

Makers of Indian Literature

**MIR ANIS**

**ALI JAWAD ZAIDI**

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi,



**Sahitya Akademi**

**SAHITYA AKADEMI**

Rabindra Bhavan, 35, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 110001

Block V-B, Rabindra Sarobar Stadium, Calcutta 700 029

29, Eldams Road, Teynampet, Madras 600 018

172, Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400 014



© Sahitya Akademi

First Published 1986

Cloth bound  
Popular

Rs. 10  
Rs. 5

Published by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi  
and printed at Sanjay Printers, Delhi 110 032.

## To Mir Anis

*Thou, greatest Eastern poet, sooner or later,  
E'en Europe must acknowledge thee as such:  
If not, then the greatest of the great,  
Prophetic bards of Urdu language: much  
May one speak of the most skilful touch  
Of the great brush. Thee many imitate,  
Thy glorious Urdu is but double Dutch;  
For those who know not Urdu, that's their state.  
But now when I some samples of thy speech  
And thought, have into my bad English done;  
So that, it may the English knowers reach,  
Thus veiled and clouded, thou art yet a sun  
Of dazzling light and splendour, thou shouldst teach  
The world to look at thee as a great one.*

AMEER ALI MA'SOOMI  
(Of Iran)

## Preface

ANIS, AN outstanding artist, ranks among the greatest in the galaxy of Urdu poets, despite the severe handicap of the basically elegiac theme that he chose. His greatness, however, does not rest with his adoption of a rarely practised verse form, the *marthia*. He excels his tribe in that he set in motion a new and virile trend of deviation and experimentation which created a lasting impact and permeated other poetic forms as well. He employed various artistic devices to overcome the restrictive influence of tradition in the field. He broadened the creative outlook and branched off into divergent directions, thereby conferring on the *marthia* a literary respectability, while still retaining a sort of folk flavour and religious base. Above all, it acquired some epic dimensions too.

The poet had undoubtedly inherited a few new traits and patterns from his trio-predecessors—Khaliq, Zamir and Fasih—but the finally evolved form bore his stamp and, to a lesser extent, his rival Dabir's. It was, however, Anis who dominated the scene. His personality encouraged his contemporaries and successors alike to further vary and expand the experiment. His style of expression was marked by dignity, clarity, feeling and moral fervour and it was later pressed into service by a new generation of poets to propagate socially, culturally and even politically meaningful concepts and values on an ever enlarging canvas. One can hear the echoes of his poetic modulations in Hāli, Chakbast, Josh and even in the earlier phases of Iqbal. Viewed against this background a study of his works in depth assumes significance both for an understanding of the development of the *marthia* form and the widening horizons of Urdu poetry in general.

A good deal has been written about Anis and his art but a

lot more deserves to be done. From the first major work, *Mowazena-i-Anis-o-Dabir* by Allāmā Shhibli No'mani, down to the latest works, few really critical studies have been attempted. These have thrown up a lot of unexplored material which calls for shifting. The celebration of the birth centenary of Anīs throughout the sub-continent has produced scores of books and research papers and the process is still on.

A special difficulty one encounters while introducing Anīs to English readers is the complexity of the poetic form he adopted. The term *marthia* has no exact parallel in any European language. The elegy comes nearest to it but the panegyric, epic, didactic, lyric and dramatic elements acquired by it over the last two centuries have given to it an identity easily distinguishable from the elegy. Some writers have been at pains to discover similarities they believe it to share with the epic or the elegy or the tragedy and in attempting this have made the confusion all the worse. A compromise has been suggested by calling it an elegiac epic. Undeniably, the *marthia* has some elements of both, but it is a little more than this. It would be wiser to discover first the basic elements of this Urdu form and then to look for any similarities with and differences from other established forms of poetry.

Its ancestry can be traced directly to Arabic and Persian but in its totality the Urdu *marthia* stands removed from most of its ancestral traits and can well claim to be an essentially Indo-Pak form of Urdu verse. The Arabic *marthia* was a short poem lamenting the loss of a personal friend or the death of a tribal hero in war. The Arab was a devoted lover and took pride in laying down his life for the sake of his beloved. In the desert's desolation love was the pivot on which revolved the Arab's whole life. Jealousy and war; friendship, treaty and submission; adventure, music and poetry; the tribal courtesies and rivalries—all these often sprang from the same motivation. When the cruel hand of fate or death separated two loving souls, their grief was unbounded. The whole atmosphere plunged into mourning (*ritha*) from which the term *marthia* is derived. It is in this respect that it merges with the elegy which, in turn, is traceable to the dirges and threnody. So the similarities between the Arabic *marthia* and elegy are easily discernible but such is not the case with Urdu. In the succeeding pages an attempt has been made

to delineate some of the main features of this rather unconventional form.

The reader need be told at the very outset that the Urdu *marthia* has been associated mainly with the martyrdom of Imām Husain (grandson of Prophet Mohammad) and his small band of seventy-two or so at Karbala (Iraq) in 60 AH/679 A.D. These heroes fought an equal fight, defied the terror and ferocity of several divisions of the fully equipped army of the Syrian ruler Yazīd, and resolutely refused to bow to what they considered to be evil, cheerfully accosting death. The story of this struggle has a visibly religious colour. However, the Arabian story as told by Anīs has a universality of approach and remains refreshingly close to the surroundings with which his Indian listeners are familiar.

The spiritual content of the *marthias* of Anīs does not overshadow its great literary qualities and as such, need not worry the critic. Religion has inspired great poetry in all the world languages and has given us the mighty classics. So great has been the influence of religious literature that in many instances it attained the status of the revealed word. At the same time, many a work of art has often suffered neglect precisely on account of its religious motivation. It must be conceded that all that has been written on religious initiative has not been of a high order and part of it is decidedly below standard but with its sheer volume and the compelling devotion that brought it about, this mass of writing is noteworthy for its social, historical and linguistic value and for the information it contains about the evolution of the various literary forms adopted by writers on a spiritual theme. The modern critic, removed as he is from the social and cultural scene in which the Urdu *marthia* matured is apt to overlook the various processes of its growth. A plea for rethinking and reassessment will not be out of place. It is to fill up this gap that an explanation of the structural and conceptual aspects of the *marthia* has been offered while discussing the art of Anīs and the *marthia* form.

Anīs is not easy to manage in English translation, for he prefers the language of the common idiom with an unmatched elegance and purity of diction with occasional elaboration and ornamentation—a blend and balance difficult to transmit from one language to another. It would have taken me much longer

had not Professor Ahmad Ali and Dr. S.M. Ameer Imām favoured me with their translations. Maharajkumar Mohammad Ameer Haider Khān made available to me some old issues of the *Muslim Review*, which carried a few pieces translated by an Iranian scholar, Ameer Ali Ma'soomi who once belonged to the Lucknow University. I am thankful to them all.

ALI JAWAD ZAIDI

## Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	7
1	Historical Background	13
2	Life	33
3	Character	57
4	Conclusion	90
5	Gleanings from a <i>Marthia</i>	91
	<i>Bibliography</i>	108

# 1

## Historical Background

WHEN ANIS appeared on the literary scene, India was passing through a period of unprecedented political upheavals. It saw the transformation of the social and economic order, the disruption of the central authority in Delhi by a succession of foreign invasions, internecine wars, provincial governors raising the banner of independence, the British colonialists tightening their stranglehold on large parts of India through intrigues and localised battles, and bands of adventurers overrunning the citadel. Northern India lay ruined and devastated. People shivered in fear of the tyrannical conditions of insecurity. After the death of Aurangzeb (1707), Delhi knew no stability and there was a regular exodus of poets and artists to the principalities of Rampur and Farrukhabad and later to Faizabad and Lucknow. If luck did not favour them at these centres, they moved farther east to Azimabad (Patna) and Murshidabad. The biggest haven was Avadh (Oudh) with its capital at Faizabad which later shifted to Lucknow. Anis's family itself migrated to Faizabad in Shujaudaula's time. The machinations of the British became uglier from Asafuddaula's time, and the authority of the Nawabs was progressively eroded, their territories shrank and revenues declined. Day to day administration was interfered with, to the annoyance of the rulers, and made the life of the people more miserable.

As the once mighty Mughal empire tottered, the Nawab of Avadh was crowned king only to demonstrate that even the symbolic national authority had collapsed. Bahādur Shāh Zafar at Delhi and Wājid Ali Shah at Lukncow were mere figureheads

and the failure of the revolt of 1857 finally destroyed whatever was left of Indian sovereignty. Blood flowed freely in the streets of Lucknow, Delhi and many other parts of India and cities and towns were overrun, as the old order faded out. Anis himself and his predecessors were eye witnesses to this tragic transition. They could perceive the utter helplessness and ineffectualness of the Indians to save their sovereignty and freedom. Despondency and gloom filled the atmosphere. Some of the symbols and imagery popular with the poets were the *bulbul* in captivity, the captor, the throttled cries of the captured, and the cage. These poets could foresee that the strong winds of change threatened to sweep away much of what society held dear.

Anis lived through the reigns of six rulers<sup>1</sup> from Sa'adat Ali Khan to Wajid Ali Shah, whose deposition, exilment and arrest became preludes to the revolt of 1857. He was painfully aware of the overwhelming exploitation and harassment of all the rulers and the reign of terror that was let loose on the people of Lucknow, Delhi and other places in northern India in 1857. He was emotionally involved in the distressing events. His own house and Imambara in the Sitehti sector and hundreds of houses of his friends and relations were razed to the ground. Thousands lost their properties and lives. Anis himself had to flee Lucknow and seek shelter in Kakori to escape the fate of those men of status who remained in the capital. The past, swallowed by time, often stirred his soul, for he knew that the glory was never to return. British censorship was so severe that free expression was impossible to think of. Tyranny and exploitation stalked the land. One can hardly conceive of a situation more congenial to the development of the elegiac and epic form of *marthia*, with its devotional strain and message of struggle and sacrifice. In northern India it made its appearance first in Delhi from the time of Farrukh Siyar and later moved on to Farrukhabad and Lucknow, giving tongue to the anguished and bewildered soul of the troubled times. As local authority weakened and foreign powers started asserting their superiority, the *marthia* gradually started putting up an epic form as well. It

1, Sa'adat Ali Khan (1798-1814); Ghaziuddin Hyder (1814-1827); Nasiruddin Hyder (1827-1837); Mohammad Ali Shah (1837-1845); Amjad Ali Shah (1842-1847); and Wajid Ali Shah (1847-1856).

glorified bravery and lauded sacrifice for a high ideal and indirectly spurred a subjugated people to fight back, unmindful of the heavy odds. The essentially religious theme of the *marthia* imparted to it the emotional impact of a patriotic poem as well.

Here are two *ruba'is* of Anis alluding to the agonising political changes, particularly in the post-1854 period:

*Kyonkar dil-i-ghamzadah na faryad kare  
Jab mulk ko yun ghanim barbād kare.  
Mango ye' du'a ki phir khdawand-i-karim  
Ujri hui mamlekat ko abād kare.*

*Afsos jahān se dost kyā kyā na gaye!  
Is bāgh se kyā kyā gul-i-Ra'nā na gaye!  
Thā kaunsā nakhl jis ne dehi na khezān!  
Woh kaun se gul khile jo murjhā na gaye!*

How will the afflicted heart not cry out  
When the enemy destroys the country so (mercilessly)?  
Let us pray to Almighty, munificent that  
He revive the Kingdom thus ransacked.

Alas! What friends departed from the world,  
What beautiful flowers were thrown out of the garden,  
What tree there was whom autumn did not visit!  
What flower there was that did not wither!

#### *The Marthia*

It would be useful to have a closer look at the *marthia* at the very outset. The Arabic term *Marthia* is usually translated as a song of lamentation, recalling to mind the dirge or the praise of the departed and the *nenia* chanted in the Roman funeral processions to the accompaniment of flutes. Originally sung by the members of the bereaved family, it was later taken over by professional hired women and turned tame and insipid. Funeral orations became more respectable and genteel. The dirges in later literatures are "simple, mournful lyrics with folk song qualities".

The elegy, another form bearing resemblance to *marthia*, is

more formal and elaborate as in Tennyson's "In Memoriam", or Milton's "Lycidas". The convention grew of referring to the departed as a shepherd, to pagan mythology or to all the earth mourning (even though, as in Milton's case, the person may have died at sea). As a poetic form, it is neither profound nor exceptionally imaginative or subtle but to borrow the words of a critic, it expresses with "consummate dignity and facility the thoughts and feelings common to humanity in the presence of death and its monuments". The *marthia* too is a poem of "pensive melancholy" like the elegy, but it has acquired many additional characteristics in the course of its long evolution and journey as a patently Indian form.

The epic resistance of Husain and his followers at Karbala was motivated by lofty ideals and their sacrifice remains an unsurpassable act of courage and defiance. This drama-packed content of the *marthia* gave it a touch of tragedy as well. The later *marthia* writers seem to have been conscious of it when they used elegant language to highlight the clash of good and evil and made full use of pathos, suspense and action to create a lasting emotional impact and catharsis.

These ramifications of form did not exhaust it. From Miskin and Saudā to Zamir, Fasih, Dilgir and Khaliq, newer elements continued creeping into it during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This happened not only without any contact with the Western forms alluded to above, but with no more than a remote knowledge of the existing material in other Indian languages. In addition to the basically elegiac aspects, it had borrowed the lyric, the panegyric and the didactic moods and the narrative trends of the *qasīda* (panegyric) and the *mathnavi* (typical long narrative). It was also marked by the folk nature of the lamentations and the reverential reference to the lofty cause which formed the central theme. Despite the tragic and the loud lamentational note, its principal message to the listeners has always been to pursue higher moral values. The present form of the *marthia* was created through various evolutionary stages in several decades and was finally perfected by Anis.

To comprehend these stages fully, one must revert to the Arabic and Persian *marthia*. It was mostly personal, as already stated in the Introduction, but one does come across *marthias* written about the tragedy of Karbala in these two languages

also. These seldom rise above the elegiac level and meet the fate of the elegy in other languages. The Urdu *marthia*, on the other hand, has shown great dynamism and has gone even beyond the point at which Anis had left it. The reason is not far to seek. While Arabic and Persian *marthias* remained tied to a rigid tradition, Urdu *marthia* freed itself from the suffocating limitation of custom, lore and orthodoxy. Once the barrier was crossed, the poets of later generations felt free to treat the great tragedy in myriad forms.

The story of Karbala has moved writers and poets alike through the centuries. Several *maqtals* and *shahādat nāmahs* in prose and *marthias*, *salāms* and *nauhās* or other folk forms like *zāri* in poetry, were written for recitation before mourning assemblies, specially during the first ten days of the lunar (*hijra*) month of Moharram to commemorate the tragedy. Muslims of all times, climes and persuasions have composed *marthias*. In fact, here Hindus have also joined the chorus. India and Urdu are no exception to this. The moving theme cut across denominational distinctions. Nevertheless, there does exist a misconception that the growth of the *marthia* is directly related to "the ascendancy of the kingdom of Oudh, several of whose rulers were zealous Shi'ites and therefore enthusiastic patrons of it".<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in the Deccan the use of this genre on a wide scale at a particular point of history is attributed to the existence of Shi'ite kingdoms at Golkunda and Bijapur. It is but half the truth. Only the naive would deny that the existence of Shi'ite regimes offered an added incentive but there the fact ends and fiction takes over. How could it be explained, for instance, that the heyday of the Lucknow *marthias* was the period of the dynasty's decline, even extinction? A critic like Mohammad Sadiq also, who shares that notion is intrigued by the fact that most of the Deccani *marthias* belonged to the times of Vali or therearound, although both the Deccani kingdoms had been Shi'ite from their commencement.<sup>3</sup> There again; it has not been the product of the ascendant times. The anomaly is too persistent to be wished away by taking refuge to the assumption that there must have been *marthias* before. The same writer, while taking a backward look, has

2. *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 145.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 146.





It shan't take long; I too am weary of life;  
Go on, my son, I shall follow thee anon! ”<sup>6</sup>

When Anis started writing, the structural form of *musaddas* (a stanza of six lines, the last two lines rhyming differently from the first four—*a a a a b b*) had been finally and almost irrevocably adopted for the *marthia*. There was no restriction on the use of metre but in practice not more than six metres have been used. The quartet, once popular in the Deccan and Delhi disappeared altogether.

The *marthia* had already begun gaining in size at the time of Miskin, but it took some decades for it to reach the length of around 250 stanzas of six lines each. Not in size alone does it seem to have been influenced by local religious epics. Tulsī Das's *Rām Charit Mānas* and other Avadhi classics must have also fascinated our elegiasts. Anis, in particular, is very fond of local colour and he uses it with consummate skill. Thus, an Arab story reads like an Indian story and yet remains faithful to the Arab origin in essentials. It has been a delicate job indeed. The *marthia* in Urdu is Indian in approach and treatment only.

The final structure of the *marthia* as Anis practised it had the following components:

- Chehrā* : The introductory stanzas, usually in praise of God and the Prophet; invocation; description of nature or glorification of the poet's art
- Mājrā* : (Metabasis) the few lines immediately following the *chehra*, allude to the coming changes in the subject matter of the *marthia* proper
- Sarāpā* : (Description of the physical charm of the hero). It follows the *nakh-sikh varnan* style of Indian poetry in general. Each part of the body from head to foot is described
- Rukhsat* : (Leave taking) The hero takes leave of his nearest relations and finally of Imam Husain to proceed to the battlefield
- Āmad* : (Arrival) Arrival of the hero on the battlefield

6. Translated by Maharaj Kumar Mohammad Ameer Haider Khan of Mahmoodābād.

- Rajaz* : (Martial bravado in poem, where the hero describes his great lineage, the exploits of his elders in war and his own prowess and skill in the martial art to instil fear in the heart of his adversary)
- Jang* : (Battle) It usually forms a substantial part of the *marthia*. The description of the battle includes praises of the sword and the steed and the description of the actual combat
- Shahādat* : (Martyrdom) Supreme sacrifice of the hero
- Bain* : (Lamentation of the relations, especially the crying of women and children when the corpse is brought from the field)

All parts, except the *majra* are regarded as essential ingredients of the developed form of the Urdu *marthia*. The *majra* occurs only in the works of a few writers and is otherwise also not so important as to warrant separate mention. Again, these parts are found only in the *tahtul lafz* or the larger *marthias*. The *marthias* written for *Soze-Khwāni* are not only short but are usually without *sarāpā*, *jang* and *rajaz*. *Chehrā* too is not essential. Some *marthias* begin directly with lamentation.

The general pattern of the story is that each martyr in the small group of followers who had clung to Husain until death parted them fought, individual combats against chosen opponents from the enemy's army of several thousands. The relations of the hero take leave of the ladies of the house, the other elders and finally, the leader, and then set out for battle. The companions take leave only of Imam Hasan. Though hungry and thirsty for three days, they put up a fierce fight. On reaching the battle field, they recite the *rajaz* to expose the evil nature of the war thrust on them and call upon the enemy to see reason and abandon hostility. An experienced enemy warrior comes forward and throws the challenge. In single combat, the hero usually wins, but he is then attacked collectively. When fatally wounded, he calls out for the leader. Husain goes to give his last blessings and carry the body from the field. The companions and relations offer condolences and the ladies wail and lament. In the battle scene the speed of the steed and the sharpness and effectiveness of the sword are described in great

poetic detail. The chicken heartedness of the mercenary army of Yazid is also brought out.

While every martyr commanded equal respect, Anis has his own favourites. They are:

'Aun and Mohammad, the two sons of Zainab, Husain's sister, aged hardly between nine and eleven years, who put up a great fight. Their moving story is told in several *marthias*.

'Ali Akbar, the eighteen-year old son of Husain, who fought extremely bravely. Both Zainab and Imām Husain loved him greatly. He resembled Prophet Mohammad.

The newly-wed Qāsim, thirteen-year old son of Imām Hasan. It is in the *marthias* on his martyrdom that the Indian atmosphere of marriage and widowhood prevails. The solemnisation of the marriage itself is not above controversy.

'Abbās, Husain's stepbrother and the standard bearer of his army, a devoted brother and a great warrior;

Hūr, a commander of Yazid's army who got converted to Husain's righteous cause, left Yazid's army and was the first to go to the battlefield and become a martyr.

*Marthias* often refer to Yazid's army commander 'Umar bin Sa'd and some of his well-known warriors. Quite a few of them were humbled in single combats. Others appear as symbols of unrelieved tyranny. After the martyrdom of Husain, all the children and women and the sole male survivor, Imām Zain-ul-'Abidin or Sajjād, the eldest son of Husain, were taken prisoner and lodged in a Damascus prison. The severed heads of Husain and his supporters after they were slain were displayed by Yazid's army on spear heads to strike terror. But this foregone victory for Yazid was shortlived. Not long after, forces of revolution sprang up, ultimately putting an end to the rule of the dynasty. The Urdu *marthia* revolves round this story. Though repetitive, elegiac in character, and bounded by rigid tradition, it was converted into a forceful form of poetry by the dexterity with which Anis, his family, contemporaries and successors treated it. In recent years, a group of *marthia* writers have come up with new ideas and the structural basis has undergone several changes. It shows that the form is still relevant and responsive to the demands of a fast-changing world.

The well-known orientalist and linguist, T. Grahame Bailey

had sufficient justification for his assertion that "there is nothing so admirable in Urdu literature as the *marthia*" and for referring to it as "the highest form of Urdu poetry".<sup>7</sup> The writing of epics with elegiac and dramatic elements in a highly refined and elegant style in an age which had cultivated a taste exclusively for the lyric, and the re-telling of a fourteen hundred year old story with which the commonest listener is already familiar without sacrificing freshness, constitutes the admirable elements Grahame Bailey speaks about. The credit of this goes largely to Anis and his celebrated family, who took care to include a lyrical touch to give it a contemporaneity as well. Effervescent, elegant and grand, it remains the most original and unconventional form in Urdu.

Dr. Mohammad Sadiq who has been an unsparing critic of the *marthia* too admits that its "contribution to poetry also has been considerable . . . . The *marthia* writers have widened the scope of Urdu poetry, and consequently that of Urdu language; they have given it polish, vigour and elasticity. No less have they enriched the style. They are the first to add rhetoric to poetry. Here they have exerted a deep influence on the course of Urdu poetry."<sup>8</sup>

#### *Family*

Few families can boast of such a long line of literary eminence as Anis's. Six generations before him, Mir Imām Moosāvi migrated from Herat to Delhi during reign of the Mughal Emperor Shahjehan (1627—1658). He was an erudite scholar, a theologian and a renowned calligraphist who could write in seven styles. Occasionally, he wrote poetry too. The munificent Emperor honoured him with a title to 3,000 Zat. His son and grandson, Baratullah<sup>9</sup> and Azizullah respectively, also were scholars.

7. T. Grahame Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Association Press, Calcutta, 1932): 61.

8. Mohammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Oxford University Press, London, 1964): 154-55.

9. In most printed versions of the *Kulliyat* (collection of poems) and *Tazkirah-i-Sho'ara-i-Urdu* the name is mentioned as Baratullah but Akbar Hydari has discovered the earliest manuscript of the *Tazkirah* which he thinks is probably in Mir Hasan's own hand,

*Zāhik*

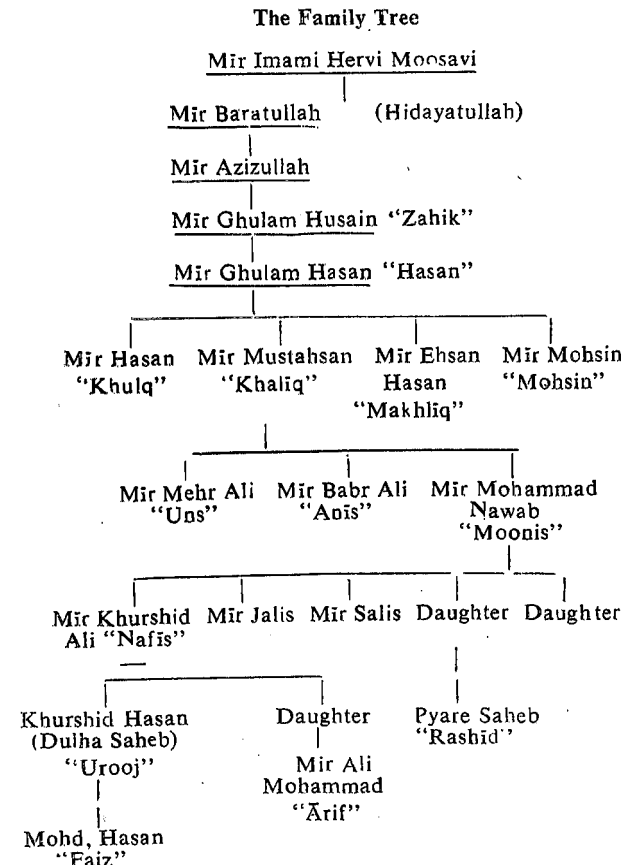
Moosāvi's great grandson, Mir Ghulam Husain "Zāhik," a mystic by temperament and a humourist and satirist by choice, was known for a rather unusual combination of scholarship and knowledge of music. He could set *marthias* to elegiac musical tunes. On his mother's side, his lineage traces back to the famous Deccani scholar-saint, Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz. His mystic predilections and his religious poetry are twin influences attributable as much to paternal inheritance as to his maternal lineage. Zāhik has written both in Persian and Urdu and is, perhaps, the first *marthia* writer in the family. The existence of his Divan (collection of poems) doggedly denied for long, was at last established by its discovery in the obscure archives of Betia State (Bihar). Apart from humour and satire, it comprises *salāms* (an allied form of the *marthia*) and a few pieces which can be termed as *marthias*.<sup>10</sup> There are also some *ghazals* and *qasidas*. He lives in the history of Urdu literature mostly for his satirical bouts he had with his contemporary, Mirza Rafi "Saudā". With no holds barred, these satires often degenerated into vulgar lampoons and obscenity and both earned notoriety for it. Ultimately, friends intervened to arrange a truce. But we are not concerned with Zāhik, the satirist. The mystic and the devout within him surfaced in his *marthias*, *salāms* and *ghazals*. Again, it is not because of the poetic worth of his works that he would merit mention by literary historians, but because of the contribution, he and his family made to the development of Urdu *marthia* and the *salām*.

By the time he appeared on the scene, the Urdu *marthia* had already won recognition as a literary form. Its adoption by Saudā and Mir Taqi "Mir," the two celebrities, had swelled the ranks of those who tried their hand at this up and coming form. Zāhik, who wrote *marthias* and *salāms* under his full name Ghulam Husain or Ghulam, was not as prolific as

where the name is mentioned as Hidāyatullah. The same name has been adopted by Agha Ashhari in his *Hazrat-i-Rasheed* p. 46 (1923). In view of the peculiarity of the name Baratullah Hidāyatullah seems to be preferable.

10. Prof. Masud Hasan Rizvi calls them *Nauhas*.

"Sauda" and "Mir" and, in no case, as masterly. But he headed a family of great *marthia*-writers, who blazed a new trail.



A glance at the family tree of Zāhik convinces one of the sustained flowering of talent and blossoming forth of the boary traditions of learning.

This family of Herāti Syeds<sup>11</sup> moved from Delhi to

11. "Hasan" has referred to the head of his family as "Moosāvi", which in common parlance would mean a descendant of the seventh Imām, Moosi Kāzim but later family members added the suffix "Razavi" to their name which would imply descent from the eighth Imām, Hazrat Raza.

Faizabad<sup>12</sup> at the time of Shuja'ud-daulah, the Subedar of Avadh<sup>13</sup> and Nawab Wazir<sup>14</sup> of the Mughal Empire (1753—1775) as it was struggling helplessly to recover from the fatal blow of foreign invasions. Driven by this state of chaos, most scholars, artists, reputed families and even artisans sought refuge in Lucknow, Faizabad, Farrukhabad, Azimabad, Murshidabad or Hyderabad. Zāhik did likewise, though it cannot be said with precision when he moved out of Delhi. Some chroniclers have recorded that his son, Mir Hasan was twelve when he left Delhi with his father. They stopped *en route* at Deig and Makanpur before landing in Lucknow, where luck does not seem to have favoured them much.

They were obliged to migrate to Faizabad, one surmises, around 1755. Zāhik never sought employment. In Delhi also he had led a carefree life. He died, according to a family source<sup>15</sup>, in 1196 AH/1782 AD at Faizabad where he lies buried. His son, Mir Hasan was too adventurous, stylish and talented for his young age. He managed to gain admittance to the court of Nawāb Sālār Jung and served as a courtier to the Nawab's young son, Nawāzish Ali Khan Sardār Jung.<sup>16</sup> The rest of the family which had stayed behind in Delhi joined them when they got settled in Faizabad. When Asafuddaulah shifted the capital to Lucknow,<sup>17</sup> Sālār Jang and his son also followed suit, bringing with them Zāhik and Mir Hasan. They continued visiting Faizabad off and on to meet the rest of their family who had stayed behind. Possibly one of the nobles, Nawab Nazir Jawahir Ali Khan patronised the family while it remained there.

12. The founder of the Avadh dynasty, Burhanul Mulk, built a temporary capital near Ayodhya (UP) which came to be known as Bangla. Safdarjung, his heir, expanded and developed it, christening it Faizabad. At the time we are talking of, the capital of Avadh was Faizabad.

13. Also spelt as Oudh.

14. Nawāb Wazir or Wazir-ul-Mama was the Prime Minister. The Avadh Subedars retained that title until Ghāziuddin Hyder assumed kingship.

15. *As lafi Mir Anis*: 34

16. *Tazkīra-i-Sho'ara-i-Urdu*: 85.

17. 1775 AD.

*Mir Hasan*

Mir Ghulam Hasan "Hasan" was the most outstanding figure in the family and Anis is deeply indebted to his grandfather for the rich literary traditions he inherited from him. Hasan, therefore, deserves separate mention. He was born in Delhi near the Bhojali mosque in the Syedwārā sector of the walled city, a little before 1728. His exact date of birth is difficult to determine,<sup>18</sup> but it is safe to presume that he was born around 1140-42 AH/1727-29. He got his early education at home in Delhi and completed it in Faizabad. He was well versed in Persian but knew only a little of Arabic. Urdu, his mother tongue, was his main medium of literary expression. He started versifying while still a child and could compose poems when he was hardly ten. In the beginning he presented his compositions for correction to his father until he came into contact with a well-known poet Ziauddin "Zia" and became his pupil. But Zia's style did not appeal to his mobile mind and he gave up. Independently he studied "Dard", "Saudā" and "Mir" and imbibed what he considered best in their respective styles. He died in Lucknow on Mubarram 1, 1201 AH/October 24, 1786 AD, and was buried behind Nawab Qasim Ali Khan's garden in the Muftiganj sector of Lucknow. He left behind three sons, Mir Mustahsan "Khaliq" Mir Ehsān Hasan "Makhlooq" and Mir Ahsan "Khulq" all of whom made their names in *marthia* writing. According to "Afsōs", he had four<sup>19</sup> sons.

Mir Hasan remains unrivalled as a *mathnavi* writer in Urdu. Indeed, he is the family's first literary giant. His masterpiece, *Sehrul Bavan*, is an example of superb craftsmanship and creative excellence. He has written a number of other *mathnavis*, a whole compilation of *ghazals*. Famous among the other

18. Ashhari puts it at 1140 AH (*Hayat-i-Anis*: 10); Waheed Qureshi at about 1154 AH (*Mir Hasan aur Unkā Zamānā*: 190-2). It is difficult to accept Waheed Qureshi's assumption because the contemporary evidence of Mushafi tells us that he was over sixty at the time of his death; Ashhari seems to be nearer the truth.

19. Masud Hasan Rizavi "Adib" thinks that "Afsos" has confused "Mohsin" with "Makhlooq" But "Afsos" speaks of four sons and Mir Mohsin "Mohsin" may be the fourth. Shah Kamal also mentions Mohsin as Hasan's son (*Majama-ul-Intekhāb*).

*mathnavis*, or longer narrative poems, are *Gulzār-i-Eram*, *Rumuz-ul-Arefin* and *Qasre Jawānir*. He has written a few *marthiās* also at the behest of his benefactors Sālār Jung and Sardār Jang, particularly the former who set them to elegiac tunes for the benefit of *marthia* singers. Hasan's *Tazkirah* of Urdu poets, written in chaste Persian, is a scholarly and largely dependable reference work.

### *Khaliq*

After Hasan's death, the family lingered on in Faizabad, 'deprived of the handsome income from his fame, and burdened with responsibilities'. Khalīq and his brother, Makhlooq, retained some connection with the court of Mirza Mohammed Taqī "Taraqqi" the son-in-law of Bahū Begum, the Queen Mother, and Mir "Khulq" played courtier to Darab Ali Khan. But it was only a subsistence allowance which Khaliq could manage to secure. According to Maulānā Mohammed Hussain "Azād", he began on a paltry allowance of Rs. 15 a month<sup>20</sup>. The abandoned capital was fast decaying and the flight of the local nobility to Lucknow was on the increase. Khaliq made it a practice to go out to the new capital every year in the hope of making a little extra income by reciting *marthias* or writing *ghazals* for beginners on a token payment. During these visits, he stayed at the modest locality of Pir Bukhārā and was often accompanied by one of his sons, Mūnis or Anis. On each recitation tour, he was able to save three to four hundred rupees. The statement of Nawab Nasir Husain "Kheyāl", quoted by many other sources, that he was employed at the department for the compilation of Urdu proverbs and technical terms at Faizabad, is unfounded. Such a department simply did not exist.

At one stage Khaliq is reported to have worked as Rajā Tikait Rāi's tutor in Lucknow. The somewhat better prospects in the new seat of the Avadh kingdom<sup>21</sup> must have prompted Khaliq to finally give up Faizabad. He left for Lucknow in the days of King Amjad Ali Shah (1842—1847). Khaliq's grandson, "Nafis", and his two sisters were born while the family was still

20. *Ab-i-Hayat*: 379.

21. By that time Avadh had become a kingdom.

in Faizabad. It follows, that he took up permanent residence at Lucknow only towards the end of his life's long and arduous journey.

### *Lucknow*

When Khaliq decided to take up permanent residence at Lucknow, he was accompanied by Anis and other members of the family. He hired a house, the exact location of which cannot be fixed for want of accurate information. From a statement of "Arif",<sup>22</sup> one may infer that, perhaps, the family first settled in Sitehatti. His sons had grown up and they might have felt the need of separate houses. It is reported that in his old age, he spent some time with each son by rotation, but gave more time to Uns, whose dutiful wife looked after the ageing father-in-law well. However, he did not live long and died in 1844, the third year of Amjad Ali Shah's reign.

Although it was the third generation after the family left Delhi, it still prided itself upon its roots there. The language spoken in the house of Khaliq was standard Dehlavi and occasionally differed from the Lucknow idiom. Anis often boasted, "This is the language of my house. The gentlemen of Lucknow do not speak thus." Nāsikh is said to have advised one of his pupils once "to go to Khaliq's house if you desire to learn Urdu."<sup>23</sup> Nāsikh, however, was not the type to concede linguistic supremacy to any contemporary and one is tempted to take this statement with a pinch of salt, even though he acknowledged the distinctive features of Khaliq's language.

Like many poets of his time, Khaliq too used to sell his *ghazals* to budding poets for recitation at *mushairas* (poetic symposia). A young poet once procured *ghazal* from him and took it to Nāsikh for correction. He was quick to discover the real writer and rebuked him: 'It is certainly beyond you to write such a *ghazal*. I recognise the language. It is from the same Pir Bukhara resident'.<sup>24</sup>

Khaliq started composing poetry at the age of sixteen and showed his early writings to his father, but he wrote so pro-

22. *Waqi'at-i-Anis*: 27.

23. *Anisiyat*: 175.

24. *Ab-i-Hayat*: 380.

fusely that his father advised him to become a regular disciple of Mushafi. Perhaps, he consulted Nāsikh also. Neither Nāsikh nor Mushafi was a *marthiā* writer. We can be sure that the consultations were confined to *ghazals* and he gave it up after compiling a *divan*, which is now extinct. He retains his name in literature mainly on account of his *marthiās*. In this field, only family tradition, his own intuition or the innovations of his contemporaries, Zameer and Faseeh, were his guide.

Khaliq had established himself as a master when he came to Lucknow. Nawab Syed Mohammed Khan "Rind" and Mir Ali Ausat "Rashk" had become his pupils at Faizabad<sup>25</sup> and, though later they switched over to "Ātash" and "Nāsikh" respectively, they acknowledged the debt they owed to him. His other disciples were Nawab Husamuddin Hyder "Nāmi" and Munnu Lal "Nālān".

Once Mirza Taqi "Taraqqi" assembled a Musha'ira at his place and invited Ātash specially from Lucknow for the occasion. But when Khaliq recited the opening couplet of his *ghazal*:

*Rashk-i-Āina hai us rashk-i-qamar kā pahlū  
sāf idhar se nazar ātā hai udhar kā pahlū*

Ātash was so moved by the spontaneity of the devotional and the hyperbolic element in it that he tore up his own *ghazal*, saying, "When you had such a person here, why did you call me?"<sup>26</sup>

Although, very little of Khaliq's works has been printed, his fame as a *marthiā* writer has not dimmed over the decades. Even his worst critic dare not dismiss it as the reflected glory of Anis. Mushafi had spotted the talent in him at the tender age of fourteen and predicted that he would one day shine as a poet. While still in the comparative seclusion of Faizabad, he had matured into a skilled poet and his reputation as a *marthiā* writer had travelled as far as Farukhabad, where he was invited before 1824-25.<sup>27</sup>

25. *Khush ma' rekah-i-Zebā*: 7:309 (Edition: Mushfiq Khwaja)

26. *Aab-i-Hayaat*: 379.

27. *Guldasta-i-Isqah*: 168.

Khaliq's poetry was characterised by simplicity of language and style, the dextrous use of idiom and a moving elegiac quality. Of his *ghazals* very little remains but about 78 *salāms* and 170 *marthias* are available in the collection of Masud Hasan Rizavi, now preserved at the Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh. Akbar Hyderi claims that he has seen at least 300 *marthias* of Khaliq. At least 20 *marthias* over and above the Masud collection have been identified by him in his book *Avadh Men Urdu Marthiye ka Irtiqa*.

Khaliq usually begins his *marthias* without a formal introduction or *chehrā*. The description of the physical charm of the hero, or *sarāpā*, seldom finds place in his earlier *marthias* but later on he appears to have followed Zamir. The hero's leave taking from his dear ones and similar poignant scenes form his favourite themes to which he devotes considerable space. This element predominates in a few *marthias*. The moving scene of Husain's sister, Zaināb, bidding farewell to her two young sons ready to go to the battle field, and her recounting the exploits of their ancestors to spur their enthusiasm, are effectively told. Incidentally, this is a theme dear to Anis as well. The entry of the warriors on the battle field, their *rajuz* (epic verses) and the description of the battle which became popular with his contemporaries Fasih and Zamir, do not fascinate him, while the details of the fall of the martyrs are also only briefly touched upon. In short, he sticks to the original elegiac style and does not take to the innovations of his contemporaries with relish or eagerness. If he resorts to these devices occasionally, it is to demonstrate his ability and not his preference. Pathos was his forte, and lamentations, more loud than subdued, his ultimate goal, and these he shared with others of his tribe. What brought him acknowledgment as a master was the dextrous use of words and idiom and the depiction of the mournful moods of loving relations and friends, almost in an Indian setting.

In the autumn of his life, he had become a recluse and left the poetic field for his sons, particularly Anis, whose popularity knew no bounds. Khaliq distributed his poetic favours equally among his sons.

He died in 1844 and was buried within the pelmets of the

*Imāmbāyā* of his son near the Gomti Railway bridge.<sup>28</sup> The British razed the whole mohallā to the ground after the failure of the great nationalist uprising of 1857. At the time of his death, Khaliq was 79 or 91 of age.<sup>29</sup>

Khaliq left behind three sons—Anis, Uns and Moonis—four daughters. One of the daughters, Hurmuzi Khānam was married to the adopted son of Zamir, a contemporary *marthia* writer. The two brothers of Khaliq—Khulq and Makhloq, were also *marthia* writers, maintaining what had by now been established as a family tradition.

Not only the menfolk but even the ladies of the house had received education, a phenomenon quite rare in that period. Anis's mother was moderately educated and was fairly well acquainted with elementary theological literature. She knew enough Persian to teach *Jāme' Abbāsi*, a secondary stage book of Shia theology. She was a pious lady and never missed her daily prayers or the month long fasts of Ramzan. She was well-known to the ladies of the royal household, who respected her for her poise, piety, dress, manner of speech, intonation and purity of language. These set the royal pattern too and were considered models for ladies of taste, good breed and station. The ladies of the aristocracy were always eager to visit her and learn from her.

28. *Aslāf-i-Mir Anis*: 141. The place of burial as reported by his great grandson, Urooj is open to serious doubt, for the *Imambara* was built in 1271 AH/1854-55 vide Mufti Mohammad Abbas's Choronograph. He may have been buried only at the site where the *Imambara* was later constructed.

29. The exact date of Khaliq's birth has not been recorded anywhere. Only Mushafi, his mentor, has stated that he started composing at the age of 16, and became his disciple a little later. This took place during Mushafi's stay at Lucknow. He visited Lucknow twice, once in 1186 AH and the second and last time in 1198 AH. Masihuzzamān fixes the time of his discipleship around 1198 AH, while Mahmood Farooqi prefers the earlier visit. Presuming that at least a year had passed after he began writing that he came to Mushafi as a disciple, his birth can be fixed at 1181 AH according to Masihuzzamān (*Urdu Marthiye ka Irteqa*: 188) and at 1169 AH according to Mahmood Farooqi (*Mir Hasan aur Khandan ke Dusre Sho'ara*; Lahore Edition).

\* *Tārikh-i-Tāf-ul Khawāteen*, Mohammad Razā Rāzi: quoted by *Hayāt-i-Anīs*: 20-21, and *Anīs and Shakespeare*.

## 2

### Life

Mir Babr Ali "Anīs" was born at his family residence of Gulāb Bāri in the city of Faizabad (Uttar Pradesh), the first capital of the Nawabs of Oudh, at the dawn of the nineteenth century. The exact date of his birth is not recorded and the dates assumed by his various biographers and historians of literature vary considerably, the earliest being 1211 AH/1796-7 AD and the latest 1220 AH/1805 AD.<sup>1</sup> Of these 1216 AH/1801 AD sounds more plausible, for it is said that he was four years younger to "Rind", whose date of birth is irrefutably 1212 AH.

#### Schooling

In accordance with the family tradition, Anis had his initial schooling at home. In a house of scholars and poets, studies usually begin at an early age and in his case it was at the tender age of four that his mother assumed the role of teacher. There is evidence of his learning the *Jāme' Abbāsi* at her feet. His first teacher outside his home was Maulvi Mir Najaf Ali of Faizabad, who taught him the elements of the

1. 1211 AH (based on a letter from Syed Karrar Husain "Roohani" to Sabit. See article by this writer published in *The Tahreer*, New Delhi); 1216 AH (*Wāqī'āt-i-Anīs*: 22; *Yādgar-i-Anīs*: 66); 1216 or 1217 AH (*Tārikh-i-Nāzm-o-Nasr*: 141); 1218 AH-1803 AD (*Shāir-i-Āzam, Anīs*; 5); *Urdu Marthiya-ka-Irteqa*: 690 & 692; *Marathiy-e-Anīs*, vol. I edited by Naib Husain Naqvi: 39 & 1220 AH, *Anīs and Shakespeare*: 7: 2; Introduction by Nizami.



various branches of knowledge. Later, when he moved to Lucknow, he completed his lessons in higher Arabic with Maulana Haider Ali.<sup>2</sup> Mufti Mohammad Abbas taught him the *Hidāyat-ul-Hikmat* (*Sadra*, so called after its author) and the pupil mastered it well. Once when a difficult point in the book was being hotly discussed by a small group of scholars, Anīs resolved it even without consulting the text.<sup>3</sup>

As a student, he was more interested in the sciences of the intellect (*ma'qoolat*) than those of tradition (*manqoolat*), and of the former category he had studied all the essential texts.<sup>4</sup> His personal library had some two thousand books. Once he bought an illuminated copy of the *Shāhnāmāh* for rupees two hundred.<sup>5</sup> He was fond of the company of scholars and litterateurs and held frequent discussions with them on literary and scholarly subjects.

Keenly interested in matters literary and linguistic,<sup>6</sup> his scholastic career was marked by a spirit of enquiry. For forty years he lived the life of an alert and active scholar, assimilating knowledge from whatever source it came and putting it to real good use in his creative works. Most Tazkirah writers speak of his erudition and scholarship, though technically he may not have completed a formal course in education. Illustrating the point, Nizami Badayuni quotes the following two lines of Anīs:

*Har Juzv-i-tan ko la yatajazzā banā diyā*  
*Lo kufiyo girā diyā harf-i-thaqēl ko.*

*Juzv-i-la yatajazzā* in the first line means "an atomic particle which cannot be split further". The scientific concept was generally not known to the moderately educated at that time. The

2. Doubts have been raised as to which of the two Haider Ali's was the tutor—the one of Faizabad, who was Sunni by faith and the author of the polemical *Muntahī-al-Kalām* written to controvert Shia tenets, or the other of Lucknow. Both were, however, younger than Anīs. There may have been yet another Haider Ali. Nothing is certain.

3. *Introduction to Marthia-i-Anīs*, by Nizami 5.

4. *Hayāt-i-Anīs*, 19-20.

5. *Anīsiyāt*, 56.

6. *Yādgar-i-Anīs*; 80.

second line alludes to the controversies between the Iraqi grammarians of Kufa and Basra cities over the dropping of the *Harf-i-thaqēl*. He was obviously conversant with these matters of higher learning.<sup>7</sup> He gave yet another demonstration of his knowledge of the old sciences when his adversaries tried to find fault with the opening line of one of his *marthias*: "*Jab qat' ki musafat-i-shab āftāb né*". The objection was that the journey of the night was completed by the moon and not by the sun, as suggested in the line. When the matter was brought to his notice, Anīs defended it publicly on the basis of the ancient science of astronomy and silenced his critics. That Anīs's alert mind was ever-receptive to new ideas is evidenced by his comparison of the swiftness of the steed to the quick transmission of sound over the wires: "*Jis tarh sé bijli kī sadā tār peh dauḡē*". The fault-finders wondered how electricity could carry sound over the wires! Anīs had a ready and valid answer and even cited a Persian couplet, probably Urfi's in his support.

These stray vindications of his knowledge of the Arabic language and the old sciences became necessary because his main rival in the field, Mirza Dabir, was an acknowledged scholar of Arabic, who had completed his formal education and took pride in exhibiting it in his works. Anīs's education was selective, informal but purposeful. There are indications that he completed his education in Arabic after coming to Lucknow, where he must have noticed the premium placed on the knowledge of Arabic in literary circles. While he displayed his capabilities occasionally to convince the unkind critics and adversaries, he never allowed his literary judgment to be blurred by these elitist considerations. His command of spoken and literary Urdu was perfect and his vocabulary extensive. He did not sacrifice simplicity, clarity or literary quality to satisfy the whims of the elite or to make a show of his knowledge.

#### *Military Exercises*

Perhaps in preparation for the handling of heroic themes and in conformity with the prevailing customs among the nobility of the day, he learnt riding and fencing with the nobles of Faizabad. He was, however, not satisfied with what he had

7. *Anīsiyāt*, 11-27.





(e) *Residence*

The position regarding the permanent residence of Anis at Lucknow is rather confused. Even the statements of his contemporaries like Ashhari and others contradict each other.

A close relation, Mehdi Hasan 'Ahsan' says that his house was situated either in Sitehatti or Shidiyon kā Ehāta and admits the existence of different versions in this regard. He quotes a statement that the first house in which Anis stayed was presented to him by Nawāb Diyānat-ud-Daulā. The latter had built a big *Imāmbāṛā* and a house in the neighbourhood of Anis. He requested Anis to inaugurate the *Imāmbāṛā* by reciting a *marthia*. Pleased with his performance, he donated the residential house<sup>13</sup> to the poet.<sup>14</sup> According to Mir Syed Ali "Manoos" (a grandson of Anis), this *Imāmbāṛā* was constructed for Anis by the Nawab himself, who had also donated a small silver tomb (*zarih*), furnishings, carpets and *chāndnis*, etc. for the *Imāmbāṛā*. Manoos puts the date of the construction of the *Imāmbāṛā* at four years before the First War of Independence (1857) that is, in 1853. Against these oral versions, we have the authentic evidence of the chronogram by Mufti Mohammad Abbas which definitely fixes the date of the construction of Anis's *Imāmbāṛā* at 1271 AH/1854-55 AD. Surely, two *Imāmbāṛās* could not be constructed simultaneously or at least in such quick succession. Mufti Abbās has clearly stated that the *Imāmbāṛā* was built by Anis. This part of Manoos's version cannot be relied upon, as makes no mention of the Nawab at all. The donation of the house as also the furnishings for the *Imāmbāṛā* are, however, the only portions which are believable.

Another difficulty presents itself in the shape of the story of Dulhā Sāheb 'Urooj'. His memory fails him when he says that Khaliq (d. 1844) was buried in the *Imāmbāṛā* constructed by Anis. It is highly improbable that within a year or two of his residing in Lucknow, Anis would have saved enough to invest in the construction of the *Imāmbāṛā*. Khaliq could have been buried on a plot of land which became a part of the *Imāmbāṛā* twenty seven years later.

13. Ahsan refers to it as "Mahalsarā"

14. *Wāqīāt-i-Anis*: 26-27.

Maulvi Abdul Ali, who had intimate connections with the house, locates both the house and the *Imāmbāṛā* in Shidion ka Ehātā, adding that Anis used to live earlier in some other Ehātā. Arif, another grandson, comes up with yet another version. According to him, before the Nawab's donation of the house to him, Anis already had a house in the same *mohalla*.

It is not easy to piece these apparently divergent versions together but the assumption that he took up residence first in Shidiyon ka Ehātā and later had a house constructed in Sitehatti, possibly a modest one, is more plausible. Later the Nawab donated a bigger house to him. As the entire locality was bulldozed by the British during the Mutiny, these houses also got demolished and no trace of them remained when Anis ended a self-imposed exile to escape the terror and dishonour. He returned to a ruined and desolate Lucknow. He had to seek shelter in far off Mansoor Nagar and then in Raja Bazar (Panjābī Tōlā) in a hired house, on a rental of ten rupees a month, from Munshi Serāj-ud-Dīn. At last, he bought the Sabzimandi house for rupees three thousand and three hundred. It has a courtyard attached to it. In a part of it he constructed a *diwan khana* where he found his last resting place. The house was renovated during the Anis centenary celebrations through grants from the government. In the courtyard of the house, Anis, Nafis and other members of the family lie buried and a tomb has come up through donations. These premises have been the hub of literary activity for decades and have seen Anis achieve great success. This complex of houses has certainly seen much better days. There was a *darogha* or caretaker, for the management of the place and more than one attendant to do the chores. How one wishes it could be converted into a monument of national importance, the surroundings cleaned and the place made easily approachable.

(f) *Anis and the Court*

In defiance of the family tradition, Anis refused to be attached to a court. Wājid 'Ali Shāh, the last ruler of Oudh, wanted him to write the family's *Shāhnāmāh* in collaboration with three other poets—Barq, Aseer and Qubūl—but Anis

excused himself.<sup>15</sup> He never wrote panegyrics of the kings or the nobles. As a writer of devotional poetry, he thought he should sing only the praises of God and His chosen few. He considered it unbecoming for a *marthia* writer to praise the worldly rulers. He said so once in the presence of the Nawab.

*Ghair kī madha karoon shāh ka sanakhwān hō kar  
Mujrai, apni hawa khoun Sulaiman hō kar.*<sup>16</sup>

Should I sing the praises of others, when I am the poet-laureate of the real King?

Being King Solomon of my own domain, should I allow my position to be compromised?

An invitation for the recitation of *marthia* was different. Its acceptance involved no sacrifice of principles. The Queen Mother Kishwar<sup>17</sup> (or Wājid Ali Shāh himself,<sup>18</sup> at the suggestion of Miftah-ud-Daulah) decided to assemble a congregation for the recitation of *marthias* and she invited both Anīs and Dabir. Usually the twain never met in the same *majlis* but royalty succeeded in getting them together. Anīs extracted his price. He would not don the court dress, nor would he perform the customary court obeisance in the royal presence. The rules were waived whereupon the poet agreed to recite his *marthia*. Wājid Ali Shāh was present in person behind a *chilman* (curtain) to hear him. In candid tones, he recited the two lines cited above without fear of an adverse royal reaction. His courage won him the praises of the common listeners as of the devout ruler and his noblemen. When he recited:

*Zulf-i-Akbar kō jō dēkhā sare nēza pur khun  
Mōi sar khol diye mañ ne parishān hō kar.*

When Mother saw the locks of his son Akbar soaked in blood and raised at the point of spear, she let her own locks fall on her shoulders in dishevelled grief.

15. *Yādgār-i-Anīs*: 86; *Wāqīāt-i-Anīs*: 82-83.

16. It now finds a place in the collection of the *salams* of "Moonis". In this connection "Anīs ke salam", p. 69, is worth referring to.

17. *Wāqīāt-i-Anīs*: 80.

18. *Hayāt-i-Anīs*: 29.

The ruler turned to Fath-ud-Daulah "Barq", a courtier and himself a poet: "Didn't I tell you that Anīs is unique as a poet? This idiom is exclusively his". After the recitation was over the Nawab asked his Prime Minister, Ali Naqi Khan to convey his appreciation and to accompany the poet up to the main gate, an honour reserved for eminent royal guests only.

#### *More Recitations*

Apart from the fixed recitations at different places during the months of Moharram and Safar, he presented his *marthias* at many places in Lucknow round the year.

There were special occasions of mourning or thanksgiving when also *majlises* were held to seek heavenly blessings. All these have not been recorded but we have got an account of Anīs's recitation at the Chehlum (fortieth day mourning function) of Zamir's<sup>19</sup> wife. The listeners included Ātash<sup>20</sup> and Nasikh, the two great litterateurs of the time. The *marthia* began with the line: "*Āmad hai Karbala ke nayastān men sher ki*" (The lion-heart is about to enter the field in Karbala). As he came to the following couplet in praise of the sword:

*Ashraf kā banāo, raeson ki shān hai  
Shāhon ki ābroo hai, sipāhee kī jān hai.*

It is the nobleman's dignity and the aristocrat's pride  
It is the King's glory and the soul of the soldier.

He turned towards Ātash for appreciation. Raising his head, Ātash said in a clear voice, "Only the naive could speak of you as a mere elegyist. By God, you are a poet, a poet of poets. The sacred crown of poetry befits your head".

Anīs was content with whatever Lucknow could offer him and seldom moved out. He stuck to the resolve until the city was taken over by the British during the 1957 revolt. He was forced to flee Lucknow and remain in hiding till the announcement of general amnesty. On his return he found Lucknow

19. Zamir was a contemporary of Khalīq and himself a *marthia* writer of repute.

20. Ātash died in January, 1847.

devastated beyond recognition and its social life completely disrupted. He wrote in great agony:

*Waraq ulat gayā duniyā kā yak-bayak kyon charakh*  
*Ye' kis tarab kā zamāne ne inteqam liya.*  
*Ulat gaya na faqat Lakhnau ka ek tabaqah*  
*Anīs, mulk-i-sukhan men bhi inqilāb āyā.*

How did the leaves of the book of the world get thus  
 scattered?

Oh Anis! Not only was an order destroyed in Lucknow;  
 Poesy's kingdom too suffered convulsions.

It was the barest truth. The nobility were the worst sufferers; looted, exploited, harassed and in consequence, pauperised and dispersed. It took them long to recover even partially. Apart from such poets as had suffered death or imprisonment during the revolt, many had migrated to Matiaburj (Calcutta) to join the deposed King's retinue. Still others moved out to the principalities of Rampur, Benaras, etc. The entire social scene had changed and avenues of income had considerably shrunk for Anīs.

#### *Patna*

In this hour of tragedy, Anīs was forced to think of pastures anew. He went to Patna for the first time in 1859 and again the following year at the invitation of Nawab Qasim Ali Khan. He was treated with such great civility and honour that he agreed to a yearly visit to that city. The following year scholars, poets and noblemen from all over northern India assembled in Patna to hear him. Moonis was asked to lead the recitation. After a two-and-a-half hour recital by Moonis, came Anīs's turn. He asked of the audience for an interval to offer the noon prayers. The audience reassembled in greater strength and sat through the recital. Anīs was visibly moved by the warmth and affection of the gathering. He recited his famous, controversial *marthia* beginning:

*Jab Quat'a kī masāfat-i-shab āftāb nē'*  
 When the sun reached the end of night's journey

#### *Hyderabad*

There had been persistent requests from Hyderabad from the time of Afzal-ud-daulah for a visit, but he had always excused himself. Now the time had changed and when Nawab Tahavvur Jung invited him in 1871 at the suggestion of Shariful-Ulema Maulvi Syed Sharif Husain Khan, son of Arastu Jah, at the persuasion of Shamsul Ulema Maulana Syed Hamid Husain, he readily agreed. Leaving Lucknow on March 2, 1871, he reached Hyderabad on March 10, travelling up to Gulbarga, via Bombay and Poona, by train. Hyderabad was not yet linked by rail and he took a stage coach from Gulbarga. During the brief halt at Gulbarga he was welcomed by many respectable citizens. On reaching Hyderabad, Nawab Tahavvur Jung received him personally with his large entourage at the Delhi Gate. Owing to the strain of the long journey he was taken ill. The Nawab's adversaries spread the rumour that Anīs had not come. To scotch the rumour, the Nawab requested him to recite just a quatrain at the congregation when it assembled. Meanwhile, Dr. Mirza Ali, an allopathic physician was called in. Anīs had the impression that alcohol formed an essential ingredient of all allopathic medicines and, therefore, hesitated but the Nawab assured him that the physician was a relation of his and he would take care to prescribe only non-alcoholic medicines. The treatment brought down the fever, but he was still weak. Realising the predicament of the Nawab, he bowed to the pressing requests and recited the quartrains and fourteen stanzas of the *marthia* beginning with: "*Bakhudā fāris-i-maidān-i-tahavvur thā Hur*" (By God, Hur was a cavalier of the brave's battle front).

In subsequent gatherings he drew large crowds, estimated to be around 8,000 for ten consecutive days. On the twentieth of Muharram he shifted from Tahavvur Jung's house to Bagh Teepu Saheb. Tahavvur Jung and his courtiers accompanied him there and played host. On April 11, 1871 he left for Lucknow. Teepu Saheb tied guineas worth rupees five hundred on his arm and Tahavvur Jung paid him Rs. 5,000 in cash, besides defraying the expenses of the journey. He also presented a robe of honour consisting of *muslin* and *himroo* dresses and a Kashmiri shawl.

In Hyderabad too Anīs refused to give up his usual dress, even when Nawab Asman Jah offered to pay Rs 5,000, if he put

on just the Hyderabadī turban.<sup>21</sup>

Once a Hyderabadī noble came to listen to Anīs's recitation. He was escorted through the crowd right to the pulpit by the members of the audience. Contemporaries stood up in respect but the poet remained seated and said only "Bismillah", beckoning the noble to a seat close by. The noble mistook it for discourtesy and conspired with his courtiers not to utter a word in the poet's praise. Anīs took the hint, composed two couplets on the spot and pointing at the Nawab, he said:

*Mansab-i-Jamshīd-o-Dārā-o-Sikandar ab kahān?  
Khār tak chhāni nā qabron ke nishān paidē huay;  
Khāksāri ne dekhāin raf'aton par raf'aten  
Is Zamān se wāh kyā kyā Āsmān paidā huay.*

No longer exist the high offices of Jamshīd, Darius  
and Alexandar.  
I sifted the dust and the desert but could not sight  
their graves.  
On the contrary, modesty raised me from one height  
to a greater height.  
What wonderful skies arose from this earth!<sup>22</sup>

This direct onslaught on the utter futility of the world's riches broke the nobleman's resistance and he shouted "Wah Wah" with great enthusiasm. His courtiers followed and the whole atmosphere was electrified.

In the beginning, Anīs had some misgivings about the capacity of the Deccani listeners to appreciate fully the finer points of his poetic art. But when he came into close contact with them, he completely changed his views. They displayed all the powers of comprehension and appreciation. They gave him great respect too. A person of the status of Tahavvur Jung once picked up Anīs' shoes and placed them on his palanquin.<sup>23</sup>

In Uttar Pradesh itself, Anīs persuaded himself to visit

21. *Mir Anīs Hyderabad Men*: Rashīda Moosāvi (Naya Daur, Lucknow, January 1964).

22. *Mir Anīs Hyderabad Men*: 123-24.

23. *Wāqīāt-i-Anīs*: 125.

Allahabad and Varanasi (Benaras) for reciting *marthias*. In Allahabad, the recitation was advertised well in advance through posters and leaflets. On the appointed day a holiday was declared in all the colleges and even court employees were permitted to leave office early to attend the function if they so wished. Officers also sought permission to avail themselves of the opportunity to hear the great poet. Shamsul Ulema Maulvi Zakaullah (Professor of Arabic at the Muir Central College) relates that on reaching the spacious house where Anīs was to recite, he found it already overflowing with admirers. Many were standing in the sun listening with rapt attention. The recitation had started and he could not manage to get inside because of the great rush. He too stood among others in the sun. Anīs had grown old but his powerful recitation could put the young to shame. It appeared as though an old lady of marvellous coordination was performing magic, making the people act the way she liked; inducing a laugh where she wanted and tears when she willed. Enchanted and amazed, the Professor stood there for two hours. His clothes were drenched in perspiration and his feet had got benumbed but so absorbed was he in the recitation that he felt no inconvenience so long as he kept looking at Anīs.<sup>24</sup>

He stopped at Benaras enroute to Lucknow on his return from Patna. An assembly at the Imāmbārā of Qazi Mir Yar Ali (situated in the Telyanala sector of Varanasi) jammed the hall. Four other members of Anīs's family were invited to recite their own *marthias*. He could sense that the listeners were fatigued. He allowed them a break of half an hour before climbing the pulpit for the recitation. The crowd reassembled and his recitation was adjudged the best.<sup>25</sup>

#### *The Shāh Najaf Stipend*

Nawab Mubarak had ordered the payment from the Shah Najaf Trust of a monthly stipend of rupees forty to Anīs, generation after generation, in consideration of a single, yearly recitation. Anīs prized his poetry far above the money. On finding that market place crowds dominated the Shah Najaf assemblies and were not capable of appreciating good poetry,

24. *Yādgār-i-Anīs*: 94.

25. *Ibid.*

he gave up reciting there and asked his son to deputise. The trustee, Hakīm Bande Mahdi, stopped the stipend to show his displeasure. Anis said in derision: "An ornamental metallic star has fallen from my slippers."

#### *Style of Recitation*

A few styles of reciting poetry were then in vogue. The lyrical *ghazal* was recited plain, with measured stresses on key words and phrases occurring in a couplet, varied according to the mood of each one. It was known as *tahtul-lafz*. Rarely was the recital of the *ghazal* accompanied by *tarannum* (chanting) as in the case of Momin. The recitation of *mathnavi* was simple narrative, only rhyming breaking the monotony. A few portions which lent themselves to dramatisation did receive special emphasis and for such occasion story-telling devices were resorted to. *Marthia* was recited in mournful tunes by the *Sozekhwans* or *marthia khwans* who had a rudimentary knowledge of music also. The *sōze* is a musical recitation in some melancholy Indian or Indo-Iranian *ragas*. It developed a style of its own through appropriate adjustments and modifications. Sung in chorus, the *sōze* is led by a *sōze khwan*, who sits in the centre, flanked by helpers called *bazoo's*. The *marthia* intended for *sōze* recitation is short, seldom exceeding thirty to forty stanzas. The *sōze* as the name indicates, is purely elegiac.

The *tahtul-lafz* is a plain form of solo, non-musical recital, with emphasis on narration, to which Zamir added an occasional dramatic touch. Different portions were stressed to heighten the effect, appropriately illustrated through movements of hands, facial expressions and voice modulations. No longer was the *marthia* confined to some forty stanzas. Now with all its components it stretched to over 200 stanzas at times. It was invariably recited *tahtul-lafz*. In *Tahtul-lafz* the poet or the reciter is seated on a pulpit, placed at the head of the assembly (*majlis*), usually congregating in *Imāmbāyās*, *Imām bargahs* or *Husainiās* or large, private hall.

Unlike *mathnavi* the *marthia* recital could not be spread over two or more sittings. It had to be a single, integrated recital, for its finale lay in the elegiac lamentation.

The two forms were in vogue at the same time and Anis wrote *marthias* for both the *sōze* and the *tahtul-lafz*. But Anis's

fame does not rest on the shorter elegiac *marthias*, in which his contemporary and rival Mirza Dabir tried to excel. It is the longer *marthia* that Anis is unrivalled in. Himself, he recited only in *tahtul-lafz*, in which he developed a style of his own. His style created great impact. He could sway his audience from moods of joyous applause to melancholy and tears. A sustained recitation of some two hundred stanzas of six metric units each easily took over two hours. Considerable recitational skill alone could keep the listeners' interest alive.

Basic uniformity of the recitational style, mingled with a judicious variety of pauses, stresses and cadences was essential to capture the subtle changes of the poetic moods of the various components of the *marthia*—the description of nature, the eulogy of the hero, the battle scenes, the emotion-packed narratives, the dialogue, the conflict of good and evil, the logic of lofty ideals and sacrifice. The closing lament, which kneaded the hearts of the listeners, required special treatment. The *marthia*, thus, assumed the peculiar form of single character dramatic poetry, and the *tahtul-lafz*, a special variation of single character acting.

We have in the Sanskrit *rūpak* an example of single character acting, but there the actor is free to sojourn from the expression of the noblest sentiments to the most ridiculous and humorous. *Tahtul-lafz* acting has, otherwise also, been difficult, and it became more exacting in an elegiac, recitational communication through highly refined and delicate gestures and tonal modulations, which only the sophisticated art sensibility of Avadh could produce. The greatness of the holy characters the *marthia* portrayed and the reverential atmosphere in the assembly further limited the freedom of the poet employing *tahtul-lafz* as a form of dramatic communication. Anis, in particular, was averse to gesticulation or motions of the body that would deflect attention from the poetic qualities of his composition. Maulana Mohammad Husain Azad gives an eye witness account: "Rarely would he raise his hand, move his head or resort to a forced movement of eyes in the course of recitation. Instead, he used the medium of his poetry to convey to the audience, whatever he wanted".<sup>26</sup> Ashhari and Sheikh.

26. *Yādgar-i-Anis*: 76. But this observation does not figure in the 1907



Hasan Raza add corresponding observations: "The manner of his recitation was a picture of moderation . . . without effort at creating an effect, or artifice. His aesthetic variations of mood, cadence or suggestive movements of head and eyebrows were so expressive, so full of meaning."

Many in his own family and a long line of disciples tried to copy him but his art eluded imitation. Several other styles of *tahtul-lafz* were developed later and are being used down to this day by many Urdu poets for recitations in poetic symposia but none could equal his style.

Those who came to him to learn the art were discouraged by the master: "What shall I teach and what will you learn! It is not an art that can be taught. Most of my expressions come to mind at the spur of the moment. I myself do not know why I employ a form of expression on a particular occasion". Anis's unostentatious craftsmanship and unlaboured style of recitation drew quite a few pupils to him. Among them was the young son of a Nawab. Once Anis taught him how to recite the line:

*Kheenche jo Kamān, de na amā'n, peel-e-damān ko.\**

He stressed the last syllable of the stressed words in a particular manner and recited the line with measured pauses to emphasise the rhymed effect, besides highlighting the three key words. But when Anis demonstrated thrice and the pupil still failed to grasp the nuances, Anis told him bluntly: "You can never learn recitation. Why, then waste my time and cause mental strain?" Another time one of his pupils, a nobleman's son began to scratch his belly in the midst of a practice. Anis reprimanded him: "It is a *marthia* and not *dhrupad* or *tappā* that you sing and scratch at the same time".<sup>27</sup> Darogha Achchhe Sahib once recited a *marthia* of Anis in his presence and drew great applause from the audience but Anis was not happy. "He mutilated and dismembered my *marthia* and violated my delicate thoughts", he deserved.

Some have stated that Anis and his brothers used to practise recitation before a large mirror in a quiet corner of their house.

edition of *Ab-i-Hayāt*. Presumably, it is a later addition.

27. *Wāqīāt-i-Anīs*: 88.

\* When he bends the bow even the mightiest elephant will not had a place to hide him.

They weighed the appropriateness of each gesture and manner of recitation carefully. Mir Syed Ali "Manoos" a grandson of Anis, contends the veracity of this statement.<sup>28</sup>

In the autumn of his life, he gave up recitation, partly because by then his son, Nafis had established himself and also because he was stung that Lucknow had not done its duty towards him and compelled him to travel to far off Hyderabad to recite in his old age. Mir Manoos, however, is more exact. According to him, Anis refrained from reciting *marthias* after the failure of the great rebellion of 1857 and its aftermath, the ruination of the city<sup>29</sup> at the hands of the British.

After a lapse of several years, it was Rashid's brother, Kallan Saheb, who succeeded in persuading him to break his silence. On his insistence, Anis recited a *marthia* at the assembly organised to felicitate him on his recovery from illness. There he presented his famous *marthia* mentioned earlier:

*Jab Qat'a ki masafat-i-shab āftāb ne*

When the sun reached the end of night's journey.

The performance demonstrated that age had not dimmed his talent.

#### *Last Recitation*

Ashhari thinks that Anis recited his last *marthia* at the assembly at Sheesh Mahal at the house of Nawabs Baqar Ali Khan and Zafar Ali Khan.<sup>30</sup> The first line of the *marthia* recited on the occasion was "*Jāti hai kis shikōh se ran me khudā ki fauj*" (With what grandeur God's army marches on to the field). Ahsan disagrees with it and he, as well as 'Alavi, are of the view that "the last recital took place at the house of Sheikh 'Ali 'Abas Wakil.<sup>31</sup> Mir Manoos, who was himself present at the *majlis* supports this statement and adds that the *marthia* recited began with the line "*Wā hastratā ke ahd-e-jawāni guzar gayā*". (Alas! The age of youth has passed away).<sup>32</sup>

28. *Anīsīyat*: 56.

29. *Ibid.* 57.

30. *Hayāt-i-Anīs*: 35.

31. *Wāqīāt-i-Anīs*: 117; *Yādgar-i-Anīs*.

32. *Anīsīyat*.

*How He Wrote*

Anis's biographers have left us an account not only of how he recited but also of his routine as a writer and the mode of his composing poetry. Fact is interwoven with fiction but it is certain that he had a daily schedule of work from which he seldom departed. As one reads of his routine one is reminded of Rājashekher who lays down a rigid timetable for poets in his famous work *Kāvya Mīmāṃsā*. Centuries after, Anis could not be expected to adhere to the same routine but there is a remarkable resemblance in the details adopted by Anis. His grandson Mr Manoos describes it as a reliable eyewitness.

"Mir Anis used to keep awake almost the whole night and went to bed only after his morning prayers. He woke up around nine in the morning, took a heavy breakfast at ten. Thereafter he spent some time in correcting the works of Moonis (his brother) and Nafis (his son). At two in the afternoon he took a nap and got up at the time of *asr* (afternoon) prayers. The prayers over, he came out to his *divan khana*. After dinner, he wrote *marthia* seated on a *takht* (settee) in the inner verandah facing south. A large candle stick protected by a transparent glass chimney, burnt brightly in front and books lay scattered on either side of his seat. He usually sat cross-legged, his elbow rested on the thighs and cheek cupped in palm. He wrote until daybreak."

Mir Hāmid Ali, a close friend, has filled a gap. Intimate friends were welcome from 9 or 10 p.m. to midnight. Mir Nafis and Mir Moonis would also be present occasionally. In these quiet hours of the night, their talks centred round poetry or literature in general. Good couplets, mostly of Persian and to a lesser extent of Urdu poets were recited from memory and critically discussed. Firdausi's *Shahnāmah* would often form the subject matter of talk and Anis could recite from memory large portions of it in support of his point of view. These sessions were in essence a continuation of the process of *marthia* writing.

Tradition has it, that Anis would often lie in bed, covered from top to toe. In these hours of absolute seclusion, he was engrossed in composing a *marthia*, repeating the lines in a clear voice for the benefit of the scribe, usually his son, Nafis. At times he would have no scribe around and took mental notes

of the composition to be dictated later. But close relations and eye witnesses like Manoos have rejected this last part of the story as a figment of imagination. Although it may not have been the usual practice, as claimed by some, it is not beyond the pale of possibility that the poet composed and dictated his stanzas in that manner. He wrote very fast, fifty to sixty stanzas in a sitting. For instance fifty stanzas of the *marthia* "Jab Qat'a kī masafat-i-shab āftāb ne" were completed in the first half of a single night.

His younger brother, Moonis once boasted in the company of his friends that it should not be difficult for an expert to write fifty to sixty stanzas in a sitting. It was communicated to Anis by a tale carrier. He did not relish the vainglory and thought of bringing it home to his brother that boasts could be put to test also. An occasion soon presented itself. Moonis had taken his new *marthia* for correction to Anis, who was then bathing in the *hauz*.<sup>33</sup> It was to be recited at the *majlis* at Nawab Meer Husain's. Anis took the *marthia* and dipped it in water twice or thrice, washing away all the writing. Moonis stood stunned as there was only a couple of days left for the recital and he knew he could not complete another in such a short time.<sup>34</sup> Anis asked him: "What's there in this *marthia* that you want to recite it at such a big assembly". Moonis was left with no words. Later, he called Moonis to lunch and said: "Why should you worry when experts can compose fifty stanzas in a single night." Moonis soon relented and explained that it was far from his intention to make any false claim. Anis thereupon dictated to him the important part of the *marthia*: "*Raunaq afroz hai mazkoor-i-wafādāri-i-Hur*". Part of it was composed by Moonis himself.<sup>35</sup>

*Last Days*

Mir Anis led an active and regulated life and enjoyed good health. The last few years were, however, plagued by intermittent sickness. From the letters of Moonis and Uns written to family

33. *Wāqiāt-i-Anis* 117-118; *Yādgar-i-Anis*: 111 (*hauz*: a small rectangular tank).

34. *Anīsīyat*: 58.

35. *Wāqiāt-i-Anis*:

friends, one learns of recurrent bouts of illness, some of them rather prolonged. The first illness, is reported in 1865 and similar reports are repeated in 1871, 1872 and 1874. In a letter addressed to Hakim Syed 'Ali of Dulahipur, Benaras (Varanasi) Anis himself wrote (November, 1872) that he had been unwell for the last few years. His continued illness had prevented him from writing any *marthias* with his usual speed. If we take 1865 as the year his health began failing, the period of restricted literary activity would spread to over nine years. In any case he had not kept well during the last four years. The same letter provides the information that he had given up reciting *marthias* for the "last few years" and had not cared to engage himself in writing fresh ones either. He had "written only two half completed *marthias*, though long enough to recite".

He got the best medical treatment and the best physicians in the town battled with the disease which was diagnosed as failure or inflammation of the liver and fever. An imputation that he died of tuberculosis is not backed by any reliable evidence. The end came quietly in the afternoon of Thursday, Shawwal 29, 1291 (December 10, 1874). Maulānā Bamde Hasan Mujtahid led the *janāzah* prayers and he was buried the same night in the courtyard of his Sabzimandi house. His rival Dabir wrote the famous chronogram:

*Toor-i-Sina be Kalimullah--o-minber bē Anīs.*

Moses has abandoned Mount Sinai; the pulpit lies  
deserted without Anis.

His death cast a gloom over the entire literary world and was universally mourned. Newspapers and magazines carried long obituary notes and several poets wrote chronograms.<sup>36</sup>

Anis was mentally alert till the very end and even as life

36. These included Ali Mian "Kāmil"; Syed Hussain Mirza, 'Ishq'; S. Mohammad Zaki "Alam"; his own son, Nafis; his brother, Moonis; "Shad" Pairve Mir; Baqar Ali Khan "Tashaffi"; Maulvi Fasihullah "Safa" Firangi Mahli; Jalal Lakhnawi; Syed Hasan "Latāfat"; Mirza Mohammad Murtaza alias Machchhu Beg "Ashiq"; Agha Hajju "Sharaf"; Khwaja Azizuddin "Aziz"; Mufti Syed Mohammad 'Abbās, etc.

ebbed out, he composed a couplet. A few quatrains are also the product of his last days. The couplet runs:

*Akhir hai waqt, zeest se ab dil bhī ser hai,  
Paimānah bhar chukā hai, chhalakne kī der hai.*

The last hour arrives and I have had enough of life,  
The cup is filled to the brim, ready to spill over any moment.

While it is almost agreed that he wrote three quatrains also, distant relations of Anis and his biographer, Ahsan mentions the following three (near literal translation):

*Dard-O-Alam-i-mamāt kyonkar guzrey?  
Ye' chand nafas hayāt kyonkar guzrey?  
Piri kī bhī dopahar dhali, Shukr, Anīs!  
Ab dekhen lahad kī rat kyonkar guzrey?*

*Woh mauj-i-hawādis kā thaperā na rahā.  
Kashti woh hui gharq, wo berā na rahā.  
Sāre jhagre the zindegani ke, Anīs!  
Jab ham na rahe to kuchh bakherā na rahā.*

*Aakhir, hai hayāt, kooch kartā hoon main.  
Rikhsat, ain zindgi ke marta hoon main.  
Allah se lau lagi hui hai meri  
Oopar ke dam is wāste bhartā hoon main.*

How the pangs of death shall ultimately end!  
And how the last flickering moments of life!  
By His Grace, the mid-day Sun of old age also declines  
And the long night of grave stares at us, Anis.

The stormy breakers of misfortune are ebbing;  
The ship has sunk; the fleet disappeared.  
Life's worries are for the living, Anis!  
Problems won't bother after we withdraw from the scene.

The end is approaching and I am about to fade out;  
Farewell, O Life! I am breathing my last.  
Only upward goes my gasping breath now,  
For I am thinking only of the Lord aloft.<sup>37</sup>

37. *Wāqi 'āt-i-Anīs*: 129.

A son-in-law of the grandson of Anis, Mir Syed Ali Manoos, however, contends that these Ruba'is were written much earlier and Ahsan's ascription of them to the last days might have arisen from the contents. But Ahsan is supported by an item appearing in Lucknow's *Avadh Akhbār* (January 1, 1875) within three weeks of the poet's death. The last *ruba'i* finds a place in that piece but the first two have been changed by the paper to the two translated below:

*Har ān ghati jāti hai tāqat meri;  
Barhti hai ghari, ghari naqāhat meri.  
Ātā nahin āb-i-rafiāh phir joo meṅ, Anīs!  
Ab marg pa' mauqūf hai sehhat meri.*

*Na āh dahan se, na fughān niklegī  
Āwāz "Ali, Ali" ki hān niklegī.  
Jis tarh nigah chashm se bāhar ho, Anīs!  
Yun bckhūbari meṅ tan se jān niklegī.*

My strength dwindles with every passing moment  
And each second adds to my weakness as it ticks by;  
Running water never returns to the spring, Anīs!  
On death alone does my recovery depend.

Not a sigh, not a cry shall issue forth  
But surely shall I chant 'Ali, 'Alī<sup>38</sup>  
Anīs! As sight travels forth from the eyes  
So softly and quietly will life quit the body.

Manoos too does not deny the fact that he did compose in the last hours of his life, but according to him the last was a *salām*, beginning with the line:

*sub 'azīz-o-āshnā nā āshnā ho jaaenge*

All relations and friends would turn strangers.

This *Salām*, however, does not find place in any of his collections. It is difficult to believe completely the story as told by Manoos, without corroboratory evidence.

38. One of the many names of Allah as also the name of Caliph 'Ali.

### 3 Character

A man of versatile tastes, Anīs was good natured but he could bear no nonsense. He was fastidious but not vain. Himself highly cultured, he treated people with respect and tenderness and naturally expected reciprocity, especially when he was reciting. He never compromised on his self-respect and never stooped to what he considered to be below dignity even in the presence of rulers and nobles. At the same time he was polite and modest. He hated show and vainglory.

Simplicity and self-respect were the two outstanding traits of his character. He never put on the showy dresses in vogue in the feudal society of Faizabad and Lucknow. He stubbornly refused to wear a court dress in Lucknow and Hyderabad and stuck to his own style. He used to put on a large Muslin *kurta* (shirt) of wide skirts. It was so large that it needed no *angarkhā* (large coat), the speciality of Lucknow, over it. Very rarely in all probability did he wear the *angarkha*. The trousers, he used, were of fine longcloth in summer and of *mushru'* woollen cloth in winter. He donned a starched pentangular dome-shaped, fine cloth cap, with elaborate embroidery in floral or crescent or decanter designs. He placed the cap at a particular angle on the forehead and took time to set it at that very angle each time. He always carried a white handkerchief and a delicate stick with him. He ate little. He preferred mutton soup for his dinner and milk, fruits and plain mutton curry for lunch. His manner of living was marked by frugality but he was rather lavish in entertaining guests.

He had to support a large family and his expenses were

heavy. He did not like to have favour done to him. He accepted gifts or offerings only from a few close friends. Others dared not do it lest he took offence. He remained contented even in the most trying circumstances and abhorred greed.

Generous to a fault, he was even ready to support such of his family members as were in need. Fortunately, he had no extravagant habits. He had cut down his wants to the minimum and was able to manage his household expenses within the means available to him.

He placed great value on friendship and abstained from any act which would even remotely displease a friend. He had enemies and men who envied his rise to fame but never thought of retaliating. Extremely religious as he was, he believed that God would take care of those who wished him ill.

A circle of his critics had no other business but to find fault with him. He challenged these adversaries to excel him in art instead of indulging in undignified and petty criticism.

He had a jovial nature and his repartees enlivened private gatherings but in public he was absolutely reserved. His biographers have mentioned several anecdotes of his light-heartedness. But he would not forgive people who did not conform to his own norms of conduct. He got so displeased with his own brother, Uns that he could not bear his sight even when he lay on his death bed. It was only in the last moments that the two got reconciled by Uns forcing entry into Anis's house, and disregarding the pleas of the inmates, his own cousins and other relatives not to disturb him, Uns threw himself upon him. It was a very tearful reunion.

Mufti Mohammad 'Abbās Shūstari, one of the most renowned scholars of the age and a Persian poet, was very fond of him. Once tale carriers created some misunderstandings between them. Anis wrote a Persian couplet and sent to him:

*Maranjan dilam ra ke in murgh-i-wahshi*  
*Ze bāmike barkhwāst mushkil nashinad.*

Don't sadden my heart for this wild bird;  
Once it flieth from a terrace, it seldom returneth.

The Mufti wrote back a full poem on receipt of it:

*Dilat bood jāman-o-neest bāwar*  
*Ke bar jāy-i-man keenah dar dil nashinad.*  
*Ze khashm-i-tu migiryam-o-chashm dāram*  
*Bishoyad ghubāri ke dar dil nashinad.*

Your heart was my abode and I don't believe  
That ill-will can occupy that place in the heart. . .  
I shed tears over your anger in the hope  
That it washes the dust that hast settled upon your  
heart.<sup>1</sup>

He disliked holding open levees. Visitors had to come to him by appointment. Even daily visitors had to give advance intimation. As long as he sat in the *divan khana* he used to be fully and formally dressed and never moved out without a palanquin, which was the custom with the elite.<sup>2</sup> While in the inner apartments, he would not admit any outsiders and would bolt the door from inside.

Anis loved beauty, whether in human beings or in fauna and flora.<sup>3</sup> He often walked in the courtyard or took a dip in the pool within the yard. In these hours of solitude no one except very close family members could have access to him.

#### *Pupils*

It was customary at the time for young poets to seek guidance from established masters in the matter of prosody, nuances of language and correct use of words and phrases. It was easier in the case of *ghazal* writers where the poet-teacher could correct eight or nine couplets without difficulty. The *marthia*, on the other hand, a longer narrative, made much greater demands on the time of the *Ustad* (master). From the times of Zamir, it had become a practice with the *marthia* writer also to consult his poet-teacher. Dabir had a very large number of disciples but Anis was rather selective. Various books, specially the *Shagirdan-i-Anis* have given the names of over thirty-one pupils, including those belonging to his own

1. *Wāqīāt-i-Anis*: 111-12;
2. *Hayāt-i-Anis*;
3. *Ibid.*, 35

family. The names of these pupils are: Mir Nawāb 'Ali 'Moonis', Mir Khurshid 'Ali 'Nafis', Syed Mohammed Haider 'Jalis', Mir Mohammad 'Askari 'Rais',<sup>4</sup> Mir Mohommad 'Salis', Syed 'Ali 'Manoos', Syed Haider Husain 'Khuld', Mirza 'Ali Husain 'Rafiq', Mir Ehsān 'Ali 'Rais', Syed Riyazuddin Hasan 'Riyāz', Syed Āghā 'Ali 'Zawwār' Zaidpuri, Shariful 'Ulema Syed Sharif Husain 'Sharif', Syed Baqar Husain 'Ziā', Syed Mohammad Mohsin Zulqadr 'Mohsin', Syed Fazle 'Ali 'Waqār' Zaidpuri, Abu Mohammad Tabsildār of Benāras, Syed Mohammad Afzal 'Farigh', Syed Bande Razā 'Ārzo', Syed Agha Hasan 'Azal', Hākim Mohammad 'Ali 'Hazin', Mirza Mohammad Khan 'Zaki', Syed Serājuddin Ahmad 'Sirāj' Amrohvi, Hākim Mohammad Razā 'Shaidā' Mohāni, 'Ābid 'Ali 'Ābid', Nawab Mirza Bāqar 'Ali Khan Bahādur 'Urooj', Mir Vilāyat 'Ali 'Firdaus', Mohammad Latif 'Latif', Syed Hasan 'Ali 'Mirrikh', Mir Jāfar 'Ali 'Mulool', Syed 'Ali 'Yūnus', Nawāb Amjad 'Ali Khān 'Huzūr', and Syed Mohammad Mehdi 'Nigār'. Aghā Wazir Hussain Khān 'Atā' was also his pupil but he composed only *ghazals* and *nauhas* and not *marthias*.

Besides these, he had taught some persons the art of reciting *marthias*. They included, Darogha Achchhe Sahib, Agha Mir, Sheikh Amir 'Ali, Munshi Amir 'Ali, Mir Salamat 'Ali, Mirza Mohammad 'Abbās 'Aks', Mir 'Ali Hasan, and Syed Amjad Hussain. To this may be added several members of his own family who learnt the art at his feet and passed it down from father to son for generations.

### Works

Anis started writing very early in life and continued till the end—a span of well over half a century. He began with the *ghazal*, the most popular verse form in Urdu at that time and wrote several *ghazals*. Some were recited in *mushairas* too. But he soon changed over to *salaams* on the advice of his father. It was a turning point in his literary career, as it diverted his attention to *marthia* and *ruba'i* as well. According to family sources he still indulged in the *ghazal* occasionally and had, on

4. He has three or four *marthias* to his credit but the general impression is that these were written by Anis.

the quiet, written enough to complete a collection which he got destroyed. A few *ghazals* that are extant can be found in "Anisiyāt" and "Wāqi'āt-i-Anis" but to be fair to him these have only historical value and a search for more of his *ghazals* may not be very fruitful from the purely literary angle.

Besides, he has written over a hundred *salāms* and over five hundred *ruba'is*. In these verse forms also, his contribution is immense but his *marthia* has overshadowed them. The *salām* bears a close resemblance to the *ghazal* not only in form but also in its lyrical mood. The main difference lies in that a *salām* invariably contains some elegiac lines as well. These occasionally greet the holy heroes with the traditional Islamic *salām* in the beginning; some start with panegyric lines. The mystic element is also there, with emphasis on the frailness of the human body, the fleeting nature of man's glory, the instability of life and the eventual destructibility of the world. The dominant mood of the *salām* is melancholic and moral, even didactic at places.

In his *ruba'is*, Anis adopts a philosophical approach to the transient nature of life, the infirmity of nature, life's transcendental unity and its moral inviolability. The basic tenets of Islamic monism and the accompanying belief in humanism and the universality of virtue and goodness; the devoted love of the Prophet and his family, who symbolised all that is good and virtuous, and respect for man and his dignity form some of the favourite themes. A substantial number of the quatrains revolve around the tragedy of Karbala and quite a few speak about the poet himself and his art.

But his fame rests mainly upon his *marthias*, a form which attained great heights at his hands. A modest assessment of the number of *marthias* written by him puts it in the vicinity of two thousand, though it is not easy to determine precisely the number of *marthias* he wrote.

Trusting the version of his family members, Ahsan puts the figure at a thousand and four hundred. Ashhari takes it to ten thousand. The latter figure is obviously exaggerated, even after making allowance for the smaller elegiac pieces intended for *sozekhwanis*. Hundreds of his *marthias* were preserved in his family well after his death but there are indications that these

were appropriated later by his family members.<sup>5</sup> According to Ahsan, many pieces left incomplete were utilised by Moonis after his brother's death.<sup>6</sup>

Anis must have composed at least five hundred thousand lines, larger in volume than Firdausi's. This assessment of the volume by Ashhari is shared by Alawi also.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of exact statistics one can only testify to Anis being a very prolific writer indeed and it would be no wonder if his output ran into hundreds of thousands of lines.

His *marthias* were first published, along with those of Zamir and Fasih, in a single volume from the Islami Press, Bombay in 1852. Another joint collection of *marthias* was published by the Makhdoomi Press also from Bombay. The *Zakhira-i-Thawab* (of the Darul Sanaye' Press, Gulbarga; 1876) too was a similar anthology of elegiac poems and contained five *marthias* of Anis as well. He emerged from the stage of early anthologies to full authorship with the first volume of his *marthias* published by the Oudh Akhbar (Newal Kishore) Press in November, 1876. Three other volumes followed in quick succession between 1880 and 1882. Some of the volumes had run into at least three editions by 1882. Volume V first went into print in 1895, the publishers being Ja'fari Press. *Shajra-i-Gham* was published in 1899 comprising mostly Anis's *marthias*. The Dabdabah-i-Ahmadi Press published volumes V and VI in 1901 and a reprint in 1914. Nizami Press of Budaun had his *marthias* edited by Nazm Tabatabai and published them in three volumes. In 1928 *Uroos-i-Sukhan or Jawahirat-i-Anis* was brought out from Rampur. Recently several volumes have been reprinted in India and Pakistan with additions and modifications. The Pakistani collections have been published by Ghulam Ali & Sons and Bookland.

The Anis centenary celebrations prompted a number of organisations and publishers to bring out centenary editions, and also look for unpublished works of the poet.

A word of caution must be sounded about the discoveries of new or hitherto unpublished *marthias* of Anis which are now

5. *Hayat-i-Anis*: 36-37

6. *Waqiat-i-Anis*: 92-94.

7. *Hayat-i-Anis*: 36-37; *Waqiat-i-Anis*: 92-94.

being reported either in part or in full from several quarters. As the poet's popularity grew, the demand for his works came from several sources. Most of his *marthias* had remained unpublished at the time of his death and men of status and taste were ready to offer any price for his compositions. People took advantage of the situation and even the works of other contemporary writers, members of the family or some renowned predecessors were passed on as his works. The reciters of *marthia* had a special liking for certain types of compositions, like descriptions of battle scenes or dialogue, and quietly incorporated such portions into his *marthias*. Without considerable research and constructive enquiry, it is difficult to sift these spurious pieces. This painstaking work is bound to take time but is well worth the trouble.

#### *Art of Anis*

The complexities of the *marthia* as a verse form, in the shape it evolved when Anis started writing, have been touched upon in brief in the chapter on *marthia*. This, the "highest form of Urdu poetry", says Bailey, reaches its culminating point in them (Anis and Dabir). Anis was the greater and more natural poet of the two. The considered literary judgment of today would probably be that he and Ghālib and Mir are the three greatest poets in the language. He employed an enormous number of words, but preferred a simple, easy and flowing style. His family is famous for the use of pure and idiomatic Urdu. He had a wonderful power of description. This is seen best when he depicts human feelings, specially pathos and bravery, or scenes of nature and fighting. He writes as if he has been on the occasions which he describes and as if the people had spoken the very words he had put down.<sup>8</sup>

This view of Anis as a poet is no exaggeration. When he began writing, Urdu poetry was a stagnant pool and the lyric *ghazal* and the narrative *mathnavi* seemed to have exhausted their potentialities. He extended the horizons of the language beyond these stagnated forms through expansion and elaboration of the new *marthia* which was struggling for an abiding

8. *A History of Urdu Literature* (Association Press, Calcutta, 1932): 67.

place in literature. The scope for his experimentations was seriously limited by the elegiac temper of the form but Anis was a wide-visioned artist. He prevailed over the limitations and set the pattern for a whole range of new poetry. The pioneers of modern poetry took the cue from him, and *masaddas* (sextain), the form which the *marthia* finally adopted, became a dynamic vehicle of expression for a variety of poems that were being written towards the end of the nineteenth century. It remained in vogue for more than three quarters of a century.

Bailey's was not a solitary voice either. A chorus of critics, including contemporary stalwarts like Āzād, Hāli and Shibli joined him. Hāli's assessment can be summed up thus: "Mir Anis raised this style to the highest point of excellence and Urdu poetry, which for long lay dormant like a stagnant pool was soon astir with new currents. It was like the churning of the sea. Although social pressure and competition with commonplace rivals did not always let him function as he liked . . . he gave many new styles of expression to Urdu poetry. By depicting the same episode in myriad ways and modes, he cleared the way for imaginative poetry to seek new avenues. A large part of the vocabulary of the language which had never been touched by their pens before, was poured into the hands of our poets and no longer remained the exclusive preserve of the linguists".<sup>9</sup>

Referring to the moral element in the *marthias* of Anis and others, Hāli writes that "the high quality of moral teachings that one meets in these works has no parallel even in Persian and Arabic poetry".<sup>10</sup> Allāmah Shibli undertook a comparative study of Anis and Dabir in his famous book *Mowazenah-i-Anis-o-Dabir*". He regarded Anis, not unjustifiably, as a better poet and craftsman than Dabir. It gave rise to a lively literary controversy and produced a crop of books supporting or attacking it. Summing up his views, he said, "the works of Mir Anis are the best possible specimens of all the forms of poetry. No other poet has made use of as many verse forms as he does in his compositions".<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Shibli, Mohammad Husain 'Āzād' finds himself in a fix and is reluctant to choose between the two. If he betrayed a suppressed tilt in favour of Dabir for his scholarly tone, he exalted Anis for his chastity and liveliness of expression. On the whole, he recognises that the two together extended the frontiers of the language and made Urdu poetry vigorous (in style).<sup>12</sup> At the same time, he makes no secret of his disapprobation of the extensions they made for, in his view, they transgressed the bounds of the elegy, while the elegiac content was of the essence of the *marthia*. Notwithstanding his insistence on tradition, he acknowledges that with the advent of this inimitable pair in the field, "clouds of progress in the art (of the *marthia*) gathered with thunderous roar and rained inventions and innovations". They "established that they alone were the real and proven poets, who could weave magic by artistically deploying a vast vocabulary to communicate various kinds of ideas and thoughts and for the description of varied situations. They could make people laugh or cry or dumbfound at will". What struck Āzād most was the creativity of Anis and his rival to make the same situations look different in each *marthia* and he was charmed by their description of nature.<sup>13</sup> While underlining the similarities and his own preference for the basically elegiac *marthia* and the grandiloquent style of Dabir, he does admit that Anis surpassed Dabir in the even flow of language and rhythm of his verses, elegant use of speech, delightful arrangement of words and deployment of idioms and phrases, graceful style, appropriateness of expression and unbroken continuity of narration.<sup>14</sup>

To Shibli, the greatest achievement of Anis is that while he uses the largest vocabulary among Urdu poets, he seldom picks up an inappropriate word or phrase. Invariably, he retains the intrinsic melody of each word, as he proceeds to build up a creative totality. He deals with diverse situations in the same *marthia* but adjusts his diction and style to bring it in harmony with the changing moods. He describes hundreds of events connected with the story of Karbala but never lets poetic

9. *Muquddamah-i-She 'r-o-Shae' ri*: 181.

10. *Ibid.* 183.

11. *Mowazenah-i-Anis-o-Dabir*; (Introduction: 1-2).

12. *Āb-i-Hayāt*: 523.

13. *Ibid.* 521.

14. *Āb-i-Hayāt*: 517.



realism suffer.<sup>15</sup>

Among the modern critics, Ālé Ahmad Suroor approvingly quotes Maulānā Abul Kalām Āzād to avow that the *ghazal* of Ghālib and the *marthia* of Anis are Urdu's two contributions to world literature. "Anis would measure up to all the standards by which poetry is adjudged. The greatness of his poetry lies in his holding aloft the banner of the higher values of life, not with the moral material as such but with the manner it is moulded into forceful and cohesive poetry."<sup>16</sup>

Ehtishām Husain adds, "Anis handles the material of conflict between good and evil with considerable poetic liberty and creativity within the limitations of the historical and religious framework". He laments that the poet's art has suffered neglect because of the devotional and historical character of his theme.

Ram Babu Saxena admires his description of battle scenes, swords and horses and of personal combats. "His portrayal of of emotions is masterly", he says, and asserts that for his painting of natural scenes, he would rank as "one of the best poets of the world."<sup>17</sup> Ghulām Imām's book *Anis and Shakespeare* deals mainly with the dramatic aspect and the critic has succeeded in marshalling striking similarities. He looks upon Anis as a "poet of realities", who "views nature as a man full of delight, with aesthetic rapture. He does not ignore its magnificence even while highlighting man with all his faults or weaknesses. His knowledge of human nature enables him to paint its excellence and celestial grandeur with rare perfection. Envy, greed and ruthlessness he detests and condemns. His emphasis is on the ethical urge of the human society. I have called Anis a poet of realities because he has no doctrine to preach, no revolution to convey and no interpretation of a mystic to give". The ethical dimension of his work does not emerge from conscious effort but in the grand theme, and "the conduct of the most outstanding human models who in a paroxysm of righteousness sacrificed everything held dear by man", to vindicate "the highest principles of freedom of conscience and liberty of thought and to give maximum importance

15. *Mowāzena-i-Anis-O-Dabir*: 21, 31, 39.

16. *Anis Shināsi*: 11, 17.

17. *A History of Urdu Literature* (R): 129,

to the virtues that rendered man the noblest creature on earth".<sup>18</sup>

Even Dr. Mohammad Sadiq, an unsparing critic of Anis, has admitted that Anis is such an important figure in Urdu poetry because he rises above the limitations of his age".<sup>19</sup>

Critics have showered not only praise on him, a few like Dr. M. Sadiq have noted that he deviated from historical details and that his portrayal of characters occasionally lacked unity or that his depiction of natural scenes had a distinctly Indian colouration. Some have found fault with the excess of the elegiac content in his *marthias*.

Anis was working on historical material but it must be realised that he was writing neither history nor biography. He endeavoured to recreate a universality of morals in an Arab setting but in a manner that was transcendental. In doing so, he did not consider it essential to be a rigid conformist. To be fair to him, a process of minor historical deflection had started much earlier in Deccan and pursued by the elegiacs of Delhi and Lucknow who had preceded him. These earlier modifications in the details of the tragedy had so stabilised in the course of time that the devout had come to regard them as settled anecdotes. The tradition regarding the marriage of Qāsim is a case in point. Its authenticity has been challenged by reputed Shi'ite scholars as well and yet it is a recurrent theme of the traditional *marthias* and elegiac orations. The ceremonial atmosphere of Indian marriages had crept into the story long before Anis but he used it with restraint and discretion.

From a purely literary point of view there is nothing wrong in imagining how the womenfolk wailed and cried when dear ones took leave one after another to march to certain death. "Ali Akbar, in the prime of his youth, seeks his mothers's permission to proceed to the battle field. She withholds neither tears nor permission:

Then holding to his skirts, she cried distressfully,  
"Fruit of my heart, promise to come back again,"

18. *Anis and Shakespeare*: 97.

19. *A History of Urdu Literature* (S): 156.

And suppressing a tear, 'Ali Akbar made reply:  
 "If death will give me time, I will come again, mother.  
 For willingly no one forsakes his dear ones;  
 But I am bound for the bourne whence no traveller  
 returns."<sup>20</sup>

The departure of the family from Medina, leaving the ailing Sughra behind, provides another moving episode. Here again, Anis recreates the situation imaginatively. Husain explains to his daughter the hard decision he has taken and Sughra implores to be taken along:

"May Allah restore you to health soon, dear daughter!  
 The thought of his child's suffering is enough to sadden  
 a father.  
 Soon am I to embark on a desert journey full of hardship  
 and travail.  
 Only Allah knows what lies ahead of Husain;  
 My heart burns at your consuming fever, Sughra;  
 The agony of the languishing thought is consuming.  
 How can I get reconciled to leaving you behind in this  
 state?"

But taking you along would be playing with your life.  
 My dearest child, you know it too well;  
 But, parting is my fate in this helpless pass.  
 Separated shall I cry in anguish and bewail;  
 Journey's end will overwhelm me with pain".

Sughra replies:

"For such tender love I could lay my life;  
 Who else will shower love and care on a dutiful daughter?  
 My life be your offering! Health too will be restored.  
 Lord's loving glance will cure all ailments.  
 When the world's Messiah casts a benevolent look,  
 Even chronic patients jump back to health."<sup>21</sup>

20. Translation by Maharaj Kumar Mohd. Amir Haider Khan.

21. *Ibid*,

Akbar, who is greatly attached to his sister, is also moved to tears at the parting but Sughra consoles him:

"Dear brother! Let not tears roll down your cheek over,  
 my solitude;  
 God willing, you are returning to the city in happiness  
 and health.  
 Though it is hard to assume you will see me alive;  
 But, my life an offering for yours, do promise to return.  
 If the campaign prolongs call me through a letter, brother!  
 Verily, you won't forget me while celebrating your  
 marriage, brother!"<sup>22</sup>

For a reader, who has prior knowledge of the fate of Akbar and others at Karbala, these ingenious allusions to the future add poignance to the words uttered. Strangely, Sughra in such speeches appears to Dr. Sadiq "far too clever, far too knowing for her age." That would not only be a very superficial reading of Anis but indeed of the entire episode as it took place.

#### *Understanding of Human Psychology*

Anis is a master of human psychology, though he wrote at a time when psychology was yet to get organised into a regular branch of knowledge. His characters include the saintly *Imām*, the slaves, the soldiers, the captains, the aged and the young, even a baby, men, women, children, friends and foes, father, mother, son, brother, sister, uncle, nephew, widows, the newly-weds, the leader and his followers, kind hearted people and merciless enemies, the brave and the mercenary. He treats the variegated crowd of people with consummate selectivity, spotting peculiarities in this diversity and identifying significant points. He has drawn very intimate pen pictures of their reactions to a common situation and their general behaviour and demeanour. He is superb in dialogue, where the language changes with age, sex, class and station of subjects who were bound to act in harmony in the face of a common and imminent danger and did not leave much room for variation.

Specimens of faithful characterisation are also to be found

22. Translation by Maharaj Kumar Mohammad Amir Haider Khan.

in the combat scenes, where the heroes are locked in bitter fight with the giants of the opposite camp. The poet brings out the contrasting abilities and qualities with uncanny insight into human nature. In mounting suspense, as in triumph and defeat how each man conducts himself gets artistic treatment.

Ordinarily, it would be difficult to delineate distinctive characteristics in situations of suspended animation but Anis does it with considerable success. The standard of Husain's army is to emerge ceremoniously from the Chief's tent. The comrades in faith and arms are lined up, waiting for its appearance, ready for sacrifice. The occasion is described by Anis thus:

Faces of some are flushed with the fervour of chivalry;  
Some are putting on their armour with the pride of  
self-adornment;

Some bend forth to tighten the saddle belts;  
Some try their arrows on their bow, though they are  
famished;

There are others tilting their spears in martial ecstasy;  
Some kiss the hilts of their sword and stand erect.

The young ones embrace one another, smiling;  
They are happy, as they intend going to paradise;  
Their ruddy faces bursting with courage and resolution.  
They pray to Almighty that their feet never leave the  
battlefield.

And that the love of Haider<sup>23</sup> reign over their hearts  
even after death.

And whether they get water or don't, may He bestow  
honour on them.

The aged comrade, Habib ibn Mazahir, is no less happy:

The army hailed the news with delight;  
The comrades flocked to the door in respectful suspense;  
Habib ibn Mazahir exclaimed "Thank God"!  
Valiant soldiers! It's our pleasure to face war ordeals.  
Earn Paradise in exchange for your heads.  
Let us watch who dies under this flag.

The poet paints a scene inside the chief's tent:

While the forces waited outside for the flag;  
The Royal master was putting on his war dress  
All the near relations stood ready fully armed,  
Abbās, the exalted one, was in the front with the flag.  
He was there in full glory of his rank;  
It seemed as if Ali stood poised for the holy war.

Kinsmen offer felicitations to Abbās on his receiving the banner and his stepsister Zaināb, the mother of Aun and Mohammad joins them. Aun and Mohammad, too young to get the honour, harboured a desire to be the standard bearers. Anis makes a poetic allusion to it as Zaināb addresses Abbās:

Zaināb after fond caresses said:

"Congratulations on your elevation, the heir of the  
Lord of the Valiants".

Abbās with folded hands said:

"Take me to be just a servant of Aun and Mohammad  
I hold charge of the command on their behalf  
The two princes are the masters and I their steward".

Anis proceeds to describe the child-like ambition of the sons of Zaināb to get the standard. They are sore that it has been denied to them:

They neither looked towards their mother nor towards the  
flag

With tearful eyes they sat, their heads bent low;  
Sweat on their resplendent faces  
Looked like dew drops on the roses.

The mother notices it, takes them aside and speaks:

From dusk till dawn you prayed constantly  
That you find honour in death before others.  
What has caused this indignation now,  
With tears and frown in the eyes,  
And beads of sweat on your faces?  
Where is gone your vivacity and sweet speech?

The children complain:

Were we not the heirs of Jafar-i-Tayyar?  
Were we not eligible for the lofty rank?

The mother pressed her finger between her teeth and  
exclaimed,

“Ha!”  
Why talk about a *fait accompli*?  
The wife of Abbās might overhear.

Imām Husain persuades Zaināb not to send both of her young sons to the field but Zaināb says, insisting:

I hope they will be in the vanguard of the forces.  
They dare not speak in your holy presence,  
So their state of lofty resolution is unknown to you.  
They have the stern looks, majestic demeanour and high  
valour of their grandfather.  
In the dextrous use of sword and shield they resemble Ali  
Although in age, they are really youngsters.

(Translations by Qurratulain Hyder)

All this is just an antithesis of the attributes of “tearfulness” and “self-pity” which Dr. Sadiq gives to Anīs’s compositions. Excessive lamentation has not been entirely unknown to the traditional *marthia* including some of the early *Sozekhwanī* pieces of Anīs. In the *marthias* proper, however, he has been balanced and austere. The general Āryan and Semitic customs also do not much mind lamentations, as they are taken to reflect deep family bonds and do not smudge the heroism of the personalities concerned. This free display of human feelings rather enhances their acceptability as a kith and kin of the world.

True to type, the brave heroes are mellow of heart. H.C. Beeching refers to this phenomenon as “the allied graces of gentleness and manliness,” in his assessment of Shakespeare.<sup>24</sup> In Anīs also, the brave react to a distressing situation with tender feelings and do not let the ladies and the young ones feel isolated in their moments of grief. Anīs usually tries to redeem a momentary loss of self-control by an impulsive reversion to

restraint and composure. The deep concern of the ladies for the safety of Husain and the preservation of ideals does not overshadow their patience and courage. Their tears are not the tears of the weak.

Apart from the devotional concepts, the human element of the *marthia* is important. Here is Husain standing alone ready to meet his end:

The valiant who had come with him from his home in Hejaz,  
Lay on the sand there, speared to death, in everlasting sleep;  
Fresh Flowers, cutdown, withering without water in the sun;  
Far from their homes they died, they got no shroud nor  
coffin there.

The desert sun beat down on them, no covering sheet was  
there;  
Nor shade above! what awful, unjust times had come about.

Their leader looked weighed down with such great  
poignant grief.

His face, all wan and pale! his bloodshot eyes, with tears  
of blood,

Now sorrowing for his brother, now in anguish for his son  
Now anxious that the bodies of his friends be trampled not;  
And now he would advance to fight, and now he would  
stop short

And now he would stand up, and now by grief he would  
be bent.

#### *Universalism*

We know that disaster envelops the righteous and moral in the *marthias* and the melancholy it generates could render it unbearably dense, if Anīs had confined himself to lack lustre descriptions of arid deserts. He forestalled this by brief sojourns into lyric or nature poetry, marked by touch of delicate Indian colouration. It created a proper climate for the local acceptance of his literary creations. These infinitesimal deviations saved his *marthias* from degenerating into historical or religious versification. Its artistically worked elegiac mood helped to fix attention on the absorbing story of how the disaster is borne with fortitude for the moral rehabilitation of mankind. The conflict of good

24. *Anīs and Shakespeare*: 320.

and evil does not always culminate in the immediate triumph of the good, though in the ultimate analysis, it might overwhelm the evil. This process may take decades or even centuries and history and the world can well afford to wait. These confrontations have a tendency to recur, not necessarily in the same place, and their message is, therefore, eternal. The universal abides after the body is perished. Against such a cosmopolitan background, a little intermingling of Arabian and Indian motifs has its own justifications, though the stern critic might still insist that the deviations should have been avoided. There are many like this writer who would contest such a stand.

We have alluded to the special form Anis was writing in, and its peculiar requirements but have yet to spell out the totality that the *marthia* is and aims at.

The *Sozekhwani marthias* are purely elegiac and, but for some of the emotionally moving pieces, their value is more devotional. The enlarged *tahtul lafz marthia* is the *Marthia* proper for our purpose. It usually tells the story of a martyr, such as 'Ali Akbar,<sup>25</sup> Abbās,<sup>26</sup> 'Aun and Mohammad,<sup>27</sup> Hūr,<sup>28</sup> Qāsim,<sup>29</sup> or one of Husain's companions like Habib bin Mazahir and Zuhair bin Qain. They have been hounded out of their homes by the men of a ruler who is bent upon securing their obeisance at the point of the sword. But, they are all made of sterner stuff and braving the hardships of the struggle at unkind Karbala, starving and thirsting, they go willingly and cheerfully to face inevitable death on the battle field. Yāzid has sent a large mercenary army. Its superiority in numbers and arms does not deter this devoted band of followers who cling to the *Imām* until death separates them. One by one, they take leave, proceed to clash with the enemy and get killed. The night before the fatal day, Husain announced a general permission to his supporters to leave him as sure death awaited them next morning, but not a soul moved, although the lights were put out to give them the cover of darkness. Two stanzas from a *marthia* of Anis will suffice to illustrate it:

25. Imām Husain's eighteen year old son.

26. Imām Husain's step-brother and the standard bearer of his army.

27. The two sons of Zaināb, the Imām's sister.

28. A commander of Yāzid's army, who came over to Husain's side.

29. The Imām's nephew.

That leader true of both the worlds stood at the place of  
prayers.  
The other side beat battle drums, this side called for prayers.  
Such true, devoted men whose speech was steeped in  
scriptural texts.  
Such fighters for the cause of Truth, the very soul of faith.  
So thoroughly devout, they were distinguished among saints.  
Devotees true who bowed in prayers amidst the flashing  
swords.

O God, what wonderful comrades they were, what warriors  
bold.  
What superb horsemen, they themselves! what matchless  
steeds they rode!  
All praise and honour they deserved, by virtue of great  
deeds.  
So far outnumbered, yet so steadfast in self-sacrifice,  
They suffered from such searing thirst, the soul strained  
hard to leave.  
And yet they patiently bore hardships with parched  
throats, dried lips.

Husain, the central figure in the *marthias*, is faced by an aggressor. As a leader, he has done everything to avoid an armed confrontation. He takes up arms only to defend the right of men to live honourably and in peace. Anis never shows any of his martyrs in a hustle; they do not itch for a fight; but when a fight is forced on them, they fight back fearlessly.

The effective duration of time within which all the characters have to appear and depart is only from morn till afternoon. An individual martyr has even less time to himself. Anis sets this short span of time against three days of thirst and hunger and the gruelling wait of about a week earlier. At times, he stretches it further by flashback to the period spent in the forced journey from Medina to Karbala. He, however, skips over most of the details and concentrates on the tenth day of Moharrum. It goes to the poet's credit that he raises a grand edifice on the slender material available from the short time span fate has ordained for each hero. He imaginatively reconstructs all the relevant events through short, meaningful hints. A major part

of the *marthia* is taken up by the hero's last act of supreme sacrifice, for which Anis carefully builds an atmosphere of conscious dignity. He does well not to huddle all the heroes together to prolong the story. Instead, he devotes a full *marthia* to each hero.

The battle is over by the afternoon but not the enemy action. The Yazidites set fire to the tents of the ladies and loot whatever there is, seize and finally march them off to a far off prison. History took its revenge, for not very long after the ruling dynasty crumbled. Islam was saved from falling into the imperial trap. Its ideology of basic humanism triumphed and survives to this day.

Now, this whole story revolves round the pivotal motive, namely, the preservation of the permanent inheritance of Islam, and the Prophet's grandson emerges as a towering figure, the saviour of a great tradition. It is no particular schism of segment of that ideology for which he stakes his all. It is the universal which reverberates in the story as told by Anis and assumes the cosmopolitanism of an elegiac epic, overflowing geographical bounds, and that constitutes its strong point and vindicates some of his major innovations.

#### *Deviations*

Anis was writing *marthias* of modest epic dimensions and he had direct access only to the imperfect Persian patterns of the *Shāhnāmāh* and the *Sikandarnāmāh* to draw upon. On the elegiac and panegyric side, the decadent Arabic model was also within his reach. There is reason to believe that he was acquainted with epic material in Avadhi as well. Descriptions of the various stages of the conflict bear the stamp of *vir rasa*, *vibhatsya rasa*, *karuna rasa* and *adbhuta rasa* of the *Avadhi Kavyas*. The language held sway in Faizabad and Lucknow, where Anis nurtured his literary tastes under the shadow of the regional master pieces like *Padmavat* and the great classic *Ram Charit Manas*. In all these triple sources of Arabic, Persian and Avadhi, the use of hyperbole and figures of speech was common and tradition and style had acquired a kind of inelasticity. Anis utilised the locally available material to the extent that his theme, deeply rooted in Islamic history, would allow. He could not tamper with the moral and social base of his story—a story

that was real and not fictional. That it was being written some thirteen hundred years after the event and for an audience largely unfamiliar with Arab topography and climate provided the *raison d'être* for the elegiac-epic style, blending Arab, Iranian and Indian elements which the *marthia* under Anis evolved finally.

Let us not forget that all forms of Urdu poetry have drawn freely upon local traditions as time went by and deviated from the original Persian models. How could a living literature or a form of it remain unaffected by the social milieu that produced it? Otherwise also, Islam in India influenced Indian life and culture in hundreds of ways and was in turn, itself influenced to give impetus to a composite culture. Anis is a poet of this cultural interplay, although he remains an uncompromisingly devout Muslim to the last. To him, Imām Husain and other members of the Prophet's family are the repositories of all virtue and possess super human qualities but they are human too and share the feelings and sentiments of ordinary mortals. They are proud of their holy descent, of their great heritage but in human affairs, they conduct themselves like good men of all times and climes.

#### *Internal Unity*

The *marthia* relates the story of individual martyrs engaged in a holy war but does not defy them. They feel and act like brothers, sons, uncles and fathers too. The women have been brought up in prophetic surroundings but they behave, as they should, like mothers, sisters, daughters and wives also. In such cases, each character is treated as a symbol and, if the local colour is sharp, it serves Anis's purpose well.

Anis is capable of writing in the grand style as in simple narrative and he knows instinctively which to employ where. He has to cater to the popular literary tastes of the day, particularly in relation to the elaboration of style, ornamentation and embellishment, but he does it not so much to display his skill or his preference but to demonstrate his ability to those for whom ornamentation was an article of faith. Happily, such occasions are not many. The artist within him usually resists but there is evidence of his using figures of speech and rhetorical expressions

at times to the detriment of the artistic blend he is so careful to maintain.

Dr. Sadiq's anxiety about the absence of unity in characterisation is misconceived, for an inner unity runs through the various aspects portrayed in the *marthias*. There is nothing potently contradictory in the emphasis on the heroism of the characters at one place and their generosity, forbearance and forgiveness at others. Their coexistence is a fact of history and one does not see how it could mar the unity.

The human material and the dramatic potential was there for skilful exploitation by Anis to fill up the gaps from observations of every day Indian life; taking good care to retain the essentially Arab element of his subjects. True, balance had to be maintained as he was writing the story of the Prophet's grandson, his family members and an overwhelmingly Arab following. But the family traits of courage, determination, hospitality, generosity and sacrifice for a cause were as much Arab as universal. The devotional factor also helped the poet to combine the two aspects. Whether it was Arab chivalry and tenacity of purpose or the piety and godliness of the main characters, he could afford to view them with the eyes of an Indian devotee and yet remain as close to the ideal as his art style permitted.

Husain and his followers symbolised oppressed humanity pitted against a ruthless enemy. In India, colonialism was knawing into the princely States and finally annexed Avadh. It presented a situation where the symbol held out a message of uncompromising struggle. History bears testimony to the great resistance the people of Avadh put up during the 1857 revolt. How far the *marthias* were responsible for rousing national feelings requires detailed probing. At this stage, one can only say that the ramble of contemporary history also sounds through this poetic form.

#### *The Invocation*

To tell the story of such a fight, Anis often prefaces his *marthia* with a lyrical note or a genial description of nature. An introduction (*chehrā*) of this type is a deliberately created imagery to help readers visualise the wide sympathies and the fearlessness of the hero he is about to introduce. The introduc-

tory part, the dialogue and elegiac situations offered several opportunities to Anis to travel beyond the confines of the conventional material. One such instance is provided by his analysis of the feelings and emotions of a traveller in a strange place:

*Hote hain bahot ranj musāfir ko safar mein  
Rāhat nahinṅ milti koi dam āth pahar mein.  
Sau Shaghl hon par dheyān lagā rathā hai ghar mein,  
Phirti hai Sadā shakl azizon ki nazār mein.  
Sang-i-gham-i-furquat dil-i-nazuk pa girānṅ hai  
Andoh-i-gharibul watani kāahish-i-jān hai.*

*Go sath mein hamrāh bhī ho rāhelah-o-zād  
Jāti nahinṅ afsurdagi-i-khātir-i-nāshād,  
Jab ālam-i-tanhāi mein ātā hai watan yād  
Har gam pa dil misl-i-jaras kartā hai faryād.  
Ek ān gham-o-ranj se fursat nahinṅ hoti.  
Manzil pa bhī ārām kī sūrat nahinṅ hoti.*

*Hamrāh safar mein ho agar hāmī-o-nāsir,  
Manzil pa' kamar khol ke sote hainṅ mnsāfir,  
Jab ho safar-i-khauf-o-parishānti-i-khātir,  
Shab jāgte hi jāgte, hojāti hai ākhir  
Har tarh musāfir ke liye ranj-o-ta'ab hai  
Rahjāe pas-i-qāfila chhutkar to ghazab hai.*

The Traveller's life is full of difficulties.  
There is no rest at night or day, no ease.  
He thinks of home in spite of anxieties  
The dear loved faces dance before his eyes.  
The grief of absence fills him all the time,  
The cares of travel do not part from him.

Though with companions and the caravan,  
Secret sorrows make him pale and wan.  
And when in loneliness he thinks anon  
Of home, his heart pounds loudly like a gong.  
Unknown fears beset him night and day,  
And follow at his heels right through the way.

If he is travelling with soldiers or with friends,  
The traveller sleeps in peace till day ascends,  
When dangers overtake him and fear sends  
Nightmares, he keeps awake till dark night ends.

Thus many cares assail him one by one  
The most he dreads is being left alone.

He begins many of his *marthias* with the description of night or of morning or the verdant green of the forests or the flowering of the garden or of the song of the *bulbul*. These are basically symbolic of spiritual fervour. The divine presence he implies is too obvious to be missed and dispels the sombre and grim nature of the immediate reality.

*Tai kar chaukā jo manzil-i-shab kārvāni-i-subh,*  
*Hone lagā ufuq se howaidā mishān-i-subh*  
*Gardoṅ se kooch karne lage akhtarān-i-subh;*  
*Har soo hui buland sada-i-azān-i-subh.*

*Pinhān nazar se ring shab-i-tar hogaya*  
*Ālām tamām matla'-i-anwār hogayā.*

*Chhupnā woh māhtā'b kā, woh subh kā zuhoor;*  
*Yād-i-khudā mein zamzama pardāzi-i-tuyūr,*  
*Woh rāunaq aur wo sard hawā, wo faza wo noor.*  
*Khunki ho jis se chashm ko aur qalb ko suroor.*  
*Insān zamīn pa mahv, malak asmān par,*  
*Jāri thā zikr-i-qudrat-i-haq har zubān par.*

*Wo surkhi-i-shafaq ki sahar charkh par bahār*  
*Wo' bārwar darakht, wo' sahrā, wo' sabzazar*  
*Shabnam ke wo gulon pa' guhar hai abdā.*  
*Phoolon se sab bhārā huā dāmān-i-kohsar*  
*Nafe khule hue wo gulon ki shamīm ke*  
*Āie the sard sard wo' jhonke nasīm ke.*

When morning's caravan had crossed the night,  
Appeared on the fringe of sky the signs of light.  
Marched from the heavens the stars in hasty flight,  
Sounded calls to prayer from mosque and height

The face of black night slowing vanished then.  
The whole wide world was filled with light and sun.

The moon went hiding and the morning came;  
The birds began to sing, repeat God's name.  
Fresh blew the breeze and cool, and Nature's frame  
Lit up, and cheered the heart and eye became.  
As men on earth, the angles in the skies,  
Were lost in wonder at Nature's mysteries.

The red of twilight, sky of splendid sheen  
The laden tress, the desert, meadows green;  
Pearls of dew on cheeks of roses keen,  
The valley full of flowers, a wondrous scene.  
Released the roses scent was all round there,  
Blew rustling gusts of cool, refreshing air.<sup>30</sup>

*Wo' subh aur wo' chhṅṅ sitāron ki aur wo' noor!*  
*Dekhe to ghash kare 'areni'—goye koh-i-Toor.*  
*Paidā gulon se qudrat-i-Allāh kā Zuhoor;*  
*Wo' jā-bajā darakhton pa' tasbih-khwān tuyūr.*  
*Gulshan Khajil the gumbad-i-minōo esās se*  
*Jangal thā sab basā huā phoolon kī bās se.*

*Thandī hawā mein sabzah-i-shrā kī wo' lahak,*  
*Sharmāe jis se atlas-i-zangāri-i-fulak.*  
*Wo' jhoomnā darakhton kā, phoolon ki wo' mahak;*  
*Har barg-i-gul pa' qatrah-i-shabnam ki wo' jhalak,*  
*Hire khajil the gauhar-i-yaktā nisār the*  
*Paṭṭe bhi har shajar ke jawāhir nigār the.*

*Qurban-i-san'at-i-qalam-i-aafriḍgaar!*  
*Thī har waraq pa' san'at-i-tarji' āshkaar.*  
*'Ajiz hai fikrat-i-sho'ara-i-hunar-she'aar.*  
*In san'aton ko pae kahān 'aql-i-sadah-kar.*  
*'Ālam thā mahv qudrat-i-Rabb-i-Ebād par.*  
*Minā kiyā thā wādi-i-minoo-sawād par.*



*Wo' noor au' wo' dasht sohana sa, wo' fazā;  
Durrāj-o-kabk-o-ṭeehū-o-ṭāoos ki sadā;  
Woh josh-i-gul, wo' nālah-i-murghān-i-khush nawāl  
Sardī jigar ko bakhshī-thī subh ki hawā.  
Phoolon se sabz, sabz shajar surkh posh the  
Thale bhī nakhl ke sabad-i-gul-farosh the.*

*Wo' dasht, wo' naseem ke jhonke, wo' sabzahzār;  
Phoolon pa jābajā wo' guharhāi aabdār;  
Uthnā wo' jhoom jhoom ke shaakhon kaa baar-baar;  
Baalaa-i-nakhl ek jo bulbul, to gul hazār!  
Khwahān the zahr-i-gulshan-i-Zahrā jo āb ke,  
Shabnam ne bhar diye the katore gulāb ke.*

*Wo' qumriyon kā chār taraf sarv ke hujūm;  
'Koo, koo' ka shore, na' rah-i-"Haqq sirrahoo" ki dhoom;  
"Subhana Rabbānā" ki sadā thī 'alal 'umoom;  
Jārī the wo' jo unki ebādat ke the rusoom;  
Kuchh gul faqat na karte the Rabb-i-'Ula ki hamd,  
Har khār ko bhī nok-i-zabān thī khudā ki hamd.*

*Chiyunṭi bhī hāth uthā ke ye kahtī thī baar-baar,  
"Ay danah-kash za'ifon ke Rāziq, tere nithār!  
"Ya Hayyo, Ya Qadeero" kī thī har taraf pukār.  
Tahlil thī kal'in, kahin tasbīh-i-kirdegār.*

*Tāyer hawā me mahv, hiran sabzahzār mein,  
Jangal ke sher goonj rahe the kachhār mein.*

*Kānton mein ek taraf the reyāz-i-Nabi ke phool,  
Khushboo se jinki Khuld tha jangal ka 'arz-o-tool,  
Dūnyā ki zeb-w-zeenat-i-Kāshānah-i-Butool!  
Wo' bāgh thaa lagaa gaye the khud jise Rasool.  
Māh-i-'Azā ke 'ashrah-i-awwal mein kat gayā!  
Wo' baghiyon ke hāth se jangal mein kat gayā.*

Such morn, such starry shade, and such a beauteous light,  
If Moses saw this, he would swoon away at sight.  
The flowers did their great Creator's art display,  
Upon the trees were perched nice birds that sang their lay.

Eclipsed were flow'r-gardens by the resplendent vale,  
The flow'ry jungles new, their perfume did exhale.

The breezes balmy cool! the waving of the lea;  
The verdent satin sky, was put to shame truly.  
The nodding of the trees, the fragrant flow'rs, their hue;  
On every petal shone, each glittering drop of dew;  
Diamonds were as abashed, great pearls were eclipsed  
free,  
Wrote jewelled script, I kēn e'en leaves of every tree.

May we be a sacrifice for the Creator's Pen,  
The ornamental art was on each page, I ken.  
The gifted poet's intellect is crazed outright;  
How can man's simple reason reach such a sublime height;  
Whole universe was dazed by power of Lord the Great,  
He had enamelled well, the heavenly vale, I state.

Such sheen, the level field, such charming spaciousness,  
The peacock's cry, shrill notes of quails and partridges.  
Such exub'rance of flow'rs, and birds' sweet melody;  
Coolth to the liver gave, the moving breezes free.  
Full blooming verdant trees, were neatly dressed in red,  
The platforms of the trees, were florists' baskets spread.

Such verdant lea, such lawn, such gushes of the breeze;  
Those lustrous dewdrops twinkling from the flower trees;  
The branches nod, move up, repeatedly 'midst bow'rs,  
Sits on the tree a bulbul, 'mong a thousand flow'rs.  
The flow'rs of Zahra's garden, for water thirsty were,  
Were filled the cups of roses, with dew so pure and rare.

Around the cypress-tree, the turtle-doves now crowd;  
Some pipe "Haqq Sirvuhu," while others coo aloud;  
"Subhana Rabbānā;" was commonly heard this note;  
All their devotional tunes and airs, were now afloat.  
Not simply roses did God's praises hum and sing,  
Each thorn upon the point of tongue, did praises bring.

The ant raised up its hands and cried repeatedly,  
 Weak grain-bearers' suppli'r, were sacrifice for Thee,  
 All round shouts of "Ya Hyy" and "Ya Qadeer" were heard,  
 Orisons somewhere and somewhere were pray'rs offer'd.  
     Amazed were birds in air, and in the forest deer;  
     The forest lions roared, close by marsh and more.

The flowers of Prophet's garden, 'midst thorns stood one  
side

Their heavenly odour filled the forest, far and side;  
 World's ornaments they were, jewels of the Holy Dame;  
 This was the garden which did Prophet plant—the same.  
     In the first tenth of mourning month, it was raided sad;  
     Among the jungles ruined 'twas by the mutineers bad.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly his characters may be speaking the local idiom but their sentiments, aspirations and chief characteristics are Arabian as well. They may not have walked in an Indian garden or listened to the chirping of birds in Indian forests, but in the eyes of Anis their doing so is no contradiction. The entire universe feels like them and breathes in unison with them. Such poetic liberties imparted contemporariness to his works and need not be unduly frowned upon.

#### *Battle Scenes*

We have seen how actively interested the poet was in the martial arts. The life-like depictions of battle scenes bear testimony of his intimate knowledge of the art. In the words of Prof. Ahmad Ali, "Anis excelled at descriptions of battle scenes, being himself an excellent swordsman and rider. They may not describe the battles as they had taken place at Karbala; the horses of his *marthias* are of fine breed. But with the help of such devices and the use of pathos and action, Anis gave the *marthias* a certain epic element and by exploiting human emotions, he gave the story a heroic touch." Ahmed Ali has translated for us two stanzas from Anis, describing the exploits of his hero with the Arab sword:

When in the woods flashed forth that sword of fire,  
 Trembled the skies, took shelter from its ire;  
 Snakes left their caves; the tigers grassy mires,  
 Cries for mercy filled the world entire.  
     The fishes were unsettled like waves  
     The hearts of rocks too quaked in watery caves.

In Cairo's army rose a raging storm  
 Like waves its ranks were broken, lost their form,  
 Trapped were soldiers in this great maelstorm:  
 The beasts breathed not in terror of the storm.  
     Not only had the armies run away  
     The river itself changed course for dread of day.

These beautifully translated pieces, though not the most representative of the poet, serve to illustrate how he utilises nature as a backdrop to create atmosphere and takes the entire universe in his sweep. When the hero sallies forth, sword in hand, not only the enemy ranks but the entire world trembles. In this hyperbole throbs a devotee's heart, whose hero is endowed with supernatural powers and whose actions affect all living beings. Does it not echo the hyperbole of the Arabic *qasida*? Ahmad Ali's scepticism about whether the actual battle of Karbala was being described springs from a misconception. In those days of hand to hand fights, one battle was not much different from another. Even if it were, the *marthia* was not concerned with the form or the art of fighting as such. What mattered was the recapturing of the battle scene, with all its grandeur and horror. In the sense, and on the success of Anis in doing this, there can be no two opinions. The battle scenes are essentially Arab, be it personal combat or mass attack. It is just a coincidence that Persia and India of those days followed more or less the same war strategy and technique, which were an expansion of the Arab war manoeuvres.

#### *Salāms and Ruba'is*

While discussing his works, we have referred in passing to the large volume of writings in the form of *salāms* and *ruba'is*. These require separate evaluation because of their volume and peculiarities of form and approach. *Salāms* are easily divisible into

31. Translated by Syed Ameer Ail Ma'soomi of Iran.

two—(i) the predominantly elegiac, and (ii) the lyrical-elegiac. In the matter of quatrains, each *rubā'i* is a separate entity and there is little room for multiple moods or themes. *Salāms*, like *ghazals* do permit multiplicity of moods and ideas. The moral element is loud and strong in the *rubā'is*, but the *salām* usually whispers; communication is more articulate and it does not suppress the lyrical overtones. The pervading mood is philosophical, unless where it turns lamentational. It touches upon a variety of subjects in tones which are hardly distinguishable from the *ghazal*. A *marthia* writer, who abjures the *ghazal*, is not hindered in the choice of themes. A few couplets will illustrate the point:

*Khud naved-zindigi lai qaza mere liye,  
Sham-i-kushta hūn, fanā mein hai baqā mere liye.*

*Kisi ko kiya ho dilon kī shikastagī kī khabar,  
ki tutne mein ye' shishe sada nahin rakhte.*

*Kheyāl-i-Khātir-i-ahbāb chāhiye har dam  
Anīs, thes na lag jāey ābgīnon ko.*

*Dar pa' shāhon ke nahin jāte faqīr Allāh ke  
Sar jahān rakhte hain sab, wān ham qadam rakhte nahin.*

*Ye jhurriyān nahin hāthon pa' zo'fe pirī ne,  
Chunā hai jāmah-i-hastī kī āstīnon ko.*

*Guzar gae the kaī din ki ghar mein āb na thā  
Magar Husain se sābir ko izterāb na thā.*

*Anīs, dam kā bharosā nahin thahar jāo  
Chirāgh leke kahān sāmne hawā ke chaley.*

*Zindigī mein to na ek dam khush kiyā haṅs bol kar  
Aj kyon rote hain mere āshnā mere liye.*

*Usi kā nūr har ek shai mein jalwahgar dekhā  
Usi kī shān nazar āgāz jidhar dekhā*

*Merā rāz-i-dil āshkārā nahin  
Wo' daryā hūn jis kā kanārā nahin.  
Wo' gul hūn judā sab se hai jis kā rang  
Wo' boo hūn ke jo āshkārā nahin.  
Wo' pānt hūn shūrīn nahin jis mein shore  
Wo' ātash hūn jis mein sharāvā nahin,  
Faqīron ki majlis hai sab se judā,  
Amīron kā yaṅ tak guzārā nahin.*

I am the extinguished candle, in mortality resides my  
immortality.

Death itself brought me the happy tidings of life.

× ×

How could one ever hear the breaking of a heart!  
These glasses do not clang when they are smashed.

× ×

Friendship's pleasure needs constant nursing, Anīs!  
Guard the delicate glass against the mildest knock.

× ×

Was it the flash of lightning or the flicker of a flame!  
I winked my eyes, and lo! the youth was gone for ever.

× ×

God's dervishes do not knock at royal doors;  
We won't put our feet where others feign bow their heads.

× ×

All-Munificent! Give me what Thou desireth, without my  
asking;

A pauper though, I know not the ways of begging.

× ×

There are not the wrinkles, but old age infirmity  
Has crimped the sleeves of life's robes.

× ×

For days the house had not a drop of water,  
But unperturbed stood the patience of Husain.

× ×

Anīs! Stop a while, for this breath sounds undependable;  
How dare you carry the lamp in this strong wind?

× ×

While I lived they spared not a moment's joy,  
Why should my friends now shed tears for me?

The goal of death is hard to reach, traveller! you are warned.  
Cruel reality reveals itself when soul leaves the body.

× ×

In everything I behold, His light outshines,  
In every direction I glance, His grandeur pervades.

× ×

My heart's secret is never revealed;  
I am a river without a shore.  
A flower am I whose colour differs from all others,  
I am the smell that remains unseen.  
I am the sweet water which knows no sourness;  
I am the fire whose flame doesn't show.  
The society of dervishes is different from all;  
The rich have no access to their circle.

The *ruba'is* deal mostly with metaphysical or moral problems.  
Quite a few, however, touch upon elegiac themes, while some  
concern matters connected with every day life.

*Gulshan mein sabā ko justujū teri hai;*  
*Bulbul ki zabān pa' gustugū teri hai.*  
*Har rang mein jalwah ha' teri qudrat kā*  
*Jis phool ko soonghā huñ bū teri hai.*

*Har barg se qudrat-i-Ahad paidā hai,*  
*Har phool se san'aṭ-i-Samad paidā hai.*  
*Sinah hai bashar ka woh mohlt-i-zakhkār*  
*Har ek nafas se jazro-mad paidā hai.*

*Jab nām-i-'Ali munh se nikal jātā hai*  
*Gar koh-i-masaib ho to tal jātā hai.*

*Girte, girte bashar sambhal jātā hai.*

*Ādam ko ajab khudā ne ruṭbā bakhshā*  
*Adnā ke liye maqām a'lā bakhshā*  
*Aql-o-hunar-o-ṭamiz-o-Jān-o-Imān*  
*Is ek kaf-i-khāk ko kyā kyā bakhshā.*

The garden's breezes seek Thee, Master mine,  
The nightingale sings eulogies divine,  
In ev'ry colour is Thy Power display'd.  
Whichever flower I smell, the perfume's Thine.<sup>32</sup>

The Maker's power in ev'ry leaf I see,  
In ev'ry flower eternal mastery;  
Man's bosom is a boundless ocean-deep,  
Each breath the ebb and flow of tides at sea.<sup>33</sup>

When uttered forth is the name, "Ya Ali!  
Troubles, a mountain mass, fade fast and flee;  
The blessed nature called upon a sudden fall,  
Guides faltering steps to safety instantly.<sup>34</sup>

God bestowed on man a glory great;  
The lowest attained the highest state,  
Wisdom, art, discretion, life and faith,  
This handful of dust got honours untold.

There is nothing extraordinary about the subject matter,  
so common in eastern thought and behavioural processes. It is  
the general theme of the mystic poetry as well. But Anis seems  
to address his *ruba'is*, like Nazir in his poems, deliberately to the  
common man in the audience. High moral ideals, even philo-  
sophical ideas, are reduced to tangible, conversational idiom  
but the choice of words and their melodious ring distinguish  
them from the absolute folk forms and account for their wide  
acceptability and popularity.

32. Translated by Māh Khān.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Eulogies and Elegies*; 10.

## 4

## Conclusion

Anis occupies a unique place among the makers of modern Indian literature. He gave Urdu a much greater Indian element. He universalised the tragic story of Karbala and by his great art had it incorporated into the body of Indian literature. He left a vast fund of idioms and colloquial phrases which had been absorbed by Hindi and allied languages and dialects. He added a new and lively form to Indian dramatic art and literature. To Urdu he gave what can be only inadequately described as the elegiac epic. But his greatest contribution is the vigour and strength which *musaddas* acquired under the influence of the *marthia*. Whether it is Hāli's *Madd-o-Jazr-i-Islam* or Iqbāl's *Shikwa* and *Jawab-i-Shikwa*, the pieces of the Ramayana from Chakbast or patriotic poetry as that of Josh and scores of others, the voice of Anis rings through them all. The narrative form of *mathnavi* had degenerated into mere versification because of the effortlessness it encouraged and the bizarre embellishment it patronised. The development of narrative, descriptive and reflective poetry after Anis can never be considered independently of the debt these owe to him.

Devotional and elegiac poetry had never attained such heights before and it is doubtful if they would be attempted on such a grand scale ever again. But they have already carved out a place for themselves in world literature. They will interest the religious, the mystic and the lover of good poetry alike. One can well close with Āzād's assessment that the *marthias* of Anis are Urdu's contribution to world literature.

## 5

## Gleanings from a Marthia

(Translation: S.M. Amir Imām)

Now heed what happened on that awesome day of martyrdom—  
 What grief and sorrow and what tribulations then befell  
 Those thirsty, starving, steadfast souls devoted thus to God,  
 Who sacrificed their precious lives in service to His cause.  
 Each one of them was such a faithful comrade without par!  
 There never will be such a lord nor ever followers such!

When on the eastern sky the faint white streaks of dawn  
appeared  
 And birds began to sing in chorus their sweet praise of God  
 Husain<sup>1</sup> emerged for morning prayers resplendent like the sun,  
 diffusing radiance all around across the wide, vast plain.  
 The Truth shone forth thus from his bold countenance all  
around,  
 The dawn aside, the moon itself looked pale and struck with  
awe!

The cool, refreshing breeze, across that plain at break of dawn!  
 These waving trees and palms, enraptured by that scene divine!  
 Across the emerald, spreading green, the dew had scattered  
pearls!

The sight itself did revel in that verdurous delight!  
 And when the zephyr blew in from across the silent plain,  
 The sound of buds, as they split open could be clearly heard!

1. The grandson of Prophet Muhammed from his daughter, Fatima.



No cypress, straight and tall, could boast of such a stately  
 form,  
 And Ali's very image were his noble, manly looks,  
 His battle-cry struck mortal terror in the lion's heart.  
 He reached the stream yet thirsted with chivalrous self-control!  
 And for the sake of others who were thirsty like Husain,  
 The standard-bearer acted as a water-carrier too!

That great and generous-hearted man fulfilled all loyalty's  
 trust;  
 So justly called the Prince of Martyrs, loyal right-hand man!  
 They call Husain "God's guiding light", Abbās, "the guide to  
 him".  
 The valiant and the brave call him, "the trusty sword of God".  
 The standard-bearer and his chief—their brotherly love well-  
 known  
 One was the right path's light, the other was light's captive  
 moth!

Then there was youthful Akbar,<sup>12</sup> with those qualities so rare,  
 His handsome face so fresh and fair, far brighter than the  
 moon,  
 Narcissus was left wonderstruck to gaze at him, abashed!  
 So full of grace and gentleness in life, so brave in death!  
 To see his fair and handsome countenance ringed by black  
 locks was  
 To see Muhammad in his glory on Ascension Night!<sup>13</sup>

And Hasan's\* son, like Canaan's Joseph, matchless in good  
 looks,  
 The source of solace to Husain and Hannan's life and soul;  
 Possessing Ali's strength and valour, Hasan's graciousness!

12. Ali al-Akbar was one of Husain's sons who suffered death and martyrdom with him in Karbala on the 10th of Moharram, 61 Hijra.

13. Ali al-Akbar ibn-al-Husain bore a very close resemblance to his great grandfather, the Prophet of Islam.

\*Reference to Qasim ibn Hasan, Husain's nephew and the son of his elder brother, Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib (Hasan, the son of Ali).

Embodiment of Hasan's nature, Hasan's good looks, Hasan's  
 mien!  
 Although the armour weighed upon his spare and boyish  
 frame,  
 He wore it with such princely grace, it went so well with him!

Oh' that forbidding, awesome air of 'Ali's daughter's sons<sup>14</sup>  
 Their wavy locks around their shining faces, lion-like;  
 Their short swords resting on their shoulders, like the crescent  
 moon;  
 Though still not past their boyhood, they held Rustam<sup>15</sup> in  
 contempt!  
 And as they rode there, back and forth, 'twixt those confronting  
 camps,  
 They caused such great confusion in the midst of enemy's  
 ranks.

Their sleeves rolled up, all eagerly prepared to join the fray;  
 That same old awesome air of 'Ali and forbidding mien,  
 With bright red faces like the tiger's: "tiger burning bright!"  
 Determined so to fight and overthrow the enemy's ranks:  
 Though murderous spears strike left and right and arrows  
 thickly rain,  
 Let swords be soon unsheathed and let the battle soon  
 commence!

And suddenly the war drums rolled, the war clouds  
 thundered so  
 That mountains trembled, earth quailed and the forests echoing  
 shook;  
 Shields rose like bank upon bank of clouds, swords flashed like  
 lightning and  
 Death showed its hideous visage in that awful noise and din

14. Reference to 'Awn and Muhammad the sons of 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far and Zaināb bin 'Ali (Zaināb, 'Ali's daughter), Husain's sister.

15. The legendary warrior-hero of Firdowsi's epic poem, *The Shahnamah*.

The sergeants in the other camp let out their battle cry  
Here, in the ranks of Islam they exclaimed, "Ya 'Ali!" too.<sup>16</sup>

The heralds shouted strong encouragements, "Brave ones, go  
forth!

Display your skill with spears and lances and your  
horsemanship!

You hold the stream, surround these starving, thirsty, solitary  
souls!

Step forth you warriors from your ranks, you lions take the  
field!

O Rustams! give a good account of yourselves in the fray!  
You face the children of brave Haidar<sup>17</sup> on this awful day!"

The Sadat<sup>18</sup> shouted, "Help! O King of Heroes<sup>19</sup>—just your  
help!

O revered one of religion, O revered one of faith!  
The venerated Prophet's source of strength and right hand  
man!

It is the hour of help! O pride of Solomon's glory, help!  
For three days we have starved and thirsted and our strength  
is gone!

We seek from you all strength and steadfastness against such  
odds!"

"O may we not so much as say a word, complaining of  
Our thirst! O may we bravely bear, while starving, spear  
thrust wounds!

And even if, near death, we get no drink, we waver not  
But give your son our full support and so may we all die!  
And while our bodies rest beside the body of Husain,  
O may our severed heads be raised on spear-points with his  
head!"

16. "Ya Ali", i.e. "O Ali." is a popular and traditional exclamation uttered on various critical occasions.

17. A name of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

18. Plural of Saiyid, meaning a close and direct descendant of the Prophet of Islam.

19. Reference to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Then all at once the enemy's serried ranks converged on them  
All like a mass of dense black clouds that gather around the

stars  
Or like the pitch dark night that falls to veil a clear, bright day  
A hail of darts and arrows rained down on the thirsty band—

The Prince of Martyrs<sup>20</sup> smiled and then looked at his brother  
while

His faithful comrades watched him apprehensively with grief.

'Abbās submitted, "Out brave men await, all zealously,  
Your word while facing volley after volley, swords in hand.  
We came not uninvited yet these cruel, violent hordes  
Care not!<sup>21</sup> If you so please, permit us now to strike at them  
And push these scoundrels back! While we hold back in silence,  
they

Transgress against us thus, advancing with impunity."

Husain replied, "I willingly await my martyrdom,  
I have no warlike vain desires, nor vain valour's pride.  
I had no wish to fight them but they forced the fight on us.  
So fight back since they harass us with neither cause nor right.  
Let all this cruel, hell-bent horde come up to slaughter me  
For I am all prepared that they behead me for Truth's cause."

Permission granted, those brave warriors spurred their steeds  
and charged—

Like swooping falcons, one by one, they fell upon the foe.  
Oh what a fight! What dextrous strokes! And what self-  
sacrifice!

A single charge by them would put in headlong flight those  
hordes!

They soon struck off clean every over-reaching hostile hand,  
And heads and headless rolled across the bloodied sand.

The awful conflict continued from morning until noon  
And with the dead and dying all the battlefield was strewn,

20. A title of Husain ibn Ali (Husain, the son of 'Aii).

21. Reference to the historical evidence that the Iraqis had invited Husain to lead them in the liberation attempt against Yazid's oppressive rule.



The dispositions and formations of the foe were soon  
All overthrown. So died with glory 'Ali's valiant ones  
So large a force has seldom seen such conflict with so few—  
Whoever fought, they thought that it was 'Ali fighting them!

How valiantly did Qāsim, Akbar and 'Abbās fight back!  
While some cried out for mercy here, there some cried out for  
help!  
When struck, some cried out helplessly, "The world has come  
to its end!"

And thus those valiant martyrs fought and died so gloriously;  
Though they be not here, in this world, Empyrean is their place  
For to this day their name lives on in this created world.

Towards the afternoon that garden was, by Autumn wind  
Laid waste, and leaf by leaf and flower by flower laid bare  
despoiled—  
The son was parted from the father, brother left bereaved  
And Zahra's son<sup>22</sup> was bent with grief, his right hand's<sup>23</sup>  
strength was gone!  
So by that afternoon Husain was all alone, forlorn!

The valiant who had come with him from his home in Hejaz,  
Lay on the sand there, speared to death, in everlasting sleep,  
Fresh flowers, cut down, withering without water in the sun,  
Far from their homes they died; they got no shroud, nor coffin  
there;  
The desert sun beat down on them, no covering sheet was there  
Nor shade above! What awful, unjust times had come about!

Their leader looked so all weighed down with such great  
poignant grief  
His face, all wan and pale; his blood-shot eyes, with tears of  
blood—  
Now sorrowing for his brother, now in anguish for his son,  
Now anxious that the bodies of his friends be trampled not;

22. i.e., Fatima's son, viz., Husain, the son of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter; Zahra being another name of Fatima.

23. viz., his brother 'Abbas.

And now he would advance to fight, and now he would stop  
short;  
And now he would stand up, and now by grief he would be bent.

The heartless foe would shout at him, challenging him to fight  
And saying, "Come and show the metal of your father's sword,  
The dead will not come back to life to face our spears and  
swords,

Once we have severed your head then our job is well nigh done!  
We have a promise of reward from son of Sa'd himself  
And also we have orders to set fire to your tents!"

Husain said, "Come; sever my head; I am prepared to die.  
I neither shirk from fighting nor from laying down my life!  
My warriors are all dead, I have no friend nor helper now—  
You hold both town and wilderness, I am a passer-by!  
So pillage, plunder, burn and kill, if that is good for you!  
O Muslims, you know that this is your Prophet's holy house!"

"Alas! I do not wish to show my face to anyone,  
Your brother yearns for death; his death is nigh, there is no  
time!  
Sukaina's love has dragged me back here from the battlefield—  
Your brother goes to die, O Zaināb! show him your sad face;  
But neither bare your head nor beat your face nor wail nor cry,  
Forget me and remember only God, most great and high."

"O sister! God is pleased with those who suffer patiently—  
With patience all the hardships here turn into blissful ease.  
O sister! follow here your patient mother's<sup>24</sup> way of life.  
But I repeat, take care of my Sukaina when I am  
No more—she has been brought up tenderly. Protect her from  
All harm—take off her ear-rings lest she suffer injuries!"

"Convey to 'Abid<sup>25</sup> this last message mine when he revives:  
You were unconscious when Husain came and went back to die.

24. i.e., Fatima, the Prophet's daughter.

25. 'Ali ibn al-Husain, Zainal-'Abidin, was ailing and weak from high fever and was unable to participate in the struggle and the defence of the great cause in Karbala.

O dearest son be not perturbed, imprisoned though you be!  
Endure, with trust in God, all torments on your way to Shām.<sup>26</sup>

The boat is caught in strong cross currents and such storm-  
tossed waves!

And saying this, he turned his steed towards that host of Shām  
The ladies' cry of lamentation went up from the tent,  
And as he charged across the battlefield towards the foe,  
The hearts and bodies of those hardened soldiers quaked with  
awe;

His recitation of heroic verse astounded them:

"There are some ladies in these tents, of Prophet's holy house,  
Their high place and position is well-known to all the world,  
They have no guardian, no protector now beside myself,  
So when I die, just spare a tent for them, for they, you know,  
Are Prophet's progeny and worthy of respect from you,  
Let them have shelter where they may, in all seclusion, weep."

If I write what those enemies then said in reply to this,  
The very heart and core of stones would melt away with grief!  
Husain's heart, with forebodings, sank, he could endure no  
more,

And heavenwards he looked with thoughts all high, sublime and  
pure;

A heart that is pent up with pain, in tears it finds relief,  
He went to shed tears at the entrance of the Family's<sup>27</sup> tent.

And then he called aloud, 'O Zaināb and O Umm-Kulthūm!  
Husain, this suffering, sole survivor bids you all farewell!  
This evil host must seek to kill me now and I must die.  
If innocent Sukaina<sup>28</sup> be unconscious due to thirst,  
Revive her and tell 'Ābid,<sup>29</sup> who with fever ails, that I  
Now go to die and never shall return to meet you all.

26. Shām, the old Arabic name for the major part of what comprises modern Syria.

27. The Prophet's Holy Family.

28. Husain's daughter.

29. Husain's only surviving son, who succeeded him as the fourth Imam of the followers of the Holy Prophet's Holy Family.

Then from behind the curtain, Zaināb, watching him, replied,  
"O Zahrā's son! may my own life be sacrificed for yours'  
Come! Let me with my mantle wipe the dust from your sad face."  
Husain said, "O dear sister! All my comrades are now dead:  
And even he whom you brought up for him too I have wept—  
I have just lost a dear son like my Ali Akbar, hero."

"I am Muhammad's grandson," boldly he proclaimed,  
"Know who I am, for I am known to our Creator too!  
I have no fear of being wounded, nor of being killed.  
For three days in this awful heat I have been thirsty and  
Here not a moment's ease or comfort I have known, yet I  
Do not complain, enduring all these torments patiently."

"I am the son of 'Ali who on Judgment Day will slake  
Your thirst with *Kawther's*<sup>30</sup> drink, who conquered Khaibar's<sup>31</sup>  
great stronghold,  
Whose dauntless courage won for Islam Badr's battle<sup>32</sup> too;  
The son of him to whom the Prophet gave his daughter's hand;<sup>33</sup>  
He also got the Prophet's holy throne<sup>34</sup> and crown<sup>35</sup> and  
sword;<sup>36</sup>  
On Prophet's shoulder he achieved Ascension's honours high."<sup>37</sup>

This flow of fine address had not yet reached its final phase  
When arrows started raining all at once on 'Ali's son;  
Husain unsheathed his sword and kissed its handle, then he  
called

30. A spring of sweet water in Paradise.

31. A Jewish stronghold, some distance north of Medīnā, conquered during the Prophet's campaigns, led by 'Ali.

32. The first battle between the Muslims of Medīnā and the Quraysh of Mecca, fought on the outskirts of Medīnā.

33. Fātimā, the Prophet's daughter and the mother of Hasan, Husain, Zaināb and Umm-Kulthum, Ali's children.

34. The throne refers to the pulpit, the crown to the Prophet's turban, and the sword which the Prophet gave 'Ali at the Battle of Ohod.

35. See above.

36. See above.

37. Refers to the tradition according to which the Prophet raised 'Ali on his shoulder to pull down an idol after the surrender of Mecca to the Muslims.

Aloud, "Beware! for now the sword of 'Ali flashes forth—  
 'Ali, the victor of Hunain and of Siffin,<sup>38</sup> I am  
 His son—so line up all your ranks and stop me for now I  
 advance!"

The *Zulfaqar*<sup>39</sup> unsheathed, flashed forth and struck disaster on  
 That host; Empyrean's firm foundations shook as Doomsday  
 dawned;  
 Truth's triumph and faith's victory advanced to greet Husain;  
 The glory of great martyrdom too followed in his wake;  
 While awful majesty stepped forth to kiss holy feet,  
 Ascendant fortune walked respectfully in front of him.

He sat up in the saddle and his steed pricked up its ears  
 And raised its head and looked towards that host to charge at  
 it;

While straining at the rein it curved its neck, its tail stood up.  
 Then proudly it fell into a canter, turning now to the right  
 And now to the left, as lightly as the morning breeze and with  
 The ease with which a fairy flies, it passed through hostile  
 ranks.

The Prince of Faith fought hundred thousand mounted men  
 alone,  
 Without a shield, all fearlessly, he faced the pikemen's lines,  
 Like 'Ali he too fought against transgressing tyrant's hordes;  
 One cannot fight against two but he fought against such odds:  
 If anyone could triumph over thousands, then it was  
 He only who was heart and soul of 'Ali—his great son!

Three days of thirst and hunger he endured yet fought God's  
 foes—  
 His throat was parched, his mouth and lips all dry with scaring  
 thirst;

The fresh green plants had dried up in the burning desert sun;  
 The heat of the scorching wind was such that even stones would  
 melt—

38. Two battles in which 'Ali fought valiantly and victoriously.

39. The name of 'Ali's sword given to him by the Holy Prophet.

While stones and gravel glowed like embers on the ground  
 beneath,  
 Above, the red hot sun or shadows of the upraised swords!

He fought them like a lion on the plain and by the bank;  
 While fighting, never did he hide his face behind the shield;  
 The sword of 'Ali never failed in cuts, precise and clean—  
 It severed heads from bodies with precision and despatch;  
 In raising of an eyebrow or the twinkling of an eye,  
 In one swift stroke it cleft into two equal halves the foe.

His eyes possessed the awesome gaze of lion's fearful glare;  
 His steed had all the speed and swiftness of a thunderbolt;  
 Death's awful countenance was mirrored in his flashing sword;  
 His hand possessed the strength and power of the Hand of  
 God!<sup>40</sup>

No wretched mortal could stand up to face his mighty stroke—  
 His strength came from the nourishment he got from Fatimā.<sup>41</sup>

Ask of Husain about thirst's torment in the battle's heat!  
 Ask of that host about the valiant fight he gave alone!  
 Ask of that awful plain, about the tremors it shook with!  
 Ask of the angel Gabriel of that sword's mighty strokes!<sup>42</sup>  
 The father fought alone there and the son here fought alone—  
 And only karbala and Khaibar witnessed such a storm!

Oh, may we be a sacrifice for 'Ali and Husain—  
 Some style of sorties, sallies and assaults, same strength, same  
 sword!

In Khaibar's battle 'Ali captured Khaibar's citadel,  
 And here Husain dispersed that host's formations many times!  
 And all expectedly! He was Muhammad's daughter's son.  
 There was a difference though—Husain had thirsted for two  
 days!

40. *Yadullāh*, literally the Hand of God, a title of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Husain's father.

41. The Prophet's daughter, Husain's mother.

42. Reference to the tradition of how Gabriel spread his wings to save the world from the stroke of the miraculous sword *Zulfaqar*, wielded by 'Ali in the battle of Khaibar.



And when he could no more stay in the saddle, faint with  
 wounds,  
 That star of God's Empyrean fell upon the dusty earth;  
 And after a while when' Ali's son came to again and rose,  
 The cruel Ibn Anas thrust a spear into his chest—  
 The spear-point passed right through his chest to come out  
 from his back,  
 His sister, watching from the tent, emerged, barehead, bare-  
 foot.

And as that accursed mercenary pulled out the bloodied spear  
 The Prince of Martyrs bowed his head in gratitude to God.  
 The hell-bent, brutal Shamr unsheathed his dagger and  
 advanced—  
 The heavens shook, the earth quaked seeing such foul, odious  
 acts.

How can I say how Shamr put the dagger to his throat—  
 It was as if he trampled on the Holy Book itself!

His sister', Ali's daughter, covered then her face and cried  
 "O my beloved brother, you are being slaughtered while  
 I watch so helplessly!" And then she heard the cry, "Great  
 God!"

She fell, face downwards on the ground and swooned from  
 grief,

And when she rose again and ran, saw an awful sight—  
 The head of Holy Prince of Martyrs, raised upon a lance!

And there she stood beside that lance lamenting bitterly,  
 "O great Husain, my martyred brother, they rejoice while I  
 Can hardly see from shock of grief, the world has turned all  
 dark!

I could not reach you in those sad last moments of your life!  
 Oh look at me how I am caught in this clamity  
 I stand barehead, barefoot amidst these fierce and faithless  
 foes!"

Anis, thou canst not write of Zaināb's lamentations more!  
 The body of Husain lay there, unburied, in the sun;  
 Alas, the Prophet found no peace in his last resting place!  
 His holy progeny imprisoned and his house burnt down!  
 How many homes Husain's death left all ruined, desolate!  
 The Prophet's progeny, thus never prospered after him.

## Select Bibliography

1. *Āb-i-Hayāt*: Muhammad Husain Azad (Newalkishore Printing Works, Lahore, 1907).
2. *A history of Urdu Literature*: T. Grahame Bailey (Associated Press of Calcutta, 1932).
3. *A History of Urdu Literature*: Ram Babu Saxena (Lahore, 1975).
4. *A History of Urdu Literature*: Mohammad Sādiq (Oxford University Press, London, 1964).
5. *Al-Mizan*: Chowdhry Syed Nazirul Hasan "Fauq" (Faize 'Am Press, Aligarh).
6. *Anīs and Shakespeare*: S. Ghulam Imam (Muslim Press, Lucknow, 1950).
7. *Anīsīyāt*: Syed Masūd Hasan Rizvi 'Adīb' (Sood Litho Press, New Delhi, 1981).
8. *Anīs ke Salām*: Ali Jawad Zaidi (Bureau for Promotion of Urdu, New Delhi.)
9. *Anīs ki Marthīa Nigari*: Mirza Ja'far Ali Khan "Asar" (Sarfaraz Qaumi Press, Lucknow, 1951).
10. *Anīs ki Sha'eri*: Shaheed Safipuri (Sarfaraz Printing Press, Delhi 1965).
11. *Anīs Shināsi*: Edited by Gopi Chand Narang (Globe Offset Press, Delhi, 1981).
12. *Aslāf-i-Mir Anīs*: Syed Masud Hasan Rizvi 'Adīb'; (Nizami Press, Lucknow, 1970).
13. *Bāqiyāt-ī-Anīs*: Akbar Hydari Kashmiri (Nizami Press, Lucknow, 1979).
14. *Eulogies and Elegies*: Syed Shakir 'Ali Jaffery (New Way Publications; Karachi, 1979).
15. *Hayāt-i-Anīs*: Syed Amjad Ali Ashhari (Agra Akhbar Press, Agra, 1923).
16. *Haznat-i-Rashīd*: Syed Agha Ashhari (Asahh-ul-Matabe', Lucknow, 1922).
17. *Kāshif-al-Haqāiq* (Vol. II): Imdād Imām "Asar" (Corporation Press, Lucknow).
18. *Majma'al-Intikhāb*: (Included in "TIN TAZKERE") Edited by Nisār Ahmad Fārūqi (Kohinoor Press, Delhi 1968).
19. *Mir Anīs-Hayāt Aur Sha'eri*: Farmān Fatehpuri (Bab-ul-Islam Printing Press, Karachi, 1976).
20. *Mir Hasan Aur Un ka Zamānā*: Dr. Waheed Qureshi (Lahore, 1959).
21. *Mowāzena-i-Anīs-o-Dabir*: Shibli Nomani (Mufidi Am Press, Agra, 1907).
22. *Moqaddama-i-She'r-o-Sha'eri*: Altaf Husain "Hāli" (U.P. Urdu Akademi Offset Edition, 1982).
23. *Oudh Men Urdu Marthiye kā Irteqā*: Akbar Hyderi (Nizami Press, Lucknow, 1981).
24. *Shāgirdān-i-Anīs*: Syed Qamqām Husain Jāfri (Sind Offset Press, Karachi, 1979).
25. *Tafsīr-i-Anīs*: Sādiq Safvi (Tanvir Press, Lucknow, 1981).
26. *Tajalliyāt-i-Anīs*: Edited by Syed Yusuf Husain "Shāiq" (Manzoor Printing Press, Lahore, 1976).
27. *Tazkira-i-Sho'ara-i-Urdu*: Mir Hasan (Latifi Press, Delhi, 1940).
28. *Urdu Marthiye ka Irteqā*: Masihuzzamān (Nizami Press, Lucknow, 1968).
29. *Wāqī'āt-i-Anīs*: Mir Mehdi Hasan "Ahsan" (Asahh-ul-Matabea', Lucknow, 1908).
30. *Yadgār-i-Anīs*: Amir Ahmad Alvi (Anwar-ul-Mataba', Lucknow, 1344 AH).