

V

THE SECOND DELHI PERIOD AND THE
FOUR POETS OF RAMPUR

A. THE SECOND DELHI PERIOD

WE have seen how poetry declined in Delhi. It never entirely ceased and a few poets were always to be found who kept the flame alive. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century there was a revival of poetry associated with the names of Mūmin, Zauq and Gālib. The last King of Delhi, Bahādur Shāh, was himself a poet and encouraged the poets at his court. He was exiled to Burma immediately after the Mutiny and died in 1862.

161. **Zauq.** MUHAMMAD IBRAHĪM ZAUQ (1789-1854) was the first poet of importance after the revival of literature in Delhi. Most of his writings were lost in the Mutiny, but Āzād and other pupils collected what they could, and now we have about 12,000 lines which give a good idea of his work. He was the son of a poor man, a servant in Delhi, and he remained poor till quite late in life. Like his teacher, Naṣīr, with whom he afterwards quarrelled, he belonged in poetic method to Lucknow rather than to Delhi, and shows considerable resemblance to Nāsikh. He had the same tendency to over-rate the value of mere words and idioms, and the same fondness for playing with meanings. This undoubtedly lessened his poetic power. At the same time he was certainly one of the greatest ode writers in Urdu; some critics would rank him first. He has left fifteen odes of an average length of about 250 lines each. He wrote also numerous lyrics, but not with the same success.

He had many pupils; the most famous of them was Āzād, who cherished his memory with great affection and wrote an account of his life as well as publishing his

poems. Another of his pupils was Bahādur Shāh II (No. 164), whose verses he used to correct. Zauq's power of expression was greater than his poetic feeling, but he wrote with a great sense of harmony and considerable vigour.

162. **Galib.** ASAD ULLĀH KHĀN GĀLIB (1797-1869) stands in the front rank of Urdu poets; one enthusiast has said that India possesses two inspired books—the Vedas and the poems of Gālib. Without going so far as that, most will agree that he is one of the first three Urdu poets. He was married when a mere boy and shortly after his marriage fell in with a Persian named Hormuzd, a Pārsī who had embraced Islām. Gālib took him in and for two years studied Persian with him, thus laying the foundation of his profound knowledge of the language. He wrote more in Persian than in Urdu; in fact for many years he despised Urdu, and when he began using it as a literary medium, it was only to show that he could do so as well as others. But gradually the fascination of the language laid hold upon him and he became very proud of his proficiency in it. For a time his Urdu poetry was impregnated with Persian, but it was criticised by his friends and parodied by others. In the end he destroyed much of his over-Persianised composition and wrote in a much simpler and purer style.

Most previous poets were confined to a narrow circle of ideas. Gālib not only struck out new lines of thought, but adopted notable methods of treatment. He was a man of great ability, a deep thinker, somewhat careless in matters of religion, full of humour, but mixing humorous and serious subjects in a very attractive way. He could handle verse and prose with equal facility. His best known works are his Urdu poems (a collection of not more than three or four thousand lines) and two volumes of prose (see No. 208). One of these, *'Ud i Hindī*, contains letters and reviews, the other, *Urdu e Mu'allā*, letters only. When we read his letters we feel as if the man were sitting opposite to us talking to us in his inimitable way. His reviews are in a very different style. In writing appreciations of his friends' books, he yielded to the custom of the time and employed the measured rhythmic prose which was regarded as necessary. These reviews will be forgotten when people still read with delight

the letters in which he speaks so naturally of his everyday joys and sorrows, chiefly sorrows, alas! for he had indifferent health; none of his children survived, and he suffered much from the buffeting of fortune.

He was always improving his style. First he followed artificial Persian writers, and then Nāsikh who was less artificial, but the poems of his later years show that he was then following Mir in the expression of yearning and pathos, sometimes even in simplicity of language. He was particularly successful as a writer of lyrics.

163. MUHAMMAD MUMIN KHAN MUMIN (1800-51), one of the three important Delhi poets in the time of Bahādur Shāh II, was fond of astrology and medicine as well as poetry. His reputation stands higher now than ever before, and he is looked upon as a very good poet, though not in the first rank. He wrote many lyrics, nine odes, the best of which is that addressed to the Navāb of Tonk in recognition of help received, several erotic romances, and some good maṣnavīs of an autobiographical nature. One poem, called *Maṣnavī e Jihādiya*, was a warlike poem against the Sikhs. His love of Persian constructions makes him obscure. His first master, the poet Shāh Naṣir, though a native of Delhi, had a great deal of the Lucknow manner; and Mumin too was given to fanciful ideas and difficult images.

164. BAHĀDUR SHĀH II, ZAFAR (1775-1862), King of Delhi (1837-58), was the author of several volumes of verse, mostly lyrics, over 130,000 lines in all. It has been said that he was a better poet than king, but even his writings show more skill in weaving a web of words than true poetry. He composed with great ease, and some of his writings have attained considerable popularity. On well worn themes he wrote with machine-like regularity, but he failed when he tried new subjects. Some critics unkindly ascribe much of his work to his poetical teacher, Zauq, but probably the great majority of it is his own.

165. AṢGAR 'ALĪ KHAN NAṢĪM of Delhi (1794-1864), not to be confounded with Dayā Shankar Kaul Nasim, the author of *Gulzār i Nasīm*, left Delhi for Lucknow, where he became known as a prolific writer and had many pupils. Muḥsin 'Alī Mūsavī, in his anthology, *Sarāpā Sukhan*

(1852), in which he quotes from no less than 700 authors, mostly contemporary, gives great praise to Nasim for his ability as an instructor of poetics. That he deserved this praise is evidenced by the fact that, though a Delhi man writing in the Delhi style, he was highly esteemed by a large band of pupils in Lucknow. He was a remarkable poet who combined happy thoughts with a bright style and effective language. He was at his best in his introductions to the sections of *The Arabian Nights*. These have been declared superior to the work of the Persian poet Zuhūrī.

166. MĪR ḤUSAIN TASKĪN (1803-51) was born in Delhi and studied poetry under Shāh Naṣir till the latter's death in 1838, when he enrolled himself under the disciples of Mumin. He had some difficulty in gaining a livelihood, but finally settled in Rāmpūr where he died. No collection of his poems is extant, but from extracts in anthologies, his verses, and especially his lyrics, are seen to be written in an attractive style.

167. MUṢṬAFĀ KHAN SHEFTA (1806-69) was a very religious man born and brought up in Delhi, who in later life performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. There are collections of his poems in both Urdu and Persian, but he is best known by his biographical anthology of Urdu poets, *Gulshan i Bekhār*.

168. ṢADR UD DĪN KHAN ĀZURDA (1789-1868) was a Kashmirī with a great reputation for learning in Arabic and Persian. He was a Government official held in great respect by a large circle of friends and pupils. In spite of his learning he wrote in an extremely simple manner. He compiled an anthology and wrote a considerable amount of verse; but as nothing has been published we have to judge of his ability by stray quotations.

169. QURBĀN 'ALĪ SĀLIK (d. 1875) was born in Haidarābād, went to Delhi at the age of six, and was brought up there. He wrote a powerful elegy on the death of his brother. One collection of his poems is called *Hanjār i Sālik*; another, compiled by his son who died about ten years ago, was published under the name of *Maikhāna e Sālik*. He owed most of his instruction to Gālib (No. 162).

He is noted for the purity of his style, which sometimes rises to eloquence, and for the pathos of some of his love passages. In late life he returned to Haidarābād where he died. He had a vivid imagination and was good at thinking out new methods of expression.

170. ZIVĀ UD DĪN RAKHSHĀN (d. 1833) was a relative and pupil of Gālib. His MSS. are still in the hands of his son, Ahmad Sa'id Khān Ṭālib (b. 1852), who is also a poet; but they have not yet been published.

171. SHAHĀB UD DĪN SĀQIB (1840-69), son of Rakhshān and elder brother of Ṭālib, was a poet of considerable merit. He had two sons who are still alive and write poetry. The elder, No. 172, SHUJĀ' UD DĪN TĀBĀN, though he has written a good deal, is not well known. The other, SIRĀJ UD DĪN SĀIL (No. 173), has a great reputation in Delhi at the present time.

174. MUHAMMAD ZAKARIYĀ KHĀN ZAKĪ (1839-1903) was an inspector of schools in the United Provinces. He was born in Delhi and looked to Gālib as his teacher; more than any other of Gālib's pupils he wrote in the style of the master, but he had only slight success. He was fond of new subjects, but when a subject did not appeal to him, he had the good sense to avoid it. His thoughts were fresh and his style pleasing. One volume of poems was published during his lifetime; sufficient material to fill another is still in the hands of his friends.

175. ZAHĪR UD DĪN ZAHĪR (born c. 1835, d. 1911) spent his life in different Indian States, and like Sālik, died in Haidarābād. Though he was a pupil of Zauq he wrote more like Mūmin and Dāg; sometimes his style was forceful, but often he indulged in merely fanciful ideas. He left several collections of poems, but only one, *Gulistān i Sukhan*, has been printed.

176. UMRĀO MIRZĀ ANVAR (c. 1840-78), younger brother of Zahir, had a gift of effective language and a polished style which was greatly admired during his lifetime; so much so that in the poetic assemblies of Delhi held in the late fifties of the last century, and attended by the greater poets of the time, not a few gave Anvar preference over the others. He was a clever writer rather than a great poet.

His friends held that he was a mixture of Mūmin, Gālib and Zauq. He passed his later years amid many anxieties and died young. Most of his work was lost, but some, about an eighth of the whole, was collected and published after his death. He is remembered specially for his treatment of love themes.

177. MĪR MAHDĪ MAJRŪH (d. 1902) is known to us chiefly by the fact that in Gālib's *'Ūd i Hindī* there are many letters addressed to him showing the affection which the author bore him. In 1898 Majrūh published a volume of poetry called *Mazhar i Ma'ānī* in which may be traced a gentle, if commonplace, simplicity of thought.

B. THE FOUR POETS AT THE RĀMPŪR COURT

178. **Amir and Dag.** In AMĪR AHMAD MĪNĀI (1828-1900) and No. 179, NAVĀB MIRZĀ KHĀN DĀG (1831-1905) we have once more an example of a pair of poets (p. 50). Much of what has been said of Saudā and Mīr might be said of Amīr and Dāg. They along with Taslīm and Jalāl, were the chief ornaments of the court of Rāmpūr after the Mutiny had led to the breaking up of the court in Lucknow. Amīr was the scholarly man, the master of high sounding words, and Dāg the natural poet with a greater flow of simple idiomatic language. Like Saudā, Amīr was superior in odes which demand splendour of style, while Dāg, like Mīr, excelled in love lyrics where simplicity and pathos are more necessary. Unfortunately both of them, but especially Dāg, indulged in verse of inferior moral tone. Amīr's scholarship is attested by his dictionary *Amīr ul Lugāt*. This was begun on a grandiose scale, but only two parts were published, and the dictionary came to an end with the first letter still incomplete. He wrote a great many poems on religious subjects, especially dealing with the birth, life, death and character of Muḥammad. They are not, however, very successful; the true poetic fire is wanting, and to the devout Muslim they appear cold and formal. His first collection of lyrics was lost in the upheavals of 1857; and consequently the second, *Mir'at ul Gāib*, is usually called his first. After he had written it he felt that the day for that kind of verse was over; he realised

that his friendly rival Dāg was getting the public ear better than he, and determined to alter his style, a difficult thing for a man of his age to do. But it used to be said of him that the older he got the younger he grew. In copying Dāg he became simpler and employed more everyday idioms. Some critics consider his second collection, *Sanamkhāna e 'Ishq*, superior to his first, but it is generally agreed that he failed to equal Dāg. This is not to be wondered at, especially as Dāg was a master of short lyrics. His third collection was entirely given up to praise of Muḥammad (a species of verse called *na't*). Mention must also be made of his valuable volume of *Letters* the publication of which was suggested by the appearance of Gālib's *Letters*. His anthology *Intikhāb i Yādgar* (1873) gives biographical details of poets who had lived in Rāmpūr. He spent many years in that city and then left it for Haidarābād, where he died shortly after his arrival. (See No. 214.)

Dāg ranks very high in the estimation of his literary fellow-countrymen, most of whom would place him in the first twelve Urdu poets. He writes with great fluency in simple and beautiful language, and is a perfect 'river of correct idioms,' but he fails to sound real depths of feeling. He lived on into the twentieth century, but he is a writer of the old school, a pupil of Zauq who inclined to the Lucknow manner, even though he belonged to Delhi. Dāg's work falls into two periods, the Rāmpūr period and the Haidarābād period. So long as he lived in Rāmpūr he was surrounded by other poets whose criticism stimulated him to do his best, and there he produced his best work—*Gulzār i Dāg*, *Ātlāb i Dāg* and *Faryād i Dāg*. After he went to Haidarābād he wrote *Mahtāb i Dāg* and *Yādgar i Dāg* with its supplement. Here he lived a life of ease, fêted on every side with no one to criticise his work. He grew careless and his poetry suffered. He is considered one of the great lyrists, but it is not easy to be enthusiastic about him.

180. TAsLĪM (1820–1911). His real name was Aḥmad Ḥusain, but he was always known by the name Amīr Ullāh. Not long after his birth near Faizābād his family removed to Lucknow where he spent much of his life in

search of a livelihood, for he was always poor. He belonged essentially to the old-fashioned way of thinking and his verses do not appeal much to us now. He wrote eight romances (of which the most esteemed are *Nāla e Taslīm*, *Subah i Khandā* and *Dil o Jān*), *Safarnāma e Navāb i Rāmpūr* (not published), a long drawn out account of the travels of the Navāb of Rāmpūr, about 50,000 lines in length, and five other collections of poetry, of which one is in MS., one was lost in the Mutiny, and three have been published under the titles of *Naẓm i Arjmand*, *Naẓm i Dilafroz*, and *Daftar i Khayāl*.

Naẓm i Dilafroz contains, approximately, 2,000 lines of laudatory odes, about 11,000 lines of lyrics and 1,300 lines of other kinds of poetry. The *Daftar i Khayāl* is a volume about half the size of that just mentioned and has nothing but short lyrics. *Naẓm i Arjmand* is his best collection of lyrics. His odes are in a rather simple style like that considered appropriate to lyrics. Among the poets assembled in Rāmpūr he was the best romance writer; his language was simple and solemn with much power of imagination. He had many pupils of whom the best are Ḥasrat Mohānī, the well-known public speaker.

181. ZĀMĪN 'ALĪ JALĀL (1834–1909) was famous in the court of Rāmpūr for his interest in matters relating to grammar and prosody. In addition to four volumes of perhaps 20,000 lines in all, containing odes and lyrics, he wrote several books on language. Some of them are very short, under 100 pages. One called *Mufīd ush Shu'arā* is a guide to the gender of words; another, much longer, *Sarmāya e Zabān i Urdū*, is a useful collection of idioms. In *Qavā'id ul Muntakhab* he discusses changes in words. He compiled also a couple of Urdu dictionaries.

It is a little difficult to understand upon what the fame of men like Taslīm and Jalāl rests. Their odes and lyrics are conventional; their merit is clever expression more than deep feeling. The lyrics contain the usual complaints against the hard-hearted, murderous loved one, and describe the torments of the lover with the scars on his heart; the odes are fulsome panegyrics. The new age of Urdu poetry had not yet come for them.