he pulls her under his hands
sometimes he spreads
her wide and open
suddenly sometimes
he draws her close
sometimes he puts a bit of salt into her
sometimes he pours a bit of wetness
into her

Testing her with heat and fire
thus they twist and twine,
the seeker and the sought —
in this game they end up
both victor and vanquished;
And the game is not
for just wife and husband
It is rather an art
shared by all lovers
and loved ones.

(Rumi)
An enemy has taken residence right into my side
I in my folly imagine
I own a heart

(Mir Asar)
My gaze is fixed
upon my own self, so
that the loved one's Image
has taken the whole world,
but I have no time
to stare.

(Iqbal)
Deep into the bush --
tigers
waiting for the command:
Come!

Out from the secret meadow
they come
those tigers;
and God unveiled
comes and goes
freely among them.

Man's essence overtakes
land and sea
and pied cattle
are slaughtered on that day
of Sacrifice

(Rumi)
I passed by the harvest of Desires. There were more gleaners than corn.

(Talib)
The knower and the known are in truth, One

He who knows God

is God

(Mas'ud Bak)
The ocean is in the waves
the waves, in the ocean
where then is the difference
between Attribute
and Substance?

You, who are lost in Reality
cast an eye
on the Tropes as well

How brightly
The Colourless One
shines
in a hundred
colours

(Swami Behram Bairag)
My heart wasn’t pleased with me for even an hour.
I wasn’t pleased with my heart for one moment.

(Ashraf)
Do not give up
loving the lovely ones
even when you’re old
for fire
is spring
to the yellow leaf.

(Sahib Ram Khamosh)
Don’t ask
about the days of separation
God! may they never be
and what can I tell you
about patience?
I had none.

(Khusrau)
I, and a book, and a lamp
whose light didn't reach
from a dark home
to the halls of the great.

(Naziri)
Hasan, who is far from you
is lost in your wonders—
And I, who found you, am
in greater wonder
still.

(Hasan Sijzi)
58

Why open my mouth futilely to speak?
Why test everybody's dagger on me?
The wise have no need, the fools deny
So why be the subject of a foolish deed?

(Ne'mat Khan Ali)
Nothing takes shape
without raw material —
Man, before he became man
was a monkey.

(Bedil)
Granted, today you agree
to give me my heart’s desire;
but where is that beauty now?

Thirty years of frustration
gone to waste.

(Ghalib)
Repentance is a worm and Love, a Python
Repentance is the quality of creatures, and Love, of God

(Rumi)
62

All my life I drank with you
and yet the anguish of my thirst
is the same. Tell me,
How is it that you don’t come from me
to me?

(Bedil)
63

What supreme indifference!
What perversity of pride!
Abraham's dearest
closes under the sword
and is not found fit
for sacrifice.

(Urfi)
She promises to visit
and fills me with hope
for she knows that waiting
can do what separation
couldn’t

(Malik Qumi)
I am lost in my beloved and yet I long for her. Our union is the same as waiting.

(Bedil)
Untainted as He is
by the nature of I and you,
it would be quite proper
To have called Him
Nothing

(Begham)
I? Deny wine?
What tales are these?
I believe I’ve sense
Enough

(Hafiz)
The doors of Paradise were open today.
I wasn't in the best of moods, I said —
"Tomorrow."

(Bedil)
I know nothing about the world's beginning
I know nothing about its end

The first and the last pages of this ancient book have fallen off.

(Kalim)
My heart is shattered
yet love's ardour is
undiminished

The ship is wrecked, and the sea
is raging still

(Jalaluddin Siadat)
Be content
and live
happy, for it's only
a week away –
The future, when
you will be past.

(Khvaja Abdullah Ansari)
72

She waits for us, desolate
The fairy-spark
der in the heart of the stone
like a peri in a mirror

Enclosed within the egg
Are young and beautiful
peafowl, ready
to fly out

Nothing can be a stumbling
block for you. Mountains,
valleys, walls – nothing.
Earth and sky
spread smooth in the path
of sound

Come, let's fire
a bit of madness together
lest we die like the spark
deep in the heart of the stone

(Bedil)
Whoever has the seeing eye
rises like dew
at crack of dawn
and settles in the eye
of the sun

(Gulab Rai Bedar)
Don't hope for the feeble-founded world to be firm of promise.

This ageless crone has been mistress to a thousand men.

(Hafiz)
What was it
that plucked at the strings of your heart
that you came here
to divert yourself among such as me,
and us?

You are the springtime
of another world. How is it
that you're here, in this garden?

(Bedil)
Don't imagine
that with your passing
the world too shall pass
A thousand
lights are dead
and yet the party goes on

(Urfa)
Did you set this world’s affairs right that you muscled your way to the sky?

(Firdausi)
I die waiting:

There's no way through the curtain; or maybe there is but the doormaster doesn't want me to know

(Hafiz)
Did you ever see
a prisoner of ignorance
such as me? The world
is an open door, and I
look everywhere
for the key.

(Bedil)
80

To him who has
no mind
no spirit
no skill
no judgement
Well said the doormaster:
"There's nobody home."

(Sa'di)
I am the object of His Worry. I go worry-free. Being lowly is in many ways, being God.

(Sukhraj Sabqat)
82

To His One-Eyed Beloved

So as to ward off the evil eye —
You, O pearl of bright water
have an unopened narcissus* behind your veil;
And stranger still:
with the wine of beauty
one of your eyes
is drunk, and the other asleep.

(Kamal Isma’îl)

*Metaphorically: the eye of the beholder.
83

In love's desert
the sands are shifting still

Countless feet
worn out, walking
this road

(Ghalib)
I have burned the scar of love
on my heart; I fear
my heart may not last
but the scar
on my heart may.

(Talib)
Out of shame
she didn't cast a glance at me
Perhaps she had word
of my aching heart.

(Raja Ratan Singh Zakhmi)
I am beholden to my luck —
it got me a lifetime job
begging
in the wine-sellers' street.

(Jai Kishan Ishrat)
For the knower of meanings
poetry is nothing
but sweet life:
if you want a new life
for each moment,
listen

(Muhammad Afzal Sarkhush)
My life, my heart
my forbearance,
I don't begrudge you any of these —
Take all that you desire, leave me
the pain of your love

(Valih Daghistani)
I gladden my heart
in wishful thoughts of union
My prey is the shadow
of a bird in flight

(Sa'ib)
The moon has no luminance that your face doesn't have
Paradise has no pleasure that your street doesn't have
The musk of Khotan has no fragrance like your tresses
Just perfect from head to toe
But for your disposition.

(Mas'ud Sa'd Salman)
Oh come on the din and bustle of this place of public works won't diminish by the piety of guys like you or the profligacy of guys like me.

(Hafiz)
My life a trail of smoke
my breast a firebox
the heart in my side
fire, pure fire

For my harvest
the destiny was
fire into fire

(Sarb Sukh Divana)
The thorn that pierced my foot as I walked her way — moved up slowly and (what luck!) it reached my heart.

(Nur ul 'Ain Vaqif)
Free yourself, if you can
from the bonds of time
why turn to dust
like fire in the cold-
magic realm of the stone?

(Mulla Sabiq)
Don't look down upon this bunch of grapes, Mr Pious!

Didn't you know that in presenting it to you I suffered the loss of one whole cup?

(Ghalib)
The tree of your love
grew, and bore fruit —
A harvest of slashed throats

(Mir)
Don't preen yourself
On your wisdom; rather
know it as a fault of your thirst
if your heart wasn't
deceived by
the mirage-river

(Urdu)

(Urmi)
He asked:
    Is this our world in tune with you?
I said:
    No, it is not;
He said:
    Lay it waste.

(Iqbal)
If my heart inclines

towards the beautiful ones, don't blame it:
it's a common enough sin
in your city too.

(Sa'di)
There's wine still,
and moonlit nights —
There are hundreds of accounts to settle
between you and me

(Nisbati)
101

The mysteries of Eternity without beginning
you know not, nor do I
The text of this Riddle
You read not, nor do I
All our exchanges of "I" and "You"
Are from behind a veil
When the veil is lifted
You are not, nor am I

(Khayyam)
The moth’s epitaph:
The flame that burned me, burned itself too.

(Urfi)
Sarmad if he keeps faith
he'll come on his own
came on his own

Sarmad if he keeps faith
if his coming is right and proper
why this futile toil and travel after thing
sit still, if he is God's he'll come on his own
Ghazal

I swept the dust of your doorstep with my face, and went away
I prayed for your prosperity, and went away
You flung me far from your sight
I became deranged, like tresses unbraided, and went away
My heart was red-full of blood like a blossom
like a rose I bloomed suddenly, and went away
Of my own will I would never go out of her door
but I went out of my mind, and went away
In your reign I never slept a sweet sleep
now I sleep with heart content. I went away.

(Khusrau)
105

From my life’s book
all colourful themes are fled;
All that remains is
me, riffling the pages
And that too, for how long?

(Sauda)
The anguish of waiting
drags me to your door, again
and again. I fulfill
a hundred promises that I never made.

(Momin)
Before they send upon you the night of devastation, give the command for the rose-red wine to be served.

My foolish master, you aren’t gold, to be buried and then dug out again.

(Khayyam)
Index of Poets and Poems

Abdulah Ansari, Khwaja (1006-1088), of Hirat, in Afghanistan. A major sufi poet, he was also one of the earliest writers of cosmic prose. (71)

Abul Qasim, Shibli (flourished 17th century), of Gaznun, in Iran. Was noted for his learning too. (16)

Abu Sa'id Ali Al-khwar (967-1049), a leading Iranian sufi, widely regarded as the first Persian poet to express sophisticated mystic themes in poetry. (21)

Adib Sabri (d. 1143), one of the prominent poets of the early classical period of Persian literature. (44)

Ali, Ne'mat Khan (d. 1709), official chronicler of Aurangzeb; was a poet and scholar of extraordinary linguistic skill. He made even Aurangzeb a victim of his barbs. The emperor, however, tolerated him with good humour. (58)

Ansari, Aabududdin (d. 1187), of Abivard, in Iran. One of the greatest of Qasida writers, and a man of vast learning. (23)

Asar, Syed Muhammad Mir (1735-1794), younger brother of Mir Dard*, was a distinguished Urdu poet as well. (47)

Ashref, Mulla Muhammad Sa'd (d. 1704), of Mazandaran, in Iran. Tutor to Princess Zebunnisa, the celebrated daughter of emperor Aurangzeb; was a poet of great wit and erudition. Died at Munger. (53)

Asir, Mirza Jalal (1639-1688), born of noble lineage in Isfahan; was a major poet of the Indian style. (15)

Azad, Ghulam Ali (1704-1760), one of the greatest of
multilingual scholars and poets in the Indo-Persian tradition; born at Bilgram in present day Uttar Pradesh. Among his numerous works, a book on Sanskrit figures of speech is also notable in Arabic or Persian. (5)

**Bedaar, Gulab Rati** (flourished 18th century), a Khatri from Punjab, not much known about him. (73)

**Bedil, Mirza Abdul Qadir** (1644-1720), of Patna and Delhi. The greatest poet of the Indian style, also a noted mystic and a major prose writer. He has the status of a national hero in Afghanistan and many Central Asian countries, and was greatly admired by Ghalib* and Iqbal*. (3, 27, 59, 62, 65, 68, 72, 75, 79)

**Begham, Sussani Bhopat Rati Bairagi** (d. 1720), a disciple of Sarkhush*. Begham wrote highly sophisticated poetry on vedantic-sufistic themes. His main achievement is a long mystical poem closely modelled on the Mansavi of Rumi*. (52, 66)

**Brahman, Raja Chandan Bhan** (d. 1663), of Agra. Associated with the courts of Shahjahana and Dana Shikoh, Brahman was the first major Hindu poet in Persian. After Dana Shikoh's death, Brahman retired to Banaras. (38, 41)

**Danish, Mirza Razi** (d. 1665), of Mash-had, in Iran. Greatly admired at the courts of Shahjahana and Dana Shikoh for his striking originality. (29)

**Dard, Syed Khwaja MIR** (1720-1785), of Delhi. The scion of a family of great distinction, Dard was a profound sufi, an expert musician, and one of the leading Persian and Urdu poets of his day. (33)

**Divana, RAI Sarb Sukh** (1728/33-1788), a nobleman of Delhi. His father was a minister to Shuja'uddaulah. Divana's perfect mastery as a Persian and Urdu poet was a household word in the 18th century. (52, 92)

**Faizri** (1547-1595), son of Sheikh Mubarak and brother of the great Abul Fazl, was the outstanding genius at the court of Akbar. Friend and rival of Urfi*, his all round talent places him above Urfi in the eye of posterity. (36, 42)

**Firdausi, Shaikh Abdul Qasim** (940-1020), of Tus in Iran; he wrote the Shabname, one of the world's greatest epics, on the history and legends of Iran. (37, 77)

**Ghalib, Mirza Asadullah Khan** (1797-1869), of Agra and Delhi. Often described as the greatest of Urdu poets, he is also the last major poet of the Indian style. In addition, he was a great prose writer in Persian and Urdu, and a fine conversationalist. His poetry has special appeal for the modern reader. (4, 22, 40, 60, 83, 95)

**Ghani, Mirza Muhammad Tahir** (d. 1669), of Kashmir, one of the most subtle of the Indo-Persian poets, was greatly admired by Sa'ib*, and by younger contemporaries. (24)

**Hafiz, Khwaja Shamsuddin** (1329-1399), of Shiraz, in Iran. Arguably the greatest Ghazal poet, his reputation has never waned in the six centuries since his death. Goethe was a passionate admirer of Hafiz, and modelled his own Der Westsüdliche Divan (1819) on his ghazals. (25, 26, 61, 74, 78, 91)

**Hasan Sijzi** (d. 1307), of Delhi, friend of Khusraoa, and a devotee of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. Died at Daulatabad in the Deccan. (57)

**Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad** (1877-1938), of Sialkot and Lahore. The greatest Urdu and Persian poet of the 20th century, and perhaps the greatest modern Indian poet, was trained as a philologist and a lawyer. He distinguished himself in the freedom movement too, and is widely believed to be the author of the idea of Pakistan. (48, 98)

**Israr, Jai Kishan** (flourished 1740's), of Kashmir, appointed to high office in Kashmir by Muhammad Shah. Was a disciple of Khaw-e Arzu. (86)

**Kashmir, Abu Taulib** (d. 1651), of Hamadan, in Iran. Poet laureate of Shahjahan, and friend of the Sanskrit literary theorist,
Panditraj Jagannath; is one of the greatest poets of the Indian style. Spent his last years in Kashmir, by the emperor's permission. (45, 59)

Kamal Isma'yl (d. 1237), of Isfahan, one of the famous poets of the classical age; was known as "the maker of (new) themes". (82)

Khamsoob, Rat Safib Ram (flourished 1780's), a nobleman at the court of Delhi, went to Banaras (Varanasi) in 1789 and died there after years of distinguished service. (54)

Khayyam, Umar (1048-1131), of Nishapur in Iran. Edward FitzGerald's translations of Khayyam made both of them famous poets in the West. Khayyam was a brilliant mathematician and astronomer, and may not have written all the Ruba'i attributed to him. The best, however, rank as some of the greatest poems ever written. (101, 107)

Khusugto, Bindra Ban (d. 1756), a Rajput of high lineage, was one of the brilliant men who frequented the circle of Sarkhush*, Redi* and Khan-e Arzu. Became a sanyasi towards the end of his life; died in Patna. (31)

Khursud, Amir Yaminuddin (1237-1324), of Delhi. The greatest Persian poet of India, also a master musician, soldier, prose writer, folk poet and suli. His poems are reported to have won the appreciation of Sadi*. Was very close to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. (2, 55, 104)

Malik Qumi (d. 1615) came from Qum, in Iran, at an early age and became court poet of Ali Adil Shah, of Bijapur. A poet of delicate sensibility, his work influenced many of his successors. (65)

Manohar (flourished 1570's), son of Raja Luv Karan of Rajastan and friend of Abul Fazl; one of the earliest of Indian style poets in Persian, is generally known as Mirza Manohar. (6)

Mas'ud Bak (flourished 14th century), a cousin of Sultan Firuz Tughlaq, he is reported to have been killed in the Deccan because of his unorthodox views. (51)

Mas'ud Sai'd Saliman (d. 1126), of Lahore. One of the earliest of the major Indo-Persian poets and greatly admired by such classical Iranian poets as Adib Sabir* and Sana'i. (9, 90)

Mir, Muhammad I'aqi (1722-1810), of Agra and Delhi, was the greatest of Urdu poets, and bilingual in Urdu and Persian. In addition to poetry, he wrote a remarkable prose autobiography in Persian. (96)

Momin, Hakim Momin Khan (1800-1852), of Delhi, major Urdu poet, was perhaps even better in Persian. (106)

Mukkli, Rat Anand Ram (flourished 1700-1750), a nobleman at the court of Muhammad Shah, was a disciple of Bedil*, then of Khan-e Arzu. (39)

Nazir, Muhammad Husain (d. 1612), of Nishapur in Iran. Spent much of his life in Gujarat, died at Ahmedabad. Perhaps the great poet of the age of Akbar. Sabir* and Ghallib* held him in high regard. (20, 35, 56)

Nishati (d. 1688), of Thanesar, India; an extremely fine poet, was a man of great learning as well. (10, 100)

Rumi, Maulana Jalaluddin (1207-1273), also known as Maulana Rum, or simply Maulavi; composed extempore, but over many years, his vast Masnavi, arguably the greatest mystic poem in any language. Also a distinguished ghazal writer. (7, 19, 34, 46, 49, 61)

Sabiq, Mulla Muhammad Umar (1722-1810), of Banaras (Varanasi); one of the most learned men of his time and a prolific poet. (94)

Sabquet, Subhan (flourished 1700's), of Delhi, was one of Bedil's brilliant disciples. (81)

Sadi, Shahib Muslibuddin (1184-1291), born at Shiraz in Iran, was perhaps Iran's greatest man of letters. Although better known as the author of the inimitable prose classic Gulistan (1559), he is also one of the greatest of ghazal
poets and a major sufi. (1, 30, 80, 99)

Sa'id, Miresa Muhammad Ali (1601-1669), of Tabriz; the best-known exponent of the Indian style, is a poet of great metaphoric brilliance. Himself an aspirant of Nazir* and Ghan*; Sa'id is almost universally admired today and is the one poet of the Indian style whose work is popular in Iran. (89)

Sarim, Mubesud Quli (d. 1647), of Tehran, came to India in Shahjahan's time. Died in the Deccan. A poet of great wit and creativity. (17) Also see 43.

Sarkhush, Mubammad Afzal (1640-1714), an officer at the courts of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, he commanded a very high reputation in his time. (13, 87)

Sarmad (d. 1688), an Armenian, came to Delhi in the 1680's and immediately attracted attention as a sufi and a poet. Was put to death for his unorthodox ways. (103)

Sauda, Miresa Mubammad Ra'fi (1713-1781), of Delhi. One of the greatest Urdu poets and a substantial poet in Persian. (105)

Shibli No'mani (1857-1914), born in Azamgarh, U.P., was one of modern Islam's outstanding scholars; a literary critic, educationalist, historian, philosopher, and freedom fighter of distinction. (8)

Siefat, Jalaluddin (d. 1700), of Lahore. A poet of wide range and fine sensibility. (70)

Talib, Muberhad Taib (d. 1626), of Amul, in Iran; one of the greatest of Indo-Iranian poets, was poet laureate of Jahangir. Died at a comparatively young age at Ahmadnagar. (15, 50, 84)

Urfit, Jamshiduddin (1556-1592), of Shiraz, in Iran, was a prominent poet in the courts of Akbar and Jahangir. A poet of intellectual power and strong imagination, and exemplar par excellence of the Indian style. (65, 76, 97, 102)

Vair, Miresa Ra'fi (flourished 17th century), of Qazvin, in Iran. Also known for his sermons. (28)

Yalub, Daghistan (1724-1756), of Isfahan; his poem on his unfulfilled love for a beautiful cousin is one of the famous love stories in Persian literature. Died in Delhi. (88)

Yaqif, Nurul Ain (flourished 1740's), came from Batala, near Lahore; was a disciple of Khan-e Arzu. One of the better-known Persian poets of the 18th century. (93)

Yarasi, Salk’Tul-Mawl (d. 1760), of Salkot, author of a short but extremely authoritative dictionary of Persian metaphors and idioms. (43)

Zaburi, Nuruddin (d. 1616) of Tarshiz, in Iran. A master of ornate prose and also a poet of considerable complexity, he was court poet to Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur. Sa'id* and Ghalib* were his admirers. (18)

Zakhmri, Raja Ratan Singh (flourished 18th century), was a nobleman in the employ of Shuja’uddaulah. (85)