

- ① کہتے ہیں جس کو نظیر، مینے تک اُس کا بیان
تھا وہ معلم غریب، بزدل و ترسندہ جاں
- ② کوئی کتاب، اُس کے تئیں، صاف نہ تھی درس کی
آئے تو معنی کہے، ورنہ پڑھائی رواں
- ③ فہم نہ تھا علم سے کچھ عربی کے اُسے
فارسی میں ہاں مگر سمجھے تھا کچھ این و آں
- ④ لکھنے کی یہ طرز تھی، کچھ جو لکھے تھا کبھی
پُختگی و خامی کے، اُس کا تھا خط، درمیاں
- ⑤ شعر و غزل کے سوا، شوق نہ تھا کچھ اُسے
اپنے اسی شغل میں رہتا تھا خوش ہر زمان
- ⑥ سست روش، بیستہ تد، سا نولا، ہندی نرژاد
تن بھی کچھ ایسا ہی تھا قد کے موافق عیاں
- ⑦ ماتھے پہ اک خال تھا چھوٹا سا، مٹے کے طور
تھا وہ پڑا آن کر ابروؤں کے درمیاں
- ⑧ وضع سبک اُس کی تھی، تس پہ نہ رکھتا تھاریش
مونچھیں تھیں، اور کانوں پر پٹے بھی تھے پنہ ساں
- ⑨ پیری میں جیسی کہ تھی کہ اُس کو دل افسردگی
وہی ہی تھی اُن دنوں، جن دنوں میں تھا جواں
- ⑩ جتنے عرض کام ہیں اور، پڑھانے سوا
چاہیے کچھ اُس سے ہوں، اتنی لیاقت کہاں
- ⑪ فضل سے اللہ نے اُس کو دیا عمر بھر
عزت و حرمت کے ساتھ، پارچہ آب و ذناں

- 1)
the one they call Nazīr, just listen to his account
he was a poor schoolteacher, fearful at heart and cowardly
- 2)
he did not have any clean books for his lessons
if he knew the meanings, he'd say them, otherwise just carry on teaching
- 3)
he couldn't comprehend any knowledge in Arabic
but in Persian, yes, he did perhaps understand some "this" and "that"
- 4)
as far as his mode of writing, whenever he wrote anything
his writing fell somewhere between immaturity and maturity
- 5)
he had no passion for anything except couplets and *ghazals*
he stayed happy in this pastime/vocation of his all the time
- 6)
slow-paced, short in height, dark, and of Indian extraction
his body was somewhat like this, open and plain like his stature
- 7)
he had a little mole on his forehead, somewhat like a wart
it had come to rest there, just between his eyebrows
- 8)
his temperament was naturally light, and moreover, he did not have a beard
he had moustaches, and his temples were white as cotton too
- 9)
in old age his heart was just as faint and dispirited
as in those days, the days when he was a young man
- 10)
in short, as many tasks as there were, except teaching
even if he wished he could not accomplish them, where was the ability?
- 11)
through His grace, Allah gave him throughout his life
with dignity and respect, paper and water and bread

پنکھا

- ① کیا موسم گرمی میں نمودار ہے پنکھا
خوبوں کے سپینوں کا خریدار ہے پنکھا
گل رُو کا ہر اک جا پہ طلب گار ہے پنکھا
اب پاس مرے یار کے ہر بار ہے پنکھا
گرمی سے محنت کی بڑا یار ہے پنکھا
- ② کیا کیا تجھے الفت کی جاتا ہے وفا میں
دھوپ آوے، تو کرتا ہے پڑا ہاتھ سے چھائیں
بے تاب ہو، کر کر کے خوشامد کی ہوائیں
لیتا ہے ہر اک دم ترے مکھڑے کی بلائیں
ایسا تری الفت میں گرفتار ہے پنکھا
- ③ دل باغ ہوا جاتا ہے پھولوں کی بھبکے
اور رُو ج بسی جاتی ہے خوش بو کی بھبکے
کچھ خس سے کچھ اُس پانی کی بوندوں کی ٹپکے
نیند آتی ہے آنکھوں میں چلی جن کی جھپکے
کیا یار کے پھلنے کا مزہ دار ہے پنکھا
- ④ زری سے، صفائی سے، نزاکت سے، بھرکے
گوٹوں کی لگاؤ سے، اور برک کی چمکے
مقیش کے جھڑتے ہیں پڑے تار جھپکے سے
دریائی وگوٹے وکناری کی جھمکے سے
کیا ہاتھ میں کافر کے جھمک دار ہے پنکھا
- ⑤ ہے یہ وہ ہوادار، جہاں اس کا گزر ہو
کرتا ہے خوشی رُو ج کو، دیتا ہے عرق کھو
پچ پوچھو تو کچھ صاحب اسرار ہے پنکھا
رکتا ہے سرد اپنے اپنے پینے میں چلے رو
رکتا ہے سدا اپنے وہ قبضے میں ہوا کو
- ⑥ لے شام سے، گرمی میں سدا، تا بہ سحر گاہ
پھولوں کی گندھاوٹ سے اب اُس گل کا نظیر آہ
عاشق کے تئیں اُس کی بھلا کیونکہ نہ ہو چاہ
رہتا ہے ہر اک وقت پری زادوں کے ہم راہ
رشتک چمن و حسرت گل زار ہے پنکھا

THE FAN

ONE

how it appears in the season of summer, the fan
a buyer of the perspiration of beautiful ones is the fan
at every place, a seeker of the rose faced one is the fan
now at every turn, close to my beloved is the fan
 a great fan of the heat of love, is the fan

TWO

what faithfulnesses of affection does the fan show to you
when the sun shines, it lies in the hand and shades you
constantly restless to blow the breezes of flattery towards you
at every breath, it averts afflictions from your face
 such a prisoner of your love is the fan

THREE

from the budding of the flowers the heart is happy, a garden
and the spirit is pervaded with the scent of perfume
from the scent of vetiver, from the dripping of the water
sleep comes to the eyes when they start to close
 how pleasant it is when my love waves the fan

FOUR

softly and cleanly, with delicacy and flashing splendour
with the tacking on of gold braid and with the shine of spangles
the brocade's threads of gold fall from its flapping
from the glitter of satin and gold braid and lace edge,
 how it sparkles in the hand of that infidel, the fan!

FIVE

so airy is the fan that wherever it passes by
the heat there just begins to cry in its own sweat
it gladdens the spirit and dries off perspiration
it always keeps the wind under its control
 if you want the truth, a master of mysteries is the fan

SIX

in the summer, from the evening until the day's dawning
the fan is the constant companion of the fairy-born
for the lover, why shouldn't it be an object of desire?
from the plaiting of its flowers, Nazīr, the fan of that rose
 is the garden's envy and the rosebed's longing, the fan!

خمسہ بر غزل مولانا سعدی رحمتہ اللہ علیہ

- ① گل ہم جو گئے باغ میں گل لطف اٹھانے اور دل کو لگے سیر گلستاں کی دکھانے
 اتنے میں کہوں کیا تجھے اور پار ایگانے بد بو و دم در چنے سرور روانے
 نزاریں کر، ایم برسے اسوسے مہانے
- ② وہ شوخ کہ عالم میں نہ دیکھا ہو کسی نے وہ حسن کہ نے حور نے پایا نہ پری نے
 کیا تجھ سے کہوں اس کی میں خوبی کے ترینے نور شیدر نے اور شے زہرہ جیسے
 یا قوت بے مانگ دے مانگ وہا نے
- ③ گل قام گل انداز، دل آرام کوئے دل وار، دل آزار، جفا کار، اور و سلا
 آہو صفحے کبک تگے، عجز میں موئے بے داؤ گے، کج گلے، عہدہ جوئے
 شکر شکرے، تیر قدے، سخت کمانے
- ④ ابر و خیم طاق حرم و زلف، گشتے قدار بج دل طویلا، درخ زنگ بستے
 تہاں نقش سویدا سے دل اور خطاب گشتے جاوے نظرے، عشوہ گے، مٹن نہر شے
 آسب دے اسخ تے، آفت جانے
- ⑤ وہ درخ کہ ہر اک شوخ پری زرا کو شہدے وہ زلف کہ سنبل جسے تاب ہو کہ دے
 گر گور بھی دیکھے تو اسے جان میں رو دے عینے نقسے، خضر رہے، یوسف عہدے
 جم مرتبہ تا جو رہے شاہ جمانے
- ⑥ شمشیر نگہ، تیر مزہ، قاتل خلقے غارت گے، ہر باو دہنے، حاصل خلقے
 مشہور جہاں، وقتے جان، مقبل خلقے تنگ شکرے، بچوں شکرے، در دل خلقے
 شوخے، گلے، بچو، تک شور جمانے
- ⑦ کیا اس کی میں تعریف کہوں حسن ادا کی بزم و عالم کی اسی شوخ ہے خوبی
 پھر مثل نظر اس بت رعنا سے لگا ہی بے زلف و رخ و لعل لب او شہدہ سعدی
 آئے و بخارے و غبارے و دھانے

MUKHAMMAS ON A GHAZAL OF SA'DĪ

yesterday, when I went to the garden to enjoy myself
and to show my heart the pleasure of the rose-garden
when suddenly, what shall I say, O friend, that unique one –
*that moving cypress in the garden stole my heart –
golden waist and silver body, and the waist as slender as a hair!*

such a seducer no one in the world has seen before
such beauty that no houri or peri can rival it
what can I tell you about the fineness of my love's splendour –
*sun-faced, lovely as the moon, with a forehead like Venus,
ruby-lipped, stony-hearted, and with a tightly closed mouth!*

rose-cheeked, rose-bodied, heart's solace, so lovely,
captivating the heart and heart-tormenting, cruel two-faced one,
a gazelle, a partridge running gracefully, with ambergris-scented hair –
*unjust one with cap askew, always looking for a fight,
with sugared speech, arrow-straight in stature, and stubborn as a bow!*

your eyebrow the arch of the Ka'ba, your tress the heathen church
your stature is the envy of Tūbā's heart, your face the envy of heaven
a mole, the image of the heart's black spot, a downy cheek the grass-edge of a field –
*magic in your glances, with teasing eyes, and beauty in your nature,
your heart is mischief, your body grief, you are the affliction of my life!*

such a face/castle would checkmate every fairy-faced temptress,
such a curl that the hyacinth would become restless and say:
if a houri were to see my love, she would yield her life that instant –
*the healing breath of Jesus, Khizr of my path, a Joseph of the age,
in rank like Jamshīd, with kingly crown, the shah of the world!*

the glance is a scimitar, the eyelash an arrow, the lock a murderer,
s/he's a destroyer, laying waste the riches of this domain!
famous through creation, the torment of lives, that fortunate one –
*miserly with sweetness, like sugar in the heart of creation,
saltily sexy, with a salt that causes a commotion in the world!*

how can I praise my love's charms and beauty enough?
the loveliness of both worlds just ends with that tease!
then, like Nazīr, attach your heart to that seductive idol –
*Sa'dī, without that lock and cheek and ruby lip, there were
sighs and lamentations, fever and fret and smoke!*

ہولی (۷)

- ① جب پھاگن رنگ جھلکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
 اوردن کے شور کھڑکتے ہوں تب دیکھ بہاریں ہولی کی
 پریوں کے رنگ دیکھتے ہوں تب دیکھ بہاریں ہولی کی
 ساغرے کے چھلکتے ہوں تب دیکھ بہاریں ہولی کی
 محبوب نشے میں جھلکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
- ② ہوناج رنگیلی پریوں کا بیٹھے ہوں گل و رنگ بھرے
 دل بھولے دیکھ بہاروں کو اور کانوں میں ہنگ بھرے
 کچھ کھینکے تانیں ہولی کے کچھ ناز واداکے ڈھنگ بھرے
 کچھ طیلے گھر دیکھیں نگ بھرے کچھ عیش کے دم منہ جنگ بھرے
 کچھ گھنگر و نال جھلکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
- ③ سامان جہاں تک ہوتا ہو اس عشرت کے مطلوبوں کا
 ہر آن تیرا میں ڈھلتی ہوں اور پھر ہو رنگ کے ڈوبوں کا
 وہ سب سامان مہیا ہو اور باغ کھلا ہو خوبوں کا
 اس عیش مزے کے عالم میں ک غول کھڑا محبوبوں کا
 کپڑوں پر رنگ پھڑکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
- ④ گل زار کھلے ہوں پریوں کے اور مجلس کی طیاری ہو
 منہ لال گلابی کھینچیں ہوں اور ہاتھوں میں پکاری ہو
 کپڑوں پر رنگ بھڑکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
 اس رنگ بھری پکاری کو، انگیا پرتک کر ماری ہو
 سینوں سے رنگ ڈھلکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
- ⑤ اس رنگ نگیلی مجلس میں وہ زندگی ناچنے والی ہو
 بدست بڑی متوالی ہو، ہر آن بجاتی تالی ہو
 منہ جس کا چاند کا ٹکڑا ہو اور آنکھ بھی مے کی پیالی ہو
 مے نوشی پیے ہو شہی ہو، بھڑوے کی منہ عین گالی ہو
 بھڑوے بھی بھڑوے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
- ⑥ اور ایک طرف دل لینے کو محبوب بھوتوں کے لڑکے
 کچھ ناز جنابوں لڑ لڑکے کچھ ہولی گادیں لڑ لڑکے
 ہر آن گھڑی گت بھڑوے کچھ گھٹ گھٹ کے کچھ بڑ بڑوے کے
 کچھ لگے شوخ کو تیلی کچھ ہاتھ چلے کچھ تن پھڑکے
 کچھ کافر میں ملکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی
- ⑦ یہ دھوم مچی ہو ہولی کی اور عیش مزے کا چھکڑا ہو
 جوں شرابیں ناز مزا اور کیا سلفا گلڑا ہو
 اس کھینچا کھینچ گھسیٹی اور بھڑوے زندگی کا پھکڑا ہو
 لڑ بھڑکے فیض پھر نکلا ہو کچھ میں اتھر تھر ہو
 جب ایسے عیش جھلکتے ہوں تب یکہ بہاریں ہولی کی

HOLĪ

1)

when springtime's colours shine forth, just look at the festive season of Holī
and the noise of the drum resounds, just look at the festive season of Holī
when the colours of the fairies glitter, just look at the festive season of Holī
when the goblets of wine overflow, just look at the festive season of Holī
and sweethearts sway with intoxication, just look at the festive season of Holī!

2)

when the colourful fairies dance, and rose-faced ones sit, full of colour
some musical notes of Holī, drenched, and manners full of grace and pride
the heart forgets itself, looking at the spring, and harmonies fill the ears
some drums resound, full of colour, and at the moment of pleasure, mouths full of war (?)
when anklets and musical beats ring out, just look at the festive season of Holī!

3)

and all the stuff that is needed for the seekers of that pleasure
when all that stuff is available, and the garden blossoms with beauties
and at every moment, wine is poured, and those sunk in colour celebrate grandly
in that world of pleasure and delight, when there is a crowd of sweethearts
and colours are sprinkled on their clothes, just look at the festive season of Holī!

4)

when rosebeds blossom with fairies, and everything is ready for a party
when squirts of colour on the clothes create marvellous patterns of flowers
faces are red and eyes pink, and squirt-guns come out in people's hands
when that colour-filled squirt-gun is aimed and shot at the blouse
and the colours flow among the breasts, just look at the festive season of Holī!

5)

in that colourful party, when the dancer is a courtesan
her face is a piece of the moon, and her eye a goblet of wine
that drunken one, very intoxicating, claps her hands in rhythm every second
there's wine-drinking and unconsciousness, and the pimp speaks only abuse
when even the pimps call him a pimp, just look at the festive season of Holī!

6)

and on one side, to steal one's heart, are the darling dancing boys
at every moment, they dance away, sometimes retreating, sometimes advancing
they show their pride aggressively, and stop and sing songs of Holī firmly
their slim seductive waists bend flexibly, their hands move, and their bodies pulsate
when their infidel eyes rock about, just look at the festive season of Holī!

7)

when there is this tumult of Holī, and a storm of pleasure and delight
pulling and pushing and dragging about, and pimps and prostitutes acting free
opium, wine, dance, and delight, and huqqahs with tobacco and cannabis
then Nazīr goes out to play, fighting, and is covered with mud from head to foot
when such pleasures sparkle and shine, just look at the festive season of Holī!

THE WEDDING OF MAHĀDEV

when the king ordered that a feast should now be prepared
they sent for flour, millions of pounds, and fruit, sugar crystals, sugar and ghee

thousands of cooks came and sat there, warming their woks and setting down platters
they thickened pure, clean milk, and put in sugar, sweetness, and liquid

then they put in lots of rosewater, and put in lumps of crystallized sugar
they piled up milk-sweets, and heaps of rose-sweets (gulābjāmuns?) and milk-cakes

then they prepared laddūs, with lots of loaf-sugar and almond kernels
white sweets, mung balls, and date-sweets, brightly coloured double-jalebīs and bīrbalīs

lots of those jalebīs and fried pastries, and those ghee-pastries and syrup-cakes
all were prepared there, so many that there was no place to put them

they went to the king and humbly said that all those articles are now ready
just come and see for yourself, how much they are and of what kind

whatever you had ordered, that much at least has been splendidly prepared
when the king lifted up his eyes, and saw that every article was elegantly made,

he felt proud, saying in his mind: when the wedding guests come
they will eat as much as they please and heaps will still be left over

after this now listen to the tale of pleasure and happiness
how magnificently Shiva's wedding procession mounted up

THE PRAISE OF HARI

how can I sing the praises, friends, of that dark-coloured incarnate one
of Śrī Krishna Kanhaiyā, the flute-player, mind-enchancing, the arbour-player

of Gopāl, the heart-enchancing, the dark one, cloud-dark, the steadfast one, the forest-
dweller

of the darling of Nandlāl, of beautiful appearance, the moon of Braj, with shining crown

of the uproarious looter of milk and butter, the abandoner of battle, the young mountain-
lifter

of the roamer through forest bowers, the creator of the dance, the happiness-bestower,
Kānha, the enemy of the demon Mura

of the one who shows a new form every moment, of every dear and precious game
of the one who keeps honour intact, the shatterer of sorrows, Hari, the support of
devotees'

devotion

constantly worship Hari, worship Hari, O bābā! Those who meditate on Hari
who look to Hari as their hope, fulfill the hope of every moment

exhort people to a less entitled worldly life, as Wordsworth admonishes us in his sonnet entitled 'The world is too much with us'. His wide sympathies, his catholicity of views, his contempt for bigotry lend an unusual charm to his poems not found in works of other poets.

His wide sympathies not only extend to human beings but Nazir, essentially to birds, animals, and even inanimate objects, an Indian poet. His songs about birds and his descriptions of bulbul fights, are extremely pleasant to read and show his wonderful knowledge of details. He is a favourite of young children for whom he has written numerous poems—on childhood, nursery tales, on kite flying, on swimming; on festivals—Dewali, Holi, Basant (spring) and Id; on fairs, on schools and tyranny of school masters, on bear fights, on monkey shows, etc. Nazir was especially possessed of the joy of life. He heartily joined in all its activities and sometimes his sympathies were misplaced and consequently they played him false by dragging him through the mire of sensuality and obscenity. He however came out richer in experience, which he turned to gold in his poems in later life. He was intensely human and partook of all the activities of the world with an ardour and enthusiasm worthy of a school boy. He describes common scenes with such a wealth of details as to extort admiration and applause. His knowledge is varied and limitless, his vocabulary inexhaustible, his simplicity enchanting and his verses simple and charming. To his unconventionality and breadth of view, to his utter contempt for the ties of orthodoxy and to his intimate association with Hindus, he owes his wonderful knowledge of customs and manners of Hindus, their mode of thought and speech, their words and idioms and their festivals which he utilized so skilfully in his numerous poems. There is no sneer, no contempt for them. He thus gives a local colour which is found wanting in most poets and present only in a very slight degree in Sauda and Insha. Nazir is essentially an Indian poet. He is thoroughly Indian in his thought, speech, language and themes.

His service to the language is immense and valuable. He His service to the utilized words which had long been despised. language. Because they did not form part of the recognised 'stock-in-trade of poets', they were thought to be common, vulgar and not fit for literary use. To Nazir belongs the credit of demonstrating that beauties which were undreamt of before lay hidden in those neglected words. It is true that all the words he sponsored did not survive but many had a sturdy life and were allowed the *entree* of the literary world. His words can be divided into three classes. Firstly, the brick-bats,

which comprise of obscene and low words used largely in his earlier compositions. They are useless. Secondly, the stones, utilized for building purposes not beautiful but useful. Thirdly, the gems, which are prized for their poetic beauties and hidden treasures of meaning enriching Urdu vocabulary satiated with the drinks at the fountain head of Persian. In fact the charges against Nazir as a poet are that he is wanting in scholarship, that he is a common place and incorrect poet writing for the bazaar people, that he is obscene and undignified and that he has corrupted and tainted the language by introducing debased and vulgar words. The other charges will be dealt with later on, but in the supposed weakness of Nazir lies his strength and superiority. He describes common scenes and festivals popular with all classes of people and he must needs adopt their homely phraseology. He is a realistic poet and he could make them vivid only when he reproduced faithfully their thoughts and their language. He is no philosophical writer on festivals who moralises on the peccadilloes of the people who have come out for enjoyment. He does not castigate them for their petty foibles, delinquencies and stupidity. To make the pictures real and graphic he must portray them as they are. He does not see festivals and feasts with the spectacles of books and scholarship. Therein lies the charm of his verses which are crisp, natural, simple and spontaneous. He is not artificial and conventional in themes and language. Hali ranks him over Anis in the range and greatness of vocabulary. Nazir, on these occasions, was neither a philosopher nor a satirist. He was one amongst the crowd sharing its excitement, fun and merriment. Satire and lampoon he never touched. He sturdily maintained his robust independence for he never flattered a powerful Nawab or a Raja and never wrote an eulogium in his honour or for their delectation—beautiful traits in his character which shine resplendently amongst the dross which disfigured his life.

Nazir has another claim to be remembered. He is the true Nazir, a sign post harbinger of the new school of national and of the new movement in Urdu. natural poetry brought into being by Azad, Hali and Sarur. He contributed the most towards the birth of the school. Anis and Dabir with their scholarship-gave pictures of battlefields and landscapes. To Nazir belongs the credit of supplying portraits of objects of human interest independent of any theme. He makes an appeal to all classes of people. There are no Persianized constructions, no polyglot words, no far-fetched similes. His style is simple, unconventional and spontaneous. The descriptions are vivid and realistic. The sentiments are not

recondite or incapable of apprehension. Nature is not worshipped by him in the abstract. There are no glowing descriptions of forests and mountain peaks. Nature serves as a background for human beings. His descriptions of garden apply to those of Agra. He is essentially human—throbbing, palpitating with life. His poems have a continuity of description which is usually found lacking in Urdu poetry. There is however no profundity of thought in him. By his simple and spontaneous treatment, in unconventional language, of subjects of human interest and national festivals, by his charming and genuine poetry freed from artificiality and sameness, he aided in the birth of a new school, destined to play an important part in the language, literature, and national consciousness of Indians.

Nazir was also remarkable for his sense of humour which was developed by his association with people of all classes and conditions. His social interest, course, his sympathy with the simple joys and sorrows of common people, gave him a wonderful insight into human nature and increased his fund of humour and wit. He bears poverty and distress with quiet resignation and humour and thus parries their blows and misfortunes of their stings. His wit is however not boisterous and his humour does not indulge in horse play. He is to be distinguished from Insha. Insha's humour is that of a courtier meant to please his sovereign ridiculing himself and everybody to the delight of his patron. Nazir's humour is the humour of a gentleman occasionally lapsing into profanity but always independent, self-respecting and not subservient. Insha's wit smacks of flattery and buffonery while Nazir's is free from such taints. It is remarkable that he has many points of resemblance with his contemporary Insha. Both delight in stiff rhymes and difficult metres in ghazals and have attempted the same measures. Both are masters in intercalating Arabic verses, both have local colour, Hindi words and Indian themes in their poems, both have composed in various languages, both have a golden thread of sufism running through their erotic sentiments and both are unconventional in the use of language. Insha however maintains the purity of Persian and Arabic words, and was a greater scholar, does not employ archaic words so largely, and was a greater wit.

The love of music was very helpful to Nazir in his selection of words. He is an artist and a great word painter. He chooses words with the same care as Tennyson does. He is fond of alliteration and uses words having sounds echoing the sense. In description of fights and frays he uses harsh gutturals whose clangour imitates the din of the battles. He uses soft liquids to narrate feasts and festivals.

The sounds of musical instruments find a reproduction in the sounds of words meant to describe them. He uses similes in moderation. His figures of speech never obtrude offensively but are always subordinated to the theme.

It would be interesting to know who makes the nearest approach to Shakespeare in Urdu Literature. There was no drama amongst the Persians to Shakespeare in and Urdu writers did not borrow it from Sanskrit. Sauda may claim consideration for his gigantic genius, force of personality, intimate knowledge of details and command over language. He shines best in his satires and would have made an admirable comedian. He has however no sympathy and his knowledge of human nature was limited. Mir is eminently a poet of tears and sorrows and shows no characterization and is circumscribed in his experience in other aspects of life. Insha had a superabundance of wit and humour and would have made an eminent actor-dramatist, with his qualities of mimicry, command over languages and geniality. But he was bound to the court and lacked profundity of thought. Anis and Dabir had real poetic gifts, command over language and power to delineate characters. But their range was limited. They were marsia writers first and last. Thus limitation was both a source of strength and weakness. The Persian passion plays, which may be compared to the miracle and mystery cycles—the nearest approaches to, and the earlier stages of, regular drama, form the themes of the marsias of Anis and Dabir but the religious fervour which dominate their poetry gives no scope for describing ordinary human beings—their joys and sorrows, their feelings and thoughts. Nazir's command over language was equal to that of Insha, Sauda and Anis. His knowledge of human beings was superior to most. He was intimate with Hindus and Mohammedans, children and old men, wealthy and poor, rustics and town-dwellers, fakirs and worldlings, profligates and saints. His knowledge of women is also creditable though no pure pictures of maidenhood and womanhood such as of Imogen, Desdemona, Portia and Ophelia could be found. This limitation is the limitation of society which does not believe in the freedom of women and holds fast to the seclusion of women. Nazir had no opportunities of mixing with high-born ladies and had no chance to know their purity of thought. He found dancing girls in the range of his experience and his verses are thus pictures of their low and immoral life. He was a great delineator of character and realistic in his descriptions but he is not so profound as Shakespeare nor does he possess a mighty genius like him. There are however two of his masnavis which partake of the characteristics of drama in some degree though they cannot be called dramas. His story of Leila and Mainoon is a

humorous descriptions. His description of bear fights and bulbul fights are extremely comic and realistic. He has not the force of Sauda, the profundity of Mir, the wit of Insha, the passionate fervour of Anis and Dabir, but he unites in himself in a moderate degree all the qualifications.

To Nazir belongs the credit of investing trite and commonplace subjects with a charm not found elsewhere in other dignified compositions. It is a pleasant release from the monotony of ghazals and the bombast of qasidas. He breaks new ground and extends the field of Urdu literature. It is true he is not scholarly and he does not depict things philosophically or with great depth. He is occasionally obscene and paints scenes with realism sometimes revolting to a sense of decorum. He may not be a great master of verse and people may detect solecisms in his technique and constructions, he may not be a purist in his language and sentiment but he is essentially an Indian poet with Indian themes, with Indian aspirations who rises superior to schisms and sects. For the wide range of his subjects, for the didactic nature of his compositions, for the breadth of his views, for the wide appeal to every class of people, for his Indian themes and language, for the impulse to the new school, Nazir deserves to be ranked amongst the foremost poets and writers of Urdu literature.

Nasir like Nazir belongs to the category of earlier poets by Nasir Delhvi, died virtue of his language and age, but he obtained 1840 A. D. prominence in a later period. He therefore serves as a link between the old and new schools.

Nasiruddin poetically surnamed Nasir commonly called Mian Kallu by reason of his black complexion, was the son of Shah Gharib and a native of Delhi. His father led a retired life being in charge of some trusts and supported himself with the income of some villages which he held as a Jagir from the Moghul emperors. Nasir was insufficiently educated but he displayed early signs of a bright poetic career. He became a pupil in poetry of one Ma'il who through Qasim connected him with Sauda and Mir Dard. He secured an entry in the court of Shah Alam by reason of his good birth and poetic talents and was a recipient of its bounties. He travelled much and visited many cities particularly Lucknow and Hyderabad (Deccan). He used to convene poetical assemblies at his house at Delhi in which many poets of the day used to recite their compositions. Zaug, the celebrated pupil of Nasir, attempted his first flights in these reunions.

With the decay of power of the Moghul emperors and the diminution of bounty and patronage the poets dispersed to seek

and Hyderabad four times. In his first visit to Lucknow it was the age of Insha, Mushaffi and Juraat and with them he took part in poetical contests there. His second visit took place when Nasikh and Atish were reigning supreme. He measured his strength with Nasikh and emerged triumphant. He went to Hyderabad at the time of Diwan Chandu Lal poetically entitled Shadan who was a great patron of men of letters and who held poets of Delhi in high esteem. He extended invitations to Zaug and Nasikh but they refused. Nasir gave an impulse to Urdu poetry at Hyderabad and enrolled many persons as his pupils. He died at Hyderabad in 1254 A. H. (1840 A. D.).

He was a most voluminous writer and had been writing verses for over 60 years. His long practice, his quickness of intelligence, the fertility of his ideas and his

His works.

sole devotion to poetry must be responsible for hundreds of thousands of couplets. Much of his composition is lost as he did not care to preserve it. One of his pupils Maharaj Singh collected his poems into a Diwan comprising of 1,00,000 verses. It is said by some that his Diwan was compiled by Mir Abdul Rahman, son of Mir Taskin a pupil of Momin and the manuscript copy of this Diwan was purchased by the Nawab of Rampur for his library.

He was by nature a very polite and an agreeable man, witty and genial, and has left a host of pupils in Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad. He was of Sunni

Nasir as man.

persuasions but was not a bigot and was very tolerant. He however, snubbed presumption, refused to correct Zaug's verses when he saw that he had aspirations for poetical fame unbefitting to his age and had the audacity to attempt to rival the great master, Sauda. These and many other differences led to a rupture between Nasir and Zaug.

He was very fond of stiff metres and difficult rhymes and he Nasir's position in was specially adroit and facile in composing Urdu Literature. odes in those measures. This is the outstanding feature of his works. He delighted in the use of stately words and was well versed in the technique of poetry. His similes and metaphors are fresh through commonplace. Like Nasikh he introduces an apt simile in the second hemistich to illustrate the first which contains some moral lesson in the approved style of the Persian poet Saib. He was a great improvisatore. He however lacked scholarship and is archaic in language. Though he writes with vigour and fire his poetry is deficient in the profundity and suggestiveness of the highest art. He occupies an important place amongst the second-rate poets of Urdu Literature. There is nothing very distinctive or original about him in his works but he enjoyed very great celebrity as a Ustad

Nazir Akbarabadi
Mohammad Hasan
New Delhi
Schitya Akademi
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CHAPTER TWO

Biographical Sketch

OUR sources of information regarding the personality and life of Nazir are scanty. Derived almost entirely from various Tazkiras or chronicles of poets, this information is neither sufficient nor reliable. Notices in Tazkiras¹ are not always complementary, for Nazir was a poet with a difference. He refused to toe the traditional line and hence was never recognised as a master craftsman or a 'master' artist by his contemporaries. Yet the only trustworthy information we get about him is from these not entirely impartial sources.

Born in Delhi in 1735, he was the 13th offspring of his father, Mohd. Faruq, who was married to the daughter of Nawab Sultan Khan, Qiladar of Agra. His father was on the pay rolls of a certain Nawab in Azimabad (Patna). Nazir was the only son of his parents. Brought up with love and care, his ears were pierced with needle and he wore ear-rings to ward off evil influences as prescribed by some mendicant. When he was four year old, Nadir Shah attacked Delhi, to be followed by three consequent attacks of Ahmad Shah Abdali from 1748 to 1756 which played havoc with the city. Along with several others, Nazir also left Delhi and migrated to Agra with his mother and maternal grand-mother at the age of 22 or 23 years. They settled down in Agra near Nuri Darwaza. He was married to the grand-daughter of a military officer of Delhi, Abdul Rehman Khan Chaghtai and the daughter of Muhammad Rehman, an immigrant from Delhi and a resident of Mohalla Tajganj. He was the proud father of a son, Gulzar Ali and a daughter, Imami Begum. The latter was married to Mir Najaf Ali Mirza Jan and her

1. Notes are given at the end of the book.

daughter Wilayati Begum, who was the source of information for Nazir's biographer, Prof. Shahbaz, who compiled his book on Nazir with her assistance.

Describing himself², Nazir has drawn an admirable self-portrait, from which we learn that he was of a moderate stature with wheatish complexion, clean-shaved chin, with moustaches and long hair and a black mole between his eyes and the eye-brow. Interested as he was in teaching and poetry, he never posed as a scholar or an intellectual and earned his living by serving as a tutor in Agra and Mathura.

He lived a happy and contented life with no ambitions to serve as a courtier or a poet-laureate. Even when invited by Raja of Bharatpur and King Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh, he refused to leave Agra and lived a carefree life. He knew eight languages and was fond of calligraphy, the art of swordsmanship, medicine, rhetoric and astronomy. This practically exhausts³ all the information culled from various Tazkiras and other contemporary sources. The details of this rather sketchy description have been provided by Prof. Shahbaz in his *Zindagani-e-Benazir*.⁴

The story of Shahbaz's quest of Nazir Akbarabadi reads like a fairy tale. Fascinated by his poetic genius, he launched upon this adventure of discovering Nazir on his own. Since information regarding his life and family was much too meagre, he decided to collect adequate information from all available sources. He started by addressing eager queries to Munshi Nawal Kishore of Lucknow, the famous Urdu publisher, who introduced to the literary world many luminaries, including Nazir. From his Secretary, Munshi Jalba Prasad, he came to know of Nazir's frequent visits to Farrukhabad, at which place, he traced one Hakim Asghar Hussain. His son-in-law, Ahmad Ali Khan, introduced him to the son-in-law of Nazir, Mirza Nawazish Ali Beg, who took him to Nazir's maternal grand-daughter, alive in 1891. From this source, he could not only get some unpublished material but also an eye-witness account of poet's life and times. This quest yielded results. Important material was obtained from many quarters including roaming minstrels, faqirs and tourists. From these fragments, Prof. Shahbaz knit together a coherent, though short, account of Nazir's life.

A History of Urdu Literature (2nd ed.)

Muhammad Sadiq

Delhi

Oxford University Press

1984

VIII

NAZİR AKBARĀBĀDĪ

1

NAZİR AKBARĀBĀDĪ (Valī Muhammad Nazīr) was given the cold shoulder by the earlier critics for being an eccentric who did not fit into the scheme of traditional poetry. He was an outsider and suffered the fate of one who did not subscribe to the reigning taste. With the enfranchisement of poetry from the old conventions, his merit has been recognized, and it may safely be predicted that his best work, to which this study is devoted, will live as long as the Urdu language itself.

Nazīr belonged to the generation that succeeded Sauda and Mīr, and was born in Delhi in 1740. About 1749, driven by the chronic disorders in that city, the family migrated to Āgra, where he later made a living as a schoolmaster. His education, it is said, had been regular and methodical, but he never allowed his scholarship to get the better of him and he was never a pedant. Nazīr was happy-go-lucky and carefree. A Bohemian by temperament, he did not take kindly to the etiquette and formalism of courts, and declined to attach himself to the rulers of the day. He died in Āgra on 16 August 1830.

2

Nazīr is an inspired vagabond and belongs to the same class as Burns and Vilon. He is essentially a poet of the people. 'Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh'; and it is out of a full and intense life that a poetry like Nazīr's springs. It appears that he had been an incorrigible Bohemian and wanderer, at home in low company and with a most tenacious memory for the scenes and sights of his early life. The sort of poetry he has left cannot be written in a closet; it grows out of the experience gained by a loving and minute observation, by one's pursuits and pastimes and the company one keeps. Nazīr has no eye for the serious aspects of the life of the day, but he was fully observant of those that chimed with his sensuous temperament. All that was rich and gay

NAZİR AKBARĀBĀDĪ

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and intoxicating in the life of Āgra for a man about town—its sensuousness and glamour, its romance and fun, its frivolity and vulgarity—is faithfully mirrored in his poetry. Nazīr does not write tongue-in-cheek; there are no sniggering indecencies here; his is the unabashed vulgarity of one who led a full man's life and made no secret of his preferences.

Nazīr is keenly alive to sensuous impressions. His poetry is a picture-gallery of the sights and scenes, fairs and festivals, pastimes and amusements of his day; and an intense delight gives a lyrical glow and warmth to his descriptions. His poems on *Holī*, *Dīvālī*, *Gharyya-jī kī Rās*, *Baldav kā Melā*, *Shab-e-Brāī*, *Īd-gāh-e-Akbarābād* are shot through with local colour. Whatever their theme, his poems have a family resemblance; there is one important thread running through them all—the sensuous thread un-mixed with any other strand, intellectual or moral. As we shall see, these latter elements came to the forefront when he was past the prime of life, but in his youthful verse there is no trace of them.

3

Nazīr has had his due share of praise from modern critics. They have dwelt at length on his sympathetic realism, wide observations and copious diction. But there are certain aspects of his mind which have not received the attention they deserve; and without a full knowledge of them his true eminence cannot be fully estimated. As I see it, the most obvious as well as the most pleasing aspects of his mind are his exuberant vitality, his passion for life at the sensuous level, and his involvement in the variegated panorama of life. And since life is action and movement, the best of his poetry is dynamic. Of what is stationary, reposed, or un-changing there is very little in him. And this is no less true of his persons than of the scenes and sights he describes. Take, for example, his *Parī kā Sarāpā*, an extraordinarily vivid picture of a society girl. Nazīr takes eighteen stanzas to describe her, and yet there is not a single static image in this long poem. All is movement; she is alive to her finger-tips. Take the following:

مذکورہ کی کیا یاب یارو اس شوخ کے کیا کیا چھپیل پن
کچھ ہاتھ ملیں، کچھ پاؤں ملیں، بھر کے بازو، بھر کے سب تن
گالی وہ بلا، تالی وہ ستر، تنگی کی نچاڈٹ دیسی ہری

یہ شوخی پھرتی بے تابانی اک ابھی بچلی نہ رہے
چمچل اچیل، سٹکے پکے، سرکھولے ڈھانکے نہیں اس کے
تقبھے کی ہنساواٹ اور غضب، ٹھکڑوں کی اڑاواٹ دوسری ہی

How can I describe the liveliness of that sprightly damsel

The restless hands,
The moving feet,
The throbbing arms,
The body all a-quiver with life,
The sparkling swear-words,
The heart-ravishing clapping of hands,
The winsome flourishing of fingers!
What agility, and playfulness!
What pertness and nimbleness!
Restless and volatle,
She minces and pouts,
Covers and uncovers her head,
And bursts into peals of laughter
And sallies of wit.

Or take the following:

خفت کے ٹھنڈ ہزاروں سیرک کی قطاریں
تے وہ چھینٹ ٹوٹے کھا کے ہاتھ ماریں
کتوں کے ہاتھ بچرے کتوں کے سر پر بیٹے
حقول کا دم لگاتے ہنسنے کے شاد ہوئے

O what a glorious sight Tarbānī presents!
Throngs of sightseers and long rows of swimmers!
Merrily they swim, bathe, jump, romp, and dive,
And splash each other with water.
Some swim stretched smoothly at full length,
Others holding bird cages in hands,
Others with parrots perched on their heads,
Others still flying kites,
Smoking the *hukka*,
Threading the needle,
And bursting into peals of laughter.

اور ایک طرف دل لینے کو محبوب بھوتوں کے رٹکے
سر آن ٹھہری گت بھرتے ہیں کچھ گھٹ گھٹ کے پھر اڑھڑہ کے
پھر ناز حنائیں اڑا کرے کچھ ہونی گائیں اڑا کرے
پھر پکے شوخ کرتیلی کچھ ہاتھ چلے کچھ تن پھوڑکے

In another place beautiful dancing boys capture your heart,
As they move to the rhythm of music;
Advance and recede;
Quarrel in amorous playfulness;
Sing songs celebrating Holi;
Twist and turn their slender waists,
And make amorous gestures.

To know what part movement plays in life as seen by Nazir, one must read all the poems from which these extracts have been taken; but even these brief extracts are enough to show that his best poetry vibrates with life.

That Nazir is at his best while describing movement and action is proved not only by the poems dealing with movement and action; it is also proved by the comparative failure of those deficient in this respect. Nazir has a pagan joy in life and, as such, his poems on Hindu festivals, especially *Holi*, with its strong Dionysian element and *Baldav jī kā Melā* are overflowing with life. Compared with their rush and roar and riot of colour, *Raktī*, though glistening with colour here and there, is slow-paced and much less lively. The same is true of his poems dealing with Muslim festivals. They are not sufficiently furnished with material to quicken his imagination, and consequently fall short of the above. His *Tāj* is a failure because of its static theme. It reads like a draftsman's sketch of a building, cold and accurate, but not a living monument.

And since we are discussing the sensuous element in Nazir, note his sheer joy in sound, which is also a kind of movement. Here he gets his best effects with gutturals and bursting labials that echo the sense and impart an unusual vivacity to his pictures. A few examples will suffice:

گاماگی پکاریں کہیں رنگوں کی پھوڑک ہے
مینا کی بھجھک اور تہیں ساغر کی بھجھک ہے

طبلوں کی صدا میں کہیں تاؤں کی بھنک ہے
تالی کی بہاریں کہیں ٹھیلیا کی کھڑک ہے
جتنا ہے کہیں دف کہیں مریچنگ زمیں پر
ہوئی نے چایا ہے عجب رنگ زمیں پر

There are loud and repeated requests for music;

The colours are splashed freely;

The wine-flask sends out strong whiffs of flavour.

The bowl is sparkling with wine.

The loud notes of drums,

The resonance of cymbals,

The rapturous clapping of hands,

The rhythmic thumping of pitchers,

Fill the air.

Some are playing on the tambourine,

Others on the harp.

Mark, what a frolicsome atmosphere Holi has created on the earth!

اور نورست ہو کر جوں کو کلا چنگاریں
کوں پیسے کوں اور کوک کر پکاریں
بھڑیلوں کی ستیوں سے دھوئیں بجارے ہیں
بادل ہوا کے اوپر ہوست پھالے ہیں
بھینگر بھنگا اپنی سرزائیاں بجا دیں
بادل لگا گویں نوبت کی گت لگا دیں
پنی کرن پیسے مینگر ملار گا دیں
کر شور ہو رہے جھڑیلوں کا مینگر ملار دیں

The koel and the *puphita* shriek and call out loudly;

And the peacock in rapture screams like the cuckoo.

The drunken clouds are spreading all over;

Their continuous downpour has created a tumult.

The thundering clouds ring like the kettle-drum,

The crickets play on their pipes,

The peacocks and the cranes call loudly for the rain,

The cuckoo calls its mate,

And the frogs make a merry din.

Nazir is no less alive to natural effects; rain, clouds, rivers, gardens, the starry night, all fill him with delight. Born of a first-hand knowledge, his descriptions are accurate. But nature for him is not the primary thing; it is rather an intensifying medium for the human drama in which

he is primarily interested. Very often it is interpenetrated with humanity as in the following:

دستاریں سرخ اس میں کیا خوبصورتی رہی ہیں
دشاڑوں پر بہا رہیں ہر اک دھل رہی ہیں
شغم کی انہریں جیسے ہر گل پر تپ رہی ہیں
جگنو پھٹتے پھرتے جوں سماں پر تارے
گرتی ہے پھٹ کسی کی کوئی کھڑا پکارے
کالی گھٹائیں اگر ہوست تل رہی ہیں
دشاڑوں پر بہا رہیں ہر اک دھل رہی ہیں
ساوان کی کالی راتیں اور برق کے اشارے
لپٹے گلے سے سوتے مستوق ماہ پارے

Drunk with joy

The dark dense clouds cover the horizon.

The faces of the people are gleaming with joy.

Their red turbans shine bright against that dark background;

And as the raindrops trickle down their faces,

They look like dew drops on red roses.

The dark nights of the month of Sāvan

Are lit with lightning flashes.

The glow-worms gleam like stars in the sky;

Beautiful damsels are asleep locked in the embraces of their lovers.

A roof is falling somewhere,

And you hear someone shouting for help.

In the following humanity is very much in the forefront.

ہے ان کے سر پر پھیری 'اٹھی اڑوڑھے ہیں
ہاتھوں میں جوتیاں ہیں اور اپنے اڑوڑھے ہیں
مشکل ہوئی ہے واں سے ہر اک کو راہ چینی
جوتی گری جواں ہے کیا تاب پھر نکلی
کپڑے تمام گم گری دل میں بس رہے ہیں
وہ دکھ بیٹھنے لگے ہیں اور گم نہیں رہے ہیں
جو اس ہوا میں یا رود و لہت میں کچھ نہیں
ہم سے غریب فرما پھر میں گر پڑے ہیں
کچھ سے ہو رہی ہے جس جا زمین پھسلنی
پھسلا جو پاؤں کچھ دہی شکل ہے پھر پھسلنی
کتے تو کچھ روں کی دل میں نہیں ہے ہیں
کتے اٹھے ہیں مر سکتے آگس رہے ہیں

The well-to-do in the rainy season ride elephants, with umbrellas over their heads.

Poor persons like me go floundering in the mud.

They are carrying their shoes in their hands,

And have rolled up their pyjamas.

The ground being slippery,

It is difficult to walk.

When someone slips, he cannot hold his turban on his head,

And if his shoes get stuck in the mud,

It is all he can do to pull them out.

So many of them are stuck in the mud;

Their clothes are steeped in the stinking slush.

Some of them raise themselves up with great effort;

Others are trying hard to be up on their feet.

They are hard put to it,

And the onlookers jeer at them.

Another thing in which he has no rival in Urdu is his feeling for colour; its profusion gives the sparkle of a luminous painting to some of his poems. I take a few instances:

جنا کارٹ گویا صحن چین ہے بارے
پیراک میں تیریں جیسے کہ چاند تارے
مونہ چاند کے سے ٹکڑے تیرے گویے پیارے
پر یوں سے بھرے ہیں مخوہارا اور کارے
کتے کھڑے ہیں پیریں اپنا دکھا کے سینہ
سینہ چمک رہا ہے ہیرے کا جوں تنگینہ

Jumna's surface is like a garden;

The swimmers with their shining faces and white bodies,

Are like stars and the moon.

The midstream and the banks are swarming with fairy-like persons.

Those about to start swimming display their breasts

That coruscate like a cut gem.

وہ رات اندھیری بالوں کی
وہ مانگ چمکتی بجلی سی

The jet-black hair like the night,

And the line parting the hair like a flash of lightning.

اس رنگ رنگیلی تھل میں وہ رنڈی ناپنے والی ہو
مونہ جس کا چاند کا ٹکڑا ہو اور اس کا کھنٹی سے کی پائی ہو

In this festive assembly there should be a dancing-girl,

With face like the moon,

And eyes sparkling like a wine-cup.

سب ابرن تن پرچک رہا اور کیرے کا مٹھے ٹیکھا

The ornaments gleaming on the body,

And the saffron-patch on the forehead.

The following shows his joy in nature for its own sake:

چہرہ کا رنگ چھٹ کر حسن دکھا رہے
چھا جوں اندھ کے پانی بوسل کی دھا رہے
برسے ہے مینہ بھرا بھرا پانی بہا ہے جاتا
غوغا کریں ہیں مینڈک بھیگ رہے غل مچاتا
اور جس میں اڑ رہی ہیں بگلوں کی سو قطاریں
اور نورست ہو کر جوں کو کلا چنگاریں

Sometimes the rain falls dreamily in the form of a drizzle;

How clear and bright look the faces washed by it!

There is an unbroken trickle of eavesdrops from the thatched roof of a cottage;

Right up to the middle of the mountain the grass is waving.

Steadily the rain falls and runs into streamlets.

The birds and animals all bathe together.

The frogs croak, the cricket chirps.

The cranes in thousands line the sky

The koel and the sparrow-hawk break into shrill cries,

And the intoxicated peacock screams like the cuckoo.

It is primarily a townman's poetry of nature; of its remote and wild aspects he has no knowledge.

So far about his youthful poetry, the only poetry of his that really matters. When the passion's trance was over, and he was no longer young, he found a quiet anchorage in mysticism, resignation, contentment, vanity of life, and renunciation. Though sincere, these poems lack the intensity of his earlier verse, dedicated to the senses. But despite this changed outlook, he held firmly till the end that life was worth living, that youth was the best part of life, and old age but a shadow of it.

Nazir's assets on the technical side are most considerable. In the variety of stanzaic structure he excels all his predecessors and contemporaries, and is well abreast of Anis in the use of the *musaddas*, whom he precedes in its use. In his use of the language two things are especially noteworthy:

his wide-ranging vocabulary and the way he subdues it to his requirements. The liberties he occasionally takes with the accepted usage and his use of what are stigmatized as low-down words or words smacking of the soil, have ranged both pedants and prigs against him. Here two things deserve consideration. Languages grow by assimilation, and in this respect words of popular origin have been imported as freely as learned words in all languages. Discussing such importations into the English language, Logan Pearsal Smith writes:

... the fact that, in spite of their vulgar origin and illiterate appearance, they have succeeded in elbowing their way into our prose and poetry, and even learned lexicons and grammars, is proof that they perform a necessary function in the domestic economy of speech.¹

The true test of verbal propriety or legitimacy is not precedent, but fitness in a given context; and the native vigour of the words picked up by Nazir from the streets and his apt use of them is a clear enough justification for their selection. Nazir broke through the thicket of conventional usage, but it was to some purpose.

He also excels equally in the use of Braj Bhāsha, and he wrote a large number of poems in it for the delectation of his Hindu friends and admirers. In his Urdu poetry he has used Hindi words with great effect.

5

Nazir is not without the defects of his qualities. He carries his use of the onomatopoeia too far. Again his irrepressible animal spirits often trespass all limits. Note how the effect of his dirge on the ruin of Āgra is spoiled by his flippanant account of the reflections of the *demi-monde* on their fallen clientele.

A Bohemian by temperament Nazir is happy-go-lucky in his art too. He takes his calling lightly. Versification came naturally to him, and he just wrote on. It appears that he never blotted a line, and it is a pity he did not.

Nazir's quick observation and his retentive memory were often a drawback and are responsible for some of his failures. When he describes a rainy day, he must describe the experiences of all sorts of men and women at length. In his *Muffis-kā-Falsafa* he described the lot of all the poor classes of the day. In his *Kabitar-Bāzī* there is a spate of technical terms that would puzzle even the best pigeon fancier. But poets, like mountains, are measured by their heights and not their flats, and the best of Nazir is the best of its kind in our literature.

6

Nazir is the most unaccountable figure in the poetry of his age. The most striking feature of his poetry is its detachment from the literary ideals of the day. It is born of the impact of life and has an accent of its own, being buoyant, cheerful, and unconventional. He is our first poet to look round for his material. This is not to say that there was no observation or local colour before him. Mir's *mawāzī* on fireworks and other festivities celebrating his patron's marriage are in a realistic vein. But his heart is not in them, and they are not sufficiently evocative. Similarly, there are poems on domestic animals and household effects by Hātim, and Sauda. But what is an exception with them is the rule with Nazir. His poems are in a class apart, and we had to wait for more than a century before Hafiz appeared on the scene with something like Nazir's passionate realization of the beauty of men and things. Parallel as they are in earth-worship, the fields in which they excel are wide apart, though in a sense complementary. Nazir's, as we have seen, is a townman's poetry; Hafiz is at home in the rural world.

7

Nazir had his admirers in his day and even after. But the first person to vindicate him, and assign him his rightful place in our poetry was S. W. Fallon, an Englishman. We may not wholly agree with him, but in several important respects he goes to the heart of the matter, as the following extract from the 'Preface' to his *Hindustani English Dictionary* (1879) shows:

... (He) is the only true Hindustani poet according to the European standard of true poetry, and the poet whom native word-worshippers will not allow to be a poet at all ... Nazir possessed all the qualifications of mind and feeling which distinguish genius. His own poems are his biography, for in them the man stands out life-like and full of individuality ... The versatility of his genius is seen in the many-coloured variety of subjects which he handled. The poetry which he has evolved from common things ... is ignorantly regarded by native scholars as the surest proof that he was no poet. 'He has written,' they say, 'on such common subjects as flour, and *dāl* (pulse), flies and mosquitoes' ... His poems are a picture-gallery in which may be seen speaking pictures of the sports and pastimes, pleasures and enjoyments, pain and misery, and the mind and feelings of the natives of India ... Nazir laid under contribution the treasures of the mother tongue ... He has presented Hindi words in all the felicitous combinations of which they were capable; and with the bold self-confidence of genius, he

has dared to use words in new combinations and senses which are always happy And this is the poet whom native scholars and poets never deign to name.²

8

We can well understand why Shefta should have failed to see his merit. He wrote: 'Many of his verses are on the tongues of the vulgar, and on that account he should not be included in the list of poets.'³ An extremely fastidious aristocrat, he stood for all that was genteel and respectable in speech, accent, and thought. Very likely, he was also repelled by Nazir's disregard of proprieties, as he thought. What is really surprising is that Azād and Hālī who wished and tried to extend the range of poetry should have failed to see his merit; for here was a poet in whom those very ideals they so strongly advocated had been fully realized.

As I have discussed in *Muhammad Husain Azād: His Mind and Works*, a very discriminating critic from Delhi while doing full justice to *Ab-e-Hayāt* referred to the omission of Momin and Nazir in it. But while Azād grudgingly included a chapter on Momin in the second edition of the book he did not think it fit to write on Nazir. And this very critic in his *Manifesto* of 1874 had both warned and advised his countrymen saying: 'Your poetry lies confined in certain narrow limits; in fact it is shackled in them. Try to free it from them.'⁴

Still more surprising is Hālī's obtuseness; for his *Prolegomena* is a condemnation of the old poetry and a spirited plea for a true and realistic picture of life and things. And the very things the absence of which he so strongly regrets are Nazir's major themes. Until Hafiz appeared on the scene, no poet other than Nazir did full justice to them.

It appears that living in a self-righteous age they fought shy of the risky in Nazir, and discreetly left him out. Such was the pressure of middle-class opinion.

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CHAPTER VIII

Nazir Akbarabadi

AS THE STRAIGHT line developments were promoting a tradition with slight doses of experimentation, a major literary event occurred. At Agra, Nazir Akbarabadi revived the folk tradition of Urdu which still lived in the meditative seclusion of monasteries. Nazir forced it out and it caught the popular imagination. Not only the wanderings minstrels but even the courtesans fell for it. The elite in literature took scant notice of the advent of Nazir. Sheftah, for instance, thought that his verses pleased only the rustics and thus almost counted him out of the circle of poets.¹ Karimuddin and Fallon repeat Sheftah's views but make a special mention of his *Jogi Namah* and *Banjara Namah* as delightful poems.² Batin in his *Tazkirah Gulistan-e-Bekbezan* took these short-sighted critics to task and like a dutiful pupil came out with a panegyric. Little did he attempt to interpret him competently in terms that his detractors could appreciate. Nazir was really rediscovered in the modern age.

Wali Mohammad Nazir Akbarabadi (1740-1830) represents a totally different tradition. It is the tradition of Kabir, Surdas and Mira Bai, but he spreads his canvas wider. He is the great poet of the common man in Urdu. There have been many others but the Persian-oriented critics never cared to take adequate note of them. An unbroken strain of tradition flows on from Khusräu to Nazir, down to the 20th century in Mutalebi Faridabadi, Inderjit Sharma and Arzu Lukhnavi, but they do not touch the fullness one finds in Nazir. It sounds strange that none but Josh and Hafiz should have cared to discover the potential in the Nazir tradition. In the seventh decade of the last century, Mohammad Hussain Azad and Altaf Hussain 'Hali' had bewailed with considerable despondency the

¹ *Tazkirah Gulshan-e-Bekbar*: 231.

² *Tabaqat-e-Sho'ara-e-Hind*: 394.

absence of variety in Urdu poetry but they completely overlooked its exuberance in Nazir and they certainly knew him. Or were they also unsure, despite protestations to the contrary, of the poetic worth of Nazir's verse. It was left to the Englishman S.W. Fallon to point out that "the versatility of his (Nazir's) genius is seen in the many coloured variety of subjects he handled." Nazir, he felt, was "the only Hindustani poet according to the European standards of true poetry." He "possessed all the qualities of mind and feeling which distinguished genius."¹ While one may not agree that no other poet measured to the European view of true poetry, Fallon's appreciation of Nazir's merit is full-throated. Nazir sings of his sorrows and joys, hopes and aspirations, struggles and sufferings, successes and failures, familiar surroundings and popular pastimes with intimate universality and invests his simple, short couplets with a homely vitality, colour and imagination. Like a true mystic, he is unconventional even in matters of formal religion and is unconcerned about its priestly disputations. He respects all allies of truth and love. Krishna and Mahadeo, Nanak and Narsi Bhagat all figure in his poetry with due regard. He participates in Hindu, Muslim and Sikh festivals alike with zest, abandon and respect for life. Many of his poems have become part of our folklore, for example 'Admi Namah', 'Banjara Namah', 'Muflisi' and 'Janam Kanhaiyaji'.

Two of his *diwans* have been printed, one including the *Kulliyat-e-Nazir*. Part of it has appeared in Hindi as well. The prolific writer that he was, there are indications that a large volume of his works still remains to be discovered.

It would be wrong to presume that his compositions are free from feudal traits but in literature he heralds the coming of local realism and conscious nationalism. In the matter of language he tries to keep closest to the commonest vocabulary and does not mind even the rustic and market place, but he puts them to remarkably good use. His is the largest and the most varied vocabulary. He set the tradition of 'poetry made easy' and the mystic in him took care that its higher functions were not sacrificed to the whims of popular literature. One may stumble upon occasional unevenness in his verse but it gets submerged in the momentum his poems generate.

¹ A New Hindustani-English Dictionary, Preface.

He seldom talks of ethereal beauty or of platonic love as was the fashion of the day. To him beauty is physical, lively and mundane and he seeks it rather than merely worship it or pine for it in feigned separation. His God is realised through love that is not restrictive but is all-embracing. He goes out on pilgrimages to Mathura and Vrindavan, participates in *wars* of Salim Chishū and other saints and the religious fairs of Hindus and Sikhs. Diwali and Holi enthral him like Shab-i-Barat and he shows devotion alike to Krishna Kanhaiya, Guru Nanak and Salim Chishū. He represents the very best in the composite culture of Agra and Mathura. His bold humanism stems from this cultural milieu. It rejects distinctions of colour, creed and region. He is a poet of human dignity, unity and equality.

پھر کے نگاہ چار سو پھری اسی کے روہرو
اس نے تو میری چشم کو قبلہ نما بنا دیا

My eyes wandered around and returned fixed on His presence.
He turned my eyes into the magnetic compass needle that
always points to Ka'bah.

جھڑا نہ کرے مذہب و ملت کا کوئی یاں
جس راہ میں جو آن پڑے خوش رہے ہر آن
زناں گلے یا کہ بغل بیچ ہو خزان
عاشق تو قلندر ہے نہ ہمدو نہ مسلمان
کافر نہ کوئی صاحبِ اسلام رہے گا
آخر وہی اللہ کا ایک نام رہے گا

No one need fight over creeds and faiths
Whatever path one is thrown upon, may he ever be happy
there!

Whether it is the sacred thread around the neck or Quran
slung across the shoulders

Love is a *qalandar*, who is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. Neither a believer nor a non-believer will live for ever. Ultimately, the name of Allah alone survives.

ہر آن میں ہر بات میں ہر اڑھنگ میں پچان
عاشق ہے تو دلبر کو ہر اک رنگ میں پچان

Discover Him in every disposition, every talk and all the ways. If you profess love, you must perceive the beloved in all His appearances.

جوں کی ناز برداری میں بھی تیری عبادت کی
ہری اس بندگی کا اب تو ہی شاہد ہے معبودا

I was doing obeisance to Thee in bowing to the coquettes of idol (beauties).

Only Thou knowest, O Lord, the depth of my devotion.

In 'Muflisi' and 'Shahr Ashoub', he displays an insight into the contradictions of the contemporary social life. In his description of the *ghats* of the Yamuna during Holi, the richness of detail and the artistic touches of the painter of nature compel attention. In other descriptive poems, there are long processions of miniature images, woven together with coherence, speed and concentration, words swaying into melodies.

جہنا کا پاک گویا سخن جن ہے بارے
پیراک اس میں تیریں پیچے کہ چاند تارے
منہ چاند کے سے نکرے تن گورے گورے پیارے
ریوں سے بھر رہے ہیں مہدھار اور کنارے
کتے کھوئے ہی تیریں اپنا دکھا کے سینہ
سینہ چمک رہا ہے تیرے کا جوں گیند

The Yamuna's wide surface glistens velvety like the garden's lawns

The swimmers glide gracefully like the moon and the stars;
Their faces shine like moon and their beautiful bodies glitter;
Fairies swarm the midstream and the banks
Many swim standing displaying their bosom
And bosom sparkling like polished diamonds.

سجد بھی آدمی نے بٹائی ہے یاں میاں
بنے ہیں آدمی ہی امام اور خطبہ خواں
پڑھتے ہیں آدمی ہی نماز اور قرآن یاں
اور آدمی ہی ان کی چراتے ہیں جو تیاں
جو ان کو مارتا ہے سو وہ بھی ہے آدمی

The mosque also was built by man, my friend!
He who leads the prayers and speaks from the pulpit is also a man;

Again, they are men who offer prayers and recite Quran there;
And he is also a man who steals their shoes
And he who apprehends him is a man as well!

In 'Janam Kanhaiyaji', he shows remarkable resilience by varying the diction and the style to suit his theme and by carefully building the devotional atmosphere:

Shubh Sa'at se yun duniya mein autar garbh mein ate hain
Jo Narad Muni hain dhyana bali, sab unka bhed batate hain
Wo' nek muhurat se jis dam is sishui mein janme jate hain
Jo lila rachni hoti hai woh rup yeh ja dikhlate hain
Yun dekhne mein aur kahne mein wo' rup to bale hote hain
Par balepan mein hi unke upkar nirale hote hain

As avatars are conceived in earthly wombs in suspicious moments,
Powerful seer Narad Muni spells out all their hidden powers.
And when on happy *muhurats* they are born in this world,

They take on the appearance that suits the phenomenon they seek to project. Apparently, they are children to see and to speak of. But even in childhood, their benevolences are unusual.

Like all mystics, he loves the world and all that it contains as a reflection of the Real Beauty, but warns the viewers that the appearance is a mirage and a passing show and not the reality. He brings it out poignantly in his 'Banjara Namah':

منور نہ ہو گواروں پر مت پھول سپارے ڈھالوں کے
 سب پٹا توڑ کے بھائیں گے، منہ دیکھ اعلان کے بھالوں کے
 کیا ڈبے موتی ہیروں کے، کیا ڈھیر نرانے مالوں کے
 کیا بچے تاش تماش کے، کیا تختے شمال دو شاہوں کے
 سب ٹھاٹھ پڑا رہا جائے گا جب لاد چلے گا بخارا

Pride not yourself on the swords, do not be arrogant on the shields

They will break all bonds and run away on seeing the death's spears

Whether it's the casket of pearls and diamonds, or heaps of treasures,

Bundles of brocades, or bales of shawls and double shawls, All the pomp will be left behind when the wandering merchant decides to pack up.

There is also the sensuous in his verse, the humour, the satire and occasionally, the vulgar and the lascivious, but then he is only holding a mirror to a society which was fast decaying. He has, for example, attempted an exquisite portrayal of the well-to-do courtesan of his times in 'Pari ka Sarapa'. Rich in details of the female fashions of the day, their costumes, ornaments, cosmetic preparations and coquette, the poem is an artistic blend of form and content, consistent with a torrential vocabulary and easy flow. The mulla, the pundit, the teacher, the artist all figure in his poems. If he writes about Agra and the inevitable Taj Mahal, he remembers affectionately its swimmer, the potter and glassmaker too, as a dutiful

son of the soil. He does not forget even the *kakri*¹ (specially of Sikandara). The Agra Bazar is his rendezvous. Even the grown-up Nazir enjoys the baby-bear shows. He is a great lover of nature. The moonlit night, the shivering winter, the smothering humidity, the romantic rainy season all hold his heart. Even calamities like earthquake and dust-storm show a brighter spot somewhere. He is a moralist who admits that economic disparities are the cause of many a crime as in 'Mufisi' and 'Roti'.

That such a poet should remain in comparative oblivion despite the pleadings of Batin, his disciple is a sad commentary on our literary assessment. A few biographical and critical works attempted in recent past, including those by Shahbaz, Makhmoor, Mumtaz and Gopi Chand Narang call for reassessing the poetic genius of Nazir. Kalimuddin Ahmad rightly observed that "Nazir shines like a lonely star on the firmament of Urdu poetry".

¹A kind of Indian cucumber.