

GHĀLIB'S PERSIAN POETRY

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The aim of this paper is chiefly stylistic. I shall therefore not dwell upon the relations between Ghālib's Persian poetry and his social environment, nor on the contribution that the study of Ghālib's Persian poems might give to a better understanding of his age.¹ A word should be said also on the type of my stylistic approach. All agree now in admitting that Persian, or, generally speaking, eastern poetry, cannot be studied successfully by applying to it *sic et simpliciter* the canons of our western stylistics. For this reason some of those western scholars (very limited in number) who have devoted themselves to the aesthetic study of Persian poetry have re-studied the eastern approach (Persian classical treatises on rhetoric, *ars poetica* etc.). This, I think, is a very meritorious and rewarding study; but they have often applied the oriental canons of aesthetic judgment too mechanically to the object of their study. To mention only one example, this seems to me to be the case in certain recent articles by the greatest scholar in this field, Professor J. Rypka of Prague,² on Nizāmī.

My personal system is a middle course between the two: neither a belletristic tattling of a pseudo-historical or pseudo-psychological character, nor a pure copy of the technical descriptive stylistic of eastern criticism, with its sharp distinction between *lafz* (word) and *ma'nā* (meaning). (One typical instance is the

¹ This is not the place for a Ghālib bibliography. Very much has been written on him in India and Pakistan, but too often these essays are of a purely 'belletristic' character. Westerners have contributed very little to a scientific study of Ghālib. See J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht, 1968, pp. 731, 734, 836-7, and my article 'Ghālib' in the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

² For instance: J. Rypka: 'Der vierte Gesang von Nizāmī's Haft Paikar neu übersetzt', *Oriens*, 15, 1967, pp. 234 ff.

study of Ghālib by Hāli, in spite of all the new and modern aspects of Hāli's aesthetic doctrine.)¹ I have tried to follow this middle course in my studies of Persian poetry² and, *inshā' allāh*, this is also the course I intend to follow here.

A summary description of the Persian poetical works of Ghālib is obviously indispensable as an introduction. In spite of their great fame, no really critical and scholarly edition of Ghālib's works has yet been published; in this he is in good company, because the same is true of many of the greatest geniuses of Persian literature. I shall therefore follow the Nawalkishor edition of 1925, comparing it here and there with the more recent (but not always better) Lahore edition of the *Kulliyāt*.³

The Persian *Kulliyāt* of Ghālib opens (pp. 11-53), with a section comprising sixty-six *qit'as*, or fragments, on various subjects: *fakhr*, poetical criticism, satire, *madh*, descriptions (including one of his cat), occasional and celebrative verses including a *qit'a* congratulating Nawwāb Yūsuf 'Alī Khān of Rāmpūr, upon the grant of new territory by the British government (*sarkār-i*

¹ A. H. Hāli, *Yādgar-i Ghālib*, 1897 and various lithographed editions. For an appreciation of Hāli's literary criticism and of his peculiar ideas on 'natural' (*nachural*) poetry, see my article 'Hāli's Ideas on Ghazal', in *Charisteria Orientalia*, Prague, 1956.

² See especially: A. Bausani, 'Contributo a una definizione dello "stile indiano" nella poesia persiana', *Amali dell'Ist. Or. di Napoli*, N.S., vol. VII, 1958, pp. 167 ff., and A. Bausani, *Storia della Letteratura Persiana*, Milan, 1960, 2nd edn 1968.

³ *Kulliyāt-i Ghālib*, Nawalkishor edn, 1925. The latest edition I know is that of Lahore, 1965, publisher Shaikh Mubārak 'Alī, with an introduction by the well-known Urdu contemporary writer Mihr. An attempt at a chronological arrangement of Ghālib's verses has been made by S. M. Ikrām, *Armughān-i Ghālib*, n.d. Mihr too laments the lack of really scientific studies on Ghālib and expresses the wish that somebody may accomplish what he calls 'two important tasks', first, a real 'Kulliyāt' edition, i.e. a fully comprehensive collection of all his Persian poetry, including even those scattered verses that are excluded from the traditional *Kulliyāt*, first published during the life of Ghālib himself in 1863 by Nawalkishor and then successively re-printed without variations. Also the 'prison verses' (*babsiyāt*) of Ghālib, the so-called *Sabad-chin*, should be included. The *Sabad-chin* contains verses written by Ghālib during his imprisonment in 1847 under the accusation of having kept a gaming-house and, 'for reasons of expediency', not included in the ordinary editions of the *Kulliyāt*. The second task, says Mihr, should be the publication of a historical commentary on Ghālib's Persian verses, showing the occasions on which they were composed, identifying the personalities and events mentioned, etc. We hope that the celebrations of the centenary of the death of the poet may have as one result the fulfilment of these hopes of Mihr. This study of mine is based on the generally available edition of the *Kulliyāt* and excludes the *Sabad-chin* to which unfortunately I have had no access. The numbers of pages refer to the above-mentioned Nawalkishor re-edition of 1925.

Angrēzī), one celebrating the British victory in the Punjab in 1846, etc., chronograms, elegies etc.

The section following is devoted to strophical poems (pp. 53-68), very limited in number: one *mukhammas* in praise of 'Ali (our poet was a Shi'a and often praises the Shi'a *imāms* in his poems), three *tarkīb-band* (chiefly elegiac: on 'Ali, the Shi'a martyrs, and a young prince, son of the Mughal sovereign Abū Zafar) and one *tarjī'-band* in praise of the Mughal Emperor Abū Zafar (deposed by the British in 1858). Though these few strophical poems are of a simple beauty, the small number of them shows that the 'architectonic' structure of the strophe poem was rather foreign to Ghālib's poetic taste.

Narrative art, too, seems to have been rather uncongenial to him. The section devoted to the *masnavīs*, the *instrumentum principis* of poetic narrative and of description in Persian (pp. 69-160), does not contain a single 'epic-narrative' *masnavī*, and Ghālib's attempts at narrative style seem rather poor (e.g. in the second *masnavī*). The *masnavīs* number eleven in all.

The *Surma-e bīnīsh* (50 couplets, metre *ramal*) is of a basically mystical character and opens with the first verse of Maulānā Rūmī's *Masnavī-i Ma'navī*. Like some other short *masnavīs* of Ghālib it looks structurally rather like a *qasīda*, with an exordium, a *madih* (in this case a panegyric of Sirāj-ud-Dīn Bahādur Shāh) and a central part, ending with the *takhalluṣ* of the poet.

The *Dard-u-dāgh* (188 couplets, metre *sarī'*) is of a didactic-narrative character. A very poor peasant leaves his home together with his old parents. In the desert they almost die of thirst. They meet a *darvīsh* in a hermitage. He offers them water, and after having prayed to God for them, informs them that God will grant one and only one wish to each of them.

سامعه را صافی این گفتگو

داد بامواج گهر شست و شو (p. 74).

'The sweetness of these words washed their ears with waves of pearls.' So the old mother asks to become a young girl, the old father expresses the desire to become rich, and the young peasant asks for success and fortune in life. After various events (told in a style that seems to me rather shallow) the conclusion is that there is nothing that can be done against Destiny (*bakht*), and everyone

returns to his former state. The narration lacks any sort of realistic detail; no names of places or of persons are given, and the characters of the tale seem abstract allegorical figures.¹ Here too the lyrical form is preserved, with the name of the poet being mentioned towards the end.

The *Chirāgh-i dair* ('The Lamp of the Temple': 108 couplets, metre *hazaj*) is in praise of Benares/Kāshī, and apart from the famous description of that town (reproduced also in 'anthologies'; see for instance that of Ikrām),² is also chiefly lyrical (including the *takhalluṣ* towards the end). Ghālib invites himself to go back to his country (Delhi) from that idolatrous place, which is however very favourably described in the first part of the poem, in the typical mystico-lyrical way. It is interesting to remark that when he speaks of Hindu objects his style is strongly 'Indian' and reminds one of Ghānimat Kunjāhī.³ The beauties of Benares have:

ادای یک گلستان جلوہ سرشار

خراسی صد قیامت فتنه در بار (pp. 81-2),

i.e. 'their coquetry is a rose garden intoxicated and brim-full of blandishments; their graceful walking embraces the hundred turmoils of Judgment Day!'

The *Rang-u-bū* ('Colours and Scents': 154 couplets, metre *sarī'*) is again of a narrative character, and allegorical. Its chief characters are Wealth and Power (*daulat*), Fortune (*iqbāl*), Magnanimity (*himmat*) a generous king, and a proud beggar. The gist of the story is that *himmat* is superior to *daulat* and *iqbāl*. In spite of

¹ In this Ghālib is quite different from Bedil, who used his peculiarly difficult (and for Ghālib incorrect) style to obtain sometimes results of a proto-realistic type. See my article 'Bedil as a Narrator' in *Jadnāme-ye J. Ripka*, Prague, 1967.

² Shaikh M. Ikrām, *Armughān-i Pāk*, Karachi, 1953. It is a good anthology, with a critical introduction in Urdu, of the Persian poetry of India. For Ghālib see pp. 72-4 and 299-315. An excellent anthology of Ghālib's Persian and Urdu poems is the *Intikhab-i Ghālib* by Imtiyāz 'Alī 'Arshī (Rāmpūr, Bombay, 1942). This selection was prepared by Ghālib himself in 1866. The notes are exclusively taken from Ghālib's own explanations scattered here and there in his 'Letters'.

³ Perhaps one of the most Indian of the Persian poets of the subcontinent. He died in 1107 H/1695. His *masnavī Nirang-i 'ishq* is particularly interesting for its descriptive and narrative techniques which utilize the 'twistedness' of the Indian style to express details of action and events in a way totally different from the neo-platonic stativity of Persian classical poetry. Some of his extremely heavy compound words seem even an echo of late Sanskrit style.

Ghālib's repeated assertion that he is more Iranian than Indian (to quote only one example, he says in a *ghazal*:

بود غالب عندلیبی از گلستان عجم
من ز غفلت طوطی هندوستان نامیدمش (p. 438).

'Ghālib was a nightingale of the rose garden of Persia, only by mistake I called him a song-bird of India', in one of the verses of this *maṣnavī* there is a *tajnīs* (play on words) understandable only to a speaker of Hindi/Urdu. It is when the proud beggar says to the king: 'I am not begging, it is rather I that have something to sell to you.'

شانه کشن طره سوداستم
با تو فروشنده کالاستم (p. 85).

'I am a comber of the waving ringlets of passion [*sandā*, also "melancholy", "blackness", and "trade"]; it is I that sell goods [*kālā*, which in Hindi/Urdu means also "black", like *saudā*] to you.'

The *Bād-i mukhālīf* ('The Contrary Wind': 154 couplets, metre *khafīf*) is addressed to the literary critics (*sukhanparvarān*) of Calcutta. (The only important journey that Ghālib ever made was that to Calcutta; he was away nearly three years, from mid-1827 to November 1829.) It contains interesting material for a better understanding of his ideas on Persian poetry. He calls himself an uninvited guest (*nā-khvyānda mihmān*) and protests against the unjust criticism of his Persian poetry by the representatives of the new 'Indian style', who especially praised Qatīl (d. 1817). Bedil, though not Persian, is not so ignorant (*nādān*) as Qatīl:

گرچه بیدل ز اهل ایران نیست
لیک همچون قتیل نادان نیست (p. 94).

This *nādānī* is an interesting aspect of his criticism of the poetry of his enemies: their ignorance of Persian is such that they cannot even use it grammatically (p. 94 contains hints at the grammatical rules of 'real' Persian).

مگر آنان که پارسی دانند
هم برین عهد و رای و پیمانند
که ز اهل زبان نبود قتیل
هرگز از اصفهان نبود قتیل
لاجرم اعتماد را نسزد
گفته اش استناد را نسزد
کاین زبان خاص اهل ایران است
مشکل ما و سهل ایران است
سخن است آشکار و پنهان نیست
دهلی و لکهنؤ ز ایران نیست

.....

که چسان از حزین بیپیچم سر
آن نجادو دمی، بدهر سمر
دل دهد، کز اسیر برگردم
زان نو آئین صفیر برگردم
دامن از کف کنم چگونه رها
طالسب و عرفی و نظیری را
خاصه روح و روان معنی را
آن ظهوری جهان معنی را

'Those who really know Persian all agree in saying that Qatīl is not a native speaker of that language [*abl-i ṣabān*]; he certainly is not from Iṣfahān, and therefore one cannot rely on him or follow his example. This language is the specific tongue of the Iranians, difficult for us but easy and natural for them: Delhi and Lucknow are not in Persia. . . Why should I follow Qatīl, abandoning Asir, Ḥazīn, Ṭālib, 'Urfī, Naẓīrī and Zuhūrī?' (pp. 96 and 97).

'But if my friends insist, let us make peace, I'll praise Qatil!' The *maṣnavī* ends in a bitterly ironic, hyperbolic panegyric of Qatil!

The *Bayān-i numūdārī-yi shān-i nubuvvat u vilāyat ki dar haqīqat partav-i nūrū'l-anvār-i haṣrat-i ulūhiyat ast* ('Declaration of the Appearance of the Glory of Prophecy and Sanctity, that is in Reality the Ray of the Supreme Light of the Godhead': 129 couplets, metre *ramal*) is of a religious, or, more specifically, of a Shī'a character, and provides very interesting materials for the study of Ghālib's religious attitudes. (The importance of this aspect of him is somewhat under-estimated by some of his students.) Ghālib sets out to prove that the great Saints, and 'Alī in particular, must be venerated. Both Muḥammad (more directly) and 'Alī and the Saints derive from the Divine Light. Jacob venerated the shirt of Joseph and Majnūn the dog of Lailā, not in themselves, but because they were symbols of their beloved. The fact that one loves Lailā is not a good reason to despise the *maḥmil* (camel-litter) of Lailā. In this way Ghālib even arrives – if I am not mistaken – at a patriotic revaluation of the cult of local Indian saints:

هست رسم خاص در هر سرزمین
 خود چه میخواهی ز نفی این رسوم
 نفی رسم کفر ما هم می کنیم
 داد با دانش فراهم می کنیم
 نفی کفر آئین ارباب صفاست
 نفی فیض ای تیره دل! رسم کجاست؟

 ای گرفتار خم و پیچ خیال!
 نفی بی اثبات نبود جز ضلال!
 ورتو گوئی "میکنم اثبات حق"
 از چه روئی منکر آیات حق؟

'Every country has its own special customs [*rasm-i kbāṣ*]. Why do you want to destroy such customs? Yes, we too reject the

customs of infidelity [*rasm-i kufr*] and unite justice [*dād*] and wisdom [*dāni sh*]; to reject infidelity is the manner [*ā'in*] of the pure [*arbab-i ṣafā*], but, oh foolish one [*tira-dil*], to reject the Divine Bounty is the manner of which place? . . . Negation without affirmation is nothing but error [*ḡalāl*] . . . One cannot affirm God and deny the signs [*āyat*] of God . . .' (pp. 101 ff.).

This is typically Shī'a and anti-modernistic reasoning. But this is not the place for a further study of the religious ideas of Ghālib, though this would be, I think, a rewarding subject.¹

The seventh, *Tabnīyat-i 'id-i shavvāl* ('Congratulations for the Feast of *Shavvāl*': 42 couplets, metre *sarī*), and the eighth, *Dar tabnīyat-i 'id ba-valī-'ahd* ('Wishes for a Happy Feast to the Crown Prince'; 39 couplets, metre *sarī*), are panegyric short *maṣnavīs* of no great importance; and so also are the ninth and tenth, respectively *Dībācha-e naṣr mausūm ba bist-u-baṣt afsar taṣnīf-i haṣrat-i falak-rif'at Shāh-i Avadh* ('Preface [in verse] to the Prose Work "Twenty-seven Crowns" by H.H. the King of Oudh': 33 couplets, metre *hazaj*) and *Taqrīz-i Ā'in-i Akbarī muṣahḥaba-e Sayyid Ahmad*

¹ He was a spiritual pupil of the mystical school of Maulānā Fakhr ad-Dīn.

In a letter to 'Ala ud-Dīn 'Alāī, a rebuke to a mulla in 'Alāī's household who had urged Ghālib to give up drinking wine leads him on to an account of his religious position. 'Tell him . . . [he writes] that there is a great difference between studying the problems of the books of Abū Ḥanīfa, plunging oneself into hairsplitting discussions on menstruation and impurity periods of women after childbirth (*nifās*), and assimilating in one's heart the words of the gnostics (*urafā*) on the reality of the Absolute and the unity of Being (*haqīqat-i baḡ wa wādat-i wujud*). Infidels are those who confuse necessary and contingent Being. Infidels are those who want us to believe that Musailima the Liar shared the gift of prophecy with the Seal of the Prophets. Infidels are those who consider a band of newly converted Muslims [the first three 'caliphs'] as peers of the Father of the Imāms [= 'Alī]. Hell is the final destiny of such people. But I am a pure monotheist [*muwahhid*] and a perfect believer. I say with my tongue: "There is no god but God," meaning in my heart: "There is no being [*maujud*] but God," i.e. there is no mover of beings but God [*la mu'assir fi'l-wujud illā'llāh*]. I believe that the prophets, all of them, are worthy of veneration and that each of them was the unique legislator of his age and all had to obey him. With Muḥammad prophecy ended, for Muḥammad is the Seal of the Prophets and a Mercy to all Nations; and I believe that the sunset of prophecy was at the same time the dawn of imamate, and that the imamate is not elective [*ijmā'i*] but by appointment from God [*min Allāh*] and that the *imāms* appointed by God are, first 'Alī, then Ḥasan, then Ḥusain and so on until the promised *Madhī*.' (Letter dated July 28, 1862.)

It is interesting to notice, in this profession of faith, the blend of Shī'a and Sūfī ideas, typical not so much of early Shī'ism but rather of later post-Ṣafavid Iranian Shī'ism. It is this sort of Sūfī reinterpretation of Shī'ism that gives Ghālib his typical and remarkable 'freedom of expression' in religious subjects (e.g. in the twelfth *maṣnavī*). Works like that of the late Khalifa 'Abdul-Ḥakīm, *Aḥkār-i Ghālib* ('The Thought of Ghālib') in Urdu (Lahore, 1954), though useful, do not seem to me worthy of too serious consideration.

Khān ṣadru's-ṣudūr-i Murādābād ('Afterword to the Edition of the *A'in-i Akbarī* made by the *ṣadru's-ṣudūr* of Murādābād, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān': 38 couplets, metre *ramal*).¹

The eleventh and last *maṣnavī* is the *Abr-i gubar-bār* ('The Cloud that Rains Pearls': 1,098 couplets, metre *mutaqārib*). Being the best and the longest of Ghālib's *maṣnavīs* it deserves a more detailed analysis, though it is no more than the introduction to a *maṣnavī* on the Holy Wars of the Prophet Muḥammad that Ghālib never finished. Ghālib wrote the *Abr-i gubar-bār* in his old age, as is shown by some verses (e.g. p. 145: 'Now that the time has arrived for me to pass away and to return to God...':

کنونم که وقت گزشتن رسید
زمان بحق بازگشتن رسید

or p. 157 where the poet complains of the disappearance of the blackness of his hair). It is divided into various chapters. The usual praises to God are powerful and majestic. The holy name of God 'is so sweet that holy men engrave it on their hearts as on a seal-ring. Every one who imprints His mark on his own heart feels such a burning pleasure that he sacrifices everything to His beauty' - free translation of the Persian:

بود نام پاکش ز بس دل نشین
تراشند پاکانش از دل نگین
بدل هر که سوزنده داغش نهاد
پری رخ پیش چراغش نهاد
بود سوز داغش ز بس دلپسند
سویدا سزد بر جمالش سپند (p. 112).

A description of the firmament and of the marvels of nature is another remarkable feature of this introduction. A *munājāt* ('prayer' or, better, 'intimate dialogue' with God) then follows: everything in this world comes from the double set of divine

¹ The editor of *A'in-i Akbarī* was the famous Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān. In its *taqrīz* Ghālib praises 'British technical progress' (including steamships) and considers it a useless task to publish such an old collection of laws!

attributes, those of *jamāl* (grace) and *jalāl* (power) as an immense fresco in black and white. Poetry (*sukhan*, 'the Word', artistic Word) too comes only from God. The form of Ghālib's expression is here almost pantheistic:

کنی ساز هنگامه اندر ضمیر
چونم در بیم و رشته اندر حریر (p. 118).

'Thou art in the innermost of ourselves such as the humidity in the ocean, the warp in the brocade.' In contrast to this absolute-ness, is the abjectness and servitude of man, but

اگر خوار ورناروائیم ما
بباغ تو برگ گیائیم ما (p. 120).

'Though we are base and unworthy, yet we are the blades of grass in Thy garden.' This concept is more graphically expressed by means of an allegorical *hikāyat* (story). A king goes to war and comes back after winning a brilliant victory. But together with those who spread flowers under the feet of his horse and bring congratulatory gifts to the sovereign, there are those, the poor and miserable, who not only do not bring anything, but are like a black spot on the beautiful picture of that glorious day. A minister wants to chase them away, but the king says:

ازان رو که در تب ز تاب مند
همان ذره آفتاب مند (p. 122).

'[They too are mine;] being consumed by fever from my burning light they are the atoms of dust dancing in the rays of my sun.'

'Do the same with us, O Lord, at the Day of Judgment [adds Ghālib] because, ultimately, our sins and our sorrows too derive from Thee. My sins are not many; perhaps the only one is wine-drinking. But I am full of sorrows, and wine is the dispeller of sorrows. Wine-drinking could have been a sin for King Bahrām or King Parvīz, but not for me, who am poor and constantly tormented by preoccupations and anxieties' (p. 124). An interesting passage follows, in which, after his usual complaints about his unhappy circumstances, he says that his heart will not be able to

find rest even in the traditional 'Paradise'. The classical 'other world' is criticized in verses, the first origin of which can be retraced in a typical leitmotif of Sūfism. These of Ghālib seem, however, to possess a certain 'modernity' and originality of expression:

چو آن ناسرادی بیاد آیدم
بفسردوس هم دل نیاسایدم
دلی را که کمتر شکیبند بیباغ
در آتش چه سوزی بسوزنده داغ
صبوحی خورم، گر شراب طهور
کجا زهره صبح و جام بلور
دم شبرویمهای مستانه کو
بهنگاسه غوغای مستانه کو
دران پاک میخانه بیخروش
چه گنجایی شورش نای و نوش
سیه سستی ایر و باران کجا
خران چون نباشد، بهاران کجا
اگر حور در دل خیالش که چه
غم هجر و ذوق وصالش که چه
چه منت نهد ناشناسا نگار
چه لذت دهد وصل بی انتظار
گریزد دم بوسه اینش کجا
فریبند بسوگند وینش کجا
برد حکم و نبود لبش تلخ گوی
دهد کام و نبود دلش کامجوی
نظربازی و ذوق دیدار کو
بفسردوس، روزن بسدیوار کو

(pp. 125-6).

'How canst Thou burn with a fire-mark in Hell a heart that finds no rest even in a garden? And, in Paradise, it is true that I shall drink at dawn the pure wine mentioned in the Qurān, but where shall I find again the star of dawn I used to see on earth, and my crystal cup? Where in Paradise are the long walks of intoxicated friends in the night, or the drunken crowds shouting merrily? In that holy tavern, silent and still, how canst Thou introduce the sounds of the flute and the gay bustle of the taverns of this earth? Where shall I find, there, the intoxication of raining clouds? Where there is no autumn, how can spring exist? If the beautiful hours are eternally in one's heart, what of the sweet thought of them? Where will be the sadness of separation and the joy of union? How could we be thankful to an unknown beauty? What will be the pleasure of a sure fruition of love, without waiting? Where shall we find, there, a girl who flees away when we would kiss her? Where will be, there, one who betrays us with false oaths of love? The beauties of Paradise will obey us and their lips will never say anything bitter; they will give us pleasure, but with a heart forever closed to the desire for pleasure. Will there be in Paradise oglings, the pleasure of coquettish glances from afar? Where will it be, in Paradise, the dear window in a well-known wall?'

The eulogy of the Prophet (*na'f*) then follows, and after that a beautiful description of the Prophet's ascension to Heaven (*mi'raj*). Its various elements are: the blackness of that night (actually more shining than day); the angel, which is the First Intellect; his dialogue with the Prophet; the extreme speed and lightness of the miraculous flight; the various celestial spheres and the zodiacal signs (each one hinted at with appropriate metaphors); the throne of God (*'arsh*) that, though more sublime than the angels, 'can tremble for the lament of the inhabitants of this dusty earth; if the heart of an afflicted one aches, a veil of dust is deposited on those immaculate steps; the noise of the broken spine of an ant here on earth is nothing; in those holy precincts it is a roar!'

بود گرچه برتر ز افلاکیان

ولی لرزد از ناله خاکیان

دل بینوائی گراید به درد

نشیند بدان پایه پاک گرد

صدای شکست کمرگاه مور

درینجاست هیچ و دران پرده شور (p. 139).

Then Ghālib attempts a description of the indescribable (curiously enough, chiefly with cabbalistic means); then comes the return from *Ḥaq* (God) to *ḥaq* (reality).

The eulogies of the Prophet are followed by those of 'Alī (*manqabat*), so hyperbolic that Ghālib himself adds: 'Do not take this, however, for *ghuluww*. In my youth too I always loved 'Alī, but now that I am old I should like to go on pilgrimage to his holy tomb at Najaf; may my body be buried there, where my soul already is' (p. 145). He then expresses a sense of envy of the great poet 'Urfī, who was buried there.

The extant part of the poem is closed by a *Mughannī-nāma* ('Book of the Minstrel') and a *Sāqī-nāma* ('Book of the Cup-bearer'). They contain poetical concepts already well known in other compositions of this type, but these by Ghālib seem to me characterized by a sort of conscious reflection on the ideas and poetical expressions found in the older classical ones (e.g. Ḥāfiz or Nizāmī). In the *Mughannī-nāma* there is what we could call a powerful hymn to Sorrow (*gham*) considered as a purifying, an exciting, a creating element:

بدین جاده کاندیشه پیموده است

غمم خضر راه سخن بوده است

نظامی نسیم، کز خضر در خیال

بیاموزم آئین سحر حلال

زلالی نیم، کز نظامی بخواب

بگنزار دانش برم جوی آب

مرا بسکه در من اثر کرده غم

بمرگ طرب مویه گر کرده غم

نظامی بحرف از سروش آمده

زلالی ازو در خروش آمده

من از خویشان با دل دردمند

نوای غزل برکشیده بلند

غزل را چو از من نواشی رسید

ز والا پسچی بجاشی رسید

که نشگفت کاین خسروانی سرود

شود وحی و هم بر من آید فرود

دران گنج تار و شب هولناک

چراغی طلب کردم از جان پاک

چراغی که باشد ز پروانه دور

چراغی که بادا ز هر خانه دور

نه بینی نشانی ز روغن درو

کند شعله بر خویش شیون درو

چراغی که بی روغن افروختم

دلی بود کز تاب غم سوختم

ز یزدان غم آمد دل افروز من

چراغ شب و اختر روز من

(pp. 152-3).

'In the path followed by my Thought,¹ the guiding *Khizr* of my poetical journey has been Sorrow. I am not a Nizāmī, who learnt the rules of the "legitimate enchantment" of poetry from the phantom of *Khizr*, nor a Zulālī, who was led by Nizāmī in a dream to bedew with the crystalline rivulet of Art the garden of Wisdom. . . I have been influenced only by Sorrow; Sorrow made me a mourner weeping and singing at the death-bed of joy. Nizāmī spoke directly with the inspiring angel Surūsh, Zulālī was

¹ *Andīsha*, as a *terminus technicus*, seems to me of Bedilian origin. See my article, 'Note su Mirzā 'Abdu'l Qādir Bedil', *Annali dell' Ist. Univ. Orientale di Napoli*, N.S. vi, 1957, pp. 163 ff.

inspired by Nizāmī, but I, alone, from my aching heart, raised the sweet lament of the *ghazal*. And, in the *ghazal*, my melody reached such a stage that you should not marvel if this Royal Hymn become a Revelation and be sent to descend – as on its Prophet – upon me. . . . In the dark treasure chamber of my life, in that frightful night, I requested my pure soul to give me a Lamp, a Lamp not accessible to flying moths, a Lamp far away from any house, a Lamp in which you would not see a trace of oil, and whose flame would silently weep over itself; that Lamp, that I lighted without oil, was my heart burnt by the fire of Sorrow! God gave me Sorrow as the heart-enlightening Lamp of my nights and the brilliant star of my days!

This passage is interesting also for the study of what Ghālib thought of his own poetry. In the *Sāqī-nāma* he says further that he does not want to be led by Nizāmī out of his way, that is, of lyrical poetry and not mystical epos:

مبادا نظامی ز راهت برد
بدمستان سوی خانقاهت برد (p. 153).

(Note that Ghālib shared the opinion of some later Persian critics according to whom Nizāmī was to be interpreted *mystically*.) He states that his lyrics are based on a sort of humanistic immanentism: *taṣawwuf* is not an indispensable constituent of lyrics (as many of his contemporaries thought) nor is the *ghazal*-form the only possible channel to express this kind of lyrical emotion:

بعرض شناسائی هرچه هست
بسه و هم ست پیدائی هرچه هست
.....
دمانی گل و نرگس از روی خاک
نشانی بطرف چمن سرو و تالک
نوا گر کنی مرغ بر شاخسار
بموج آوری آب در جویبار
بخویش ارچه داری گمانی ز باغ
برون از تو نبود نشانی ز باغ

در اندیشه پنهان و پیدا توئی
گل و بلبل و گلشن آرا توئی
.....
دو گیتی ازان جو نمی بیش نیست
ازل تا ابد خود دمی بیش نیست
.....
تصوف نزیبد سخن پیشه را
سخن پیشه رند کز اندیشه را
.....
غزل گر نباشد نوائی دگر
سر دل سلامت هوائی دگر
.....
غزل گر ملال آرد افسانه گوی
کهن داستان های شاهانه گوی (pp. 155-6).

At the end he declares the aim of his poem: that of singing the epic exploits of, not ancient kings like Khusrav or Rustam, but those of the Prophet Muhammad.

Ghālib's *qaṣīdas* are rather numerous and occupy 170 pages out of a total of 340 pages of *qaṣīdas* plus *ghazals*; in other words, their verses equal in quantity those of the *ghazals*, in sharp contrast with the Urdu *divān* in which the *ghazal* and the 'fragment' are sovereign. The *Kulliyāt* contains sixty-four *qaṣīdas*. The first is of a religious character, on *taḥḥīd*; nos 3 and 4 comprise praises of the Prophet (*na'ī*); and the fourth includes also eulogies of 'Ali. To the praise (*manqabat*) of 'Ali are devoted also the four following *qaṣīdas* (nos 5-8). The ninth is in praise of the martyred grandson of the Prophet, Ḥusain; the tenth is devoted to the *manqabat* of the second Shī'a *imām*; the eleventh sings the praise of another Shī'a, a martyr, 'Abbās son of 'Ali; whereas the twelfth sings the praise of the twelfth *imām*, who is, according to Shī'a beliefs, 'in

occultation' and will come back at the end of the world. Of the following sixteen *qaṣīdas*, one is dedicated to the Mughal Muḥammad Akbar Shāh (this *qaṣīda* is dated 1250/1835) and fifteen to the last Mughal Emperor, Abū Zafar Bahādur Shāh (exiled in 1858). Three *qaṣīdas* (nos 29, 30 and 31) are in praise of Queen Victoria, and another fourteen extol various British personalities in India: Lord Auckland (the *qaṣīda* is dated 1837), Lord Ellenborough, and judges, governors, etc. The last nineteen *qaṣīdas* of the collection are directed to various dignitaries of the Mughal court, to the Nawwāb of Oudh, Vājīd 'Alī Shāh and other Indian personalities (including two non-Muslims, Shiv Dhyān Singh Bahādur and Rājā Narendar Singh). The last one is directed to Ghālib himself. In spite of the enthusiastic judgement of Hālī¹ ('The *qaṣīdas* of Ghālib, both from the point of view of quantity and quality, are the literary *genre* in which he excels most. . . In them he sometimes follows Khāqānī, sometimes Salmān and Zahir, or 'Urfī and Nazīrī, and always with success: the best part of Ghālib's *qaṣīdas* is their *tashbīb* rather than the actually panegyric section. . .'), I think that Ghālib is great above all as a lyric poet, which is in a way confirmed by Hālī himself when he speaks of the especial excellence of Ghālib in precisely the most lyrical part of the *qaṣīda*, namely the *tashbīb*. Here are – as a specimen – some rather original verses of the *tashbīb* of the twenty-sixth *qaṣīda* in praise of the Mughal Emperor Abū Zafar Bahādur Shāh. In it Ghālib emphasizes one of his typical motifs, that of the 'penetrating glance' (*naẓar, nigāh*) of the 'seer' (*dādar, dūrbīn*):

رہروان چون گہر آبلہ پا بینند
پای را پایہ فراتر ز ثریا بینند (p. 235).

'When the Wayfarers consider the pearls of the blister of their sore feet, they attribute to them a station higher than the Pleiads.' This is the beginning of the ode, rather uncongenial, I am afraid, to western literary taste, and almost untranslatable. The general idea, or to put it better, '*Stimmung*', underlying the entire poem, is that of the positiveness of active life, expressed by means of extremely varied symbols and metaphors centred on the idea of the Way, the

¹ I translate from the text reproduced as an Introduction to the above-mentioned Lahore edition (1965) of Ghālib's *Kulliyāt*, p. 104.

Wayfarer, the blisters on the sore feet, the paths of the desert compared to eternally pulsating veins:

جاده چون نبض تپان در تن صحرا بینند (p. 235).

'They see the Way as a pulsating vein in the body of the Desert,' united with the active and almost alchemic effect of the 'glance', which not only sees things, but also transforms them. But these *dādarān*, these 'active seers', are at the same time detached from that world through which they incessantly wander, and from the things that they continuously transform with their piercing glances:

دل نہ بندند بہ نیرنگ و درین دیر دو رنگ
ہرچہ بینند بعنوان تماشا بینند (p. 235).

'They do not attach their heart to the magic spell of the world, and everything they look at, is, for them, a mere show and entertainment.' The entire passage is the best expression of the double position of Ghālib, at the end of the Indo-Muslim mystical Middle Ages, and at the beginning of the new 'modern' world.

(Metre: ۲ ۰ ۰ -- | ۰ ۰ ۰ -- | ۰ ۰ ۰ -- | ۲ ۰ ۰ --)

رہروان چون گہر آبلہ پا بینند
پای را پایہ فراتر ز ثریا بینند
ہرچہ در دیدہ عیانست نگاہش دارند
ہرچہ در سینہ نہانست ز سیا بینند
راستی از رقم صفحہ ہستی خوانند
نقش کج بر ورق شہر عنقا بینند
دوربینان ازل کوری چشم بدبین
ہم درین جا نگرند آنچه در آنجا بینند
رازین دیدہوران جوی کہ از دیدہوری
نقطہ گر در نظر آرند سویدا بینند

راه زین دیده‌وران پرس که در گرم‌روی
 جاده چون نبض تپان در تن صحرا بینند
 شرری را که بناگاه بیدر خواهد جست
 زخمه کردار بتسار رگ خارا بینند
 قطره را که هر آئینه گهر خواهد بست
 صورت آبله بر چهره دریا بینند
 شام در کوکبه صبح نمایان نگرند
 روز در منظر خفّاش هویدا بینند
 وحشت تفرقه در کاخ مصور سنجند
 مجمع انس به نی بست زلیخا بینند
 هرچه گوید عجم از خسرو و شیرین شنوند
 هرچه آرد عرب از وامق و عذرا بینند
 نستوهند اگر هم‌ره سجنون گردند
 نخروشند اگر محمل لیلا بینند
 خون خورند و جگر از غصه بدن‌دان گیرند
 خویش را چون بر سائده تنها بینند
 سر و تن را اگر از درد ستوه انگارند
 جان و دل را اگر از دوست شکیبایا بینند
 قطره آب بلب بوسه نشتر شمرند
 پاره نسان بگلو ریزه مینا بینند

 قشقه را رونق هنگامه هندو خوانند
 باده را شمع طربخانه ترسا بینند

برسم و زمزمه و قشقه و زنار و صلیب
 خرّقه و سبّحه و مسواک و مصلا بینند
 دل نه بندند به نیرنگ و درین دیر دو رنگ
 هرچه بینند بعنوان تماشا بینند (p. 235).

This ideal Ghālibian Man, half old *darvīsh*, half modern scientist tinged with virile sadness, is at the base of all of his verses, and is the real protagonist of his work.

Speaking of Ghālib's Persian *ghazals*, one is naturally led to a comparison with his Urdu *ghazals*. But I shall only say here that Ghālib's Persian *ghazals* are more 'regular' according to the rules of the classical *ghazal*, whereas his Urdu poems, as he himself declared, are purely an *intikhab*, a selection, more similar to *qit'as* than to the classical *ghazal* (and this, by the way, is just what makes them more agreeable to our taste).

Since it is not possible to 'describe' or summarize a collection of *ghazals*, I think it useful to attempt an experiment: that of making a list of the 'characters' of two *ghazals* selected at random. The characters of a *ghazal* are – obviously – not persons, but rather the substantive nouns included in them, a sort of pale and fading gallery of ideas 'at random strung'.

1st *ghazal* (eleven couplets):

بخود رسیدنش از ناز بسکه دشوارست (p. 360).

ba-khub rasīdan: coming back to one's self
nāz: feigned disdain
tamannā: desire
dām: net
jism: body
pīraban: shirt
khār: thorn
qatl: killing
jīb: pocket
dastār: turban
nāmūs: honour
fasāna: legend
iādda: way

- qāmat*: stature
babār: spring
 **gul*: rose
 **chaman*: meadow, garden
shābid: beautiful ephebe
bāzār: market
gham: sorrow
parkār: pair of compasses
kamar: waist
fanā: annihilation, or non-being
hastī: being
pūd-u-tār: woof and warp
fitna: tumult
āwāragī: wandering
naghma: melody
tār: string
Ādam: Adam
nuqta: point
haft parkār: seven compasses = the skies
āfarīnīsh: creation
 **nigāb*: glance
partau: ray
 **rukḥ*: cheek
ā'ina: mirror
sarāb: mirage

2nd *ghazal*:

اندوده بداعی دو سه پرکاله فرو ریخت

(p. 372).

- dāgh* (twice): fire mark, wound, scar
parkāla: patch
shaqā'iq: anemone
jigar: liver
nāla: lament
ātīshkada: fire, temple
 **gul* (twice): rose
lāla: tulip
khūy: manner
vafā: loyalty

- sharar*: spark
bidād: injustice
 **rukḥ* (twice): cheek
āb (twice): water, purity
dallāla: bawd
sāqī: cupbearer
qadāb: cup
bāda: wine
 **nigāb*: glance
chashm: eye
khūn: blood
mastī (twice): intoxication
mashshāta: bride-dresser, tiring-maid
husn: beauty
 **chaman*: meadow, garden
qand: sugar
Bangāla: Bengal
manj: wave
khīrām: graceful walking
jaubar: pearl
anjum: stars
khurshīd: sun
barq: lightning
dam: breath
sbīrāza: stitch
butkhāna: an idol temple
khatt: down on the cheek
rū: face
rang: colour
māh: moon
hāla: halo
mullā: mulla
qālib: mould
khāk: dust
qazā: destiny
gūsāla: calf
rag: vein
abr: cloud
qalam: pen
z'hāla: dew

(N.B. The words present in both poems are marked with an asterisk. The poems are selected at random, and these repeated words seem rather numerous; we can be sure that 'rose', 'meadow', 'cheek' and 'glance' will recur thousands of times in this sort of poetry.)

One is tempted to say: put everything into the small pot of the *ghazal*, add some verbs and adjectives as spices, mix together, and you'll have the poem!

A comparative statistical inventory of such and similar key-words from different poets of different areas and periods would be, I think, a rewarding, though a rather laborious, task.¹ Here, for instance, we find some typically Indian-style 'characters' not very frequent in the classical Persian *ghazal* (e.g. the *shīrāza* or 'stitching of books', the *gūsāla* or 'calf', etc.). They are, however, only the first stratum of the different layers of which a *ghazal* is composed. On a higher level we could recognize the conceptual 'motifs' whose basic ingredients are those key-words. At this point a second type of inventory is needed, that of the motifs. Synchronical and diachronical comparisons among various of these inventories of different poets will be the only basis of a serious investigation of Persian styles. For the time being let us limit ourselves to a purely empirical tentative hint at the chief general trends of the contents of Ghālib's *ghazals*.

(1) One is the general trend exemplified by the famous Urdu verse:

ہے ہرے سرحدِ ادراک سے ، اپنا مسجود
قبلے کو ، اہل نظر، قبلہ نما کہتے ہیں

'God being absolutely beyond every limit of human perception, what people call *qibla* [the object of our prayers, our earthly "Absolute"] is really no more than a *qibla-numā*, i.e. the needle of the compass, pointing at the Absolute, not the Absolute itself.' The same concept we have already seen in some of the Persian verses already quoted, and, to quote a further instance, in this *rubā'i*:

¹ A first purely terminological list of the key-words of the motifs of Hāfiz is being published by Amir Muqaddam in the *Nashriyeh-Dāneskhade-ye Adabiyāt* of Tabriz (first instalment No. 4, xvii, 1344/1965). It is a useful work that should be supplemented by deeper typological and historical studies.

راہیست ز عبد تا حضور الله
خواهی تو دراز گیر و خواهی کوتاه
این کوثر و طوبی که نشانها دارد
سرچشمه و سایه ایست در نیمه راه (p. 501).

'There is a path from the worshipper to the presence of God, whether you take the long one or the short one. This Kausar and Tūba are signs, are a spring and a shade halfway along the path.' I would call this motif: poetically expressed consequences of the Absolute transcendancy of God. This includes relativism, the idea of the endless way, activity, etc. But these truths are recognized only by the *abl-i nazār*.

(2) A second general trend is therefore that of the alchemical value of the *nazar/nigāb*, a motif which has an ancient tradition in the Persian lyric, but is particularly emphasized by Ghālib. A good example of it is provided by the verses on the *dāvarān*, already quoted.

(3) A third general trend is cerebralism: personal experiences are not expressed directly (as in modern western poetry), nor through socially translatable symbols (as in the classical Persian lyric, e.g. Hāfiz's) but rather by means of a bookish rethinking of the traditional symbols, a sort of second-degree intellectual meditation on the classical Persian poetical elaboration of reality, rather than on reality. Instances can be taken almost at random from Ghālib's *ghazals*. Let us take the first verse of the *ghazal* with *radīf* . . . *khufast* utilized by Hāli in his comparison between Ghālib and Nazīri:

به وادی که دران خضر را عصا خفتست
به سینه می سپرم ره اگرچه پا خفتست (p. 373).

Here a first layer (the deepest) is the simple expression of an emotion: 'so full of difficulties and dangers is the path of my life, that I must travel on it with my inner strength or "on my breast", rather than with my feet'.

The second layer is the symbolic filter: the sequence of the (seven or more) Valleys of the Pilgrimage, the miraculous guide Khizr with his rod (*asā*), the sore foot of the Wanderer. But these

symbols are not directly used to express the first emotional layer; they are considered as already well-known motifs of a given imagery.

A third layer is superadded, in which Ghālib reshapes those already-known motifs in a personal but purely cerebral, intellectual way. The result is an expression more or less of this kind:

'In a valley in which even the rod of Khizr is sleeping [impotent], I travel in my self [or I travel on my breast, creeping] even if my feet are asleep [tired, impotent].' It is from this point of view that we should interpret some, at first sight, proto-realistic elements of Ghālib's style, e.g. the verse, at p. 10, *ba-Firdaus rauzan ba-dīvār kū?* The *rauzan ba-dīvār* is not something invented by the poet, it is a well-known element in the given set of images, or symbols, of Indo-Persian poetry. Nor is (perhaps) the way in which Ghālib uses it as an element for a further construction.

(4) A consequence of all this, which we may also call a fourth general trend, is introspection: neither nature, nor *tasawwuf*, nor philosophy, nor God nor even a more-or-less clearly imagined 'Beloved' are the subjects of Ghālib's *ghazals*, i.e. neither a *masjūd* nor a *mamdūb* nor a *ma'shūq*. Its real subjects are the psychological movements of his self (mostly dissatisfaction, sadness and related sensations) analysed in detail and expressed by means of the above-mentioned poetical instruments.

But this is also, at least partly, a characteristic of the 'Indian style' in Persian poetry. In what sense and to what extent is Ghālib 'original', not in Persian poetry in general, but in the particular background of the Indian style?

Before giving a tentative answer to this question – in the next paragraph – some words should be said on Ghālib's *rubā'iyāt* (quatrains) that form – as customary – the last section of the *Kulliyāt*. They are comparatively few in number (104) and almost all show an interesting characteristic: that of being – if compared with other verses of Ghālib – very simple. This derives partly from the fact that the *rubā'ī* form cannot physically contain a too complicated imagery; but probably also from the fact that Ghālib (like other classical poets) did not use them as a too 'serious' form of poetry, confining to them, therefore, those more direct and immediate expressions of feeling that for us are just the most interesting matter of poetry. Here is an instance, a simple cry of pain:

در باغ سراد ما ز بیداد تگرگ
 نے نخل بجائے ماند نے شاخ نہ برگ
 چون خانه خرابست چه نالیم ز سیل
 چون زیست و بالست چه ترسیم ز مرگ

(p. 506).

'In the garden of my desire, by the iniquity of hail not a palm remained alive, nor a branch nor a leaf; since the house is ruined, why should I complain of floods? If life itself is a plague, why should I fear death?'

In the terms of a tentative typology of the *rubā'ī* form that I have sketched in my *Literary History of Persia*,² the majority of Ghālib's *rubā'īs* are of the type that I called 'triangular', the most common, perhaps, and most generic amongst the types of *rubā'īs*.

Reading Ghālib's work as a whole, one is struck at first sight by a curious double stylistic 'contradiction'. One horizontal, between his Urdu and Persian works, the other vertical, between his prose and his poetry. To put it in a very simple or rather oversimplified way, his Urdu verse is more Bedilian and complicated than his Persian poetry; on the other hand his Persian prose is very much more Bedilian and complicated than his Urdu prose (noted as a model of simplicity). Before attempting an explanation or justification of these contradictions, let us say a word on the famous subject of Ghālib's Bedilism. In another article of mine,³ I tried to demonstrate that, where Ghālib's Urdu poetry is concerned, the idea of a passing from an initial Bedilism to a progressive rejection of Bedilian style is not accurate. This succession is more true of his Persian poetry; but here also the idea should be taken *cum grano salis*. The 'salt' consists chiefly in recognizing that this generally-accepted interpretation of Ghālib's style is based on judgments given by himself and by eastern critics, who used as a *mīzān* (balance, scales) of aesthetic judgment their own system of stylistics, and measured and defined 'Bedilism' and 'non-Bedilism' on scales quite different from ours, bearing in mind especially purely *lafzī* and even lexical, syntactic or

¹ Another, stylistically very simple, *rubā'ī*, has been already quoted at p. 93.

² See the chapter on *Rubā'īs*, pp. 319 ff.

³ A. Bausani, 'The Position of Ghālib in the History of Urdu and Indo-Persian Poetry: I. Ghālib's Urdu Poetry', *Der Islam*, vol. 34, 1958, pp. 99 ff.

grammatical characteristics.¹ A re-reading of the famous letter of Ghālib to Chaudhri 'Abd al-Ghafūr,² the starting-point of this generally accepted interpretation, may be useful. The letter refers to a long discussion between Ghālib and his master (*pīr-u-murshid*), Šāhib 'Ālam, about the new style of such Persian poets of India as Qatīl and Vāqif against whom Ghālib makes his strongest protests, accusing them even (an interesting point that confirms what I have said before) of 'not knowing Persian'.

'My master Šāhib 'Ālam [Ghālib says] is angry with me because I have said that the poetry of Mumtāz and Akhtar is defective [*nāqis*]. In this letter I shall take the liberty of expounding a standard [lit. 'scales', *mīzān*] of poetry, and Ḥaẓrat Šāhib is kindly requested to weigh the poetry of those gentlemen, i.e. the verses of the Indian poets from Qatīl and Vāqif up to Bedil and Nāsir 'Alī, on these scales. Here is the standard. A group of poets is that which goes from Rūdakī and Firdausī up to Khāqānī, Sanā'ī, Anyarī, etc. The poetry of these personalities, notwithstanding differences of small account, is based on the same style [*vax*']. Then Sa'dī was the founder of a special style [*tarz-i kbāss*]. Sa'dī, Jāmi, Hilālī: such personalities are not numerous. Fighānī is then the inventor of another special art [*shiva-e kbāss*] bringing delicate images [*kbayālha-e nāẓuk*] and sublime meanings [*ma'āni-e buland*]. Perfection in this kind of art was achieved by Zuhūrī, Naẓirī, 'Urfī and Nau'ī. God be praised! It was as if life itself were poured into the mould of speech. This style was then given the unction of a fluent simplicity by other poetical natures: Šā'ib, Kalīm, Salīm, Qudṣī and Ḥakīm Shifā'ī are of this circle. The style of Rūdakī and Firdausī was abandoned at the time of Sa'dī. On the other hand, Sa'dī's art being of an "inaccessible simplicity" [*sabl-i mumtana*'], it never found wide diffusion. It was then Fighānī's style which spread widely and, in it, new and original refinements emerged.

¹ Ghālib, who, as is known, had in his youth an Iranian teacher for Persian, a former Zoroastrian, converted to Islām, Mullā 'Abd as-Šamad Hormuzd, was always keenly interested in grammatical and lexicological problems, as is shown by his famous *Qāfi-i Burhān*, with connected polemics, and by the numerous grammatical observations strewn here and there in his Urdu letters. He felt that he knew Persian grammar and syntax like a Persian, not like an Indian. This feeling led him to the imitation of 'good Persian' models rather than to the continuation of the un-Persian, but 'new' style of a Bedil or a Ghanimat.

² *Ud-i Hindī*, Lucknow, 1941, pp. 64-6.

Summing up, there are three styles [*tarz*] in existence: that of Khāqānī and his peers, that of Zuhūrī and his followers, that of Šā'ib and those like him. Now tell me truly, in which of these styles is the poetry of Mumtāz, Akhtar, etc., composed? You no doubt will answer me that they write in another style, and that we have to consider it as a fourth one. Well, it may be a style, perhaps even a good one; but it is not a Persian style, it is Indian. It is a coin, but not one coined in the Royal Mint; it is a false coin. Be just!

Another important statement by Ghālib himself is that contained in his own *taqrīz* to the Persian *Kulliyāt*.¹ He mentions there his continuous self-correction, applying to this 'literary dissatisfaction' his own couplet (again exemplifying one of the general trends of his poetry mentioned above):

در سلوک از هر چه پیش آمد گذشتن داشتم

کعبه دیدم نقش پائے رهروان نامیدمش

'On the Way, I passed beyond everything I had in front of me: I saw the Ka'ba, but I called it the footstep of an eternal Wanderer!'

And then he goes on to say (I reproduce also the Persian text in order to show the remarkable complication of its prose style, still recalling that of Bedil):

هرچند منش که یزدانی سروش ست در سر آغاز نیز پسندیده گوی و گزیده
جوی بود اما پیشتر از فراه روی پے جاده ناشناسان بر داشتی و کثری
رفتار آنان را لغزش مستانه انگاشتی - تا هم در آن تگاپو پیش خرامان را
به خجستگی ارزش همقدسی که در من یافتند مهر بجنید و دل از آرم
بدرد آمد - اندوه آوارگیهائے من خوردند و آموزگارانه در من نگرستند -
شیخ علی حزین بختند زیر لسی پے راه رویهائے مرا در نظرم جلوه گر ساخت
و زهر نگاه طالب آملی و برق چشم عرفی شیرازی مادّه آن هرزه جنبشهای

¹ Pp. 515-17 of the 1925 Nawalkishor edn, and pp. 661-3 of the Lahore edn (1965).

ناروا در پائے ره پیمائے من بسوخت - ظهوری بسرگرمی گیرائی نفس
 حرزی بیازوئے و توشه بر کمرم بست و نظیری لا ابالی خرام بهنجار خاصه
 خودم بچالش آورد - اکنون به یمن فرة پرورش آموختگی این گروه فرشته
 شکوه کک رقاص من بخرامش تدریست و برامش موسیقار بجلوه طاؤس ست
 و به پرواز عنقا

'Though the Mind, that is a divine angel, was at the beginning too, speaking accepted words and looking for chosen expressions, at first, due to my wanderings here and there, it followed the way of unknown people and took their crooked gait for the stumbling of poetical intoxication, until a moment when, in this running to and fro, my forerunners, finding me worthy of being their colleague were moved to compassion and, saddened by my literary straying, looked at me with a teaching eye. Shaikh 'Alī Ḥazīn, with a smile, showed to me my errors, and the wrathful glances of Ṭālib Āmulī and the blazing eyes of 'Urfī Shīrāzī burnt and destroyed those unworthy and frivolous absurdities in front of my walking feet. Zuhūrī, with kind interest, bound an amulet around my arm and supplied me with provisions for travel and Nazīrī in his carefree way encouraged me in my own typical style. Now, as a result of the prosperous and glorious protection of those angelical souls, my dancing pen walks like a cock pheasant, plays melodies like Pan pipes, shines like a peacock, flies like a Phoenix!

In spite of these solemn affirmations, this 'great change' should be taken, I think, to indicate a syntactic and linguistic change rather than a real stylistic change. Ghālib himself seems to confirm this when, for example, he writes to Chaudhri 'Abd al-Ghafūr Sarūr (*'Ud-i Hindī*, Lucknow edition, 1941, pp. 22-3): '... anyhow it is known to you... that unless I see an expression [*lafz*] or a compound [*tarkīb*] in the works [*kalām*] of the great classical [*qudamā*] or the good later [*muta' khkibirīn*] poets such as Ṣā'ib, Kalīm, Asīr and Ḥazīn [all Persians of Iran!] I do not use it in prose or verse...'. Fortunately this extreme *taqlīd* and traditionalism remained only syntactic and lexical.

Actually if we compare poems of some of Ghālib's masters with similar ones of his own we shall notice, apart from obvious exceptions, that the most 'Bedilian' and 'Indian' of the two is Ghālib.

Let us take, for instance, some couplets of a *javāb* by Ghālib to a *ghazal* of Nazīrī of Nīshāpūr with the *radīf khuftast*, of which we have already quoted one verse. In the interpretation – not always easy for a westerner – of these couplets, we have the guidance of Hāli in his study of Ghālib's Persian poetry.¹ The first couplet (quoted already at p. 93) corresponds to this verse by Nazīrī:

نظر بظاهر و صیاد در خفا خفتست
 اجل رسیده چه داند بلا کجا خفتست

The idea is that love is born at first sight: a hunter is 'sleeping' (or concealed inside) the glance of the beloved; the poor lover – like a man near to death – does not know when the sudden end will come. It is – compared with the elaborate verse of Ghālib – a comparatively simple, and – as Hāli says – 'natural' (*nochural*) expression of more or less real love.

Nazīrī says further:

کجا ز عشوه آن چشم نیم باز رهیم
 که فتنه خاسته از خواب و پائے ما خفتست

'How could I be saved from the coquetry of the glances of a half-asleep beauty? Temptation is rising from sleep, and my foot is asleep!'

The corresponding verse of Ghālib portrays – it is true – a more general feeling, but at the same time it uses 'secondary' intellectualized images:

دگر ز ایمنی راه و قرب کعبه چه حظ
 مرا که ناقه ز رفتار ماند و پا خفتست

'Which joy can I have from the fact that the way is sure and the Ka'ba [the final station] is near, when my camel is lame and my foot asleep?'

¹ Hāli compares the two poems in *-khuftast* of Nazīrī and Ghālib, and also that of Zuhūrī *ba-'ishq qābil-i āwānagi khīradmand-ast* with Ghālib's *ghazal: chu subh-i man zi siyāhi ba-shām mānand-ast*. The considerations stated by Hāli are especially interesting for a study of his own ideas on style and poetry. See pp. 89 ff. of the Introduction to the Lahore edn of the *Kulliyāt*.

Another instance from the same poem:
Nazīri expresses a very common feeling of lovers in this rather simple way:

کس از معانقۀ روز وصل یابد ذوق
که چند شب ز هم آغوش خود جدا خفتست

'Only he who for several nights has slept separated from his partner finds a real pleasure in the embrace of the day of union!'

Ghālib does not express the psychology of personal love, but a more general feeling of unhappiness:

درازی شب و بیداری من این همه نیست
ز بخت من خیر آید تا کجا خفتست

'The length of nights, my lying awake, all this is nothing; tell me rather where has my Good Luck gone to sleep?'

In the traditional symbolism, *bakht-i bīdār* (waking luck) is good luck, and *bakht-i khufā* (sleeping luck) is bad luck. Here these symbols are re-employed in a 'secondary', reflected way.

Further examples would render this paper too long. It is now time to say something on the historical position of Ghālib's Persian poetry in Ghālib's India, i.e. in the India of the first half of the past century.

Attempts have been made to compare Ghālib's poetry to the metaphysical poetry of English literature, or to Euphuism; I have also suggested certain stylistic resemblances between Ghālib and Góngora.¹ Though all comparisons of this kind are open to obvious criticism, they can nevertheless be useful for a better understanding of certain aspects of Ghālib's art. But those who make them seem to forget that the literary situation of India at the period of Ghālib was perhaps more similar to that of our Middle Ages than to more modern periods of European literary history.

Persian held, in Mughal India, a position somewhat similar to that of Latin in our early Middle Ages. It was not the mother tongue of anybody, and vernaculars like Urdu (to speak only of the Muslim environment) were already alive. 'Indian-style' poets are in a position, *mutatis mutandis*, comparable to that of certain authors of the early Middle Ages studied by Auerbach in his

¹ In my above-quoted article on Ghālib's Urdu poetry, p. 121.

stimulating essays. In his 'Latin Prose of the Early Middle Ages',¹ trying to explain the twistedness and difficulty of the style of writers like Cesarius of Arles, Gregory of Tours, and Raterius, he says that they used those specific stylistic forms not because of their inability to write in classical Latin, but simply because 'the objects and the thoughts that had to be expressed, could not be expressed in the stylistic forms of the high classical culture' (p. 98 Italian edn). The 'mannerism of Raterius' language is certainly not erudite ornamentation but the peculiar form assumed by his new content' (p. 133). 'He thinks that his obscurity aims at a superior clarity, which, however, reveals itself only to those who make an effort to understand him' (p. 134), speaking *à la* Ghālib, to a *ṣabāndān* (p. 412):

بیاورید گر اینجا بود ز باندانی
غریب شهر سخنهائی گفتمی دارد

'If there is one here who knows the language, bring him to me. This stranger in the city has something to say.' (Similar expressions can be found in Bedil.) Some sentences of Auerbach, in that same essay, could be almost literally applied to the situation of the 'Indian style' of a Bedil, only changing 'Latin' into 'Persian': 'His [he still speaks of Raterius] peculiar quality is due not only to his temperament, but also to the linguistic materials he uses. It is a Latin [read: Persian] that had for a long time no more been enlivened by everyday usage... In order to express his own peculiar quality he had no other means than that of adding a sort of expressionistic ornamentation, operating through the disposition of words, etc.' (p. 135). This is why a Bedil, a Qatib and a Vāqif wrote in what for Ghālib was such a 'bad' Persian. Ghālib felt it his duty to 'reconstruct' the real 'Iranian' Persian, if not that of Firdausi or Sa'di, at least that of Zuhūri and Nazīri. But the sixteenth century and the social, spiritual and linguistic conditions of Mughal India of that age were forever gone; this is the reason why the 'better' and simpler Persian of Ghālib seems to us not much more than a literary exercise. His public – still to use Auerbachian concepts – was the extremely restricted literary aristocracy of Delhi, and even they were not always in agreement with him, as it is shown by their criticisms.

¹ Included in his collection of essays: *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter*, Bern, 1958. I quote from the Italian translation, E. Auerbach, *Lingua letteraria e pubblico nella tarda antichità latina e nel Medioevo*, Milan, 1960.

Just as he had nothing poetically new to say in Persian poetry – and therefore he could exercise himself in writing in the comparatively simple style of the ancient tradition – so too he could exercise himself in difficult Persian prose; he had no urgent need of being understood by people. Conversely, in Urdu verse he felt he had something new to say, and this new element, stylistically, in the conditions of the Mughal India of his time, could not but be the historical continuation on more modern lines of Bedil's novelty and, therefore – at first sight – difficult. But in Urdu prose he had a practical need to be understood; hence his famous clarity and simplicity. Of course he was not himself conscious of all this and, as everybody knows, he preferred his Persian verses:

فارسی بین تا بینی نقشهای رنگ رنگ
بگزر، از مجموعه اردو که بیرنگ منست¹

What is *rang*? It is colour, ornament, conscious effort of style, exercise. In the '*intikhab*' (selection) of 'pearls at random strung', without too much conscious exercise of style (that is his Urdu *divān*), he wrote not for the public but for himself, and therefore he followed his own secret taste. Paradoxically the result was that in the last resort he identified himself with historical reality, whereas the 'public' for which he studied his *rangs* in Persian poetry was the only possible public for Persian in India, the idealized public of the century of Zuhūri and Nazīri.

This, I think, is a fairly satisfactory explanation of the contradictions of Ghālib's styles. Ghālib, seen from this point of view, is the last Persian poet of India, and the first 'modern' Urdu poet. But, being a really poetical genius, it is obvious that even in his more artificial Persian 'exercises' he achieves remarkable results of 'pure poetry'.

Ghālib himself felt a clear conscience about being a 'last' representative of classical Mughal India; the outward power and glory of the Mughals is transformed in him into a poetical, spiritual glory:

گهر از رایست شاهان عجم بر چیدند
بعوض خامه گنجینه فشانم دادند

¹ This verse is found in one of the first *qit'as* of the *Kulliyāt* (to be precise, in the 7th, p. 14).

افسر از تارک ترکان پشتگی بردند
به سخن ناصیه فر کیانم دادند
گوهر از تاج گسستند و بدانش بستند
هر چه بردند به پیدا به نهانم دادند (p. 391).

'The pearl has been taken away from the royal standard of Persia and in exchange a pearl-strewing pen was given to me. The crown has been torn away from the head of the Turks of Pashang, and the flaming Glory of the Kais was transformed, in me, into poetry!

The pearl was taken from the crown and was set in wisdom: what they outwardly took away, was given to me in secret.'

And in a *rubā'i* he says that 'the broken arrow of my ancestors was transformed into my pen':

شد تیر شکسته نیاگان قلمم (p. 501).

His was not therefore a social or political poetry, but rather an intimate, 'hidden' one. Ghālib was what would be called now a 'formalistic poet'. In his form, in spite of his repeated claims of 'Iranism' he was typically Indian, and it is not an accident that he is presently more celebrated in India than in Pakistan. The subtlety of his poetical analysis of reality is characteristic of Indian style:

دیده‌ور آنکه تا نهد دل بشمار دلبری
در دل سنگ بنگرد رقص بتان آزی (p. 499).

'The real seer is the one that, when he analyses the psychological details of love, is able to see in the heart of the stone, the dance of the fire-idols of Āzar!'

To see what is potentially hidden in the given stony reality is the task of the poet; not that of giving more or less social messages. The woof and warp of Ghālib's poetry is a sort of dialectical monism, transposed into poetical forms (and in this too, his Bedilian heritage is evident). It would be a fascinating subject of study – though an extremely difficult one – to retrace possible Indian sources in the stylistic trends of Indian style, of which Ghālib is one of the last examples in Persian. But since my task is

to speak of Ghālib's Persian poetry, I can do no more here than mention this possibility. It is certain, however, that some verses of Ghālib seem to call to mind Śankara's monism or even certain aspects of modern dialectic idealism. With one of them I close my rather haphazard considerations of him. It is particularly appropriate because it seems to invite to silence, after so many, perhaps useless, words.

بگفتار اندیشه برهم مزن
در اندیشه دل خون کن و دم مزن (p. 156).

'Do not spoil thought with words: let thy heart bleed in thought and cease speaking!'

GHĀLIB'S URDU VERSE

RALPH RUSSELL

In considering Ghālib's poetic achievement – and, for that matter, his achievement as a prose-writer too – it is entirely appropriate to look first at his Persian work. It is well-known that he himself took pride above all in his Persian poetry, and even on occasion expressed contempt for his Urdu verse. Thus, in much-quoted lines, he says:¹

فارسی بین تا به بینی نقش‌های رنگ رنگ
بگزر از مجموعه اردو که بر رنگ من ست

Look at my Persian: there you see the full range of my artistry –
And leave aside my Urdu verse, for there is nothing there of me.

At the same time, one must be careful not to over-rate the importance of statements such as these. It is undoubtedly true that he regarded his Persian as his great achievement. He lamented the fact that in his day Urdu had ousted Persian from its former place as *the* language of poetry and culture. He knew his Persian verse was little understood and little appreciated, and this pained him. But it is also true that the most forceful of his statements contrasting his Persian and his Urdu to the great disadvantage of the latter, are made in a particular context, in a context where his Urdu verse is under attack, or where he anticipates such an attack, or where his Urdu is being compared unfavourably with that of rival poets such as Zauq. In such a context it is his standard reaction to represent his Urdu as written under some sort of external compulsion, and not from any desire of his own, and to vaunt his superiority in a field where such slighting comparisons cannot be made. The poem from which I have just

¹ *Kulliyāt-i-Ghālib, Fārsī*, ed. Sayyid Murtazā Husain, Lahore, Majlis-i-Taraqqi-i-Adab, vol. 1, 1967, p. 161.