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*Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane**

THE VAST SCHOLARSHIP ON memory has extensively discussed the relationship between reenacting past events in practices of remembrance and collective identity formation processes.¹ Recent research on historiographical practices in South Asia points out the role of non-institutionalized popular and literary historical narratives in creating modern dominant visions of the past and political identities (see Deshpande 2007). Studies on the historical representation of 1857 suggest a close connection between South Asian writing about the *ghadr* (uprising) and community discourses since the early twentieth century, in the course of which 1857 was constructed as a watershed of Indian national history. Through the contestation of its character and memory, different actors made a claim on the definition of the event and their role in it, and hence on their position in contemporary society (Alavi 2008, 148–63).

This essay focuses on the Delhi-based Sufi master, author and activist Khwāja Ḥasan Niẓāmī's (1878–1955) edited twelve-volume² Urdu series on 1857, *Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsānē* (Tales of the Uprising in Delhi) as one strand in the historical discourse on 1857 in late colonial India. Published from 1914 onwards, over a period of more than two decades, the texts provide a collage of primary source editions and translations, as well as Niẓāmī's historiographical syntheses, which were based on Urdu and En-

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¹ Among the earlier influential works in the large body of research in this field are the studies by Assmann (2011) and Nora (1996–1998; 1989).

² Here I refer to the number of volumes as given in the recent omnibus edition of the series (Niẓāmī 2007). Earlier editions included more volumes, e.g. Mirzā Farḡatū'l-Lāh Bēg's (1979; 1949) popular novelette *Dehli ki Ākbiri Sham* (The Last Flame of Delhi) about one of the last mushairas, a gathering of poets where they read from their compositions, which was held in Bahadur Shah's Delhi (Farooqi 2008, 216–18).

glish history books as well as on oral accounts by contemporary witnesses.

In the following discussion I will trace Khvāja Ḥasan Niẓāmī's position within the narratives of meaning around 1857. Who belonged to the collective self he imagined, what was its character, and how did he construct it in the texts? How did he create identification among his audience in his literary evocation of the event of the *ghadr*?

This essay attempts to recover Niẓāmī's *Ghadr-e Dehli kē Afsānē* (henceforward GDA) as a Sufi reformist perspective on 1857 within ongoing identity debates. In prevailing historiographies there is a tension of secular-inclusive versus religious-exclusive nationalist vistas.³ My essay offers ways of thinking beyond this dialectic, highlighting one strand in the production of a colonial Urdu historical memory of 1857. Additionally, it probes how the texts construct "belonging" as a habitual practice of ethical conduct with the help of a semantic of emotion woven into the texts.

Niẓāmī reenacts the suffering of the people in Delhi who were affected by 1857 by way of an emotive rendering of their painful experience of the uprising. With its graphic descriptions of the horror of the historic conflict, and its explanation in accordance with a common narrative resulting from the moral decadence of the ruling classes of society, the series is framed as *'ibrat* (warning), with a didactic and potentially redemptive intent (2007, 16).

I argue that the GDA aims at a moral reform of the assumed reader through evoking an emotional response from their reimagining of the past agony and loss and rationalizing it as a just punishment. The shared experience and problematic memory of suffering also serves as a bonding tool for the larger community that possibly identified with Niẓāmī's history of the siege of Delhi. Hence, for Niẓāmī, the intended cathartic effect of affectively remembering is directed at the production of community and at the reform of its character.

This essay suggests that the first volume of the GDA, entitled *Bēgamāt kē Āñsū* (The Tears of the Ladies), projects an ethos consisting of a reformed work ethic, of love, patience and compassion as the core of an envisioned collective identity. While most of these ideals of conduct were shared by large parts of northern Indian society across communities and classes, they also resonate within Sufi traditions as aspects of a pious attitude. Niẓāmī's emphasis on education and work, however, responds to policies of social reformist movements since the nineteenth century. These virtues are in accordance with Niẓāmī's agenda of Sufi politics and reflect his position towards the Raj and the Indian nationalist resistance to

³For the Pakistani Muslim perspective, see, for example, Chaghatai (2007).

it. In the *Bēgamāt kē Āñsū* they are embodied in the dervishes and the shrine of the saint Niẓāmu'd-Dīn Auliya'. They act as a successful alternative to the proud and luxurious ways of the Delhi nobility in the Red Fort at the time of the upheavals during the siege and its aftermath. I argue that Niẓāmī claims a reformed Sufi piety both as a valid definition of being Muslim and as an attractive possible identification for the larger society in the modern era, with its British government and specific requirements. Through the politics of emotions in his writings on 1857, Niẓāmī thus negotiates the character of the community trying to come to terms with the colonial situation and the position of the Sufis therein.

Niẓāmī's persona as an historian was not limited to being the editor of the series on 1857 under consideration here. Although he was never formally affiliated with any academic institution, he published extensively on the history of India, Islam, and the Muslim community. Written in an appealing style and made available in the market at an affordable price, his works addressed a broad Urdu-reading audience and sought to contribute to contemporary identity debates.⁴

Niẓāmī was a prolific and well-networked publicist, journalist and writer on various other themes as well. In many pieces he commented on contemporary politics. Much of his writing appeared in the context of his activist agenda, as an effort to argue for a position within South Asian Muslim politics, spread knowledge about Sufism and Islam with the aim to empower the Indian Sufi and the Muslim community and strengthen its identity within its contemporary environment.

Niẓāmī also made a name for himself as a popular Sufi master of the Chishti Order, with a huge trans-local following. Initiated into the lineage of Pīr Mehr 'Alī Shāh of Golra Sharif, Niẓāmī spent most of his life until his death in 1955 in the neighborhood of the shrine of the Chishti saint Niẓāmu'd-Dīn Auliya' in Delhi—where Niẓāmī was born in 1878 into a family of traditional custodians of the dargah.

Niẓāmī's Sufism was of a reformist tinge. Having studied with several teachers, including the cofounder of the Deobandi seminary, Rashīd Aḥmad Gaṅgōhī,⁵ Niẓāmī argued for the abolition at the shrines of practices that were deemed outside of Islamic law. He also promoted a moral lifestyle for members of all classes, specifically emphasizing a strong work ethic (1919, 71–72; Hermansen 2007, 32).

⁴See, for instance, Niẓāmī 1917, 1923a, 1923b, 1925a, 1925b, 1926, 1927, 1944, 1947, and 2005.

⁵For Gaṅgōhī's critique of Sufism, see Ingram (2009).

Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane (GDA)

Nizāmī's GDA meticulously assembles contemporary letters and newspaper articles during the siege of Delhi, translations of eyewitness narratives, and accounts of the suffering of the Mughal royals, of Delhi's population and of the British during the different phases of the *ghadr*.⁶ They were first serialized between 1914 (Nizāmī 1919, 87) and the 1930s. Due to their great popularity, the various volumes were continuously reprinted from then on. Interest in Nizāmī's treatment of the "mutiny" theme has evidently remained high. To date, we have several post-independence editions in Pakistan and India, with complete omnibus volumes published in both countries on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the event in 2007.

The different volumes bear a remarkably heterogeneous style and content. For instance, *Ghadr kī Ṣubḥ-o-Shām* (2007, 535–672) is dedicated to conveying detailed information about the course of events during 1857 in a rather sober idiom. The plots of others are constructed with a focus on suspense and the experience of individual princesses, for instance the story of Ghamza Bēgam in the last volume *Zamīmē* (Supplements) (*ibid.*,

⁶The second volume of the series, *Aṅgrēzōn kī Biptā* (The Calamity of the British), is comprised of accounts taken from British historiography about the suffering of the British at the hands of Indian mutineers during the uprising (2007, 137–82); the third, *Muḥāṣira-e Ghadr-e Dehli kē Khuṭūṭ* (Letters from the Siege of Delhi), contains letters from British officers relating details of the siege of Delhi (*ibid.*, 183–201); the fifth, *Ghadr kē Farmān* (Edicts from the Uprising), assembles the royal edicts and letters by insurgents to the Mughal Emperor during the uprising (*ibid.*, 355–428); the sixth, *Ghadr-e Dehli kē Akhbār* (Newspapers from the Uprising), is a partial edition of the anti-British and pro-uprising Urdu newspaper *Ṣādiqū'l-Akhhār* during the siege (*ibid.*, 429–40); the seventh, *Ghālib kā Rōznāmā-e Ghadr-e 1857* (Ghālib's Diary of the Uprising of 1857), is an abbreviated translation of the Persian diary, *Dastañbu*, of the famous Delhi-based poet Mirzā Asadu'l-Lāh Khān "Ghālib" during the siege (*ibid.*, 441–71); the ninth, *Ghadr kī Ṣubḥ-o-Shām* (Morning and Evening of the Uprising), is an Urdu edition of two diaries written inside the besieged capital by the spies of the British, Mu'īnu'-Dīn Ḥasan Khān and Munshī Jīvan Lāl, and an account of the situation by Captain Douglas and Sir Charles Theophilus Metcalfe. According to Nizāmī, he used the latter's English translation of the diaries originally written in Urdu as a basis for his Urdu edition (*ibid.*, 535–672). The referenced source for the tenth volume, *Dehli kī Sazā* (Delhi's Punishment), is a handwritten book in Persian authored by Navāb Ghulām Ḥusain Khān and treats mainly the executions of mutineers after the uprising (*ibid.*, 673–710); and the eleventh volume, *Dehli kā Ākhirī Sāñs* (Delhi's Last Breath), is an Urdu translation of some of the last Emperor's daily court reports in Persian from 1844 to 1848 (*ibid.*, 711–818).

819–80). Some volumes, such as the famous *Dehli kī Ākhirī Sham*⁶, strike a nostalgic note about the life and culture of the city's nobility in the era preceding 1857 (Bēg 1979). What is common to all, however, is a sense of crisis, horror and grief, and their claim to contribute to the historiography of 1857.

There is a striking tension in Niẓāmī's framing of the series. On the one hand, from the available early editions of the 1920s onwards he expresses their objective to be a gesture of appeasement to his contemporary Indians in regard to their resistance to the colonial sovereign (2007, 481). On the other hand, they read as a source in the production of a nationalist and revolutionary consciousness, as some later editions of the series, which were entitled *Dehli kī Jañg-e Āzādī kī Tārīkh* (The History of Delhi's War of Freedom) and *Inqilāb-e Dehli san 1857 kī Tārīkh* (The Revolution of Delhi in the Year 1857) suggest (*ibid.*, 137). This might lead one to assume that here Niẓāmī is walking a tightrope between avoiding having the publications banned, appealing to the taste of his audience, and pursuing his own agenda.

Niẓāmī mentions having had no censorship issues to deal with after the early publications (*ibid.*, 138). Yet, in the foreword to the volume *Ghadr kā Natīja* (The Outcome of the Uprising), the translation of a Persian manuscript detailing the executions of the mutineers, he explains that the title he originally planned for the book, *Ghadr kī Phāñsiyāñ* (The Gallows of the Uprising), was not approved by the authorities at the publication of its first edition in 1930. In 1946, however, the term *ghadr* did not appeal to his audience anymore. This is why Niẓāmī changed the title for the later editions to *Dehli kī Sazā* (*ibid.*, 673).

The above discussion reflects a development of the memory practices regarding 1857 on both the Indian and British sides, as well as the changing political context in which the nationalist movement in India was increasingly gaining momentum. The changed titles and less stringent censorship policies towards the end of the Raj suggest that, during the course of the last decades of British India, remembering 1857 in terms of revolution and a nationalist war of freedom had become widely accepted, and a substantial part of the Indian population had identified with the revolting soldiers as representing their own shared Indian cause.

Niẓāmī projects himself as an historian committed to scientific objectivity and political reticence. He painstakingly assembles a wide variety of Urdu, Persian, and English texts, as well as oral sources, to convey to his Urdu readership quite a comprehensive picture of the experiences of the people during the siege of Delhi in 1857. For instance, *Ghadr-e Dehli kī Akhbār* brings together articles from the anti-British newspaper *Şādiqul-*

Akbbār in order to add, as it were, another critical perspective to the discourse on 1857, which until then was largely dominated by pro-British narratives. The volume *Añgrēzōñ kī Biptā* explicitly serves to inform Niẓāmī's Urdu readership about the atrocities perpetrated against the British residents of Delhi by the mutineers.

Such historiography is accompanied by Niẓāmī's literary and reformist objectives. His texts bear the evidence of some significant tropes. Thus, the theme of suffering, with all its associations, permeates the volumes as a leitmotif—as conveyed, for instance, in titles such as *Bēgamāt kē Āñsū*, *Añgrēzōñ kī Biptā*, or *Dehlī kī Jāñkanī* (The Agony of Delhi). The city of Delhi is another dominant trope that pervades the volumes. I propose that Delhi functions as a metonym for India, both at the time the historical narrative is set in 1857 and the present time of the author, when, in 1911, New Delhi was inaugurated as the capital of British India, evoking readings in the context of discourses which negotiated the colonial present and the community of the nation mediated through its relationship with the past. Other tropes include the Sufi theme and a reformist agenda.

Yet, while Niẓāmī referred to modern academic norms, he actually constituted an Urdu counterpart of what Prachi Deshpande describes for Marathi historiography as “the body of amateur researchers and writers outside the formal academic structures” (2007, 207). For the Marathi context, Deshpande characterizes them as “writers and researchers who were amateurs in a dispersed public domain, and who drew upon a mix of Western and precolonial methods and literary evocations to create a modern historiographical practice” (*ibid.*). In the GDA we find both academic standards of source indication as well as authorization through oral sources such as in the *tārikh* tradition, and both diligent source editions and translations as well as evocations of literary and cultural tropes. Hence, the texts not only contributed to familiarizing a broad audience with the circumstances of the *ghadr*, but also to giving the reader a sense of 1857 as a constitutive moment of the shared history of their own community. The stories were certainly also an active force which sought to shape the “collective memory” (Halbwachs 1980) of the uprising of India, which was fed and molded by a variety of diverse competing and interacting historical narratives, as a memory of suffering, and through this the collective present of a community of suffering.

**Reformed Sufis and Emotional Communities in the
Begamat ke Ansu (BA)**

Published in 1914, BA, the first volume of the GDA, is composed of a collection of short episodes that relate the tragic fate of the nobles of the Mughal house in Delhi in the aftermath of the uprising of 1857. As the princes and princesses were expelled from the Red Fort or fled from it when the British recaptured the city, they experienced extreme and unexpected hardships and humiliations at the hands of both fellow Indians and the British. Many of them died, and the surviving princes and princesses mostly ended their lives in grinding poverty. The latter constitute the sources Niẓāmī refers to in the text (2007, 13).

BA features Niẓāmī's agenda of social change and Sufi politics both in its moral claim and its reformist critique, as well as in the structure of the narratives where, along with the princes and princesses, Sufis figure as the main protagonists. In the examined volume, Niẓāmī convinces the reader that the Mughal style of polity and life has passed away under the trauma of 1857—and is to be replaced by a new Sufic ethos suitable to the circumstances of colonial modernity. For Niẓāmī, this Sufic ethos has particular components: An emphasis on a strong work ethic and a personal lifestyle of humility and love. He highlights these aspects in his accounts of the memories of the princes and princesses.

The volume opens with a depiction of Bahadur Shah, the emperor of Hindustan and symbol of the country and the community, as an ascetic dervish, a patron of Sufism, and a deeply attached devotee of the early Chishti saint Niẓāmu'd-Dīn Auliya' (1238–1325). Niẓāmī mentions Bahadur Shah's historically documented devotion to the Chishti saint Quṭbu'd-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī (1173–1235) of Delhi, and points to the Emperor's receiving *bai'at* (pledge of spiritual allegiance) from the Sufi master Hazrat Maulānā Fakhr and his son Hazrat Miyān Quṭbu'd-Dīn, as well as his close attachment to the latter's successor Hazrat Miyān Naṣīru'd-Dīn (also known as Miyān Kālē Ṣāhib (*ibid.*, 14). However, Niẓāmī suggests an even closer relationship of Bahadur Shah with the shrine of Niẓāmu'd-Dīn Auliya', to which Niẓāmī himself was affiliated. He assigns the role of Bahadur Shah's most intimate pir and personal spiritual advisor to his own maternal grandfather, Hazrat Shāh Ghulām Ḥasan Chishti.

This is a potent attempt by Niẓāmī to highlight his own genealogical connection to the shrine and the Mughal Emperor. Through this episode he seeks to substantiate his legitimacy as a Sufi author and pir through the authority of this lineage to which he is affiliated.

He characterizes Bahadur Shah as a Sufi in his habits as well:

The last Emperor of Delhi was like a dervish. Hundreds of examples of his way of life as a fakir and his friendship with fakirs are well known in Delhi and all over India. And hundreds of men in Delhi today have seen him in the garb of a mendicant with their own eyes, and have heard his mystical works with their own ears. Bahadur Shah was an emperor very devoted to God. Since the affairs of the country were in the hands of the English Company, the Emperor did not have to do any work apart from remembering God and composing Sufi works. When the court was made ready, the Emperor's summons to mystical debates could be heard all over the place, and among the poets and Sufis the knowledge and truth of Sufism was discussed.

(*ibid.*, 13)⁷

Bahadur Shah wears both the hat of the king and the Sufi. His appearance bears neither royal symbol nor any display of riches or aristocratic opulence. Rather, his Sufi mendicant attire is associated with voluntary poverty and with a retreat from the demands of worldly life and from the politics of the country—the realm meant to be ruled by the king—in favor of a commitment to Sufic religiosity, spiritual practices, and association with mystics. With a resigned but stoic detachment, the last Mughal Emperor accepts the impending doom, which puts a brutal end to his dynasty and an entire political and cultural era. I propose that here Nizāmī argues for political reticence and quietism in the face of overwhelming British dominance, as well as for attending to the Sufis and their pious and modest lifestyle. Bahadur Shah's close relationships with Sufis and his patronage of mystical scholarship and teaching suggest an influential political role for the Sufis.

Before Bahadur Shah surrenders to the victorious British at the tomb of Humayun after their recapture of Delhi, he passes a relic of five hairs from the Prophet's beard to Nizāmī's maternal grandfather mentioned above, who was a pir at the shrine of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Auliya'.⁸

⁷Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Urdu are by the present writer.

⁸According to Nizāmī, this relic was still in the possession of his family and the shrine and was shown to the public every year during the month of Rabī'u'l-Avval (2007, 15). However, a similar story exists about Bahadur Shah handing over a relic to Quṭbu'd-Dīn's shrine (Green 2006, 111). It has yet to be discovered whether Nizāmī's maternal grandfather Shah Ghulam Hasan was the same as the contemporary *sajjada nasbin* (successor) of Quṭbu'd-Dīn's shrine. If this is confirmed, it is interesting to note that in this text Nizāmī made him a major pir of Nizamuddin's shrine, but did not expound such a central aspect of his lineage in his autobiography. Nizāmī's construction of his lineage can probably be under-

“Brother, although a reclusive fakir, I am the scion of a family which does not flinch from offering resistance till its last breath. My ancestors were in greater distress, and they did not lose courage, but to me the end has been secretly revealed. Now there is no room for any doubt that I am the last sign of Timur on the throne of India. The flame of the reign of the Mughals is dying and ephemeral. So why should I deliberately cause any bloodshed. That is why I left the castle and came here. The land belongs to God. He should give it to whom He wishes. For hundreds of years my dynasty has ruled in the country of India with dignity and omnipotence. The present era belongs to others. They will rule. They will appoint the king. And they will subdue us. We do not need to feel any sorrow or grief over it. After all, we also built our house by destroying others.” After these grievous words, the Emperor gave him a small box and said: “I entrust this to you. When the Emir Timur conquered Constantinople he got hold of this blessing in the treasury of Sultan Yildirim Bayezid. In it there are five hairs of the blessed beard of the Prophet that have been handed down as special sacred relics within our family up until now. Now I do not have any home in the world. Where shall I take them? No one is more worthy of them than you. Here you are, keep them. In the present terrible calamity, I part with these—the apple of my eye.” Thus my maternal grandfather took the small box and put it into the storeroom of the dargah, where it still remains. Every year during the month of Rabī‘u’l- Avval the relics are taken out in a procession.”

(*ibid.*, 15–16)

I argue that here Nizāmī has quite encapsulated his Sufic and political agenda. By the symbolic transfer of the holy object from the Emperor to the Sufi, he proposes a transfer of the Mughal political era and ethos to a new Sufi era and ethos. The relic, a symbol of might, was in the possession of the Mughal dynasty since the time of its progenitor, the Emir Timur. At the terminal moment of the Mughal Empire, Nizāmī bequeaths the protection of these relics to a Chishti Sufi and thus suggests a continuation of the spiritual role of the Sufis and their succession to the role of the Mughal kings in preserving Islam. Bahadur Shah embodies both the king and the Sufi—and thus the transition from one to the other—while formally still being a warrior, he lives up to a Sufi ethos. In this way Nizāmī also puts

stood as a resource of “mobilization and engagement in the present,” having more strategic functions than being mere family trees, as Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence suggest regarding Sufi lineages during the Colonial period (2002, 113). This is certainly one of the many examples in his publications where Nizāmī constructs the Nizāmu’l-Dīn shrine as the central identifier of Nizāmīyya Chishti identity and center of Sufi networks.

forward his political argument against violent resistance during his own time. For Nizāmī, complete dissolution of the Mughal world in 1857 means that the warrior's ethos of Bahadur Shah's ancestors has become meaningless, so armed opposition would be futile. The era characterized by ancestral *sharāfat* (nobility), *adab* (conduct), and heroic ideals is no more, and in Nizāmī's Delhi of the early twentieth century there is no room for a hope of reinstalling the Mughal dynasty to the throne of Hindustan. For Nizāmī it is not a question of who should form the government, but rather, how best to pragmatically come to terms with the reality of the colonial present—which he finds in laying down arms, becoming a Sufi, and cultivating patience and trust in God while letting go of one's pride. Here, courage is no longer defined as the courage to fight and resist, but as the courage to endure hardship like a fakir.

The episode “Faqīr Shahzādē kī Daulat” (The Wealth of the Fakir Prince; *ibid.*, 57–58) relates the story of an unnamed Mughal prince who, similar to Bahadur Shah, embodied ascetic Sufi ideals while he formally belonged to the class of the Mughal aristocracy otherwise known for its debaucheries. The fakir prince had, however, already lived a reclusive life of meditation before the outbreak of the uprising and rejected all worldly pleasures, status and familial bonds.

A certain prince of Bahadur Shah's kinfolk was interested in Sufi meditation. Inside the house, God had provided for everything: servants and maids, elephants and horses, but this slave of God used to sit all by himself in a corner. Twice a day he ate two breads of barley, drank water from an earthen mug, and otherwise busied himself with remembering God.

(ibid., 57)

When everyone fled the palace in 1857, the fakir-prince left his property, wife and daughter with the servants in order to settle down alone at the dargah of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Auliya', to remember God and eat only the little food offered to him by pilgrims from time to time. When his wife and daughter fell into a destitute state, the fakir-prince, who had just died, fulfilled his responsibility for them through an angel, who wondrously took care of them until the girl was married and her mother had died.

Like many other episodes, this narrative takes up the trope of the prince who becomes a Sufi by adopting Sufic habits and negotiating worldly and spiritual power as embodied in the fakir-prince. The story demonstrates the excellence and relative stability of the world, the ideals and the might of the Sufis, particularly conspicuous at the moment of the dissolution of the realm of the Mughals. The routine practices of the fakir-prince continue unabated even after the British conquer the Red Fort, and

the exploits, skills and lifestyle of the city's nobility are deprived of the milieu which had facilitated them and provided a frame of reference and meaning for them. The narrative also puts forward the characteristics and asceticism of the dervishes as an attractive alternative to the excessive abundance and luxury of courtly life for the fakir-prince and as worth adopting even in the time before the world of Mughal Delhi was toppled. The shrine of Niẓāmu'd-Dīn Auliā', a place of refuge in the turbulent days of 1857, functions as the palpable symbol of continuity from the time before the *ghadr* to the time of the narrator. It is set against the Red Fort which, although a symbol of identification for the people of Hindustan in Niẓāmī's time, nevertheless symbolizes a problematic past that cannot uncritically serve as an idealized example for an imagined community.

Most of the other princes and princesses in the book encounter Sufis or visit Sufi shrines in the course of the stories as well. Virtually all of them are morally transformed by the experience of suffering and poverty and are drawn to Sufism and the Niẓāmu'd-Dīn dargah or adopt an ascetic lifestyle and worldview resembling that of the fakirs.

According to Niẓāmī's reading of 1857, the stability of a government and of a society depend upon a moral lifestyle among both the worldly and the spiritual authorities, as well as among the population at large. This ethical habitus is defined by an attitude of love (*muḥabbat*) and compassion (*hamdardī*) towards one's fellow human beings and by the treatment of the Sufis within society. It becomes evident, for instance, in the reasons Niẓāmī gives for the uprising, one being the popular tale of the veil that had come between the graves of the two lovers—Niẓāmu'd-Dīn Auliā' and his contemporary and disciple, the poet Amir Khusrau—in the form of the tomb of the eighteenth-century Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. In addition, the negligence and mistreatment of the Sufis is said to have caused the decline of the Mughal Empire. Among the other reasons for the catastrophe are the immoral way of life and the attitude of pride (*ghurūr* and *takabbur*) exhibited in the conduct of the ruling Mughal noble class (*ibid.*, 14–17). In this way Niẓāmī's trajectory of 1857 attributes a historically effective function to the performance of conduct and emotions. The line of thought goes: had the people been loving, not proud, and had they secured a respectable position for the Sufis, 1857 and colonial modernity in Hindustan would not have happened. As armed opposition had proved unsuccessful at that time, it cannot be a desired political measure today. Hence, in Niẓāmī's time as earlier, moral reform of the individual is the desired means to effect social and political change.

Niẓāmī establishes the meta-narrative of his memory of 1857 as an instance of *'ibrat*, with the purpose of transforming and reforming the

reader according to the Sufi ideals of humility, patience, and trust in God in the face of the transience of worldly fortune.

In Rangoon there was also no change in his Sufi habitus. As long as he was alive, he spent his time as a patient (*ṣābir*) and trusting (*mutavakkil*) dervish. This story contains the great treasure of a warning. Hearing it man forgets his pride, and when the odor of pride leaves the mind of man, he becomes a real human being.

(*ibid.*, 16)

Apart from calling for a loving, patient and faithful disposition in the face of the vagaries of life and the world, Niẓāmī's intended reform is mainly directed at redefining the code of honor for the noble classes and the Sufis by rehabilitating education and work as respectable activities even for those who were used to living off the work of others and who regarded earning a livelihood through one's own efforts as an humiliation to their inherited status. The story of Prince Dildār (*ibid.*, 39–43) exemplifies the tragic outcome of the neglect of education in the contemporary world, which works according to different rules set by the British sovereign. After his father's death, Dildār's spoiled son and his helpless wife face extreme financial distress and cannot even afford to celebrate Eid with food and new clothes. The episode closes with the admonition to share with the needy:

Through this story one learns how dangerous it is to neglect the education of one's children and to leave them without training. This true story is a warning to all those who lose themselves in the happiness of Eid and do not think of the destitute and poor in their midst.

(*ibid.*, 43)

This quote illustrates the social reformist objective intended as an effect of spiritual transformation through *'ibrat*. The refined human being is defined by attention to education, work, and the needs of the community, instead of merely caring about one's own personal joy and happiness.

In the tale about the grass-cutter pir (*ibid.*, 43–51) Niẓāmī calls for an ideal of *adab* and *sharāfat* which considers even menial work respectable for all classes, including Sufis and aristocrats. It starts out with the protagonist, who is the son of a Sufi master, wondering why his father continues to do—in his view—the disreputable work of an artisan when he could easily live off the donations of his *murīds* (followers). He is told by his mother that the perfection of a fakir lies in the fact that he earns his bread with his own hands, while the donations of the *murīds* are meant to be given to the needy:

One day I asked my mother: "Say, why does Abbāji still polish gemstones even though he has no need to earn a living. This is very dishonorable. God has provided for everything. Yet he continues to labor hard to eek out a scanty livelihood." Ammāñ Jān said laughingly: "Son! He teaches that a fakir is just such a perfect person who earns his bread with his own hands. Even with broken limbs he would not settle for support from others. He says that what he gets from the rich *murīds* is for the poor *murīds*, not for us. Our living we have to earn ourselves." I said: "Are the donations of the *murīds* forbidden then, that he doesn't use them?" Ammāñ Jān said: "No, they aren't forbidden, but we don't have any right to them. They are the lot of others. God sends us these gratuities so that we support our needy brothers and earn our living by our own effort as long as we are physically able to do so.

(*ibid.*, 44)

During the hardships of 1857, the protagonist pir sells talismans to *murīds* in order to support his family. However, in a dream he is reprimanded by his father and a saint for eating the money of other distressed people. Waking up in a shattered state, he decides to find an ordinary job. Later, he takes up the menial work of a grass-cutter when he learns from a grass-cutter that a person can live very decently doing this job. His wife supports him saying that there is nothing bad about cutting grass, and that very important, wise people have done it. They sell her jewelry to be able to invest in the business (*ibid.*, 51).

This episode illustrates the way in which Nizāmī seeks to mold ideals of respectability by framing his historical narrative about 1857 as moral tales. Reminiscent of a modern bourgeois work ethic, he validates effort and investment, and devalues the conceit of the aristocratic class and the amassing and displaying of riches.

Nizāmī's Sufi reformist claim is articulated forthrightly in his advice to his fellow pirs to consider adopting conduct appropriate to the new time they live in after hearing the shattering story of the doom of one prince.

Through this true and modern story will our rich brothers not become grieved and let go of their habitual *ghurūr-o-takabbur* since they can see what becomes of the proud in front of their eyes. First and foremost, I must give advice to the children of the sheikhs, who perish kissing the hands and feet of the *murīds* and who do not understand the worth of anyone in front of them. To trust in the earnings of ancestors and not learn any skills leads a person to destruction and dishonor one day. Every *pīrzāda* should also learn the work on the basis of which his ancestors were called pirs. To expect gifts from pilgrims merely on the basis of being the son of a pir, without developing the merit to deserve these donations, is extremely shameless. I have seen many children of Sufi masters who are used to a

royal lifestyle since childhood and who conceive of the *murīds* as the subjects of their fathers, but just as time once destroyed the crown and the throne of the worldly government and made the princes beg in the streets and lanes, so the impiety of the new time is ready to destroy the *dīnī* (religious) empire that is Sufism. Beware lest this throne should shake and that the *pīrzādas* become homeless like the princes. We should all come to our senses before it is too late, fix our circumstances and actions, and contest the *dilēri* (daring) of the enemies so we will be able to completely protect and maintain our peaceful country.

(*ibid.*, 20)

Here Nizāmī compares the situation of the Sufis in his contemporary context to that of the Mughal princes in 1857 who perished because they did not see the writing on the wall and decadently perpetuated their feudal lifestyle. The Sufis need to adapt to the requirements of their time and environment, which call for giving up their old prejudice against work. Nizāmī proposes earning a living through work as the new expression of courage—that is, of high value according to a warrior’s code of honor, with the objective to protect their position in society and serve their country. This refers again to the Sufis as inheritors of the position of the Mughal emperor as protectors of the country and to a new vision for the definition and reach of Sufic practice. The advice provided appears to be in line with what Nizāmī expressed in his autobiography as his resolute “aim of life.” Among other things, this was to write and to think about *taṣawwuf* (Sufism) in a modern way, to spread and protect it, and defend the political rights of the Sufis (1919, 31–32). This passage hints at the rationale of Nizāmī’s historical narrative as arguably directed at a comprehensive moral critique and reform in his own present context.

Reading the BA for *‘ibrat* is a pious exercise with a view to transform the readers’ habitual emotional attitudes, conduct, and the objective of their practice. It aims at casting out their pride and instill courage (*himmat*) in them to protect their peace-loving country (2007, 20). Here, the transformation of pride into humility, love and compassion does not mark the point of withdrawal of the Sufi from the world and embarkation on the mystical path leading to unity with God, but rather indicates a noticeable twist towards the mentioned worldly and patriotic objective of this spiritual transformation. Piety and morality are equated with courage and protection of the country. In other words, performing Nizāmī’s reformed Sufi identity is an expression of patriotism and actively serving the country, and thus possibly in line with nationalist ideas. In return, people’s suffering in 1857 and their actions in the world resulting from that suffering are incorporated into salvation history. In this respect, Nizāmī stands in the

tradition of the nineteenth-century Indian Muslim reformers who put religion in the service of social and cultural reform.

The passages from the BA discussed above elucidate the way that Niẓāmī framed the memory of 1857 as cautionary tales about Sufis and as a piece of Sufi literature. It is the argument here that through formulating the examined stories as a Sufi critique of the decadence of the former ruling class, Niẓāmī proposed a vision of a moral government and community in his own present-day context appropriate for dealing with the changed social circumstances of early twentieth-century British India. For him the quality of the government is more important than the question of who is the sovereign of Hindustan. The central objective is not to secure a particular government institutionally, but to secure an ideal of it through the embodied personal virtues of those who represent it.

Painting the Mughal emperor, the princes and princesses as epitomizing Sufi practices and virtues, or measuring their decadent conduct and negligence of religious duties as norms associated with Sufi piety, he maps out a set of emotions such as love, compassion and patience, and the ideal of earning one's living through work as part of a desirable ethos which forms the core identification of the collective self.

The recurring theme of decadence in the BA had figured prominently in eighteenth-century Muslim reformist writing in its efforts to explain the loss of political power of the Muslims in South Asia to the foreign unbelievers. Other emotions talked about in the volume, such as parental love, and love for the political subjects and for all creatures, also have a reformist tone. To some extent they are reminiscent of the political redefinitions of love in contemporary Urdu poetry by authors such as Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī (Zaidi 1993, 275–80). They seem to sound the possibilities for an emotional culture of the colonial society. Furthermore, patience, courage, honor, fear of God and trust in God figure as habitual emotions and values to be cultivated. Anger and hate are clearly negatively connoted and demonstrated to only lead to further calamity. Patriotism is expressed within the Sufi semantics of suffering and love that are realigned towards social activism. The text appeals to a distanced peacefulness and conciliatoriness in the readers and to their inner, moral advancement while they patiently come to terms with the existing worldly government.

Negotiating the conduct, virtues and emotions of the Emperor and his family, who function as the symbol of the country and the community, Niẓāmī also negotiates the character of this community. With values and feelings at the core of its identity, he constructs the collective self in the examined text as an “emotional community.” The medievalist Barbara Rosenwein refers to emotional communities as social or textual commu-

nities with common interests and values, as “groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or devalue—the same related emotions” (2006, 2). In interaction with their social context, emotional communities are subject to historical change both in their constellation and in the emotions they emphasize. In the course of the production of emotional communities, the related emotions undergo reconceptualizations in accordance with the needs and the understanding of that community in a discursive process between the actors involved in its construction. Using the concept of “emotional communities” to understand the creation of South Asian collective identities adds a different perspective to frameworks of belonging mainly based on categories of geography and descent. Thinking identities, from a core comprising conduct, values, feelings and morals, challenges knowledge about the meaning of boundaries and of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from communities. I argue that the BA is one strand in the discourse producing Hindustan as an emotional community, thereby reconceptualizing Sufi constellations of emotions and ethics within the nation-space. Niẓāmī constructs these feelings as an ideal Sufi emotional regime and invites the reader to join his community through relating to this particular narrated story.

Glue of the Community: Suffering, Nostalgia, Remembering

Like other instances of individual or collective pain in the northern Indian, largely Muslim context, Niẓāmī’s treatment of the trope of the suffering of the protagonists of the *ghadr* evokes the widespread motif of Karbalā as the archetypal metaphor and idiom of suffering. The martyrdom of Ḥusain and his family in the battle of Karbalā forms a constitutive moment in the cultural memory of the Muslim community. In Urdu literature, 1857 had been intertwined with the aesthetic of Karbalā since the late nineteenth century. According to Zaidi, the Urdu poetic genre of *marṣiya*, which laments the tragedy of the battle of Karbalā, reached its height with one of its main poets Mīr Anīs from Lucknow. After the events of 1857 the *marṣiya* also had contemporary relevance, expressing the personal pain and loss experienced by many at that time (1993, 159–67). Similarly, Urdu poems of the *shahr āshōb* (laments of the city) genre engaged with 1857 in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁹ At the same time Urdu genres

⁹For an introduction to *Fughān-e Dehli* (Lament for Delhi), a collection of

were invested with new purposes focused on the community by reformist critics such as Ḥālī, who claimed for the *marṣīya*, for instance, that it should infuse the community with solidarity (Hyder 2006, 164).

In an adventurous story of the BA about the educated lady Zakīya, a descendant of the family of the Prophet, the protagonist addresses the following words to a *majlis*, an assembly of mourners commemorating the martyrdom of Ḥusain:

“The Mujtahid Šāḥib and the people who have come to the assembly will know that Husain and his descendants are affected by the suffering of Karbalā even today. The flowers in the Ḥusainī garden wither in the sun of tyranny even today. The descendants of Bibī Fāṭima stumble desperately in every lane of this world. Even today the tyranny of Yazīd befalls the sayyids Why are you faking sighs. If you had been there at the time of Karbalā you would have been just as negligent of the family of Muḥammad as you are today. Even if you had lived at the time of the pure and innocent (*ma‘šūm*) imams, you would appear as egoistic (*kbudgharḥ*) as you are today, and none of you would help them.”

(2007, 85)

This passage illustrates the way Niẓāmī constructs a genealogy of suffering and moral failure from Karbalā to 1857 by evoking strong literary and cultural images.

Besides this example, in Niẓāmī’s series we find many strong topical parallels to the story of Karbalā such as the siege, the self-sacrifice of the male protagonists, and the tears and agony of the women who outlive them. Together with the rhetoric of suffering, this invites an interpretation of 1857, as it were, as a reenactment of the event of Karbalā. This implies the attribution of a similar meaning to the grief and the actors involved. In the narrative of Karbalā, the experience of suffering defines the community of the righteous in contrast to their tyrannical oppressors. It constitutes a moral victory as well as a moment of spiritual redemption. Similarly, the sadness of the mourners who remember the suffering has a high spiritual value and serves as an identifying symbol for a community of suffering, defined through its emotional disposition and practice of mourning.¹⁰ The communal act of affectively remembering creates synchronicity between the remembered event and the present of the actors, and functions as a bonding force for the community.

poems compiled in 1863 by Tafazzul Ḥusain Kaukab, whose common theme is the destruction of Delhi in 1857, see Khan (2009).

¹⁰On Karbalā and Muḥarram, and the trope of suffering in both contexts, see Hyder (2006) and Pinault (2001).

Nostalgia is the other emotion to be explored here as a bonding tool. Like Muslim reformist writing since the nineteenth century, the BA criticizes the decadence of the nobility of Delhi while being bound in several instances to strike a nostalgic note on the lost world before 1857. As Pernau (2011) argues, this ambiguity of reference to 1857 can also be found in authors such as Farḥatu'l-Lāh Bēg and Rāshidu'l-Khairī, both staunch “Alīgarḥī” scholars and at the same time writers of nostalgic literature about the days before 1857. They wrote during the same years as Niẓāmī, who also edited their work as part of the series under consideration. Niẓāmī, however, is not an “Alīgarḥī” modernist, and refers to himself as an unreformed representative of the *purānī rōshnī* (old light) (1924, 23). Yet, he nevertheless fits into that space of ambiguity between reformist agendas and nostalgic remembering as two modes of negotiating colonial modernity. As I have argued above, he does not favor a return to the old political and social texture. In an episode from his own times, a princess states:

“God blessed us with wealth. As long as we were capable we kept the wealth. When our conduct became bad, it affected our comfort and our agreeable life. We became negligent towards our country. We forgot the oppressed. We were pleased by the flattery of the tyrants. God took away this wealth from us and has given it to other people. We do not complain about it to other people. One has to assume responsibility for one’s deeds.”
(2007, 62)

Rather than demanding an institutional change of government, Niẓāmī is interested in retrieving a genealogy of the contemporary situation in Delhi and in conveying a lesson from the past. For him, 1857 constitutes a foil for disseminating his message of reform as the best way to deal with the British sovereign and the overwhelming presence of colonial modernity. The tension in affectively relating to the lost world of pre-1857 Delhi—oscillating between nostalgia at the glory and disgust at the decadence of its inhabitants—emphasizes the insurmountable distance between his present and the past he narrates, and the horror of the catastrophe which, according to him, separates the two eras. Both are linked through the memory of loss and grief, the surviving impoverished protagonists, and the city of Delhi as the symbolic heart of the community now and then, and are witness and proof of the differences between the two.

The stories told to him by grandparents in childhood are, he informs, the reason for his own nostalgia and the rationale for his writing about Mughal Delhi (1947, 4), and 1857 was the moment that ended that old world. Yet, it is also the New Delhi of his day, with its electric bulbs and spacious roads, that triggers the nostalgic feeling over loss of the old culture and

lifestyle. Naim, writing about Abdu'l-Ḥalīm Sharar's popular work *Guzashta Lakḥnav*, argues that the moment the end of what was understood as Lucknow's culture was felt is to be situated at the time of Sharar's writing in 1913–1920, rather than in the mid- or late nineteenth century. Against this background Sharar's book reads as a comment on the author's own time (Naim 2012, 19). I argue that similarly, Niẓāmī's early twentieth-century memory of 1857 addresses the insecurity he experienced in his own time in the face of a changing social, political and material environment.

In an episode set at the time of the narrator, a poor princess implores a picture of Lady Harding, wife of the British Viceroy, to support the poor Mughal princes, lamenting their fate which had taken them from a life of riches and ease to destitution:

“May your New Delhi prosper, in the construction of whose roads thousands of rupees have been invested. May your new buildings prosper, for whose sake millions of rupees have been granted. May your noble thought increase, because of which the old buildings of Delhi are being repaired at a cost of an uncountable amount of rupees. Have the unfortunate roads of my stomach repaired as well, and have buildings constructed on our broken hearts as well. We are symbols of the old time, too. People regard us as relics of the old time, too. Save us from destruction, too. God will help you and protect you.”

(2007, 62)

This passage reads as a critique of British policies regarding Delhi's—and Hindustan's—population, and expresses alienation towards its government and new capital.

The nostalgic tone of some writings does not imply a gesture towards the future which endorses a restoration of a premodern order, but rather a critical gesture towards the present which deploys the nostalgic memory as a bonding tool and as the core of the collective identity of the community. On this memory, and the community created through it, a new future can be built.¹¹

Conclusion

The series *Ghadr-e Dehlī kē Afsānē* constitutes one narrative in the South Asian constructions of 1857 as the traumatic and unifying event of the Subcontinent's national history, which is how it is remembered today. With

¹¹See also Boym (2007) and Fritzsche (2001) on nostalgia as a modern phenomenon.

his work on 1857, Khvāja Ḥasan Niẓāmī sought to contribute to shaping a canon of Indian history and to formulating this myth of the Indian nationalist movement, which even today occupies a central place in South Asian collective imaginations and cultural identities. Such a shared memory forms a constitutive element of the emotional bonding within a national community, as Etienne François, Hannes Siegrist, and Jakob Vogel have pointed out in their introductory essay to *Nation und Emotion* (1995, 15–24). And as Benedict Anderson emphasizes, the process of national community building has to be conceptualized as emotionally constituted and as reinforced by literary production (1991, 145–49). This essay suggests that Niẓāmī explores the topography of the community that was to be imagined as the nation in terms of its possible emotional identity.

In the GDA, Niẓāmī pursues the unity of the addressed community in a narrative of *‘ibrat*, through vividly and extensively describing the shared suffering of the people who experienced the uprising and thereby invites the reader to emotionally respond in an act of affective remembering. In this gesture, emotions are both a part of the related event and of its active recalling which seeks to appropriate it within a perceived cultural identity. By reenacting the suffering of the people affected by 1857 in the texts and in the reader, Niẓāmī constructs a community of suffering stretching from his contemporaneous audience to the victims of 1857, and even up to the Muslim community of the early days of Islam, who are related to each other through their shared grief and the experienced and remembered catastrophe. In the BA, they are also related through the historical teleology he constructs, according to which the moral decadence of the nobles and the Sufi elite brought about 1857 and, as a consequence, the colonial present of the author and his audience.

One moment of tension in the series’ memory of the world of Mughal Delhi appears in the nostalgia towards the time before the *ghadr*, which proliferates in some of the volumes, but which is breached by the construal of 1857 as a self-inflicted punishment for the sinful actions of the noble and Sufi representatives of the country and the community. There is an ambivalence of feeling about the past with which one is keen to identify but needs to reject on moral grounds as an example for the present and a possible future. The cautionary claim of the text, the drastic memory it creates, and the texture of suffering, horror and nostalgia, serve as a foil to negotiate the present with its new capital, its colonial government and resistance to it, its modern rhythms and structures of life and society. Niẓāmī seeks to find ways to come to terms with it rather than to fundamentally challenge it.

At the center of his engagement with his contemporary community is

his reformist call for a more appropriate collective ethos with an emphasis on education and work as highly respectable activities and ends on a loving, patient, pious and compassionate attitude. This challenges existing ideas of class, of *sharāfat* and *adab*, and sets morals, conduct and emotions at the core of the identity discourse of the community.

His strategic entanglement of 1857 with the semantics of emotions defined as Sufic entails an expansion of the “emotional community” of Sufism to the larger society. There, reformed Sufi morals, virtues and attitudes of feeling are offered as the basis for the cultural identity of an inclusive, imagined Indian nation. Feeling Sufi becomes feeling Indian. In this process the relevant semantics of emotion are reconceptualized with a view to putting the selves which are transformed by the experience of suffering into the service of the community. This claim is further legitimized through the author’s reframing the history of 1857 as Sufic spiritual history. In the context of early twentieth-century politics in colonial India, the GDA can be interpreted as a strategic piece of history voicing a claim on a space for the Sufis in contemporary modern society and on the definition of that society’s character.

To some extent Nizāmī’s project is reminiscent of the Gandhian movement, which also started out with a moral reformist objective and a religious focus aiming at national unity on the basis of a shared ethical core. In further studies it would be worthwhile to situate the texts under consideration here in the political context of late-colonial India when the ground was prepared for the overwhelming response to Mahatma Gandhi’s explorations of the idea of the community, and the implicitly reformulated Hinduism that was to become the Indian nation. □

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