

Here at last, it may be suggested, the impact of the *Musaddas* finds its truest resonance, not in more or less mechanical imitation or translation but in a wholesale re-creation. Iqbal's extensive stylistic remodelling of Hali's poetic idiom successfully allows a full place to the grander register of Persian vocabulary. He was thereby able to construct a viable post-Halian rhetoric for serious Urdu poetry, through which he was able to convey an even more ambitious vision than Hali's of the way in which an understanding of the Indian Muslims' past might hope to remove some of the uncertainties of their present by helping to reveal the grandeur of the divinely appointed destiny again awaiting them.

3:1 Decline and progress

In both his Introductions to the *Musaddas*, Hali makes explicit the hortatory character of the poem. He ends the First Introduction by defining the aim of his composition:

This poem has not...been composed in order to be enjoyed or with the aim of eliciting applause, but in order to make my friends and fellows feel a sense of outrage and shame.

The Second Introduction refers to the subject matter of the poem as consisting 'largely of criticism and blame'. Something of the didactic flavour of the poem is also conveyed by Hali's footnotes, which explain in textbook style locations, scenes, and references. Given this conception of the *Musaddas* as an instrument of reform, it is perhaps not surprising that the poem is in part structured around a series of contrasts or oppositions. The main opposition in the poem is between decline and progress, and Hali's vision of broad historical movements in the *Musaddas* is to a large extent based on this opposition. The depiction of time in the poem needs to be seen, at least in part, in terms of the interaction between the poem's moral rhetoric and its rhetoric of temporality.¹ It is to the latter that we now turn.

Something of the complexity of structure in the poem's depiction of temporality is suggested by Abdul Haq, when he notes how Hali at the very beginning of the poem provides a glimpse of the contemporary condition, thereby preparing us for the future sections, and then immediately takes the reader to the original home of the *millat*, that is, the pivotal period of the Jahiliyya and the rise of Islam (Abdul Haq 1976:114). These broad movements of progress and decline correspond to the sections into which the poem is structured. Thus the poem opens with a brief section on the degenerate state of contemporary Islam (M3-M6) and then shifts to the past achievements of Islam (M7-M104), but this latter section contains a sub-section on the barbaric state of pre-Islamic Arabia (M8-M22). The section on the past glories of Islam is followed again by a long section on the decay of Islam, with a particular emphasis on the decline of Indian Muslims (M105-M281). Once again, though, this section contains pieces on European progress (e.g. M131-M133, M171-M175), and on the progress of other Indian communities (M134-M137), as well as another point of contrast between early and contemporary Islam (M226-M228). The overall result is an interleaving of pictures of progress and its antithesis, the antithesis being either decline or the barbaric infancy of society. This interlocking of images of progress and decline is evocative of the

¹ We have taken the phrase 'rhetoric of temporality' from De Man (1983:187-228). For some illuminating discussions of 'Islamic' historical narratives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Smith 1957:41-92, Ahmad 1967:77-102, and the brilliant exposition in al-Azmeh 1993.

poem's engagement with the broad movements of history as a whole. They are also suggestive of the relativity of decline and progress; progress in one epoch can become decline in another. The restless onward movement of history can rapidly turn a culture of advance into a backwater of history; similarly, areas of backwardness such as the Arabian peninsula can quickly become the centres of civilizations.

However, the structure of the poem is evocative of not just the broad movements of history, with alternating periods of progress and decline, but also hints at the cyclical character of history as a whole. The very title of the poem serves to underline this, calling as it does upon the cycle of tides to describe the rise and fall of Islam. This is reinforced by the concluding section of the poem, which is inaugurated by the re-introduction of the simile of the boat in danger (M275-M276), recalling the opening section of the poem on the degenerate state of contemporary Islam, where the same simile is employed (M3). Here it might also be worth adding that the simile's re-introduction is followed by another section on the sorry state of Indian Islam (M277-M281), then seven verses on progress—in particular, on the benefits of progress under British rule (M282-M289)—and then another brief reminder of the pitiful state of contemporary Islam with anticipation of worse to come (M290-M291). The poem concludes with three verses meditating on the passing of human greatness and on the contrasting eternity of the Divine (M292-294). This meditation reaches a powerful climax in the final verse of the poem (M294):

*Vuhī ek hai jis ko dā'im baqā hai
Jahān kī virāṣat usī ko sazā hai
Sivā us ke anjām sab kā fanā hai
Na ko'ī rahegā na ko'ī rahā hai
Musāfir yahān haiṅ faqīr aur ḡhanī sab
Ḡhulām aur āzād haiṅ raftanī sab²*

In other words, the reintroduction of the boat simile is followed by a recapitulation of the entire preceding movement of the poem, but here there is not just a repetition of the interlocking of images of progress and decline; there is also a final release into a transcendental realm beyond the temporal cycles of decay and renewal.

The simile of the boat in danger is particularly apposite for Hali's expression of a sense of vulnerability in the face of historical cycles of progress and decline. The simile builds upon the image evoked by the title of the poem, suggesting as it does the negotiation by a fragile vessel of the tidal ebbs and flows of history. This fragility is pointed to in the First Introduction, when Sir Sayyid is presented as pontificating on the decline of the Indian Muslim community. The moral is that 'at such a time it is necessary that each man

² The life of God alone will never wane, this world's uniquely worthy Suzerain, / For life eternal others hope in vain: not one has yet, nor ever will, remain. / See, here are rich and poor but travellers all, departure is the rule for free and thrall.

should do what he can, for we are all embarked upon the same ship, and our welfare depends upon that of the whole craft.' The simile of the boat is therefore used here to suggest the necessity of co-operation for mutual benefit in the face of a common danger. This points to the poem's later concern with the patriotism of European nations, which is seen to be based on mutual effort and co-operation (M173), an example which the poet exhorts his readers to emulate. Whilst there is an explicit appeal for co-operation here, generally the emphasis is on impressing the reader with the reality of the dangers threatening the boat, rather than an exhortation to mutual help to keep the vessel afloat. In keeping with this, the image of the boat in danger and the sinking vessel is used in a variety of historical contexts as an image of the decline of communities, e.g. the ancient Romans (M63), or the Arabs and the Indian Muslims (M113, M199, M202, M212, M225, M276). In a more positive context, the change-around in the direction of history brought about by the Prophet's mission is depicted in terms of a sea vessel taking advantage of a favourable turn in the weather (M25). Similarly, when the glories of early Islam are evoked, the image of the boat is used at least once, and the Arabs are described as rescuing and repairing sinking ships (M70). But on the whole, the boat simile is employed to suggest the dangers of historical decline and the possibilities of extinction. This becomes especially effective when the vessel is described as being sucked into a whirlpool (M275), suggesting as it does the treacherous eddies of local history, which mirror the larger, cyclical movements of world history itself.

Abdul Haq has also suggested that the significance of the *Musaddas* lies in its attempt to disentangle an ethical realm (*akhlāq*) from the historical decline of a government, and by implication, the decline of a *qaum* (Abdul Haq 1976:116). This touches upon a number of general features of the *Musaddas*, particularly in relation to the way the moral polemic of the poem interacts with its depiction of time. To a certain extent, the move towards an ethical realm supposedly immune to the vicissitudes of history can be seen as synonymous with the general shift in the Indian Muslim community towards the central religious heritage of Arab Islam, which could not be taken away by British colonial rule (Smith 1985:65-7, 74-8, Shackle 1996a:238). This shift is evident in the *Musaddas*, with its extended hymn to the glories of classical Islam, and its general ambivalence towards the Perso-Urdu poetic past (Shackle 1996a:233). In this regard, it is perhaps interesting that Abdul Haq calls upon a stereotype of early Arab poets, itself evident in Hali's *Muqaddama* (Hali:136-8). Abdul Haq likens Hali to a typical Arab poet who is 'a critic of life, and a poet of the past and present' (Abdul Haq 1976:112). At any rate, Abdul Haq's view of the *Musaddas*, as hinting towards a moral realm immune to temporal cycles of progress and decline, can be seen in terms of the shift towards a heritage based on what was defined as the pristine simplicity of early Islam. In a sense, the *Musaddas* can be read in terms of M.G. Hodgson's later formulation of the role of conscience in Islamic history, which rests on making a distinction between Islam as personal faith and inner piety, and Islam as social system and historical force. In this scheme of things, the epoch of classical Islam becomes the only

period in Islamic history where inner piety is perfectly mirrored in external polity (Hodgson 1974:1:360, Turner 1994:53-66). Similarly, the powerful model of classical Islam in the poem becomes the unique historical counterpart of an inner piety and faith. The rest of the poem is an attempt to rescue that inner faith from the steady historical decline of Islam. As Hali himself puts it (M117):

*Adā kar chukī jab haq apnā hukūmat
Rahī ab na islām ko us kī hājat
Magar haif ai fakhr-e ādam kī ummat
Hu'ī ādamīyyat bhī sāth us ke rukhsat
Hukūmat thī goyā ki ik jhūl tum pār
Kī urte hī us ke nikal ā'e jauhar³*

Whilst the tone of the last couplet is decidedly sarcastic, it is expressive of the general thrust of the poem: namely, its attempt to disentangle a culture's self-perceptions from its historical involvement with worldly power, so that the kernel of its identity might become self-dependent and insulated from the revolutions of political fortune.⁴

However, whilst the oppositions in the *Musaddas* try to clear a space for the centrality and transcendence of inner faith and ethical outlook as immune from the vicissitudes of history, nonetheless the ethical/religious realm of the poem is dependent on those very vicissitudes for its admonitory injunctions. So, in part at least, the series of contrasts in the poem and its didacticism need to be read in the context of its simultaneous dependence on history and the attempt to transcend history into a realm immune from those processes of decline. In part this inevitably results from the poem's drawing of imaginative strength from the pristine simplicity of classical Islam. Here Gustav von Grunebaum's view of classical Islam (cited in Turner 1994:69) might be illuminating: 'The classical represents a model. It is, in fact, a model whose reconstruction is by definition an obligation and an impossibility.' In some ways, the *Musaddas* labours under this obligation to reconstruct the classical, and it also reflects the impossibility of ever recreating that early pristine simplicity of the classical period. More importantly, the model of classical Islam is powerfully inspiring precisely because it cannot be recreated. The whole force of the classical model lies in its uniqueness, and so its resistance to historical duplication. Hence, too, Hali is mainly a poet of Islam's decline, a decline which in India at least, he himself was a witness to. As Abdul Haq has put it, Hali witnessed the final extinguishing of the flickering lamp of the Mughals, which had kept all sorts of fantastic hopes

³ Now that government has performed its proper function, Islam has no need for it left. / But, alas, O community of the Glory of Man, humanity departed together with it. / Government was like a gilt covering upon you. As soon as it peeled off, your innate capacity emerged.

⁴ Gustav von Grunebaum's later view of Islam (summarized in Turner 1994:72) as a fixed cultural form erecting defences around its sacral identity against external intervention is in some ways akin to aspects of the construction of Islam in the *Musaddas*. Cf. also von Grunebaum 1962:73-96 on the notion of 'cultural classicism'.

alive (Abdul Haq 1976:109). The decay of the Mughal empire in India and the contemporary condition of Indian Muslims is illuminated by the larger theme of Islamic history as a process of decline from the classical simplicity of early Islam. It is because the *Musaddas* is fused with the consciousness of decline that it is so elegiac in tone; Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan aptly described the poem as a 'mirror of the nation's condition and an elegy expressive of its grief' (Ahmad Khan 1924:167).⁵ This preoccupation with decline is sharpened by the poem's equal concern with progress. Hence Sadiq's claim about the two moods of the *Musaddas*—and of Hali's poetry generally—as consisting of a retrospective and a forward-looking mood (Sadiq 1984:349). This idea might be developed further, to suggest a consciousness of the creative possibilities of the future while clinging to an idealized version of the past.

3:2 Smelting and historical refashionings

The alternating moments of progress and decline in the *Musaddas* are thus evocative of the way in which Hali's broad vision shaped the poem. Here it might prove useful to look at some key verses on the decline of Islam (M105-M108). These verses are indicative of the way in which the poem symbolically depicts processes of historical causality. Of particular interest here are the second and third couplets of M105, which typify the rhetoric of this section as a whole:

*Rahā mail se shahd-e safī musaffā
Rahī khoḡ se sīm-e khālis mubarrā
Na thā ko'ī islām kā mard-e maidān
'Ālam ek thā shish-jihat meḥ darafshān⁶*

On the face of it, this is an enigmatic way of depicting the decline of Islam. Two images are used, that of clear honey and pure silver, and their clarity and purity are seen to be dependent on each other, although no causal link between them is elaborated. To a certain extent, this is indicative of the mysterious opacity of the processes of historical decline, an opacity which is at odds with the clarity that the images of honey and silver evoke. More importantly, the link between pure metal and clear honey becomes a point in the poem where a mysterious interdependence in the symbolic realm becomes a trope for the holistic totality of history. In part, this totality consists of the concatenation of cause and effect that lies behind decline. In some ways, the couplet reproduces

⁵ For *marṣiyas* in other parts of Hali's oeuvre, see Abdul Qadir 1932:28, Sadiq 1984:346, Saksena 1927:214, 216-7, and Sandilavi 1960:225-33.

⁶ So long as the clear honey remained unpolluted by filth, the pure silver remained free of alloy, / There was none to take the field against Islam, and there was but one standard gloriously flying over the world.

in miniature the larger concern of the poem with carving out a realm immune from the forces of history, which is yet dependent on those very forces for its efficacy. The interdependence between the purity of silver and honey in the symbolic realm expresses a sense of that realm's self-referential totality, and yet it stands in a symmetrical and reflective relationship to the historical realm for which it serves as a trope. In this context, one can perhaps return to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's description of the *Musaddas* as both a mirror and an elegy (cf. 3:1 above), in order to re-describe the *Musaddas* as an elegiac reflection both on and of historical processes of decline. In aesthetic terms, one might also see this couplet—and this section of the poem as a whole, as an attempt to create a balance between the self-referential poetic world of classical poetry, with its imaginary inner and timeless gardens, and the new world of modern poetry, with its depictions of the natural landscapes and seasons of the temporal world, one example of which is Hali's own poem on the rainy season, *Barkhāru*.⁷ Here it might be worthwhile to touch upon the imagery of gardens which form one of the continuous threads of the *Musaddas*. The decline of Islam is figured as a ruined garden (e.g. M111-M112)—again, perhaps specifically, as a Persian garden complete with nightingale (M140):

Chaman meñ havā ā chukā hai khizān kī
Phir hai nazar der se bāghbān kī
Sadā aur hai bulbul-e naghma-khwān kī
Ko'ī dam meñ rihlat hai ab gulistān kī
Tabāhī ke khwāb ā rahe hain nazar sab
Musibat kī hai āne vālī sahar ab⁸

The image of such a garden lying in ruins is particularly suggestive given Hali's own ambivalent views about classical poetic practice, for which Mir Taqi Mir's vision of an imaginative garden of fertile artifice was equally apposite (Pritchett 1994:59, Steele 1981:9-10).

The adjustment of the symbolic imagination in the *Musaddas* to history is indicative of that larger social and cultural adjustment to the forces of history for which Hali so often explicitly strove. This is entirely in keeping with his strategy of making the necessary adjustments in the entire gambit of Indo-Islamic postures vis-à-vis changes in historical circumstances. However, the reference to silver and honey discussed above can be explored even further in this context. Imagery of gold and silver, and ore and treasure, form a cluster of images in the *Musaddas*; to this cluster also belong allusions to the

⁷ For the remark of the great eighteenth century Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir on the superiority of inner gardens to external scenes, see Pritchett 1994:50-1, 59. Cf. *ibid.*:127 on the vision of classical poetry and its striving for timelessness. For Hali's natural poetry, see Saksena 1940:219.

⁸ The wind of autumn has already come into the garden, the direction of the gardener's gaze has shifted. / The warbling nightingale's cry has altered. Now the garden is due to depart at any moment. / All the visions which are seen are of destruction. Now the dawn of catastrophe is about to break.

transmutations of alchemy. The changes wrought by the Prophet upon the culture of the Arabian peninsula are likened to alchemical transmutation. He is described as bringing with him an alchemical formula (*nuskha-e kīmiyā*), which transformed copper into the finest gold, and separated the counterfeit and the pure (M24-M25). This is expanded in the next verse, which combines the allusion to alchemy with the unearthing of valuable ore, in order to express further the magical means by which the potential buried in the Arab *qaum* was brought to the surface by the Prophet.

The image of unearthing treasure is used for similar purposes when the effect of the spread of Islam on learning is depicted. Learning under the Abbasid Caliphate is shown to uncover the hidden pearls (*durr-e makhnūn* M87) of Aesop and Socrates, while the buried treasure of the tongue and pen (*Khazāna thā madfūn zabān aur qalam kā* M100) was also revealed to the world. The impact of Islam on morality calls upon the image of smelting: virtues were strained off and vices melted (M96). It is typical of the complexity of the *Musaddas* that this image of buried ore is also used in the negative context of Islam's decline in India (M133):

Magar ham ki ab tak jahān the vahīn hain
Jamādāt kī tarḥ bār-e zamīn hain⁹

The fact that the word *bār* 'burden' can also be translated as 'fruit', and *jamādāt* as either 'fossils' or 'minerals', reinforces the ambiguity of the image of buried mineral ore, ambiguous because it recalls those sections of the poem which dealt with the transformations wrought by Islam in its heyday. There is perhaps a suggestion here of potential waiting to be re-discovered for another smelting process; but at any rate, the ambiguity of this image points to the complexity of Hali's attitudes to progress and decline, which we shall explore further below in section 3:6.

3:3 The economics of time and bodily illness

The images of alchemy, treasure, and smelting woven together in the poem are illustrative of the poem's general concerns with the transformations and refashionings wrought by history. In attempting to educate Muslims about the ebb and flow of history, the *Musaddas* also tries to teach them about the very medium of history itself, namely time. Learning the value of time is associated with acquiring the desire to work; this is made clear by the Prophet's instructions as to the preciousness of time and the need for effort (M41-M42). However, perhaps the most interesting verses on time occur in the section on the 'utter

⁹ But we, who are still exactly where we were, are a burden on the earth, like minerals.

degeneracy of the Indian Muslims' (M119-M130). Verse 127 uses images of wealth and treasure to evoke the preciousness of time:

Vo be-mol pūrjī ki hai aśl daulat
Vo shā'ista logōñ kā ganj-e sa'ādat
Vo āsūda qaumōñ kā rās ul bizā'at
Vo daulat ki hai vaqt jis se 'ibārat
Nahīñ us kī vaq'at nazar meñ hamārī
Yuhīñ muft jāñ hai barbād sārī¹⁰

The decline of Muslims in India is in part measured by their indolent attitude to time. Their wastefulness regarding time is amplified in the next verse, where time is further described as the capital of religion and the world (*sarmāya-e dīn aur dunyā* M128), whose every moment is priceless. As with the verses on honey and silver and the decline of Islam, the verses on time as the very medium of history are expressive of the poem's rhetorical style. Particularly noteworthy here is the use of the term *'ibārat* in the verse quoted above, which may be translated as a trope, i.e. a rhetorical figure by which a thing is denoted. Here it is used in the sense of being expressive of; but the significance of the hemistich describing 'that wealth by which time is expressed or denoted' is worth a little more comment. First, it is a reversal of a proposition which might have been more straightforward, that is, 'time denotes or signifies wealth.' Here the logical link seems to be 'wealth denotes time', so that time becomes the object which is denoted by wealth. Wealth becomes, as it were, a synecdoche of time, or put another way, wealth becomes a manifestation of time. Secondly, the diction of wealth in this poem, as elsewhere, encompasses both the specific senses of capital and stock, as well as a wider sense of value as a whole. This is particularly evident where attitudes to money or coins are contrasted with attitudes to time itself, so that different senses of value are juxtaposed with each other (M128). Thirdly, the depiction of time's value and the contrasting attitudes to it are linked to economic habits of frugality or profligacy. Time is described as a profitable investment, and careless use of it characterizes spendthrift ways; it is the latter which is a measure of the degeneracy of Indian Muslims.¹¹

The way in which time becomes an object which is denoted by wealth is indicative of the extent to which a nexus of economic value and the rhetoric of temporality have penetrated the *Musaddas*. This fructifying intrusion of the outside world into the self-referential, self-contained world of Urdu poetry is completely in keeping with Hali's own poetic views. The sense of time as the very medium through which history is enacted, is highlighted by its association with economic value, while economic value becomes one of the manifestations

¹⁰ That priceless capital which is real wealth, that noble treasure of decent folk, / That substance of well-off communities, that wealth which denotes time, / Has no value in our eyes, but is all dissipated uselessly and for nothing.

¹¹ See also M158-M162, where habits of decadent profligacy in the Muslim community are described.

of time, or even one of the tropes for time. Laurel Steele has pointed to Hali's comments on the Indian economic situation in his poetry, and briefly suggested ways in which this reflected wider changes in Indian society under the impact of imperial rule (Steele 1981:14-5). This can be explored further in the case of the *Musaddas*, e.g. M129:

Agar sāñs dīn rāt ke sab gīñēñ ham
To nikleñge anfās aise bahut kam
Ki ho jin meñ kal ke liye kuchh farāham
Yuhīñ guzre jāte haiñ dīn rāt paiham
Nahīñ ko'ī goyā khabardār ham meñ
Ki ye sāñs ākhīr haiñ ab ko'ī dam meñ¹²

Even the very rhythms of the body are measured in accordance with an economic scale of values. In part, there is another dimension here of the pulses of the body harmonizing with the changing rhythms of history itself. The qasida which Hali composed for the Golden Jubilee of 1887 bears signs of the reach and scope of this colonization when Queen Victoria's power is contrasted to the power of previous conquerors (Sperl and Shackle 1996b: no. 36, verse 17):

Tashkīr faqat aglōñ ne 'ālam ko kiyā thā
Aur tu ne kiyā hai dil-e 'ālam ko musakhkhar¹³

The penetration of the body in this way falls under what David Arnold has called the 'corporeality of colonialism' in India, in which the body becomes a site of contestation between the colonized and colonizers (Arnold 1993:8-9). There are a number of ways in which what Arnold has called the 'political and cultural problematics of the body in a colonized society' (ibid.:6) are manifested in the *Musaddas*. It is metaphors of bodily illness that set the tone of the poem. In the First Introduction to the *Musaddas*, Hali employs images of fever and infection to describe the inner turmoil he underwent as he was torn between the poetry of the past and the demands of the present:

When I beheld the new pattern of the age, my heart became sick of the old poetry, and I began to feel ashamed of stringing together empty fabrications. The promptings of my friends gave me no encouragement, nor was I stimulated to rival my companions. Yet it was as if I was trying to close an open sore which would not rest without oozing in one way or another. And so I suffocated in the effort of suppressing the

¹² If we reckon up all the breaths of day and night, then very few will be left to be gathered for the next day. / Our days and nights are continually spent for nothing. / It is as, if no one among us was aware that these breaths will come to an end at some moment.

¹³ The former ones only subdued the world, while you have subdued the heart of the world.

fevers raging within myself, racking my heart and brain, while seeking their outlet.

Hali goes on to describe how he went about setting his 'long-chilled heart and worn-out brain to work, after they had been rendered useless by uninterrupted attacks of illness.' The writing of the *Musaddas* becomes an attempted act of healing, a catharsis which rejuvenates a body exhausted by illness and infected wounds. From the early twentieth century onwards the link between community, health and nation, was increasingly to exercise the minds of those who sought both to rebut European notions of degenerate races, and to redefine a new sense of self on the basis of rehabilitated and reappropriated notions of medicine (Arnold 1993:280-88). In a more metaphorical mode, the poet's ill health here becomes a symbol of national illness, and the *Musaddas* is written to heal and rejuvenate the worn-out body of both the poet and the Muslim community in India.

In this way, there is a strong link between poetics and bodily health and the act of writing itself becomes an attempt to cure and re-establish control over a degenerate body. The association between personal health and national health was later reinforced in the Second Introduction to the poem, where the poet describes the potential for regeneration in the community in terms of ashes and sparks waiting to be rekindled, and then explains the despairing tone of the *Musaddas* in terms of the fading fire in his own heart. The poem opens with the metaphor of illness, when the poet relates an anecdote about Hippocrates and the incurable disease by which the Muslim community is afflicted (M1-M2). The potency of this image is sharpened by the way it blends into the simile of the boat in danger, so that the feverish maladies afflicted by decline are combined with a sense of historical vulnerability (M3). The image of disease in the poem is contrasted with the glories of Graeco-Islamic medicine in a classical and robust Islam, and the ignorance of practitioners of traditional medicine amongst the sick Muslims of contemporary India. The denunciation of the latter is of some interest, given the interplay and conflict between European and indigenous medicine in British India (cf. Arnold 1993:3-4, 12, 44-55). Hali's evocation of the glories of Graeco-Islamic medicine in a safely distant past, combined with a predictable denunciation of degenerate Indo-Muslim practices, neatly balances the demands of both colonial and indigenous medicine. But it also suggests how Hali himself might have been negotiating a path between the two, trying to appropriate what he could from colonial ideologies in order to rejuvenate an indigenous body of poetics, in a way perhaps foreshadowing a similar strategy to be employed in the more literal context of health and medicine (ibid.:289). It also parallels his later negotiation of European authors in the *Muqaddama* (cf. section 1:3 above). The association between bodily illness and degenerate poetics is reinforced later in the poem, when contemporary poets are described as afflicted by 'hectic fever' (M251). This recalls the First Introduction to the *Musaddas* when Hali described himself as suffering from a similar malady, thereby further adding to the poem's perception of itself as attempting to offer a cure for a malady which is responsible for the corruption of aesthetic as well

as moral senses. Such powerful images of psychosomatic illness, in which the personal and the national are conflated, are evocative of the effects of the historical forces of decline that the poem grapples with, forces transmitted through the medium of the colonial state and manifested in imprints left on the body of the poet and his community as well as society at large.

3:4 Deserts and gardens

The nexus of economic values and a rhetoric of temporality is also partially evident in Hali's use of images of cultivation and irrigation to signify civilization. This imagery is particularly clear in the verses depicting the civilizing effect of Islam on the Arabian peninsula and the Middle East generally, which Hali described in the First Introduction in terms of the fructifying effects of Islam on a physically and culturally barren landscape. In the poem, pre-Islamic Arabia is described as a barren, inhospitable geographical region (M10):

Na khitton meñ ghalla na jangal meñ kheti
*'Arab aur kul kā'ināt us kā ye thī'*¹⁴

The dependence of the region on rain water, rather than any organized water supply, is also stressed (M9):

Na sabza thā šahrā meñ paidā na pāni
*Faqat āb-e bārān pai thī zindagānī'*¹⁵

This picture of barrenness is transformed by the impact of Islam. The Arabs became unmatched and unique in agriculture (*Falāhat meñ be-misāl-o yaktā hu'e vo* M75) and they made every desolate land flourish (*Kiyā ja-ke ābād har mulk-e vīrān* M76). Images of greenery are also used in a more general sense to measure the fructifying impact of Islam; thus, the seeds of spring are brought by the Arabs into the world (M76):

Bahār ab jo dunyā meñ ā'ī hu'ī hai
*Ye sab paud unhī kī lagā'ī hu'ī hai'*¹⁶

The effect of Islam is described as a rain cloud which transformed God's plantation into greenery (M69):

¹⁴ There was no grain in the granaries, no cultivation in the wilderness. This was Arabia, and its whole world.

¹⁵ No greenery grew in the desert. There was no water. Life was dependent solely upon rain water.

¹⁶ The spring season which has now come into the world had its seedlings planted by them.