

# The Position of Ġālib (1796—1869) in the History of Urdu and Indo-Persian Poetry

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## I

### *Ġālib's Urdu Poetry*

The following points I consider already known to my readers: a) Asadū ʿllāh Ḥān Ġālib's biography and his position in the external history of Urdu Literature.<sup>1)</sup> b) The general background of classical Muslim poetry, with its stock-in-trade of more or less conventional images and symbols.<sup>2)</sup> Otherwise, an introductory study on both those subjects would make this already long paper too prolix, with the risk, moreover, of repeating well-known facts.

What follows is therefore no more than an analysis of those stylistic peculiarities of Ġālib's poetry, which make him one of the most significant poets of the Indian literature of the "classical" school, and, at the same time, a link between that school and the modern tendencies. Notwithstanding Ġālib's great importance, no European islamist, as far as I know, has studied him and his poetical style. The reader is kindly requested to bear in mind this "pioneering" position of mine, and to excuse the shortcomings connected with the difficulty of such a task.

The editions of Ġālib's works I have used for this study are:

a) *Kulliyāt-i Ġālib*. Lucknow, Nawalkishore, 1925. It contains the *Persian* "complete works" of Ġālib, i.e. *qit'as* (pp. 11—53), strophical poems (pp. 53—68), eleven short *masnavīs* (pp. 69—160), sixty-four *qaṣīdas* (pp. 161—329), *ġazals* and *rubā'īs* (pp. 330—515). (Abbr.: *Kulliyāt*)

b) *Dīvān-i Ġālib*. Berlin edition, printed by the Kāviānī Press in 1925 on behalf of the Muslim University of 'Aligarh. It is a very fine pocket-edition, unfortunately with some typographical defects. (Abbr.: *Dīvān Berlin*)

<sup>1)</sup> The reader is invited to consult, as an introduction, such reference works as the histories of Urdu Literature by R. B. SAKSENA Allahabad, 1927, Urdu transl., with quotations of original texts (Lucknow, 1952) and T.G. BAYLEY (Calcutta, 1932).

<sup>2)</sup> For a general introduction see GIBB's introductory chapters to his *History of the Ottoman Poetry*, London, 1900—09, and BROWNE's first pages of the 2nd vol. of his *Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1951<sup>5</sup>). In an article entitled *The Religious Spirit of Muslim Poetry* in "Pakistan Quarterly" (Karachi, V, 2, 1955) and also in my introduction to the *Poesie di M. Iqbāl* (Parma, Guanda, 1956), in an article on the literary criticism of A. H. Ḥāli (*Ḥāli's Ideas on Ġazal*, in "Rypka's Mem. Vol.". Prague, 1956), and in an introductory study on Mirzā A. Bedil (*Note su Mirzā Bedil*) published in the "Annali dell'Istituto Sup. Universitario di Napoli", N. S., VI, 1957, pp. 163ff. I have anticipated some ideas expressed in the present paper.

c) *Divān-i Ġālib*. Lucknow, Nawalkishore, 1952; with short footnotes by Sayyid Amīr Ḥasan Nūrānī. At its end there is an appendix containing a selection of unpublished Urdu verses of Ġālib, in his early style, that "of Bedil and Šaukat". The Poet rejected them afterwards, deeming them not worthy of publication. (Abbr.: *Divān Lucknow*; *Divān App.*)

d) *Intihāb-i Ġālib*, i.e. a selection of Ġālib's Persian and Urdu poems, whose chief interest lies in the fact that it was prepared by the Author himself, at the command of H. H. the *nawwāb* of Oudh in 1866 (three years before his death). I use the splendid edition made at the expense of the Ruler of Rāmpūr by Imtiyāz 'Alī 'Aršī, forming the n. III of a "Series of Publications of the State Library of Rāmpūr" (*Silsila-e maṭbū'āt-i kitābhāna-e riyāsat-i Rāmpūr*) and published in Bombay (Maṭba'a-e Qayyima) in 1942. It contains a good introduction by I. A. 'Aršī and valuable notes, exclusively taken from Ġālib's own explanations scattered here and there in his letters. It is accompanied by a critical apparatus for the Persian and Urdu texts. (Abbr.: *Intihāb*)

e) Ġālib's well-known collections of letters in Urdu (*Urdū-e mu'allā* and *'Ud-i Hindī*) contain important material for a comprehension, both literal and spiritual, of his poetry. I use two Lucknow editions of 1941 (Abbr. *Urdū*; *'Ud*).

For the transliteration of Persian I follow the scientific system generally adopted for the consonants (however *j*, not *ǰ*, for ج); for the vowels I preserve the Indian pronunciation, which was that of Ġālib himself, i.e. *a*, *i*, *u*, *ā*, *ī*, *ū*, *e*, *o*; so *banda* and not *bandè*, *roz* and not *rūz* etc. The *wāw-i 'aṭf* I transliterate as *-u-*. The *izāfat* after *-a*, *-ā*, *-ī*, *-ū* is transliterated as *-e*. One of the chief difficulties of a consequent transliteration, for Urdu, is the representation of the Arabic emphatica. A transliteration *ṭ* = ط would cause misunderstandings in Urdu, as identical with the accepted transliteration for ط. As the misunderstanding is practically significant, in Urdu, only in the case of *ṭ* (*dād* being always pronounced and transliterated as *z*) I have chosen the practical, if not very consequent, solution of having *t* as the transliteration for ط and *ṭ* as that for ط. *ṭ* is therefore *d*, but *ṣ* is ص, *z* is ط, *z* is ض.

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In one of his letters (*'Ud* pp. 64—66) directed to Chaudhri 'Abdu 'l-Ġafūr, Ġālib himself delineates in rapid but clear strokes the chief schools of Persian<sup>1</sup>) poetical style. This letter deserves a quasi-integral translation, as it forms a good introduction — in the words of Ġālib himself — to a study of his own style of poetry.

<sup>1</sup>) Concerning poetical style it is rather difficult to distinguish between classical Persian, Urdu and Turkish poetry. Ḥālī remarked in his *Muqaddima* (see my article mentioned in note <sup>2</sup>) p. 99 how much more unitarian this traditional style is in comparison with that of the European languages. An Oriental poet, he says, can compose poetry in a foreign language much more easily than a European. In the course of this paper I shall call this traditional style "Persian" only by way of abbreviation.

The letter refers to a long discussion between Ġālib and his Master (*pīr-u-muršid*) Šāhib ‘Ālam, about the “new style” of such Persian poets of India as Qatīl and Vāqif<sup>1</sup>) against whom Ġālib raises his strongest protests, accusing them even “of not knowing Persian”. “My master Šāhib ‘Ālam — Ġālib says — is angry with me because I have said that the poetry of Mumtāz and Aḥtar<sup>2</sup>) is defective (*nāqiṣ*). 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 (*kalām*) of those gentlemen, i.e. the verses of the Indian Poets from Qatīl and Vāqif up to Bedil and Nāṣir ‘Alī<sup>3</sup>) on these scales. Here is the standard. A group (*guroh*) of poets is that which goes from Rūdakī and Firdausī up to Ḥāqānī, Sanā’ī, Anvarī etc. The poetry (*kalām*) of these personalities, notwithstanding differences of small account, is based on the same style (*vaṣ’*). Then Sa’dī was the founder (*mūjid*) of a special style (*ṭarz-i ḥāṣṣ*). Sa’dī, Jāmī, Hilālī:<sup>4</sup>) such personalities are not numerous. Fiḡānī<sup>5</sup>) is then the inventor (*mubdi’*) of another special art (*šīva-e ḥāṣṣ*) bringing delicate images (*ḥiyālḥā-e nāzūk*) and sublime meanings (*ma’ānī-e buland*). Perfection in this kind of art was achieved by Zuhūrī, Naẓirī, ‘Urfī and Nau’ī.<sup>6</sup>) 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 (*salāsāt-kā ḥarbā diyā*) by other poetical natures (*ṣāḥibān-i ṭab’*): Šā’ib, Kalīm,

<sup>1</sup>) Vāqif (d. 1776) of Baṭāla, was a pupil of Ārzū of Agra (d. 1756). He travelled far and wide in India and was also invited to Kabul by Aḥmad Šāh Abdālī. He died in Bahāwalpūr, where he had taken refuge from the troubles caused by Sikhs and Marhatas. (See some specimens of his poetry in *IKRĀM. Armuḡān-i Pāk*. Karachi, 1953<sup>2</sup>, pp. 268—71). Qatīl (d. 1817) wrote both in Urdu and in Persian (specimens of his poems *ibid.* pp. 290—91).

<sup>2</sup>) Aḥtar (d. 1858) is Qāzī Muḥammad Šādiq Ḥān Aḥtar who lived in Lucknow at the time of the *nawwāb*-poet Vājid ‘Alī Šāh whose *taḥalluṣ* was also Aḥtar. (It seems that the ruler bought the *taḥalluṣ* from his poet paying him with rich presents). Aḥtar was a pupil of the already mentioned Qatīl.

<sup>3</sup>) Bedil is the famous Mirzā ‘Abdu’l-Qādir Bedil of Paṭna (1644—1721). He is remarkable not only as a poet and a stylist, but also as a philosopher. His fame in India, Ottoman Turkey and Central Asia (not however in Persia) is hardly balanced by equal interest in him on the part of Western Orientalists. The general opinion is that Ġālib followed his style and then abandoned it. We shall see the limits of such a general statement afterwards. Nāṣir ‘Alī of Širhind (d. 1697) was also a contemporary of Aurangzeb. With him the Indian style reaches extremes of complicated intellectualism.

<sup>4</sup>) Hilālī of Astarābād (put to death as a šī’a in 1528/29) is comparatively less known and less appreciated by Western scholars than the others named before. Also in the East not all seem to share Ġālib’s high appreciation of him.

<sup>5</sup>) The importance of Bābā Fiḡānī of Širāz (d. 1519) in the opinion of Indian litterateurs is very great: unfortunately we lack the materials to judge him properly, as only some of his poetical productions are easily accessible.

<sup>6</sup>) Zuhūrī of Turšīz (d. 1615), Naẓirī of Nišāpūr (d. 1612—13), ‘Urfī of Širāz (d. 1590—91) and Nau’ī (contemporary of the preceding poets) all lived for more or less long periods in India and are (with the exception of the great ‘Urfī) far less esteemed in Persia than in their adopted country. All of them are unanimously considered by Indian critics as pupils of Fiḡānī.

Salīm, Qudṣī and Ḥakīm Šifā'ī<sup>1)</sup> are of this circle. The style of Rūdakī and Firdausī was abandoned at the time Sa'dī. On the other hand, Sa'dī's art being of an "inaccessible simplicity" (*sahl-i mumtani'*) it never found large diffusion. It was then Figānī's style which spread widely, and, in it, new and original refinements (*na'e na'e rang*) emerged. Summing up, there are three styles (*tarzen*) in existence: that of Ḥāqānī and his peers, that of Zuhūrī and his followers, that of Šā'ib and his parallels. Now tell me in sincerity, the poetry of Mumtāz, Aḥtar etc., in which of these styles is it 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 will be a style, perhaps even a good one, but not a Persian style: it is Indian. It is a coin, not however coined in the Royal Mint, but a false coin, be just!"

He then quotes three Persian couplets, the last of which is as follows:

*ma-šau munkir ki dar aš'ār-i in qaum  
varā-e šā'irī čize digar hast*

"Do not deny that in the poems of these people (i.e. the real Persian poets) beyond poetry there is something else."

And he adds: "This 'something else' has been allotted by Destiny to Persians (*pārsion*: in the linguistic, not in the racial sense of the word). Yes, it is true that 'that something' has been achieved sometimes also by Indians, in Urdu poetry. For instance in these verses:

By Mīr Taqī:<sup>2)</sup>

*badnām hoge, jāne bhī do imtiḥān-ko  
rakhegā kaun tum-se 'azīz apnī jān-ko ?*

(Metre: a kind of *mujtass*,  $\underline{\cup} - \cup - / \underline{\cup} - \cup - / \cup - \cup - / -$ )

"Thou wilt acquire a bad name, better leave aside tests and trials: who would ever prefer his own life to Thee?" (In the sense: You — God or the Beloved — do not need to send trials or proofs of Love, killing or feigning to kill me by your disdain. By this you will earn no more than the bad fame of being a tyrant, because the fact that all prefer You to their own lives is so evident that it does not need any proof).<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Šā'ib of Tabrīz (d. 1670) is considered also by an orientalist as Browne a remarkable poet and the greatest of the Persian *muta'ahḥirīn*. Abū Ṭālib Kalīm of Hamadān (d. 1651) is one of those better known in India (where he lived at the Mughal Court) than in Iran. Salīm of Teheran (d. 1647—48), Qudṣī of Mašhad (d. 1646—7) and Ḥakīm (the "Physician") Šifā'ī (d. 1627) all belong to the Šafavī pleiad. The last one was court physician and boon companion to Šāh 'Abbās the Great.

<sup>2)</sup> Mīr Taqī Mīr of Agra (d. 1810) is considered as one of the greatest Urdu poets.

<sup>3)</sup> Cfr. a similar hyperbole in this verse by Figānī (quoted in Šibli NU'MĀNĪ's *Šī'ru 'l-'Ajam*. 'Aligarḥ ed., III vol., p. 30)

*ai ki mī-gū'ī čirā jāme ba-jāne mī-ḥarī  
in suḥan ba sāqī-e mā gū ki arzān karda-ast*

"Oh thou who sayest: Why dost thou buy a Cup with thy Life! Ask this question to our Saki, who has made this bargain so cheap!" (i.e. to give only one's Life for a Cup of Wine is too cheap!)

Or by Saudā:<sup>1)</sup>

*dikhilā'īye lejā-ke tujhe Miṣr-kā bāzār*  
*h'āhāñ nahīñ, lekīn, ko'ī, vāñ, jīns-i girān-kā*

(Metre: a kind of *hazaḡ*: — — ∪ / ∪ — — ∪ / ∪ — — ∪ / ∪ — — )

“Having brought Thee to the market of Egypt, there thou must be displayed (to be sold); but, there, there is no buyer for precious merchandise” (The allusion is to the small price paid by the Egyptian merchants for the beautiful Joseph. Implicitly the verse amounts to a hyperbolic praise of the beauty of the Beloved).  
Or by Qā'im:<sup>2)</sup>

*Qā'im aur tujh-se ṭalab bose-kī kyūñkar māñūñ ?*  
*hai tū nādāñ, magar itnā bhī bad-amoz nahīñ!*

(Metre: *ramal*. — ∪ — — / ∪ ∪ — — / ∪ ∪ — — / ∪ ∪ — )

“O Qā'im, why should I believe in another request of a kiss from Thee? Thou art, I admit, a simpleton, but non so incapable of learning!” (so incapable of learning as not to have understood that a second kiss is not *requested* but taken!)  
Or by Momin Ḥāñ:<sup>3)</sup>

*tum mire pās hote ho, goyā*  
*jab koī dūsrā nahīñ hotā*

(Metre: *ḡafīf*, — ∪ — — / ∪ — ∪ — / — — )

“It is as if Thou werest with me, whenever nobody else is with me”. In Nāsiḡ's poems less, and in Ātiš's<sup>4)</sup> works more, there are such darts and lancets. But at this moment no verse of them occurs to my memory.”

At first sight these four verses do not say much to our Western taste, with the exception of the simple and direct verse of Momin. But let us examine them more accurately. They seem to me to have three common characteristics. a) None of them contains formal comparisons (*tašbīḡ*) or metaphors. They are, in a way, “simple”, from the purely *lafzī* point of view. The statements they contain are poetically expressed not through play on images, but rather through play on actions or hints. Momin's verse, in particular, does not contain a single Arabic or persian word: it is all Urdu verbs and particles. The “difficulty” of some of them is purely conceptual: once the “point” is understood they are, in fact, very simple. This would explain the comments of Mr. 'Aršī (*Intiḡāb* p. XXXIV) who attributes to these verses qualities at first sight not too apparent to western readers, such as *salāsat-i alfāz* (simplicity of wording) and *pākīzagī-u-ṣafā'ī-e rozmarra* (purity of idiom). b) All the above-quoted couplets consist in dialogues between the Lover and the Beloved: they have all a “dramatic” element in common. c) The conceptual play, the “point” of all them, is a sort of hyperbole, whose discovery produces a sense of astonishment in the reader. The entire letter is a good specimen of what Ġālib considered a good style in the later stage of his development: rejecting the extreme “formalism” of the classical images, and

1) d. 1780, of Delhi: Famous for his *gaṣīdas* and satirical poems.

2) Less important than the above mentioned, born in Čāñdpūr, d. in 1795.

3) Momin Ḥāñ is a later poet of Delhi, d. 1852.

4) A famous couple of poets of the Lucknow school, often mentioned together: Ātiš (d. 1846) is more simple, Nāsiḡ (d. 1838) more refined.

maintaining the sense of "maraviglia" which poets like our Marino considered the aim of a good verse.<sup>1)</sup>

But we can now make a further step to understand what Ġālib considered, in his later stages of development, true art and true poetical beauty. We are fortunate enough to possess *three* different forms of some of Ġālib's *gazals*, i.e. the discarded verses, those approved by him for publication in his *Dīvān*, and the shorter form, the bunch of verses selected by himself for his *Intihāb* of 1866. The printed *Dīvān* of Ġālib itself is an *Intihāb*, as he states in the well-known Persian *miṣrā'*: *dāda am dīvān-i Ġālib, intihābe beš nāst!* "I have read the *Dīvān* of Ġālib: it is no more than an anthology!" There are in fact several verses of his *gazals* and *qaṣīdas* which were rejected by him at the moment of the compilation of his *Dīvān*, especially because he considered them too much imbued with the bedilian style that had inspired his earlier poetry. A study of the successively discarded verses, compared with those accepted by the poet in the later *Intihāb* will be, I think, very useful.

We shall begin with an Urdu *gazal* with radif *-pasand āyā*, which, even in the form it has in the printed *Dīvān*, is typically "bedilian":

1. *šumār-i subḥa marġūb-i but-i muškil-pasand āyā*  
*tamāšā-e ba-yak-kaḥ-burdan-i-šad-dil pasand āyā*
2. *bā-faiẓ-i bedilī naumedī-e jāved āsān hai*  
*kušā'iš-ko hamārā 'uqda-e muškil pasand āyā*
3. *havā-e sair-i gul ā'ina-e be-mihrī-e qātil*  
*ki andāz-i ba-ḥūn-gāllīdan-i-biṣmil pasand āyā*

(*Dīvān Lucknow* p. 14. Metre, *hazaj*: ◡ — — — / ◡ — — — / ◡ — — — / ◡ — — —)

Translation and commentary:<sup>2)</sup>

1. "The counting of the rosary's beads has become pleasing for (my) Idol, who loves difficult exploits — a pleasant show is indeed that of stealing a hundred hearts by a single hand!"

The Muslim rosary, *subḥa*, is composed, as it is well-known, of one hundred beads, each of which represents one of the Names of God.

<sup>1)</sup> In another letter Ġālib, criticizing some poems submitted to him for correction, in which the Author had attributed to *zulf* (tresses) the adjective *šabġir* (travelling by night, before dawn) says that such an adjective is adapted for a noun like *nāla* (sigh, lament) in the sense of "early morning sigh", but absolutely improper for *zulf*. *Zulf* can be *šab-rang* ("night-coloured") or *šab-gūn* (same sense) but never *šabġir*. (*Ūd*, p. 96). This is a good example of what we called "formalism of the classical poetry", a formalism that the later Ġālib seemed to approve, but that he himself practically more than once has broken.

<sup>2)</sup> As English is not my mother language, my translations have no poetical pretensions at all; they are merely a guide to the understanding of the text. To those not able to read the originals they will sometimes appear as enigmas of the worst taste, and the poet not a great one. Perhaps only a rather free translation into a Western hermetic style could do justice to Ġālib. An attempt to it is presently done by the writer, in Italian.

Formally the beads are compared to hearts. The heart-stealing Idol (i.e. the Beloved) is able, in this way, to ravish a hundred hearts with a single hand. The contrast *but-subḥa* ("Idol" against "pious Rosary") is easily perceivable. Typically bedilian is the use of the substantivate infinitive *ba-yak-kaf-burdan-i-ṣad-dil*: the expression being entirely Persian, it gives an even greater impression of elaborateness in Urdu. This entire long expression forms the grammatical subject of the verb *āyā!*

2. "By the grace of Heartlessness, eternal despair is easy — the Unloosing likes our difficult Knot!"

*Beditī*, "heartlessness", "being-out-of-one's-self", "unconsciousness" is a quality which makes eternal despair easy, for the heart, the seat of perception and conscience, stolen by the Beloved, is no more there to remind the Poet that he is desperate. In this way the difficult "knot" of the intricate metaphysical situation of the heartless lover is solved in the easiest way. "The Solution likes difficult knots": treating the abstract *kuṣā'iṣ* as a thing or a person capable of feelings is an expedient that would never have been resorted to by a "classical" poet and is typically bedilian. Remark, moreover, that *kuṣā'iṣ*, "solution", "unloosing", means also "peace", "relaxment", "tranquillity" and is also verbally contrasted with the preceding *naumedī*, "despair". Another contrast in this verse is that of *āsān* (easy) and *muṣkil* (difficult).

3. "The desire to contemplate the Rose is the mirror of the pitilessness of the Killer, — who likes the spectacle<sup>1</sup>) of the butchered bird palpitating in its own blood!"

We like to go and see the roses blossoming in the garden, but, given the cruelly short time of the rose's life, our apparently gentle action is similar to the cruel pleasure of the butcher when looking at a hen rolling and palpitating in its own blood.<sup>2</sup>) The red colour of the rose fallen in the dust after its short life is the exact counterpart of the red colour of blood: and this is quite in the line of the classical style. Less so, perhaps, is the comparison *havā -ā'ina* (desire — mirror): calling the "desire" a "mirror" is one of those bold innovations of Indian style, that amount practically to multiplying the expressive possibilities of the poetical language.

No more than these three are the verses selected by Ġālib for his printed *Dīwān*. The original *gāzal* (or, to put it better, the couplets originally meant to

<sup>1</sup>) *andāz* is, more literally, "gesture", "fashion", "mood" (also "grace of gesture").

<sup>2</sup>) It is perhaps superfluous to remind the reader that this cruel spectacle is very often seen in Muslim towns or villages, where, according to religious traditions, fowls are ritually killed cutting their throat with a knife while pronouncing the ritual *bismillāh* (this is why the killed bird is called *bismil*).

form part of a *gazal* in this metre and this *radif*) had four more, including the *maqta'*, then rejected by him as being too bedilian. Here they are (*Divān App.* p. 116).<sup>1)</sup>

1. *fażā-e ḥanda-e gul tang u zauq-i 'aiš be-parvā  
farāġat-gāh-i āġoš-i vidā' dil-pasand āyā*
2. *hū'ī jis-ko bahār-i furṣat-i hastī-se āgāhī  
ba-rang-i lāla jān-i-bāda-bar-mahmil pasand āyā*
3. *savād-i-čašm-i-bismil-intihāb nuqta-ārā'ī  
ḥirām-i nāz be-parvā'ī-e-qātil-pasand āyā*
4. *Asad har jā suḥan-ne turra bāġ-tāza dālī hai  
muġhe rang-i bahār-ījādī-e Bedil pasand āyā*

1. "The space of the rose's smile is narrow, and bold and fearless is the pleasure of Joy;  
the broad place of leisure of the farewell-embrace was (more) pleasant to (our) heart!"

In more prosaic and less elaborate words: "The short life of the Rose is insufficient for the bold fearlessness of our Pleasure; separation was, then, for us more pleasant than union." The idea that separation is better than union (metaphysically expressed, that *'adam* is, in a way, better, wider in its indefinite possibilities, than *hastī*) is already in itself typical of the bedilian philosophy and there are many traces of it not only in Ġālib but in Iqbāl too.<sup>2)</sup> Here it is expressed in terms of space and dimension, contrasting the narrow "space of the rose's smile" with the ampler *farāġat-gāh* of the farewell-embrace. But the idea and expressions seem to me quite original and interesting. Why did the second Ġālib discard them? Very probably because that *fażā-e ḥanda-e gul tang* in which he introduced special dimensions into a smile was formally too etherodox: it gave to "Smile" (the capital letter comes here quite naturally) a too great autonomy to create its own world of adjectives and actions. Formally less unorthodox is the *farāġat-gāh-i āġoš-i vidā'* that corresponds to it in the second *miṣrā'*, and that probably produced, in the mind of the poet, the parallel idea of giving a dimension to the smile of the rose.<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Unfortunately the edition I possess reproduces only some of the rejected verses. This however does not prejudice the general exactness of an eventual judgement.

<sup>2)</sup> I think it is a great mistake to judge the development of Eastern (Muslim) philosophy only by the works of the professional philosophers. The most original philosophical thoughts of the Muslims are scattered in their theological and poetical works; and even a study of literary taste and its changes could give us a deeper understanding of some variations in philosophical ideas, quite impossible to detect in the classical *falāsifa*, whose works are as fixed a literary genre as any other.

<sup>3)</sup> We must not forget that the traditionalism (fortunately enough, often only theoretical) of the later Ġālib brought him so far as to write ('*Ūd* pp. 22—23) "...anyhow it is known to you (Chaudhrī 'Abdu 'l-Ġafūr Sarvar)... that unless



2. "Whoever is conscious of the Spring of the ephemeral Occasion of Being, like the Tulip, loves to put at the top of his luggage a red cup of Wine!"

This verse is clear enough and does not require too many comments. We have only to remind the reader that the "Occasion" (*furṣat*) has become in the poetry-philosophy of Bedil a sort of *terminus technicus*.

3. "The play of dots is an outcome of the selection of the pupil of the eye of the butchered bird;  
the graceful Walking has come to love the careless boldness of the Killer!"

The *nuqṭa-ārā'i* (play on dots and points) and the *ḥirām-i nāz* (the act of gracefully and proudly walking) are here considered as the outcome of two objects connected with the well-known leitmotiv *bismil-qātil*: the first being connected with the black dot-like pupil of the eye of the bird, the second with the careless, bold and cruel walking of the butcher towards his victim. Abstract ideas such as *be-parvā'i*, *ḥirām-i nāz*, are, again, felt as concrete things and quasi-personified. But here we are in the presence of another feature of the "bedilian" style, and really one of the less agreeable ones: that of forming *tarkīb-i ġair ma'nūs* (unusual and unfamiliar compounds). So, in the first *miṣrā'*, *inti-hāb* is perhaps considered a second term of a compound whose first term is the already composite expression *savād-i ḥaṣm-i bismil*, and, in the second, *pasand* may play the same role for *be-parvā'i-e qātil*.<sup>1)</sup>

I don't see an expression (*lafz*) or a compound (*tarkīb*) in the works (*kalām*) of great classical (*qudamā*) or good moderns (*muta'ahhirin*) poets such as Ṣā'ib, Kalīm, Asīr and Ḥazīn (all Persians of Iran!) I do not use it in prose or verse. . . ." This declaration of the most outspoken aesthetical *taqlīd* is partly explained by the fact that he was speaking there of poetry *in Persian*, a language, after all, foreign to him. For the image of the *āḡoṣ-i vidā'*, cfr. also these verses of the *Dīvān*:

*āḡoṣ-i gul kuṣūda barā-e vidā' hai*  
*ai 'andalīb, ḥal, ki ḥale dīn bahār-ke*

(*Divan Lucknow* p. 95. Metre: *muṣārī'*).

"The bosom (embrace) of the Rose is open for the Farewell; o Nightingale, go, for gone are the days of Spring!"

*gulšan-ko tirī ṣuḥbat az-bas-ki ḥoṣ ā'i hai*  
*har ġunḥe-kā gul-honā āḡoṣ-kuṣā'i hai*

(*ibid.* p. 94. Metre: *hazaj*).

"The rose garden liked thy company so much, that the Becoming-Rose of every rosebud is the opening of an embrace!" (Remark the technique of concretization of the *gul-honā*, "the act of becoming a Rose").

<sup>1)</sup> It would be interesting, but it is here out of place, to study to which extent these kinds of *ġair ma'nūs tarkīben* may have been influenced by a substrate of Indian languages. Cfr. another example in the following verse.

4. "O Asad, wherever the Word made its curls fresh and new as a garden, the colour of the spring-creativity of Bedil has been pleasant for me."

The *vazn* of this verse compels us to read, as we did, *suḥan-ne* (subj.) *ṭurra* (obj.) *bāḡ-tāza dālī hai*, and not, as one would have at first been tempted to read, *suḥan-ne ṭurra-e bāḡ tāza dālī hai*. So we have the strange and new compound adjective *bāḡ-tāza*: "fresh and new as a garden." In the second *miṣrāʿ*, that contains an explicit praise of his master Bedil, Ġālib uses another bedilian *tarkīb*, and a rather heavy one, the abstract *bahār-ijādī*, "spring-creativity," conceptually, however, very expressive. Notwithstanding the comparatively great freedom of the Persian language for the creation of new compound words, this freedom is to a large extent limited by a certain accepted and established taste. The formation of compounds like *bahār ijādī* is an attempt to create larger liberties also in the *lexical* field. Its fault was that they were sometimes constructed rather on a Sanskrit than on a Persian linguistic pattern.

The study of this poem has been useful, I think, as an introduction to Ġālib's bedilism. It is easy to guess that not a single verse of it has been accepted in the later *Intihāb*. But let us now study later and more accepted Urdu poems of Ġālib and see whether, in them too, his style is really so free from bedilism as many suppose.

The following *gāzal* (metre: *ramal*), written some time before 1859, was almost entirely accepted into the *Intihāb* of 1866, with the exception of only seven verses, which we mark here with an asterisk:

*sab-kahān kuḥ lāla-u-gul-meṅ numāyān hogaʿīṅ*  
*ḥāk-meṅ kyā ṣūrateṅ honḡī ki pinhān hogaʿīṅ*

"Wherever Forms became manifest in the Tulip and the Rose, how many Forms will there be, hidden beneath the dust!"

How many mysterious Forms must lie hidden under the earth if those that come out manifest themselves in the beauty of flowers! The idea is not in itself a new one and it is already present in some famous couplets of Ḥayyām. Here, however, the use of that *ṣūrateṅ* introduces it in a more philosophical way. It is the abstract *ṣūrat* (form) not the blood of a king or the mole of a Beauty, that put on the garment of colours and flowers.

*yād thīṅ ham-ko bhī rangārang bazm-ārāʿiyān*  
*lekin ab naqṣ-u-nigār-i ṭāq-i nisyan hogaʿīṅ*

"I too once remembered many-coloured banquet-adornments, but now they have become pure decoration on the Arch of Oblivion."

Remark here, first, the abstract plural *bazm-ārāʿiyān*, "adornments of banquets;" i.e. the remembrances of merry assemblies in the heart of the poet, now reduced to pure decoration. The "arch of oblivion" *ṭāq-i nisyan* is an expression very often employed by Ġālib. To quote only one verse more (*Divān Lucknow*, p. 15; *Intihāb*, p. 187):

*sitāyišgar hai zāhid isqadar jis bāg-i rizvān-kā  
voh ik guldasta hai ham behudon-ke tūq-i nisyan-kā*

“That Garden of Paradise, which the Ascetic praises so much, is no more than a bunch of flowers on the Arch of Oblivion of us, senseless people”.

The once living remembrances are now transformed into linear and cold decoration on an Arch: an image not easily found, perhaps, in classical poets.

*\* thīṅ banātu 'n-na's-i gardūn din-ko parde-meṅ nihān  
šab-ko un-ke dil-meṅ kyā ā'ī ki 'uryān hoga'īṅ*

“During the day the ‘Daughters of the Bier’ (stars of the Constellation of the Great Bear) were concealed under the veil; at night what befell their hearts that they appeared naked (to the sight)?”

This verse has not been accepted into the later *Intihāb*. Probably Ġālib felt in it an excess of “personification”? (the garment of the stars, their act of denuding themselves etc.)

*qaid-meṅ Ya'qūb-ne lī, go, na Yūsuf-kī ḥabar  
lekin āṅkheṅ rauzan-i dīvār-i zindān hoga'īṅ*

“It seems that Jacob had no news of Joseph in fetters, but (his blind) eyes became the windows in the wall of the prison.”

The qur'ānic and biblical story of Jacob and Joseph (the prototype of perfect Beauty) is too known. This verse is one of the numerous allusions — derived from the metaphysical background of later Persian poetry — to the power of *sight* (see also below, v. 10). As to the image, the poetical identification eye-window could seem baroque only to those who forget the etymology of our “window” itself (*vindauga*, “eye of the wind”). The eyes of Jacob, though blind, became windows in the prison-wall of Joseph. The image is perfectly on the line of classical tradition. Cfr. a similar hint in this other verse of Ġālib:

*na choṛī ḥazrat-i Yūsuf-ne yāṅ bhī ḥāna-ārā'ī  
safedī dīda-e ya'qūb-kī phirtī hai zindān-par*

“Even here Joseph did not abandon the adorning of the house: the whiteness of the eye of Jacob is wandering above the Prison.” (*Dīvān Lucknow* p. 39)

*\* sab raqībōṅ-se haiṅ nāḥoś, par zamān-i Mišr-se  
hai Zulaiḥā ḥoś, ki mahv-i māh-i Kin'ān hoga'īṅ*

“All are displeased with rivals, but with the women of Egypt Zulaiḥa (Potiphar's wife) is pleased, for they were destroyed by the Moon of Canaan (Joseph)”.

The Statement in the first *mišrā'*, rather prosaic, and the general idea expressed in the verse, are not too original.

*jū-e ḥūn āṅkheṅ-se bahne do, ki hai šām-i firāq  
maiṅ yeh samjhūṅga ki šam'eṅ do furozāṅ hoga'īṅ*

“Let a river of blood flow down from (my) eyes, for it is the eve of separation! I shall think as if two candles have been lit.”

A play of colours. The two eyes, flowing (red) tears of blood, are assimilated to two (red) candles burning in the night of farewell.

*in parī-zādoṅ-se leṅge huld-meṅ ham intiqām  
qudrat-i ḥaq-se yehī ḥūreṅ agar vāṅ hoga'īṅ*

"I shall take revenge on these fairy-born (maidens) in the Eternal paradise, if, by the power of God, they be there transformed into *hūrī* (remark the contrast *parī-hūrī*).

*nāṅd uskī hai, dimāḡ uskā hai, rāteṅ uskī haiṅ  
terī zulfeṅ jis-ke bāzū-par parešān hoga'īṅ*

"Sleep, Brain, Nights, all are possessed by the one, on whose arm thy tresses lie dishevelled."

Sleep and brain, because the tresses are *parešān*, dishevelled, dispersed, like the sleep and the senses of the Lover. The nights, because the tresses are black as night. In a sense, the novelty of the image consists in the intermingling, without a clear distinction, of details of things formally comparable to *parešānī*. So sleep is connected both with the tresses as veils and with their *parešānī*, *dimāḡ* especially with the *parešānī*, nights especially with blackness, but also probable with *parešānī* (nights dispersed, ruined etc.).

\* *maiṅ čaman-meṅ kyā gayā goyā dabistān khul-gayā  
bulbuleṅ, sunkar mire nāle, ḡazal-ḥ'ān hoga'īṅ*

"When I went to the meadow it was as if a School had been opened, and the nightingales, hearing my laments, have begun to sing ḡazals."

The nightingales are the poet's pupils in singing *ḡazals*, as if the meadow were a school. The *ḥusn-i ta'tīl* is not too original.

\* *voh nigāheṅ kyūṅ hū'ī jāti haiṅ, yā Rab, dil-ke pār  
jo mirī kūtahī-e qismat-se muḡḡān hoga'īṅ ?*

"Those glances that, because of the shortness of my Fortune, became eye-lashes, why, o Lord, are they piercing my heart?"

Shortness of Fortune means bad luck: "shortness" of fortune has transformed the amorous glances of the Beloved into piercing eye-lashes. But why, if the eye-lashes are so short, did they succeed in passing through my heart? A double poetical play, based chiefly on the formal similarity of the *nigāh*, "glance", with something long and piercing, here concretised, as it were, in the eye-lashes, elsewhere also directly compared with threads etc. (cfr. here below p. 117) The *nigāheṅ* are elsewhere in Ġālib's *Dīvān* compared with *āheṅ* (sighs) because both are felt as thread-like. For instance in this beautiful isolated verse (*Dīvān Lucknow* p. 53; *Intihāb*, p. 223).

*mat mardumak-i dāde-meṅ samjho yeh nigāheṅ  
haiṅ jam' suvaidā-e dil-i čāsm-meṅ āheṅ<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>) A propos of this verse an interesting remark occurs to me, in order to clarify further the difference between Western and Persian poetical taste. An image of this sort: "do not consider what you see in my eyes as glances, no, they are all the sighs of my heart collected there!" appeals also strongly to us. But if

“Do not consider these as glances in my pupils; they are sighs collected together in the innermost core of the heart of the Eye!”

*bas-ki rokā main-ne, aur sīne-meñ ubhrīñ pai-ba-pai  
merī aheñ baḥya-e čāk-i girībān hoga’īñ*

“Notwithstanding my efforts to stop them, they grew more and more in my breast one after another. . . my sighs, became the sewing of my torn collar!”

All acquainted with Persian poetry know the *čāk-i girībān*, one of the most frequent (and for Westerners least translatable) leit-motifs of Persian classical style: the rending of the collar in despair etc. *Baḥya* means “stitching,” “sewing”, “suture”; in Persian idioms, strangely enough, an expression as *baḥya bar rū-e kār uftād* means “the secret was divulged,” in the sense, perhaps, that “the stitching on its laceration is too clearly visible.” In the commentary to the preceding verse we saw how *āh* (the sigh) is felt as something thread-like. Here we see the metaphor directly applied: sighs become the thread sewing very visibly the rift of the garment torn in despair, then revealing the state of mind of the poet to others, notwithstanding his efforts to stop his *āh*’s. The play of images, in its extreme formal parallelism of details, is perfect for the oriental taste, especially after the experiences of Bedil and the Indian school: such an elaborate identification “sigh-thread” would have been probably less acceptable to a Ḥāfiẓ or a Sa’dī.

\* *vān gayā bhī maiñ to un-kī gālīñ-ka kyā javāb ?  
yād thīñ jītnī du’ā’eñ goyā šarf-i darbān hoga’īñ*

“I even went there, but how could I answer to her abuses ? All the invocations I remembered were spent, as it were, for the porter!”

we consider more deeply the cause of our first instinctive pleasure at this image, we shall see that it is quite different. The Eastern literary taste sees its beauty especially in the formal visual elegance of comparing two objects equally filiform and piercing; and, moreover in the refined identification of the black pupil of the eye with another traditional concept, that of the *suvaīdā-e qalb*, the black point in the innermost depth of the heart, formally very aptly connected — both through its blackness and through its smallness — with a pupil. Lacking, as we do, all those images in our poetical tradition we feel the beauty of the image from another, purely emotional and dynamic angle; our first comment would probably be that the glances potentially hidden in the eye are a crowd of sighs urging to express themselves through the eyes (eventually with tears etc.). But if we retranslate our emotional translation for an Oriental (I speak of course of a theoretical Oriental of the traditional school) probably he would find the aesthetical expression at least partly spoiled and misunderstood. This is another proof of how purely casual is the liking of our Western public for Eastern art, and how that liking can be sometimes based on a (fortunate) misunderstanding. This implies also the problem of translation of the products of a given poetical tradition into another; practically I feel that an able translator is quite justified in utilizing for the sake of Art such happy misunderstandings.

The motif: abuse of the Beloved — Porter is well known, here, moreover, *gālī* (abuse) is contrasted with *du‘ā* (invocation).

\* *jān-fazā hai bāda jis-ke hāth-men jān ā-gayā*  
*sab lakīren hāth-kī goyā rag-i jān hoga‘īn*

“Soul refreshing is the Wine, and the lines of the palm of the One in whose hands the Cup came, are transformed, as it were, into Life-Veins.”

The lines of the hand of the cup-bearer are seen as veins, Life veins (arteries) in the same sense as Wine is Life or soul-refreshing. The red wine is often compared with blood. The ensemble is not however so perfect, in the balanced parallelism of details, as some others of Ġālib. The identification lines-of-the-hand: Life-veins seemed perhaps too far-fetched formally to the neo-classicism of Ġālib, especially because the blood is, in the veins, flowing *through* them, whereas in the case of the Wine-image the wine is *in the cup* held by the *veined* hands of the cupbearer.

*ham muvāḥḥid haiñ, hamārā keś hai tark-i rusūm*  
*millaten jāb mīṭ-ga‘īn ajzā-e imān hoga‘īn*

“We are Unitarians, our religion is to abandon (man-made) traditions; when the (old religious) communities were effaced, they became portions of the (one) Faith”

With *millat* the religious community is meant, here especially the older ones, destroyed by the wrath of God for not accepting the new Prophets. Here, I think, the expression *ajzā-e imān* is formally remarkable, Faith being considered as something concretely divisible into portions, *juz‘*.

*ranj-se hūgar hū‘ā insān, to mīṭ-jātā hai ranj*  
*muškilen mujh-par pariñ itnī, ki āsān hoga‘īn*

“When man gets accustomed to grief, grief itself disappears; so great difficulties befell me that they became easy.”

The verse is easily understandable and not extremely original, based as it is chiefly on the contrast *muškīl-āsān* (difficult-easy).

\* *yūñ-hī gar rotā rahā Ġālib, to ai ahl-i jāhān,*  
*dekhnā in bastīon-ko tum ki vīrān hoga‘īn*

“If Ġālib is weeping thus, as if for nothing, o peoples of the World, look at these (once flourishing) towns, how they were destroyed!”

Under the apparent simplicity of the expression lies, if I am not mistaken, a double poetical play: 1. do not reproach Ġālib, if he seems to weep thus (*yūñ-hī*, “as by chance”, “as for nothing”) for he weeps for the destructions wrought by Destiny in this World. 2. The quantity of the tears abundantly flowing from Ġālib’s eyes is not for nothing, look at how many towns were destroyed by them as by a torrent or a flood!

It cannot be denied, in my opinion, that much of the best of Bedilism is preserved even in a poem like this, accepted for a great part into the later

*Intihāb* of Ġālib. The poem quoted above is a good example of the average quality of Ġālib's *gazals*, where his former tendencies, corrected and perfected, still play a significant role.<sup>1)</sup>

Lack of space prevents further quotations of entire *gazals*. As, however, the real unit in Persian poetry is rather the *bait*, I hope that I will be allowed to quote some further remarkable verses of the Urdu *divān*, through which a better understanding of Ġālib's style can be obtained. After each verse we shall give the pages of the Lucknow *Divān* and, if it is the case, of the *Intihāb*.

*āgahī dām-i šunīdan jisqadar čāhe bičhā'e*  
*mudda'ā 'anqā hai apne 'ālam-i taqrīr-kā*

(p. 11. Metre: *ramal*).

"Let Conscience spread, so wide as it wishes, the net of Hearing, the (inner) Sense is the Phoenix of its own world of expression."

This verse could be considered, in a sense, as the manifesto of a certain stage of Ġālib's art. To understand it, another couplet ought to be remembered (p. 71).

*našv-u-numā hai ašl-se, Ġālib, furū'-ko*  
*hāmošī-hī-se nikle hai jo bāt čāhī'e*

"Every growth happens from a Root into different Branches: the Word we want must germinate from Silence".

The deep meaningful Word, the real "meaning" or "purpose", the *mudda'ā*, lies in a zone that can metaphysically be styled as 'adam, "Non-Existence" or "silence". The Phoenix is a legendary, "non-existing" Bird, then it lives in Non-Existence. The play of personifications is here extremely abstract. The *āgahī* (Conscience) is a Hunter who spreads his net to catch the unseizable bird of Meaning or Purpose. The net is the Hearing, a Persian substantivated infinitive, *šunīdan*: nothing can formally suggest a *tašbīh* Hearing-Net, the assimilation is purely creative. Conscience, Hearing, Meaning are three abstract concepts objectivized poetically into Hunter, Net, Bird.

For the 'Anqā-Non-Existence motif see also these verses of the *Divān*:

*mīrī hastī fažā-e hāirat-ābād-i tamannā hai*  
*jise kahte haiñ nāla voh usī 'ālam-kā 'Anqā hai*

(p. 76. Metre: *hazaj*).

"My existence is the space of the Realm of Stupor called Hope: what they call Sigh, is the Phoenix of that world."

This is another interesting variant of the poetical use of the term "space" (see above p. 106). Hope, or Desire, is a Realm, a town, *ābād*: a town of stupor, because it is the space of the not-yet, and its inhabitants are non-existent things, therefore cause of astonishment. The flying Sigh is the Phoenix of that *nā-kujā-ābād*).<sup>2)</sup> The element of flying (in

<sup>1)</sup> Ġālib wrote in a letter (*Urdu* p. 368) that a friend which possessed some of his scattered productions sent him this *gazal* for the *Divān*.

<sup>2)</sup> This suhrawardian expression comes here quite naturally. See also this *misrā'* of Ġālib (among those not included in the printed *Divān*, *Divān App.*

*sigh and Phoenix*) is probably the only common formal element of the simile; or, the Sigh, Like a Phoenix, exists but is not visible (is repressed).

*maiṅ 'adam-se bhī pare hūṅ, varna, gāfil, bārḥā*  
*merī āh-i ātiš-īn-se bāl-i 'Anqā jal-gayā*

(p. 12; 186. Metre: *ramal*).

"I am even beyond Non-Existence: otherwise, o thou careless one, the wing of the Phoenix would have been set aflame more than once by my fiery sigh!"

Differently from those other two 'Anqā-verses, this has been accepted by Ġālib into his later *Intihāb*. In it, actually, the crescendo he liked so much reaches its maximum, and at the same time the parallelism of formal details is well preserved. The hyperbolic effect of the Sigh, operating even in the field of Non-Existence, is well expressed by the hyperbole of the burning of the wing of the (non-existing) Phoenix: but even this stage is passed over, 'adam-se pare, towards a further third stage of absolute interior Nihil.

The apparent world is pure non-existence. To express this concept, common to every mystical school, in the following verse the 'Anqā gives place to another hyperbolic symbol of non-existence, the (extremely subtle) *kamar* (waist) of the Beloved:

*šāhid-i hastī-e muṭlaq-kī kamar hai 'ālam*  
*log kahte haiṅ ki hai, par hameṅ manzūr nahīṅ*

(p. 56; 227. Metre: *Ramal*).

"The world is the waist of that Beloved called 'Absolute Being'; people say "it exists", but it is not apparent to us!"

A philosophical or theological concept such as Absolute Being is personified in a beautiful Woman, whose waist, according to the canon of beauty accepted by Persian taste, is very slender, hyperbolically speaking, non-existent. Absolute Being is the only real Existence, this world is no more than a geometrical point in her body, where its dimensions become evanescent, a Nothing!

In the *geometrical* play of concepts, very frequent in Ġālib, there is, among other images, that of the *circle*, often materialized into the *ḥalqa*, ring or loop of a chain or of a net.

*bas-ki hūṅ, Ġālib, asīrī-meṅ bhī ātiš-zer-i-pā*  
*mū-e ātiš-dāda hai ḥalqa mirī zanjīr-kā*

(p. 11; 185. Metre: *ramal*).

"O Ġālib, I am, though imprisoned, so restless and agitated (lit. with fire under my feet) that the loop of my chain is a hair that has experienced Fire."

p. 127) *maiṅ 'andalīb-i gulšan-i nā-āfarīda hūṅ* "I am the nightingale of a not yet created Garden (or, more platonically, "of an uncreated garden"). The *isrāqī* and *ismā'īlī* (in a word "gnostic") philosophical legacy is playing a great part in such a poetical style, in my opinion.



The poetical identification chain-link-hair is rather far-fetched, I would say tendentially bedilian; the verse was however accepted also in the *Intihāb*. The connecting link between the two objects is, rather than their form, the superadded idea of "Fire under the fettered feet," i.e. the idea of the prisoner anxiously striving for action.

Here is a similar concept:

*māni* '-i *dašt-navardī ko'ī tadbīr nahīn*  
*ik čakkar hai mire pān-meṅ, zanjīr nahīn*

(p. 52, 223. Metre: *ramal*).

"There is no deliberation (of others) that can hinder me from wandering in deserts and plains: what you see at my foot is a wheel, not a chain!"

The loop of the chain is here a wheel. Formally the image is perfectly justified, and this verse, included in the *Intihāb*, is often quoted as one among the most beautiful of Ġālib, as one in which the Poet makes use of classical stylistic instruments to construct "modern" expressions (sense of activity, motion etc.). What renders it rather ridiculous to a Westerner is the fact that he catches the entire vision of the scene *in motion*, and the idea of a man who runs about on a single wheel as on a skate is not made to excite his aesthetical admiration. For the Easterner this has less importance: what he appreciates is the novelty of the aetiology, the perfect parallelism of forms, on a static, verbal plane.

So, again, the circular orb of the cosmos is a *ḥalqa* of a net:

*hastī-ke mat fareb-meṅ ā-jā'īo, Asad*  
*'ālam tamām ḥalqa-e dām-i ḥiyāl hai*

(p. 76, 246. Metre: *možāri*).

"Do not be deceived by Existence, o Asad: the entire world is no more than a loop in the net of Imagination."

Here the *ḥalqa* contains the triple implication of "circularity," "emptiness" (vacuity) and "deception."

Great importance is given to the *linear* image, which assumes many aspects: thread, glance, sigh, rod, road, path etc. We saw already some instances of the sigh-glance-thread type. Here are some other:

*dil guzargāh-i ḥiyāl-i mai-u-sāgar hī sahī*  
*gar nafas jādda-e sar-manzil-i taqvā na hū'ā*

(p. 14. Metre: *ramal*).

"The heart could well have been a thoroughfare of images of Wine and Cups, if the Sigh had not been the Path to the station of Abstinence" (The sigh is here compared to a Road).

*nazar-meṅ hai hamārī jādda-e rāh-i fanā, Ġālib,*  
*ki yeh šīrāza hai 'ālam-ke ajzā-e parešān-kā*

(p. 15. Metre: *hazaj*).

"In our glance, o Ġālib, there is the path leading to Annihilation, for this is the Sewing of the dispersed parts (fascicles) of the world".

The line of the *nazar* is here both a path and a suture or sewing thread (*širāza*, specially said of bookbinding) of the dispersed (*parešan*, both "scattered" and "distressed") *juz'* ("parts" or "fascicles") of the world. The *rāh-i fanā* is the only thread connecting together, and giving a unitarian meaning to the otherwise ununderstandable world. A rather original thought.

The path (*jādda*) is here a symbol of activity, as very often in Ġālib<sup>1</sup>) and in his imitators, and, before him, in Bedil and other poets of the Indian school:

*yak zarra-e zamīn nahīn bekār bāg-kā*  
*yān jādda bhī fatīla hai lāle-ke dāg-kā*

(p. 26. Metre: *mužāri'*).

"Not even a single atom of dust is inactive in the Garden; also the minute veining of the membrane (*fatīla*) of the Tulip's scar is a Path."

Once again remark the abstract intellectuality of this *tašbih*. Ġālib, Bedil and others of this kind, often introduce as elements of their *tašbihs* very minute objects (here the *fatīla*; see below "the ant's egg!") that convey the idea on a pure verbal and symbolical plane, not as part of a realistically conceived image. The Path assumes here — compared as it is to an almost invisible line — a marginal signification of almost pure "Motion."

*šauq us-dašt-men daurā'e hai mujḥ-ko kī jahān*  
*jādda gair az nigāh-i dīda-e tašvīr nahīn*

(p. 52. Metre: *ramal*).

"Desire made me run far away into a Desert, where there is no Path save the glance of the Eye of an Image."

In this remarkable couplet the desert is the Absolute Desert of *Ma-jnūn* where passion (*šauq*) impels the poet to run about. In order to express poetically the metaphysicity and pathlessness of this desert, the Poet uses the system, by him most admired, of exaggeration: the only Path in it is the extremely subtle line departing, as a look or glance, from the eye of the Image of Absolute Beauty.

Further original treatment of the line-thread motif:

*nahīn hai zaḥm ko'ī baḥye-ke darḥor mire tan-men*  
*hū'ā hai tār-i ašk-i yās rišta čašm-i sūzan-men*

(p. 62; 233. Metre: *hazaj*).

"In my body there is no Wound capable of being Sutured: the thread has become a twine of desperate tears in the eye of the needle".

The elements of this play are the Wound, the Sewing Thread, the Tears, the Eye (of the Needle). The eye of the Needle is connected with Tears (Water). The expression *tār-i ašk-i yās* (thread of tears of despair) is rather bold and worthy of Bedil or of some modern her-

<sup>1</sup>) Cfr. the splendid Persian *qašīda* of Ġālib with *radīf -bīnand* (*Kulliyāt* p. 235) *jādda čū nabz-i tapān dar tan-i šahrā bīnand* "(people who) see the Path as a pulsating vein in the body of Desert."

metic poet. *Yās* (desperation) in the eye of the needle hints at the impossibility of suturing the innumerable and grave wounds in the poet's body.

*nikohiš māni'-i berab t̄i-e šor-i junūn ā'ī*  
*hū'ā hai ḥanda-i aḥbāb baḥya jeb-u-dāman-meṇ*

(p. 62. Metre: *hazaj*).

"Blame has come to be an impediment to the disordered tumult of Folly; the laughter of the Friends has been a suture in my torn garment!"

We saw above that the Persian idiom "sewing on a garment" means revealing a secret. The torn garment is a symbol of Love-Madness, especially in the well known motif of the *čāk-i girībān* ("rending the collar," see following verse). Here, by a bold formal leap, the suture, *baḥya*, is identified with the laughter of the reproaching friends at the mad poet; the laughter, like a sewing on a garment, reveals the secret of the poet's folly.

This brings us to the time-worn image of the *čāk-i girībān*. See the intellectual way in which this image is treated in this verse:

*čāk-kī ḥ<sup>v</sup>āhiš agar vaḥṣat ba-'uryānī kare*  
*ṣubḥ-ke mānind zaḥm-i dil girībānī kare*

(p. 97; 271. Metre: *ramal*).

"If the Wilderness of Despair will express, notwithstanding its nudity, the desire of 'Rending,' the Wound in the Heart will propose itself as 'Collar' like unto the Dawn!"

*Vaḥṣat* (the wilderness of love-folly), *Čāk* (the traditional rending or tearing), *'Uryānī* (nudity, as that of Majnūn in the desert), *Girībānī* (abstract Persian word derived from *girībān*, "collar," "acting as a collar") move in a rarefied atmosphere of abstraction. The Folly of Love is naked (as Majnūn in the desert: *vaḥṣat* means also "desert"): therefore, how can it tear its collar or its garment in despair? This logical impossibility is remedied by the *zaḥm-i dil* (heart's wound) having the form of a rent collar. The further introduction of the Dawn into the play (the *break* of the Dawn is an image that has become an idiom in our European languages; in Eastern imagery the Dawn tears its collar and the sun appears) adds a sort of unexpectedness to the scene. Remark, again; how much attention the oriental poet devotes to the "logical" (if fantastic) connection of all the details. The *čāk-i girībān* is felt as a purely abstract instrument to convey "ideas" also in other verses of Ġālib. (Cfr. *Divān Lucnow* p. 36): *čāk hotā hai girībān-se jūdā mere ba'd* "after me (my death) the *čāk* (rending) will be for ever separated from the *girībān* (collar) (i.e. nobody after me will be capable of a real Love-Folly!) After all this is the only way of using in a "new" way the old heritage of images, for one who does not want to reject the system totally!

Here is a treatment of the "drop of blood" image:

*vadī'at-ḥāna-e bedād-i kāvišā-e muḥgān hūṇ*  
*nigīn-i nām-i šāhid hai mirā har gaṭra hūn tan-meṇ*

(p. 62; 233. Metre: *hazaj*).

"I am the depository of the tyranny of the piercings of the eyelashes; in my body every drop of blood is a seal-ring with the name of the Beloved!"<sup>1)</sup>

The formal equilibrium of the classical style is here perfectly preserved in the second *mišrā'*, whereas, in the first, the assimilation of the Poet's body to a depository of tyrannical eyelash-piercings would seem unbalanced and too original to a classical poet.

The blood image brings us to the *hinnā*-blood *tašbīh*; the following three verses show a crescendo of abstractness in treating this image:

*dil-se mišnā tirī angušt-i hinnā'i-kā hiyāl*  
*ho-gayā gošt-se nāhun-kā judā hojānā*

(p. 32; 206. Metre: *ramal*).

"To cancel from the heart the image of thy finger red with *hinnā*, had become the same as the separation of the nail from the flesh."

The verse, for those who know the old motif of the *hinnā*-blood is sufficiently clear.

*hūn hai dil hāk-meṇ aḥvāl-i butān-par ya'ne*  
*un-kā nāhun hū'e muhtāj-i hinnā mere ba'd*

(p. 36; 209. Metre: *ramal*).

"Even under the dust, my heart will bleed for the state of the beautiful idols, that is, their nails, after my departure, will be sorely in need of *hinnā*!"

After my death they will have no heart to scratch with their fingers, and for this will my heart bleed even in the tomb!

And, at last, the *hinnā*-motif receives a hyperbolic, quasi-metaphysical treatment in a verse like this:

*hinnā-e pā-e ḥazān hai bahār, agar hai yehī,*  
*davām kulfat-i ḥāṭir hai 'aiš-i dunyā-ka*

(p. 24. Metre: *muḥtass*).

"Spring is the (red) *hinnā* on the foot of Autumn; if it is so, a continuity of worldly pleasure would amount to a trouble for the soul".

In the second *mišrā'*, if we read '*aiš-i dunyā-kā* and connect it with *davām* ('*aiš-i dunyā-kā davām*) we obtain the translation given above. Equally justified would be '*ais dunyā-kā* (*dunyā-kā 'aiš*); in this case *davām* gets an adverbial sense (continuously): "The pleasure of the world would be incessantly a trouble for the soul". *Kulfat*, besides "trouble," can also signify a "red blackish colour" (similar to that of *hinnā*). The meaning of the entire verse seems to be: the Spring is no more than an ornament (but in blood-colour) of Autumn. A permanence of worldly pleasure (identified with Spring) would thus amount to a permanence of the reddish colour of pre-autumnal *hinnā*, i.e. to a trouble for the soul. Remark the personification of Autumn as a being having feet (rather uncommon in classical style and, in a sense, bedilian).

<sup>1)</sup> Cfr. this verse in Gālib's Persian *masnavī Abr-i guhar-bār* ("The pearl-raining cloud").

*buvāq nām-i pāk-aš zi bas dil-nišīn*  
*tarāšand pākān-aš az dil nigīn* (*Kullīyāt* p. 112).

A comparatively rare motif, that of the (more or less "cosmic") egg<sup>1</sup>) finds these expressions in Ġālib's poetical world:

*nāla sarmāya-e yak 'ālam u 'ālam kaf-i ḥāk*  
*āsmān baiḡa-e qumrī naẓar ātā hai mujhe*

(p. 107. Metre: *ramal*).

"The sigh is the capital of a world, and the World is a handful of dust. The sky appears to my sight as the egg of a turtle dove."

*Qumrī*, the turtle, is elsewhere compared by Ġālib to a handful of ashes, due to its grey colour. The sky, by its form, reminds us of an egg, egg of a turtle, because what is inside the egg, the 'ālam (world) is, like a turtle, a *kaf-i ḥāk*, a handful of dust. And what remains of all this is a Sigh, or Lament.<sup>2</sup>)

*kyā tang ham sitam-zadagān-kā jahān hai*  
*jis-men ki ek baiḡa-e mūr āsmān hai*

(p. 73; 244. Metre: *muzārī'*).

"How narrow is the world of us oppressed ones, a world whose sky is an ant's egg!"

The ant is not selected at random. It serves two purposes; it hints at smallness on one hand, on the other it is a symbol of the *sitamzada* the "oppressed by tyranny" (see *Qur'ān* XXVII, 18). Remark again the purely verbal and mental significance of the ant-image. The poet does not create an autonomously living picture, (which in a sense would be — in the Islamic Weltanschauung — a heresy) but rather suggests a thought. His images are more similar to the calligraphic sentences of the *Qur'ān* in a mosque than to a painting.

Here the egg symbol is employed in a rather unusual way:

*baiḡa-āsā nang-i-bāl-u-par hai yeh kunj-i qafas*  
*az-sar-i-nau zindagī ho gar rahā ho-jā'īye*

(p. 108. Metre: *ramal*).

<sup>1</sup>) A curious egg-image is already in J. Rūmī's *Dīvān* (cfr. NICHOLSON *Selected poems from the Dīvān-i Shamsi Tabrīz*, Cambridge 1898 notes. p. 221) and in Bābā Kūhī of Šīrāz (Cfr. BERTELS: *Kosmičeskie miŷy v gazeli Baba Kūhi* in "Dokl. Ross. Ak. Nauk" 1925, B; p. 43ff.).

<sup>2</sup>) This helps to explain a verse of Ġālib (*Dīvān Lucknow*, p. 111) which Iqbāl quoted in his *Jāved-Nāma* (see my Italian translation *Il Poema Celeste* Roma, 1952 p. 114) among all the verses of his Urdu *Dīvān* as a specimen of his "difficult" poetry

*qumrī kaf-i ḥākistar u bulbul qafas-i zang (var. rang)*  
*ai nāla, nišān-i jigar-i soḡta kyā hai ?*

"The turtle is a handful of ashes and the nightingale is a cage of rust (var. "of colour"); o Sigh! What is then the symbol of the Burnt Heart?" That is, Turtle and Nightingale (being the first no more than a heap of dust and the second a mass of rust) cannot be the real symbols of Man's passionate and weeping heart; who then (if not Thou, o Sigh) is this symbol?

“Like unto an egg, this vault of the cage is a shame<sup>1)</sup> for Feathers and Wings: may I find a new life when freed from it!”

The cage being identified with an egg, the coming out of the cage is identical to a renewed life, as in the case of the new born chicken.

Many of the verses quoted above showed us repeated attempts of the Poet to break, in a way, the traditional stylistic pattern, without however the slightest idea of abandoning it. Of this difficult condition Ġālib himself — like his great predecessor Bedil — was clearly conscious. He feels that his poetic world cannot be contained in the narrow space of traditional aesthetical technique:

*ba-qadr-i šauq nahīn zarf-i tangnā-e ġazal  
kučh aur čāhīye vus‘at mire bayān-ke tī’e*

(p. 113. Metre: *mujtass*).

“The narrow vessel of the *ġazal* does not correspond to the force of Passion: I need more vastity to express myself!”

And similarly:

*gila hai šauq -ko dil-meñ bhī tangī-e jā-kā  
guhar-meñ mahw hū‘ā iẓtirāb daryā-kā*

(p. 24. Metre: *hazaj*).

“Even in the heart Passion complains for narrowness of place; the restlessness of the Ocean has been annihilated in a Pearl!” Here not only the *ġazal* is too narrow but also the Poet’s heart; the sense of the narrowness of aesthetical means has its metaphysical counterpart in the narrowness of Being. This feeling, and the expression itself, are typically bedilian; the reader is invited to read the good poem of the Poet of Paṭna with the *radīf na-mī-gunjam*, published in one of my above-mentioned articles (see note 2, p. 99).

After the examination of the Urdu *divān* of Ġālib we can safely conclude that the often expressed judgement that Ġālib was first a Bedilian and then he “abandoned” his old style is only very partly true and in any case too simplist. I think that Ġālib’s critics were misled, in formulating such a judgement, by the repeated statements of the Author himself on his change in style and by his bitter criticism of Bedilism. They forgot that Ġālib was concerned chiefly and specially, when he made such declarations, with *Persian* poetry and literature and *Persian* poetry and literature of *India*, and not so much with *Urdu* poetry. Moreover, what Ġālib more strongly criticized in Indian (*Persian* writing) Bedilists is the *grammatical* and *lexical* incorrectness and the un-iranicity of their style. He is rarely concerned, in that criticism, with *Urdu*.<sup>2)</sup> Thus the common opinion on the radical “change” of style of Ġālib is far more correct for his *Persian* productions than for his *Urdu* poems; the former are much more simple and fluent and direct than the latter. This fact is strange enough, if we think that *Persian* was not his mother-language.

<sup>1)</sup> Being inside the egg is considered as a shame also in Rūmī’s verse mentioned above (the chicken in it is *haqīr-u-mustahān*).

<sup>2)</sup> He often invites his critics to be concerned with his *Persian* rather than with his *Urdu* poetry:

*fārsī bīn tā bi-bīnī naqšhā-e rang-rang  
bi-guzar az majmū‘a-e urdū, ki be-rang-i man-ast (Kullīyāt p. 14).*

By this, of course, we do not want to say that Ġālib's Urdu *divān* is bedilian. Even in his Urdu *Divān* there are poems of remarkable simplicity and straightforwardness of expression. The following fragment (quoted often in contemporary anthologies of good Urdu poetry) is a specimen of what Ġālib succeeded in producing when he wanted to be "simple":

*rahī'e ab aisi jagah čalkar jahān ko'ī na ho*  
*ham-suḥān ko'ī na ho aur ham-zabān ko'ī na ho*  
*be-dar-u-dīvār-sā ik ghar banāyā čāhī'e*  
*ko'ī hamsāya na ho aur pāsban ko'ī na ho*  
*parī'e gar bemār to ko'ī na ho bemār-dār (var. tīmār-dār)*  
*aur agar mar-jā'e to nauḥa-ḥ'ān ko'ī na ho*

(p. 70; Metre: *rajaz*).

"I should now rest in such a place where is nobody's abode  
 where nobody speaks with me, and nobody knows my language.  
 I should build such a house where no door or walls may be seen  
 where I have no neighbour, and no porter or guardian  
 And if I fall ill, nobody be my attendant  
 and if I come to die, nobody wail over me."

This apparently simple poem does not lack, however, some subtleness of image. In the second couplet, for instance, we have to remark the perfect parallelism between the rather strange expression *be-dar-u-dīvār* (without doors nor walls) on one hand and *ham-sāya* ("neighbour," but literally "shadow-mate," living under the same shadow) and *pāsban* (guardian, doorkeeper) on the other. The first (*hamsāya*) refers to the lack of *shadow* in a house without walls, the second to the absence of a doorkeeper in a house without any door.

The "narrowness of space" prevents us from quoting more examples of this simpler Ġālib,<sup>1)</sup> who is not however in contrast with the difficult one, simplicity being sometimes, for this sort of poets (cfr. in our Europe, the Spanish Góngora) a supreme form of refinement.<sup>2)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> So for instance the poem beginning:

*ko'ī dīn gar zīndagānī aur hai*  
*apne jī-men ham-ne thānī aur hai*

(*Divān Lucknow* p. 82; *Intihāb*, p. 257) etc. Concerning this poem Ġālib himself wrote: "There is no difficulty here. Such the *lafz*, such the *ma'nā*" (*Intihāb* p. 330 note 257; 1). Remarkable for the direct expression of emotion is also the *gāzal* beginning:

*ko'ī ummed bar nahīn ātī*  
*ko'ī šūrat nazar nahīn ātī* (*Divān Lucknow*, p. 82; *Intihāb*, p. 257).

<sup>2)</sup> Besides, the poetical discontinuity is an element of true and instinctive poetry, where both the popular and the extremely refined meet. In the collection of Afghan folksongs by Darmesteter one finds sometimes expressions strangely similar to those of the most refined Bedilists (e.g. the "bazar of black tresses" by the mad bard of Paklī, pp. 168ff.). It would be interesting to study how much and in what measure mutual influences between "bedilism" (very widely spread in Afghanistan and India even among the illiterate) and popular poetry inter-act.

When, in Ġālib, these two tendencies, the one towards simple and direct simplicity, and the other towards extreme refinement as a means of breaking the iron chain of classical style, combine together, really great poetry appears. This is the case, for instance, of the very powerful *ġazal* whose *maṭla'* is:

*har qadam dūrī-e manzil hai numāyān mujh-se*  
*merī raftār-se bhāge hai biyābān mujh-se* (p. 96; 269)

where the concomitance of all the images towards the central idea of the Burning Poet in front of which all the rubbish of common life flees in fear of being burnt, the modernity of the concepts (the deserts that run away from the poet, the Station always inaccessible and far etc.) the refinement of the images, all combine to form one the finest expressions of Ġālib poetical genius.

\* \* \*

Summing up, Ġālib could and ought to be considered as one who perfected Indian style and Bedilism rather than as one who abandoned it to choose a hypothetical "new style." But in which sense did Ġālib bring to perfection this style? This happened, I would say, in two directions. On one hand he deepened the elements of dynamic psychologism already present on the Indian style, where the description of psychological states is very subtle and sophisticated but scarcely organic:

*man ān šauq-am ki hud-rā dar ġubār-i h<sup>v</sup>īš mī-ġūyam*  
*rahe dar jeb-i manzil kardā-am ijād u mī-pūyam*

"I am a Desire that looks for itself in its own dust; I have created a Path in the bosom (lit. collar or pocket) of the Station and by that I go." So sings Bedil,<sup>1)</sup> expressing new feelings, that however remain studied and subtly analyzed rather than lively and warmly experienced. Ġālib adds to that a greater immediateness and above all a deeper sincerity of emotion.

On the other hand perfectionment is attempted in the direction of pure style. Indian style is based substantially on the following four elements: a) hyperbolization of the formal system of imagery of the traditional poetry, bringing it to a limit. The words assume then a marginal meaning.<sup>2)</sup> b) Intentional formal dissonance among the elements of the image (to *sow* the walking; the brilliant *voice* of

<sup>1)</sup> The idea that "the *manzil* (station) is in motion" is found often in Bedil ('*ālame mahmil-ba-doš -i vahm ġaulān mīkunad- -kīst tā fahmad ki manzil ham barāh uftāda ast* ? Cfr. my article mentioned in note 2, p. 99) and, after Ġālib, is one of the leit-motifs of Iqbāl's poetry-philosophy.

<sup>2)</sup> I use the adjective "marginal" in this sense: every word possesses a certain group of meanings or shades of meaning which can be imagined as scattered on a certain surface. When poetically connected with another word in a comparison or metaphor etc. the meanings or shades of meaning more near the "margins" or boundaries of that surface are emphasized, rather than the central ones. Examples are frequently met and plenty of them can be detected in this paper.



the rose; to sow sighs etc.).<sup>1)</sup> c) Concretization or personification of abstract ideas (emphasized sometimes by the use of infinitives as nouns or by pluralizing infinitives or abstract terms). We saw many examples of this in the course of our paper. d) Use of *ġair-ma'nūs tarkībēn* (unfamiliar compound expressions) of the type exemplified at page 108.

Ġālib totally renounced this last instrument, and combined a more deeply felt poetical emotion with the preceding three.

If we accept the synthetical but very appropriate definition of Persian art given by the Iranian painter and critic Mohsen Moghaddam<sup>2)</sup> i. e. "maximum simplicity of structure, together with a maximum complexity of decoration" we could say that the Indian tendency, of which Ġālib is a highly interesting aspect, could be summarized in this single sentence "attempt to renovate classical art through complication of structure too." At a given moment in the history of Iranian poetical style, after Jāmi, that marks the close of the classical age,<sup>3)</sup> beginning more or less at the Safavid epoch; ferments of renovation can be perceived. After an attempt to solve the problem through the creation of a complicated structure (which, brought to the Moghul court of India, found a specially favourable acceptance there and contributed to create the 'Indian style') the Iranian taste preferred to resort to a *back-to-Rūdagī* tendency, trying to make decoration as simple as the structure. The Indian style, on the contrary, in its attempt to complicate the structure, even went so far as to invent new and unusual *tarkībs*; but its more interesting proceeding for the renovation of structure is perhaps what we termed the concretization of abstract ideas. This, combined with what we have called "formal dissonance" can reach results remarkably similar to those of certain Western poetry. Eastern critics see as one of the basic features of modern Western poetry its great richness in materials for the poetical construction,<sup>4)</sup> without, however, fully understanding the real cause of such richness. The system exemplified by images as "the resounding laughter of roses" (qualitative dissonance) or "sowing the Walking" (dynamic dissonance) breaking the purely formal limits of the classical scenery, opens the way to a multiplication *ad infinitum* of the elements that can enter into the play. Actually what is common among the different elements of such a new play is not, or not only, their *form*, but a *common action* attributed to them by the poet. A more personal

<sup>1)</sup> Cfr. this verse in a *qaṣīda* by Ġālib (*Dīvān Lucknow* p. 136)

*koh-u-sahrā hama ma'mūrī-e šauq-i bulbul  
rāh-i ḥ'ābīda hū'ī ḥanda-e gul-se bedār*

("Mounts and plains are all the abode of the Passion of the Nightingale; the sleeping Path has been waked up by the laughter of the rose!)

<sup>2)</sup> See *Messages d'Orient. Cahier Persan*. Alexandrie, 1926, p. 130 "le caractère essentiel de l'art persan se résume en deux mots; simplicité de la forme et richesse du décor."

<sup>3)</sup> This often repeated statement has been criticized by such an authority as E. G. Browne. But I think that it remains substantially correct. This of course does not mean (as some implicitly suggest) that all post-jāmian poetry is not worthy of serious study. On the contrary, it is in my opinion more interesting just because it is non-classical!

<sup>4)</sup> See A. H. ḤĀLĪ. *Muqaddima-e šī'r-u-šā'irī*. Labore ed. (Maktaba-e Jadid) with notes and Introduction by V. Quraiši, 1953, p. 221 ff.

element, the poet's inventive activity, is introduced, a personal perception of Beauty, whereas traditional art was substantially impersonal, or, to put it better, left a limited freedom to the personal taste of the poet.<sup>1)</sup> This explains the apparent strange statements of some modern Urdu critics, like the poet N.M. Rāšid. He, in a preface to the first book of a remarkable contemporary Urdu poet, F.A. Faiż<sup>2)</sup> when speaking of the differences between traditional and modern Urdu poetry says that *hamāre qadīm šā'ir, dar-aṣl, ḥusn-ke iḥsās-se bahut had-tak be-bahre the* ("our old poets, in fact, were to a large extent incapable of the feeling of Beauty") and that for them Beauty was extremely superficial and unworthy of any attention (*nā-qābil-i tavajjuh*). I would say, perhaps less generically, that there was no direct personal participation of the old Urdu poet in the creation of Beauty; good taste was therefore surer and more generalized, because it had been already traditionally tested and incapable of individualistic arbitrary freedoms, but there was also much less creative responsibility and seriousness on the part of the single poets. A judgement on the creative responsible-seriousness of the poet is on the contrary at the basis of our Western modern literary criticism.<sup>3)</sup>

Through the Iranian system of renovation (back-to-Rūdagi-and-Firdausi!) the poets of modern Iran (I don't mean here, of course, the poets directly and exclusively influenced by Europe and refusing every connection with the alleged *gul-u-bulbuli* style) produced works of the same kind as those of a Parvīn I'tiṣāmi,<sup>4)</sup> simple, serious, didactic, full of the spirit of wisdom and *pand-u-naṣiḥat* so typical of a certain current of old Persian poetry, but also, formally considered, rather shallow. In India, through Ġālib, who had the important historical function of making the Indian style accessible and popular through its perfectionment — we arrived at some superb artistic achievements such as the best productions of an Iqbāl or of some significant contemporary poet such Faiż A. Faiż.<sup>5)</sup> On him (as more or less on all modern urdu poets) Ġālib's influence has been very great. The titles of his two collections of poems are one hundred percent ġālibian: *Naqš-i Firiyādī* ("The Design of the Complainant") and *Dast-i Šabā* (the Hand of

<sup>1)</sup> This is another instance of what I said in note 2, p. 106. If we read the philosophers of such an apparently arid epoch as the islamic XVII—XIX cc. we get an impression of the immutable fixity of a more or less "medieval" world. But a study of the changes in style, and also in the ideas expressed by poetry could probably show us that the "personalistic revolution" which in Europe marked the beginnings of the post-medieval Renaissance did happen, though in different terms, also in the Eastern countries. There is no greater mistake than that of repeating the often heard slogan of the "changelessness" and monotony of Muslim or generally of Oriental thought.

<sup>2)</sup> F. A. FAIŻ. *Naqš-i Firiyādī*. Lahore, 1945 pp. 10—11.

<sup>3)</sup> This also explains why the critical judgements given in the traditional *tazkira's* appears so insignificant to our eyes.

<sup>4)</sup> P. I'tiṣāmi (d. 1941) is by some Persians considered the greatest contemporary poet of Iran, a judgement in my opinion rather exaggerated. See on her a succinet study by an Indian critic (Munibur RAHMAN. *Post-revolution Persian verse*. Aligarh, 1955 pp. 73—85).

<sup>5)</sup> Former editor of the important English newspaper of Karachi, *Pakistan Times*. Tendencially leftist, he was imprisoned in 1949 under the charge of having

the Zephyr).<sup>1)</sup> Even a cursory glance at them (taken simply as an instance of a certain kind of contemporary Urdu poetry) shows how many ġālibian stylistic materials are contained in them, and at the same time, in which sense Ġālib's style has been also an appropriate channel and preparation for the peaceful introduction of the best of modern Western style into contemporary Urdu poetry, without those revolutionary shocks which generally accompany the breaking of a tradition. In Faiż we see:

"in my silences trembles the lost voice of my sighs" (*Naqş*, p. 22): "to hide into the laments pieces of cries of complaint" (ibid. 23); "the tired voice of the moon is falling asleep on the thick trees" (ibid. 40); "gleams of smiles upon the red lips are like jasmin flowers plunged into pomegranate-juice" (ibid. 50); "may Resurrections be offered in sacrifice for the gracious gesture of thy sliding foot" (ibid. 58); "the crowd of sleeping quiets of the long nights" (ibid. 59); "why put a seal on my tongue, when I created speaking languages into each link of my prisoner's-chain?" (*Dast* p. 15); "Night is descending, step by step, down the contorted stars of Evening" (ibid. 106); "the beautiful hand of the gentle moon has melted upon earth the water of the stars" (ibid. 107) or, in the very beautiful poem "Solitude" (*Tanhā'ī*, in *Naqş*, p. 79); "Night is all poured out, the dust of stars has begun to disperse, the sleeping lamps in the corridors began to stagger."

In all this the eyes of a too hasty critic, unaware of the historical developments of Perso-Urdu poetic style, would probably see no more than an influence of modern European poetry superimposed to reminiscences of the Urdu and Persian classics (but which ones? We saw that Perso-Urdu style is not a single indifferenced whole). Certainly Faiż, who knows English perfectly, did not remain free from Western influences. But what is European in him did not come revolutionarily into a stiffened classical style breaking it asunder, on the contrary it found its way to enter just through the stylistic channel already opened by Ġālib by means of a deepening and a perfecting of the classical style itself. It is easy to remark in Faiż's verses that the "path of Ġālib" was further gone over by him. A verse like the last one we quoted above would probably never have come out the pen of Ġālib. There is, in it, a precision and a loving attention and interest for every detail of action, which was unknown to the great poet of the XIX century. Verbs precisely expressing shades of action (verbs in which Urdu, differently from Persian, is very rich) are rather rare in Ġālib. Faiż says *dhal-čukī rāt* "the night is all poured out." Ġālib would have said, in all probability, simply "the night has gone away"; the modalities of the going away of the night, the emotional description of the mode of that action would have been irrelevant to him. He probably would have then compared the night to

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taken part in a military conspiracy against the Government of Pakistan. He has been released in 1955. I consider him one of the best contemporary Urdu poets. Particularly remarkable is his stylistic equilibrium, and the great skill in which he introduces "social" or "political" subjects into his poetry without breaking the delicate charm of traditional style.

<sup>1)</sup> The first is taken from the first verse in Ġālib's Urdu *Dvān*; the second is a typical image quite in the spirit of Indo-Persian tradition. My quotations are from the Lahore edition mentioned before, and, for what concerns *Dast-i Šabā* from A. A. FAIŻ. *Dast-i Šabā*. Lahore, Qaumī Dāru'l-Išā'at, 1954; (third reprint: the first edition has been published in 1952).

a folded veil etc. or, if he wanted to insist on the "pouring out" image, he would have said something as: "the wine of night has been poured out of the cup of the sky". And, still in the same poem of Faiż, there is another sequence of other precise descriptive verbs such as *bikharne lagā tāroṅ-kā gubār, larḵharāne lage . . . ḥ<sup>o</sup>ābīde čirāg*, where *bikharna* (to be scattered) and *larḵharānā* (to reel or stagger) are good and solid popular Urdu verbs expressing accurately details of actions. Not to speak of the expression of psychological realities, more congruous and now totally freed from the cold *nukta-jū'ī* applied by the great classical masters (and partly, as we saw, by Ġālib himself) also to the analysis of their emotions. The fact however remains that the influence of Ġālib's style, and I dare say perhaps precisely of the alleged older and more bedilian Ġālib's style, was the most important element in preparing Urdu poetry to the well balanced acceptance of the modern Western mechanics of imagery.

That *na-gunjīdan* (not to be contained) by the cosmos and by the normal forms of classical poetry, which for a Bedil or a Ġālib still had a metaphysical and a gnostic value, has been, stylistically, the beginning of a cleavage and of a reconstruction, which they probably had not foreseen, but certainly had prepared.

N. B. In an appendix to this paper, which I hope to publish as soon as possible, I shall study the position of Ġālib in the history of *Persian* poetical style of India, and at the same time the philosophical and religious background of his poetical art.

#### ADDENDA ET EMENDANDA

p. 99; note 2. The reader can now consult also: A. BAUSANI. *Storia delle Letterature del Pakistan*. Milano, 1958. A. BAUSANI. *Contributo a una definizione dello "stile indiano" nella poesia persiana*, in "Ann. dell'Ist. Univ. Orientale di Napoli" N.S. vol. VII (1958) pp. 167ff. Amongst the various commentaries of Ġālib's *Divān* I found the following particularly useful, as it includes the gist of the works of earlier commentators: Āgā Muḥammad BĀQIR. *Bayān-i Ġālib*. Lahore, 1946.

p. 108; line 36ff. The expression *tāq-i nisyān* is present also in the classical Persian poetry with the sense of "vaulted corbel or bracket in a wall on which things are put and then forgot".

p. 115, line 34ff. A better interpretation of the verse is: "If (my) Sigh has not been a Path to the station of Abstinence, there is nothing to do, (because) my heart is a thoroughfare of images of Wine and Cups", i.e. I am a *rind* (libertine) by birth, by nature.

p. 115; line 40ff. *Nazar-men hai* can also be interpreted as: "I have always in sight, I did not forget". I.e. "The Path to Annihilation is always present to my eyes..."

p. 116; line 9ff. According to a better interpretation: "Even the footpath of the Garden, as a result of the life-power of Spring, becomes the wick of the Tulip's scar (similar to a Lamp)"!

p. 117; line 4ff. Another possible interpretation: "In order to avoid the shame of being laughed at by my friends, I stop rending my garment in the

frenzy of Folly. In this way, the laughter of my friends has become a suture to my (otherwise rent) garment!" The formal link between "laughter" and "suture" is probably given by the (linear) "row of teeth" of the laughing friends. (Ṭabāṭa-bā'i, quoted by Bāqir, op. cit. p. 275).

p. 118; line 1 ff. The connection between the first and second *miṣrā's* is given by the fact that the eyelashes are imagined as the instruments that engrave the name of the Beloved on the drops of blood (ruby ring-stones). The image is further complicated by the idea that things collected in a "depository" should have a seal with the name of their owner.

p. 118; line 25 ff. Another element of this play of images is: "The *ḥinnā* does not remain on the feet more than a few days. Similarly Spring soon disappears, leaving no more than regret".

p. 120; line 16 ff. The two *miṣrā's* could also be connected by a "though". "Passion complains for narrowness of space in the heart, *though* the Heart is like unto a Pearl, in which even the restlessness of an Ocean can be dissolved and annihilated." It is well known that according to old Greek and Muslim beliefs the Pearl is no more than a hardened drop of water.