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Mir in “Fact” and Fiction*

MIR MUHAMMAD TAQI, Mir, was born around 1723 in Agra. He lived most of his adult life in Delhi, with an extended spell as a refugee in Bharatpur, Dig and Kumher; he then moved to Lucknow, where he died in 1810. Mir is the only premodern Urdu poet who wrote an autobiography, albeit in Persian. It is entitled *Zikr-e Mir* (An Account of Mir).¹

The book has two main sections. The first describes Mir’s father and the people who, coming in contact with him, found their lives radically transformed. The second section is an extended account of the political events in Delhi, in particular, and North India, in general, which Mir himself witnessed or learned about. The short final section is a collection of jokes and amusing anecdotes, some of them unfit for children. Mir started the book in his late thirties, and wrote most of it over the next ten years, approximately from 1761 to 1771.

The second section, in addition to political history, also contains bits and pieces of a more personal nature. Mir mentions his troubles with his stepbrother and the latter’s uncle, Sirāju’d-Dīn ‘Alī Khān, Ārzū, an influential critic, poet, and lexicographer of the time. Mir had stayed with Ārzū on moving to Delhi and described him in glowing terms in an earlier book. But in *Zikr*, written after Ārzū’s death, Mir has only hateful words for him, and blames Ārzū for the nervous breakdown he suffered—the period of Mir’s “moon-madness.”² Mir also mentions most of his patrons, particularly the people whose service he formally joined. But much, much

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¹All references to this work are to its English translation (Naim).

²In *Zikr* and in the *mašnavī* “Khvāb-o-Khayāl” Mir reports a spell of lunacy, when he perceived a shape in the moon and remained obsessed with it until he was cured (Naim 1999, 189–92).

more is left out. He does not tell us the year of his birth, nor does he mention his two marriages and all his children. Nothing is said about the life of poetry in Delhi and Lucknow—not one word about his major contemporaries such as Shāh Ḥātām, Muḥammad Rafī‘ Saudā, and Khvāja Mīr Dard. Nothing even about Abdul Ḥai Tābān, whose physical beauty Mīr had extolled and whose premature death he had grieved over in an earlier book (1935, 108–9). There are, additionally, any number of people, places, and details that are mentioned in some of Mīr’s topical poems in the *mašnavī* form but find no place in the autobiography.

And Mīr certainly does not take us into his confidence concerning any affair of the heart. We get only one brief, nostalgic glimpse into the rich experience of life he must have had in Delhi for at least a couple of decades. After staying as a refugee for some time in the Jat territory, Mīr returned to Delhi in February 1761, which in the meantime had been pillaged, first by the Afghans and the Rohillas, then by the Marathas, and was again under Afghan occupation.

Suddenly I found myself in my old neighborhood—where I used to gather my friends and recite verses; where I once lived the life of love and shed tears many a night; where I fell in love with slim and tall [beauties] and sang high their praises; where I spent time with those who had long ringlets and where I adored many a beauty. If I were without such people for even a moment I would pine for them. [It was here that] I once arranged joyous gatherings of beautiful people and laid out feasts for them, where I had lived a most joyful life. But now no familiar face came into sight so I could spend a few happy moments with him. Nor could I find anyone worthy to talk to.

(Naim 1999, 94; translation revised for the present paper)

The rest of the book, however, adds not the tiniest detail to the above.

Of course, like any autobiography, *Zikr* is an attempt to leave behind for posterity a persona of the writer’s own preference. What I find intriguing are the distinctions Mīr seems to make between the account he gives of himself in *Zikr* and the autobiographical information he shares in other writings. The persona of a mystically inclined son of an allegedly prominent Sufi makes its appearance only in the prose autobiography, as does the person who claims to be a political historian and a diplomat. No such claim, to my knowledge, is found in Mīr’s verse. On the other hand, Mīr’s decrepit home, his pet animals, and a couple of alleged love affairs find expression almost exclusively in his topical poems or *mašnavīs*. As for Mīr’s interaction with other poets of his time, young and old, it is presented in a piecemeal manner in his earliest prose work, the *tazkira* entitled *Nikāt al-Shu‘arā’*, and in one short *mašnavī*, “*Aždar-Nāma*,”

where he presents himself as a dragon of a poet who could swallow all lesser poets in one gulp. Mīr's third prose work, *Faiẓ-e Mīr*, written as a reader for his son Mīr Faiẓ 'Alī, is similar to *Zikr* in projecting Mīr as a person much at home among Sufis. The personal information in it is trivial.

I am unable to explain this compartmentalization. One may posit some link between the contents of each book or poem and its intended audience, but one would then be speculating about intended audiences. For example, concerning *Zikr*, one can only say that its intended audience was never very large. In fact, during the years of its composition it could have been an audience of one, i.e., Mīr's patron of the moment: first Raja Nagar Mal, then Navāb Āṣafu'd-Daula. Could it be that Mīr expected *Zikr* to be read only by the ruling élite? Was it a way to display himself as a poet who was not circumscribed by what was in his verse? On the other hand, there is more of the personal in several *maṣnavīs*. The poems about pet animals—were they meant for his children? And who was the intended audience of the poem about his sexual conquest at Tisang? Apparently, Mīr had no wish to show a close fit between his topical verse in Urdu and a formal narrative of his life in Persian prose. The two served different purposes for him, but what they were, I cannot say. A close fit, however, becomes a tempting goal and a useful tool for those who write about Mīr later. Here I comment on only three.

The first is Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, whose famous book on Urdu poets, *Āb-e Ḥayāt*, came out in 1881. Āzād had no knowledge of *Zikr*, but he had access to *Faiẓ* and *Nikāt*. He also had access to many previous *tazkiras*, and relied on them heavily for biographical and anecdotal information. The influence of his book on Urdu literary criticism cannot be overestimated. With reference to Mīr, it created a particular image of the poet in Urdu literary history that still dominates much of what is commonly written about him.

At the beginning of his section on Mīr, Āzād makes a general statement about his personality:

[...] Mīr Sahib's loftiness of vision was so extreme that no one's worldly position, or accomplishment, or greatness, earned his esteem. This flaw made him temperamental, and kept him always deprived of worldly comfort and freedom from care—and he, wrongly thinking himself full of consistency of style and contentment in poverty, considered it a source of pride.

(2001, 186)

In the main, Āzād is anxious to set up a major binary opposition between Mīr and Mīr's chief contemporary, Muḥammad Rafī' Saudā, which he then uses with reference to some other poets too. Here is the

paradigmatic anecdote that Āzād uses to set up the distinction.

One day in Lucknow two people became involved in a prolonged dispute about the poetry of Mīr and Mirzā. Both were disciples of K̄hvājah Bāsiṭ. They went to him and petitioned that he should decide. He said that both were accomplished masters, but the difference was only this: that Mīr Sahib's poetry is a sigh [*āb*], and Mirzā Sahib's poetry is a "Bravo!" [*vāb*]. As an example, he recited this verse of Mīr Sahib's:

Speak softly near Mīr's bed—
He's just now wept himself to sleep

Then he recited this verse of Mirzā's:

On Saudā's pillow there was the tumult of Doomsday,
The respectful servants said, "He's just now gone to sleep."

(*ibid.*, 160–1)

The other anecdote that similarly gained a paradigmatic status among Urdu scholars is about a room that had a window opening on to a garden. Mīr occupied it for a few years, but he reportedly never bothered to open the window. One day a visitor remarked: Mīr Sahib, why don't you open the window, there is a garden under it. When Mīr showed surprise at the news, the friend added, "That's why the Navab brought you here, to divert and cheer you." Mīr then pointed to the scraps of paper on the carpet around him on which he had drafted his ghazals, and replied, "I'm so absorbed in attending to this garden, I'm not even aware of that one" (*ibid.*, 199).

For Āzād, Mīr is a total introvert, while Saudā is as extroverted a person as they come. That difference in their personalities, Āzād argues, also defines their relative excellence in separate genres of poetry—it makes Mīr excel in ghazals, and makes Saudā a superior panegyrist and satirist. Āzād, repeatedly, describes Mīr as *darvīsh*-like, as a person who held in disdain the many temptations of the world. Like a *darvīsh*, let me reiterate, and not like a Sufi. Not for a moment does Āzād suggest that Mīr was a Sufi, or that his verse was mystical. Āzād recognizes the fact that Mīr was a professional poet, and as such sought and found patrons, and wrote poems to please them. But, according to Āzād, Mīr shows his true self in his ghazals—heartbroken in both love and life because he never received what he really deserved, and a great tragic figure, for his own nature would not allow him to accept happiness when it came to him. Āzād believed that to excel in what he regarded was special to the ghazal—themes related to love/Love, a melancholic atmosphere, and simplicity of expression—the poet had to have a particular temperament. And Mīr, Āzād believed, was naturally gifted with just such a temperament (*ibid.*,

160). Āzād's views still dominate in Urdu books and classrooms. They continue to define for most Urdu readers where a "true" ghazal comes from, casting into neglect a great deal of ghazal poetry, including a lot of Mīr's own.

My second author is Khushwant Singh, whose novel about Delhi, appropriately entitled *Delhi*, came out in 1989. In it Singh imagines a narrative not only for the two Delhis of today but also for several other Delhis of the historical past. The novel is segmented into chapters. Some are historical in nature; they are narrated by some relevant historical figure as imagined by Singh. Interspersed are many shorter chapters that are narrated by a Singh, who at times is identical with the author. In these non-historical chapters, the narrator interacts with his muse, Bhagmati, who is both male and female, and thus capable of satisfying the most intimate needs of both sexes. Their interaction, often violently sexual, narrates a parallel story of love/hate interdependency, and only vaguely seems to comment upon the historical narratives. A literary critic would say: Bhagmati, crude and ugly, but ample in many seductive ways, is for Singh a metaphor for Delhi, the city of numerous pasts and as many presents.

Khushwant Singh loves and respects Urdu poetry. He has read much in Urdu, including, evidently, the superb Urdu translation of *Zikr* by the late Nišār Aḥmad Fārūqī. Singh's chapter on Mīr's Delhi is simply titled, "Meer Taqi Meer," and runs to thirty-seven pages. Narrated by Mīr, it opens with the statement: "I do not know which I was more, a lover or a poet. Both love and poetry consumed me. An affair of the heart brought me into disrepute; my poetry earned me a name which resounded all over Hindustan" (1989, 195).

Singh depends on *Zikr* a great deal throughout the chapter. He gives us Mīr's father as Mīr claimed him to be: a profound mystic. So too, the father's close friend, Mīr's "Chacha" Amānu'l-Lāh. The two men were intimate friends, but, according to Singh, also quite different. Singh, at one place, has Mīr's father say, "[I]f you love God you love everything created by God." To which Amānu'l-Lāh responds, "If you love God's creatures you love God" (*ibid.*, 195–96). And so in due course, Amānu'l-Lāh falls madly in love with a beautiful boy, and, according to Singh, eventually dies pining away in that love. Singh then has Mīr make the following comment: "Unfortunately it was neither the kind of love that consumed *Chacha* Amanullah nor the sort my father spoke of that became my abiding passion but the type that envelopes a man when he loses his head and his heart to one woman" (*ibid.*, 196).

Khushwant Singh's Mīr begins life in his father's hospice outside Agra,

then, after the father's death, moves into the city itself, where he starts earning a pittance tutoring children. He attends mushairas and finds most poets third-rate, in particular a poet named Parvāna (Moth). Yet Mīr also feels envious of them for the attention and applause they receive. It is that envy that first motivates Singh's Mīr to compose poetry himself, but he soon discovers that "[verses] poured out of [him] like the waters of the Tasneem" (*ibid.*, 198). A mushaira is held at the house of "Agra's richest Nawab, Rais Mian" (*ibid.*), whose Begum was rumored to have taken a fancy to Parvāna. In the mushaira, Parvāna tries to belittle Mīr and asks him to present some of his verses. When Mīr complies, after some reluctance, the assembly breaks into applause. Soon a maid approaches Mīr. She quietly puts a gold coin in his hand then conveys to him the Begum's request to bring her a copy of his ghazal in person the following day.

Singh depicts Mīr as fifteen at the time, and the Begum twice that age. At their meeting the following day the Begum promises Mīr unstinting patronage and appoints him her children's tutor. When Mīr's mother, suspicious of her son's sudden good fortune, visits the Begum, the Begum not only gives her valuable gifts, but sometime later also arranges for Mīr to be married to a poor relation of her own. Besotted with love, Mīr gives the Begum a new name, Qamaru'n-Nisā, "the Moon Among Women" (*ibid.*, 202).³

Singh, true to form, is generous with the physical details of love-making, and makes it clear that the Begum was an adept both at seducing young men and manipulating her husband. But he also has her speak frankly to Mīr about her obligations to her husband. Mīr, however, is not that mature or sophisticated; he becomes jealous of the husband. He also gets upset when the affair becomes known to the gossips. Again the Begum takes control of things. She arranges for Mīr to join her husband in Delhi, with expectations of better patronage.

Mīr leaves his family at Agra and moves to Delhi. The Navāb helps him attend a mushaira where Mīr becomes an instant hit. Many of the élite in the audience give him tokens of their appreciation. Mīr, an innocent lost in the big city, promptly squanders all the money, first on a "special" paan in the Chowk and then on the dubious charms of a young woman in a dark alley.

Life, however, turns good for Mīr, for Navāb Ṣamṣāmu'd-Daula offers him sustained patronage. Mīr makes some money; he earns much fame. He even makes "a point to join the Friday prayer because of the adulation [he receives] from the congregation" after the prayers are over (*ibid.*, 219).

³Singh's way to accommodate the "moon-madness" episode in Mīr's life.

But soon reports come that Nadir Shah is on his way to Delhi. The royal army suffers a defeat, and Şamşāmu'd-Daula is killed in the encounter. Mīr now runs back to Agra, “the city of [his] heart’s ruination” (*ibid.*, 220), only to discover that the Begum had hired a new tutor for her children. After a miserable six months he returns to Delhi, where he suffers a nervous breakdown. He is bound and held, leeches are stuck to his body, and other harsh cures are applied. Then an old lady’s efforts bring him back to normalcy.

The remaining nine pages of the chapter are devoted to the story of Delhi’s ruination as described in *Zikr*. It ends with Mīr in Lucknow, eighty years old and nearly blind, looking back at what he and his beloved city had endured. His final words are: “Why do people tell frightening tales of the road of death when there are so many going along the same way to keep one company? I have no fear of dying. I had two loves in my life, Begum Qamarunnissa and Delhi. One destroyed me, the other was destroyed for me. I have nothing more to live for” (*ibid.*, 232).

My final author is Shamsu'r-Raḥmān Fārūqī, the doyen of Urdu literary critics, a many-talented man of vast learning, whose profound work on Urdu *dāstāns* will remain unique for generations and whose extraordinary, four-volume study of Mīr’s ghazals encompasses all that anyone needs to know to appreciate not just Mīr but the entire poetic heritage of Urdu. Fārūqī’s fiction about Mīr is 116 pages long and entitled “In Şuḥbatōñ mēñ Ākhir...” (Eventually, in Such Company...) (2001). The reference is to a couplet of Mīr’s:

*In şuḥbatōñ mēñ ākhir janēñ hī jātiyāñ haiñ
Nē ‘ishq kō hai şarfa nē ḥusn kō muḥābā*

One eventually loses one’s life in keeping such company,
For neither Passion nor Beauty knows any limit.

The lengthy short story was first published around 1996. In the preface to the collection that came out in 2001, Fārūqī explicitly states that his was an attempt to resurrect the Delhi of the eighteenth century as he believed it truly had been. He does so mostly in a lush language that echoes the language of *dāstāns*, perhaps to enhance an impression of verisimilitude. For both, he says, he was inspired by Charles Makepeace Thackeray’s *The History of Henry Esmond*—a book, I confess, I have barely heard of.

To create his fictional Mīr, Fārūqī adopts the voice of an omnipresent narrator, but, interestingly, also presents himself as a confidant of Mīr’s—someone with whom, later in his life, Mīr shares many of the events and their aftermath.

Fārūqī puts as much effort into imagining Mīr's first and only true love, Nūr, as into Mīr himself. In fact, his narrative begins a generation earlier and very far away from India. It starts with the story of Labība Khānum, a Jewish woman whose ancestors flee from Spain to seek refuge in Ottoman Bulgaria, and subsequently settle in Ottoman Armenia. Labība, however, becomes an orphan in childhood and gets sold to a courtesan. She suffers much hardship, but with growing age comes exceptional beauty to make life better for her. She, however, remains chaste at heart even in a house of sensual pleasures. Then a Circassian musician named Bāyazīd comes into town. He has a bewitching voice, but also suffers from consumption. Bāyazīd and Labība fall in love—he, having heard of her beauty; she, from hearing his song. Sometime later they run away to Tabriz, with Labība carrying plenty of gold and jewels. Their union produces a daughter, whom they name Nūra's-Sa'ādat (Light of Blessing). The year is 1731, i.e., eight or nine years after Muḥammad Taqī's birth in Agra.

Nūr inherits her mother's beauty, her father's illness, and their combined artistic talents. When the father dies, Labība moves with Nūr to Isfahan, where she runs an opulent salon and sings for a living. Twelve years pass, and as Nūr grows, the author brings out her twin traits of acting stubborn and haughty while being utterly charming and precocious. We are assured that no one in Isfahan gained any intimacy with either the mother or the daughter.

Now the year is 1743, four years after Nadir's invasion. Nūr is twelve, in Isfahan; Muḥammad Taqī is twenty, in Delhi. He lives in the house of his step-uncle, Sirāju'd-Dīn 'Alī Khān, Ārzū, and is becoming known as Mīr—a poet of exceptional talent among the countless poets in Delhi.

One day an Indian dignitary named Rā'ē Kishan Čand, Ikhlāṣ, arrives in Isfahan, sent by Navāb Qamaru'd-Dīn Khān, the Indian Emperor Muḥammad Shāh's Prime Minister, to invite Labība Khānum to Delhi to perform at his daughter's wedding. At first Labība is reluctant to undertake the journey, but Nūr and Ikhlāṣ manage to persuade her. That Labība and Ikhlāṣ are immediately attracted to each other also helps. During the journey, Ikhlāṣ, who knows Mīr well, recites one of his couplets and translates it for the women. It is so direct and passionate in tone that it reminds Labība of the past masters she admired. This occurs after nearly forty pages of dense narration. Clearly for Fārūqī, the entirely fictional Labība and Nūr are as fascinating and exceptional as the relatively more factual Ikhlāṣ and Mīr. For Fārūqī, only two peris from Qāf would do for the two talented poets of Delhi.

The narration now moves to Delhi. It is the morning of the night Mīr

leaves Ārzū's house for good after they had a nasty argument. He meets a man named 'Alīmu'l-Lāh who gets him a position in the assembly of Navāb Ri'āyat Khān—the groom at the coming wedding. And so, as a lowly member of the groom's party, Mīr finally sees Nūr at the wedding entertainment and falls passionately in love. When Ikhhlāṣ tells him that Nūr already admired his poetry, Mīr sends her one of his ghazals. She responds, but only months later. The two meet, then keep meeting as occasions allow. Their passion is mutual, but it is never consummated—until perhaps one night, when both are in a remote village called Tisang in the retinue of a common patron. Fārūqī veils that night of union (*shab-e vaṣṭ*) in a cascade of beguiling words. His account is sensuous, even titillating, but insists on remaining a mystery. Did Nūr actually visit Mīr in that dark and dreadful room; was it merely a nocturnal dream; or was it perhaps a phantasmagoria of the kind Mīr had suffered earlier? Fārūqī writes: "Mīr would swear all his life that he had not come awake that night at all ... but he would also as readily swear on the Qur'ān and say that something certainly had happened that night" (2001, 220).⁴

Things suddenly take a bad turn. Nūr's health deteriorates, Ahmad Shah Abdali attacks Hindustan, the Prime Minister is killed in a freak accident, and Ikhhlāṣ is fatally wounded. Consequently, the mother and daughter leave Delhi to return to Tabriz, but Nūr dies on the way at Herat. At her death she was 17 years and 7 months old. That is to say, she and Mīr had been the object of each other's passion for five years. But while Mīr had loved her ensconced in a world of his own making, Nūr had loved him in the real world. When the terrible news reaches Mīr, he gives up poetry, but then slowly, after over a year, takes it up again. A major transformation, however, has taken place. Mīr realizes that now the world totally dominates him [*dunyā us par ḥāvī hō-čukī hai*]. We are left to think of the rest of his life in the light of that cryptic realization.

Conclusions

I have, in fact, no conclusions to offer. I am simply intrigued by Mīr the man, and the fictional depictions of him. Being intrigued, to me, means being interested in something but leaving one's guard up. Hence I do not speculate any conclusions; I only point out what I find intriguing and

⁴Fārūqī uses the word *mu'āmalā*, thus linking his account to Mīr's *maṣnavī* "Mu'āmalāt-e 'Ishq," from which he draws other details too. He also uses *Muraqqa'-e Diblī* and several other books to add many details and reported events.

why.

Arguably, in *Zikr*, Mīr makes two major claims of experiential knowledge for himself: one, that as a child he had a mystical bent; and the other, that as an adult he was adept at politics and diplomacy. A less dominant purpose is to belittle Ārzū, the famous scholar and Mīr's step-uncle. Mīr had praised him in his *tazkira* when Ārzū was alive, but in *Zikr*—when Ārzū is dead—he denounces him roundly, while simultaneously plundering Ārzū's famous dictionary, *Ārāgh-e Hidāyat*, for rare Persian words and expressions, to claim them, in effect, as a part of his own learning. More intriguingly, during the same time at Kumher, Mīr also composes a rapturous note on his own Persian poetry and inserts it into the text of Ārzū's acclaimed *tazkira*, *Majma' an-Nafā'is*, in a manuscript that was most likely prepared under his supervision (Naim 1999, 7, 13–15).

Returning to Mīr's two major claims—that he was as much at home among Sufis as among diplomats and warriors—I must stress that they are made independent of his poetry. Mīr does not make them to add authority or authenticity to his verse in any manner. His being a great poet, to his mind, was independent of his allegedly being a wise political councilor.

Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, on the other hand, employs anecdotes about Mīr to build a particular personality: haughty, disdainful of others, and also otherworldly and introverted. It helps Āzād set up a literary-critical binary opposition that he then uses to explain not only the difference he felt existed between Mīr and Saudā but also to suggest what truly constituted excellence in ghazal poetry. That, in turn, aids him in positing an alleged distinction between Delhi and Lucknow societies—the latter being the more extroverted and almost devoid of having any “internal” life. I find the trajectory of Āzād's logic intriguing, and also the fact that his views still endure among so many Urdu readers.

Both Mīr and Āzād thought of a human personality in terms of *mizāj* or inherent dispositions based on a theory of bodily humors. For them a person was born with a particular inherent disposition, which never changed except perhaps in the company or *ṣuḥbat* of some spiritual master. A child, to their mind, was already the adult.

Singh and Fārūqī, on the other hand, believe in evolution, growth, and change, in life-crises and their transformative power. Both, therefore, imagine separate “coming-of-age” stories for Mīr. And since they are modern authors, their stories are also about “sexual awakening” and “loss of innocence.” However, while Singh's story is pretty straightforward in that regard, Fārūqī's fiction displays some other concerns too.

Fārūqī, in the main, imagines two heterosexual love stories that are identical in essence. In both, the feminine element is endowed with ex-

traordinary physical attributes—one look is enough to arouse the corresponding male’s passion. The male protagonists are not physically unattractive, but they do have some invisible bodily defect: Bāyazīd suffers from tuberculosis, and Mīr from melancholia—two quintessential romantic illnesses. Each feminine protagonist, however, is attracted to the corresponding masculine on account of something ethereal: Bāyazīd’s music in the case of Labība Khānum, and Mīr’s poetry in Nūr’s case. To enhance the non-physical aspect of the female passion, there is even significant physical distance when it is first aroused. Labība hears Bāyazīd’s music from inside her home, while he sits in the market square, and Nūr first hears Mīr’s verses hundreds of miles away from Delhi. That would seem to imply that female passion was somehow more subtle and refined.

But Fārūqī also makes his female protagonists the more assertive and active—it is they who initiate the rough and tumble that must follow the first chaste glance of romantic love. In that regard, he is not unlike Singh, who also lets the Begum be on top of Mīr’s life in every manner. Intriguingly, while the aggressive female of Singh’s imagination is almost twice Mīr’s age, Fārūqī’s assertive and controlling woman is eight years younger than Mīr’s twenty-two. For one author, Mīr comes of age thanks to an older woman of appetites, for the other, it is a precocious teen who does the good work. Of course, Nūr is not merely precocious; she has also seen too much of the world. Compared to Nūr, Fārūqī’s Mīr is as innocent as Singh’s Mīr is compared to the Begum. This shared insistence on Mīr’s “innocence” I find very intriguing. Related to it is the fact that neither author exploits for his fiction Mīr’s rumored involvement with a female relative of Ārzū’s. Is it because doing so would not allow the loss-of-innocence motif, or the equally common literary motif—masculine fantasy?—of an assertive and experienced woman awakening a callow youth to the realities of life? But why should it be so? Why do these intriguing features turn up in the love life of an eighteenth-century poet even when imagined by two twentieth-century authors? I honestly have no answers to offer. At the moment, I am merely intrigued. □

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