In this monograph, Mir is presented as a poet next only to Ghalib and Iqbal in Urdu literature; whereas both of the latter have received a surfeit of critical studies, Mir has almost been neglected. Poet after poet, including Ghalib, has paid him tribute in a verse or two and acknowledged to have received inspiration from him, but very few critics have gone deeply into his art and contribution, almost none in English. This book is therefore a significant contribution that fills a deeply-felt vacuum in Urdu literature.

This book, from the pen of a professor of English, is meant for the general reader who is not much acquainted with Mir in particuler and Urdu literature in general. Mr. Ish Kumar, who has taught English literature for more than forty years, has tried to evaluate Mir more from the western than the eastern canons of literary criticism which, he believes, are a little different from each other in some respects. He has also tried to compare him not only with some Urdu poets, but also with some English poets, since he agrees with Goethe who said, "Left to itself, every literature will exhaust its vitality if not refreshed by the interest and contribution of a foreign one."

Prof. Ish Kumar has ta... litera-
ture in different colleges an... .
Punjab for more than four de...
Urdu literature, however, st...
has stuck to him all his life.

ISBN. 81-260-0186-0 Rs. 15.

Mir Taqi Mir

Ish Kumar

Makers of Indian Literature

Mir Taqi Mir

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

Mir Taqi Mir

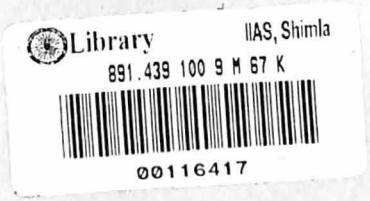
By
Ish Kumar

Sahitya Akademi

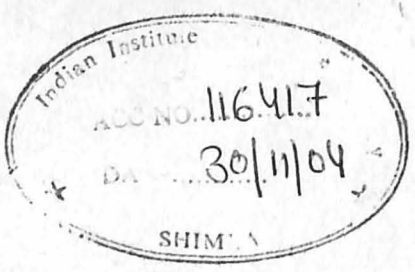
Sahitya Akademi

Rabindra Bhawan, 35, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 110 001
Sales : 'Swati', Mandir Marg, New Delhi 110 001

Jeevan Tara Building, 4th Floor, 23A/44X, Diamond Harbour Road, Calcutta 700 053
172, Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400 014
Guna Building, Nos. 304-305, Anna Salai, Teynampet, Madras 600 018
ADA Rangamandira, 109, J.C. Road, Bangalore 560 002



First Published : 1982
Reprinted : 1996



Rs. 15

ISBN - 81-260-0186-0

Printed by : Diamond Art Printers, Delhi

Contents

Introduction

Mir is one of the greatest poets in Urdu, but it is a pity that he has not received an adequate critical appreciation. Poet after poet has paid him glowing tributes in a verse or two, sometime in a whole poem, and has received inspiration from him in his own art, but I have come across only two full-length critical studies of him—Dr. Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi's *Mir Taqi Mir, Hayat aur sha'iri* and Dr. Abdullah's *Naqd-i-Mir*. That I feel is not enough for a poet like him. I have seen very little on him in English. That is rather surprising, since I feel that, as a poet, he stands next only to Ghalib and Iqbal, both of whom have whole libraries written on them.

Here is a poet about whom Dr. Faruqi rightly says, "Mir has written not verses, but elegies of Delhi and his own heart and has provided brilliance to love and humanity. He has enlivened the sorrow of love as well as of life with the blaze of fire. His poetry has obliterated the discrimination between words and meanings and has enshrined in it not only the development of Urdu language, but also the traditions and the historical and cultural heritage of a long time."[1]

Here is a poet of 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'[2]: a poet for whom content and expression were twin-born, without any intermediary stage of reflection and glossing over; a poet dealing with common every-day themes in common, every-day language with sincerity and intensity; a poet for whom rhythm and melody were more important than depth of thought or problematic considerations, a poet, rather, who made thought itself musical. He converted ethics into aesthetics and reconciled instruction with delight and taught people, in Pope's words, 'as if you taught them not'[3]. He was himself crushed under the weight of griefs and torture, but lightened the burden of humanity. Here is a poet, moreover, who will not become archaic or absolete with the change of time and tastes, since he dealt

with eternal themes in neutral and natural language untained by convention or artificiality. "There may be people who may deny the greatness of Iqbal and Ghalib," says Sardar Jafri, "but none who denies Mir's greatness."[4]

Such a poet, I feel, has been criminally neglected. Even some of his works have either not yet been published or were published long after his death. There is not a single authoritative edition of his *diwan* and there is dispute even about the athenticity and correctness of scores of his verses.[5] It is true that at times he himself sacrificed quality at the altar of quantity and mixed lot of chaff with mere handfuls of grain in trying to produce voluminous output. It is true that more than half, more than eighty per cent according to some rather unsympathetic critics, of his six *diwans* is very low indeed and tends to detract from his reputation as a poet. Ghalib declared that the selections from his poety had brought him ill repute (*she'ron ke intkhāb ne ruswā kiyā mujhe*), but the case of Mir is quite the opposite. He has to be read in selections to know his real worth, since there is a vast distance between his high and low. His microscopic gems are hidden in a heap of straw. Shaifta truly said that his high was very high indeed and his low very low (*pastash agarchih andak past ast ammā balandash bisyār buland*). All this is true, but we have to judge a poet from his best and his best affects us powerfully, since it comes straight from the heart and goes straight to the heart. He has both sincerity and intensity, the *sine qua non* of great poetry, and at his best, he is in the front rank.

My contact with Mir started late in life, if we exclude the poems that I read in my middle classes in our Urdu courses, for instances, poems beginning with

kal pāūn merā kāsah-i-sar par jo jā parā

or

jis sar ko ghrūr āj hai yān tājwarī kā

that our teacher asked us to commit to memory and recite in the class-room. During my college days and my forty years of teaching life, Iqbal monopolised all my interest in Urdu poetry, including Ghalib's which had intrigued me in my teens, but which remained suppressed till after my retirement from service.

I quoted Iqbal to my classes oftener than Keats, Browning and Shakespeare, my favourites in English literature, while illustrating simile and metaphor, rhythm and imagery, meaning and music and the rest. It was after I had written rather exhaustively about him and Ghalib that I turned to Mir for a change, and found an altogether new world in him. It was like turning from sophisticated urbanity to rural setting, from Keats and Shakespeare, so to say, to Burns and Wordworth.

Besides poetry, his rich and comprehensive personality appealed to me. I found him a man of varied tastes and interests. Basically sad and self-centred in temperament with sufistic contenment and sensitive self-respect, he also enjoyed the fun and festivities of life. Fundamentally a man of the Delhi school, he was not wholly unaffected by the levity and light-heartedness of the Lucknow school, as is commonly supposed. His *masnavis* give a lie to the impression which his ghazals have created about him. We shall of course talk of that during the course of our study.

I am perhaps guilty of copious quotations of Mir's verses. I make no apology for it, since I believe that criticism is not worth much unless it illustrates what it says with quotations. Criticism, after all, is merely a means to an end; the end is the text. I shall regard my labour lost if the reader stops short even at the quotations, however copious, and is not tempted to study Mir's poetry in original. I have given only its translation and know what a mess I have made of it. I could not help it, since poetry, by its very nature, is untranslatable. It consists in the very words that a poet uses. Substitute a synonym of the same language for a word and the magic, that is poetry, vanishes. If that is true of a single word of the same language, what remains if all the words are translated into a different language? I wish that I could give the references to his verses, but, as I have said, I could not get a single standard edition of his diwans. In fact there are no standard editions of Urdu poets before Iqbal whose verses alone have been referred to the original.

Besides comparing Mir with contemporary Urdu poets, I have also compared him, at relevant places, with English prototypes. That may not be of much interest to the readers who are not interested in English literature, but that brings him into wider perspective and tends to cure us of inferiority complex

which makes us feel shy of bringing our poets into limelight. "Left to itself", said Goethe, "every literature will exhaust its vitality if it is not refreshed by the interest and contribution of a foreign language."[6]

Any suggestions for the improvement of the book will be most welcome and will be gratefully acknowleged by the author.

1590, Sector 18D,
Chandigarh-160 018.

ISH KUMAR

1

Biographical Background

Born in 1722 in Akbarabad (Agra), Mir Mohammad Taqi was very lucky in his father, Mohammad Ali, called out of respect for his learning and godliness Ali Mutaqqi. He was a sufi saint, greatly renowned and revered all around for his high morals and ascetic temperament. He divined great promise in Mir and asked him one day, "My life, what is this fire hidden in your heart?" His influence on Mir was immense, though mainly through example rather than precept. Being almost always self-absorbed and preoccupied with meditation, he had little time for companionship and verbal instruction. The only precept of his that has come down to us, besides the worship of God and the transitoriness of life, is his grand conception of love. He advised Mir to adopt love as his mission, since this whole machine, called the universe, was held in balance by love, without which it would go topsy-turvy. Life without love was torture. Real perfection lay in losing oneself in love. Love made and unmade humanity. (*ishq basāzad-o-ishq basozad*).

In a verse, he said:

> One should not live, move and have one's being without love:
> Even the prophet of Kin'an (Jacob) loved his son (Joseph).

Further, this world was interpenetrated with love. Fire was its warmth and water, its speed. Earth was its rest and air, its movement. Death was its intoxication and life, its waking. Virtue was its vicinity and sin, its remoteness. He went to the length of saying that love was superior to worship, asceticism, truth, godliness and the rest.

Mir reiterated it in almost the same vein:

Love pervades every object that you see;
The whole world is interpenetrated with it.
Love is the lover as well as the beloved;
It is thus its own victim.
Who in the world can attain his goal without love?
Love is both desire as well as aim.

Again:

Love is both the pain as well as the remedy;
How can you know the secret of love, O Shaikh?
Without love, the whole world would go topsy-turvy.
Poets are right in saying that God is love.

In his masnavi, *Sho'lah-i-'ishq*, he further elaborated on the theme:

Love has brought light out of darkness;
Without love, nothing would have been manifest;
. . . . . .
Heart is aflame with the fire of love;
Without love, heart would be stone.

and so on for a score of verses.

Iqbal later further developed this grand conception. Used by him, the word *'ishq* which was being generally used in its narrow sense of physical passion, connoted the force that provided the solution of all human restlessness (*hamah betābī*). It denoted not an individual feeling, but a cosmic force, responsible for all creation and evolution, like Bergson's life-force. It was the basis of all good and great actions. It alone gave meaning to life and distinguished a good deed from a bad one. Its highest form was the creation of all values and ideals and the endeavour to realise them. He went to the limit of saying:

Love is the breath of Gabriel and of Mohammad,
It is the messenger as well as the word of God.
It is the plucker of the string of life's music;
It is the fire as well as the light of life.[1]

Again:

Life is the greatest guide of intellect, heart and vision:

Without it, religion is a shrine of vague imaginings.
Love is the sincerity of Abraham and the patience of Hussain,
It is badr and hussain in the struggle of life.[2]

There is no end to Iqbal's quotations on the topic:

The resonance of high and low in music is through love;
Love is the fire and energy in different forms of universe;
It is imbedded in the nerves and arteries of men;
It is the dampness of the morning breeze in the flower.[3]

It appears to me that Iqbal needed a different word for his grand conception, since *'ishq* had come to have a narrow erotic sense, but perhaps he did not think of it or was unable to invent one. It was like Aristotle who developed and amplified Plato's philosophic concepts of virtue, justice etc., but stuck to the same terminology to be intelligible.

This grand conception of love, however, is nothing new. Many thinkers of antiquity[4] regarded love to be one of the greatest values, one of the creative energies operating throughout the universe—the cosmic power that creates and maintains the grand order of existence.

In ancient Greece, for instance, Empedocles held that the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) were kept in continual motion and change, as they were alternately combined by love and separated by strife. Plato taught that Eros (love) was the movement of the human soul towards what is beautiful and desirable. He distinguished between the vulgar sexual eros and heavenly eros which meant a movement of the soul towards perfection, a desire for the pure and eternal world. In *Phaedrus*, he said that the soul, by its divine nature, was attracted upwards. This upward attraction of the soul was heavenly Eros. It forbade the soul to settle down and rest in the material world. In *Symposium*, he wrote: "The madness of love is the greatest of heaven's blessings."

Aristotle expanded the idea to include in it a movement from matter to the ideal form, from imperfection to perfection from potentiality to actuality. What set the whole process in motion, he said, was the pure Form, which, though it was itself unmoved, was the source of all motion. This desire of Eros, in

the hands of Aristotle, became a driving force of the universe whereby the lower was all the time striving for the higher.

Christianity took up the word agape and distinguished it from Eros. Greek eros started from the material and was a movement upward of the mind and spirit. Agape had its origin in God and moved downward to all creation. Eros was the desire of the soul of men to attain salvation by detachment from earthly objects of desire and by seeking after heavenly things, but was yet selfish and egocentric; agape was theocentric—God's own love. God was agape, entirely unselfish and his desire was poured on the good and the evil alike.

"God is love", said John, "and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but God loved us."

Acquinas and Augustus tried to combine the two, agape and eros, in some sort of harmony in the idea of Chritas which dominated the thought of medieval Europe.

Boethius, a Latin poet of the fifteenth century, said "Should He (love) let go the reins, all things that now live in mutual affection would be at continual strife." Again "Thus through eternal love, eternal courses are renewed and discordent war is absent from the regions inhabited by the stars." In *Consolation of Philosophy*, he wrote: "O happy race of men; if love which rules heaven, rule our mind!"

And here is Edmund Spenser, the English poet, in modern spellings:

> Air hated earth and water hated fire,
> Till love relented their rebellious ire.[3]

Haven't we forgotten Mir in all this? Deep and abiding as his father's influence on him was, still deeper was the influence of his "spiritual" uncle, Amanullah, one of his father's most devoted disciples, who had given up his home and new bride to stay with his preceptor when Mir was seven years old. Mir mentions in his autobiography *Zikr-i-Mir* from which most of what is known about him as well as his family is derived, that his father happened to visit Bayanah, the native place of Amanullah, on the day of his marriage. He looked at the young groom in a way that made him senseless. It naturally spread consternation all around. He was ultimately brought round by

the holy man's sprinkling water over his face and uttering a few words. He who had himself married twice in his life, though he said that he was then free from that bondage, told him that marriage was opposed to the worship of God (*kad khudāi mani' khudā parastī*). That is how Amanullah gave up his home and his bride and came to live with Ali Mutaqqi in Agra and in a short time became a perfect saint (*faqir kamil*). At home, his bride died of tuberculosis after a short time. Here he himself fell in love with a boy. When the preceptor came to know of it, he ordered him to shut himself up in a room for a whole week as penance, which would bring the boy to him of his own accord. The boy did come and ultimately became a disciple.

Ali Mutaqqi used to call Amanullah 'dear brother', he being the closest and most devoted disciple. Mir spent most of his time with his "uncle", since his father was constantly in contemplation. Amanullah was responsible for his educational development in early life, taught him the Holy Quran and took him to visit different men of God. One such godly man, named Ihsanullah, deserves special mention. He lived in a cave. Whenever some one came to meet him, he shouted from inside that Ihsanullah was not in. Those unfamiliar with his habits returned, but Amanullah who knew, shouted back, "If Ihsanullah is not in, Amanullah is", and got admittance. On their very first meeting, Ihsanullah, on knowing who the boy was, foretold that if he got proper education, he would 'rise to the sky in his first flight'. Mir also mentions that he gave him a piece of dry bread soaked in water the like of which, in taste, he had never eaten before. The darvesh himself, however, had a queer end. A boy sang to him some verses which inspired him so much that he asked him to stay with him for the night and sing to him all that he knew. The boy saw him putting under his pillow five sovereigns given to him by Nusrat Yar Khan, the Subedar of the town, as present and was tempted to poison his milk and slip away with the money.

Mir was greatly impressed by Ihsanullah and had him in mind, it is said, when he wrote verses about self-oblivision:

I am famous in the world, but where am I?
Don't pursue me, for I am nowhere.

Mir remains out of himself when separated from Him:

About whom are you talking? He is not within himself.

I remained lost all my life:
Did you ever find me in myself ?

Another darvesh that they met was Bayazid who was in extreme ill health, but absorbed in meditation. He advised them to be rid of all mosques and temples, since the real aim of life lay not in formal worship, but in sympathy, in making room in people's hearts, in never breaking any one's heart and throwing the stone of cruelty on glass (*dil shiknī kase na kunī-o-sang-i-sitam bar shīshah na zanī*).

All these influences had an indelible mark on Mir and developed in him independence, self-respect and faith in God. Liberality and sympathy (*dardmandi*) became his favourite topics in poetry.

I don't know what is Islam or Kufr;
I want your abode in Ka'aba or in temple.

Do whatever you like in life:
Only do not live to injure any one.
What fun reaching ka'aba, O shaikh;
Try to reach someone's heart.

But unfortunately these opportunities did not last long. Both his father and 'uncle' died when he was only ten years old. Mir has given a detailed account of their deaths. One Ahsanullah, a co-disciple of his father, feeling extremely unhappy over the ruin of his business, was instructed in a dream by their common preceptor that, as a remedy, he should go to meet Ali Mutaqqi, which he did. But one man's meat was to prove another man's poison. Ali Mutaqqi, on asking his preceptor about the promonition of his death, had been told that his end would be near when Ahsanullah came to meet him. When Amanullah came to know of it, he was greatly grieved and declared that he would not live to see that day. And so it happend. Amanullah's condition became worse and worse everyday and he soon died. This greatly grieved Mir's father and he also followed him.

Mir was orphaned. He felt the shock of his uncle's death more acutely than even his father is, since he had spent all his time with him for three years and had benefitted a great deal

from him—a warm-hearted man and of extremely loving nature. He mourned for his death intensely day and night, he said, (*rozhā yād mī kardam, shabhā faryād mī kardam*).

Mir has also narrated in *Zikr-i-Mir* that his father, on his death-bed, called Mir's elder step-brother, Hafiz Mohammad Hassain, and asked him to divide his books, the only property he had, half and half with Mir, but Mohammad Hassan replied that Mir was not fond of books like himself and had no use for them. His father was unhappy and told him so. He asked Mir to wipe off his debt of three hundred rupees before his funeral rites, and when Mir showed confusion and helplessness, he said that the money was on the way and would soon arrive. The money did arrive through some disciples, but he himself was no more.

After his death, Mir was left to his own resources which were nil. In fact, his life became miserable thereafter. His step-brother who was already annoyed with him, because he felt that Mir was receiving all the attention and love of his father, began to treat him cruelly. The result was that the child who had been brought up with great affection and was almost revered by all around, felt deserted and lost all support and stamina. It made him more and more obstinate and self-willed, even arrogant. He began to feel that the whole world had turned into his enemy. He had to leave home, giving charge to his younger brother, Mohammad Razi, and wandered about helpless here and there in search of livelihood (*bisyār gardïdam, shafīqe na dīdam*). Ultimately he went to Delhi and got in touch with Nawab Samsud-daulah, an aristocrat who had great reverence for his father and who bestowed on him a rupees per day for his needs, which he went on getting till the Nawab was killed in Nadir Shah's attack on Delhi in 1739. It was a great shock to Mir; greater shock was the condition of Delhi which he had begun to love and which was subjected to loot and arson during Nadir Shah's invasion. He was greatly grieved at the desolation and ruin of the city and gave poignant expression to it in some of his verses.

Life in Delhi became intolerable and he went back to Agra, but none recognised him there. All the respect that he had commanded due to his father's holiness had vanished, perhaps because he is said to have created a scandal on account of a clandestine love affair with one of his relatives. He felt unhappy

and returned to Delhi and started living with his foster maternal uncle, Sirajuddin popularly known as Khan Arzoo, one of the greatest Persian scholars alive and foremost among those who espoused the cause of Urdu. He was a voluminous writer, with a score of books to his credit. Azad has paid him high tribute: "Khan Arzoo has done for Urdu what Aristotle did for logic. As long as all logicians are called the descendents of Aristotle, all Urdu scholars will also be called the descendents of Khan Arzoo."[6] He was a poineer and many contemporary poets, including Mir and Sauda, came within the orbit of his influence. It was, in fact, on his advice that Sauda decided to give up writing in Persian in favour of Urdu, which had a far-reaching effect both on his own poetic career and the development of Urdu poetry.

Mir benefitted a great deal from him, and regarded him as the greatest scholar and the most sweet-tongued poet alive. In his critical treatise, *Nikat-ul-sho'ra*, he called him his teacher and preceptor (*ustād-o-pīr-o-murshid*). But the relationship did not last long, since his step-brother pursued him with vendetta here too and wrote to Khan Arzoo, his real uncle, that Mir was a mischief-monger (*fitnah rozgār*) and did not deserve any help. The result was that the relations between them became extremely strained and the uncle began to harrass him right and left. Another reason, according to Azad, was their religious differences, Mir being a *Shiite*, whereas him uncle was *Hanafite*, which is improbable, since both of them were liberal in their outlook. Mir was already highly depressed on account of frustrated love-affair and the shock of Nadir Shah's invasion, followed by Ahmad Shah Abdali's repeated attacks and his uncle's cruel behaviour added fuel to the fire, with the result that he left him in 1753. He was again thrown on the street and lost his wits for sometime. It may have been partly due to the ancestral influence, since his uncle had been suffering from insanity. He himself said:

My heart began to bleed due to cruelties of fate,
And gradually severe obstructions led to my madness.

No wonder that in *Zikr-i-Mir*, instead of having a good word for his uncle or acknowledging his debt as he had done in *Nikat*, he used harsh language for him, and called him skin-peeler

(*sallākhi*) and cotton-carder (hallāji).

During his temporary insanity, a lady (Fakharruddin's wife), a near relative and devotee of his father, spent lot of money on his treatment and he soon recovered. For a time, he studied with Mir Jafar and then with Sa'adat Amrohi who induced him to write more in Urdu. He soon made a name for himself and began to be ranked with the greatest poets, with the result that patron after patron began to befriend him. The first one was an aristocrat Riyat Khan, who relieved him of a great part of his misery. Their relations became rather thick, so much so that Mir accompanied him to the war with Ahmad Shah Abdali, who was defeated at Sirhind. He even tried to bring about reconcilation between Riyat Khan and Maharajna Rajit Singh when their relations became strained. But Mir's temperament, obstinate and self-willed, did not allow him to stay anywhere for long. One day Riyat Khan asked him to teach a few of his verses to a *qawal* boy and almost compelled him. Mir agreed, but it affected him so adversely that he left service and confined himself to home for some time. Riyat Khan, however, did not lose his regard for him and employed his younger brother, Mohammad Razi, in his place. After that Mir first got attached to Raja Jugal Kishor for correcting his verses though he did not find much in them (*qābliyat islāh na dīdam bar aksar tasnīfāt-i-o khat kashīdam*), and then to Raja Nagar Mal with whom he spent some time happily and went about here and there. After that he got attached successively to Suraj Mal Jat, Bahadur Singh, Vajihuddin Khan and Hassan Raza Khan. Emperor Alam Gir II also sent for him sometimes, but he never complied.

Life in Delhi, however, was becoming unbearable. The invasion of Nadir Shah and the repeated attacks of Ahmad Shah Abdali had already shattered the Mughal Empire, which led to the break-up of the country. The Jats, the Marhattas, the Rohillas, and the British all carved out their individual little kingdoms. There was no peace anywhere and the life was divided between murder and robbery. Ghulam Qadir Rohilla, a minister, abused Emperor Shah Alam in the open *durbar* and plucked out his eyes. Delhi was maimed and disfigured. All this had an immense influence on a sensitive mind like Mir's and he mourned it in verse after verse:

People who till yesterday were hankering after the throne
Find it hard to get even alms today.

What to talk of a beggar like you, O Mir!
Even big officers have been reduced to dust.

I am the resident of that town
Which destiny has robbed and laid waste.

This went down deep into his sub-conscious mind, with the result that it frequently became a part even of his imagery.

I don't like to stay in these desolate towns,
My heart hankers after living in wilderness.

The heart is not a town which can be repopulated;
You will repent after making it desolate.

A scar is shining in my desolate heart,
Like a single lamp in a deserted town.

My heart was a wonderful town of thoughts,
which has been desolated by the beauties.

and so on.

A ray of hope appeared in 1782, however, by way of an invitation from Nawab Asafuddaulah of Lucknow who had heard a great deal about his reputation as a poet. Mir regarded it as a godsend and promptly accepted it. Azad narrates in *Ab-i-hayat*, with doubtful veracity, that when Mir left for Lucknow, he did not have the railway fare and had to borrow it from a fellow passenger, who, however, annoyed him on the way by his silly chatter. Mir turned his face the other way and asked him not to bore him with his talk, simply because he had paid his fare. Mir's own account is different. He narrates that the Nawab sent to him the expenses of the journey. On his way, Farukhabad Rais Muzaffar Jang wanted him to stay with him for a few days, but he did not agree.

In Lucknow, he was greatly respected and received a salary of Rs. 300 per mensem, a huge sum in those days, considering the standards. Zauq was getting rupees four per mensem as the teacher of Bahadur Shah when he was a prince and Rs. 30 when the latter became the Emperor, though later it was increased to Rs. 100/-. Ghalib received Rs. 100 per mensem as his highest

ever salary from his most generous patron, the Nawab of Rampur.

Nawab Asafuddaulah got quite fond of Mir and took him with him on his journeys and on hunting expeditions, some of which Mir has described in his masnavis. His sojourn in Lucknow added a great glory to the city. The literary atmosphere became all the more resplendent. *Musha'aras* gained added interest and people from far and near flocked there to listen to him and took away his poems as gifts. More than his poetry, it was his personality that attracted people—his patience and forbearance, his independence and self-respect, his resignation and contentment. A man of few words, he mostly kept to himself. He was poor, almost penniless, and yet seldom indulged in undue adoration, never at the cost of his dignity. This was a new thing in the courtly atmosphere of Lucknow. He said:

I had no taste for praising the rose and jasmine;
I am no flatterer of the garden like the breeze.

Here he found peace, security and honour, but he was not happy. A sensitive and egotistic man like Mir could be happy nowhere. Here, in addition, there were damping conditions. The atmosphere of Lucknow was full of luxury and license which was not congenial to a man of his ascetic and rather gloomy temperament. Its culture was superficial and artificial, without much substance underneath. It was all polish and glitter, wit, brilliance and effiminacy, without depth of sentiment. There was no genuineness and warmth behind the exterior glamour. It had become a citadel of poets and prostitutes, wine and women, song and dance, debauchery and dissipation, and reminded one of Restoration England. It is said that prostitutes rolled in wealth and were received at court with respect and admiration and aristocrats sent their children to them for culture and education. Two of them with stellar names, Zohra (Venus) and Mushtari (Mercury), were well-known poetesses, who wrote against Ghalib in the controversy over *Qati 'Burhan*. The Nawab as well as the nobles took pride in a life of drinking and debauchery which gave Insha and Jur'at courage to write some of their unquotable verses.

There was no scope here for Mir's present mood of gloom and pessimism. The whole atmosphere was full of levity and

license, revelry and ribaldry, light-hearted hedonism and superficial glitter. The result was that poetry also developed light and frivolous qualities—wit, refinement, polish, banter, sarcasm. The style was cultivated at the cost of subject-matter and it gained in external brilliance what it lost in gravity and depth of emotion. It is evident that when the resources of a poet are deployed to secure manipulation with words, inspiration must either be starved or relegated to the background. Excessively strained and artificial punning became the stock-in-trade of the Lucknow poets. Simplicity and sincerity, the two qualities that Mir cherished, were at discount both in life and poetry. Borrowed themes were garbed in artificial and gaudy phraseology. Nasik was the supreme leader who devoted all his attention to the reform of language and went to the length of correcting the language of even Mir and Sauda. All indigenous words were rooted out and Persian vocabulary and structures were freely imported. It needed regular instruction and tutelage in poetry became a rule rather than an exception. Rules of grammar and correct use of idiom were strictly enforced. Prosody became the tyrant and any departure from it was ridiculed and rejected Language became highly ornate and artificial with all sorts of prosodic devices like alliteration and assonance, balance and antithesis, verbal jugglery and technical tricks. Poetry became tailor-made, so to say. It had more wit than feeling, and was wholly cerebral—in fact, an affair of repartee and banter, exchanged at gatherings of nobles and aristocrats. The Nawab, though seldom a poet, led the way. The caresses of their harlots and jests of the poets at times regulated the policy of the state.

The beloved was, for a change, female in characteristics, though not in language. It was a poetry more of fulfilment than frustration and all tricks of coquetry and blandishment were employed. Description of dress and parts of the body (*sarāpā*), pranks with the beloved and assignations became the common themes. There was no inhibition or modesty and poets like Jurat and Insha crossed all limits of decency and good taste.

This was popularly known as the Lucknow School of Urdu poetry, as opposed to the Delhi School of which Mir himself was the greatest representative. He had seen the ruin and desecration of Delhi at the hands of Nadir Shah and his successor Ahmed Shah Abdali. The whole trend of the Delhi poets was

towards despair and darkness. The poets whose job should be to inspire and show the way were themselves overwhelmed by the situation and felt helpless. They saw nothing good or beautiful around. There was no confidence in their joy, no abandon in their love. The lover supplicated for generosity and the beloved gave rebuffs with utter unconcern. The gloom and pessimism led to sufism and other-worldliness, which became an essential element of the Delhi school. Sufism gave gravity and seriousness to the themes and precedence to feelings generally of pathos and defeatism, simplicity and naturalness of expression and most of all, subjectivity. Deeply pathetic, subjective and individualistic in content, its style was, on the whole, simple and unadorned. There were no hard and fast rules of grammar or even spelling, no stringent rules of *qafia* or *radif*. Hatim, one of its leaders, revolted against *iham* and meticulous spellings and pronunciation of Persian loan words. All this was opposed to the Lucknow style, which was objective and social in theme and elaborate and decorative in style. They may, roughly speaking, be compared to the romantic and classical schools of English poetry.

In form, the Delhi school deserves the credit of adding *masnavi*, *hiju* and *qasidah* to the *ghazal* and producing tolerably good works in them. Sauda raised qasidah to a high pitch and would have done the same for *hiju* as well, if he were not guilty of the lack of taste and elegance. Mir was almost the pioneer in raising *masnavi* to a great art, as we shall see later.

Mir was the pure product of the Delhi school with its gloom and pessimism in content and simplicity and indigenousness of style. No wonder that he was not happy in Lucknow. He again and again deplored that the atmosphere there was not congenial for great poetry:

The tale of my heart remained unrelated,
Since nobody here understood my language.

I exhibited a variety of jewels,
But no customer came forward.

I recited verses in various artistic manners,
But no body understood my language in this town.

Take your art back;
Enough of Lucknow, go home (to Delhi).

Added to this, was the fact that he was getting old and subject to various physical ailments which gave him the constant fear that he would not live long. He confined himself to home and gave up meeting even his friends.

Azad has narrated quite a few incidents to show that, though dependent on the Nawab for his very livelihood and highly respected at court for his poetry, Mir often came in clash with him whenever his sensitive and egotistic self-respect was touched. He would not like even to hand over a book lying near him when the Nawab asked for it, and pointed to a servant to do so. When the Nawab asked him one day if he had brought a fresh poem asked for, he rudely replied that poems could not be manufactured at will. One day, when, on being asked he was reciting his verses, the Nawab was playing with fishes in the pond. When he objected to it, the Nawab replied that a good verse would itself attract attention. He pocketed the note-book and came away. Their relations became strained and Mir stopped going to the Court. The Nawab happened to meet him in the street one day and asked him the reason. Mir brusquely rebuked him that it was not good manners to hold such a discussion in the street. Such was the man with whom we have to deal.

It must be said to the credit of the Nawab, however, that his salary continued, even by his successor Nawab Sa'adat Ali Khan, although their relations did not improve. Both the Nawabs treated him with utmost courtesy and put up with his vagaries with good humour and forbearance. One day Nawab Sa'adat Ali Khan was passing through a street when all who saw him stood up. Mir kept sitting. The Nawab asked Insha who he was and was told that he was the same 'arrogant beggar' (*gadāe mutkabbir*) who was frequantly mentioned in court and had perhaps had no meal even that day. The Nawab tried to appease him by sending a khil'at and a thousand rupees which Mir refused to accept saying that he was not so poor and that the gifts should be sent to some mosque. He felt insulted that they had been sent through a poor messenger. They were sent again through Insha to whom he said, "If the Nawab is a king in his own dominion, I am a king in mine." But he ultimately accepted them through Insha's persuasion.

One can have respect for a man of independence and self-respect, but Mir quite often crossed the limit and became ill-

tempered and arrogant and himself confessed that he did. "I am known as ill-tempered in assemblies".

How ill-tempered you are, O Mir!
You are at loggerheads with both earth and sky.

Ill temper, restlessness, helplessness, debility,
How can people live with such manners?

He even said that he could not meet his second anywhere (*apni ānkhon men na āyā koi sāni us kā*). He wrote a whole masnavi, *Ajgar-nāmah*, in which he compared himself to a dragon, where other poets were worms:

How can these wretched worms approach my greatness?
The dragon has gone; let them now crawl over his path.

After a poet had recited some of his verses on a boat with him, expecting some encouragement, he got the rebuke, "Throw away your verses into the river". Another poet who expressed a desire to listen to his own verses got the reprimand, "It does not appear from your face that you can appreciate poetry. what is the use of casting pearls before you?" Still another poet got a sharper rebuke, "you should know that your poetry is fit to be recited in the presence of girls who are busy in the kitchen and not in my presence."

To Soz, the teacher of Nawab Asafuddaulah, he said, "Aren't you ashamed of reciting your verses before me?" To Jurat, he said, "you don't know the art of poetry. You should indulge only in versifying your kisses and caresses." Some one asked him who were the contemporary poets. He replied that there was Sauda and his own humble self and, after some hesitation, added 'and half in Mir Dard'. "What about Soz, the teacher of Nawab Asafuddaulah?" The reply came, "Let there be two and three quarters, then". Mohammad Yaqub has written a whole book, *Mir ke adbi ma'rke* (Delhi, 1971), narrating his tiffs with a dozen poets. Some critics doubt the veracity of Azad's statements, not only because some of Mir's books, like *Zikr-i-Mir* and *Nikatulsho'ra*, had not been published or, if published, had not come to his notice when he wrote *Ab-i-hayat*, and he depended mostly on tradition and hearsay but also because he was interested in literary flavour and spicy

narration even at the cost of historicity.

Mir was, no doubt, anti-social, arrogant and cynical, and would not easily appreciate merit in others and was often blunt and brusque. In fact he thought too highly of himself and though he lived in the full blaze of reputation, he never regarded it as adequate. This led him to his sullen complaints and boorish manner at times. In both Persian and Urdu, the poets arrogate to themselves the right of self-praise, but Mir beat them all. As mentioned above, he compared himself to a dragon (*ajgar*) and his contemporary poets to reptiles and vermin who were scotched to death by the poisonous breath of the dragon.

Quite often, he refused to meet V.I.P.'s, saying that they wanted to meet him for his poetry which they could not understand and would offer gifts which was against his self-respect to accept. This tug-of-war between his utter penury and his sensitive self-respect continued all his life and can be clearly traced to his early training under his father and "uncle". An additional factor was that he preferred the atmosphere of Delhi, though himself a pauper and the city desolate, to the luxuries of Lucknow and said so again and again. Here are some of his nostalgic verses.

Though I have lived in Lucknow for years,
I have been hankering to get away from this atmosphere.

Both my heart and Delhi are desolate,
Yet I find comfort in that deserted city.

The streets of Delhi were like the album of a painter;
Every figure there was itself a picture.

Desolate Delhi was far better than Lucknow;
O that I had not come here and died there!

For him, *dil* (heart) and *dilli* (Delhi) had become synonymous. In a *masnavi*, in his still unpublished Persian *diwan*, lying in the department of Urdu (Hyderabad), like Yaksh in Kalidas's *Meghdut* who sends a message to his beloved through the cloud, he enjoins the morning breeze going to Delhi to kiss every step there on his behalf, to greet every mosque, to remember him to every woe-begone, to give his love to every beauty and tell them that he can no longer write poetry in their separation.

I am grief-stricken with excess of sorrow,
Whoever regards me a poet is himself unpoetic.[7]

Upto the end, he wanted to leave Lucknow where "owls" dwelt.

As he grew, his ailments went on increasing and he gave up meeting even friends, of whom, of course, he had not many. His last days were extremely unhappy on account of illness and frustrations. He died in 1810 at the age of 88.

He left behind six Urdu *diwans*, one Persian *diwan*, some *masnavis, rubais, hijus, marsiyas, qasidahs, mukhammas, tarji'-band* and three volumes of prose as well, a stupendous achievement indeed for a man who was seldom at peace with life.

Mir had two sons and one daughter. To his elder son, Mohammad Askari, he enjoined, like his own father, during his last days that he had no material goods to leave behind for him and that his sole property was his poetry which had been the stay and honour of his life and which had raised him from a life of disgrace to one of sky-high reputation. All riches were trash when compared to it. Askari took the injunction to heart and, sensitive like his father, led a life of independence, asceticism and contentment. He did become a poet of a sort with Arsh as *takhallus*. Azad met him in Lucknow and found him an indifferent and careless sort of person who even refused to talk to him.[8] He had, however, a *diwan* to his credit and also had a few disciples.[9] Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi came across his *Vasokht* in Agra and has copied it out in his book.[10]

Mir's second son was Mir Faiz Ali, also a poet, with Faiz as *Takhallus*. His daughter adopted Begam as *takhallus*, but died in his life-time, soon after her marriage, leaving him miserable. He is said to have married a second time in his old age, under the ostensible plea that he liked to be called a "boy" by his in-laws.

2

Poet of Sorrow

After a study of Mir's life and temperament, it does not need a Freud to surmise what the content of his poetry was likely to be. He was mainly a poet of the love of sorrow and the sorrow of love. Sorrow, in fact, is the basis and source of all great poetry. It is said that lips begin to sing when they cannot kiss.[1] Elsewhere[2] I have gone into details and quoted, Shelley, Keats and Valmiki. Here I shall confine myself only to Urdu poets, Ghalib first of all.

The flame of poetry does not attain its full splendour,
Until the heart learns to bleed.

Again:

Writing poetry is in sooth, piercing the heart (*Sukhan guftan az haa jigar suftan ast*).

Iqbal said the same. It is only when the mind bleeds that the heart gets vision (*jigar khūn ho to chashm-i-dil men hotī hai nazar paidā*).[3] Again, poetry is nurtured by the bleeding of the heart (*khūn-i-jigar se tarbiyat pātī hai sukhanvarī*).[4]
Above all, should be Mir's own testimony in this context.

Don't call me a poet, O Mir;
I collected umpteen sorrows which became my *diwan*.

Mir, as we have seen, knew what sorrow was, if any body did. He had passed through the severest imaginable afflictions like Ghalib, another poet of sorrow, with whom he may be fitly compared. Whereas Ghalib was endowed with a limitless sense of humour with which he beguiled his grief, and even created fun out of it, Mir lacked this great quality and even

became insane for a time under extreme distress and depression. Ghalib felt that sorrow added to the greatness of poetry (*mī fazāyad dar sukhan ranje kih bar dil man rasad*). His poetry is not the poetry of despair and dejection, but of longing and wistfulness. Life never lost savour for him, but it became all the more charming, the more his privations increased. Though at times Ghalib gave vent to utter misery in life and letters, in poetry, he, more or less, controlled himself. Poetry, in fact, helped him to overcome his sorrow. He believed that a poet should himself suffer, but should not let his readers suffer. Thorns were for him, flowers for his readers. The poet should create beauty out of suffering. Learn from me, he said, to blossom by the wound of the heart and keep the fire within hidden.

Shigufian zi dāghe kih bar dil barad
nihufian sharāre kih dar dil bavad

What, he declared in a well-known verse, if beauty does not requite your love, it is beauty all the same. Why not enjoy its coquettish gait and winsome blandishments? What, if spring has no time to stay, it is spring all the same. Why not enjoy the splendour of the garden and the delight of the breeze?

Begging was his greatest misery, but he made fun of it in poetry.

Putting on the garb of a beggar, O Ghalib;
I enjoy the fun of generous patrons.

Again:

O Asad, I did not give up enjoying the fun of even begging;
When I started begging, I fell in love with my patrons.

He believed in making the best of sorrow. At times he regarded it as a blessing (*naghmahāe gham ko bhī ai dil ghanīmat jāniye*). He even believed that the rebuffs of the world were essential for spiritual development and gave a peep into reality. The buffets of the world were a school for improvement for the discerning (*ahil-i-bīnash ko hai tufān-i-havādas maktab*). Sorrow teaches wisdom (*bidānish gham amozgār man ast*). Even though hellish, sorrow is heaven (*bavad dozakh ammā bahisht man ast*). It helps to store the grain and scatter the chaff. (*Dānah zakhīrah me kunad kah babād me dihad*). The troubles of life act as

the whetstone for the sword (*sakhtie dahir shavad tegh marā sang fasān*). In fun he has even tiff with God. If You gave me so much grief, he complains, You should have given me many hearts to bear them. God gave him two eyes, but they too were not enough.

The blood in my heart is boiling;
I would have cried bitterly if I had many blood-shedding eyes.

Wine also helped Ghalib, which was forbidden to Mir. "What if griefs are abundant, wine is no less abundant". In a Persian verse, he pleaded before God as to what sin he had committed by drinking. He had given him limitless griefs and made wine their remedy. Ultimately, however, he found that wine brought him more and more misery, by adding to his debt.

People who regard wine and music as antidotes to grief
Are old-fashioned. Let them alone.

Ghalib had limitless ways of assuaging his grief. In a Persian verse he asks the Supreme Mind (*aql-i-kul*) why Providence has ordained eternal imprisonment for him and gets the comforting reply that he is not a kite or crow to be caught and set free, but a nightingale to be encaged for the sake of music.

At times, Ghalib intellectualises and universalises his grief:

What help was Khizar to Alexander; whom should one have for a guide?
Who is there who is not needy? Whose need should one satisfy?

There was no such comfort for Mir. He was not philosophically inclined like Ghalib. Whereas Ghalib was a man of 'felt thought', Mir was pure feeling and no thought. He was ever lachrymose and grumbling. He gushed out with emotion, raw and undiluted. He was soaked in sorrow and felt pleasure in luxuriating in pain.

O mentor, weeping is my second nature;
How long will you keep on washing my eyes?

What happens when I start crying?
The handkerchief remains drenched like the cloud, thick with rain.

Every place on earth was a spot for weeping,
I wept bitterly at every place like a cloud.

When he cried, he made whole gatherings weep;
Was he broken-hearted Mir or a mourner for the dead?

I didn't see more than a moment's happy time,
I wept like dew on the garden in the smiling morning.

My eyes are tearful and my hand, on my heart;
May God not reduce any one to much misery.

The fire of the heart can be extinguished by constant weeping,
A tear or two make it all the more ablaze.

My mornings became evenings in sorrow;
I have always shed tears of blood.

I have had no leisure called life,
And have lived in constant death.

There is no end to such verses in Mir. When Wordsworth defined poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings', he at once qualified it by adding that 'it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity'.[5] "Poetry", said T.S. Eliot, "is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion".[6] Herbert Read said that poetry "is the culture of the feeling, and not the cultivation of the feeling'.[7]

Mir's poetry of sorrow, I am afraid, is the cultivation of the feeling for its own sake. It is 'the spontaneous overflow', without tranquillity, as we have seen above. He had neither the sense of humour nor the luxury of wine to assuage his grief and his sensitive temperament coupled with his inordinate self-importance led him to utter misery at times.

I have dealt with the most prominent trends of Mir and Ghalib, but that does not mean that they did not write in each other's vein. A great poet passes through the whole gamut of emotions and at times contradicts himself. Both of them had experienced all kinds of harrowing situations and gave expression to them. I have given the contrast between their reactions according to their temperaments, otherwise there are quite a few of Ghalib's verses that could easily pass for Mir's; these,

for instance:

If Ghalib goes on weeping like this,
All these towns will be laid waste.

What to me if there exist both joy and sorrow?
God has given me a heart that is ever unhappy.

I stopped Ghalib from weeping or you would have seen
Even the sky being swept away like foam in the flood of his tears.

Mir, too, at times, exhibits Ghalib's self-control.

I was conscious of the etiquette of love,
Otherwise a flood of tears had appeared on my eye-lids.

Success or failure are by fate, O Mir;
I gave a good fight, however.

A scar is shining in the wilderness of my heart,
Like a solitary lamp in a deserted village.

Ghalib's was a more comprehensive mind, which passed through greater variety of moods. It appears to me sometimes that there is not a thing about sorrow, but Ghalib has versified it.

When we talk of Mir's constant mournings, let us not forget that there is a sense of universal values and deep understanding behind it. Agreed that he lacks that timber and toughness, that breadth of vision that we discover in Ghalib, that there is no anticipation of spring in his autumn. Agreed, further, that he lacks Ghalib's philosophic contemplation, but his sorrow is not all vain crying. It comes out of the fulness of the heart and goes down deep into the heart. His sincerity itself softens down the grief and causes sympathy rather than despair. If it were all despair, it would not be great poetry. The great end of poetry, said Keats,

The great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.[8]

All critics are agreed that the object of poetry is to delight and not to sadden.

Mir's poetry performs that function, besides its sincerity, through its melody. He excels in the art of combining meaning with music – that is the definition that T.S. Eliot gave to poetry. There is rhythm in his verses which is absent from Ghalib's, except in the simple poems that he wrote under Mir's influence. Mir sacrificed even grammatical constructions for the sake of melody. He realised, if any body did in Urdu poetry, that words were not only sense, but also sound—sound not only in themselves, but also in consonance with the neighbouring words so as to produce a tune. Sayyid Abdullah calls his verses songs (*gīt*) and devotes a whole chapter to them.[9] This melody helped to soften down Mir's poetry of sorrow. He himself was conscious of his excessive rhythm (*quiyāmat ravāni*). Ale Ahmad Sarur calls him the king of catharsis (*tanqiyah*),[10] particularly in his verses of shorter metre (*chhoti bahr*) which are the emblem of melody.

In longer metres, Mir takes recourse to repetition. Repetition is a very effective weapon in the hands of poets, particularly of soft sounds. It not only emphasises the point, but adds to the rhythm.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea.

How effectively the sense of loneliness is conveyed by monosyllabic repetition, separated from each other by a comma. More than that is the vast expanse of the sea, indicated by the two simple words 'wide, wide'. The situation of the lonely sailor when all his companions have fallen dead on a huge sea with nothing else around except himself could hardly be better expressed than in these lines from *The Ancient Mariner*. Wonderful rhythm of the lines can only be appreciated by proper reading. Mir uses this trick very often:

Un ne ro ro diyā kal hāth ko dhote dhote
Voh hāth so gayā hai sirhāne dhare dhare
bulbul pukāri dekh ke sāhib pare pare
daryā daryā rotā hun main sehrā sehrā vehshat hai
rat guzrī hai mujhe naza' men rote rote

Mir is also skilful in using the tricks of assonance and alliteration.

Tujh ko kyā banne bigarne se zamāne ke kih yān
khāk kin kin kī huī aur huā kyā kyā kuchh

Mark the alliteration of the sound *k* here and of *b* and *j* in the following verses:

main na ātā thā bāgh men us bin
mujh ko bulbul pukār lāī hai
jāe hai jī nijāt ke gham men
aesī jannat gaī jahnnam men

The sound k, though not very soft, appears to be favourite with Mir.

kuchh kahen to kahe hai yih na kaho
kyonkar azhār-i-mad'ā karye
sab kahne kī bāten hain kuchh bhī na kahā jātā
khāk kin kin kī huī aur huā kyā kyā kuchh

And here are the examples of his assonance:

kuch yār ke āne ki magar garm khabar hai.
tere bande ham hain khudā jāntā hai
khudā jāne tu ham ko kyā jāntā hai
mujhe jāne hai ap hī sā farebī
du'a ko bhī merī daghā jāntā hai

Mir's sincerity and universality of sentiment enlivened by the rhythm and melody of his style help to provide comfort in his poetry of sorrow. Quite often, his sorrow becomes the sorrow of humanity.

There is pain of all times in my *diwan*,
You should also study this collection of restlessness.

3

Poet of Love

Most love poetry in Urdu is academic and conventional and the conventions are almost wholly Petrarchan—the pain of separation and the sorrow of rejection, the unparallelled beauty of the beloved and her invariable cruelty, the abject adoration of the lover and his constant wailing, the transience of both love and beauty. The lover may sigh, cry or die; the beloved goes about with utter unconcern, if not with positive scorn. It is all frustration and no fulfilment. There is no individual experience or particular situation behind, since every Juliet is Cleopatra and every Rosalind, Desdemona; they have all common characteristics. In fact the beloveds are not Desdemonas, but Ganymedes.[1] This conventional male beloved, like most other conventions, is also borrowed from Persian poetry. In Iran, male beloved was not merely a convention, but a fact of life. The beloved in Arabic poetry was female. The Arabs learnt this cult of homosexuality from the Persians when they conquered Khurasan.

Persian poets like Daqiqi, Farakhi, Khaqani, Zahiri, Faryabi are disgustingly frank. The love of king Mahmud Ghaznavi for his Turkish slave, Ayaz, is well-known and has become an accepted imagery both in Persian and Urdu poetry. From the king, the custom travelled down to nobles and general society. In Persian poetry, it was not merely a matter of masculine gender, but the beloved is explicitly mentioned as a boy (*pisar*). Sa'adi protested against this vulgarity.

Zan khūb-o-khushkhūe ārāstah
chih mānad ba nādan nau khwāstah

What is a budding youth when compared to
A beautiful, sweet-tempered and well-dressed woman.

But even Sa'adi could not resist the temptation and ultimately came to take pride in having himself become famous for it.

The name of Sa'adi became well-known for homosexuality.
It is no evil, but commendable in religion.

The fifth chapter of *Gulistan* contains twenty tales of love, out of which fifteen are about homosexualists, including himself and other respectable people.

Sa'adi, however, excuses himself on the plea that he was forced to write indecent stories by a prince, on pain of death. Even well-known sufis like Hafiz, Jami and Sahabi could not escape the epidemic, at least not in poetry. This is Hafiz:

Here am I and the sorrow of the love of a boy,
His moon-like face has curved me like the crescent.

My beloved boy will kill me some day in play;
But it will not be a sin in divine law.

I am in love with an adolescent, beautiful youth;
I pray to God to grant me union.

No amount of sophisticated interpretation of such verses as indicative of divine love, as some of his apologists have given, can absolve him.

The evil travelled from Iran to India along with the Persians both in life and poetry. Even Amir Khusrau, well-known for his holiness, wrote:

If Khizr had access to the lips of this boy, he would break his fast,
Since *ab-i-hayat* is hidden under those lips.

During the time of Jahangir, Sarmad Shahid, the well-known apostle whose tomb is situated near Jama Masjid in Delhi, migrated to India and fell in love with a boy named Abbi Chand.

I don't know if under the dome of the sky,
Abbi Chand is my God or some one else.

I have gone into these details, since Mir himself fell victim to the malady. Some of even his most ardent admirers, who read him in selection, do not know how voluminous his poetry is. He left six *diwans* in Urdu, containing more than twenty thousand

verses (Ghalib's current *diwan* contains a thousand and a half). Some critics have selected only seventy-two arrows (*nishtar*) in the form of verses that can be called good, but that is too hard. In his love of boys, he is, at times, vulgar; he mentions a score of them—*attar ka launda, qazi ka launda, sapahi zadah, Mughal bachchah* and the rest. No wonder that Azurda said about his poetry that his high is very high and his low is very low (*pastash agarchih andak past ast, ammā bulandash bisyār buland*). It is sometimes said that, in his case, there was a dissociation of personality, that there were two Mirs, one high, the other low, one godly and ascetic and the other, jolly and boisterous. We shall have occasion to talk about it when we pass on from his *ghazals* to his *masnavis*. Here are some of his verses about boys though the word *boy* does not convey the evocative sense of *launda*.

The fairy-born boy is the agony of life;
He is the boisterous talk of the young and the old.

How simple of Mir to get medicine from the same physician boy
Who has been the cause of his illness.

The boys of Delhi have conquered my heart since long;
How can one get back what has been eaten up?

The boys of Delhi with oblique caps
Have been the cause of lovers' deaths.

It may be said in extenuation that, by and large, Urdu poets use the masculine gender as a mere convention, born of the custom of *purdah* and strict segregation of sexes in a society, where heterosexual love was forbidden and severely punished, though even as a convention it mars the genuineness of poetry. It deprives the beloved of individuality and poetry, of experience.

The common conventional beloved of Urdu poets is of course entrancingly beautiful and delicate. She cannot carry the weight of *henna*, or stand the strain of being photographed or bear the touch of the breeze. Her waist has vanished out of existence. If it still exists, like Zauq's beloved's, it bends down with the weight of delicacy itself. Ghalib's beloved is still more delicate; her feet

begin to hurt even when she visits some one in a dream, and so on.

Like the beloved, the lover of Urdu poets is conventional too, since there is no actual lover-beloved relationship. It is all a game transplanted wholesale from Iran to India and our poets go on playing it without involving their hearts. It is surprising how this hot-house poetry has been and, I am afraid, still is flourishing in extremely different and uncongenial environments without any reality or experience behind it. There is no such other example in literary history.

It is lucky that Mir, on the whole, did not fall a prey to these conventions. Mir knew what love was, and his love was fully requited, though not fulfilled. His love was genuine and passionate which pursued him all his life and is said to have been one of the causes of insanity. He knew love with all its intensity and disappointment, but not with its joy and rapture. There is both sincerity and intensity in his love poetry that we miss in most Urdu poets. From his poetry, we gather that his beloved was a consistent character, respectable, courteous, modest though, out of reach. Mir does not indulge in conventional trappings like gait, tresses, henna etc. She is no *saqi* and holds no assemblies and keeps no watchmen. She is not an Iranian woman of Omar Khayyam days, but an Indian woman of flesh and blood whom he had met and desired.

Love was in Mir's blood. He got it from his father, as we have seen, though he soon got away from the wholly spiritual conception, when he fell in love. His conception thereafter became physical, one of sex and desire. His love poetry has no philosophy about it, but it has a great warmth and intensity. He is wholly subjective and romantic. He pours out the lava of his emotions red-hot. It burns, but it does not brighten. It is all *nār* (fire) and no *nūr* (light). There is no metaphysics about it but its spontaneous overflow sweeps one off one's feet.

Mir talks of frustration and not fulfilment, not because it was in the air, but because he was actually frustrated. As elsewhere, his love poetry too is based on his personal experience. Nobody who had not himself gone through the torture could write like this, for instance.

Mad, dishonoured, broken-hearted, wretched;
What will not people call me in love?

You wake up suddenly, mentioning her name;
Are you all right, O Mir or have you seen a dream?

Acceptance has not the charm of refusal;
Her 'no' intensifies desire.

I am in silent wonder at your beauty;
Why are you? What has struck you dumb?

What should I do? I lower my gaze and she is angry.
If I gaze at her, she blushes and feels shy.

I am no doubt guilty of loving you;
Aren't you also guilty of being so lovely?

Such pride in the symmetry of your form!
God spoiled you by making you so beautiful.

That is the general trend of Mir's love—abandon, surrender, submission, self-pity, even crying. But a lover like Mir must have had varied moods. At times, he displays Ghalib's self-respect, even self-consciousness.

When our relations were happy, I put up with bluntness;
Why should I do that now when they are not?

I went away in arrogance, assuming indifference;
I have no heart to put up with coquetry.

I shall never step in your street again;
I am not so down and woe-begone.

Here is Ghalibian mood of revenge, though without threats.

O that you should also come across someone unresponsive
like yourself;
My only object is revenge.

None has sympathy for my condition;
May God deal with you likewise, O idol!

Mir also exhibits control and culture. In fact culture and decency were in Mir's blood, in his pre-Lucknow days at least. Love itself taught him etiquette (*ishq bin yeh adab nahīn ātā*). He did not believe in indecent, disgraceful advances. He was even careful not to betray his love, more for the sake of the beloved

than for himself. Quite often he blamed himself.

I controlled myself out of regard for love;
Otherwise profuse tears had appeared on my eye-lids.

Not to talk of writhing under the sword of cruelty,
I could not even move my head out of obeisance to love.

I am not so heartless as to grumble against luck;
God forbid that I should have a grievance against you.

Mir could not wait for her to keep her promise;
It was not she, but life that played him false.

We have lived together for years like this,
She would lift the sword to strike and I would bow my neck.

It appears to me that Mir is the greatest love poet in Urdu, as Browning is in English. Russel calls him 'one of the great love poets in world literature',[2] and with Khurshidul Islam, has devoted about a hundred and fifty pages to his conception of love and lover. Browning achieved his love by eloping with his beloved and no wonder that he became an irrepressible optimist. Mir's situation was hopeless. He loved a married woman and in a society where extra-marital love was a crime and elopement unthinkable. As it was, it became an unpardonable scandal which pursued him all his life, much to his misery and even temporary insanity, and made him a rather maudlin pessimist. Browning's love is all-inclusive; there is not a phase of it which he has left untouched. Mir is mainly confined to failure and frustration, though his comprehensiveness in it is surprising. He did talk of the happy days that he had seen.

We pass the night naked in each other's arm;
Strange that during the day she veils her face shyly from me!

What can I offer you today that you have consented,
Except that I should draw you to embrace and love?

But those happy days have become a thing of the past.

Those days are gone when she, the idol of the world,
Used to run and embrace me when I was sad.

How happy were the days and nights when we were together;
They are not the same now during our separation.

A time comes when he humbly submits to his beloved and even stops believing her even when she assures him of her love.

What can I do if she does not accept my service in humility,
Except stand and wait to serve her every day?

She does say today that she loves me,
But who can trust a lovely woman's word?

He even goes to the length of warning his readers against love.

Fall into the chains of slavery and die in prison,
But do not fall into the snares of love.

Do not step into the desert of love;
Even Khizar will turn back from it.

Would that people did not fall in love,
For it spares neither the lover nor beloved.

And so on for umpteen verses. This is the general trend of his love in his ghazals.

Where has vanished that inspiring conception of love that he got from his father—the love that upholds and sustains the universe? In his *masnavis*, however, except in the autobiographical ones, Mir becomes more optimistic, since they are objective, romantic tales and not his personal, subjective experience. There it is love at first sight which gets matured, though it has illogical, supernatural end. At places, he re-echoes his father's conception.

Browning was a philosophic poet and gave a grand and inspiring conception of love. He believed that love was immortal and could conquer even all-conquering death. In *Any Wife to Any Husband*, he says:

Therefore she is immortally my bride,
Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

Mir never achieved such philosophical heights; he was a subjective poet and poured out his emotions, unalloyed and unintellectualised. That of course does not mean that his outpourings were all tearful. They did come from the heart and went straight to the heart, but their variety as well as their universality is startling. Under the cover of his own frustrated love,

he gave its universal experience in all its phases:

Don't ask me what forms my sad love has assumed;
From blood, joy, pain, it has become sorrow.

The depth of the heart is too soft and mysterious to be expressed;
Love has only two phases, but is spread over extensively.

Under the garb of his personal love, he said, he had conveyed other secrets.

The discerning never worship externals,
Deeper meaning is hidden in my love of idols.

He also talked of love in a cosmic sense, as an experience permanent and universal.

He who has tasted the wine of love for a night
Remains intoxicated till the day of Judgment.

People who live in the streets of their beloveds,
Never care to look even at Paradise.

In love, there is no room for being sensitive;
Toil with all your heart in love, like Farhad.

4

Poet of Sufism

We have talked so far of Mir's love and sorrow, the two eternal themes of Urdu poetry, but Mir was not confined to them. His sufism too, which he had imbibed in his childhood under the inspiring influence of his father and "uncle", remained firm in his subconscious being and tinged his whole life and poetry. That was perhaps the cause of his split personality and contradictory behaviour. Pushed to the extreme, it became the basis of his sensitive self-respect and independence, even his egotism and ambition or was it the other way about? With him, sufism was genuine and not merely for verses as for most Persian and Urdu poets (*tasavvuf barae sh'er guftan khūb ast*). He was firmly convinced of the Unity of Existence, predestination and the transitoriness of life. We have already quoted his verses about godly love, which is the basis of sufism, verses like these for instance,

Love is the cause as well as the cause-maker;
Love performs unique actions;
No body is born without love;
No place is devoid of love;
Love is pervading this whole machine;
It is all in all in the universe.

His sufism goes further:

Where has self-oblivision taken me?
I am waiting for myself, since long.

Seeing Him, I was myself lost, O Mir;
Observe this kind of search!

There are two alternatives; either the world is reflection
Or mirror of that self-manifesting Beloved.

Though even otherwise the world was the manifestation of the Beloved,
Yet when I closed my eyes, I saw strange visions.

This garden is not a dwelling place for long:
It is like the fragrance of a flower or the warbling of a nightingale.

Your purpose could not be served through men, O Mir;
Now depend on the Almighty for fulfilment of your desires.

You are the garden, the spring, the colour and fragrance of flowers;
The discerning know that they are all Your manifestations.

The nail of will-power could not untie the knot of the heart;
It will get loosened by the hand of the Almighty.

He is pervading the garden of this universe;
He has converted every flower into a curtain.

Our existence is a curtain in between;
There is no screen, excepting ourselves.

The discerning never worship externals;
Deeper meaning is hidden in my love of idols.

There is no end to such verses in Mir. With Sufism, he combined ethics and wrote umpteen verses on the moral life of man and the evanescence of the world.

This leisure which is called life
Is just a little waiting.

The ephemeral world is only a path of the storms of troubles;
Don't think of any construction in its transience.

The earth never gets fertile;
Why are you sowing the seeds of desire in your heart?

Don't live like a bud in this world;
Live with a face like a flower in blossom.

Your life may be happy or sad;
Do something to be remembered by.

What fun reaching Ka'ba, O Shaikh?
Try to reach some one's heart.

Make your principle not to injure any one:
What use building Ka'ba after hurting people?

Tie up your luggage from this world;
It is not destination, but mere journey.

Desire incarnate has made us human;
Devoid of desire, we would have been God.

It will not be out of place to compare Mir with Khwaja Mir Dard (1719-1785), the third of the trio (the other two being Mir and Sauda) who raised the dignity of Urdu poetry both by theory and practice. He knew the real nature of poetry more than any of his predecessors or contemporaries. He wrote in *'Ilm-ul-Kitab.*

> My poems are not the result of professionalism or effort. I have never written poetry without a spontaneous inner urge, never written it by a deliberate effort or out of an unwilling heart. I have never satirised or praised any one. Nor have I even written by way of compliance with a reward or in response to a challenge.[1]

This was refreshing in an age when poetry was all effort and seldom a matter of inner urge and when both satire (*hiju*) and panegyric (*qasidah*) were very much in fashion. Urdu poets, at the time, were following Arabic, and more particularly Persian, canons of criticism which suffered from laying undue emphasis on technique and rhetoric, on style rather than on subject-matter, on grammatical and structural niceties rather than on imagery and rhythm. Qadamah, the well-known Arabic critic, went to the length of saying:

> A verse is a rhymed and rhythmic composition which is not based on meaning. The poet has complete liberty of theme. His only job is to raise it to great heights by beautifying expression, be the subject high or low. Its vulgarity or indecency does not kill the merit of poetry.[2]

He illustrated it by giving the example of the carpenter who can make good furniture out of any kind of timber or the goldsmith who can make beautiful ornaments out of any kind of metal. One is not sure if a good carpenter or goldsmith will agree to this but, for one thing, how far was it fair for Qadmah to compare poetry with carpentry or smithy and, for another, the emphasis is revealing. Urdu poets took Qadamah rather seriously and, before the time of Nazir, Mir and Mir Dard, were creating ornaments which, though dazzling to the sight, lost their glitter with time.

Nizami Aruzi Samarkandi, a Persian critic, had this to say about poetry:

> Poetry is that art of which the poet arranges the imaginary topics in such a way that great things become small and small great; virtue becomes vice and vice, virtue and with the help of *iham* (ambiguity) excites the passions of anger and sex so much so that this *iham* creates freshness and attraction in the mind.[3]

This view of the predominance of *iham* in poetry was prevalent in Urdu poetry, when the Khwaja decried deliberate efforts and emphasised the spontaneous urge. One can imagine how hard he, along with Khan Arzoo, Mir and Sauda, must have fought both in theory and practice to dethrone the universal supremacy of *iham* in Urdu poetry.

To come to the point in question, we know that Mir Dar was out and out a mystic both in life and poetry and far above either sarcasm or flattery. He was sincere when he said that he had never satirised or praised any one. Like Mir, he got his sufism from his father, a godly man and a poet of Persian, who enjoyed great reverence with his followers. Dard himself was a soldier by profession, but gave it up at the age of twenty-eight at the behest of his father and became a recluse. Next year, he replaced his father as *Sajjadah Nashin* (leader at prayer) and inherited all his honour and reverence.

When the rest of the people, including almost all poets, were leaving Delhi on account of constant invasions and disturbances, he stuck on to his post. This of course does not mean that he did not feel the desolation of Delhi acutely. It only means that he did not believe in luxuriating in pain like Mir, but, like a

real mystic, had control over his temper. Mir got satisfaction out of depression, Dard out of forbearance. Besides sufism, his gift of music and the reverence of his followers kept up his spirits. People big and small flocked to him to pay homage and he treated them with equal regard.

Azad has stated that once Emperor Shah Alam expressed a desire to come and meet him, but he did not agree. Every month, a meeting of the sufis took place at his house. Shah Alam turned up without notice. His foot was aching and hence he spread it out. Khwaja remarked that it was against etiquette and when the Emperor told him the reason, he said that, in that case, he need not have come.

He wrote quite a few books on Sufism in Persian and took to writing poetry as a mere hobby. He regarded it as 'not one of those arts which one could follow as a profession and feel proud of'. He was particularly hard on satire as well as panegyric which both Mir and Sauda had made fashionable. He also criticised the prevalent love poetry.

> This kind of wordly love (*majāzi*) does not lead to the apprehension of reality. The only right type of worldly love is the love of one's spiritual guide which leads one to God.[4]

No wonder that though he could not suppress himself, his output was not voluminous like Mir's and mostly mystical. But a great and sound poet that he was, he could not keep out physical love from his poetry altogether. His love poetry is, on the whole, unconventional. He himself said: "I have no dealings with beautiful women, but I have enjoyed myself whole-heartedly in the company of friends."[5]

But he did write verses about beautiful women, unless one interprets all his love poetry as referring to divine love, as some of his admirers have tried to do, without much success. How can one ignore such verses, for instance, as

When I said that her kiss was like sugar,
She replied that sugar could not be repeated.

It is true that I am thinking of her day and night.
But where are those nights when she was in my arms?

Now that evening has fallen,
Come soon, since the night is passing.

When her eyes meet mine,
They act like daggers that pierce.

There is, however, no doubt that Dard's real contribution lies in the field of mystic poetry more than any one else's.
He knew it when he said:

The garden of mysticism will flourish on this soil,
Since I have sown its seed in my verses.

Its real worth lies not in its being mystic poetry, but in its being the poetry of a real mystic, all whose thought was permeated with sufism. It is not a matter of fashion, but is completely genuine and the expression of the poet's soul. He thought differently from an ordinary poet or one can say that his life was bigger than his poetry and gave an indelible impress to it. For him, mysticism was not a philosophy of life, but life itself, not a mere doctrine but actual practice. He had imbibed thoroughly the principles of forbearance, resignation, contentment, pre-destination, faith, right living etc. He did not grumble or complain either in life or in poetry like Mir. He did regard human life as a kind of imprisonment and separation from the Eternal Being, but he took it as it was and there was the end of it. He did come across contradictions and disappointments in life, but did not mourn over them. All his poetry is characterised by this control and contentment. It is not full of self-pity morbidity or arrogance, neither does it betray bad taste or vulgarity:

What is the use of creating a roar, O Dard?
Suppress in your mind whatever rises in it.

The temper of the world did not become even and temperate,
But I absorbed in myself the heat and the cold of the time.

When he cannot understand the problems of the world, he is not confused, but interrogates. His poetry is full of interrogations.

Do you know, O Dard, where all these people
Have come from and are going?

God alone knows where, O sky, you have obliterated
All the famous persons like phoenix.

What is this mystery, O God, that intellect
Cannot go beyond you, however much it may run?

Where did the sight of my heart fall, O Dard?
Wherever I see, He alone is visible.

Mir is interrogative too. All great poetry is characterised by 'obstinate questionings'. Poetry solves no problems like philosophy. For poetry the world is not absolute and admits of no absolute solutions. Its world is relative, depending on moods and situations. The same destiny that shapes our ends in one situation may end our shapes in another.

All a poet can do is not to solve problems, but to ask questions and his questions are much more than mere questions. When Ghalib asks:

If nothing exists in the world but You;
What then is all this fuss about, O God?

Is it a simple question? Doesn't it open out a whole vista of philosophic wonder that has faced all sufis of all times. Doesn't it make us think for long? Like Ghalib and Dard, Mir also asked frequent questions, which contradicts the common view that he was merely a poet of sentiment. He was not philosophic like Ghalib and Iqbal, but he did observe deeply and asked searching questions which indicated his wonderment at what he saw about him.

Hands and armpits rise with zeal out of every rise and fall:
Whose secret is hidden in the ocean, O God, that they are happy?

Every wave rises like an armpit;
Whom does the river desire to kiss and embrace?

Mir is most struck by the study of nature which very often presents him with beauties and mysteries to gaze at and wonder.

Flowers, colour and spring are curtains
In every manifestation, He is hidden.

Look at every part of the garden minutely;
The flower is born when thousand shapes are destroyed.

More than even nature is the beauty as well the as transitoriness of this world:

This world is a picture gallery of beautiful faces;
What can the discerning say? They are silent with wonderment.

You are seeing the charm of this assembly;
With what wonder are people attracted by it!

What a charming place this world is, O comrade!
Those who came for a couple of days could not leave it for years.

What is all this world about? Wherefrom have we come and where are we going? These are eternal questions which no philosopher has been able to solve and which most poets have looked at with awe and wonder.

What is this marching of the colour and fragrance and the morning breeze?
What is all this rush in the garden?

They have come into existence from non-existence and yet are restless;
Where do these passengers intend to go now?

What is this life that you are leading, O Mir?
One has to be ready for death all the time.

For heaven, we are always in fear of death;
Let such heaven go to hell.

With all this transitoriness of life and constant fear of death, Mir had a grand conception of the dignity of man. He was perhaps the first to have it among Urdu poets. After him, Ghalib and Iqbal elaborated on the idea and added to that dignity. Mir said:

Though made of dust, we are what we are;
We are more powerful than fate.

Though man lives on the earth,
His imagination is sky-high.

All our humility is towards ourselves;
We regard this handful of dust worthy of worship.

He regarded man superior to angels

How can an angel be compared with man?
The glory of man is very high indeed!

I concede that the mentor is an angel,
But it is very difficult to be a man.

Both Ghalib and Iqbal said the same after him.

Ghalib: We are unjustly condemned on the testimony of angels;
Was there a man too recording our deeds?

Iqbal: And then, this man whose eye is always directed beyond the sky;
And who is purer in intention than the angels.[6]

Mir believed that man was the centre of the universe and was the main object for whom it was created.

The world is resplendent with the existence of man;
It was otherwise a mirror not worth looking at.

Ghalib and Iqbal thought the same:

Ghalib: There is no object of the creation of the world, except man;
The seven skies are revolving like a pair of compasses round us as centre.

Iqbal: All this world that I see about me
Is a circle of the pair of compasses around me, as centre.[7]

Mir, the mystic, went to the length of saying that man was God:

Don't refuse to bow before Adam, O satan;
Perhaps there may be God behind that curtain.

Such a man, Mir believed, was created with great difficulty.

Don't take us to be cheap; the sky revolves for years,
To create man out of the veil of existence

Ghalib said the same:

The turmoil and commotion of the universe is due to us;
Out of the curtain of the earth, Rusurrection blossoms, that man he born.

Here is Iqbal:

Narcissus mourns for its non-appreciation for thousands of years;
A seer is born in the garden with great difficulty.[8]

Let us now turn to Dard's mystic poetry, which is quite genuine and written with a spontaneous urge:

Alas for my ignorance that I realised only at the time of my death
That what I saw was mere dream and what I heard was mere fiction.

After coming into the world, I looked here and there;
You alone were visible wherever I saw.

How can the earth and the sky enclose Your vastness?
It is my heart alone that can contain it.

Both the visible and the invisible are Your manifestations;
You are manifest here as well as there.

You could not understand the secret of the joy and the sorrow of the world,
Why does the morning smile and in whose memory the dew sheds tears.

This is not your job, messenger, go your way:
His messages cannot be brought out except by the heart.

Nothing exists except You in both the worlds;
We exist only in our whim.

Whether it was a school, a church, Ka'ba or temple,
We were all guests; You alone were the master of the house.

Dard's poetry, unlike Mir's, is of an even level, neither high, nor low. It does not scale Mir's height, neither does it lick Mir's dust. We are of course concerned with the highest. Here is Dard:

When in front of your beauty, in the assembly,
I looked at the taper, it had no light.

Compare it with Mir's verse on the same theme:

Mir did see that she came into the assembly;
But after that, the lamps lost their light.

Mir creates a dramatic situation by making the beloved enter the room and it is not one, but the whole chandelier that is eclipsed.

Like Mir, Dard also felt the weakness of ghazal as a form of poetry in as much as it was a collection of scattered thoughts and feelings, "A continued poem", he said, "has a peculiar flavour and refreshes the heart."[9] His style, like Mir's, is simple, rhythmic and flowing. Quite a few critics think that their ghazals are indistinguishable from each other. Both have the same sincerity and intensity of content and simplicity and rhythm of style At times, Dard also has Mir's pathos.

My breast and heart were overpowered by longings;
My heart got crushed by the crowd of despairs.

What should we desire from you, O sky?
The heart, the sea of desires, is no more.

My heart was also a drop of blood, O Dard;
It must have fallen somewhere with tears.

Your tears do not stop falling in a gush;
It appears you have fallen in love, O Dard.

Mir's variety of topics is startling. He writes about religion, ethics, love, sorrow, dignity of man, transitoriness of life, non-recognition of merit, taunts on the mentor, wine and cellar, Ka'bah and temple. It appears to me that there is not a human problem which Mir has not touched.

Mir was the first poet to expand the nature of the ghazal and free it from the bonds of convention both with regard to the

style and the subject-matter. In fact, he paved the way for Ghalib and Iqbal who made it further elastic to include all kinds of themes. He is Mir's variety.

What sort of people are they who like to be worshippers?
I shall feel ashamed of being even God.

You slander us unjustly by calling us free, O God:
You do whatever you like and blame us for nothing.

Who asks you to do this or that?
You should only create room for yourself in people's hearts.

With one act of wilfulness you have estranged people
Whom heaven had created by sifting the whole earth.

O that I had the means
To turn all wasteland into fertility!

If you want to go on a pilgrimage, take the Shaikh along:
You will need a donkey with you to reach Ka'aba.

Time will not wait; death overtakes too soon:
Do whatever you have to do quickly.

5

Mir and Sauda

It will not be out of place to compare Mir with Sauda, his great contemporary. It has been said above that they, along with Mir Dard and Khan Arzoo were the first to establish the prestige of Urdu poetry. Before them, for a whole generation, there was no great poet competent enough to push it up. *Iham* (ambiguity-cum-paradox) held the field and gave it a wrong direction. They took Urdu out of its experimental stage and raised it to a high standard, so that it could even stand comparison with Persian.

Born nine years earlier than Mir in 1713, to a prosperous merchant of Kabul who had come to India for trade, he squandered his inheritance in boyhood in enjoyment with friends, was reduced to penury and had to seek the help of patrons like Mir. Like Mir, he early came under the influence of Khan Arzoo, who advised him to shift from Persian, almost his ancestral language, to Urdū—a timely advice which proved lucky both for himself and for Urdu poetry.

Like Mir, he gained a great reputation for his poetry and found easy patrons. For a time he lived with Miharban Khan and Basant Khan to whom he wrote *qasidahs*, but they both died and life became insupportable in the disrupted and desolate atmosphere of Delhi. In 1754, he left for Farukhabad and lived there for seventeen years in the service of the diwan of the Nawab. Then he left for Faizabad on the invitation of Nawab Shujauddaulah, who had a high regard for him, but who died in 1774. Sauda then accompanied Nawab Asafuddaulah who shifted his capital from Faizabad to Lucknow and who bestowed on him the title of *Mulkul sho'ra* and a monthly grant of Rs. 500. Mir was invited eight years later when Sauda

had died and received a stipened of Rs. 300, as we have seen. Like Mir, Sauda was not happy in Lucknow, in spite of liberal patronage, and always nostalgically yearned for Delhi.

The resemblance between them ends here and the contrast begins. Unlike Mir, Sauda was a man of hearty and cheerful temperament, fond of the fun of life, and not a man of introspective gloom and cynical egotism. He was bursting with the zest and joy of life and lived in a world of poetic exaggeration. His innate irrepressible cheer and joviality was, however, inconsistently tinged with irritable religiosity. When it came to clashes, he could well be quits with anybody and not sulk like Mir or confine himself indoors. He did not brood over offences, but retaliated even with violence and abuse. Early in life, he had a tiff with King Shah Alam who used to send him poems for correction. Once he asked Sauda as to how many poems he could produce in a day. Sauda replied that he could produce a few verses when he felt inspired. Shah Alam retorted that he wrote three or four poems even in a lavatory. Sauda was not the man to be dominated and remarked, "Therefore they smell of it." When the King sent for him again for the correction of his verses and even offered him the title of *Mulk-ul-Sho'ra*, Sauda refused to go, saying that his poetry would make him *Mulk-ul-Sho'ra* and not the king's generosity. On the whole, however, his manners were courtly and he had an innate genius for writing *qasidahs*. He had the capacity of making friends and keeping them, unlike Mir who quarrelled with every body including his patrons, even though they were extremely kind and generous to him. Mir himself said in a verse that he was at loggerheads with both earth and sky. Sauda did not suffer from Mir's inordinate vanity and arrogance. The difference between them was well-illustrated in Amir Minai's verse.

Both Sauda and Mir are masters of their art, O Amir;
The difference between them is that between Ha (*vāh*) and Oh! (*āh*)!

No wonder, therefore, that, as poets, they stand as mighty opposites. Mir, as we have seen, discarded heavy Persian vocabulary and constructions that could not be assimilated in Urdu and used the language of the common people. Sauda stood for Persian ideals and tried to import them into Urdu. Not that he

shunned Hindi words; in fact he used quite a few like *parbat rāī, jag, kanayā, nain, mahant, nichant, muygān ne tere piyāre Arjan kā tīr mārā* and the rest, but he could not assimilate them imperceptibly like Mir.

In content too, Mir stood for realism and simplicity, for whatever he saw and experienced without any glossing over it, while Sauda did not believe in the actual and wanted to give it a fanciful interpretation. He did not like to describe things as they were, but always gave an elaborate colouring to them. He even indulged in extravagant exaggeration and hyperbole which was the common weakness of Urdu poets of the time and which Mir scrupulously shunned. Here are some of Sauda's hyperboles.

Sleep has disappeared even from the sky;
The moon keeps her eyes wide open.

The earth has grown so fertile that no wonder
That flowers should grow on the horns of the cow supporting the earth.

If the bubbles were to break by your intoxicating glance,
Then even plain water would taste like wine.

Sauda was fond of elaborating the form, using difficult rhymes and high-sounding words. His technical skill was remarkable. He was incapable of soft and tender emotions and simple and melodious language. He was too hearty, too boisterous, too masculine for the plaintiveness required for the ghazal. He did not have Mir's experience of love and his trenchancy for undue and fanciful exaggerations made his love poetry savourless. His *qasidahs*, however, which need decorative elaboration are masterpieces and can stand comparison even with the best of their kind in Persian, with Anwari's or Khaqani's. He wrote a large number of *qasidahs*, longer and more difficult than the Persian, and gave them new themes—the condition of the world, the description of nations, the complaint against surroundings, social evils, corrupt authorities, inefficient army, general degradation etc. They are forceful, replete with fresh similes and metaphors, brilliance of language and flight of imagination. He was the master of language and was never at a loss for words. He is known for appropriate vocabulary and technical virtuo-

sity. His variety of topics is surprising.

My pen asks which topics should I make the subjects of poetry,
Themes rush to me like clouds.

This difference between them was not merely due to their temperaments, but also to the vocabulary they were masters of. A *Qasidah* needs exalted, decorative style and smart constructions along with exalted themes, whereas *ghazal*, dealing mainly with love, needs soft and delicate conversational vocabulary, tenderness of sentiment and gentle and sweet content. Very often, the vocabulary determines the kind of poetry that a poet will excel in. Different words are needed for lyrical and for epic poetry, for tenderness and for anger. In great poetry, the very sound and rhythm of language conveys the sense. "The votary of poetry," said Phosphor Mallam, "reads it with his ear and tongue as well as with his eyes and brain."[1] The sound of words helps to create what is called "atmosphere" about a poem. It evokes appropriate emotion. The aptest illustration I can think of at the moment is the contrast between Tennyson's *Ulysses* and *Lotus Eaters*, between the quick heats of the former denoting zeal and activity and the slow lingering long-drawn-out movement of the latter denoting lethargy and sluggishness, between

To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield,
and
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

If you read the two poems with proper intonation to a critically sensitive reader who does not know English, he will immediately appreciate what they are about, though he does not grasp the sense. Shibli writes that Sa'adi had no aptitude for war poetry nor Firdausi, for love poetry. That, he asserts, apart from their temperaments, was due to the vocabulary they specialised in.[2]

Sauda not only laid the foundation of satire (*hiju*) but raised it to the level of great art. His satires are both personal and social and are full of fun and laughter. His sense of fun stuck to him till old age of which his satires are a glaring witness. The fact was that whenever he was annoyed with anyone, he found

catharsis in immediate satire on the spot. His servant always carried writing material with him for the use of his master who spared no one and knew no limit to revengeful tirade. His satires have, as their theme, the evils of contemporary life, the destruction of Delhi, the miseries of the people, the tyrannies of the rulers and general intellectual degeneration etc. They illustrate how the funniest humour can be inter-mixed with the deepest pathos.

A word need be added here about the poetical contests (*musha'aras*) which were much in fashion in those days. They were not like the present ones which gather thousands of the fit and the unfit as the audience. They were confined mostly to the poets themselves and learned scholars. Khan Arzoo, Mir, Sauda and Mir Dard often met in healthy rivalry which led to the improvement of both language and poetry. After the musha'-arahs, they would sit together and weed out outmoded words and constructions and import fresh vocabulary and expressions. They rooted out all low and rural expressions and made the language polished and civilised, so to say, and borrowed a great deal from Persian, but only that which could rhythmically be absorbed in Urdu. Their predecessors had mostly been merely ghazal writers. They added *qasidah*, *masnavi*, *hiju*, *vasokht* and the rest. The very fact that such symposia were held and enjoyed indicates high standard of culture. So long as they remained good-humoured banter of rivalry, they conduced to the growth and development of the language. In Urdu poetry, there has been poetic rivalry between Vali and Nasir Ali, Mus-hafi and Insha, Insha and Jurat, Nasikh and Atish, Anis and Dabir, as also between Mir and Sauda. In a comparatively healthier form it continued to the time of Zauq and Ghalib, perhaps due to the influence of the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who guided them. Azad has given delightful picture of these rivalries in *Ab-i-hayat* and says what a wonderful place Lucknow must have been with all its sins and debaucheries.

There is no denying the fact that Urdu poetry has mostly been nourished on these contests. At times, however, they degenerated into violence and vulgarity and bred hatred, as in the case of Mus-hafi and Insha whose disciples always entered the fray and went to the extreme length of vituperation. The rivalry between the disciples of Dabir (*Dabirye*) and of Anis

(*Anisye*) became so spirited that it became almost impossible for their heroes to recite their verses in the same gatherings. The discussion between the respective merits of their poetry became a favourite pastime.

Azad also narrates that Sauda once found mistakes in Mirza Fakhir's corrections of some Persian poems, which the latter's disciples resented. They took him out with a dagger in a street to insult him when luckily Nawab Sa'adat Ali Khan appeared and saved him. Nawab Asafuddaulah then interfered, but Sauda showed generosity and forgiveness, though satirical references between them continued. Sauda's are known; Fakhir's have been forgotten.

The limit reached when, in one such contest, Mahshar, the disciple of Khwaja Mir Dard, killed Muhlat, the disciple of Jurat, which the relations of the latter avenged by killing the former.

Mir and Sauda, being diametrically opposed in temperaments, often came in clash. They started with having a high opinion of each other. Mir praised Sauda in *Nikat-ul-sho'ra* for his warmth and cheerfulness and for his poetry. In verse, he said:

One or two only excel in delicious poetry,
These are the days of Mir and Mirza.

Why should Urdu poetry not become lifeless and insignificant?

Mir has become mad and Sauda intoxicated.

Sauda said about Mir:
Revise your ghazal again and again, O Sauda;
You have to compete with a master like Mir.

But their temperaments did not allow them to remain friendly and they soon began to attack each other rather violently. It is not definitely known who set the ball rolling, though almost all are agreed that it must have been Mir, being more egoistic and ill-tempered and lacking a sense of humour. Both wanted to gain the upper hand and win greater applause. When Sauda said:

Don't recite this ghazal before Mir, O Sauda;
What does he know of such art and technique?

Mir replied:

It is hard to be my equal in poetic art, O Mir;
Sauda tries in vain; what does the fool know?

Sauda had the advantage of a hearty temperament which got him many friends and innumerable disciples who were always keen to take his side and attack Mir. In a satire, Mir called Sauda barber and Sauda retaliated by calling him the son of a cook. A common point of attack with Mir was Sauda's love of dogs, which was regarded as against religion.

He has become a stone of the street in search of dogs;
Like a washerman's dog, he is neither of home nor of the pond.

He is wearing himself shouting after dogs;
The fool will die barking.

Sauda was not the man to take it lying down and charged him with being a catamite.

Poluted by dog, the man is purified by bathing,
But the sin of a catamite cannot be washed away even if soaked in *zamzam*.

Your dog (tongue) has bitten me violently, O friend;
You will excuse me if my dog also bites you.

It reflects great discredit on both of them that they lost all sense of decency and good manners.

Since Mir lacked Sauda's broad, tolerant and cheerful spirit, he also lacked his vanity and many-sidedness. His world was narrow, but deep and touched the tenderest chords of human heart that Sauda's gay and comic spirit could not. Sauda tried to make up by refreshing metaphors and word-play, but no one thing can be a substitute for another. Sauda lacked the realism and seriousness of Mir. One always has the strength of one's weaknesses.

Sauda, because of the priority of his birth, deserves the credit of expanding the forms of poetry which till then was confined mainly to ghazal. He added *qasidah*, *masnavi*, *musaddas*, *mukhamas*, *tarji' band*, *tarkib band*, *rubai*, *qita'h*, *vesokht* and *hiju*

from Persian, but the pity of it was that along with the forms, he borrowed its decadent spirit as well. He copied not only the technical skill and tortuous rhymes, but also themes and imagery. He cut himself off from reality and indulged in fanciful exaggerations. It was all gaudy trappings without the soul. His ghazals lack the experience of love. They have neither the gentle and sweet self-surrender, nor the poignant and pathetic sentiment. They are all conventional make-believe, without any root in experience or observation. His real contribution is in the field of *qasidah* where he finds himself in his elements and displays a force and ripeness that we miss elsewhere. Quite often he exhibits both genuineness of feeling and flight of imagination. He introduces variety of themes in the introduction (*tashbib*) and freshness of praise in the main poem (*madah*).

Qasidah, however, is not the highest form of poetry, since it is generally occasional, quite often written to order or actuated by necessity and almost always characterised by undue exaggeration. It is seldom sincere and intense. Its further defect is that, like a ghazal, it has the same rhyme throughout and, being much longer, presents greater difficulty. It has to hunt up all possible rhymes which, in turn, tend to dictate the content. All this contributes to artificiality; so much so that the same *qasidah*, *mutatus mutandi*, can be presented from one person to another. It must be said to Sauda's credit, however, that he seldom wrote *qasidah* except in praise of either religious preceptors or of nobles for whom he had genuine respect.

Satire is Sauda's second strong point. Hatred, as an emotion, is more intense than admiration and capable of inspiring greater poetry, though some people condemn it as a debasing and not an elevating sentiment. That objection, however, is based on ethics and not on aesthetics and brings in considerations extraneous to art. Satire, moreover, is basically moral in origin and effect. Alexander Pope, perhaps the greatest satirist in English literature, said:

> Hence satire rose, that just the medium hit,
> And heals with morals what it hurts with wit.[3]

Again:

> O sacred weapon! left for truth's defence,
> Sole dread of folly, vice and indolence.[4]

But the trouble with most satires is that they over-shoot the mark by exaggeration or vituperation. Sauda is very often guilty of that. At his worst, he becomes unquotable with his dog-bitch invective.

Satire is the artistic refinement of the instinct to laugh at what we hate. It consists in both rebuke and ridicule. Without rebuke, it becomes good-natured fun; without ridicule, it becomes mere invective. It has both the honey and the sting of the bee and the art of the satirist is to keep proper proportion between them. In Sauda, there is more of the sting than of the honey and the sting is mostly malicious. Nor has Sauda the intensity of great art. He is funny and boisterous, but not deep and intense. About Sauda, Azad has narrated a number of anecdotes where his victims either apologised or were worsted.

His social satires on *Shahr Ashob* are a little better. They are impersonal and have more of pathos than ridicule in them. They also have variety both of theme and treatment. They are simpler and more sincere, but they too lack the intensity of great poetry. Mir's satires have a lot of fun, much against his general temperament and are less vituperative than Sauda's, but they do not approach Sauda's art.

Sauda's main contribution is not to poetry so much as to language. He, along with Mir and Khwaja Mir Dard, as already indicated, expanded and standardised its vocabulary. He enriched it by adding words of the native tongue like Mir, and by the use of idioms. His style, on the whole, was simple and fluent and his quick rhythm was in consonance with his cheerful temper.

He felt the narrowness of the ghazal more acutely than any of his contemporaries and interposed *qita'hs* quite frequently. His cheerful spirit needed wider expanse. No wonder that he dabbled in more forms than any other Urdu poet.

When all is said, Sauda does not stand by the side of Mir. He has greater variety, but less depth or intensity. His poetry is not a matter of experience or inspiration, but of labour and artifice. His love, which is his most prominent theme, is varied, but it is neither subjective nor psychological.

6

Mir and Ghalib

I have again and again compared Mir and Ghalib in the above pages, but I feel that the comparison needs further elaboration. Ghalib was greatly indebted to Mir, and paid a high tribute to him in verse.

I believe in the dictum of Nasikh, O Ghalib;
He who is not convinced of Mir's greatness is himself ignorant.

What should I say about the poetry of Mir, O Ghalib?
His diwan is not less glorious than the garden of Kashmir.[1]

Coming from a man like Ghalib, such a tribute cannot be considered formal. Ghalib was not in the habit of paying formal compliments in his literary views. In fact, it was quite the opposite. He raised up controversies, because he was very frank in his literary judgements and did not mince matters. He offended even a man like Sir Sayyid Ahmad who asked him to write a *taqriz* (review) for his edition of Abul Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbari*, by writing a rather discriminating review which was not considered laudatory enough to deserve publication. When one of his dearest disciples, Hargopal Tafta, complained against a similar kind of *taqriz* that Ghalib wrote for his Diwan, he got the reply, "I cannot sacrifice my principles. I hate the practice of Indian writers of Persian of eulogising like the professional singers (*bhats*)."[2]

In one of his letters, he confessed that after trying to follow Nasikh, he ultimately adopted Mir's style.[3] It was Mir who brought him out of Bedil's mazes.

There was a great deal common between them. Both passed through the furnace of extreme tortures. We have noticed Mir's

above. Ghalib's were severer. The death of his father, and after that, of his guardian uncle while he was still a child, of all his seven children one after the other, none of whom survived for more than eighteen months, of his dearly-loved brother and still more dearly-loved adopted son at young age, the scourge of poverty and constant danger of debtor's jail, the torture and disgrace of gambler's prison, non-recognition of merit and vulgar vilification over literary controversies, the pain and suffering of half a dozen diseases, and, above all, bitter domestic life—what could be more heart-rending for a sensitive man like Ghalib? Added to all this, was the consciousness and arrogance of real or imaginary royal ancestry which always disposed him to think in terms of kings as his patrons. The difference between them was that of their situations. Mir had the advantage of his saintly training in childhood. Also he won great renown as a poet at an early age which brought him invitations from all quarters. Ghalib, on the other hand, had to struggle hard and had to face non-recognition, even ridicule, for a long time. Mir, luckily, got patrons, like the Nawabs of Lucknow, who were extremely generous to art and learning and who saved him from the necessity of cringing and flattery. Ghalib stuck to Delhi when the Mughal Empire had already shattered and the Emperor Bahadur Shah, though himself a sort of poet and quite generous to poets, was merely a titular ruler with scanty means. Added to this was the fact that Nemesis was following Ghalib ruthlessly. Whoever helped him came to harm. When on Zauq's death in 1854, he was appointed the tutor to the Emperor and besides his salary for that, was receiving the pension from the British government as well as Rs. 500 per annum from the king of Oudh as a reward for a *qasidah* and was quite comfortable, the king of Oudh was arrested and transported to Calcutta in 1856 and his state confiscated. Next year, the Mutiny occurred and the Emperor was deported to Rangoon. Ghalib wrote that that cup broke and the cup-bearer was no more (*ān qadah Shikast-o-ān sāqi namānad*). When sometime later some one suggested to him to establish contact with the Nizam of Hyderabad, he replied:

> If I now turn to the Nizam of the Deccan, remember that either the intermediary would die or be sacked. And if that

does not happen, his efforts would go in vain and the Nizam would give me nothing. But if he does, his state would go to ruin and the donkeys would plough the land.[4]

In a Persian verse, he bewailed his luck:

Agar tāftam rishtah gohar shikast
Vagar bāftam bādah sāghir shikast

If I span a thread, the pearl broke;
If I procured wine, the cup broke.

Mir escaped such vagaries of fate and spent a care-free, even arrogant, life in Lucknow. How he would have faced Ghalib's difficulties it is idle to surmise. Both heredity and environment, thus, tended to make them temperamentally different from each other. Mir's simplicity and association with both high and low, his lack of material ambition as well as of learning, his inwardness and gloom were directly opposed to Ghalib's extrovert mind, fond of the fun and luxuries of life, his association with the most learned society of Delhi and his sense of humour which got him innumerable friends.

One thing, however, is certain that both were extremely sensitive and took seriously to heart whatever rebuffs came their way. No wonder that both, since they wrote from experience, miles away from conventions, became great poets of sorrow as we have already seen.

When Ghalib was thirteen years old, some of his verses were taken to Mir who was at the time at the height of glory. On seeing them, he remarked, "If this boy gets some worthy teacher, who guides him on proper lines, he will become a unique poet, otherwise he will write nonsense."[5] Ghalib did became a unique poet, greater than Mir himself, though he could not get the kind of teacher that Mir had in mind if such a one existed. He escaped writing nonsense, mainly under Mir's own influence, after he gave up the tutelage of Bedil and started writing simpler poems in short metre (*chhoti bahr*) for which he is most well-known today, like Mir, poems like those beginning with, for instance,

dil-i-nādān tujhe huā kyā hai
ibn-i-maryam huā kare koi
dard minnat kash-i-dawā na huā

koī din gar zingāni aur hai
koī ummīd bar nahīn ātī
bāzīchah-i-itfāl hai dunyā mere āge.

Both had a high notion of their calling as well as of their own poetry. Mir said:

Mir has raised Urdu to great heights:
Who is there who is not convinced of his greatness?

Every verse of mine is creating a storm in the world;
There is the commotion of the day of judgment in my *diwan.*

There is no one in the world like me,
Who can create such sweet and delicious melody.

I am pervading the whole universe;
My writ is obeyed all over.

The musicians sang one of Mir's ghazals at night;
The whole assembly remained intoxicated for long.

And this is Ghalib:

There are no doubt other poets in the world too,
But they say that Ghalib's art is unique.

Both thought that they were much beyond the comprehension of common people.

Mir:

My story remained unrelated in my heart;
Nobody could understand my language in this town.

With what great skill I wrote Urdu poetry;
Nobody understood my language in this country.

In almost the same language, but with characteristic sarcasm, Ghalib wrote:

People have not understood, will not understand, what I say;
Give them a different heart, O God, or me a different tongue.

Let intellect spread as wide a net of hearing as it likes;
The import of my verses, like phoenix, will not be entangled.

Whereas Mir, as has already been mentioned, compared himself to a dragon while other poets were mere worms, Ghalib, in the introduction to *Kulyat-i-farsi*, talked of himself as the sun, while the rest of the poets were lamps.

Both were sure of their future popularity. Mir said:

People will go about reciting my verses in the streets;
My poetry will be remembered for long.

The stir created by my poetry will not cease;
My *diwan* will last till the day of Judgement.

You will remember my verses; you will never hear such again;
When you will hear some one reciting them, you will nod your head for long.

In a well-known Persian verse, Ghalib compared his poetry to wine which, though it lacked customers at the moment, would become their rage when it gets ripe with time. Then both the Shaikh and the brahmin would interpret it differently to suit their purposes. Elsewhere, he declared that he was the nightingale of the yet unblossomed garden (*main 'andlib-i-gulshan-i-nā afrīdah hūn*).

Both felt curbed in the narrow range of the ghazal which may flourish in conventions, but is not a suitable form for writing from experience, which both of them did. Both found scope in *masnavis* and *qasidahs*, though ghazal was their *forte*, on which their reputation is mainly based.

Mir's influence on Ghalib can well be illustrated by a large number of parallel verses. At times, Mir's lines have been almost bodily lifted by Ghalib, though he has made them so much his own by investing them with his peculiar touch that he cannot be accused of plagiarism. This point cannot be illustrated without quoting the original verses.

Mir: *Tez yūnhī na thī shab ātish shauq*
thī khabar garm un ke āne kī.

Not for nothing was the fire of love blazing at night;
There was hot rumour of his coming.

Ghalib: *thī khabar garm un ke āne kī*
āj h gharī men boryā na huā.

There was hot rumour of his coming;
Pity that there is not even sack-cloth in the house today.

Mir: *ishq kī sozash ne dil men kucch na chhorā kyā kahen*
lag gaī yih āg nāgāhi ki ghar sab phuk gyā.

What can one say about the fire of love in the heart.
It caught fire so suddenly that the whole house was reduced to ashes.

Ghalib: *dil men shauq-i-vasl-o-yād-i-yār tak bāqi nahīn*
āg is ghar men lagī aisī kih jo thā jal gayā.

This house caught fire so that every thing was reduced to ashes,
Not even the memory of the beloved or the desire for union remained.

Mir: *Hotā hai yān jahān men har roz-o-shab tamāshah*
dekho jo khūb to hai dunyā 'ajab tamāshah.

A play is going on in the world day and night;
Seen carefully, it looks a queer drama.

Ghalib: *hazīchah-i-itfāl hai dunyā mere āge*
hotā hai shab-o-roz tamāshah mere āge

The world is a children's play for me;
Day and night, a drama is being enacted.

Mir: *be khudī le gaī kahān ham ko*
der se intzār hai apnā

Where has self-oblivian taken me?
I have been waiting for myself since long.

Ghalib: *ham vahān hain jahān se ham ko bhī*
kuchh hamārī khabar nahīn ātī

I am at a place from where
Even myself I get no news of myself

Mir: *yā ro ke yā rulāe apnī to yūn hī guzrī*
kyā zikr hamsafīran yarān-i-shādmān kā.

My days were spent in weeping or making others weep;
How can I talk about my cheerful co-singer friends?

Ghalib: *jahān men ho gham-o-shādī baham hamen kyā kām*
diyā hai ham ko khudā ne voh dil kih shād nahīn.

What to me if there is joy or sorrow in the world.
God has given me a heart which is never happy.

Mir: *Yarān-i-dair-o-ka'bah dono bulā rahe hain*
ab dekhen Mir apnā jānā kidhar bane hai

The friends of both ka'bah and the church are beckoning,
Let us see where I am led.

Ghalib: *imān mujhe roke hai to khenche hai mujhe kufr*
ka'bah mere pīchhe hai kalīsa mere āge.

My faith is forbidding me, while heresy is beckoning;
ka'bah is behind me, while the church is in front.

Mir: *harf-i-ghalat the kiyā ham safahe pih zindgī ke*
jo sāf yūn qazā ne ham ko mitā diyā hai.

Was I a wrong word on the page of life?
That the fate has blotted me out.

Ghalib: *Yā rab zamānah mujh ko mitātā hai kis liye*
loh-i-jahān pih harf-i-mukarrar nahīn hūm main

Why does the world blot me out, O God?
I am not a redundant word on the slate of life.

Mir: *ishq un ko hai jo yār ko apne dam-i-raftan*
karte nahin ghairat se khudā ke bhī hawāle.

They really love who, while parting,
Cannot entrust their beloved even to God.

Ghalib: *qiyāmat hai keh hove mud'aī kā ham safar Ghalib.*
voh kāfir jo khudā ko bhī na sonpā jāe hai mujh se.

It is death for me that he has my rival as co-traveller,
When I cannot trust him even to God.'

One can go on with similar quotations to any length, but the scope of the books forbids it. It may, however, be mentioned in passing that besides the lines quoted alove, Ghalib wrote some poems with the same *qafia* and *radif* as Mir, as well as used quite a number of Mir's phrases and constructions.

Ghalib rightly believed that his art was the gift of God.

In a Persian verse, he said:

The excellence of my genius is the gift of God and of none else;
Spontaneous is the redness of the lily, though grown in a desert.

Again:

The ripeness of my poetry is by the grace of God.
(*sairāī-i-nazm az faiz-i-hakīm ast*)

He did learn a great deal from his teachers in his childhood in Agra, particularly from Maulvi Mohammed Mu'azzam and from Mulla Abdul Samad, a learned Parsi tourist from Iran, newly converted to Islam, who came to Agra for a brief visit in 1810 when Ghalib was thirteen years old, but stayed with him for a couple of years. He must have given him a peep into Iranian language and structures as well as thought, but for his poetry Ghalib was indebted to no preceptor as a regular disciple, though it cannot be denied, as indicated above, that he owed a great deal of gratitude to Mir who inspired him to discard complicated Persian constructions and turn to simple style so much so that he expurgated his *diwan* of more than two-thirds of rigmarole and declared that none of the expurgated verses should be attributed to him.

The difference between Mir and Ghalib is also the reflection of their times. Mir was born at a time when it was all dark about him. Delhi was the victim of constant attacks from Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali and was being desolated and torn asunder and Lucknow was in the grip of levity, luxury and lassitude. There were no serious moral, social or political values,

Mir's poetry was, therefore, soaked in feelings without much thought or philosophy. Ghalib's times also saw the end of the Mughal Empire and the devastations of the Mutiny, but there appeared a ray in the dawn of the western civilisation and a new hope for the future. Men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Sir Sayyid Ahmed had shown the way and the conjunction of the East and the West was creating a kind of renaissance, both in life and literature. Ghalib, therefore, came to grips with problems and tendencies which were denied to Mir. It is, therefore, futile to expect the philosophic depth of Ghalib from him. The main thing of course is the innate genius which is bound to be different. Mir mourns the vanishing of all that was valuable, all that gave meaning to life. That of course is the general trend of his poetry but that does not mean that he had no contact with the joy and cheer of life. His *masnavis* give the impression that he was a hearty man, full of fun and friendships. His association with Nawab Asafuddaulah gave him many opportunities of enjoying outdoor life and all kinds of festivities. At places he even talks of wine and women. Even his ghazals have a cheerful vein at places:

The vintners are not less clever than musicians;
They convert the Shaikh into a donkey with their drink.

The beauties now are not as abundant as wheat;
There is famine in India, O Mir.

The churches are full of wine and roasted meat,
What is there in the mosque, O Shaikh—neither food nor wine.

We are lost in the pleasures of youth, O Mir;
Khizar is welcome to enjoy the fun of old age.

I kept singing among flowers;
That is how I spent my time happily in the garden.

The boys of the vintner are mischief incarnate;
They pull down the turban of every worshipper.

7

His Works

Besides ghazal, Mir wrote *masnavis*, *marsiyas*, *hijus*, *vasokhts*, *shikarnamahs*, though they do not add much to his reputation as a poet, which rests mainly on his ghazals. Mir is said to have laid the foundation of masnavi-writing which does not appear to be a fact, but he was certainly not only the first one to write it in northern India, but also give it a tone and temper. Before him, the southern masnavis were loose, without the tightness of narrative or consistency of plot. The style too was inappropriate. Though he does not rank with the top masnavi-writers, like Mir Hassan and Nasim, he contributed a great deal indeed towards its development. He gave it sense of proportion and reality of feelings. He, being cramped within the narrow confines of ghazal, got wider scope in masnavi, though it naturally diluted his intensity. Some of his shorter masnavis, however, approach the limit of his longer ghazals and become as personal and individualistic. Some of his love masnavis as if narrate his own conception of love, how he would have lived and behaved in those environments. They are subjective and romantic like his ghazals and not objective like fictional stories. That some critics regard as their defect, but Mir was what he was, a great ghazal-writer and it goes to his credit that he gave a philip to masnavi-writing as well. He was certainly the first to have raised it to a high standard. Mir Hasan, Shauq, Rasikh, Qaim, Mushafi were all greatly indebted to him.

In all, he wrote thirty-seven masnavis, out of which nine or ten dealing with love deserve mention. Besides love, they deal with Nawab Asafuddaulah, his marriage, court and hunting expeditions, with himself, his environments and his dilapidated house, with *holi*, dog, cat, sheep and cock fight. They also in-

clude eulogy and satire. Apart from the poetic merit of some of them, they also throw light on contemporary customs and conditions. Some of them are quite humorous, though his humour is tinged with pathos. Humour has sometimes been defined as the gift of thinking seriously and talking lightly, the humour that Mir displays here and in ghazals always. The typical examples of Mir's humour are his autobiographical masnavis, like *dar hiju khanah khud* and *Nisang namah* which are realistic and describe the inconveniences of a humble dwelling and life in a cheerless and bleak country. After describing the decrepit conditions of his house in a dozen verses, he says:

> Death of being crushed was ever in view;
> It was not a dwelling, but a house of death.

> And yet these masnavis are characterised by pungent humour, as if the poet is enjoying the miseries of such a dwelling. They are realistic descriptions and exhibit acute power of observation of poor life.

Of his love masnavis, the most well-known is *sho'lah-i-ishq* which narrates the tragic story of Paras Ram's wife. Since the story has been narrated by some other poets as well, it appears to have some historical basis. In brief, it is as follows. A youngman, Mohammad Hassan, was walking along the bank of the Ganges, where a lady, named Sham Sundari, was having a bath. Their eyes met and they at first sight fell into love with each other. After that, Mohammad Hassan wandered about in streets and along the bank but could not meet her. He started studying Sanskrit and committed to memory a few shlokas of *Ramayana* and under the guise of a *jogi* and assumed name of Paras Ram, began frequently visiting her house, till he was greatly revered by her people, so much so that he was appointed the priest to perform her marriage to some one else. It so happened that on the day of marriage, the house caught fire, more by design than accident, and in the consequent confusion, Paras Ram carried away Sham Sundari to his house, got married to her and began to live happily.

Soon after Mohammad Hassan fell into a river while going in a boat and the news went round that he had been drowned. Sham Sundari could not stand the shock and expired. Moham-

mad Hassan, however, was not dead, but had saved himself by swimming, but Sham Sundari's death affected him grievously and he lost his senses.

The story may be true so far, but hereafter the poet's fancy takes hold. Mohammad Hassan learnt that a flame appeared on the river at dead of night and cried 'Hassan, Hassan.' To satisfy his curiosity, he took some of his friends with him to the river and when the flame appeared, he jumped towards it and disappeared before his friends' eyes. After sometimes, two flames appeared on the surface of the river and crying 'Hassan-Sham-Sundari, Hassan-Sham Sundari', merged into each other and vanished for ever

Hikayat-i-ishq is another love story of an Afghan youth and a married woman, whose husband died after some time. She got ready to perform *sati*, but when she jumped into the fire, the youth also jumped with her, but was pulled out and saved by his friends. The lady also got up from her ashes like sphinx and they both disappeared.

Such unnatural end, though it looks repugnant to modern taste, was meant to illustrate that love defies death and the lovers have union even after dying. Mir, however, goes to the length of making a peacock fall in love with a queen in *Mor Namah*.

These erotic masnavis narrate different love stories which generally have a tragic and unnatural end, as we have seen above. They, however, give expression to the sincerity and intensity of love which Mir alone knew. We are not bothered about their unnatural end, since we are not concerned so much with the authenticity of stories as with the art of narration and the genuineness and warmth of sentiment, of both of which Mir was a master. They have sometimes been called prolonged ghazals, since, like ghazals, they are rather subjective and throw more light on himself than on his characters and deal with the fire and universality of love.

Don't ask what is love.
The truth is that love is God.

. . . . . .

Love has burnt breasts
And set fire to umpteen places.

The love-stricken were never happy,
Kings became beggars in love.

In masnavi *Khwab-o-khayal,* he has described his own insanity after the cruel treatment he received from Khan Arzoo. It is pathetic, witty and sarcastic. At places, it is frankly sensual. On the whole, it is more effective, since it is his own love story.

Masnavi Dunya is the description of the hardships of his old age, his illness, his utter debility and heart-break, such that he did not desire to live long. "What should I write? I am dead while living" (*likhūn kyā kih main jīte jī mar gayā*).

His *shikar namah,* the longest among his masnavis, narrates his experiences when he accompanied Nawab Asafuddaulah on his hunting expeditions. He showers high praise on the Nawab for his patronage of art and learning and for his courtesy and generosity. Besides this, he gives graphic description of birds and animals and of jungles, hills and rivers he passed through as well as of beauties of nature and the march of armies. It is an index of the out-door life of a poet who was generally considered a recluse, confined to the four-walls of his house. At places, it contains some of his ghazals. On the whole, it is rather objective, characterised by his characteristic melody.

His *saqi namahs* too depict his interest in fun and festivities and his reconciliation with his environments. He took part in all kinds of assemblies and at a place he even says that Lucknow is better than Delhi, much against his confirmed opposite conviction. Isn't such description very un-Mir-like?

Come along, O saqi, we have pledged
To go about joyously to have fun;
Let us appreciate the dancing girls
And get intimate with some simple one.
Let us pull some beloved by the hand,
And carry some other with us.
Let us embrace some beauties
And rub shoulder with some delicate one.
Let us get intoxicated with a couple of pegs
And go about hand in hand with some one.
And then get reconciled on her crying.
Let us now drink the red wine to our fill
And leave the rest for some other time.

His description of colour-sprinkling at the *Holi* festival and of lights at the *Diwali* are equally frank and cheerful, as also the animal fights. In the Nawab's marriage, he has given the description of the procession, fire-works, gift-offerings and different kinds of feasts. In *Ajgar Namah* he regards himself as a dragon and other poets as worms.

It may be pointed out that, on the whole, opposed to the common masnavis like *Sahrul Bayan* and *Gulzar nasim* where the hero is of a high rank and exhibits aristocratic, heroic and warlike qualities, the hero of Mir's *masnavi* comes of humble origin; sad, faithful, pathetic who very often falls a victim himself instead of achieving conquests. His one great quality is that he loves intensely and forgets himself and mostly it is a responded passion, even when the beloved is already married. Though the hero belongs to common society, he does not belong to the real world. The love depicted is not realistic, nor are the deaths of the lovers.

There is no anecdotal interest in these masnavis, nor characterisation, since love itself is unreal. In fact, here at times Mir reverts to the concept of ideal love that he had imbibed from his father. He has raised wordly love into heavenly love.

If there were no love, there would be no mutual attraction;
Without it in between, there would be no world.
(*Jawan-o-'arus*)

Love has brought light out of darkness;
Without love, there would have been no manifestation.
(*sho 'lah-i-ishq*)

That, in fact, is the real charm about these masnavis Most of them are tragic. One could not expect comedies from Mir. Love is mostly ideal and responsive, but it never achieves fulfilment in life. Quite often, the lovers merge into each other after death. Like Iqbal and Browning, Mir of these masnavi believes that love can conquer the all-conquering death and illustrates it by unnatural ends of the stories.

His masnavis, as also his *qasidahs*, indicate his love of nature. He was not a nature poet as such, but he was greatly interested and sometimes even engrossed in the study of nature and what he wrote was based on that study and not as a matter

of convention. His main object of study was the garden with its buds and flowers, grass and dew, fountains and breeze, though he also talked about all kinds of birds and animals, rivers and ocean, storms and lighting. In the introduction to his qasidah in praise of Hazrat Ali he has given a beautiful description of spring as also in his masnavi on *Holi*. Though he is neither pictorial like Keats or philosophic like Wordsworth, he does identify himself with natural objects and sees in them the reflection of human mind or interprets them according to his own mood. The buds and flowers represent his own delicate and sensitive heart, the rise and fall of the ocean indicate the storms of his passion. He grows friendly with them and often holds converse.

O cloud, let us associate for sometime.
I am a storm in worrying; you are a storm in weeping.

I cannot stand this noise every morning, O nightingale;
Either you will stay in the garden or I.

Here are some more of his verses about nature:

The colour of the flower set such fire to the garden,
That the nightingale shouted, "Away, away".

Let us go to the garden, the spring has arrived there;
Flowers are blossoming, the leaves have turned green and it is drizzling.

Every wave rises with its arms raised;
Whom does the river like to embrace and kiss?

Elsewhere, he describes that the branches of the trees are stretching their limbs, the bent flowers are yawning, weary of waiting for some one, the colour of the flower is red like the tears of blood of a lover, the bud of the lily is floating on water like a grief-stricken in a flood of tears. Most frequently he talks to the cloud and the nightingale. He is naturally more fond of spring, but he does not neglect autumn.

What to talk of flowers, O breeze; now in autumn
I have fallen in love with straw and thorns.

In nature too, as in life, Mir is more influenced by its transience

—the withering of flowers, the glow before the sunset, the tints on the clouds.

The colour and fragrance of the flower are attractive, O breeze,
But they do not stay even for a single glance.

The defects in his masnavis are evident. He had no narrative skill or taste for long poems. He lacked objectivity required for story-telling, nor had he the art of plot-making or characterisation.

HIS QASIDAHS

His Persian qasidahs have no great merit. Though in search of patrons all his life, he was temperamentally not fitted for unqualified eulogy that a *qasidah* generally is. Nawab Shaifta said that his ghazals were of a high order, but his qasidahs were low (*chandān kih ghazalash buland martabah tar ast, ham chunān qasidah ast past pāyah tar*). They are neither long, nor grandiloquent, characterised neither by striking metaphors nor smart rhymes. His independent and rather ascetic temper was not conducive to flattery. Out of the seven in number, four are in praise of religious preceptors, two in that of Asafuddaulah and one, of Shah Alam, but none of them approaches the art of Sauda.

HIS MARSIYAHS

By its very motif which is to bring out pathos and touch the heart, a *marsiya* cannot be fanciful and artificial. It must be simple and direct. But even in this field, the poets fallen on evil times, could not avoid the usual word-play, for otherwise they would not be poets. There is no doubt, however, that the *marsiyah*, like the *masnavi*, enriched the language and widened the scope of Urdu poetry. Though confined mainly to the story of *Karbala*, it expanded the themes of poets. Besides pathos, it brought in extra-sexual love—that between father and son, between brother and sister etc. It introduced historical incidents,

more particularly the themes of war and gave philip to nature poetry. It popularised *musaddas* which was the fittest metre for warlike descriptions and, above all, with its serious and sanctimonious themes, it helped to purge the Lucknow school of its grossness and vulgarity. About the theme of the marsiyah, Anis one of the two stalwarts in the field (the other being Dabir) said:

> The splendour of social gathering is different,
> And the field of warfare is different,
> (In a marsiya) there should be awe, danger and praise;
> The heart should be pleased, tickled as well as praised.

Mir's *marsiyas*, forty-one in number, do not approach the pathos of his ghazals, naturally because one's own grief is always more poignant than any tragedy, however, intensely it may affect one. His favourite theme is of course the tragic story of karbala. It was a time when elegies were not much in fashion and the common saying went that a corrupted poet became elegy-writer. Mir, however, does bring out genuine pathos at places, though he does not approach the objective descriptions of Sauda. Sauda regarded his marsiyas very low from poetic point of view.

Vasokht generally conveys the common Petrarchan conception of Urdu love poetry—the infidelity and cruelty of the beloved, her love for the rival, the torture of separation, even threat to the beloved. Mir's four vasokhts are also full of taunts, complaints and rebukes. Mir was not the first to write vasokht though Azad calls him its founder, but he did show the way to poets like Momin, Jurat, Atish and Shauq. Lucknow was a congenial ground for this type of poetry and in decoration and pomposity went much beyond Mir's simplicity.

Mir's satires, more than even his *masnavis* and *vasokhat*, indicate the vein of fun and jollity in his temperament which the study of his ghazals tends to hide. They, moreover, throw light on the downfall of the Mughal Empire and are a severe criticism of social evils and individual idiosyncrasies. Most of them are included in *masnavis*, and have neither any literary value nor any real sense of satire. At places they exhibit hatred and anger, even vulgarity, unworthy of him, though, they do not indicate ill-will and malice, nor do they approach the abusive extrava-

gances of Sauda. Sauda was temperamentally fitted for satire and left Mir far behind, though Mir's place next to Sauda's is safe. Sauda's *Shahr Ashob* is unparallelled in its imaginative flight, sparkling language, ready wit and boisterous fun.

HIS PROSE WORKS (PERSIAN)

Mir also wrote three books of prose in Persian.

(1) *Faiz-i-Mir* contains five stories of godly men, about their life and miracles and indirectly throw light on his own religious beliefs and ascetic temperament. Like his poetry, his prose is simple too, without much decoration and artificiality. It is both spontaneous and smart and shows his mastery of language.

(2) *Nikat-ul-sho'ra* is a critical treatise mainly about contemporary poets and is also, like *Faiz-i-Mir*, reflection of his own personality, independent and rather egotistic. It does not follow the beaten track of conventionality and criticises most poets rather severely. Since Urdu poetry, as we have seen above, was in the grip of conventions and artificiality, attached undue importance to verbal tricks and stylistic niceties at the cost of meaningful content and sacrificed reality of experience to decorative artificiality, Mir who was opposed to all this was rather severe in his judgements. It is no doubt true that it shows his independence and straightforwardness, but in his egotistic zeal, he at places overshot the mark and became unjustly harsh and even abusive.

The treatise is, on the whole, more condemnatory than critical. "He is the hanging judge with the black cap on", says Dr. Mohammad Sadiq, "sentencing his victims to summary execution and no possibility of reprieve."[1] From literary criticism, he often descends to personal attack on habits and character, quite unworthy of a great critic. He does not hesitate to use epithets like idiot, fool, thief. His criticism of Hatim, for instance, is most unjust. Hatim was perhaps the only one, except Vali, among the earlier poets who deserved commendable mention. He was credited with having polished and persianised Urdu so as to remove it further from popular speech. He swept off all vernacular words as low and vulgar. He also discarded *iham*, like Mir himself, which was universally

popular at the time and with its ambiguity and paradox had become an end in itself and was killing the genuineness of poetic creation. He had a large number of disciples, Sauda among them, and was sometimes known as *jagat-guru* (the teacher of the world). He is also known as the founder of the Delhi school of poets, of which Mir himself was the greatest representative. To call such a man, much older than himself and a man of high morals, *jahil* (idiot) was most unjust, so also was his criticism of Vali, Yaqin, Hashmat, Khaksar and many others. It is believable that there may have been some personal grudge in some cases lurking in his mind. We have seen how in poetical contests the poets attacked each other. Baqa, for instance, used for Mir epithets like idiot (*paji*), illegitimate (*tukhm-i-haram*), son of the devil (*nutfah shaitan*). Mir who did not stand the slightest discourtesy even from his patrons, could not be expected to forgive all that.

On the whole, however, the treatise shows Mir's high critical sense. His very bitterness is interpreted in some circles as his impartial and independent judgement, much against prevalent trend of indiscriminate eulogy and adoration. Mir called a spade a spade which serves a useful purpose in evaluation.

Here are some of his opinions both complimentary and condemnatory.

'Andlib (Dard's father)—the leader

Vali—doesn't need any praise since he is well-known, nor do I know enough about him

Khwajah Mir Dard—sweet-tempered, humble, friendly

Mirza Mazhar—unrivalled and sweet-tongued.

Sauda—Cheerful and friendly, the leader of the Indian poets.

Hatim—idiot, of slow intelligence.

Yaqin—fool, satanic, thief, wretched with no understanding of poetry at all.

Khaksar—mean, his verses are unrhymed and incorrect.

Khan Arzoo—forceful poet, master literateure, man of unparalleled learning in India.

He had a high critical sense and made a valuable contribution to literary criticism. In all, he wrote about more than one hundred and fifty poets, though he omitted a few worth mentioning, which caused heart-burning. His claim that it was the

first treatise of its kind in Urdu poetry, however, is not true. Khan Arzoo, Sauda, Khaksar are known to have written *tazkiras*, but since they do not exist, Mir's *Nikat-ul-Sho'ra* has pre-eminence.

By the way, the book also throws light on Mir's sense of spirited fun which is opposed to the general impression that we form from his poetry and autobiography. He appreciated friendliness, sociability and humour in others. These are some of the phrases of commendation, *tabi'e shokhe dāsht* (had spirited temper), *zarīf hashāsh bashāsh* (jolly and humorous), *khalīq* (social), *hameshah khandān-o-shaguftah rū* (ever smiling and bright-faced) etc. The language is simple, free from exaggeration and complexities of imagery.

(3) *Zikr-i-Mir* is his autobiography and naturally throws a flood of light on his character and personality as well as contemporary history. Whatever has been said about his life above is mainly based on this book though some critics[2] have expressed doubts about its strict veracity. It has been pointed out that Mir is not very reliable in his account either of himself and his ancestors or his opponents. He has over-eulogised his father who, he says, enjoyed world-wide reputation (*shohrah-i-āfāq*), whereas the fact is, as has been pointed by Qazi Abdul Wadud, that, but for his own mention, the saint would have been quite unknown.[3] His contradictory accounts of Khan Arzoo, a universally admired scholar, before and after their relations were strained, is a further pointer to the fact. His *Nikat-ul-sho'ra* also indicates at places how far he cound go in his likes and dislikes. On the whole, it indicates that he was not a recluse, given to contentment and resignation and did hanker after patronage and at times had to undergo hardships for it, though under compulsion. He was otherwise a straightforward man, full of human sympathy and kindness. He was sufi shiite in his belief, fond of associating with godly men. He has paid appropriate compliments to his numerous benefactors.

The book is both subjective and objective. Besides throwing light on himself, it is a mine of historical information. It narrates events from the death of Mohammed Shah upto the cruelties of Ghulam Qadir Rohilla, and throws light on the relations between the Marhattas, the Sikhs, the Jats and the English during the decline of the Mughal Empire, and on the cordial

relations between the Hindus and the Muslims. It has given lie to many traditional stories about him which had cropped up, since the book was not available till recent times. It is a pity that he has not dealt with his own literary activities or those going on about him. Also it goes upto 1788 and does not deal with his last twenty-two years.

The style is clear, natural and spontaneous like his poetry without any gloss or decoration. It has rhythm and flow of short sentences.

(4) *Daryae ishq* has not seen the print, but some extracts from the manuscript were published in the Mir Number of *Nairang* (Rampur). It is a love story.

I am afraid I am not competent enough to evaluate his Persian poetry, nor is it available except in manuscript form in Muslim University, Aligarh, but it is universally held and on sound reasons, that it is inferior to his Urdu poetry. No great poetry can be composed except in one's mother-tongue. Macaulay said that categorically:

> No noble work of imagination, as far as we recollect, was ever produced by any man except in a dialect which he has learnt without remembering how and when and which he has spoken with ease before he has analysed its structure.[4]

Nor did Mir have Ghalib's advantage of ancestry or the benefit of a Persian scholar like Abdul Samad's company for two years. Ghalib also spent the best part of his young life writing in Persian. No wonder that he was always proud of the 'varied tints' of his Persian poetry when compared to colourless Urdu. Mir could not arrogate to himself such a boast.

The almost universal opinion about his Persian work is that it is merely a reflection of his Urdu poetry. Its style is simple and clear and it repeats the same variety of themes with the same force of expression.

8

General Estimate

It was a time when Urdu language was coming to its own and new experiments were being tried. Poets like Sauda, Mazhar, Soz, Mus-hafi, Insha were occupying the stage in Delhi. Nasikh in Lucknow was in full glory and was carrying out reforms in Urdu language. He was persianising it both in vocabulary and conventions and was creating what may be called poetic diction. Waggon-loads of words and conventions were being borrowed and poetry was becoming more and more gaudy and artificial, as we have already seen. It stands to the credit of Mir and Nazir Akbarabadi to stand against the current and create poetry out of common themes and common language like Wordsworth.

Nazir (1740-1830) deserves more than a passing mention in this connection, not because he was a great poet, but because he was a genuine poet, different from the general trend. Like Mir, he wrote straight from the heart, without the least taint of convention. Like Mir, he was poet of the soil both in style and subject-matter. His roots were in India and not in Iran and he wrote about what he saw around him—*holi, diwali, baldev ka mela, bakar-id, shab-i-barat, kabutar bazi, ata dal ka bayan* and the rest and his language was the language, spoken by the common people. He had no inhibitions either about diction or theme and, like Wordsworth, did not distinguish between poetic and prosaic words. "There neither is, nor can be," said Wordsworth, "any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition."[1]

Like Mir again, Nazir had a mystic vein too which was perhaps the cause of his independence and contentment. He declined the invitation of Nawab Sa'adat Ali Khan of Lucknow

(Mir's own patron) and of the Raja of Bharatpur and stuck to his job as a teacher on Rs. 17 a month. He spent all his life under the two trees (*nim* and *beri*). He was ultimately buried in his componnd where he had taught numerous pupils.

In his youth, he was a happp-go-lucky fellow, fond of fun and frivolity, wine and women which is evident from his frankly sensuous verses, at times even vulgar and indecent. During his last phase, however, he repented of his early escapades, turned a sufi and began to write ethical poetry about the transience of life and the worship of God. Like Mir, he did succeed in turning out great didactic poetry. He is sometimes compared to Hafiz in this two-fold interest—the fun of life and the merits of asceticism. Contentment was always characteristic of him and his liberality of religious views was well-known. He had no sectarian prejudices and took part freely in Hindu festivals. He had great love for animals and wrote ardently about them—the child of a bear or a squirrel or a deer, the fights of pigeons or nightingales. His experiences were very wide and comprehensive, and he converted them spontaneously into poetry, without any gloss or philosophical depth. His poetry is absolutely free from convention and artificiality, as also from stiff Persian vocabulary or constructions.

He was a man of limitless fund of humour which was the outcome of his open-mindedness and freedom from malice and prejudice, freedom also from contempt or irony. No wonder that he never wrote satire or panegyrics. He was a master of language which, combined with his fondness for music, contributed to the melody of his verse. He had the art of selecting the most suitable words for his purpose with the result that very often the sound of his verses echoed the sense.

His variety of themes, like Mir's, is surprising. His themes include religion, sufism, ethics, love, complaint, resignation, nature with all its *flora* and *fauna*, social life, customs, festivals, stories, mythology, all tinged with humour. His forms, like Mir's, are various too. They include *ghazal*, *qasidah*, *masnavi*, *qita'h*, *mukhammas*, *musaddas*, *tarkib band*, *mustrazad*. He had the breadth, though not the depth, of Mir. He was a man of comprehensive tastes and interests. Very few poets have written on so many topics with so great mastery. There was no effort about him. Verses came to him naturally and he wrote with

zest and enjoyment like Mir. 'Out of the fulness of the heart, the mouth speaketh' was true in the case of both. He was a voluminous writer, like Mir, and is said to have written some two lakh verses, though only about six thousand have been preserved,—those also through Lala Bilas Ram whose son he taught most of his life on a petty salary. He himself was very careless about preserving his poems.

For a comprehensive mind like Nazir's, the ghazal was a narrow medium, as it was for Mir. Needing a wider scope for his descriptive powers, he took to *nazm* and made it his *forte*. Many of his ghazals too are organised wholes and approach the continuity of a *nazm*.

It is true that he was not a poet of the front rank, but it is a pity that he was not fitly recognised and for a long time remained a controversial figure. In his life-time, he was cold-shouldered and dismissed as falling outside the scheme of traditional poetry and not subscribing to the ruling taste. In personal temperament, he was happy-go-lucky and never took to courtly manners. He has been called the inspired vagabond who talked of the plebeian life. Shaifta thought that he did not deserve the appellation of a poet, since both his style and content were of the 'marketplace'. Azad, the admirer of Zauq's decorative style, did not consider him worthy of mention in *Ab-i-Hayat*. That was because poetry was regarded as a matter of prosody and embellishment. This neglect of Nazir did a great harm both to language and poetry. A proper appreciation of the nature of poetry, of which Nazir's work was a supreme example, would have done nothing but good and would perhaps have relegated to the well-deserved oblivision a great deal of artificial rigmarole that remained in lime-light for a long time.

It is now when, under Mir's own influence and the western canons of criticism, we have begun to understand the real nature of poetry that Nazir is being more and more appreciated. Majnun Gorakhpuri writes that Nazir "takes us towards subjectivity and invites us to open our eyes and take delight in the vast world. Nazir is the only personality in the whole of Urdu poetry who is not imprisoned in the chains of his mind."[2] Kalimuddin, in his *Urdu Shai'ri par ek nazar*, Vol. I has devoted a special supplement of forty-four pages to Nazir, while he has dismissed Zauq, Ghalib and Momin all in a chapter of thirty-

eight pages. He begins: "The existence of Nazir Akbarabadi is refulgent like a lonely star on the firmament of Urdu poetry." Elsewhere he rightly says,

> If the writers of ghazal had appreciated the value of Nazir's experiments and made him the leader of their carvan, Urdu poetry and Urdu ghazal would have risen from the low depth to a great height.[3]

And, above all, Fallon, the author of *A New Hindustani-English Dictionary*, who was supposed to be the master of both the languages and in a position to judge him by western standards. He deserves quoting at length, not only because he places Nazir in the right perspective, but also because I feel that our conviction-ridden poets have not learnt their lesson from Nazir yet and are still going on with their *gul-o-bulbul* poetry. Fallon says in the Introduction that Nazir is "the only true Hindustani poet according to European standard of true poetry, and the poet whom native word-worship will not allow to be a poet at all.". . .He adds

"Nazir possessed all the qualities of mind and feeling which distinguished genius. . . .The poetry which he has evolved from common things—as no other Hindustani poet has condescended, or been able to do—is ignorantly regarded by native scholars as the surest proof that he was no poet. . . .His versatility and power of imagination are further displayed in the various aspects in which he has portrayed the same thing in different poems. . .

Nazir laid under contribution the treasures of the modern tongue. He has done in this matter what only kings like Chaucer and Shakespeare succeeded in doing . . . . and with the bold self-confidence of genius, he has dared to use words in new combinations and senses which are always happy."

I wish I had scope of quoting verses to illustrate all these points. I can only refer the reader to the original, since in translation, both the simplicity as well as the rhythm of style for which Nazir is justly known, vanishes. For a simple example, however, here is a scene from his nature poetry, of which he may be regarded as the founder. He frequently reminds of Burns and at places even of Wordsworth

Birds and animals are all bathing together,
The frogs croak and the crickets chirp.
It is raining in torrents from dark thick clouds,
The cranes in hundreds are lining the sky,
The koels and the sparrow hawks give out shrill cries.
And the intoxicated peacocks scream with joy.

Nazir was Mir's contemporary and, though he spent most of his life at Akbarbad, Mir's own birthplace, they do not appear to have met. I wish they had and exchanged views about poetry. What would have happened to Urdu poetry, it is idle to surmise. Nazir certainly would have come into lime-light too, like Mir. They were doing similar work both for language and poetry. Mir, like Nazir, stuck to the poetry of the soil and shunned old time-worn imagery and brought in freshness and vigour both in style and content. He discarded heavy Persian vocabulary and accepted only those words which could be easily absorbed in Urdu and he borrowed freely from Hindi. Here are some of such words—*chāh, rīt, jogī, mīt, swāng, rām kahānī, bisrām, samay, sānjh, dhyān, mukhrā, parbat, dosh, hankār, sansār.* He struck a compromise between Persian and Hindustani and shunned indigestible Persian constructions. It was a sort of protest against the prevailing trend of the Lucknow school which was cultivating the language for its own sake and was making it polished and artificial, far removed from common speech. There was a conscious effort to weed out all uncouth and quaint expressions and the poets were indulging in word-play and difficult *radifs* to show off their technical skill. Luckily, Mir and Nazir did not fall victims to the common trend or indulge in embellishing the style at the cost of the content.

Mir, like Nazir, wrote from experience about things that he saw around him

With what struggle Mir has passed his life,
Which enabled him to create his Urdu poetry.

He was a realist to the core. When Sidney complained to his Muse that he was all astir, but poetry was not coming out of him, he got the admonition, "Look into thy heart and write."[4] Mir always looked into his heart and wrote. He avoided the contemparory fashion of fanciful exaggerations and elaborate

decorations. He gave precise expression to his moods and susceptibilities and took meticulous care to represent his inner feelings faithfully. Like Wordsworth, he wrote with his 'eye on the subject'.

His style, very often, is conversational, where he uses words of address like *miyān*, *are*, *piyāre*, *sāhib* etc. and the intimate *thou* and *thine* and thus creates delightful friendliness.

The rivals talk ill of me in your presence,
And you sit silent listening to what they say.

Don't entice your heart somewhere;
Haven't you heard what love has done to Mir?

O lightning, fall fiercely on some heap of flowers.
What fun burning down the thorns of my hut?

We know the dying of the moth by burning, O taper;
You should also say something; you have a tongue too.

Quite often he himself calls his poetry talk.

People will go on reciting my poetry in the streets,
My talk will be remembered for a long time.

No wonder that in construction, his poetry generally has the order of prose. This intimacy of dialogue keeps the reader interested and absorbed. Mir talks to animals, flowers, clouds, breeze, dew, nightingale, moth, taper, even to the shattered bones of a skull (*kāsah-i-sar*).

How can I describe the beauty of her face, O bud!
You shouldn't speak; it gives out odour.

Come along, O cloud, let us weep one night;
But not so much as to wash away a town.

Let us make up our mind to weep profusely, O cloud,
In the valley of Majnun, whenever we get up from the hill.

Notice the intimacy of phrases like 'You shouldn't speak' or 'come along' or 'let us make up our mind'.

Mir knows the art of infusing new life into old worn-out themes. This he does mostly by making refreshing use of old imagery or introducing sarcasm into commonly accepted themes.

Ab-i-hayat, is it the same which Khizar and Alexander were dying to attain?
Our credit is that we have brought it out of dust.

How attractive is this universe? whoever left it
Was full of sorrow, and longing incarnate.

Mir must be lying in the shadow of some wall;
What has that comfort-loving to do with love?

Look at the comfort of a lover who has left home and is constantly lying in the shadow of the beloved's wall.

Don't be taken in by her kindness, O comrade:
She was kind to me as well some time back.

The secret of the magic and popularity of Mir's poetry, says Firaq Gorakhpuri, consists in his unparallelled art of painting his inmost feelings most naturally and in the fewest and simplest words possible. It appears, he adds, that it is not Mir who is speaking, but our own humanity and temperament. His poetry is not the voice of a poet; but of life itself. There is truth and innocence in it which makes us stop and ponder over every verse. The poetry of ghazal has reached acme in him in verses like these:[5]

My heart remains extinguished since the evening
Like the lamp of a pauper.

I asked how long the flower will last;
Hearing this, the bud just smiled in reply.

I saw many trouble ere this, but the conqest of my heart
Has become a queer accident.

I am going from the wine-cellar, O Mir;
We shall meet again if God ordains.

Take care of the mad person;
The rumour is that spring is coming.

The taper went on feeling excited till the morning;
What did the moth whisper in its ears?

Like Nazir, Mir wrote about *Holi*, *Diwali* etc. and about Indian themes in Indian language.

The fire of love burnt down Ravan,
Though Lanka, the giant's home, was surrounded by water.

I have no time for sleep in talking about the beloved:
Day and night I listen to such nice talk (*Rām Kahāni*)

The compromise between Hindi and Persian themes and vocabulary was Mir's unique contribution. Added to this was his simplicity of language and sincerity of content in a convention-ridden age. He was neither allusive nor philosophic. He had the gift of transparent utterance. He was always clear and straight-forward,
No wonder that he said:

Though aristocrats love my poetry,
I have dialogue with the common people.

He even said that he had learnt his language at the foot-steps of Jama Masjid. His poetry has been compared to the surface of a sea which looks calm and ripple-less at the surface, but has a storm of waves below.

Mir's *forte* was short metre (*chhoti bahr*) which made him most popular—poems beginning with such lines, for instance.

shām hī se bujhā sā rehtā hai
ibtdāe ishq hai rotā hai kyā
marg ik māndgi ka vakfah hai
hastī apnī habāb kī sī hai
umr bhar hami rahe sharābi se
faqīrānah āe sadā kar chale.

Such simple poems came straight from the heart and went direct to the heart. For a parallel one can aptly go to Bihari, the Hindi poet, who rightly said about his couplets:

The couplets of *Satsai* are like the arrows of a hunter;
Though small in appearance, they pierce the heart deeply.

If his poems of shorter metre act like arrows, those with longer ones tend to soften down the sharpness of the wound. They make even sorrow pleasant by their expanse, melody and slow movement. It is a pity that in laying emphasis on shorter metre, his longer metre has been neglected. Mir is Mir everywhere.

Like his language, his similes were also fresh and simple. He did not indulge in frequent and complex metaphors like Ghalib and picked up imagery from every-day experience, which was very effective for his purpose.

Don't ask about the breaking of his heart;
It is like some one whose town has been ransacked.

My heart feels extingnished with the advent of the evening,
Like the dim lamp of a pauper.

What to talk of the delicacy of his lips,
They are like the petals of a rose.

A scar is shining in my dejected heart
Like a lamp in a deserted village.

He even expressly condemned the time-worn, conventional similies. The mouth of a beloved is generally compared to a bud. Mir says:

The bud in reality is not like her mouth:
We have invented the simile just for fun.

How can we imitate the beauty of her mouth, O bud?
You at least should not speak, it gives out bad odour.

What tremendous signifance is hidden underneath this simple verse! The poet's obvious purpose again is to decry the hackneyed simile of comparing the beloved's mouth to a bud. He conveys it with his favourite device of personification and dialogue and wants the bud itself to confess its inferiority. The gap between the first and the second lines indicates as if the bud wanted to plead its case, but the poet cuts it short by his rebuke that it should not speak, since it will give out bad odour. *Bū* (odour) in place of *khushbū* (fragrance) clenches the issue.

They compare your lips with *ab-i-hayat*;
Some day the latter will lose all its dignity.

The nightingale's love for the rose which makes her warble mournfully is another rather hackneyed simile which Mir repudiates. Its love is nothing when compared to his own.

Don't sing before me, O nightingale;
Every one learns to sing from me.

The nightingale is defaming me in the whole garden,
As if I had given it the secret of my heart.

Mir attained glory early in life. It is said that people carried his poems as gifts from place to place. One of the main causes of his popularity was the charm of his personality which, though rather egoistic, was unique and interesting. He was transparently sincere like Ghalib and never tried to cover up his faults. He had no repressions or complexes about him. In fact, he confessed his faults of arrogance and ill-temper in his verses rather loudly, even more than he was guilty of. There was not the least hypocrisy or make-believe about him. On the positive side, his crowning merit was human sympathy, the milk of human kindness. If he could not stand the snobbery of the rich, he could neither remain unaffected by the misery of the poor.

His whole youth was spent in human sympathy;
It would burst out like a prick on the boil.

There is no other sin equal to this, O friend,
That one should be cruel to any one.

Do whatever comes to your mind, O dear one;
Only do not injure any one.

His poetry was hundred percent the reflection of his personality—the truth and beauty of his temperament, its pain and sympathy, its realisation of the transience and the contradictions of life, the imperfection and the disorder of the world, which, in spite of that, was charming.

What attraction is there in this world that whoever left it
Was grief-stricken, woe-begone and longing incarnate.

Here is the whole of fundamental Mir. All his life, he created great poetry out of this basic trend of his mind. The common impression that he was a man of seclusion who kept indoors with his window shut and did not look at the garden outside is wrong, as has been illustrated in the study of his *masnavis*. He

did not create much fuss, but he did take part in all kinds of gatherings and festivities. His genius brought him means of comfort and even luxury if he cared and the company of the Nawabs of Lucknow provided him many opportunities of various kinds of experiences which made a deep impression on him and even made him a bundle of contradictions. It took him from inside to outside which often created conflict between the introvert and the extrovert and involved him in intensity of emotions. All his personality revolved round this contradiction between his inner genius and outer experiences About his early life in Delhi, he wrote:

This grief-stricken Mir was young some time back;
He created some uproar with the art of his poetry.
Whichever side that heavy-laden went out in Delhi,
He had the commotion of doomsday with him;
He was not miserable and water-soaked dust,
But a storm, a desperado, a fanfare.

In Lucknow, he often went about with Nawab Asafaddaulah on his hunting expeditions and got full opportunity of observing the outside world and his power of observation was very keen.

Every particle of dust here needs observation;
Don't go about indifferently; stop at every step.

You went about carelessly in the world,
Otherwise there was a different world underneath.

If you have eyes, this world is a house of mirrors,
In which you can see your face in the walls.

The most prominent quality of his poetry is its uniqueness, its individuality, which instantly distinguishes it from what his contemporaries were writing. His pervasive tone, as we have seen, is sad and gloomy, but he tries to enliven it with his sarcasm, his conversational style, his affinity with nature, his tickling the beloved, his dialogue with inanimate objects and his variety of topics. He always provides relief in sorrow and has a wide level of appeal. The common people like him for the simplicity of his style and common, every-day level of his content and the uppish class likes him for his meodious tricks of style. On the one hand, he is free from stiff and ambiguous

imagery and complex themes and on the other, he gives freshness and vitality to outworn topics as well as metaphors. Look at the common similes and their uncommon use.

The light of the eyes dims when the tears dry up;
The lamp gets extinguished when the oil is finished.

My heart keeps extinguished since the evening,
Like the lamp of the pauper.

He is perhaps the only poet in Urdu whose reputation has seen no rise and fall. There have never been two opinions about him, in spite of the numerous tiffs he had with the contemporary poets and his scathing criticism of their poetry in *Nikat-ul-sho'ra* as well as in his verses.

Time and taste have changed considerably in more than a century and a half, but his popularity stands firm like a rock. He will never grow obsolete or out of date. Even today, the poets imitate him. That is because his style is neutral and natural which has nothing topical about it to become stale. No wonder that poet after poet has paid a glowing tribute to him.

There is no doubt about the greatness of Mir, O Nasikh;
He who is not convinced of it is himself ignorant.

Again:

I alone am not in search of Mir's *Diwan*, O Nasikh;
Who is there who does not want it?

O Mus-hafi, how can you claim greatness in poetry?
This claim fits in only on Mir.

According to the opinion of my friend, Sauda, O Atish,
You have to be like the Master, Mir.

O Atish, the truth is that out of the poets of the world,
Only Mir's poetry fascinates the heart.

Mir, the master-mind, was no doubt a *vali*, O Asar;

Asar as well as Farrukh Banarsi and Aziz Lucknowi have written whole poems on Mir like Weshat who says:

There was no leader like him in the valley of love;
None knew the secrets of the heart so acutely.

He had no rival in love poetry, O Wehshat:
Nor to talk of India, he had no equal even in Iran.
He had various techniques and equalled
Halali, Zamiri, Safai and Faghani.

Zauq expended all efforts in the field of *ghazal*,
But could not attain to the art of Mir.

O Sauda, write this ghazal over and over again;
You have to attain the perfection of Mir.

You alone are not the master of Urdu, O Ghalib;
It is said that there one Mir as well in the past.

Hali is indebted to Shaifta in poetry;
He is the devotee of Ghalib, but follower of Mir.

My verses are no doubt pathetic, O Hasrat;
But wherefrom should I bring the art of Mir?

There have been many master-poets in the past,
But Mir is unrivalled in effect so far, O Hasrat.

Admitted that all the poets are felicitous, O Majruh,
But Mir's delightful art is different.

You may try as hard as you can, O Arsh;
How can you attain the art of Mir?

I am a felicitous poet of India, O Shad,
Whose language is Urdu like Mir's.

True that Sauda was also a Master of his time,
But Mir was unique in the art of poetry. (Ismail)

It is not easy to write in the vein of Mir, O Dagh,
Just compare your own *Diwan* with his.

What am I that I should copy his art, O Akbar,
When even Nasikh and Zauq could not compete with Mir.

The position that Hafiz occupies in Persian, O Safi,
Mir has the same position in Urdu.

In ghazal, Mir has such force, O Mirza,
That the world is applauding him today, even after a hundred years (Mirza Ruswa)

I am the disciple of a teacher like Mir, O Rasikh,
My teacher is the teacher of teachers.

Again:

Why should I not feel proud, O Rasikh?
Since Hazrat Mir is my teacher.

How far does your poetry resemble Mir's?
I am a lover of his art, O Rind.

At the moment, leaving Shaikh. Nasikh Khwaja, Atish,
I copy the art of Mir, among Indian poets, O Rind.

My art is no doubt unique, O Shaifta,
But sometimes, I hanker after the mastery of Mir.

Admitted that you also write like him, O Jalal;
But who can approach the art of Mir?

Mir has been called the god of poetry (*khudāe sukhan*), the king of ghazal (*shahinshah-i-ghazal*), the preceptor of poets (*ustād-ul-sho'ra*), the jewel of the ring of poetry (*nagīn khātam-i-sukhan afrīni*), steersman of the boat of poetry (*nākhudā safīnah-i-sukhan*) and Hafiz of Urdu etc.

Apart from these verbal tributes, poet after poet is said to have been influenced by him in his art. Among them are Khwajah, Qaim, Soz, Bayan, Mus-hafi, Jurat, Nasikh, Mir Hassan, Shaiftah and Ghalib. Among the moderns, Shad Azimabadi is said to be thoroughly immersed in Mirian influence and is sometimes called 'Mir of his time'. Among the critics of modern times, we have already seen the tributes paid to him by Firaq Gorakhpuri and Ale Ahmad Sarur who has called him the king of catharsis. Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi and Sayyid Abdullah have paid him generous tributes in their whole-length sludies of his personslity and poetry. Besides this, the latter has devoted a whole chapter[6] entitled *Mir aur Main* (Mir and I) to his personal debt of gratitude where he says that in his own hours of troubles and tribulations, Mir has come to his rescue more than Hafiz, Iqbal or Ghalib, his three great favourites in poetry. And yet all this, I feel, in not enough. Mir deserves much more.

References

INTRODUCTION

1. p. 48.
2. Wordsworth's definition of great poetry. *English Critical Essays*, XIX Century, ed. Edmund D. Jones (O.U.P., 1958) p. 5.
3. *An Essay On Criticism*, l. 584.
4. *Diwan-i-Mir*, (Bombay, 1960), p. 11.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-55.
6. Rene Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, Vol. I, (New Havens, 1955), p. 221.

CHAPTER 1

1. *Bal-i-Jibrail* (Lahore, 1954), p. 128.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
4. For what follows about these thinkers, I am mainly indebted to Varrie Elvin's, *A Philosophy of Love* (Delhi, 1962), pp. 5-8.
5. *An Hymn in Honour of Love.*
6. *Ab-i-hayat* (Lucknow, ?), p. 148.
7. *Diwan-i-Mir, op. cit.*, p. 25.
8. Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi, *Mir Taqi Mir* (Aligarh, 1954), p. 72.
9. *Ab-i-hayat, op. cit.*, p. 274.
10. *Mir Taqi Mir, op. cit.*, pp. 265-9.

CHAPTER 2

1. Singing is sweet, but be sure of this,
   Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.
   (James Thomson, *Sunday Up The River*)
2. *The Melody of an Angel*, (P.U , Chandigarh, 1981), p. 55.
3. *Bang-i-dara*, (Lahore, 1943), p. 305.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
5. Introduction, 2, above.
6. *Selected Essays*, (New York, 1932), p. 10.
7. *Wordsworth* (London, 1930), p. 31.
8. *Sleep And Poetry*, 11. 245-7.
9. *Naqd-i-Mir* (Delhi, ?) pp. 349-70.
10. *Kulyat-i-Mir*, ed. Zil-i-Abbas Abbasi (Delhi, 1968), p. 45.

CHAPTER 3

1. The boy-bearer of Zeus, the most beautiful of all mortals.
2. *Three Mughal Poets*, (London, 1969), Introduction, p. XX.

CHAPTER 4

1. Mohammad Sadiq, *A short History of Urdu Literature*, (O.U.P., 1966), p. 96.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 102-3.
6. *Bang-i-dara, op. cit.*, p. 261.
7. *Zabur-i-'Ajam*, (Delhi, ?) p. 13.
8. *Bang-i-dara, op. cit.* p. 306.
9. *A Short History of Urdu Literature, op. cit.*, p. 103.

CHAPTER 5

1. *An Approach to Poetry*, (London, 1929), p. 8.
2. *Muwazanah Dabir-o-Anis*, (Allahabad, 1952), pp. 48-9.
3. *To Augustus*, 11. 261-2.
4. *Epilogue to the Satires*, Dialogue II, 11. 212-3.

CHAPTER 6

1. This verse is from *Nuskhah Hamidiyah* which Ghalib deleted from the current *diwan*.
2. *Urdu Mu'alla* (Allahabad, 1952), p. 75.
3. *Ahwal-i-Ghalib*, ed. Mukhtaruddin Ahmad, (Aligarh, 1953) p. 65.
4. Urdu Mu'alla, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
5. Malik Ram: *Zikr-i-Ghalib*, (Delhi, 1955), p. 41.

CHAPTER 7

1. *A Short History of Urdu Literature, op. cit.*, p. 96.
2. Among others, Qazi Abdul Wadud and Al-e-Ahmad Sarur (*Kulyat-i-Mir, op. cit.*), pp. 6 and 38 respectively.
3. *Mir Taqi Mir, op. cit.*, p. 272.
4. *Critical and Historical Essays*, (London, 1974), p. 663.

CHAPTER 8

1. *English Critical Essays*, XIX Century, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
2. *Naqd-o-Nigar*, (Lucknow, 1955), p. 254.
3. pp. 425-6.
4. *Astrophel And Stella*, Sonnet 1.
5. *Kulyat-i-Mir, op. cit.*, p. 56.
6. *Naqd-i-Mir, op. cit.*, pp. 404-46.