

Mir left Delhi soon afterwards, and it was ten years before he returned. But wherever he went, he saw the decay of the civilisation he loved. In this same year of 1761 he revisited his native city of Agra after an absence of more than twenty years, and stayed there for four months. Agra had not suffered as much material destruction as Delhi had, but the city seemed empty to him. "On two or three occasions," he writes,<sup>38</sup>

I went right through the city, meeting scholars and holy men and poets, but none could give peace to my restless heart. I said to myself "Great God! This is that city where in every other street were fine houses and gardens, inns, cloisters, mosques, schools and seminaries, and where scholars and doctors of law, divines and learned men, saints and mystics, physicians and teachers and poets and writers were seen on every hand. But now I see no place where I could rest in peaceful enjoyment, and no man in whose company I could rejoice." I saw a scene of dreadful desolation, and grieved deeply.

No sensitive man could live in such an age and not be deeply influenced by all he saw happening around him; and the writings of Mir, Sauda, and Mir Hasan show how each in his own characteristic way reacted. All feel a deep regret at the passing of Mughal glory, and a life-long attachment to Delhi, which even in its decline symbolised for them all that was most precious in the values of Mughal India. It was these values which they sought to uphold, inspired by the idealised memory of their own childhoods and what the Empire had been in their fathers' and grandfathers' day. Their methods differ. Sauda uses his power as a satirist to pillory those who contribute to the general decline in civilised standards, whether in personal or social life. Mir Hasan condemns by silence, withdrawing from the decadent world around him and holding up before men's eyes a picture of one moulded nearer to his heart's desire. In Mir the keynotes are a deep, personal sorrow and an unshakable determination to uphold in his poetry the principles in which he believed with all his heart and which guided his own life. But at this point we can turn direct to the poets' works and leave it to the reader to make his own appraisal.

<sup>38</sup> *Zikr i Mir*, p. 104.

## The Satires of Sauda

AN AGE LIKE THAT OF eighteenth-century Mughal India calls aloud for a satirist, and in Sauda it found one.<sup>1</sup> He was not a satirist alone. His collected verse is a bulky volume, including poems in all the main classical forms, and all have played their part in making him one of the great names in Urdu literature. Traditionally he is assessed not only as a great satirist but also as one of the only two Urdu poets to achieve real distinction in the difficult form of the *qasīda*. But it is his satires which today arouse the greatest interest, and these alone will be discussed here.

Sauda was of noble descent on both sides of his family, and was born and brought up in Delhi. His father died when he was still quite a young man, and he inherited a considerable fortune. But he was generous, and liking the good things of life, his money was soon spent. Even so, he never seems to have experienced any great hardship. He made his name as a poet quite early in life, so impressing his *ustād* that he used to tell people that Sauda could have said of him what the Persian poet *Sāib* (1601-1676) said of his *ustād*:

<sup>1</sup> Sources for this chapter are *Shaiḫ Cānd*, *Saudā* (Aurangābād, 1936), which is still the only substantial study of the poet; and *Saudā's Kulliyāt* (collected verse). No satisfactory edition of the *Kulliyāt* exists. The most recent is that of 'Abdul Bārī Āsī, 2 vols. (Lucknow, 1932). Unfortunately, despite the better arrangement of the poems and the very much greater clarity of the text, Āsī's edition is inferior in many respects to some of its predecessors, notably in that he has taken it upon himself to expurgate *Saudā's* verse of what he regards as obscene and objectionable matter, following an earlier edition "from which," to quote his complacent words, "these thorns had been cleared" (p. 18 of his Introduction). We have therefore preferred an earlier edition—that prepared by Momin's pupil, Mir 'Abdur Raḥmān Āhī, and printed at Delhi in A.H. 1272 (A.D. 1856). *Kulliyāt* in the notes below means this edition. The edition is not easily accessible, and all but a few of the verses we quote are included in Khurshidul Islam's selection *Kalām i Saudā* (Aligarh, 1965). We have therefore added the references to this selection, abbreviated in the notes below as *Kalām*.

Respect commands my silence, but the truth is  
My master is not fit to be my pupil.

Both his noble birth and his fame as a poet gave Sauda access to the courts of the nobility and ensured him a life of material comfort. We do not know who his first patrons were, but when he left Delhi in 1757, he had for some time been attached to the court of Imād ul Mulk, the Vazīr of the Empire whose political crimes have already been described. Imād seems, however, to have known and fulfilled his obligations as a patron, and there is nothing to suggest that Sauda found any cause for dissatisfaction with him in this respect. Subsequent patrons provided equally well for him. From 1757 to about 1770<sup>2</sup> he lived at Farrukhābād, under the patronage of the chief minister of the kingdom, and from then to his death in 1781 at the court of the Governors of Oudh, who were then the most generous patrons of Urdu literature in Mughal India. Richard Johnson, the British Assistant Resident at the court of Oudh, who is said to have known Urdu well and to have appreciated Urdu poetry, was among those whose acquaintance he made there.

His attitude to his patrons was, as we have seen, a healthy one. He was a great poet, and his obligation to society, which he fully accepted, was to practise and perfect his art. Society's obligation to him was, through the institution of patronage, to assure him the means of doing so. What he received from his patrons was his due; he owed them appreciation and respect, but nothing more than that. He maintained this attitude all his life, as a story of his last years shows.<sup>3</sup>

Sauda was living under the patronage of Āsaf ud Daula, the Governor of Oudh. Āsaf ud Daula was once out on a hunting expedition and the news came that he had killed a lion. Sauda at once celebrated the occasion with a couplet:

یارو یہ ابن بلجم پیدا ہوا دوبارا  
شیرِ خدا کو جس نے بھیلوں کے بن میں مارا

See, Ibn i Muljam comes to earth again  
And so the Lion of God once more is slain.

<sup>2</sup> To be more precise, some time between A.H. 1183 (A.D. 1769-1770) and A.H. 1185 (A.D. 1771-1772). Cf. Shaikh Cānd, pp. 55-56.

<sup>3</sup> See Āzād, *Āb i Hayāt*, p. 169.

The point of the verse is in the play on the words "the Lion of God." Lion of God is one of the titles of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and Ibn i Muljam was the name of the man who assassinated him. Āsaf ud Daula was a Shia, a sect of Muslims which holds Ali and his family in special veneration, and to be compared, even in jest, with Ali's assassin, was something he was not likely to appreciate. Āsaf ud Daula heard of the verse, and on his return said to Sauda, "Mirza,<sup>4</sup> I hear you have compared me to the murderer of the Lion of God." Sauda was quite unabashed. He laughed and replied, "Well, it was a fair comparison. The lion was God's, not yours or mine."

This independent spirit is one of his many attractive qualities. There is nothing complicated about his character. He enjoyed life without any inhibitions, and he liked others to enjoy it too. He thought he was a good poet, and took a pride in being so. But he was not an arrogant man, and made no pretensions to qualities which he knew he did not possess. "I am not the fairest flower in the garden, nor am I a thorn in any man's path," he wrote of himself. "I am neither famous for virtue nor notorious for vice . . . I seek nobody's favours, and want nobody to seek mine. People may think well or ill of me as they please: I act as my nature prompts me."<sup>5</sup>

Acting as his nature prompted him meant, among other things, giving free rein to a quick wit and an exuberant, often Rabelaisian, sense of humour, as many stories of him show. On one occasion a friend of his brought a young poet to see him. The poet had long been anxious to meet Sauda, and had hopes of persuading him to be his ustād. After Sauda had listened to a few of his verses, he asked him what takhallus he had chosen. "Umedvār," he replied, meaning one who hopes for, or expects, or aspires to something. Sauda smiled and said,

ہے فیض سے کسی کے شجران کا باردار  
اس واسطے کیا ہے تخلص امیدوار

Someone has made him fruitful: need he tell us  
Why he has made Umedvār his takhallus?

<sup>4</sup> "Mirzā" was the proper courteous form of address for a gentleman of Mughal (as opposed to Persian) descent.

<sup>5</sup> *Kulliyāt*, p. 363, lower margin, lines 18-20; p. 364, centre, line 1; and p. 355, centre, line 14. *Kalām*, p. 207, lines 1-2, and p. 211, lines 4-5.

Umedvār, like the English "expectant," also means pregnant. The young man was covered in confusion, and decided both to change his takhallus and to look for another ustād.

On another occasion he was visited by a poet named Hidāyat. After the usual formalities Sauda asked him what he was doing these days. Hidāyat replied pompously, "The management of my affairs leaves me but little leisure, but my temperament constrains me from time to time to write some trifling verses, and occasionally I compose a ghazal." "Why waste time on ghazals?" Sauda replied. "You should write satires." Hidāyat was taken aback. "But whom should I satirise?" he asked. "That's no problem," said Sauda. "You satirise me and I'll satirise you." Having shown Hidāyat that he was not impressed by his pompousness, Sauda seems to have been content to leave it at that.<sup>6</sup> Otherwise Hidāyat would have found to his cost that to be the target of Sauda's satire was a painful experience.

One of such targets was Mir Zāhik, the father of the Mir Hasan of this book, and a man whom Sauda regarded as a sponger and detested accordingly. One day Sauda and another poet named Sikandar were at the house of Mirza Sulaimān Shikoh, a son of the Emperor Shāh Ālam, and their host was conversing with them when Mir Zāhik came in. Sulaimān Shikoh, who was well aware of Sauda's dislike for the man, greeted Zāhik politely, asked him to be seated, and had the hookah set before him. He then turned to Sauda and said, smiling, "Won't you recite something for us?" Sauda replied that he had not written anything recently, and then, with a gesture towards Sikandar added, "But he has just written a poem; I'll recite you the first verse":

یارب تو مری سن لے یہ کہتا ہے سکندر  
ضاحک کے اڑا دیوے کسی بن میں قلندر  
گھر اس کے تولد ہوا گز چہ بندر  
گیلوں میں نچا تا پھیرے وہ بنگلے کے اندر  
روٹی تو کما کھائے کسی طور مچھندر

<sup>6</sup> The anecdotes about Umedvār and Hidāyat are from Āzād, *Āb i Hayāt*, pp. 170, 171, respectively.

Sikandar craves this boon of the Almighty:  
Rouse Zāhik up to lift his spouse's nightie.  
And then when she brings forth his monkey-lad  
He'll dance it through the streets of Faizābād  
And earn his living by an honest trade.

Without waiting to hear any more, Mir Zāhik rose to his feet and threw himself upon the astonished Sikandar, while others rushed in to part them. Meanwhile Sauda stood on one side smiling; the verse was not Sikandar's, but his own.<sup>7</sup>

The incident illustrates both Sauda's character and his satirical style. Within five lines it is suggested that Zāhik is incapable of performing a husband's duties without divine intervention, that he is so apeline that most people would mistake his son for a monkey, that he lives by sponging on others, and that even going the rounds with a performing monkey would be a more honourable way of getting a living. Amidst this shower of insults only the last but one is at all seriously intended. There is a single motive for attack, but the attack is made with any and every weapon that comes to hand.

This method can be disconcerting to one whose ideas of literary polemic are based on the modern conventions that an opponent must be treated fairly and courteously, that personalities should be avoided, and that anything not strictly relevant to the point at issue should be excluded from the argument. But these are quite irrelevant to the satire of Sauda's day—and indeed to that of most countries and most ages up to quite modern times.<sup>8</sup> Sauda enjoyed all and more of the license that is

<sup>7</sup> Shaikh Cānd, pp. 82–83.

<sup>8</sup> The comedies of Aristophanes in ancient Athens, the polemics of Luther against the Pope, and the attacks of Milton on Salmasius illustrate in different countries and different ages that this was so. Thus E. H. Gombrich and E. Kris, in *Caricature* (Harmondsworth, 1940), p. 8, write, "Some of the woodcuts against the Pope which he [Luther] ordered Cranach to make are today hardly reproducible . . . they are illustrated libels, debasing the opponent as crudely as possible." Milton in his polemics addresses Salmasius as "busy puppy," "you slug you," and "you silly loggerhead." Another work against an anonymous opponent has such passages as: "Salmasius will make the trumpet blow a deadly blast." You announce a new kind of harmony; for to the terrors of that loud-sounding instrument no symphony bears so close a resemblance as that which is produced by accumulated flatulency." And: "Take away, O ass! those panniers of airy nothingness; and speak, if you can, three words that have an affinity to common sense; if it be possible for the tumid pumpkin of your skull to discover for a moment anything like the reality of intellect." Milton, *The Prose Works*, ed. J. A. St. John (London, 1848), I, 15, 17, 232, 242, respectively.

still granted to the modern political cartoonist, who may ridicule the personal appearance and habits of his target, though these have nothing to do with the point of his cartoon. The atmosphere of his satires is the atmosphere of the open-air political meeting, where speaker and heckler are all the time trying to score off each other, and the audience thoroughly enjoys every hit that goes home, no matter how irrelevant it may be to the subject under discussion. In the last resort they are not deeply malicious, though that is not to say that they didn't hurt. They did, and they were meant to. Not all of them are personal attacks. Some are sheer clowning, like modern slapstick comedy. One is a ferocious attack on the intolerable heat of the Indian summer.<sup>9</sup> But most of them are, like the verse on Mir Zāhik, directed against people who are specifically named. And if modern taste has grown unaccustomed to this sort of thing, it had at any rate one great advantage, and Sauda did not have to complain, as Swift did, that "satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own."<sup>10</sup>

One in which the victim is not named lampoons a rich man for his meanness.<sup>11</sup> Sauda introduces his subject:

ہے خدا کا یہ ایک شتمہ لوز  
جس سے روشن ہے آسماں کا تیز  
کس زباں سے ہو اس کا شکر ادا  
نعمتیں کیا کیا ان نے کیں پیدا  
میوے ہیں باغ میں زمانے کے  
واسطے کھانے اور کھلانے کے

<sup>9</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 138-140. *Kalām*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>10</sup> Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and The Battle of the Books* (London, 1948), p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 141-144. *Kalām*, pp. 145-151. Passages translated are *Kulliyāt*, p. 141, upper margin, line 20, to lower margin, line 1, and lower margin, lines 6-13; p. 142, centre, lines 7-8; and p. 144, upper margin, lines 1-4 and 19-20. *Kalām*, p. 145, lines 1-6; p. 146, lines 4-5; p. 149, line 15, to p. 150, line 11; p. 150, lines 16-17; and p. 151, lines 6-7.

فضل سے اس کے کچھ نہیں ہے کمی  
لیک وہ کیا کرے جو ہم ہوں دنی  
سُنیویار و کروں ہوں میں اک نقل  
جس کو باور کرے نہ ہرگز عقل

God filled the world with numberless good things,  
That every man might eat and have to spare;  
Men live in a vast orchard, fit for kings,  
Laden with fruits enough for all to share.  
The ordinary man like you and me  
Gives thanks that He provides for us so well.  
But what is He to do with such as he  
Who figures in this tale I'm going to tell?

He goes on to relate how an acquaintance of his once went to visit a rich nobleman. Hardly had he been admitted when the sky clouded over and it began to look like rain. His host at once became extremely agitated, and forgetting even the normal courtesies with which a visitor is welcomed, began to ask anxiously whether he had brought a cloak or shawl which would give him some protection if it should happen to rain on his way home. He replied that he had not, for he had not expected rain when he left home. Shortly afterwards the rain began. The host went and fetched a waterproof and laid it before his visitor, exclaiming against his evil fortune and lamenting that one who had not visited him for so long should be put to all the inconvenience of going home in the pouring rain. The other, who knew that a man of his host's wealth and position could put him up for the night without the slightest inconvenience, was genuinely puzzled at his words and replied:

لو لے یہ سادگی سے کیا ہے ضرور  
بھیگتا جاؤں گا میں اتنی دور

رکھے خالق سلامت آپ کی ذات  
نہ کھلے گا تو میں رہوں گا رات

Why all this agitation, my good lord?  
What need to fancy me in such a plight?  
I need not hasten home; be reassured.  
If it keeps on like this I'll stay the night.

At these words his host turned pale, as though his guest had dealt him a mortal blow, and in even greater agitation he spoke constantly about the rain, sending his servants out repeatedly to look at the sky and see if there were any sign of it clearing up. But when the steady downpour continued, he realised that other measures would be needed. For a while he conversed with his visitor, dwelling at length, for his benefit, on a tradition of the Holy Prophet, which tells how he reproved one of his acquaintances for visiting him too frequently; and when it was time for dinner, he excused himself, saying that he had to go to the lavatory, but telling his guest to send for the steward and order anything he wished. The visitor accordingly did so. The steward came only after being repeatedly summoned, and having at length appeared, said that no food was ready, that there were no provisions in the house, and that the tradesmen had found it so difficult to extract payment for what they supplied that they had all long since refused to deal with the house any longer. Then, warming to his subject, he launched into a long and contemptuous account of his master's unspeakable meanness—this speech forms the bulk of the satire—ending with an incident which was meant to convince his hearer that he could not expect to receive the slightest hospitality at this house:

ایک فرزند یہ رکھے ہے لاغ  
اُن نے اک روز یہ حماقت کی  
نہ ضیافت کہ جس میں ہو رنگ رس  
تس پر یوں پیش آیا یہ مردود  
سارے گھر کا ہے اس کے چشم چراغ  
آشنا اپنے کی ضیافت کی  
اک رکابی طعام و دیگر بس  
یاد آیا اُسے پچھی کا دودھ

چاہتا تھا کرے یہ اس کو عاق  
بائے لوگوں نے آکے سمجھایا  
پتھر اس کے عوض تو کیوں نہ جی  
یار و مجھ سے تو لا ولد بہتر  
اس کا دادا بھی گرچہ تھا عیاش  
جو کوئی اس کے گھر میں لوکر تھا  
پھرتا وہ ٹکڑے مانگتا گھر گھر  
اچھے چن چن کے آپ کھاتے تھے  
پیدا کر گئے تھے اس طرح اجداد  
میں تو آپ ہی کو جانتا تھا فضول  
گڑے پیسے یہ سب اڑاوے گا  
تھی بزرگوں کی اپنے تو یہ چال  
خوب جو کچھ اٹھا خزینے سے

اور ماں کو بھی اس کی دیوے طلاق  
تب یہ جو روکے حق میں فرمایا  
کاش پھنس مرتداواں یہ ناشدنی  
میرا بیٹا اور اس قدر ابتر  
اس سلیقے سے پر کرے تھا معاش  
رات کو اس پہ یہ مقدر تھا  
لاتا آفت کے آگے جھولی بھر  
بڑے تنخواہ میں لگاتے تھے  
سو یہ بد بخت نے ہے یوں برباد  
پر یہ مجھ سے بھی نکلا نامعقول  
اینٹوں تک بیچ بیچ کھاوے گا  
کرتی ہیں یاں ضیافتیں پامال  
لو اتالیق کے ہینے سے

This fellow has a son, a stupid boy,  
But none the less his father's pride and joy.  
Do you know what he did, the silly fellow?  
One day, feeling particularly mellow,  
He asked a friend to lunch—'twas nothing much—  
A plate of greens and lentils, or some such.

You should have seen his father's agitation.  
 You'd think his son had feasted half the nation.  
 He swore he'd cut him off without a shilling;  
 Divorce his mother too: *he'd* not be willing  
 To call her wife who'd borne a son so monstrous!  
 Then, less infuriated and more pompous,  
 He called her and proceeded to hold forth:  
 "O would that you had never given birth!  
 Or else brought forth a stone! Or else miscarried!  
 Better by far if I had never married.  
 Better by far die childless than have one  
 So utterly unworthy for a son!  
 His grandsire was a great voluptuary.  
 But still, he was no spendthrift—no, not he!  
 He planned his operations like a soldier  
 And sent his servants, haversack on shoulder,  
 To beg from door to door for scraps of food,  
 And bring them back to him; anything good  
 He'd pick out for himself. Then he would say  
 "The rest is yours"—and dock it from their pay.  
 That's how our family fortunes were amassed,  
 And was it all for this, that he at last  
 Should leave us naked 'gainst the winter's blast?  
 I thought *myself* extravagant, but he  
 In reckless spending outdoes even me.  
 He'll rapidly exhaust our buried hoards,  
 Pull down the house, and sell the bricks and boards.  
 And all for senseless prodigality!  
 Well, since the thing is done, I'll have to see  
 Where lies the true responsibility.  
 His tutor should have taught the boy more sense,  
 So he shall pay the bill . . ."

The steward concluded by saying that the visitor would get nothing here, but that his own humble dwelling was not far away and he would be very welcome to dine there if he wished. The visitor thanked him and returned

home, and the next day came and related the whole story to Sauda, who concludes:

بھجو یار و اب ایسے عمدہ پر  
 لعنت کردگار شام و سحر

On such a perfect nobleman, I say,  
 May God send down His curses night and day.

Another satire is on the gluttony of Mir Zāhik.<sup>12</sup> It depicts a number of separate scenes rather than telling a connected story.

گھر میں اب جس کے دیکھ کر کھڑے  
 در پر اس کے یہ بیٹھیوں اڑ کے  
 گور سے پھر جو رستم اٹھ کر آئے  
 میت اس کی اٹھائے یا نہ اٹھائے

He only has to hear a saucy rattle,  
 And like a soldier digging in for battle,  
 He'll take up his position by the door.  
 Nothing can shift him then: that god of war,  
 Rustam himself, might rise up from the tomb  
 And try his strength against him. He'd stand firm.  
 He'd fight to the last breath and never yield  
 Until his corpse was carried from the field.

It is enough to catch a whiff of food cooking for him to fly to the place and sit there beating his head with both hands in an agony of impatience and looking like a great fly which sits on the food washing its face with its front legs. When food is set before him, he rushes at it as a soldier

<sup>12</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 144-147. *Kalām*, pp. 156-161. Passages translated are *Kulliyāt*, p. 144, centre, lines 4-5, and p. 145, upper margin, lines 11-18. *Kalām*, p. 157, lines 2-3; p. 158, lines 2-4; other verses not included in *Kalām*.

rushes to loot a house, feverishly gathering everything up in case anyone should come and disturb him before he can finish, and his hands flash back and forth between the plate and his mouth as nimbly as those of a fencer hard pressed by a determined opponent. So obsessed is he by the thought of food that it dominates his mind even when he is alone with his wife. He

جور ڈاپنی پہ جب کرے ہے نظر  
اس سے کہتا ہے تب یہ گیدی خر  
کچھ ترے پاس لے حمیدہ ہے  
تیری انگیا میں گاؤ دیدہ ہے  
یا چھپائے ہیں تو نے قرض پیر  
بیج ہی کہہ ورنہ ہوں گا میں دیگر  
کچھ خوشک پہ ہاتھ پھیرا جان  
کس طرح کی یہ بچہ کش ہے نان

Fixes his lady's bodice with a stare,  
"Tell me," he asks, "What have you got in there?  
Are they two loaves? Or two delicious cheeses?"  
Or, if his hand should stray into her breeches,  
"What's this I feel," he cries, "So soft and warm?  
Newly-baked bread?<sup>13</sup> If so 'twould do no harm  
To let me eat it. Why do you hide it from me?"

Another satire is directed against an ignorant *hakim*,<sup>14</sup> or one who practises the traditional Greek system of medicine as developed by the Arabs—a system still widely prevalent in all countries which have a large

<sup>13</sup> Saudā uses the word *panjakash*. This was a kind of bread bearing the marks of five fingers.

<sup>14</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 151-153. *Kalām*, pp. 137-141. Passages translated are *Kulliyāt*, p. 151, lower margin, lines 3-6 and 16-20; p. 152, centre, lines 5-9; and p. 153, upper margin, lines 7-8. *Kalām*, p. 137, lines 1-2, 5-7, and 10-15; p. 141, lines 3-4.

Muslim population. In this case Sauda launches his attack without any general preamble:

صدر کے بازار میں ہے اک بنگ  
عارِ اطبا و طبابت کا تنگ  
شکل ہے شیطان کی اور غوث نام  
جگ میں ہلا کو کا ہے قائم مقام  
قاتل ہندو و مسلمان ہے وہ  
نسخہ نہ لکھتا کبھو وہ بدسرشت  
بھرتے نہ انسان سے دوزخ بہشت  
جب سے مریضوں کو وہ ہے ہر دوا  
کام میں ہے مرگ معطل شفا

There's a *hakim*, the mention of whose name  
Makes every good physician blush with shame.  
Down in the main bazaar you'll find his house;  
He looks like Satan, yet his name is Ghaus.<sup>15</sup>  
Since he took up his practice people say  
Death works while Healing takes a holiday.  
None whom he treated ever yet got well;  
His patients populate both Heaven and Hell.  
Worthy successor to Halāku Khān,<sup>16</sup>  
He massacres Hindu and Musalman.

<sup>15</sup> *Ghaus* is a title of a Muslim saint.

<sup>16</sup> Halākū Khān was the grandson of Chingiz, or Jenghiz, Khān, and commander of the Mongol hordes which overran the Muslim 'Abbāsīd Empire. When he took Baghdad, he ordered a general massacre of the population of the city and of the surrounding country.

ہو کے کسل مند جو وہ بے حیا  
اپنے تئیں آپ کرے ہے دوا  
مردہ شو، مولودی و تابوت گر  
گھیرتے ہیں ان کے سب اس کا گھر  
دیں ہیں دہائی وہ بصد قیل و قال  
ان میں سے ہر ایک کرے ہے سوال  
اپنی دوا آپ تو ظالم نہ کر  
میرے کس دکو، کی طرف کر نظر  
خوب جو کرتا ہے تو آپ ہی دوا  
اور کوئی آپ سا مجھ کو بتا  
روزی سے خاطر ہو مری تاکہ جمع  
بیہجوں تری گور پہ گل اور شمع

This idiot once felt slightly indisposed;  
He dosed himself with his own preparations.  
Corpse-washers, mourners, coffin-makers, all  
Thronged round his door with earnest supplications:  
‘‘You’ll kill yourself! How can you be so cruel?  
Have pity on our wives and families!  
How shall we earn our bread when you are gone?  
We need you more than you can realise—  
Well, if you must then, tell us someone who  
Makes out the same prescriptions as you do,  
And we will promise (given what we crave)  
Always to keep fresh flowers on your grave.’’

The poem goes on to describe how a man went to consult him and was given a prescription to take to the druggist to be made up. The druggist took one look at it, and asked the man to describe the hakīm who had given him it. From the description he at once recognised that it must be Ghaus, whereupon he launched into a long diatribe against him (which takes up the rest of the poem), cursing him heartily and quoting numerous instances of his complete incompetence. Sauda concludes:

تھا غرض اس نقل سے یہ مدعا  
تاکہ تو ایسے کی نہ کھائے دوا

The moral is, make this a golden rule:  
Don’t go for treatment to this bloody fool.<sup>17</sup>

Ignorant, self-important frauds like hakīm Ghaus are the target of a great number of satires. One of Sauda’s favourite butts was a ‘‘learned’’ Kashmiri named Nudrat. This man did his best to acquire a reputation for virtue, learning, and poetry alike; but he seems in fact—if Sauda is to be believed—to have been a close spiritual kinsman of

. . . the peerless paper lord, Lord Peter,  
Who broke the laws of God, and man, and metre.

There is perhaps no other figure whom Sauda attacks so often and so mercilessly in his satires, sometimes in terms which shock even one accustomed to his coarseness. But the best of them is less crude, and concentrates on exposing Nudrat’s pretensions to be a great scholar and poet:

فاضلوں کی تو بزم میں ہوتے ہو جا کے شعر خواں  
شاعروں پاس آپ کو کہتے ہو نحو و صرف داں  
دونوں ہوں جمع جس جگہ پڑھیں وہاں جگہ کہاں  
بولو جو واں کچھ ان کر سب کہیں تم کو مہرباں  
گھوڑے کو دو نہ دو لگام منہ کو تنک لگام دو

<sup>17</sup> The whole tone of this satire reminds one of Robert Burns’ *Death and Doctor Hornbrook*.



Where scholars are assembled, you're a poet;  
 Where poets gather, a grammarian.  
 Both claims are false, but how are they to know it?  
 They can't catch Nudrat! He's too spry for them!  
 But what when both are met? If you speak there,  
 These are the words you'll very quickly hear:  
 Give your old nag full rein, but curb your tongue! 18

About satires like these Sauda might well have given his readers the same advice as Rabelais gave his: "You . . . may not too easily conclude that they treat of nothing but mockery, fooling, and pleasant fiction . . . You must open this book and carefully weigh up its contents. You will discover then that the drug within is far more valuable than the box promised." 19 What in essence his satires all assert is that it is not too difficult to fulfil your elementary obligations to your fellowmen and to society at large, and that if you fail in them, he has the right to tell you so plainly and to make you smart for it. This down-to-earth approach engages one's sympathies much more than a high moral tone would do. But in any case Sauda did not like the high moral tone. He knew that it was all too often the mark of people who could see failings only in other people, and never in themselves; and he left no one in any doubt about what he thought of such people: 20

Pious severely censures me, I hear,  
 On evidence Abstemious supplied him.  
 Sauda will not resent that, never fear,  
 But I would just respectfully remind him:  
 That which Abstemious saw fit to do  
 For me, he very well may do for you.

I never understood what prompts a man  
 To ferret out the vices of his neighbours.

18 *Kulliyāt*, p. 357, upper margin, lines 12-16. *Kalām*, p. 196, line 13, p. 197, line 2. The last line is a refrain that follows each of the 15 verses.

19 *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Harmondsworth, 1955), pp. 37-38.

20 *Kulliyāt*, p. 355. *Kalām*, pp. 211-212. The translation represents a considerable abridgement of the original, but draws upon most of the stanzas.

Surely a decent human being can  
 Find a much better object for his labours.  
 The rosary was meant for other things  
 Than counting up a fellow-creature's sins.

Suppose my every sin a deadly one—  
 Does that stop *you* living a life of piety?  
 I sin in my own way, involving none:  
 Does that in any way corrupt society?  
 Does it require the strictures of the pious?  
 Ask any normal person free from bias.

I wish this tribe would learn another trade;  
 But meanwhile let them heed this friendly warning:  
 I cannot spy; that's not the way I'm made:  
 I go to bed at night and sleep till morning.  
 And yet I also know a thing or two;  
 You'd best leave me alone: be off with you!

In another short poem he tells how he was approached by an acquaintance who warned him not to make any man his friend, because there are no friends who prove true once they are put to the test. Sauda records his words and then writes:

یہ سن کے اس سے کہا مسکرا کے سووانے  
 شکایت اتنی کسو کی کوئی بیباں نہ کرے  
 بھلے بڑے کے تجھے امتحان سے کیا کام  
 پیش کر کر، جو کوئی تجھ کو امتحان نہ کرے

I heard him out; then, smiling, said to him:  
 "It is not good to speak so ill of men.  
 Who made *you* judge of others? You had best  
 Thank God that no one puts *you* to the test." 21

21 *Kulliyāt*, p. 315, centre. *Kalām*, p. 68. The lines translated are *Kulliyāt*, p. 315, centre, lines 13-14. *Kalām*, p. 68, lines 8-9.

The attitude these poems express helps to explain why Sauda was so popular in his day, when people saw and condemned the degeneracy all round them, and wanted to see their feelings expressed, but were too conscious of their own human failings to sympathise with the conventional moralists. The poems also help to correct a false picture of Sauda to which Urdu critics of the Victorian age gave currency and which is still quite commonly presented. This picture represents him as a proud, irascible man, very conscious of his powers as a satirist and always ready to use them at once against anyone who did anything to upset him. This idea of him arises from a failure to understand the conventions of eighteenth-century satire. What has already been said on this point is not special pleading for Sauda. The few satirical poems of Mir and Mir Hasan are in the same convention as his—a fact these critics seem to have overlooked, for none of them draws similar conclusions about their character. The truth is that no such conclusions can legitimately be drawn, either about them or about Sauda. Mir Hasan, for example, has always been thought of as a man of gentle and courteous disposition; his contemporaries go out of their way to praise these qualities in him, and no subsequent writer has seen any reason to question their testimony. Yet manuscripts of his verse include a satire written in reply to Sauda's attack on his father, Mir Zāhik, and couched in terms so scurrilous that modern editors do not venture to print it as it stands.<sup>22</sup> The outrageous charges made in verse of this kind have nothing to do with the writer's serious estimate of his adversary. One of Mir Hasan's works is a short account of the Urdu poets,<sup>23</sup> and in it he gives high praise to Sauda, adding in passing that he was a frequent visitor at Sauda's house, and was always treated with kindness and affection.

In Mir's case the evidence is even more substantial. The high regard in which Mir and Sauda held each other is well known. Yet they satirised each other in terms which, if taken at their face value, would lead to quite the opposite conclusion. For example, Sauda was very fond of dogs, and Mir wrote a satire attacking him for this.<sup>24</sup> He used many sticks to beat him with, including the argument that Islam regards the dog as an

<sup>22</sup> An expurgated extract is quoted in Maḥmūd Fārūqī, *Mir Ḥasan aur Khāndān ke dūsrē shu'arā* (Lahore, 1956), pp. 42-43.

<sup>23</sup> Mir Ḥasan, *Tazkira i Shu'arā i Urdū*, quoted in Shaikh Cānd, *Saudā*, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup> *Kulliyāt i Mir*, ed. 'Abdul Bārī Āsī (Lucknow, 1941), p. 823.

unclean animal, and the suggestion that Sauda's ostentatious love of dogs is nothing but self-advertisement, necessary because he had no other qualities that would attract anyone's attention. Whether Mir really attached any weight to the views of orthodox Islam on the dog is questionable, for he himself had once kept one.<sup>25</sup> And it is quite certain that Mir did not really think that Sauda had any need to advertise himself, for we know that Mir fully shared the current opinion of him as one of the greatest poets of his day. The whole piece is in lighthearted vein, and probably means only that Mir—in common, no doubt, with many others—thought the attention which Sauda devoted to his dogs extravagant, a little ostentatious, and rather ridiculous.

Sauda replied to Mir's attack in a short piece of about the same length.<sup>26</sup> He takes the argument about the attitude of Islam at its face value and replies that he fully accepts that dogs are unclean animals; but after being in contact with them, one only has to bathe to be clean again. He argues that there is therefore no harm in keeping dogs, and goes on to say that there is one dog, however, which a man should on no account cherish, and that is the dog of his own baser impulses. Love for this dog so contaminates a man that no amount of bathing will make him clean. Let those who want to teach others the way they should live preach against all attachment to this dog; and above all let them see to it first that they themselves are free from such attachment—a plain suggestion to Mir that if he is so concerned with godly living, he should first concentrate on correcting his own faults. The whole thing amounts to a mild rebuke to Mir—not perhaps wholly undeserved—for being too ready to tell others what they ought and ought not to do.

Mir is the target of another short satire<sup>27</sup> in which Sauda says that one of the best calligraphers of his day came to him complaining bitterly that Mir was ruining his reputation for him. "How so?" asked Sauda. The man replied that Mir brought him verses of the classical poets to write out, but insisted on "improving" them. When other people saw them, not knowing that Mir was responsible for the changes, they blamed them on the carelessness of the calligrapher. Here again, the serious intention

<sup>25</sup> He preferred cats, however, and this too is made the occasion for a hit at Saudā: "Now if he had kept cats, then I would own / That he had shown himself a man of sense."

<sup>26</sup> *Kulliyāt*, p. 363, lower margin to p. 364. *Kalām*, pp. 207-208.

<sup>27</sup> *Kulliyāt*, p. 316. *Kalām*, p. 170.

is simply to take a hit at Mir for the readiness with which he passes literary judgements, both on the poetry of his own day and on that of the past.

In short, in such exchanges there is on both sides a point of criticism quite seriously intended, but it is accompanied by a good deal more which is not. Serious judgements were another matter. Mir wrote of Sauda as "Pre-eminent among the poets of India . . . and worthy to be called the poet laureate of Urdu."<sup>28</sup> One of the most famous anecdotes about him tells how, when he was asked to name the great poets of his day, he replied without hesitation, "First Sauda; secondly, myself" (adding after a pause that a third poet, Mir Dard, was "half a poet").<sup>29</sup> The names of the two poets—"Mir and Mirza," as their contemporaries called them—were regularly linked together, and they themselves must have approved of the judgement this implies, for they use the phrase in their own writings.<sup>30</sup> There is an anecdote which shows that Sauda did not consider anyone and everyone entitled to attack Mir.<sup>31</sup> He was present on one occasion at a gathering where he was approached by a self-styled poet named Khāksār,<sup>32</sup> who asked him to compose an extempore satire on Mir. To his delight, Sauda agreed to his request. A couplet ostensibly ridiculing Mir's personal appearance was greeted with roars of laughter in which Khāksār joined until, when the laughter showed no sign of dying down, it dawned upon him that the verse described not Mir but himself.

All this shows that one poet might lampoon another in the most extravagant terms without this necessarily implying any real feeling of enmity between them. It does not, of course, mean that such enmity never existed between the satirist and his victim. Probably Sauda cordially detested most of those whom he attacked by name. But even then it is important, before forming conclusions, to distinguish the essential theme of the satire from the rest and to assess its underlying tone.

That Sauda was not at all the arrogant, touchy, waspish person that some have made him out to be is well illustrated by an incident which

<sup>28</sup> Mir, *Nikāt ush Shu'arā*, ed. Ḥabīb ur Raḥmān Khān Shīrvānī (Aurangābād, n.d.), pp. 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> Āzād, *Āb i Ḥayāt*, p. 216.

<sup>30</sup> Cf., for example, Mir, *Kulliyāt*, p. 826, line 11; and Sauda, *Kulliyāt*, p. 155, lower margin, lines 12-13.

<sup>31</sup> Shaikh Cānd, *Saudā*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>32</sup> Khāksār means humble, but the name was hardly an apt one; he thought himself a far better poet than Mir, and had conferred upon himself the title of King of Poets.

occurred during the last period of his life in Lucknow.<sup>33</sup> There was a man named Ashraf Ali Khān who had spent fifteen years in compiling a selection of Persian verse taken from the works of the great poets. When he had completed it, he took it to Fākhīr Makīn, who enjoyed the reputation of being the best Persian poet of the day, and asked if he would consent to look over it. Fākhīr Makīn made all sorts of difficulties, but in the end took the selection and began to look through it. Ashraf Ali Khān later heard to his consternation that he was crossing out the verses of even the greatest poets, on the ground that they were meaningless, and was making drastic alterations in others. He at once went to him, and having after much persuasion got the selection returned, went with it to Sauda. He told him of all that had happened, and of how distressed he felt at what Fākhīr Makīn had done, and in the end asked Sauda to undertake the revision of the selection. Sauda replied that his knowledge of Persian was not adequate to the task; he felt sure, he said, that a scholar like Fākhīr Makīn must have good reason for what he had done; if Ashraf Ali Khān could not bring himself to accept Fākhīr Makīn's corrections, he should approach other eminent Persian scholars, and named five whom he considered competent to undertake the task. Ashraf Ali Khān pointed out in reply that Fākhīr Makīn held the very poorest opinion of those whom Sauda had named, and again asked Sauda himself to revise his selection. At length Sauda reluctantly agreed. When he began to examine the selection, he was astonished to find what Fākhīr Makīn had done. The verses of great classical poets had been mutilated beyond recognition. Sauda then wrote a pamphlet which he entitled "Ibrat ul Ghāfilīn," or A Warning to the Heedless. In it he dealt with all the mistakes that Fākhīr Makīn had committed in making his so-called corrections, and then went on to a detailed examination of all the mistakes in Fākhīr Makīn's own Persian verse.

Fākhīr Makīn heard of this with alarm, and at once took steps to prevent the thing becoming public knowledge. He first sent one of his best pupils, a man with some reputation as a Persian scholar in his own right, to dispute some of the points Sauda had made, but Sauda completely refuted all his arguments. He then took more desperate steps. He sent a gang of young bloods to compel Sauda under threat of violence to accompany them to Fākhīr Makīn's house and settle the whole matter with him

<sup>33</sup> Āzād, *Āb i Ḥayāt*, pp. 165-168.

there and then. Sauda had no alternative but to submit. On the way there they tried to humiliate him in public by provoking a clash with him, and the dispute was at its height when, fortunately for Sauda, the retinue of Āsaf ud Daula's brother Sa'adat Ali Khān passed that way. Having ascertained what was happening, he compelled the men to release Sauda, and seating him beside him on his own elephant, went directly to Āsaf ud Daula. He was taking his meal at the time, but Sa'adat Ali Khān went straight in to him and related the whole incident, expressing his regret that the ruler of Oudh apparently could not prevent such a thing happening even in the streets of his own capital. Āsaf ud Daula was very concerned. He at once came out, and having heard a more detailed account of what had happened, ordered that the rowdies should be expelled from the city and the quarter where they lived razed to the ground, while Fākhir Makīn was to be commanded to appear at once at court, just as he was. It was Sauda who interceded for his adversary, saying that the help already given him was sufficient protection, and that what was after all in origin a literary dispute should be settled by literary means. Āsaf ud Daula deferred to his wishes and Sauda was allowed to go home, escorted as a precaution by some of the Navvāb's own soldiers.

The next day Āsaf ud Daula rebuked Fākhir Makīn sharply before the whole court, and told him in conclusion: "If you possess the poetic talent you claim, compose a verse against Sauda here and now in his presence." Fākhir Makīn replied, "That is more than I can do." "Yes," said the Navvāb, "but you could set these devils on Sauda and let them drag him from his house into the street and humiliate him. *That* was not more than you could do." He then turned to Sauda and indicated that he should speak. Sauda, never at a loss, at once recited a *rubāi* in Persian, which may be freely translated:

The learned class in every land reveres thy name;  
O crown of poetry, who has not heard thy fame?  
Three errors in two lines! Pray you correct them, friend;  
For "class" read "ass"; for "crown" read "clown"; for "fame"  
read "shame."

The story is interesting not only because it shows Sauda to have been a modest man, capable of exercising restraint and tolerance even under

great provocation, but because it also shows the great honour and respect in which a good patron was expected to hold a great poet.

Most of Sauda's satires are personal, in the sense that they attack particular people, often by name. But in some of them personal merges with social satire, because it is public figures who are under attack. And in addition to these there are others which directly satirise social institutions. In his social, as in his personal, satire Sauda spoke from a standpoint very close to that of the ordinary man. He stood by the medieval ideals of social life, and was not prepared to abandon them, no matter how generally they had ceased to be observed in his own day. He attributed the decay of the Empire to the selfish neglect by men of all classes of the duties to society appropriate to their station; and he therefore saw the remedy in himself doing his duty to society according to his lights, and in persuading or shaming others into doing theirs. As a satirist, he played his part by attacking any departure from the social ideals in which he believed. Like most men of his age, he looked for inspiration to the past, or more accurately, to an unconsciously idealised part, which in fact represented his aspirations for the future. Many passages show how this idealised memory sustained him, so that while the contemporary scene often aroused his anger and sorrow, he did not succumb to pessimism.

In demanding, so to speak, that his social ideals be realised, he did not feel that he was demanding the impossible, for he believed that they had already been realised once before—and only a generation or two before his time. Thus one of his satires contrasts the Delhi of former times with that of his own day.<sup>34</sup> There was a time, he says, when the administration was firm, vigorous, and incorruptible, and the people of the city lived a good life in peace and prosperity, assured that their lives and property were secure. But today the city swarms with thieves and robbers, who go unpunished because the police are in league with them; the danger of assault is always present, so that men go out in the evening to a *mushāira* fully armed, as though they were going out to battle. Elsewhere he describes the age as one in which

ستائہیں ہے درد رعیت کا بادشاہ

The king no longer heeds his subjects' cry.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 136-138. *Kalām*, pp. 130-133.

<sup>35</sup> *Kulliyāt*, p. 338, centre, line 14. (Not included in *Kalām*.)

And in another place he exclaims:

اس زمانے کا جو دیکھا تو ایسا انصاف  
گرگ آزاد ہیں اور ہوں شباں پرے میں

See the perverted justice of this age!

The wolves roam free: the shepherds are in chains.<sup>36</sup>

Sauda raised his voice against all these social ills, and the more effectively because his own conscience was clear. The standards he set for himself were no less exacting than those he set for others who had a different part to play in society, and his writings show how seriously he took the responsibilities of his calling. They also show his confidence that he was fulfilling them adequately, and reflect the pride and pleasure which this gave him. He knew that in his age none could surpass him, and only one—Mir—could equal him, and then only because Mir's superiority in his own particular field matched his own pre-eminence in his. He never rested content with what he had achieved, but always tried to perfect still further his mastery of his craft, and to keep himself always ready to learn. He wrote towards the end of his life<sup>37</sup> that in the forty or more years since he had made his name as a poet, he had tried all the time to learn from the great poets of the past as a pupil does from his master, had never withheld the praise that is the due of good poetry, even though it was the work of his enemies, and that he still does not regard his own poetry as incapable of improvement, and will continue as always to listen attentively to criticism and to accept it where he feels it to be just, even should the critic be the rawest and most unpractised of poets.

This receptiveness served him well. The mastery of his craft revealed by his poetry is remarkable, particularly when one considers that Urdu poetry in northern India was in its infancy when he and Mir entered the field. He handles with ease the complex metres and figures of rhetoric. His range of vocabulary is wide, and he never seems to be at a loss for words, while at the same time he uses his vocabulary with economy, giving the fullest expression to what he wants to say without wasting any

<sup>36</sup> *Kulliyāt*, p. 308, centre, line 6. *Kalām*, p. 107, line 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Shaikh Cānd, Saudā*, p. 75.

words. He writes on the most varied themes, particularly in his satires, and uses with uniform ease the range of vocabulary appropriate to each. His satires also show a wide and varied experience of life, a keen power of observation, and an impressive familiarity with the arts and sciences of his day, so that when he lampoons an ignorant hakīm or a self-styled scholar, he can carry the attack into his opponent's own territory. For all these reasons he speaks with the vigorous assurance of one who knows that his own position is unchallengeable. If he enjoyed a life of comfort and even luxury, he regarded this as no more than what was due to him as one of the two greatest poets of the age, each of whom, moreover, had in his own field raised Urdu poetry to a level never before attained. He was satisfied with his own part in the life of his age; he did not feel tempted, as a weaker man might have done, to blind himself to the reality of what he saw around him in case he should be compelled to face also the reality about himself; and he knew he had no need to protect himself from the possibility of counterattack by holding back in his denunciation of the vices and shortcomings of others.

Sauda was never overawed by anyone. Men with a countrywide reputation were attacked by name in his satires. The great religious leader Shāh Vali Ullāh is the subject of one of them.<sup>38</sup> Zābīta Khān, the Rohilla chieftain, son of a distinguished father, Najīb ud Daula, who from Delhi had ruled what was left of the Empire with great ability for seven years after the momentous events of 1761, is satirised for his cowardice.<sup>39</sup> One full-length satire is a devastating exposure of Shīdi Faulād Khān, *kotvāl* of Delhi.<sup>40</sup> The duties of the *kotvāl* of a city correspond very roughly to those of a modern chief of police, though his powers and responsibilities were in many respects much wider. Faulād Khān, however, instead of protecting the property of the citizens of Delhi, was in league with the thieves and shared with them the proceeds of their activities.

In other satires he speaks out against evils too widespread to be attacked through satire against individuals. One pictures the chaos and inefficiency of the imperial army,<sup>41</sup> in which every man tries to evade his obligations and in which the skill, equipment, and courage without which no army

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 86. The poem is given in *Kulliyāt*, p. 108, where, however, no name is mentioned. Some manuscripts describe this as a satire on Shāh Vali Ullāh.

<sup>39</sup> *Kulliyāt*, p. 315.

<sup>40</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 136-138. *Kalām*, pp. 130-133.

<sup>41</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 113-115. *Kalām*, pp. 121-125.

can give a good account of itself in war are all wanting. Finally there are two satires which give so comprehensive a view of the society of his day that they are worth summarising at some length. The first<sup>42</sup> tells how a man approached Sauda and asked him whether he could tell him of any way to earn his living in Hindustan today. Sauda replied:

Better to keep silent than try to answer such a question, for even the tongues of angels cannot do justice to the answer. There are many professions which you could adopt, but let us see what difficulties will beset you in each of them these days. You could buy a horse and offer yourself for service in some noble's army. But never in this world will you see your pay, and you will rarely have both sword and shield by you, for you must pawn one or the other to buy fodder for your horse; and unless the moneylender is kind to you, you or your wife must go hungry, for you will not get enough to feed you both. You could minister to the needs of the faithful in a mosque, but you would find asses tethered there and men young and old sitting there idle and unwilling to be disturbed. Let the muezzin give the call to prayer and they will stop his mouth, for no one cares for Islam these days . . . You could become the courtier of some great man, but your life would not be worth living. If he does not feel like sleeping at night, you too must wake with him, though you are ready to drop, and until he feels inclined to dine, you may not, though you are faint with hunger and your belly is rumbling. Or you could become his physician; but if you did, your life would be passed in constant apprehension, for should the Navvāb sneeze, he will glare at you as though you ought to have given him a sword and buckler to keep off the cold wind. You will live through torture as you watch him feed. He will stuff himself with sweet melon and cream and then fish, and then cow's tongue, and, with it all, fancy breads of all kinds; and if at any stage he feels the slightest pain in his stomach, then you, you ignorant fool, are to blame, though you were Bū Ali Sīna himself.<sup>43</sup> Why not become a merchant then? But if you do, you must reckon with the possibility that the wares you buy in Ispahan will not find a market in Hindustan,<sup>44</sup> and you

<sup>42</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 111-113. *Kalām*, pp. 108-113.

<sup>43</sup> One of the greatest medieval authorities on medicine, known in Europe as Avicenna (d. 1037).

<sup>44</sup> The term here means northern India only.

will have to take them as far afield as the Deccan. You never know in the morning whether you will ever reach your destination for the day,<sup>45</sup> and your evenings will be passed in anxious reckonings of gain and loss. When you take your wares to some great man, you will be astonished at the way he speaks to you, and an observer, noting the price you are compelled to accept, would conclude that you are suspected of selling stolen property. Moreover, you will not get your money right away, but must go to the great man's agent for it, and though you show him authorisation to pay, he will tell you that he has not got the money to do so. So back you must go to his master, only to be told, "Take your goods back; my steward says they are too dear." But when you go for them, they are not to be found. So you lose both the goods and their price, and you must stand outside the great man's fortress hoping to waylay him as he comes out in his palanquin and lay your petition for redress before him. And do not think you can make a living from the land, for only if the rains are good can you survive, and you pass your days in dread of drought or floods . . . But perhaps you have thought of becoming a poet, for are not poets said to enjoy freedom from all care? You will find it is not so. No one is such a prey to worry as he. He cannot even concentrate on his *Īd* prayer,<sup>46</sup> for he is trying all the time to compose an ode to his patron. No sooner is it rumoured that the noble lord has fertilised his lady's womb than he must rack his brains for a chronogram,<sup>47</sup> ready for the birth of the child, and if she should miscarry, he must write such an elegy on the abortion that no one ever after will want to read those on *Imām Husain*.<sup>48</sup> If you think of becoming a teacher, bear this in mind, that men able to teach the greatest works of Persian literature today get

<sup>45</sup> An allusion to the robber-infested roads.

<sup>46</sup> *Īd* is the day which marks the end of the month-long fast of *Ramzān*. It is a day of great rejoicing. Congregational prayers are said on a big open space, since the mosques cannot contain the huge crowds.

<sup>47</sup> In the Arabic alphabet, adopted by *Urdū* speakers—as by most other peoples who embraced *Islām*—for the writing of their own language, every letter stands for a particular number. The dates of important events were marked by chronograms, or verses in which would be included a word or phrase made up of letters whose numerical value when totalled would give the date required.

<sup>48</sup> The grandson of the Prophet, who, with a band of his companions, was martyred at *Karbala*, in *Iraq*. The *marsiya*, or elegy, is one of the major forms of *Urdū* verse, and early became associated with the theme of *Husain's* martyrdom; it developed to its highest point after the close of our period.

paid no more than what will give them a cup of cheap lentils and two rounds of coarse bread to dine on. Calligraphers could once command great honours. But nobody appreciates their art these days, and even the greatest masters of the art must sit in the open street, soliciting work and selling their talents for a song. . . . Perhaps, then, in the end you will forsake all wordly professions and, taking no thought for the morrow, repose your trust in God. But do you know what will happen then? Your wife will think you a lazy good-for-nothing; your son will despise you; your daughter will think you have gone mad. And when your children begin to die of hunger, you must run after every great man's carriage and ask for the charity that your holiness deserves. And perhaps you may get a few coppers and a little chit saying, "This man merits your charity; he is a truly religious man and is learned in religious lore." In short, you will not find in Hindustan any means of earning a decent living. Peace and plenty have become empty words in this world. Some say that we shall know them in the next, but who can persuade himself that it is so? For my part, I think it only wishful thinking. Here, there is nothing but the struggle to live; there, nothing but the tumult of Judgement Day. Peace and plenty is an empty recollection: you will not find it either on earth or in heaven.

The second satire<sup>49</sup> tells how Sauda was approached by a person who asked him, "Why do you spend your days roaming aimlessly about? Why don't you buy a horse and ask for employment in some noble's army?" "Employment?" Sauda replied.

And can you tell me how it is sold these days? By the bushel or by the pound? Don't you know that only the wealthy and great can offer—or rather, *could* offer—employment? But how can they do so today? They can no longer realise the revenue from their estates. For years now the land has been a prey to lawless and rebellious men. Even the person supposed to be lord and master of twenty-two provinces no longer controls even the district of Aligarh.<sup>50</sup> All the real power belongs to lawless men. The great lords are helpless and impoverished. Their

<sup>49</sup> *Kulliyāt*, pp. 361–363. *Kalām*, pp. 114–120.

<sup>50</sup> A direct reference to the Emperor Shāh 'Ālam. The statement was literally true. Aligarh is only 80 miles south of Delhi.

peasants raise two crops a year, but their lords see nothing of either, and their agents on the spot are virtual prisoners in the peasants' hands, like a peasant kept in his creditor's house until he can pay his debt. So complete is the collapse of all order and administration that though the peasant reaps a harvest of gold, his lord does not see so much as a wisp of straw. How then can the lord keep the armed force he should? How can he pay the soldiers who should go before him when he goes out, or the horsemen who should ride behind him? They have fallen so low now that but for the beating of the drums to announce their coming, no one would know them for nobles. All their thought is of how to reduce their expenses, and if they do so much further, then even the drummers will be dismissed, and the palanquin-bearers who carry him—nay, the Navvāb himself sitting inside—will have to beat the drums themselves. But still they cling to their hollow greatness, though they have long forgotten how a noble should conduct himself, whether in peace or war. All their concern is to cling to their two peacock-feather fans and their robe of fur. Those who know the responsibilities of a noble and could discharge them have long since tested out the way things are run here and have withdrawn to their own dominions, leaving the Empire to its fate.<sup>51</sup> And now our all-wise nobles who are left have seen the conditions of the age and washed their hands of everything. They sit in their mansions surrounded by a little group of courtier-companions, with a man to fan them, and betel and spittoon before them, and if anyone should come to visit them, it all depends upon their mood whether they will see him or not. If the noble lord deigns to admit him and converse with him, let not his visitor be so rash as to speak of public affairs. "Brother!" he will be told, "for God's sake speak of other things!"

The ministers of the Empire have been summoned for consultation. See how they consult for the welfare of the state. The Imperial Paymaster is thinking up some scheme to stay at home doing nothing and still draw his pay, while the Chief Minister has his eyes on the silver knobs on the poles of the royal tent, and is calculating how much they will fetch in the market. They are all of them strangers to any sense of

<sup>51</sup> A reference to such men as the governors of the Deccan and of Oudh, who established their provinces as virtually independent states. Saudā blames the hopeless incompetence of the Emperor and of those who rule by his favour for this state of affairs.

shame. They spend their time in gambling and only come when summoned. A lifetime of their counsel has resulted only in this, that men who once lived in well-built houses now inhabit mud huts. Yet each of them is in his own estimation a veritable paragon. If war comes they creep out of their fortresses just long enough to draw up an army which, you may depend on it, will turn and run from every battle, soldiers who quake with fear even when they see the barber take out his razor to shave them, horsemen who fall out of their beds at night even at the dream of a horse rearing under them.

The royal treasury is empty: nothing comes in from the crown lands; the state of the Office of Salaries defies description. Soldiers, clerks, all alike are without employment. Documents authorising payment to the bearer are so much waste paper: the pharmacist tears them up to wrap his medicines in. Men who once held *jāgīrs* or posts paid from the royal treasury are looking for jobs as village watchmen. Their sword and shield have long since gone to the pawnshop, and when they next come out, it will be with a beggar's staff and bowl. Words cannot describe how some of these once great ones live. Their wardrobe has ended up at the rag merchant's. If the cow's tongue which comes out of their oven could speak, it would say, "Before my master could buy me, he had to do without three meals and sell his sable robe for next to nothing." Ask the steward who has charge of his beasts and cattle; he will tell you that there is neither grain nor fodder for them to eat and their condition is pitiable. The noble lord boasts of his elephants, but go to look at them and you will find an old blind she and a one-eyed bull, both without any hope of being fed and resigned to the prospect of death. The servants' hunger has made them bold and insolent. The doorkeeper, who should protect his master's privacy, cares nothing for his duties, and all and sundry get access to him. The cooks are told to prepare *pulāo*, but send up broth instead.<sup>52</sup> If the servant is told to straighten out the carpet on which his master is sitting, he will not wait for his master to rise, but will give a tug at the carpet there and then. But the truth is that servants and courtiers alike are weak from hunger and are not fit to perform even the lightest duties.

<sup>52</sup> The implication is that they use the ingredients of the ordered *pulāo*, or the money given them to buy these ingredients, to fill their own bellies. *Pulāo* is a rich dish prepared from rice, meat, and other ingredients.

The *salātīn*<sup>53</sup> are in such desperate straits that their clothes are all threadbare. They are ashamed to admit visitors to their homes and will slam the door in their faces rather than do so. Some are saying that if they are such a burden to maintain, it would be better to give them poison to take. In short, poverty has overtaken all, and a man may try his utmost for employment and still find none, unless he is prepared to emigrate as far afield as Ispahan or Istambul<sup>54</sup> . . .

How can I describe the desolation of Delhi? There is no house from where the jackal's cry cannot be heard. The mosques at evening are unlit and deserted, and only in one house in a hundred will you see a light burning. Its citizens do not possess even the essential cooking pots, and vermin crawl in the places where in former days men used to welcome the coming of spring with music and rejoicing. The lovely buildings which once made the famished man forget his hunger are in ruins now. In the once-beautiful gardens where the nightingale sang his love songs to the rose, the grass grows waist-high around the fallen pillars and ruined arches. In the villages round about, the young women no longer come to draw water at the wells and stand talking in the leafy shade of the trees. The villages are deserted, the trees themselves are gone, and the wells are full of corpses.<sup>55</sup> *Jahānābād*,<sup>56</sup> you never deserved this terrible fate, you who were once vibrant with life and love and hope, like the heart of a young lover, you for whom men afloat upon the ocean of the world once set their course as to the promised shore, you from whose dust men came to gather pearls. Not even a lamp of clay now burns where once the chandelier blazed with light. Those who once lived in great mansions now eke out their lives among the ruins. Thousands of hearts once full of hope are sunk in despair. Women of noble birth, veiled from head to foot, stand in the streets carrying in their arms their little children, lovely as fresh

<sup>53</sup> The *salātīn*, or princes, were the relatives and descendants of the imperial family, who, as may be imagined when the size of the imperial harems is borne in mind, were numerous. In 1836 there were no less than 795 receiving stipends of some sort. Cf. Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls*, p. 39.

<sup>54</sup> Whereas formerly people flocked to India from the whole Islamic world and made their fortunes there.

<sup>55</sup> Of women who, in the days when armies were looting and raping, threw themselves into the wells to escape dishonour.

<sup>56</sup> Delhi.



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

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.

<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> The main source for the significant facts of Mir Hasan's life is his own works. Two of these—the *masnavī Gulzār i Iram* and his *taẓkira*—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, Maḥmūd Fārūqī's *Mir Hasan aur Khāndān ke dūse 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 Ṣafdar 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 *taẓkira*, 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 Ṣafdar 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 Ṣafdar 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 *masnavī Siḥr ul Bayān* which we have used is that edited by 'Abdul Bārī Āsī (Lucknow, 1941).

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#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Critical studies of Urdu literature, whether in Urdu or in English, tend to be unsatisfying. Old-style Urdu critics have followed the characteristically medieval tradition of evaluating poetry solely in terms of formal and technical accomplishment, without reference to the content of the poetry; and this tradition is still alive, though overshadowed now by more modern trends. Modern criticism came into existence a little less than a century ago, and was much influenced by nineteenth-century English writing—notably by Macaulay. This English influence unfortunately made its impact at a time when imaginative sympathy with medieval ways of thought and feeling was at a low ebb in Britain, and such lack of sympathy is still evident in both Urdu and English writings. There are three histories of Urdu literature in English:

- T. Grahame Bailey. *Urdu Literature*. Calcutta: Association Press (Y.M.C.A.), 1932.  
 Ram Babu Saxena. *History of Urdu Literature*. Allahabad: Ram Narain Lal, 1927.  
 Muhammad Sadiq. *History of Urdu Literature*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.  
 Bailey's is a very short sketch. Saxena's is fuller and more readable. Sadiq's is the best and fullest to be published so far.

The culture and literature of medieval and renaissance Europe has been studied with an insight and a sympathy not yet to be found in studies of Urdu. For this reason, and because the parallels with Urdu poetry are often strikingly close, it is worth while to read a number of them. Recommended are:

- C. S. Lewis. *The Allegory of Love*. London: Oxford University Press paperback, 1958.  
 ——— *The Discarded Image*. Cambridge University Press, 1964.  
 J. Huizinga. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958.  
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In other European languages are:

- Joseph Garcin de Tassy. *Histoire de la littérature hindoue et hindoustanie*. 3 vols. Paris: Labitte, 1870–1871.  
 Alessandro Bausani. *Storia delle letterature del Pakistan*. Milan: Nuova Accademia Editrice, 1958. Chaps. 1 and 2 are relevant.

For those who know enough Urdu the best introductions to Urdu poetry are still Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād's *Āb i Ḥayāt*, first published in 1879; and Altāf Ḥusain Ḥālī's *Muqaddima She'r o Shā'irī*, first published in 1893. For a brief note on *Āb i Ḥayāt* see p. 7, n. 4. It is constantly being republished and is rarely out of print. Of Ḥālī's *Muqaddima* the first half is a general discussion of the canons of poetry, and leans heavily on Macaulay, but the second half, with all its limitations, is a good survey of the major forms of classical Urdu poetry. The edition of Vaḥīd Quraishī (Lahore: Maktaba Jadid, 1953) reproduces the text of 1893, is excellently printed, and has many useful annotations.

A readable essay on Urdu love poetry is Firāq Gorakhpūrī, *Urdū kī 'Ishqiya Shā'irī* (Allahabad: Sangam Publishing House, 1945).

#### THE PERSIAN AND ISLAMIC BACKGROUND

Since Urdu poetry is in a direct line of descent from the Persian, works on Persian literature are also relevant to an understanding of Urdu; and Persian is much better served than Urdu by translations and interpretative studies. Some of the most important, together with some works on Islamic mysticism and on Islam in general, are:

- E. G. Browne. *A Literary History of Persia*. 4 vols. Cambridge University Press, 1951. This is the classic survey.  
 A. J. Arberry. *Classical Persian Literature*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1958.  
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 H. Ritter. *Das Meer der Seele*. Leiden: Brill, 1955. This gives the fullest account of classical Persian mysticism and its love-symbolism, and should be studied by everyone who wants to understand Persian, Turkish, or Urdu mystical poetry.

For the literary symbolism see:

- F. Rückert. *Grammatik, Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser*, herausgegeben von W. Pertsch. Gotha: Perthes, 1874. (Reprinted 1967).  
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#### SPECIALISED WORKS IN URDU

Important new work in Urdu on the eighteenth-century poets has been published since this book was written, including the following:

Khalīq Anjum. *Mirzā Rafī' Saudā*. Aligarh: Anjuman i Taraqqī i Urdū, 1966.  
 This comprehensive study should supersede the pioneering work of Shaikh Cānd.

*Delhi College Magazine, Special Mir Number*. Delhi, 1962-1963.

Vaḥīd Quraishī. *Mir Ḥasan aur un kā zamāna*. Lahore: Istiqlāl Press, 1959.

It is to be hoped that Urdu scholars will soon give their attention to producing definitive texts of the poets' works. *Kalām i Saudā*, ed. Khūrshīd ul Islām (Aligarh: Anjuman i Taraqqī i Urdū, 1965), is a reliable text of a comprehensive selection of Saudā's verse. A definitive text of the collected verse is currently being prepared by Shamsuddīn Ṣiddīqī.

## GLOSSARY

- burqa' A loose, flowing garment worn in the Indian subcontinent by Muslim women who observe *parda* (purdah.) It envelops the whole body, from the crown of the head (which supports the garment) to the feet. Lace network, or a strip of thinner cloth across the eyes, enables the wearer to see while remaining fully protected from others' eyes.
- dīvān A collection of ghazals.
- faqīr Literally, a beggar; but the word has religious connotations also, and signifies one who spurns all worldly possessions and trusts in God to provide for him through the charity of his fellow men.
- ghazal A short lyric poem consisting of couplets independent of one another in meaning, but bound by a strict unity of form, that is, a uniform metre and a rhyming scheme AA, BA, CA, DA, etc. The predominant theme is love, which may be either literal or figurative.
- ḥakīm A physician who practises the traditional Greek system of medicine as modified by the Arabs.
- jāgīr An assignment to a noble of the land revenue from one or more villages in lieu of salary.
- kulliyāt The collected verse of a poet.
- maṣnavī A lengthy poem in the rhyme scheme AA, BB, CC, etc. In Urdu it is generally a love story. The shorter maṣnavīs are generally realistic and tragic; the longer have a stronger element of fantasy and the story has a happy ending.
- mukhammas A poem of five-line stanzas, rhyming AAAAX.

- mushā'ira A gathering at which poets assemble to recite their verse.
- navvāb Literally, one who exercises deputed power; in general roughly equivalent to the British title of Lord.
- parda (purdah) The system of strict segregation of women traditionally practised by Muslims in India and Pakistan (cf. p. 98).
- parī A supernatural being with magic powers, in the form of a beautiful woman.
- qaṣīda A lengthy poem rhyming AA, BA, CA, etc.; generally a panegyric ode.
- shāgird A pupil, or apprentice. A young poet in his capacity of apprentice to his ustād.
- shaikh Literally, an old man; hence, an elder; hence, the pillar of orthodox religion, always represented in poetry as a hypocrite and a Pharisee.
- takhalluṣ The poet's pen-name, always introduced into the closing couplet of the ghazal.
- tazkira A short account of poets, giving for each entry brief biographical details and a few specimen verses.
- ustād Literally, teacher, or master; the poet of established reputation in his capacity of guide to his shāgirds.
- vazīr Minister, usually Chief Minister; the "Vizier" of the *Arabian Nights*.

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