

METAPHYSICAL BEGINNINGS

An early avatar of what came to be known as Urdu in the late eighteenth century is traceable in the works of Amir Khusrau, way back in the late thirteenth century. However, literary history records the beginnings of Urdu poetry since the Deccan rulers of Golconda that had emerged as an independent state with the decline of the Bahmani Sultanate in 1527. The two most significant of the Deccan poets—Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah and Wali Deccani—initiated the great tradition of Urdu poetry that flowered in various parts of northern India later.

Although the Mughal Empire had started declining by the end of the seventeenth century, Persian remained the language of the court, the nobility and the poets. Poetry in the new-fangled and so-called Urdu language was still in its infancy but it was vying for a place alongside the poetry written in the canonical Persian. As a language that grew out of the military camp, Urdu had closely drawn upon other languages like Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Braj, and had come to be known variously

at various points of time as Deccani, Gujar, Hindi/Hindavi, Dehlavi, Rekhta and Urdu-i Mu'alla. While Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah and Vali Decanni wrote in Decanni Urdu, Mirza Mazhar Jan-e Janan wrote in Dehlavi Urdu. Although Jan-e Janan's chosen language of poetic expression was Persian, he got inclined towards writing in Urdu as he was impressed by Vali's linguistic innovations and saw the possibility of evolving it as a new language with great literary potential.

Poetry in the Deccan had a rich variety of sources to draw upon: it reflected the communal harmony of the land, represented its flora and fauna, absorbed the linguistic habits of its folk and recorded literatures, and finally, negotiated with the Persian influences without being unduly swayed by it. As opposed to this, poetry in the northern parts of India had a different set of conditions to fall back upon: it reflected the cultural norms defined by the continuity of Muslim rule, its court and nobility, refinement and elitism, as also the unitary dominance of the Persian literary culture. The poetry of Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah, Vali Deccani and Mirza Mazhar Jan-e Janan had a certain metaphysical aura about it which was preserved further by other poets of the south and the north. While Ashraf Bayabani, Hasan Shauqi, Mohammad Qutub Shah, Abdullah Qutub Shah, Mulla Asadullah Wajhi, Ibne Nishati and Mohammad Nusrat Nusrati represented the Deccan sensibility, Sirajuddin Ali Khan Arzoo, Najmuddin Abru, Mohammad Shakir Naji, Sheikh Sharfuddin Mazmoon, Zahuruddin Hatim and Sadruddin Mohammad Khan Fayeze represented the northern sensibility.

I

Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah

Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah (1565?–1611?), popularly known and recorded in history as Abul Muzaffar Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah and Sultan Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah, was the fifth ruler of the Qutub Shahi dynasty of Golconda and the founder of the city of Hyderabad. He was born in Golconda, Hyderabad (there is no unanimity about the dates of his birth and death). The legend goes that he founded a city called Bhag Nagar after one of his beloveds, Bhagmati. Bhag Nagar later became Hyderabad once Bhagmati was renamed Hyder Mahal. He is said to have erected other monuments in the name of his other twelve beloveds, and he celebrated his romance with them in his poetry separately.

Shah who wrote in Persian, Telugu and Deccani—a variant of Urdu—is justifiably the first poet in Deccani Urdu with at least fifty thousand shers to his credit put together in his *Kulliyaat*. Acclaimed to be a major voice, he practised all poetic forms. He wrote on a variety of issues concerning communal

life and the sentiments of the common man, their festivals and faiths, love and the pleasures of union, in a frank and disarming manner. Drawing upon Hindu culture, as also upon the Persian culture and its literary tradition, he developed a secular view of love, life and literature. A contemporary of Tulsidas, he blended the best traditions of the two streams of thought and life to impart a new halo to his poetry. His poetic merit lies in his simplicity and musicality which he appropriated to project an inclusive view of life and art. Essentially a poet of Deccan flora and fauna, Shah was a kind-hearted ruler, a passionate lover and a great patron of fine arts and architecture.

I

*Piyaa baaj pyaala piyaa jaaye naa
Piyaa baaj yek til jiya jaaye naa*

*Kaheethey piyaa bin saboori karoon
Kahhiya jaaye amma kiya jaaye naa*

*Naheen ishq jis wo badaa kood hai
Kadhein us se mil biseeyaa jaaye naa*

*Qutub Shah na de mujh diwaane ku pand
Diwaane ku kuchh pand diyaa jaaye naa*

I

I can't ever drink my drink without my love
I can't ever breathe; I sink without my love

I should be patient, you say, without my love
How unfair! I can't even blink without my love

A boor indeed is one who can't be in love
I'm no boor; I'm on the brink without my love

No counsels, Qutub Shah, none to this crazy one
I'm the one; I can't even think without my love

2

*Kahiyaa ke bosa seti haman too jawaan karo
Kahiye ke prit ki baat taman jiu ka jaan karo*

*Kahiyaa ke aafsaab kiran aayi qaul koon
Kahiye ke qaul jot soon likh kar rawaan karo*

*Kahiyaa adhar tumhare jiu koon jalaawate
Hans kar kahi ye baat nako tum bayaan karo*

*Kahiyaa ke haq parasti karo but pujan sato
Kahiye ke donon baat mein ek imtihaan karo*

*Kahiyaa ke aadmi ka murawwat naheen taman
Kahiye ke bus hai ishq tumhara nihaan karo*

*Kahiyaa ke aashiqan koon dukhaane ka bhed kya
Kahiye ke aashiqi mane goongee zabaan karo*

*Kahiyaa ke mad gulaabi jalaadewe jeeu koon
Kahiye azal se must hoon tum naasamaan karo*

*Kahiyaa ke marhamat ki nazar soon nawaaz mujh
Kahiye hamaari panth mane jaanfishaan karo*

*Kahiyaa tumhaari sewaa Ma'ani ka daulat hai
Kahiye ke tum bhi sewaa baraabar shahaan karo*

2

Make me young with a kiss, my love, I said
If it's love, breathe life into breath, she said

The sun has shown, rays say their say, I said
If words be rays, write the rays and send, she said

Look, your delicate lips sear my heart, I said
She giggled in jest; don't tell me that, she said

Bow down to the real God, not an image, I said
Then why don't you test me in both, she said

You don't respect a man, you don't, I said
You don't know what love, hide your love, she said

Why put your love in pain, why so, I said
If in love, seal your lips, my love, she said

That pink wine sears my heart, my breath, I said
Well, I'm myself drunk since eternity, she said

Be kind to me, do me a favour, I said
Then shed your life for that very love, she said

Being at your feet is all that I cherish, my love
Then you should better serve the lords, not me, she said