

flowers; they are ashamed to beg outright, and offer for sale rosaries made from the holy clay of Karbala.⁵⁷

But Sauda, still your voice, for your strength fails you now. Every heart is aflame with grief, every eye brimming with tears. There is nothing to be said but this: We are living in a special kind of age. So say no more.

These two satires alone would be enough to show that the vehemence of Sauda's attack springs from a grievous awareness of all the evils of his day—in fact, that the mainspring of his satire, as of all good satire, is a deep compassion for humanity and a savage indignation against the conditions of an age in which humanity is degraded. And it is this that still gives his satires, two hundred years after they were written, a relevance and an interest for today.

⁵⁷ Cf. note 48 above.

Mir Hasan's "Enchanting Story"

MIR HASAN, the son of that Mir Zāhik to whom Sauda's verse brought so unenviable a fame, was born in Delhi probably in 1727 or 1728, and passed his early life there.¹ We do not know exactly when he left with his father to settle at Faizābād, in Oudh, but his own account tells us that it was "early in the days of my youth," and also that he did not want to go because it meant parting from a girl with whom he had fallen in love. From this we can infer that he probably witnessed the occupation, massacre, and looting of Delhi by Nādir Shāh in 1739. By comparison with

¹ The main source for the significant facts of Mir Hasan's life is his own works. Two of these—the *magnavi Gulzar-i-Itram* and his *razhnā*—contain brief autobiographical details. As indicated earlier, the date of his birth is disputed. Earlier authorities give it as A.H. 1140 (A.D. 1727-1728), but the most recent work on the subject, Mahmūd Faruqī's *Mir Hasan aur Khāndan ke dāsire shu'arā*, states that the correct date is A.H. 1151 (A.D. 1738-1739). However, he gives no adequate evidence for preferring this later date. It is known, he says, that Mir Zāhik left Delhi and reached Faizābād while Sādar Jang was still ruler of Oudh—i.e., before 1754—and therefore favours a date around A.H. 1163-1164 (A.D. 1750-1751) for this event. Then, taking this as the basis of his calculations, and noting that Mir Hasan says that it was "early in his youth" that he left Delhi, he rejects 1140 as the date of his birth on the grounds that an age of 23-24 cannot be described as "early youth." However, if 23-24 is too old, 12-13 is surely too young. Mir Hasan says that he left Delhi with a heavy heart because he had fallen in love there—an important statement which the authorities, with their customary sense of decorum, pass over in discreet silence. Further, Mir Hasan figures in Mir's *razhnā*, and this is known to have been written in A.H. 1165 (A.D. 1750-1751); and it is hardly likely that he would already have made his name as a poet at the age of 14. Lastly, the mere knowledge that it was during Sādar Jang's governorship of Oudh that Mir Hasan and his father left Delhi does not warrant fixing this event in A.D. 1750-1751, for Sādar Jang had been governor since 1739. For these reasons we incline to think that A.D. 1727-1728, or soon after, is the likely date of his birth.

The text of the *magnavi Shihr ul Bayān* which we have used is that edited by 'Abdul Bari Asī (Lucknow, 1941).

Mir and Sauda, his subsequent life seems to have been uneventful, for the province of Oudh in which he lived enjoyed relative peace during this period. All the same, his life was not an easy one. His patrons, unlike Sauda's, seem to have been none too generous. Mir Hasan himself hints at this, writing that he "received enough to live on," while a contemporary writer says bluntly that he "lived in penury."²

Although several manuscripts are extant, his collected verse has never been published. It contains poems in all the classical forms, but like his great contemporaries, he excelled in one form in particular, and devoted his main attention to it. As Sauda is the master of the *gasida* and of satirical verse, and as Mir is the master of the *ghazal*, so Mir Hasan is the master of the *masnavi*. He wrote eleven in all, and some of them are of considerable length. But his fame is based on one of them alone, so much so that it is regularly called "Mir Hasan's *masnavi*," as though it were the only one he had written. This is the *masnavi Shīr ul Bayān* (The Enchanting Story),³ a long poem of over 2,000 couplets. Completed in 1785, only two years before his death, it won immediate acclaim, and its popularity remains undiminished to this day. If one can only deplore the neglect of his other works, it nevertheless underlines the extraordinary popularity of this one, which has been published and republished innumerable times. This is the story it tells:

In a splendid city there once ruled a great and powerful king. His dominion extended far and wide, and kings as far away as Central Asia and China acknowledged themselves his vassals. Words cannot describe the beauty and prosperity of the capital. The streets were all paved, the buildings all solidly constructed and of dazzling whiteness; tanks and wells, fountains and watercourses, abounded in the city, which was made beautiful with parks and gardens in every quarter; and over all towered the great fort where the king held his court. The extent of the city was vast, and such was the prosperity and good order which reigned there that men flocked to it from near and far, and those who arrived penniless, quickly became rich and prosperous. In its bazaars one might see the finest craftsmen of every land and clime, and the splendour of the main market was such that to enter it was to linger on,

² Both statements are quoted by Mahmūd Farīqī, p. 41.

³ *Shīr ul Bayān* literally means "the enchantment of story."

unwilling to depart. In the fort all was luxury and enjoyment, and beautiful slave girls stood constantly ready to satisfy every need.

Yet amid all this prosperity and happiness the king was not happy. For though he was now advanced in years, he had no son to bring joy to his heart and to succeed to the throne when he was gone. One day he called his ministers to him and said, "It is time for me to leave the world. What use is all this wealth and magnificence when I have no son to succeed me? In my concern for the affairs of state I have neglected my duties towards God. It is better now that I should forsake my kingdom and give myself up to religious contemplation." His ministers replied, "Such a course is not good, your majesty. You are a king, and you cannot fulfil your religious duty by neglecting that which your position lays upon you. Devote yourself to the service of God, but do so by ruling as a great and good king should, so that on the Day of Judgement you can stand before your Judge with a clear conscience and a good heart. And do not commit the sin of despairing of God's mercy. Who knows but that you may yet have a son? Call the Brahmins, the astrologers and geomancers, and ask them what the future holds in store for you." The king accepted their advice, and on an appointed day the astrologers and others waited upon him to determine by their studies what would be the future course of events. Every method of divination was used, and all foretold that in due course a son would be born to the king. Finally the king called upon the Brahmins to speak. They replied, "Your Majesty will have a son as beautiful as the moon, and your grief is now destined to be turned into joy; if it is not so, then we are not Brahmins. But there is something else prescribed by fate. For twelve years your son is threatened by danger. He must never be allowed to go up onto the roof of the palace; nor during all those years must he venture outside the palace walls. His life is not in danger, but it seems that he is fated to dwell some time in the wilderness. Some jinn or fairy will fall in love with him, and he will fall in love with some lady." The king heard their words with mingled joy and grief, but resigned himself with a trusting heart to the will of God and spent much time in earnest prayer. And before the year was out, one of his queens was with child.

Eventually a beautiful boy was born, to whom the name of Benazir was given. At the good news great crowds assembled outside the palace.

The king distributed his bounty generously as a mark of his rejoicing, and by his decree the occasion was celebrated with music and dancing, and with feasting and festivity which lasted for six whole days. Celebrations no less magnificent marked the boy's first birthday; when he learned to walk, slaves were set free in his name as a token of rejoicing; and his weaning, as he entered his fourth year, was again the occasion of public rejoicings.

The king now built for the boy a beautiful garden, and equipped it with buildings and furnishings of indescribable magnificence. There were canopies and curtains of cloth of gold, cords of gold and silver thread, screens adorned with fine paintings, carpets of velvet, lamps which as they burned spread fragrant perfume throughout the rooms, furniture studded with jewels, and mirrors on all sides to enhance the beauty still further. The garden was laid out with walks and water-courses of marble, lined with cypresses and other graceful trees and beautiful flowers. Sweetly singing birds lived in the garden, and lovely maids were always at hand to serve the prince and keep him company. In this atmosphere of beauty the prince began his education; from the beginning he showed great promise, and within a few years he had mastered all the traditional and scientific branches of learning. Rhetoric, logic, literature, medicine, astronomy, geometry, astrology, calligraphy, archery, cudgel fighting, music, painting, the use of firearms—he was well-versed in all; and, above all, he learned the human kindness and consideration which is the hallmark of a real man, loving the company of good and talented men and despising that of the mean and worthless.

So the years passed by, and Benazir reached his twelfth birthday. On this long-awaited day the king gave orders to prepare a state drive through the streets of the capital, and sent word that his son should be taken to the baths and then dressed in princely array ready to go out in procession. All that the king commanded was joyfully carried out. Lovely maidservants massaged his body and bathed him, joining happily in his involuntary laughter as the punice stone tickled the soles of his feet; then they dressed him in clothes of the finest cloth and adorned him with jewels and pearls, and so made him ready.

Great was the enthusiasm of the people as the procession started out, amid a scene of breath-taking magnificence. As the prince came

out, trays of pearls were scattered over his head and left where they fell on the ground for the bystanders to gather up. The city was a wonderful sight. The walls of all the buildings, the shops, and the houses were draped with decorations made of the finest silks and brocades, and big mirrors set up on all sides heightened the gaiety and colourfulness of the scene. There were horsemen riding two by two, lines of hundreds of elephants bearing their riders in gold and silver howdahs, palanquin-bearers dressed in resplendent livery hurrying here and there, and the flat roofs thronged with people dressed in their finest clothes, as the procession, to the sounds of drums and trumpets, and with standards and banners waving, made its way from the palace to the farthest bounds of the city. There the king and the prince refreshed themselves a while in a garden before returning as night fell to the palace. In the palace, revelry continued until late into the night.

It was the night of the full moon, and when the prince began to feel sleepy he thought how pleasant it would be to sleep, for the first time, on the palace roof. The maidservants conveyed his wish to the king, who gave his consent, stipulating only that watch should be kept over him as he slept.

But there had been a miscalculation. Unknown to the king and his servants, the twelve years of danger were not yet past, and one night still remained.

So the prince's bed was made on the palace roof, and he lay down to sleep in the quiet of the moonlit night and amid the scent of the flowers. Soon a cool breeze sprang up, and those who had been appointed to watch over him fell fast asleep. Only the full moon kept her watch above.

It so happened that a fairy,⁴ travelling through the air on her flying throne, chanced to pass that way, and as she looked down, her glance fell upon the sleeping prince. Entranced by his great beauty, she brought her throne down onto the roof and advanced to where he was sleeping in a moonlight so brilliant that it seemed as though the whole earth and sky were radiant with it. She drew back the coverlet and

⁴ 'Fairy' is not really a satisfactory translation of the Urdu (and Persian) *pari*, for the English word suggests a tiny creature with gossamer wings, whereas a *pari* was a supernatural being in the form of a lovely woman. *Pari* has been naturalized in English as *peri*, but we have used the more familiar word despite its inadequacy.

pressed her cheek to his, and then carried him off, still sleeping in his bed, to the fairy kingdom.

When the maidservants awoke and found that the prince had vanished, they were overcome with grief. The bad news was quickly carried to the king and queen; the king himself came in tears to the spot from where the prince had vanished, but no trace of him could be found. As day broke, the news spread throughout the city, which was plunged into mourning. Even the trees and flowers, the birds and streams, seemed to join in the general sorrow, for though search was made far and wide and no expense was spared, there was no news of the prince to be brought back to the palace.

Meanwhile Benazir was a prisoner in fairyland. The years passed by, and though he was treated with every consideration and surrounded with every luxury, he pined for the happy life he had led in his father's palace, surrounded by those who loved him. The fairy, who was named Māhrukh, tried all she could to dispel his grief, but without effect. One day she came to him and said, "Benazir, you are my prisoner; but it makes me sad to see you pining like this. So listen to what I propose. Every evening I leave you here alone and go to visit my father, and in solitude you grow more and more dejected. So I will give you a magic horse, and for three hours every evening you may ride out on it and amuse yourself. It will carry you through the air wherever you want to go. But in return you must give me your written undertaking that if you give your heart to anyone else, then you will acknowledge your fault and accept my punishment." Benazir accepted this condition, and Māhrukh gave him the magic horses and showed him how to control it. After that he would go out every evening, but would always take care to return when the striking of the hour told him that his time was up.

He rode out one night at the beginning of the cold season. A cool breeze was blowing and the stars and the moon shone brightly in the sky, and as he rode on, he saw below him a lovely garden, and in it a building shining dazzling white in the moonlight. Attracted by the scene he came down onto the roof, and leaning over, tried to discover whether anyone were there. So charming was the scene that he made

⁵ The words of the original make it clear that the "magic horse" was a kind of machine, and not a living creature.

up his mind to go down into the garden. He tiptoed down the stair and out of the door, and keeping in the shadows, made for a cluster of trees where he could see without being seen. As he looked around, he could see all the signs of people living there, and it was not long before he caught sight of a group of women sitting by a watercourse. In the centre sat a fifteen-year-old princess,⁶ a girl of great beauty, reclining with her elbow on a cushion, and surrounded by her lovely handmaidens as the shining moon is surrounded by stars. She was dressed in fine and delicate fabrics through which her fair body gleamed as the candle gleams in the chandelier, and was adorned with pearls and jewels of great price. Benazir stood entranced in his hiding place, lost in admiration of her great beauty—the beauty of her form, and of her dress, and of her whole bearing—and as he stood there, one of the maidservants caught sight of him. Amid much excitement the word passed from one to another that someone was hiding behind the trees, until the princess herself heard it. In great agitation she called her maids to help her to rise and take her to the trees so that she might see for herself what was there. Though she summoned up all her courage, it was in fear and trembling that she went. In front of her walked some of her trusted maids repeating prayers for heavenly protection. When they reached the trees, they saw that a handsome young man was standing there motionless, either because there was no way of withdrawing from where he stood, or because love and amazement rooted him to the spot. He seemed to be about fifteen or sixteen years old, in the bloom of youth, finely dressed and adorned with jewellery. The girls were entranced at the sight of him, and quickly turning back, told their mistress, in the indirect way which delicacy demanded, of what they had seen, and assuring her that there was nothing to fear, urged her to come forward. Badr i Munir (for that was the name of the princess) came forward, and as her eyes met those of Benazir, both were smitten with love and fell down in a swoon.

With Badr i Munir was her closest friend, the Vazir's daughter Najim un Nisa, a girl of great beauty and full of the spirit of mischief. She now ran and fetched rose water, and by sprinkling it over her friend, succeeded in reviving her and helping her to rise. Benazir too

⁶ A year older than Shakespeare's Juliet.

had now come to his senses and was standing there lost in love and admiration. But Badr i Munir averted her face from him and then turned and walked away, leaving him faint with love as he gazed at the nape of her neck and her shoulders and her slender waist and her long plait of black hair swinging across her hips. She knew very well the effect of her beauty upon him and was secretly glad. She wished to appear angry, but love was in her heart, and with her face hidden from him, she smiled as she said, "Who is this wretch who intrudes upon the privacy of my garden?" And so saying, she went quickly into the house, letting fall the curtain behind her.

Najim un Nisa came to her laughing and said, "Badr i Munir, such deceitful airs are not good. Do not leave the young man to die of love for you. And you too should enjoy the pleasures of life and love while you are young: do as your heart tells you, and forget the heavy burdens which religion and society lay upon you. Your youth and beauty will pass away and never return, and missed opportunities do not come again. This handsome youth has come to you unbidden; so quickly make preparations to receive him and for the wine to flow." Badr i Munir smiled and answered her, "Yes, Yes! I see! The young man has taken your fancy and I am to be the excuse for entertaining him." "I admit it," returned Najim un Nisa smiling. "It was I who fainted at the sight of him and you who revived me with rose water. Very well then, for my sake do as I tell you and send for him to come." With these words she quickly went and brought Benazir and seated him in a room; and then taking Badr i Munir by the hand, she brought her in and made her sit at Benazir's side. Badr i Munir came unwillingly, and took care as she seated herself that no part of her body should touch his. For a long time the two lovers sat side by side in embarrassed silence, each too shy to speak to the other, until Najim un Nisa lost patience and said to Badr i Munir, "Why do you sit there without speaking a word? Here, take this cup and give it to your guest, and, if only for my sake, smile and talk a little." Badr i Munir did not reply, but smiled and took up the cup, and then averting her face held out the cup to Benazir and in indirect language invited him to take it. Benazir laughed and drank first one cup and then another; then he in turn filled the cup and offered it to Badr i Munir. With the wine their conversation began to flow more freely, and Benazir told his whole story to the princess.

When he came to speak of the fairy, Badr i Munir frowned and drew away from him and said, "You are welcome to your fairy and she is welcome to you. I am not one to share a lover with anyone else. You don't care for me, so why should I break my heart for you? Be off now, and do not come again." At these words Benazir fell at her feet and cried, "Ah, Badr i Munir! What am I to do if you turn me away? It makes no difference how much she loves me; what do I care for her? Body and soul I am yours and yours alone." "Take your head off my feet," she replied, "How am I to know what is in your heart?" But all the same she was pleased by his answer and no longer pressed him to go. And so as they sat talking together, the hour struck when Benazir must leave. He started up and said, "Badr i Munir, I must go. If I can escape again, I will come tomorrow at the same time. Do not think that there is any pleasure for me there, but what am I to do? I am completely within her power. God knows I do not want to leave you. I go leaving my heart here with you. Be kind to me and understand my plight." And so he went, leaving her as agitated as himself.

Somehow he passed the night with Mahrûkh, and set himself to endure the heavy hours which must pass before evening came round again and he could fly to Badr i Munir. She on her side awaited his coming with the same feelings in her heart. As she sat sadly alone, Najim un Nisa came to her, trying to drive away her sorrow and take her mind off her grief. "Tonight," she said, "I should like to see you dressed and adorned so that your beauty is seen in all its perfection."—and though Badr i Munir scolded her, Najim un Nisa had only spoken what was already in her own mind. That day she bathed and performed her toilet with such care that she looked like a newly-wedded bride. Meanwhile, maidservants prepared the palace for the evening's meeting. They laid costly carpets on the floor, draped the rooms with hangings of silk and laid upon the bed coverlets worked with jewels. They made the rooms fragrant with flowers and with precious perfumes and brought in sweetly-smelling rare fruits. At the head of the bed they placed a richly bound volume of the selected verse of the great Persian poets Zuhûri and Naziri, and another of the great Urdu poets, Sauda and Mir and Mir Hasan. Wine was made ready and detailed instructions given for the preparation of the food. In

short, nothing was left undone, and when everything was ready Badr i Munir went out to walk in the garden until evening.

Benazir too prepared himself with special care for the meeting with his beloved, and when at last he was free to go, flew with all speed to the garden where she was walking.

She saw him coming and quickly hid herself behind some trees where she could stand unobserved and admire her lover's appearance. One of the maidservants came surreptitiously to her and asked her where they were to conduct the prince; and when they had seated him in the room which had been made ready for him, Badr i Munir herself made her appearance in all her breath-taking beauty. Benazir was fired with passion, and seizing her hand, led her resisting to sit by him. She struggled to free her hand, telling him scathingly to keep this warmth for the one he really loved; but he passionately rebuked her, telling her to torture him no more by such words but to sit at his side and give herself freely and unashamedly to his embrace. At length she was persuaded to sit down beside him, and as the wine cup passed from one to the other, they began to talk in a fashion which made the maidservants lower their eyes for shame and find pretexts one after another to withdraw from the room. Then Benazir led Badr i Munir to the bed, where they lay in one another's arms and drank the wine of union together, enjoying their love to the full. At length they came out from the bedchamber, the one radiant, the other pale, and sat silently together, still drunk with the wine of passion, until at the sounding of the hour, Benazir rose with a start to take his leave. Badr i Munir's face was the picture of distress: she neither looked at him nor spoke. "Darling, do not be angry with me; I shall come again," he said. "As you wish," she replied, and he left her, heavy at heart because she was displeased with him, and with the tears running down his cheeks.

But the following night he came again, and after that he would come every day; and in each other's company they would forget the grief which oppressed them during the hours of separation.

But fate never allows lasting happiness to anyone. One day a giant came to Māhrukh and told her that her captive had given his heart to someone else, and that as he flew over the garden, he had seen the two lovers standing hand in hand. Māhrukh was furious, and the moment

Benazir returned, she poured out all her wrath upon him. "Did you not give me your written undertaking?" she cried. "Then prepare to honour your word, and take the punishment which I shall inflict upon you." At once she summoned a huge jinn and commanded him to drag Benazir away to the desert and throw him down a dried-up well; there he was to be held imprisoned, and the mouth of the well closed by an enormous rock. The jinn was to feed him only once a day at evening, and no one was to pay any attention to his cries. So Benazir was thrown into the dark well, from which there was no way of escape.

The next evening Badr i Munir waited in vain for Benazir to come, and the evening after that and the one after that. When several days had passed and she grew sick with love and sorrow and disappointment, she spoke to Najm un Nisa. "What can have happened to him?" she asked. Najm un Nisa, hoping to shock her out of her dejection, replied harshly, "Lady, are you mad? Do you think these handsome young men think twice about anyone? God alone knows where he is now or what he is doing. I have no patience with people who simply surrender themselves to love. Could you not control yourself? In love you must act as your lover acts. If he seems cool, you too be cool; if he inclines towards you, only then incline towards him." Badr i Munir made no reply.

As the days passed she became immersed more and more in her sorrow, increasingly indifferent to all that went on around her. She would roam about the garden like someone distracted, lingering among the trees. She slept uneasily at night, and had bad dreams; and during the day she was always looking for some excuse to go to her bed, where she could be alone and weep. All appetite left her, and often when people spoke to her, she did not hear or could not bring her attention to bear on what they said, so that her answers had nothing to do with their questions. If others had not brought her food and drink, she would never have thought of it. Day and night Benazir's image was before her eyes, and in her heart she talked to him alone. Sometimes she would sing poems of the sorrow of love, but generally even poetry had no charm for her. One day she rallied herself sufficiently to go into the garden and send for her dancing girl Aish Bai to come and entertain her with song and dance. But though all the listeners were

held spellbound by the grace and beauty of her performance, to Badr i Munir the words and music only revived poignant memories, and bursting into tears she left the garden and went to her bed to weep.

A whole month passed in this way, and still Benazir did not come. Badr i Munir was on the verge of madness, unable to eat or sleep, completely heedless of her dress and appearance and even of the need to preserve a decent discretion about her love. Najm un Nisa made one more attempt to rally her. "Why do you grieve yourself so?" she said. "You who could once have given wise advice to others are today yourself behaving like a fool. What madness is this, to give your heart to a passing stranger? These travellers never stay in one place for long, and wherever they go, there they declare their love. You should know better, dear, than to give your love until your wooer has given unmistakable proof of his; and if he shows no concern for you, then you too should banish him from your thoughts. He has his fairy and is content with her. Otherwise would he have stayed away so long?" Badr i Munir, gently but with deep emotion replied, "Listen to me, my dear. It is not good to speak ill of people, for only God knows everything about them. As for me, I know he is true at heart, and I am afraid only for what may have happened to him, that for all these days he has not come. Perhaps the fairy has heard of what happened here and has imprisoned him or given him over to some ogre to devour. I only know that for him I have borne all the sorrow of separation, and I would give my own life that he might live." Then bursting into tears she huddled herself up in the corner of her bed and covered her head with the coverlet.

When at last she fell asleep, she had a dream. She thought she saw, in the middle of a vast desert, a well closed by an enormous stone from which came the voice of Benazir speaking of his love for her, and telling her of his plight. She tried to call to him, but no sound would come, and at this point she awoke. Though driven nearly to distraction, she at first told no one of her dream. But at last she could contain herself no longer, and calling her closest friends to her (and Najm un Nisa amongst them), she revealed her dream to them. Najm un Nisa at once made up her mind. "Do not weep any more," she said. "From now on lay all your sorrows upon me. I am going to the desert to find Benazir and bring him back to you. If I live, I will return to throw

myself at your feet again. And if I die, why then, I die, and I will gladly die for your sake." Badr i Munir implored her not to risk her life in so dangerous an undertaking, saying that her company was the one thing that gave her some consolation and that without her she would die. But Najm un Nisa replied, weeping, "I cannot bear to see you like this, for the grief it brings me is more than I can endure." And weeping all the time, she tore her fine clothes and threw them aside. Then, putting on the dress of a wandering Hindu ascetic, and taking a lute with her, she got ready to go. Badr i Munir and her companions gathered around her weeping, telling her not to forget them and praying that God's protection might go with her and bring her safely back.

So Najm un Nisa set out to wander in the desert, in the hope that sooner or later she might find out where Benazir was. Wherever she sat down for a while, she would play on the lute, and all living creatures would listen, enthralled by the music and by the great beauty of the player, which her simple disguise enhanced rather than concealed.

One bright moonlight night in the desert she sat down to play. It was the night of the full moon, which shone so brilliantly that it seemed as though a dazzling white sheet had been laid down over the earth. Every thorn and blade of grass shone bright and clear; the leaves of the trees glistened with light and beneath them light and shade mingled as though the moonlight had passed through a net. As she began to play, the birds and beasts forgot their sleep, the breeze began to dance in the treetops in ecstasy, and the very moonlight lay still as though entranced. And at this moment there happened to pass that way on his magic throne Firoz Shāh, the son of the king of the jims, a handsome youth of some twenty or twenty-one years. Hearing the sound of the lute, he brought his throne to earth and drew near to listen, and his eyes fell upon Najm un Nisa. One glance was enough to make him captive to her beauty, and sensing that her dress was some disguise he approached and spoke to her, asking what misfortune had impelled her to wander forth in her present style and where she had come from and where she wished to go. Najm un Nisa was quick to realise the effect of her beauty upon him, and smilingly rebuked him saying, "Turn your thoughts only to God or else return whence you came." Firoz Shāh protested at her severity, promising to go if she

wished, but asking first to be allowed to stay and listen to her playing. "Then sit there quietly," said Najm un Nisa, and she again began to play. Firoz Shāh sat down on the sand in front of her and was soon lost in contemplation of her beauty and of the sweetness of the music. Najm un Nisa played on until dawn, and he sat there before her weeping unrestrainedly. She stopped, yawned, and placing the lute on her shoulder, rose to go, when Firoz Shāh, quickly seizing her by the hand, brought her to his magic throne and carried her off protesting to his father's court. There he brought her before his father, praising her perfect mastery of the art of music, and urging him to persuade her to play for them. The king received her with great deference and placed a house at her disposal for as long as she wished to stay at his court. The whole day was passed in entertaining her, and when night fell Najm un Nisa was asked to sing and play on her lute before those assembled there. She expressed some displeasure at this request. "As-cetics are not concerned with singing and music, but only with God, and these repeated requests are not pleasing to me. But so long as I am in your house, I am under constraint to carry out your wishes." The king replied, "No, No! What are you saying? Your very presence here is a favour to us. If it is your own wish we will ask you to play, but God forbid that you should do so against your will." She replied, "You have spoken well; for not in commands but in submission will you attain your desires."

With this she began to play. The sweetness of the music moved every hearer to tears, but on none was its effect so profound as on Firoz Shāh, who every moment fell more and more hopelessly in love with her. Gazing upon her, now from in front, now from other angles, sometimes watching her from behind one of the pillars of the great hall, sometimes in his imagination kissing her face, he moved restlessly among the audience, weeping all the time. She on her side stole occasional glances at him, noting with satisfaction the effect which she was having upon him, but quickly averting her gaze if ever their eyes met.

At length she stopped playing, though all those present felt as though they could have gone on gazing upon her and listening to her forever. The king praised her performance highly and asked her to favour them every evening by playing to them and to stay as long as she wished, regarding the palace as her own and taking without ceremony whatever

she wanted. Najm un Nisa replied disclaiming any interest in material things, but agreeing to his request. Secretly she was well pleased with the king's invitation, and saw already the possibility that through Firoz Shāh she might yet achieve the purpose for which she had set out. After that she would go for a few hours every evening to the court, and when she had passed the time in pleasant conversation and in playing the lute, would return to her house.

Meanwhile the plight of the unhappy Firoz Shāh grew ever more desperate, and Najm un Nisa took a delight in making it so. His simplicity was no match for her art. She showed herself now kind to him, now cold, until he was helplessly in her toils. One day in desperation he determined to speak out at the next opportunity, and finding her alone, threw himself at her feet. But before he could speak Najm un Nisa forestalled him. Smilingly she said, "What are you doing? Why are you so agitated? Has my long stay here become a burden to you? If so, I am ready to go, with my blessings upon you; there is no need to fall at my feet to implore me." Firoz Shāh replied weeping, "Enough! I cannot bear to hear such words! Why do you still go on torturing me? Do you not know what has happened to me? I am devoted to you body and soul. But you are cold and unkind towards me; what is there that I can say to you?" Najm un Nisa replied, "Now tell me clearly what you mean and why you have fallen at my feet." Firoz Shāh said, "My love, how can I conceal any longer the inmost desire of my heart? I cannot bear to go on living apart from you: marry me and make me your slave." At this Najm un Nisa laughed and said, "Then listen attentively to what I have to tell you; perhaps if you can do what I want, you too may be the gainer." "Tell me quickly," he replied. "I will do whatever is in my power." Najm un Nisa now told him her whole story, revealing who she was and why she had set out in her present disguise. She concluded, "You too are a fairy; if you search for him, you may find where Māhrukh has imprisoned Benazir; then by your help we may be reunited and all our desires fulfilled; and perhaps you too may get what you want." "Give me your hand on it," he said, but Najm un Nisa scolded him, telling him not to presume. Firoz Shāh then called his people together, and after explaining the situation to them, promised a rich reward to him who should discover where Benazir lay confined. The fairies went out in search of him, and

before many days had passed, one of them returned to claim his reward. Firoz Shāh now sent a letter to Māhrukh rebuking her in the strongest terms and demanding that on pain of severe punishment she must give up Benazir and swear never again to form any attachment to a human. Māhrukh was forced to agree, and she replied acknowledging her fault and asking only that the affair should not be made known to her father. And so at long last Benazir, haggard and emaciated, was freed from his imprisonment and brought on Firoz Shāh's magic throne to fairyland. When he arrived there, Firoz Shāh left Benazir at a little distance and went to Najm un Nisa. "Come," he said, "I have brought Benazir." Najm un Nisa started up in agitation, and demanding to know where he was, would have gone straight to him had not Firoz Shāh restrained her for fear that her uncontrolled joy might bring her to grief. Then taking her hand in his, he led her to where Benazir was sitting. "Look at him well," he said. "Is he the one whom you are seeking or not?" "Yes! Yes!" she said. "It is! It is!" Then going near to the magic throne, she said, "Stand aside, fairy, and let me take his misfortunes upon me."⁷ Firoz Shāh replied smiling, "Very well, but mind you do the same for me afterwards." But she brushed him aside with an impatient gesture and started to walk round the prince, taking his misfortunes upon her. Then, falling on his neck, she wept without restraint. Benazir, to his surprise, saw that it was Najm un Nisa, and asked in bewilderment how she came to be there and what had led to his release. Then as they embraced one another she told him the whole story; and from that day his grief left him and happiness was his once more.

One day soon after it was decided that all three of them—Firoz Shāh, Najm un Nisa, and Benazir—should fly on the magic throne to Badr i Munir. They brought the throne down behind the clump of trees where Benazir had concealed himself on his first visit to the garden, and Najm un Nisa told them to keep themselves hidden there while she went alone to Badr i Munir to prepare her for the good news. When she came to where Badr i Munir was, she fell at her feet, and for a moment Badr i Munir did not recognise her. When she did, she

⁷ A literal translation of the Urdu phrase. In former times a woman would signify her love and devotion to a person by drawing her hands over his head and then cracking her fingers over her own temples in token of taking all his impending misfortunes upon herself.

welcomed her with the utmost joy and affection, saying that she had never expected to live until her return. She tried her best to rise, but had become so weak that she fell to the ground in the attempt to do so, apologising for the weakness which made it impossible for her to stand. Najm un Nisa walked round her, taking her misfortunes upon her. She well remembered how pitiable had been Badr i Munir's condition at the time when they had parted; but now the ravages of grief had reduced her to a still more pitiable plight, and the appearance of the house, the garden, and the maidservants all was such as could result only from prolonged neglect. The talk and happy laughter had long been stilled and the singers and musicians long silent; and as she surveyed the desolate scene, Najm un Nisa wept. Yet as the rumour of her coming spread, everything stirred to life; the maidservants thronged around her, expressing their joy at her return and wanting to know all about her adventures, until Najm un Nisa in desperation had to plead the fatigue of her long journeyings and ask them to leave her in peace, promising however that she would relate the whole story next day.

When they had dispersed Najm un Nisa looked around to see that no one was within hearing and then said to Badr i Munir, "Princess, won't you take a stroll with me? There is something I have to tell you." Then when they were quite alone, she said to Badr i Munir, "I have brought your Benazir." At these words, Badr i Munir fainted. When she had come to herself, she asked, "Is he really here? Or are you trying to tease me?" Najm un Nisa replied solemnly, "I swear to you by my life; if I am speaking falsely, may I die!" Then in answer to Badr i Munir's questions, she told how she had found out where Benazir was, and had brought about his release, and how, along with another, she had brought him here. "But see what misfortune this has involved me in; in order to bring your Benazir, I have had to bring another captive too. Still, now let me bring Benazir to you; the other I will find some means of sending away." At this the princess laughed aloud. "Why do you try to deceive me?" she said. "No more of such deceitful tricks! Go and bring them both quickly." "Will you appear unveiled before the jinn then," asked Najm un Nisa, "without first asking Benazir?"⁸ "Surely you do not think he will say no?" she

⁸ A husband may allow (or command) his wife not to observe *parda* with his intimate friends.

replied. "But if you have any doubt, go first and I will wait. Go and ask him what his wishes are." Najm un Nisa went quickly, and calling out to them, summoned them to the house. Then she asked Benazir if she should bring Badr i Munnir. He replied in astonishment, "What is the matter with you, beautiful one? Is there *parda* between brother and sister? Firoz Shāh is a brother to me. Do I not owe my life to him? What then have I to keep from his eyes?" Badr i Munnir heard his words from behind the screen, and came out of her own accord. Going shyly to where he was sitting, she sat down by his side, and he felt as though for the first time he had begun to live again. Tears came into his eyes, and as they sat together, it was a scene to excite compassion. There they sat, their eyes red with weeping, a feverish flush on their pale cheeks, their whole form weakened and emaciated from the sorrow of their long separation, each weeping for the other's plight, until Najm un Nisa grew worried and spoke up. "Do you hear me, Badr i Munnir? Has not Benazir wept enough tears already because of you, that you by your own weeping give him further cause for grief? Enough now! Where has he the strength to bear more sorrow? I brought him to you so that your love might make him whole. Talk to him now of happier things, and may God never give you cause to weep again." At this they all laughed, and the succeeding hours passed pleasantly in happy conversation. The night was already long spent when they had the food brought in, and after satisfying their hunger, the two couples each went to their beds to spend the rest of the night in loving converse and in sleep. Badr i Munnir and Benazir long lay together, each recalling the misfortunes now so happily past. Benazir told her of the hardships of his imprisonment, and of how only his love for her and the slender hope of reunion with her at last had kept him alive. She told him of the strange dream she had had, and of how this had led Najm un Nisa to go out in search of him. Meanwhile Firoz Shāh and Najm un Nisa lay talking together, and for all four of them morning dawned all too soon. They rose, and turn by turn went to take their bath; and now Najm un Nisa showed that she had still not used the full extent of her power over Firoz Shāh. When she returned from the bath, she was clothed from head to foot in garments of the finest red silk, edged with a border of gold thread. Her fair body gleamed through them as the flame gleams through glowing coals, and on her

firm young bosom, brought into prominence by the tightness of her bodice, the dark nipples stood out in contrast to the fairness of her breasts. Firoz Shāh was as though stunned as he gazed on her beauty, but shame and modesty would not let him speak.

And so the four lovers began to pass their days happily together. But at the back of their minds they were haunted by the fear that their happy life together might again be broken by enforced separation. They determined, therefore, to take steps so that they could be married and there would no longer be any need for concealment. While Badr i Munnir and Najm un Nisa visited their parents, professing their desire to be with them again for a while after being parted for so long, Benazir and Firoz Shāh retired to a city where they could make all the necessary preparations, and then got ready to act.

A letter in royal style was sent to Badr i Munnir's father, the king Masūd Shāh. "O kings of kings, pride of Jamshed,⁹ peer of Farīdūn, scion of Sikandar's line, in whom are realised the hopes of the world: Rustam in valour, Hātim in generosity—I come as a poor guest to your dominions, brought hither by my fate, seeking your kindness with the request that you make me your slave.¹⁰ Such has ever been the custom of mankind, for by such alliances the work of the world prospers. Men well know me and the line from which I am sprung. I am a prince, the son of king Malik Shāh, and young and old have heard my fame, for my name is prince Benazir." He then went on to vaunt his noble ancestry, the formidable power of his army, and the vast extent of his wealth, and in the end, after every show of modesty and humility, wrote these words: "He who works against the Law of Islam is my mortal enemy; if you accept my proposal, it is well. If not, consider me already at your gates." Masūd Shāh read and reread the letter, and considered carefully what he should reply. He noted the strength of Benazir's forces, and reflected that if it came to war, the struggle would be a

⁹ Jamshed, the legendary Iranian king, is traditionally thought to be the inventor both of the wine and the cup; the 'goblet of Jam' (*jam-e Jam*) is the marvellous glass which shows the whole world. Farīdūn is the Iranian king of yore who excelled by his justice; Sikandar is Alexander the Great, one of the leading heroes even in Muslim and Persian tradition; Rustam the great warrior of old Iran, is the hero of Iranian folklore and the central figure in Firdausi's epic *Shāhnāmah*; Hātim was considered by the pre-Islamic Arabs as the model of generosity among the Bedouins, and his name has, for this reason, become proverbial in the Islamic East. (A.S.)

¹⁰ I.e., give me your daughter in marriage.

heavy one and its outcome uncertain. Besides, what harm could there be in the proposed marriage? There was nothing unusual in the proposal: such marriages were made every day. There and then he sent the following reply: "After praise to God and his Prophet be it known that your letter has reached me. Were I not constrained by the Law of Islam, you should have seen what my answer would have been, and were I to demonstrate my power you should know that kings before whom you are nothing can lay no claim upon my consideration. Such vaunting as yours does not become a mere lad fresh from his mother's home and without the knowledge to discern what is good and what is bad. But what can I do? I am constrained by the ways of the world and by my regard for the Law of Islam, for he who departs from the road marked out by God and his Prophet shall assuredly not attain his ends. Let, then, a suitable date be decided. I have commanded you. Come!"

When the news of the betrothal became known, there was great rejoicing in the city, and in this atmosphere the preparations for the wedding were put in hand.

Eventually the longed for day arrived, and as the bridegroom's procession left the palace to make its way to the bride's house, people thronged to see it, some mounted on horses, some on elephants, some in carriages or palanquins, and some on foot. On all sides could be heard the clash of sword-hilt on shield as people moved about. Everywhere the drums were booming and the trumpets sounding. On platforms raised above the level of the streets, courtisans were dancing and singing as the wedding procession moved through the gorgeously decorated city. Thousands of lighted lamps lined the route and burned brightly on the top of the ceremonial arches. On all sides were raised platforms made beautiful with flowers and coloured lights and displays of fireworks. The bridegroom, his face veiled by the strings of pearls hanging from his brow, mounted on a fine, slow-stepping horse, fanned by fans of peacock feathers, surrounded by a transparent screen, and preceded by drums and music, came to the bride's house. There too festivities were in full swing as all the traditional wedding rites were duly performed.

After the marriage ceremony the bridegroom was led to the bride who was seated inside the palace, resplendent in her wedding dress, and there too the traditional rites were performed—the bridegroom

was made to sit close to the bride facing her, she, however, remaining veiled. Then the Holy Quran was placed between them, and on it a small mirror into which the bridegroom looked, and as she removed her veil, he saw her face for the first time, reflected in the mirror. Then the bride was made to sit and sugar was sprinkled all over her, and the bridegroom ordered, with jesting and laughter, to take up the sugar with his mouth, now from her eyes, now from her lips, from her waist, from her feet. At length the time came for the bridal pair to leave for the prince's home, and the procession moved off amid scenes of undiminished merriment and rejoicing. Thus Benazir and Badr i Munir were united in marriage.

Only a few days later, at Benazir's request, Najm un Nisa's father consented to give her in marriage to Firuz Shah, and with pomp and ceremony no less spectacular than that which had accompanied the wedding of the prince and princess, their wedding too was celebrated. And thus the heart's desire of all four lovers was accomplished.

Now came the time for them to part. Firuz Shah and his bride, promising often to visit their friends, departed on their magic throne to fairyland, while Benazir prepared to bring his bride home to his parents' house. Returning with his army, he came to the outskirts of the city and pitched camp on the banks of a river. It quickly became known who he was, and the news spread like wildfire throughout the city that the vanished prince had returned. The news was carried to the king and queen too, but they could not believe that such good fortune could be theirs, and the king was only with difficulty persuaded to come and see for himself that it was none other than his son Benazir. Benazir saw him coming, and ran and fell at his feet crying, "Praise be to God that I am restored to your service once more!" The king, weeping copiously, raised him up and clasped him to his bosom and then fainted away from the excess of his joy.

The prince's return was greeted with universal rejoicing, and in token of their joy the people high and low brought gifts to the palace. Meanwhile Benazir presented his bride to his parents. As they entered the palace, Benazir's mother came forward to greet them, and embraced them both weeping tears of happiness. By the wish of his parents, Benazir's wedding was again celebrated in his own city, and life and happiness soon returned in full measure to the capital and its people.

“And thus may you and I,” concludes Mir Hasan, “see our fortunes change. Thus may God reunite all dear ones who are parted; may we live, like them, in a thriving and prosperous city like theirs; may God rain his blessings upon my patron, the Navvāb Āsaf ud Daula, and may I, Mir Hasan, attain the happiness I seek.”

In a prose summary a good deal is inevitably lost, for in the original a strongly rhythmical metre carries the story forward. Its basic unit is a foot of one short syllable followed by two longs, and the line consists of four feet, in the last of which the final long is dropped, so that the line runs $\text{v} - \text{—} | \text{v} - \text{—} | \text{v} - \text{—} | \text{v} - \text{—}$.¹¹ English has the long-short-short of the dactyl and the short-short-long of the anapaest, but it cannot effectively match this metre, in which the regularity of the rhythm contributes a sense of continuous flow, while the preponderance of long syllables prevents the verse breaking into a gallop. Nor can an English summary easily convey the effectiveness of Mir Hasan's diction. He seems to write with effortless simplicity, yet he tells us at the end of the poem that the labour he had spent upon it had changed him into an old man, and we realise how much care lies behind the apparently spontaneous expression. All Urdu critics have been struck by the freshness and, so to speak, the timelessness of his language. One, writing a century after Mir Hasan's death, said, “His language is that which you and I speak today. Turn to the verse of his contemporaries, and you will find on every page words and constructions which today are obsolete. . . . Turn to his, and, apart from a few words, what you find is as current now as it was then.”¹² And after the lapse of another hundred years the words are still valid today.

The same apparent simplicity conceals the skill with which he uses the devices of rhetoric. Some of these—the vivid similes, for example—come across in English, but there are others that defy translation. Many depend upon verbal conceit of the kind one finds in the earlier plays of Shakespeare, and their use—in both poets—sometimes seems, to modern taste, to detract from the charm of the poetry rather than add to it. Aply used, however, they do make an appeal—as where, early in the

¹¹ This metre is called *mutaqārib*, and was also used in the greatest epic poem of Persian literature, Firdausi's *Shāh-nāmah*. (A.S.)

¹² Azād, *Ab i Hayāt*, p. 250.

poem, the king's earnest prayers for the gift of a son are described, and Mir Hasan continues: “Udhar lau lagāva to pāya cirāgh.” The words *lau lagāva* and *cirāgh* bear both a literal and a metaphorical meaning. “Lau lagāna” means literally to light a flame and metaphorically to concentrate one's whole thought on something. “Cirāgh” means literally a lamp, but is also the regular metaphor for a son, who brings radiance to his parents' home. Here the metaphorical meaning is the primary one: the king concentrated all his thought on prayer, and obtained a son. But Mir Hasan has just told us that as part of his devotions the king set a lamp in the mosque and kept it constantly burning; so the literal meanings are also relevant and help to heighten the atmosphere.

The poem shows an equally firm grasp of the larger aspects of craftsmanship. It has the steady flow, the sense of proportion between the constituent parts, and the timely variation of theme which the art of narrative demands. The descriptive passages are, in general, long enough to add colour to the story, but not long enough to pall. There is an eye for vivid and significant details which evoke a whole atmosphere. Thus Mir Hasan, describing how Najm un Nisa ceases playing her lute as dawn breaks, says, “She stopped, yawned, and placing the lute on her shoulder, rose to go”—and the one word “yawned” conveys all the pretended indifference by which she aims to captivate Firoz Shāh. In every part of the poem there are vivid touches like these—the young prince in the bath, laughing as the pumice stone tickles his feet; Badr i Munir's long black plait swinging across her hips as she turns to go back to the palace; Benazir at his marriage being compelled by the laughing womenfolk to take up with his mouth the sugar sprinkled over his bride; and many more.

The *Enchanting Story* belongs to what may be described as the Arabian Nights class of literature, and one does not therefore look for complex analysis of character in it; it is a tale, not a novel. But the portrayal of the characters is convincing, if not deep, and they are presented not through static descriptions but through their actions and their speech. When Najm un Nisa is first introduced, Mir Hasan's own comment on her is confined to just half a line, in which we are told that she is “a girl of great beauty and full of the spirit of mischief.” After that her dialogue and her actions are allowed to speak for themselves. Once again, English can only partially convey the excellence of the dialogue. The whole tone—even the turns

of phrase—of each speaker is in character. That of the Brahmin astrologers is proud and self-assured, and contains more Hindi¹³ words than the other characters employ (except Najm un Nisa in her role of Hindu ascetic); Mahrûkh's is shrill and coarse; Najm un Nisa's, mischievous, self-possessed, and full of humour; Badr i Muñir's, simple and sincere.

The appeal of the poem owes much to the skill with which Mir Hasan has blended romanticism with realism—literary methods that are too often regarded as mutually exclusive. All critics have agreed that the masnavi is a romantic poem; but generally all they have meant by this is that it is a love story with a happy ending, or that the supernatural plays a part in it. Both these things are true, but neither contributes much to the understanding and appreciation of the poem. The fact that the characters include supernatural beings is of quite minor importance; like the fact that the other characters are all royal personages or their close associates, it represents nothing more than Mir Hasan's use of a convention which had been established for this kind of romantic masnavi long before his day. The characters, both supernatural and human, are universal in their significance; their emotional experience is universal human experience; and it is with the treatment of this experience that Mir Hasan is concerned. *The Enchanting Story* is a romantic poem in a deeper sense. The poet does not place his story in a setting drawn from the real world which he sees around him, or from that of an earlier historical period; the world he portrays is largely an idealised world, in which the aspirations of the poet and of his audience are shown as being realised, and in which men live happily in a community where true love ultimately triumphs over all difficulties. Yet this world is depicted with all the power of the realistic method.

Mir Hasan's portrayal of love illustrates this method. The description of love and of the emotions to which the lovers' experiences give rise is absolutely real. But the setting is largely unreal. Neither in Mir Hasan's own day nor in the earlier period of the glory of the Mughal Empire, which he consciously recalls, did the course of true love run so smooth as it does in *The Enchanting Story*. As we shall see later, true love stories in the social conditions of Mughal India were nearly all tragedies. Of course,

¹³ Hindi is the other literary form of the dialect on which Urdu is based. Its literature has a Hindu background in the same sense as Urdu literature has a Muslim background.

there are in the poem allusions to the need for secrecy and to the lovers' fears that discovery may dash all their hopes and doom them to enforced and permanent separation; but these things are touched on in the lightest possible way and are given no prominence. In real life the tragedy of separation is due to the conditions of social life; in *The Enchanting Story* it is due to the power of Mahrûkh over Benzîr, a power achieved and maintained by supernatural means.

Much the same is true for Mir Hasan's picture of the society in which his story is set. He depicts a society in which the atmosphere is one of general happiness, a society abounding in wealth, where kings rule justly, where the leaders of society conform to the highest ideals that popular opinion prescribes for them, and where the subjects live in peace and prosperity. But here too the element of realistic description is strong. No city ever existed like that described in the opening pages of the narrative, but imperial Delhi had once resembled Mir Hasan's imaginary city in many ways, and it is the recollection of that Delhi which provides the basis of his picture. No prince ever existed so perfect in all accomplishments as the youthful Benzîr, but those familiar with the lives of such men as Bâbur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, and Akbar, its greatest representative, know that these men at an equally early age had accomplishments hardly less remarkable. The pomp and magnificence of the great royal processions are painted, so to speak, larger than life; but not so much larger that they do not bear a close resemblance to historical truth. Mir Hasan was still writing the masnavi when the British Governor-General visited Lucknow, and the fantastic magnificence of the welcome which Āsaf ud Daula gave him is well attested. Thus romance and reality are again fused into a single whole.

It may be because Mir Hasan wrote this, his greatest poem, so late in life, that his contemporaries did not rank him with Mir and Sauda. He himself ventured to differ from them. In the passage in the masnavi where he describes how in preparation for Benzîr's coming the maidservants placed 'at the head of the bed . . . a richly bound volume of . . . the great Urdu poets, Sauda and Mir and Mir Hasan,' he is, in a characteristically graceful way, asserting a claim to a place alongside them. One can only speculate as to the ways in which he felt he could compare with them. Perhaps he has in mind simply his mastery of the craft of poetry.

But the words could bear a deeper meaning: they could be a claim also that he upholds, with the same artistic power as they do, the values for which they both stand. And such a claim would be justified. His poetic method is distinct from theirs, but he does indeed share their essential outlook, and he fully deserves a place at their side.

The Love Poetry of Mir

THE REPUTATION which Mir Hasan's *Enchanting Story* won him long overshadowed that of other masnavi writers, and it was not until nearly a century later that the accomplishment of Mir in handling the same form began to be rediscovered.¹ His masnavis differ from Mir Hasan's in important respects, and we find for once that the textbook definition of masnavi suffers not from the usual fault of being overelaborate and over-precise but from the opposite defect. Masnavi means simply a poem in rhymed couplets. One has to add that, in Urdu at any rate, the largest single class of masnavis consists of love stories, and that these fall into two distinct classes. Some, like *The Enchanting Story*, are long romantic tales. Others are, in their essential story, directly realistic, and these are by convention much shorter poems. Mir's love masnavis are all of this second kind.

¹ The source for virtually the whole of this chapter is Mir's own verse, collected in *Kulliyāt i Mir*. At the time when the chapter was written, the best edition was that of 'Abdul Bari Āsī (Lucknow, 1941). The slightly more comprehensive edition by Dr. 'Ibādat Bareilavī, published from Karachi in 1958, is marred by numerous copyist's mistakes, and as this edition is now, like Āsī's, out of print, we have not thought it worth while to undertake the laborious task of collating the references to Āsī's edition with the paging of Dr. Bareilavī's and giving references in terms of the latter. There are six divāns of Mir's ghazals, and we have indicated in Roman numerals the divān from which each verse quoted has been taken. The references have been given as briefly as possible. Thus I. 164.14 means that the verse comes from the first divān and will be found at line 14 on p. 164 of Āsī's edition of the *Kulliyāt*. Verses from poems not included in the divāns are referred to as (e.g.) *Kulliyāt*, p. 920, line 13.