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Eighty Years of Dakani Scholarship

DAKANI, THE FORM OF URDU which as the term implies was written and developed in the kingdoms of the medieval Deccan, is still widely spoken, though now rarely written, over a large area of southern India, and during the last eighty years or so its literature has attracted the attention of many modern scholars and historians. The language which is generally referred to by the blanket term *qadīm urdū* (old Urdu)¹ grew up in and around Delhi after the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE, and rapidly developed into a convenient lingua franca of the area. It was, however, Persian which persisted as the major literary medium, and in the early period, apart from a few scattered and often garbled quotations in the hagiographies of the Sufis, we have little evidence for the use of vernacular. It is popularly believed that the fourteenth century poet Amir Khusrao composed some of his verse in it, and that his contemporary Gesu Daraz, who eventually arrived in the Deccan to spread the word of Islam, composed works in both Dakani prose and verse, but since there is no way to prove their authenticity, such theories should probably be discounted. Stray sentences in the *malḥūzāt* of the Sufis, however, give us a clear indication that the language was used during their time.

The early speakers of this developing language probably had little concept of its nature, and referred to it by a plethora of Persian names: *hindī*, *hindavī* (i.e., Indian), *zabān-e dīhlī* (the speech of Delhi), and when it eventually spread as a common tongue to Gujarat and the Deccan, the geographical terms *gujārī* and *dakanī* came to be applied to it. Although

¹Writers of the 16th and 17th centuries refer to their language by a number of names: *zabān-dīhlavī*, *hindī*, *hindavī*, etc. The term *dakanī* or *dak'īnī* is probably first attested in the *maṣnavī*, *Qisṣa-e Bēnazīr* of San'atī (Bijapur 1645).

some scholars would have us believe that these terms refer to separate languages, when we look at the texts, apart from certain local words and grammatical characteristics, there is essentially no great difference among them.

The development of language as a literary medium outside the capital was at first a Sufi enterprise. In Delhi, the preachers could comfortably use Persian; when they went farther afield to the west and the south, they were obliged to use a vernacular understood by the common people whom they tried to instruct in the ways of Islam.

Their works, which began to appear in written form from roughly the middle of the fifteenth century, are almost entirely religious and very serious in tone. Some of the Sufis naturally found it difficult to cope with a language whose rules were as yet uncodified, and rather endearingly apologize for the fact that their writing is so inept. Although, as we saw, their language is essentially the same, styles and vocabulary can differ widely.

There are two main reasons for this: first, the long distance they traveled meant that they would spend lengthy periods of time in various linguistic regions, and would naturally be influenced by local speech; second, a discerning preacher would have to consider the kind of audience he was addressing. Non-converted Hindus would require the kind of words with which they were familiar from their own religious texts; those who were already acquainted with the basic tenets of Islam could cope with more complicated technical terms.

The later Bijapur Sufi, Burhanuddin Janam (c. 1560) can sometimes write verse employing a large number of Sanskrit, Marathi and Hindi dialect words; other poems are replete with Persian and Arabic.

Although we have no evidence for linguistic or literary debate at that time (and the contemporary Persian historians remained blissfully ignorant of any other language but their own), such debate must have taken place, and over a hundred years or so the Dakani works exhibit growing refinement.

The first text of whose authenticity we can be sure, like the short poem composed on the subject of Karbala by the Ahmadnagar Sufi, Ashraf (1503),² or the religious verse of Miran ji, who flourished in Bijapur towards the end of the fifteenth century, are rough and ready compositions, and, although generally comprehensible, do not exhibit

²Nāṣiruddīn Hāshimī, *Dakan mēn Urdū* (Lucknow, 1963), p. 233.

many obscurities.³

The works of Miran ji's son, Burhanuddin Janam, one of whose latest compositions is firmly dated 1582, are much more elegant and regular.⁴

Thus by the end of the sixteenth century we have a language which could be used for comparatively sophisticated writing.

At this period, two dynamic rulers divided the Deccan between them—Ibrahim Adil Shah II, the king of Bijapur, and Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the Sultan of Golkonda and founder of the city of Hyderabad. Both were great builders, and both were writers in their own language—Dakani.

Ibrahim, renowned for his eccentricities, chose to compose songs for which he himself chose *rāgas*; Muhammad Quli, an amorous and romantic king, preferred the Persian-style *ğazal*, and his *divān* is one of the first substantial collections of secular Urdu poetry. What is important from the point of view of Dakani literature is that these two rulers and their successors extended their patronage to other writers, and in the course of the seventeenth century, before the Deccan kingdoms were annexed by Aurangzeb, a vast amount of poetry and even a certain amount of prose was produced under the auspices of the courts. In general, Persian models were followed and, as in later Urdu literature, the love lyric (*ğazal*) and the verse romance (*maşnavī*) were the most popular genres. Some of the *maşnavīs* could run into well over a hundred thousand lines.

Before examining some of the major features of this literature, we should turn our attention to its “rediscovery” and to the developments in Dakani scholarship, which came into being at the beginning of this century.

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the capital Delhi became the natural center for Urdu poets who sought court patronage, and about this time a rather shadowy figure, named Vali, arrived on the scene. His exact provenance and dates are not known for sure, but he seems to have spent the early part of his life in the Deccan. He is usually credited with being the instigator of the Urdu tradition in the north, and earlier literary historians imagined him to have been the first great Urdu poet. The

³Mirān Ji's works can safely be dated to the first half of the 15th century. They are discussed at some length in M. Akbaruddin Şiddiqī, *Irşād-nāma* (Hyderabad, 1956).

⁴Şiddiqī, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

Dakani period had almost entirely been forgotten and its literature, perhaps because its archaic and regional style was not to the taste of those of the north, remained neglected.

In his catalogue of Hindustani manuscripts in the British Museum and the India Office Library (1899–1926), J.F. Blumhardt mentions briefly a number of important Dakani works, but his entries made little impression on contemporary Indian scholars, who still persisted in their belief that it was Vali who began the whole literary process.

One of the first researchers to turn his mind to the large corpus was Maulvi Abdul Haqq, whose untiring efforts in almost every domain of Urdu language and literature earned him the well-deserved title *Bābā-e Urdū* (The Father of Urdu). Abdul Haqq was a prolific writer, and his studies of the early Sufis, his essays, his textual commentaries and his linguistic treatises still remain standard works. Perhaps his greatest monument is his English-Urdu dictionary, which to this day remains unsurpassed as a work of lexicography.

Abdul Haqq's appointment to the *Anjuman-e Taraqqī-e Urdū* at Aurangabad gave him a unique opportunity to discover past treasures, one of which was the *Kulliyāt* of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, which he briefly described in the journal, *Risāla-e Urdū*, in 1922.⁵

This priceless manuscript, which bore the signature of Muhammad Quli's successor, was discovered in the Asifiyya (now State Central) Library of Hyderabad, from which it promptly disappeared before it could be edited.

According to Abdul Haqq, it contained something in the region of 50,000 verses, with poetry in Urdu, Persian and Telugu. This statement may not be completely accurate, since there seems to be no evidence that the king knew Telugu, but tragically we shall probably never know. Rumor has it that the manuscript was taken to the Nizam's palace and now lies in a heap of dust, ravaged by termites.

Fortunately two other incomplete manuscripts, containing only 4,000 Urdu verses, are extant in the Salar Jung Museum of Hyderabad, and were edited by Muhiuddin Qadir Zor, the doyen of Dakani studies, in 1940.

Many of these early scholars, like Abdul Haqq and Zor, who had a vast knowledge of their subject, worked alarmingly fast and perhaps

⁵Abdul Haqq, *Kulliyāt-e Muḥammad Qulī Qutb Shāh*, in *Risāla-e Urdū*, July 1922.

should have taken a little more care.

Zor, himself a native of the Deccan, and therefore one acquainted with the local dialect (which to this day retains some of the archaic idioms and vocabulary which were lost in the north) contributed a great deal to all aspects of the subject. He was highly respected as a promulgator of the literature of his own people and in present-day Hyderabad no one will hear a word said against him. Since he worked as a pioneer, however, there were bound to be blemishes in his publications, for which he cannot necessarily be blamed. None of his successors has done even half as well.

In a series of splendidly produced texts, the "*Silsila-e Yūsufīya*,"⁶ financed by the Nizam, many Dakani texts were edited for the first time. The printed books are beautiful, but the texts themselves leave a great deal to be desired. Too many sentences remain garbled, indicating that the editors did not take sufficient trouble to decipher the manuscripts they had in front of them; glossaries usually contain only the more common words, most of which can be found in Platt's Oxford dictionary. The more obscure words, which with some effort can be found elsewhere, are frequently omitted.

Brief mention be made of the series "*Qadīm Urdū*,"⁷ which under the direction of the linguist and scholar Mas'ud Husain Khan was produced in the 1960's. Here the standard of textual criticism was much higher than in previous works. As a paragon, he worked with others on the first large scale Dakani dictionary, which unfortunately, because of a short deadline imposed by the Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Academy, had to be rushed through the press and thus remains very incomplete.

Scholars in Pakistan, who have at their disposal the wealth of manuscripts housed in the library of the Karachi *Anjuman-e Taraqqī-e Urdū*, have also worked to great effect. One of the most distinguished, Jamil Jalibi, who, like most others in the field, has been far too hasty with the publications and editions, recently produced one of the fullest accounts of the literary history of the medieval period.

The obvious problem in dealing with such material is that one needs to possess a bewildering number of languages and skills, and editing a seventeenth-century text consisting of thousands of verses really demands teamwork, an idea to which many scholars do not readily lend

⁶The series of Dakani texts, which included the *Kulliyāt* of Muḥammad Quli (ed., M.Q. Zōr, 1940) ran occasionally from mid-thirties to the late fifties.

⁷Ed. M. H. Khan, Osmaniya University (Hyderabad), 1965–1969.

themselves.

Dakani writers were immensely prolific, if not prolix, and we unfortunately have little information on the way their works were received and recited in their own times.

Writers like the great court poet of Bijapur, Nusrati, in the introduction to one of his *maṣnavīs* tells us that on one festive evening he was sitting with his friends. One of them remarked how rich the literature of Persian had been, and, in contrast, how poor the writers of the Deccan are. It was therefore suggested that Nusrati, being a man of letters and influence (he represented his Bijapur patron as envoy to Golkonda), should turn his attention to emulating Anvari and Khaqani. He took up the challenge and the result was a fine *maṣnavī* of tolerable length, which might very well have been read or recited during the long moonlit nights, when courtiers had the leisure to listen once more to versions of the old romances.

But who would have the leisure, who would have had the patience to plough through the 200,000 verses of *Xāvarnāma*, a long, tedious account of the exploits of Ali, now housed in the India Office Library?

A mystery is a manuscript of the British Library, entitled *Pem Nem*. Its beautiful calligraphy and fine miniatures make it one of the treasures of the collection. The work was composed in the year 999 AH/1590 CE in Bijapur during the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II. These facts are clearly stated by the author in his preface and conclusion. The long introduction, among other things, contains some fascinating insights into the life and activities of the Bijapur court, lavish descriptions of the city and its festivals. The story which forms the bulk of the work concerns the love of the hero Shah ji for his heroine Mah ji. The details of how the lovers meet, become separated, do curious things with holy men and tortoises, and then meet again to live happily ever after do not concern us here.

One of the most striking features of the work is its language. The gist of the text can be understood with a little patience; the grammar, syntax and meaning of many verses defy interpretation. What on earth can be made of lines like these:

karak karījan kar rī karkat
kārī khan khan khar khar kharkhat
sah jal bal pal pal tal mal

*pem pāyā man muñh at*⁸

Such verses are typical of the whole work.

The *Pem Nem* was written in an age when Sufis like Burhanuddin Janam (incidentally the *pīr* and *muršid* of the author of the *Pem Nem*) were beginning to write eminently comprehensible Dakani. It was also a time when, under the patronage of Ibrahim and Muhammad Quli, writers were refining and regularizing their language and style.

If we are right in assuming that the *Pem Nem* was composed for the royal court of Bijapur—and the care lavished upon the manuscript by the unknown scribe and artists suggests that this was the case—then what sort of audience would have read or listened to such obscure lines?

Another interesting thing about the *Pem Nem* is that it was erroneously described by Blumhardt in his Hindi catalogue as a version of the *Padmāvatī*⁹ story, and thus it never came to the attention of scholars like Nasiruddin Hashmi, whose excellent pioneering work *Dakan mēñ Urdū* (Urdu in the Deccan) still remains a classic.

Blumhardt, who also perhaps took on more than is possible for one man, was misled by a hastily read verse:

nem yih astut sah jī jān
*dhan gun sāgar ratan khān*¹⁰

which can in fact be clearly interpreted as:

This section is in praise of Shah ji.
A blessed sea of qualities (*gun sāgar*), a
mine of jewels (*ratan khān*).

The last two words of the verse obviously suggested to Blumhardt the interpretation: *ratan* = *ratan sēn* (the lover of Padmavati), *khān* = *kahānī* (story): hence *ratan-kahānī* (the story of Ratan Sen [and Padmavati]). The slight error (excusable in such a monumental work), deprived the Dakani

⁸*Pem Nem*, fol. 50.

⁹J.F. Blumhardt, *Catalogue of the Hindi, Punjabi and Hindustani Manuscripts in the Library of the British Museum* (1899), p. 57. Part of the work is being edited by my research student, Mrs. Amir Zahra Raizvi.

¹⁰*Pem Nem*, foll. 37–39.

world of possibly one of its greatest treasures for almost a century.

There are many more mysteries to solve, and of course, with the vast amount of manuscript material we have at our disposal, much of which is still tucked away unedited and gathering dust in various libraries of South Asia and Europe, we could not have expected to have them all solved in the relatively short period during which scholars have been carrying out their research.

An accurate, authentic history of the two centuries when the Urdu language and its literature were developed far away from the place where the tongue originated is still to be written. Before this can be done, however, it is clear that much of the basic research still needs to be carried out.

We owe our tribute to people like Abdul Haqq, Mohiuddin Qadiri Zor, Blumhardt, and their contemporaries and followers who laid the foundations. It is now time for us and those who, hopefully, will follow us to look at the details with great scrutiny. I am convinced that so much more could have been revealed with more care, patience and, above all, cooperation.

In the following pages, I attempt to outline some of the salient features of Dakani literature, which, when one overcomes the linguistic problems, can favorably compare with that produced by later Urdu writers. I do this by sampling passages from three poets whose work can be regarded as typical. The extracts are given in English translation, with references to the original texts given in the notes.

The first extract from Burhanuddin Janam's short discourse, *Manfa'at ul Īmān* (The Benefit of the Faith),¹¹ is written in clear, simple Dakani, and the general clarity and regularity of the poem suggests that it was written some time in the latter half of the sixteenth century, towards the end of his life. The early Sufis had a very clear picture of the nature of God and the universe and usually dismissed out of hand other theories which did not conform to their own way of thinking, without taking trouble to argue the point too closely. Adjectives like "absurd," "stupid," "foolish," "wrong" are frequently used to counteract the tenets of other religions which flourished in India at the time. The Sufis, many of them charismatic elderly men, lacked nothing in energy and were prepared to travel on foot from city to city in search of converts. Burhanuddin went

¹¹Ed. M.H. Syed, Allahabad University Studies, Vol. VII, Part I, pp. 471-498.

as far as Gujarat, adapting the style and vocabulary of his sermons to the conditions he encountered. Some of his poems, presumably aimed at Hindu audiences who would not have been conversant with Islamic terminology, are replete with Sanskrit words; others, written for the consumption of the converted, possess a large element of Arabic and Persian vocabulary. In the first two verses of the following poem, the

Roman script words are Arabic; the others are common Hindi words:

1. allāh vāḥid *sirjanhār*
yē jag račnā račyā apār

2. *saglā* ‘ālam *kiyā* ṛahūr
apnē bāṭin *kerē* nūr

God is one and did create
This boundless world for man’s estate,

He created day and night.
The whole earth came from His own
light.

The negligence has cast a net
Upon the truth which we forget.

The Prophet’s path and all that’s true
Is only followed by a few.

But heretics spread cunning lies
And God they fail to recognize.

Some say God is wind and air
And to such theories oft repair.

But air is empty. Can such talk
Explain the earth on which we walk?

Some say God is merely sound,
The cause of all we see around—

The Holy Book the spoken world.
Such theories, are of course absurd.

Heed not such words, beware of lies
And let the veil fall from your eyes.

For if you follow God’s true way

In faith, you will not go astray.

Take a teacher who will show
The path of truth, then you will know

The secrets of the Power Divine
And you will have a faith like mine.

For Shah Burhan is full of light
His words will guide you through the
night.

In general the Sufis would have little to do with the court, preferring to set up their *xānqāhs* some way from the city. Their compositions, however, attracted the attention of the nobility, and one of Burhanuddin's followers was Ibrahim Adil Shah who ruled Bijapur from 1580 to 1618.

Ibrahim, like his contemporary, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the founder of the city of Hyderabad, was a great patron of the arts, and in the courts of these two rather eccentric monarchs, Urdu—at that time referred to as *dakani* (the vernacular of the south)—was given great encouragement. Both Ibrahim and Muhammad Quli were great poets in their own right and their respective works provide some of the first examples of secular writing.

Both the states of Bijapur and Hyderabad, whose rulers were effectively in control of much of the South of India, were affluent and relatively peaceful, and soon began to attract eminent Persian writers who sought refuge from the political upheavals of Iran. One of the most prominent authors of the time was the historian, Firishta, to whom we are indebted for his beautifully written, if not too accurate, account of the medieval Deccan. Firishta composed in his native tongue, and like many other Persian historians was fascinated by the life of the court, but took little trouble to report on the happenings of daily life.

Ibrahim, who by accounts spoke rather indifferent Persian, chose his own vernacular for the poems collected into his work, *Kitāb-e Nauras* (The Nauras Book). The word *nauras* (the nine traditional genres of *rasas* of ancient Indian poetry) obviously pleased him. Not only did he compose his verse, heavily influenced by traditional Hindu devotional poetry, under the title, but also built a palace, called Nauras Mahal, founded a new capital, the name of which was Nauraspur (the remains

still survive), and minted coins known as *hun-e nauras* (the *hun*, a Sanskrit word for “pagoda,” was a gold coin used in South India until fairly recent times).

Ibrahim’s *Kitāb-e Nauras*, which consists of a collection of *dōbhās* and songs, set to prescribed *rāgas*, is a curious composition. As well as songs composed in praise of the Prophet, the *Panjtan* (Muhammad, Fatima, Ali, Hasan and Husain) and the saint, Gesu Daraz, we also find a number of poems devoted to Hindu gods, especially Ganesh and Sarasvati, of whom Ibrahim, as a scholar and musician, was extremely fond. And then there are verses describing his favorite possessions, such as his *tanbūra*, to which he referred as Moti Khan, his favorite elephant, Atish Khan, which suffered a tragic death by drowning, and songs extolling the beauty of nature and the young women of the court, whose company he obviously enjoyed.

Ibrahim was a Muslim ruler of Shi’a persuasion, but his attachment to the Hindu *dēvmālā* earned him the title of *Jagat Gurū* (the Universal Mentor) in which he delighted. These eccentric practices of the king proved to be a matter of grave concern to the orthodox, and contemporary histories make reference to Muslim theologians who converged upon Bijapur to discuss the consequences of his unorthodox way of life. Many of the stories, like the one concerning Shah Abul Hasan Qadiri, are of an obviously fantastic nature, but in the original Persian make for good reading.

It is said that this particular saint, who migrated to Bijapur from the north, was anxious to win the King’s allegiance from the *jōgī*, Ajai Pal, who endeared Ibrahim to himself by raising his daughter from the dead. In the contest which followed, the *jōgī* demonstrated his miraculous powers by elevating himself to the ceiling; the Qadiri saint did the same but flew off to Mecca, from which he promptly returned with a pinch of the holy dust. Ibrahim was impressed and again embraced Islam, at which point the unfortunate daughter died once more.

Ibrahim’s style was very individual and differed greatly from that of poets to whom he extended the hand of patronage at his court. His language, a blend of local dialects, often contains words which he might well have made up himself. Comparisons are difficult to make and are usually completely invalid, but if we say that Ibrahim’s verse strikes the modern Urdu ear in much the same way as Burns’ fabricated Ayrshire dialect strikes that of a twentieth-century English speaker, perhaps we shall not be too far from the truth. Even without recourse to commentaries, we get the gist of the poems of both writers and feel that

sentiment always prevails over dry academic analysis.

Following the traditions of Indian poetry, feelings of love are often expressed in the words of a lady waiting the return of her lover, whose epitome was Krishna. His dalliance with his milkmaids, his long absences from home, his alluring charm have frequently impressed poets of every language and persuasion:

Dear moon, I'll tell you a story:
We are both unhappy by day
The night has come in its glory
And our cares are far away

I'll put out the lamp, for the envious
sun
Like a spy will take our news and run
Through every street and lane of the
town,
Beware lest he come to announce the
dawn!

Ibrahim, do not sleep! Wake up and
rise
Your young girl is decked out so fair
Embrace her and kiss those greedy eyes
Night is short and like love so rare.¹²

Another poem, set to the *rāga Malhār*, played during the rainy season, describes a beautiful, dusky southern girl. The coming of the rains offers relief from the heat of the long summer and the season is regarded as the most romantic of all.

My sweetheart and the monsoon rains
are one
For both are welcome but their visits
rare.
Her flashing smile can well outshine the
sun

¹²Nazir Ahmad, ed., *Kitāb-e Nauras* (New Delhi: 1956).

Whose radiance strives to pierce the
heavy air.
And as the moonbeam fills the sky with
light
Her sulky lips give promises of night.

Her dress reflects the colors of the sky
And little does to hide her shapely
form.
A welcome breeze repeats her passioned
sigh
Which like the thunder, echoes in a
storm.
The down upon her cheeks is warm and
soft
Her cries sound sweet like doves inside
their loft.

The thunder resounds like the beat of
the drum
The King calls out "it is time to come"
And Ibrahim is a slave entranced
To the sound of the rain a peacock
danced.¹³

Ibrahim's contemporary, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, who died a few years before him in 1612, ruled the eastern kingdom from his mountain city of Golkonda. This romantic figure also attracted the interest of Persian historians and many of their accounts are almost certainly fictitious. In 1600, in order to provide more room for the growing population of his capital, he founded the city of Hyderabad which has always been one of the most important centers of Urdu.

It is said that in his youth, Muhammad Quli fell in love with a Telugu speaking Hindu girl named Bhagmati who lived in the village of Chichlam on the other side of the river Musi. His frequent visits to her home obliged him to ride his horse through the gushing river and this caused his father, Ibrahim Qutb Shah, no little anxiety. A bridge was

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 102.

therefore constructed, known now as the Purānā Pul (the old bridge), which still carries the heavy traffic of Hyderabad.

On the site of his sweetheart's village he constructed the Čār Mīnār (the four minarets) and the new city which rapidly expanded around the building was named Bhagnagar. Later when he married Bhagmati, who then took the Muslim faith, he changed her name to Haidar Mahal, and the city founded in her honor was accordingly renamed Haidarabad.

There is probably little truth in the story, but few Hyderabadī citizens have ever disputed it.

What remains of Muhammad Qulī's verse consists almost entirely of Urdu *ġazals*, which show the increasing influence of Persian upon the language. His meters, which are those employed by every Urdu poet, whether in the south or the north, who came after him, are impeccably Persian, and his poems display some influence of the great Iranian masters whom he admired, especially Hafiz, some of whose *ġazals* he rendered into Urdu.

Many of Muhammad Qulī's *ġazals* were composed on the theme of love, often expressed in the Indian fashion by a woman awaiting the favors of her lover, who frequently turns out to be the King himself.

My love's away; I cannot sleep this long
night through.
My handsome Lord, my only pleasure
is to sleep with you.

I lie unconscious; then I wipe my
burning, fevered brow.
My memory belies my thoughts. My
Lord, please do come now!

Hippocrates could not prescribe for me
a curing antidote.
Give me the wine of your lips. On you
alone, my Lord, I dote.

One night in love is like a hundred
nights—or so it's said.
But now I rest alone, my Lord. Please
call me to your bed.

You are king; your deeds and valiant
actions are so brave.
Relive me, if you wish. From you a kiss
is all I crave.

My God, I thank the Prophet for the
gift that he bestowed
Upon the King. With her sweet talk,
she'll win all she is owed.¹⁴

In others the beloved is described in the more conventional way by the male lover. In this happy age love was rarely unrequited and Muhammad Quli's verse stands in sharp contrast to that of the later Delhi poets, like Mir Taqi Mir (c. 1722–1810), whose *ġazals*, no doubt reflecting the despondency of his age, are full of lamentation and tears of blood. One gains the impression that Muhammad Quli suffered little during his life.

Love is sweet in every way, in every
heart,
My sweetheart's love sustains my soul if
we're apart.

The whole world is enchanted by her
flashing eyes
Her tresses raise a tumult in the
heavenly skies.

Ascetics lost their senses when they saw
her face.
The breath of Jesus is imparted by her
charm and grace.

Let men of learning tell me all I should
not do.
But fate decreed that I should fall in

¹⁴M.Q. Zōr, ed., *Kulliyāt-e Muḥammad Qulī Quṭb Šāh* (Hyderabad, 1940), Pt. 2, p. 5.

love with you.

My rival's jealous. How his wretched
head bows down!
When he beholds the jewels in my
radiant crown.

For I received this blessing from the
twelve Imams,
Who favored me and took me in their
loving arms.

The Pole Star is your rightful title,
Qutb Shah
Give thanks to God that it will always
be your star.¹⁵

An interesting feature of this work are the *ġazals* he composed to mark the various festivals, both religious and secular, which took place annually in Hyderabad, and we have a number of poems on the subject of the birthdays of the Prophet and Ali, whom as a fervent Shi'a, he passionately admired; his own birthday; the celebrations of the New Year and the rainy season; the buildings of Hyderabad; and the joys of life in general.

Muhammad Quli, for all his religious fervor, is known to have indulged, perhaps to excess, in drinking wine, which according to some accounts was the cause of his premature death. Reluctantly he abstained during Ramazān, the month of fasting, but as soon as the crescent moon was sighted in the sky heralding the end of the month's ordeal, he once more gladly took up his goblet.

The moon is on the heaven! Pour me
wine; please pour me wine!
The fasting's gone, my *sāqī*; now this
goblet will be mine.

For one whole month I've fasted; I've

¹⁵*Ibid.*, Pt. I, p. 243.

respected the command
Of Islam, now I seek the favor of your
gentle hand.

The flask now bends its narrow neck in
deference to me.
I hope I am forgiven for this long
sobriety.

For thirty days, my *sāqī*, I have been
without a drink.
Come, fill the cups, my darling servant,
right up to the brink.

My God! This wine is vintage. It's so
red, so full, so nice.
I wonder if they'll serve me when I go
to Paradise?¹⁶

Muhammad Quli, whose ancestors had originated from Turkestan, and had therefore been Sunni by persuasion, became a Shi'a, and his feelings towards Ali and the family of Ali, who met their death at Karbala, are frequently expressed in his verse. Like many of the Sufi poets who preceded him, he had little time for dissenters and heretics.

Under the patronage of the rulers of Bijapur and Golkonda, whose kingdoms flourished until the 1680's, when they were finally annexed by the Mughals, many works of increasing quality were produced by writers who were attached to the respective courts. The favorite genres were the *maṣnavī* and the *ghazal*, but other works were also produced both in verse and prose. These works have only recently attracted the attention of scholars and scores of manuscripts still lie unedited in various libraries of the world.

Over the eighty year period during which they were composed, the language went through a continuous process of refinement and standardization, but maintained its distinctive Dakani features, which can still be heard in the Urdu spoken in Hyderabad and other cities of the south.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, Pt. I, p. 104.