THE SHADOW OF A BIRD IN FLIGHT

Selection and translation SHAMSUR RAHMAN FARUQI

Introduction

Like most educated Indians, I have long kept a diary (or, a commonplace book). I record in it my favourite verses. Unlike most educated Indians today, the verses that fill the pages of my book are Persian. Recuperating from heart surgery a couple of years ago, I began to render, by way of amusement, some of my favourite (and translatable) verses from it into English. The amusement soon became a compulsive task to which I was obliged to devote most of my leisure hours on recovery. The fruit of that labour is now in your hands. If the reading of this book gives you even a fraction of the pleasure that the making of it gave me, I'd consider myself successful.

Let me emphasize that while most of the one hundred and seven pieces from sixty poets represented here are poetry of the highest order, this is not a systematic selection of Persian verse. It is exactly what its source is: an assembly of poems lovingly collected without any scheme, design or organisation. There has been no attempt to place side by side poems on similar themes, or poets of the same period. The idea is to give the reader the delight of discovery. Sometimes, chance has played its part in putting cheek by jowl poems with a strong family resem-

blance (78, 79, 80); sometimes the alert reader will detect faint echoes from earlier pieces in later ones (47, 53). But the idea is to surprise, by variety and by bringing together disparate representatives from a multitudinous tradition. A commonplace book is not divided into sections, or periods, or genres. It has an almost crazy organicity of its own. This book attempts to give you a flavour of the commonplace book of a modern Indian who acquired Urdu and Persian at home and English at school. I hope it will motivate the non-Persian knowing reader to ask for more. To the Persian knowing reader, it should be an interesting collection to browse into and to come upon many unexpected (and some expected) acquaintances from an ancient and powerful poetic milieu which is still quite alive in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and also to a certain extent in the Indian subcontinent.

There is another thing that spurred me on in my task: my desire to reflect, in some degree at least, the richness of the Indian contribution to Persian poetry. Persian literature goes back more than a thousand years, and for at least eight centuries, Indians (Muslim and Hindu) have contributed to it. The Hindu contribution reached its peak in the eighteenth century, but was by no means negligible in the seventeenth and the nineteenth. There is a whole style of Persian poetry and prose which is universally described as "Indian", (sabk-e hindi, in Persian. I have heard some western scholars call it "Mughal-Safavid", because of some recent Iranians attempts to claim its origins in Safavid Iran). "Oriental" historians and critics of

Persian literature have done little to make the Indian-Persian writing available to their students, far less to the non-Persian speaker. I feel it is high time our place in Persian literature was recognised fully. I also believe that the main reason for the comparative sterility of Iranian Persian literature since the 1600's is the Iranians' refusal to absorb the Indian style into their canon. This little anthology, in which I have taken some pains to present, in addition to the well known ones, many excellent though little known Indian poets from the twelfth century to the twentieth, will, I hope, prove a first step towards foregrounding the intrinsic worth and the amazing variety of Indian Persian literature.

There are five main genres in Persian poetry, and all five are represented here in some measure. The most popular by far is the Ghazal. A ghazal is basically a love poem, especially of unrequited or unfulfilled love. Much of the ghazal can be interpreted as dealing with "sacred" and "profane" love at the same time. Over more than fourteen centuries in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish (and a host of other languages) the theme of love in the ghazal has acquired immeasurable depth and complexity. It is impossible, for example, to describe 27 or 83 or 102 as just love poems; yet without the deeply embedded theme of love and well-set conventions about how to deal with it, such poems could never have been created. The basic fact is that a ghazal is fundamentally a love poem, and it can at the same time be much more than, or radically different from, a love poem as understood by a modern western(ised) reader.

In a ghazal, each verse most often stands alone in terms of tone of utterance and meaning; and each is interpreted as a separate poem. There is no unity in a ghazal in the western sense; the metre and the rhyme provide an extremely tight and highly structured formal unity and that's all that there is in a ghazal by way of unity. So it is quite proper and often desirable to pick individual verses from ghazals. Like all readers native to the tradition, I have done so freely. I have also presented two more or less complete ghazals from Khusrau (104) and Hafiz (26).

The next most popular genre in classical Persian is Qasida, a poem of medium length, devoted to praise or blame, or moral teaching and reflection. Its form is somewhat like that of the ghazal, but with greater unity of theme. A qasida is difficult to present in translation, unless given in a big chunk, and would even then not always make much sense to the reader not au fait in its conventions. I have, therefore, presented only one verse from a qasida (23). A Masnavi is generally a much longer poem than a qasida; it is in rhyming couplets, and is most often a narrative. Since excerpting is easy from it, and some of the world's greatest poetry is found in Persian masnavis, I give plenty of space to this genre (7, 28, 46, 49, 61, 66, 72, 77). The Ruba'i (a four line poem in a special metre), and the Qita (a poem of indeterminate length, but on a single theme) are the other two most popular genres in classical Persian. The former - made famous by FitzGerald - has attracted

practically all poets of any standing. Ruba'is are not very large in number, but they have always had high prestige, and are regarded as proving ground for poets. Since a fair amount of best Persian poetry is in the ruba'is, and because I myself take great delight in the ruba'i, I have here a fairly large number of them (21, 23, 24, 41, 52, 58, 82, 90, 101, 103, 107). In addition, there are 43, 71 and 87 where I have translated only two lines from the ruba'i. The qita is represented by poem number 22.

Persian is particularly rich in satirical, comic and bawdy verse. I have eschewed the last two in deference to our somewhat Victorian view of such things nowadays. Satire is particularly hard to translate: there are two brief samples in 43 and 82. The latter could also be a serious attempt at the impossible: praise poem for a one-eyed woman. One could, of course, read 90 as a satirical love poem.

The poets included in this anthology can be conveniently placed in one of four categories:

1) The Iranians — Those who were born in Iran and worked wholly or almost wholly in Iran, (Khvaja Abdullah Ansari, Shaikh Abul Qasim, Shaikh Abu Saʻid Abi Al-Khair, Adib Sabir, Anvari, Asir, Firdausi, Hafiz, Kamal Isma'il, Umar Khayyam, Rumi, Sa'di, Shahidi, Va'iz). In this list, only Asir is regarded as a poet of the Indian style.

2) The Indo-Iranians — Those who were born in Iran but worked almost wholly or mainly in India (Ne'mat Khan Ali, Ashraf, Danish, Kalim, Malik Oumi, Naziri, Sa'ib, Salim, Sarmad, Talib, Urfi,

- Zahuri). All these poets (except perhaps Sarmad) wrote in the Indian style.
- 3) The Indo-Persians Those who were born in India, but wrote all or most of their work in Persian (Azad, Bedar, Bedil, Begham, Faizi, Ghani, Hasan Sijzi, Ishrat, Khamosh, Khushgo, Khusrau, Manohar, Mas'ud Bak, Mas'ud Sa'd Salman, Mukhlis, Nisbati, Sabiq, Sabqat, Sarkhush, Siadat, Valih, Vaqif, Varasta, Zakhmi). Here all but Hasan and Khusrau wrote in the Indian style.
- 4) The Indians Those who wrote chiefly in Urdu, but were substantial achievers in Persian too (Asar, Dard, Divana, Ghalib, Iqbal, Mir, Momin, Sauda, Shibli). All but Shibli and Iqbal wrote in the Indian style. Iqbal used many styles and modes, depending on what he wanted to do at a particular time. He himself was very well read in the poets of the Indian style.

In light of the above lists, I need say nothing more to prove the substantial place of Indians in Persian literature. Appropriately, I have drawn the name of the anthology from Sa'ib, best known poet of the Indian style. The name is appropriate in another way too: a translation is nothing more than the shadow of a being which is evanescent, and alluring; it is far beyond the translator's power to capture it. All that the translator can do is to try and make you imagine the force and the beauty of a polychromatic object from it monochromatic shadow, while the object itself seems to be always slipping away from him. Yet

translations must go on. There is no other way for most of us to make sense of other times, other situations, and other paroles.

Both in school and at home, translation was an important activity in my boyhood days. In school, English was taught as much through translation practice as through textual study. At home, my father used to set me, partly for fun and partly by way of serious exercise, sentences and passages from Urdu for translation into English. At that time, all of us regarded translation as a matter of skill and expertise - more a matter of technique than intuition. I remember once my father made me read aloud from some Urdu report while he converted it into English to my reading, without asking me to pause, or repeat a word or phrase. We young and avid students of English idioms and grammar naively believed that all human beings think alike, or could think alike, if they translated from one language to another.

While things did not remain so simple for too long, my faith in the translatability of all texts remained largely unshaken. How could it be otherwise, when I found myself constantly translating (or believing that I was doing so) from English to Urdu in the hope of "enriching" Urdu literature? It was only much later that my illusions were broken. I found that translation was a problematic issue, very nearly incapable of solution. Comprehension of literary texts was itself a problematic of extra-large dimensions, because all language was contextual; and words from one language were not necessarily symmetrical with those of another,

even if both apparently meant the same. (Also, by that time I knew more Urdu and English and Persian than I did as a schoolboy and could see that translations, any translations, could transport but little of the ore of one text into another).

But the business of translation continued to fascinate me. Not for nothing was I born at a time when the great age of verse translations in Urdu was just ending, only to give way to perhaps an even greater age of prose translations. Igbal was the first great poet in Urdu with whose poetry I had more than a passing acquaintance as a boy. He was the favourite poet of my father too, and I remember him reading and teaching Iqbal to me with infectious enthusiasm. I also remember being struck with the power and apparent competence of Igbal's translations from the Sanskrit, from Tennyson, Longfellow, and many others. In prose, by the time I passed high school (1949), Hardy, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and a host of other European writers were household names in many Urdu-speaking homes, just because of translations. My later dissatisfaction with the whole enterprise of translation notwithstanding, I did retain the view than an extremely able - and more than extremely lucky - translator could do a good job, given time and incentive. In my case, the incentive was still there to give to others some sense of the shock of joy, and the vibrant rhythms of the human spirit, that creative writing, and particularly poetry, has always embodied for me.

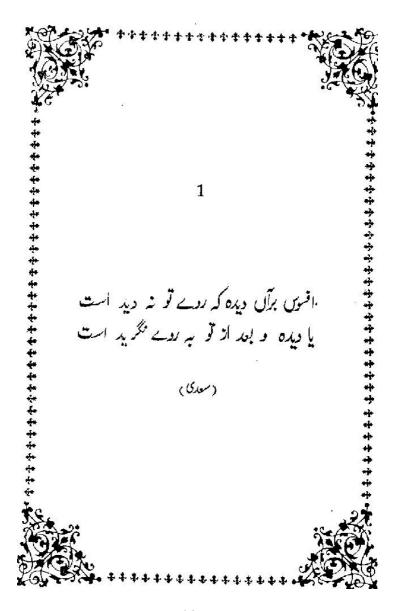
I have travelled a long way since the hot and humid days of a small provincial town in U.P. when a high school campus was a big world for me and I used to vie with my peers in finding apt English phrases for Urdu expressions. I now know, to my regret, that lucky and able translators are a rarity. Perhaps two people working together, one a native speaker of the input language and the other a native speaker of the output language, and each having full command of the other's language as well, might succeed where one person cannot. Yet, side by side with my other work, I almost always did some translation, for after all many of the world's great translations were done by individuals, not by teams. (But perhaps the greatest work of translation ever—the King James Bible—was done by a team!)

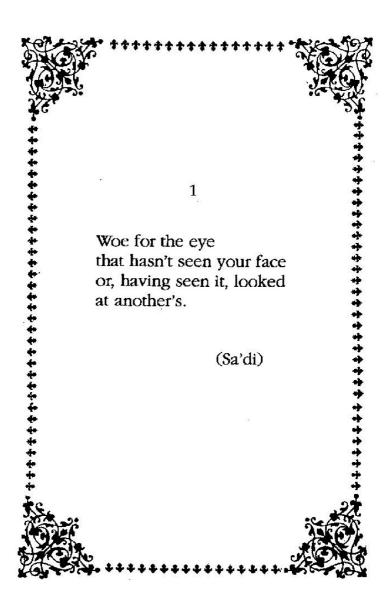
This little work is my first serious attempt to translate from a foreign language into a foreign language. If it is a little more than moderately successful, it is because I chose only those texts which I thought lent themselves somewhat easily to translation, and also because I have tried to pay equal allegiance to the integrity of the Persian text, and the rhythms and tones of modern, not "poetic" English.

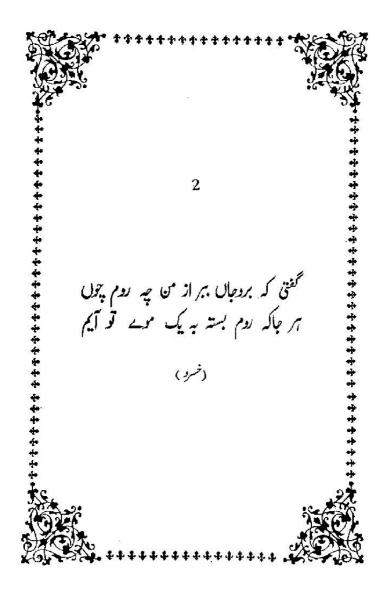
It now remains for me to acknowledge my debt to Jamila, for her interest and assistance; C.M. Naim, for solicited suggestions (many of which I actually accepted); Aslam Mahmud, for introducing me to R.K. Mehra of Rupa; my editor, Sunjoy Shekhar, for his patience and understanding; and Frances Pritchett, from whom I learnt much about the art of translation. I also thank V.N. Manchanda and D.K. Mahajan for their assistance in preparing the typescript of the manuscript.

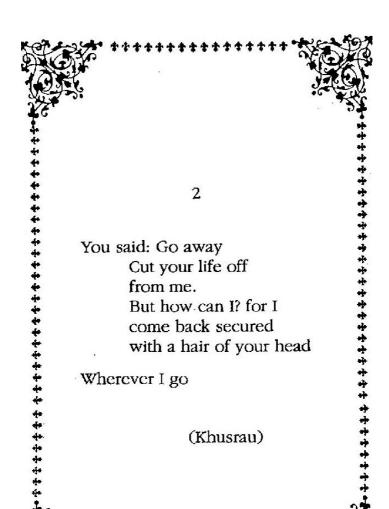
Shamsur Rahman Faruqi

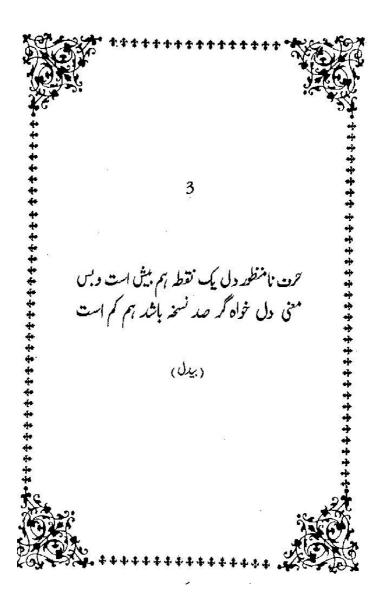
THE SHADOW OF A BIRD IN FLIGHT

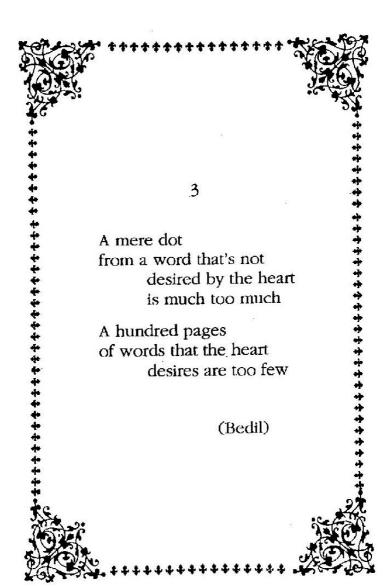


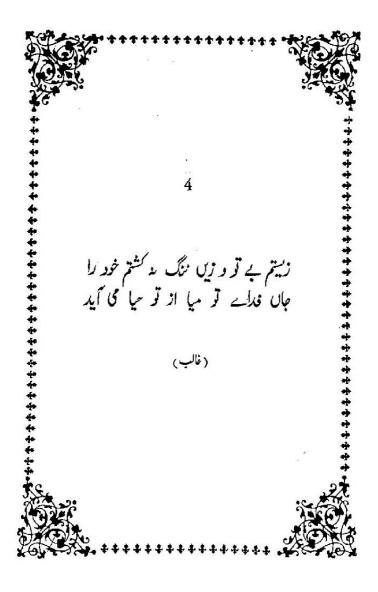


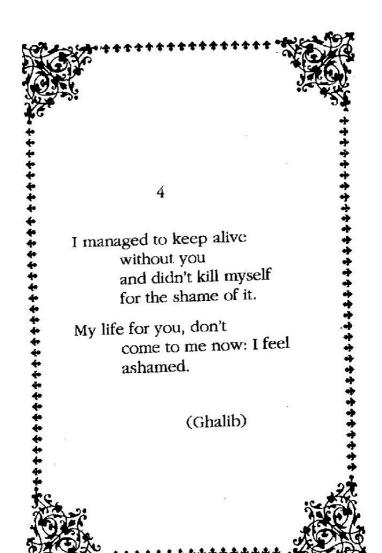


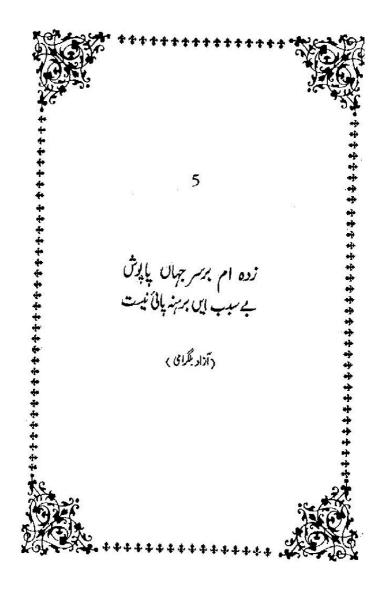


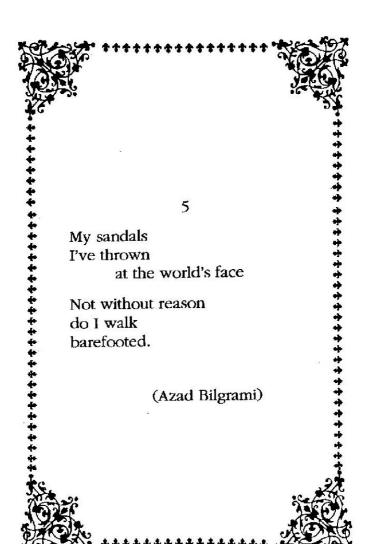


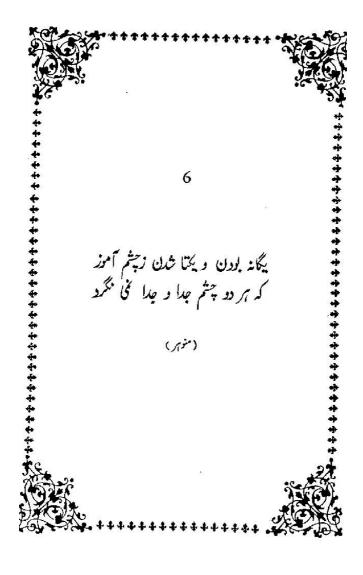


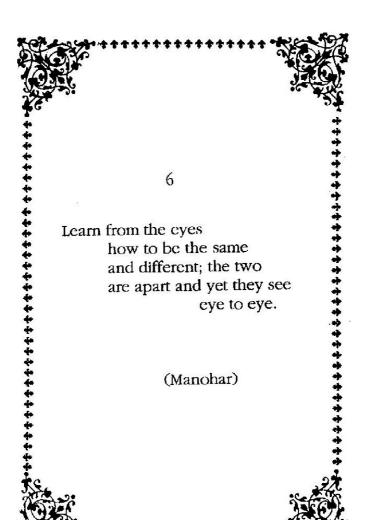


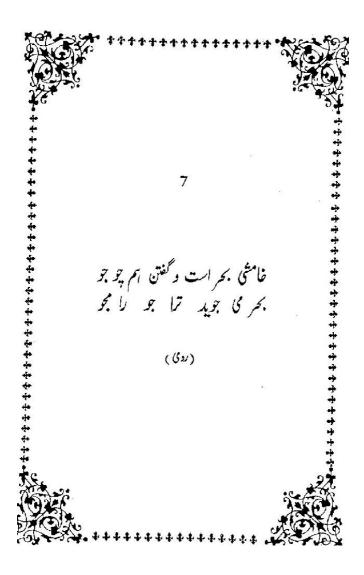


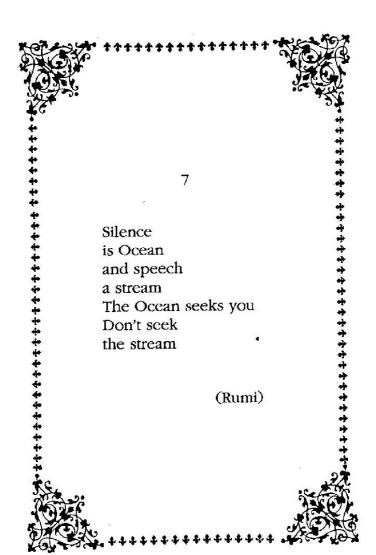




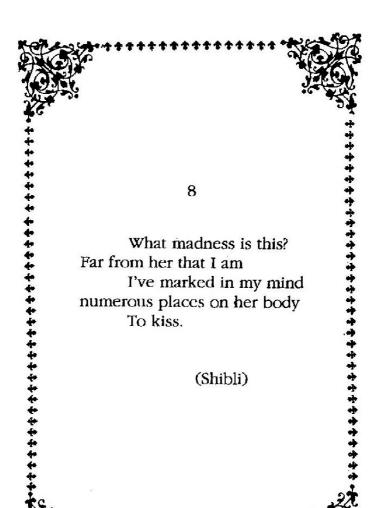


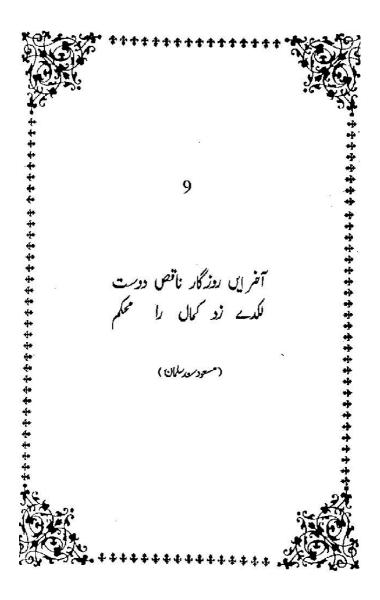


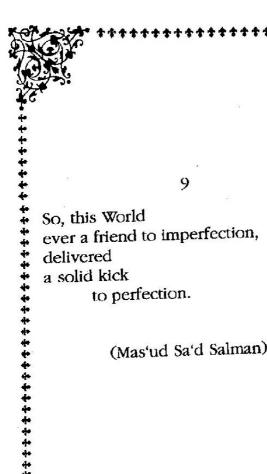








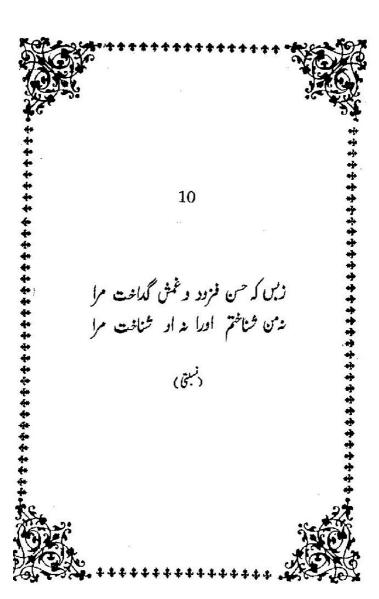




So, this World ever a friend to imperfection, delivered a solid kick to perfection.

(Mas'ud Sa'd Salman)





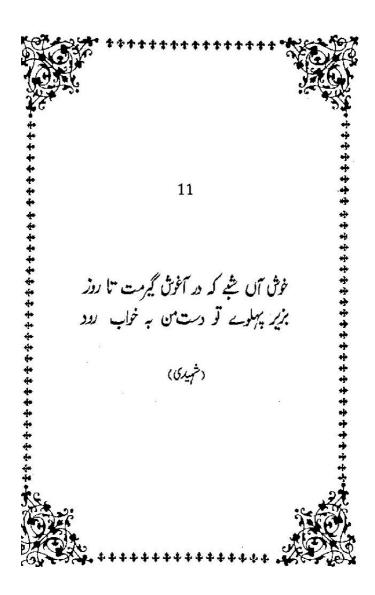


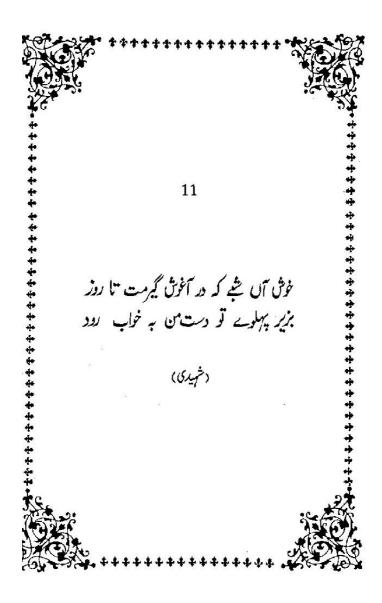


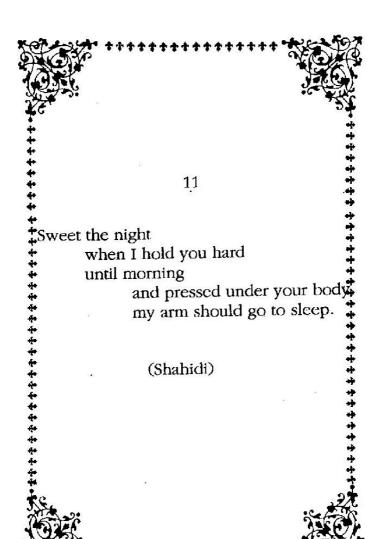
Her beauty
grew so much, and I
longing
for her, grew
so thin
that she didn't
know me, and I
didn't know her

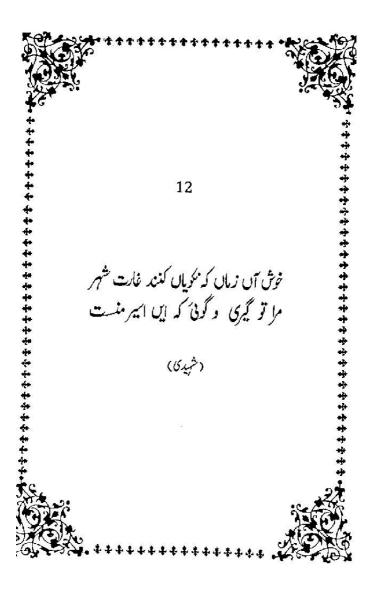
(Nisbati)

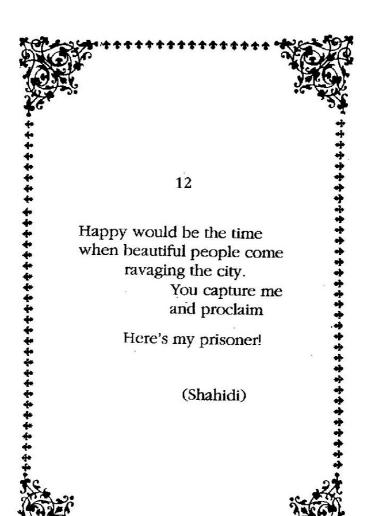


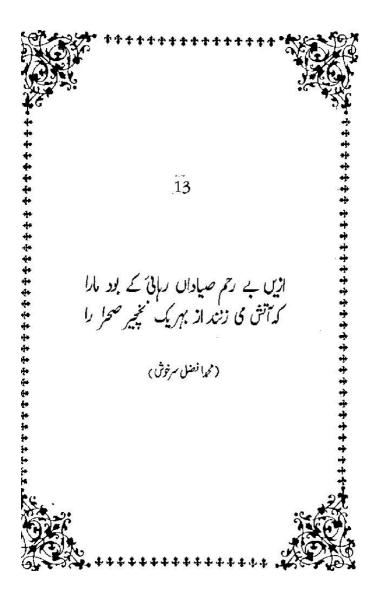


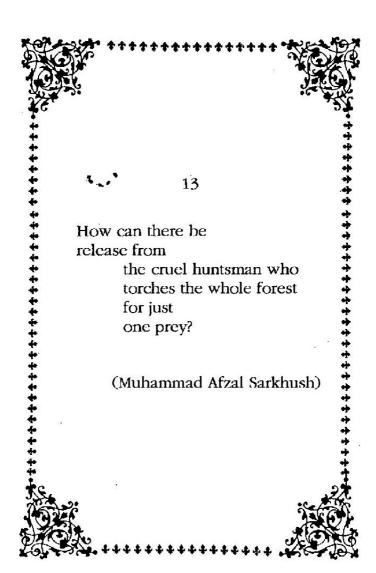


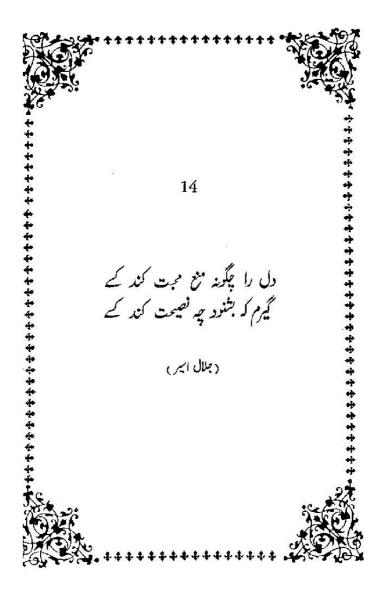


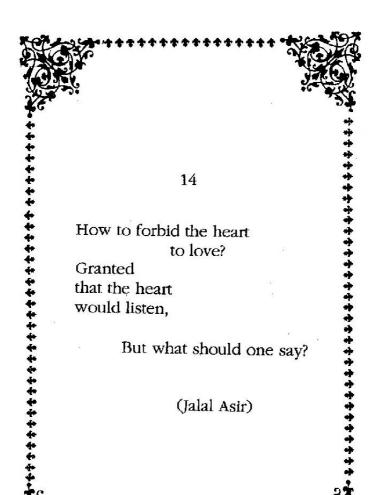


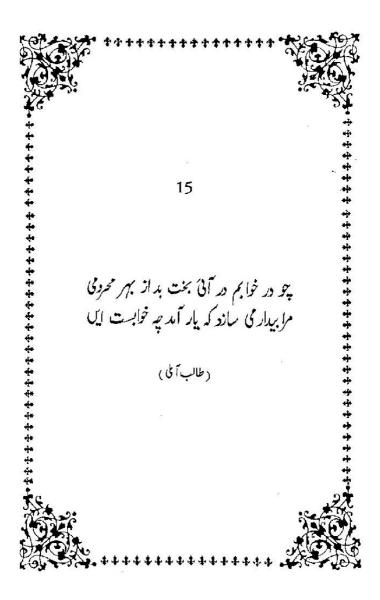




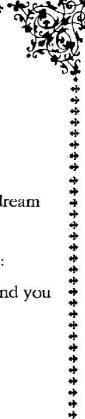












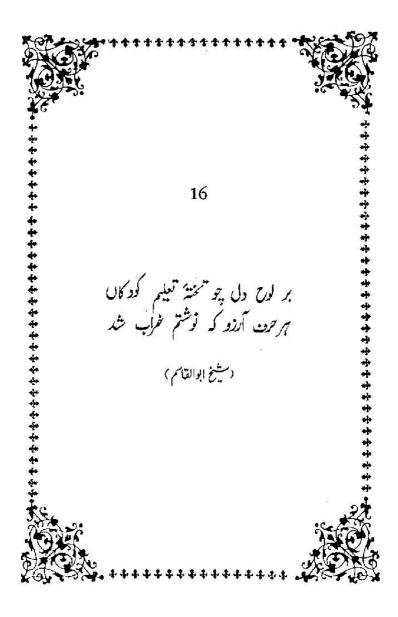
15

When you come to me in a dream
My misfortune
ever ready to do harm
wakes me up and says:

Your beloved is here and you Are asleep?

(Talib)







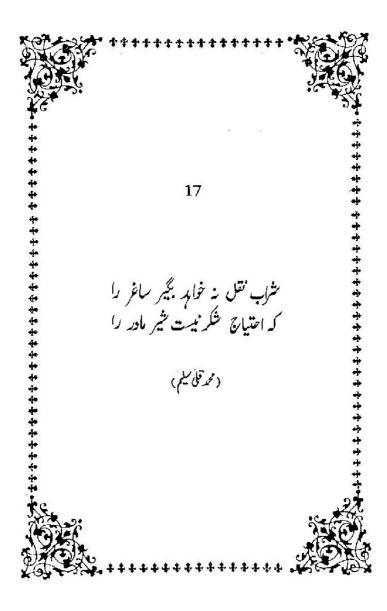


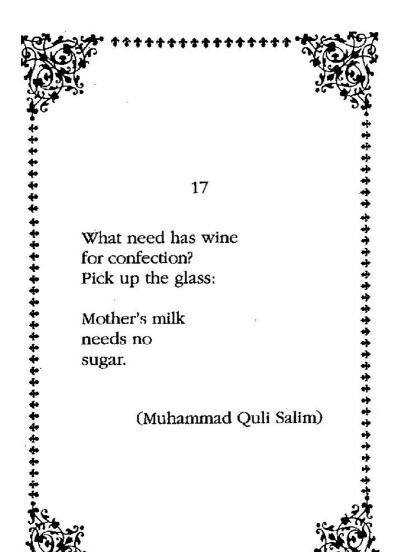
16

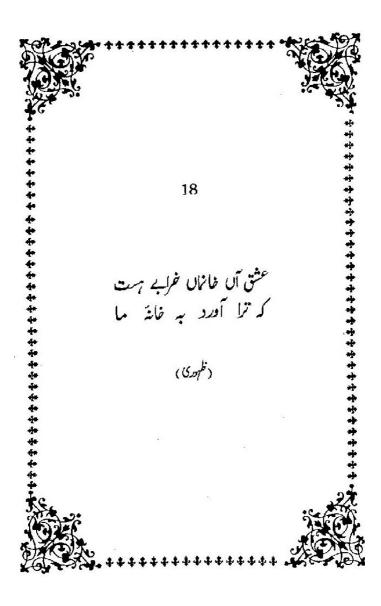
My heart was like a child's slate --Whatever word of hope I wrote on it was erased.

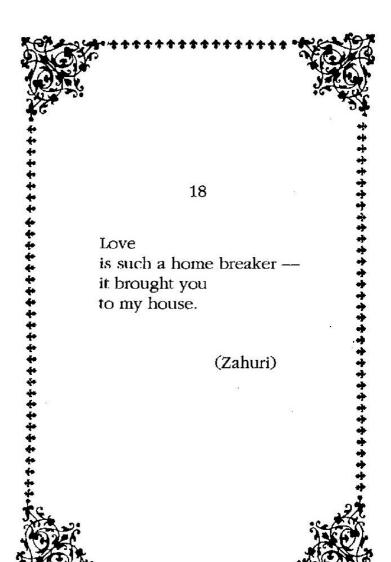
(Shaikh Abul Qasim)

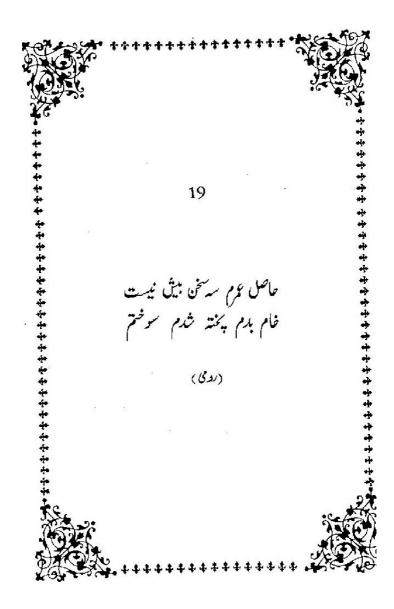


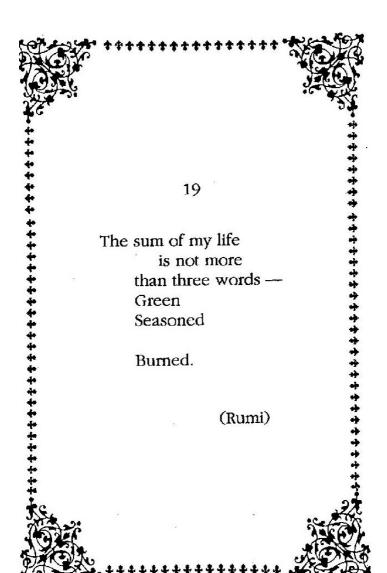


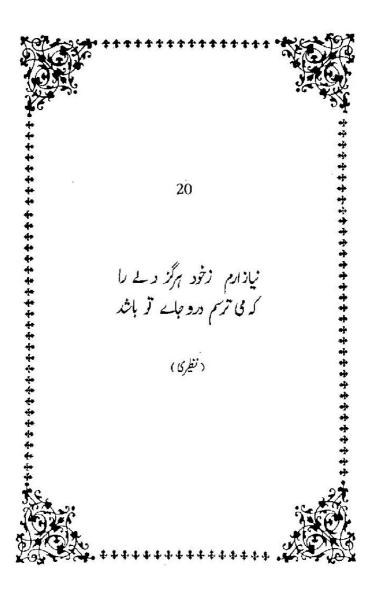


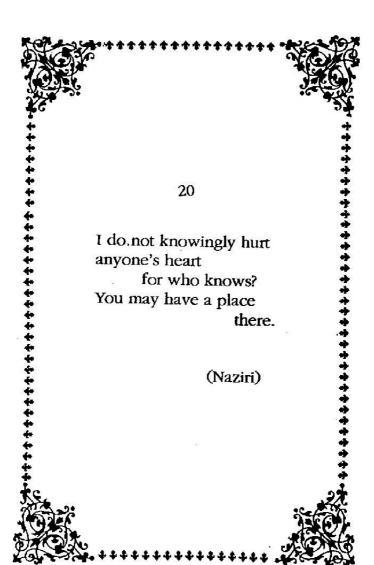


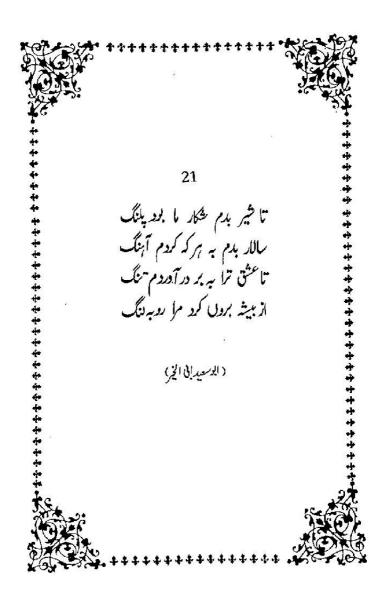
















21

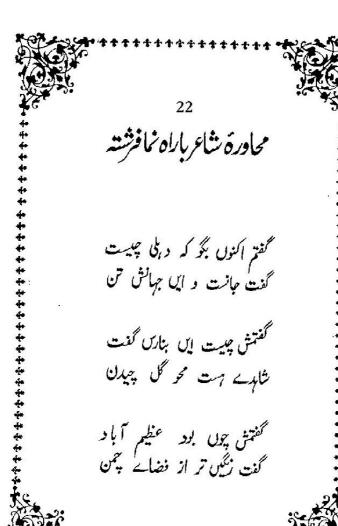
I was a lion the leopard was my prey Whomever I sprang upon was overwhelmed.

When I grasped your love hard to my breast A lame fox came

and chased me out of my lair.

(Abu Sa'id Abi Al-khair)







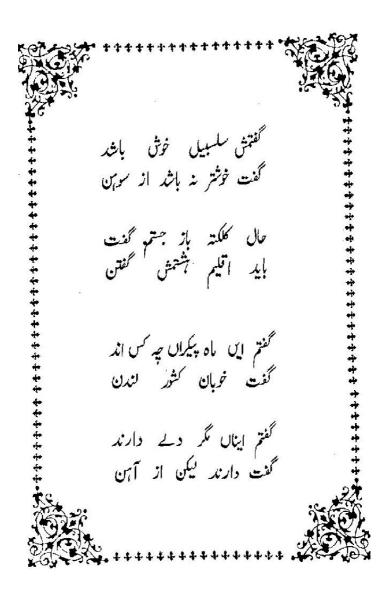
Conversation with his Guiding Angel ******

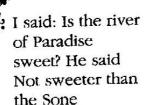
I said: Tell me now about Delhi. He said It's the soul and the world its body

I said: What about Banaras then? He said, A sweet beloved absorbed in plucking flowers

I asked: How about Azimabad? He said, It's more colourful than a garden's air





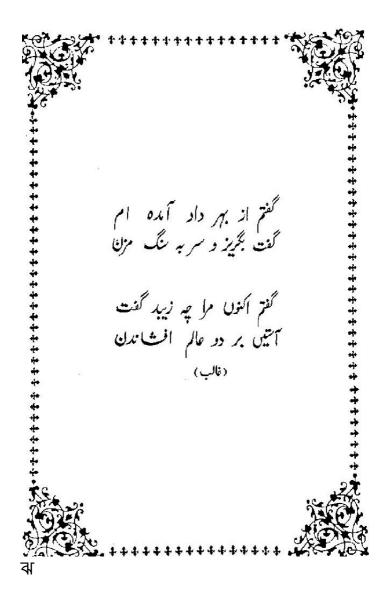


I asked then about Calcutta. He said, Call it the eighth continent

62444444444444444444444444444

I said: Who are these moonlike people? He said The beauties of the city of London ******

I said: Perhaps they have a heart? He said, yes but of steel







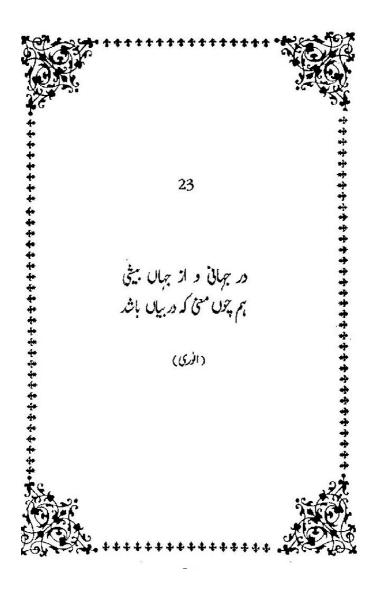
I said: I've come to seek justice He said, Go away don't beat your head against stone

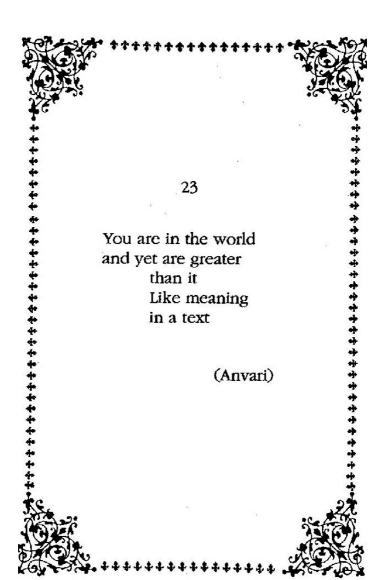
I said, what's then best for me? He said Shake the world's dust from your feet.

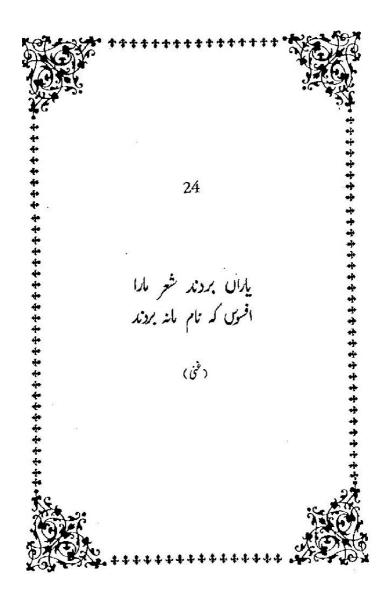
(Ghalib)

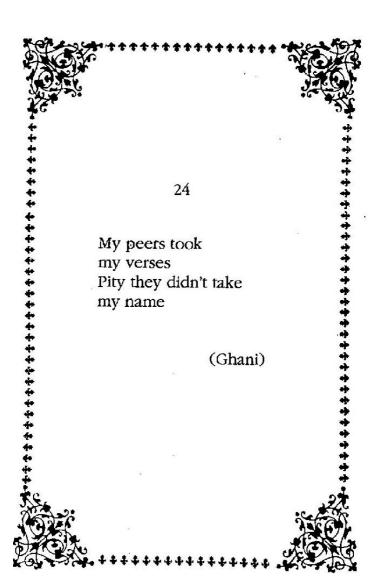


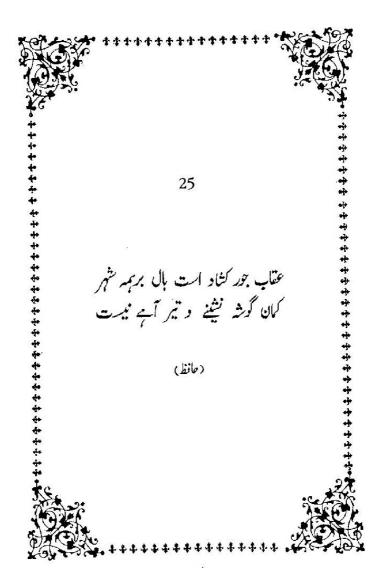














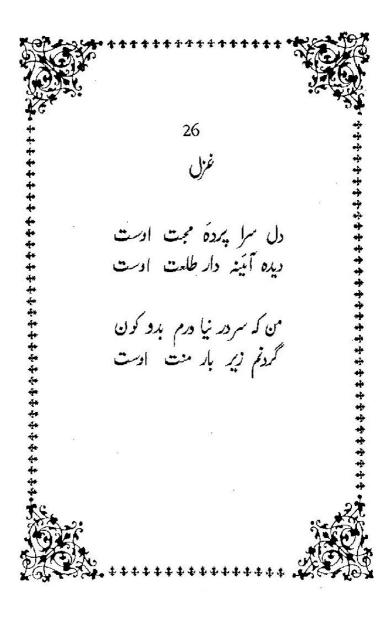
25

Tyranny's vulture has a wingspan darkening the whole city There's no recluse doubled up in pain like a bow

Nor the arrow of a sigh

(Hafiz)









26

Ghazal

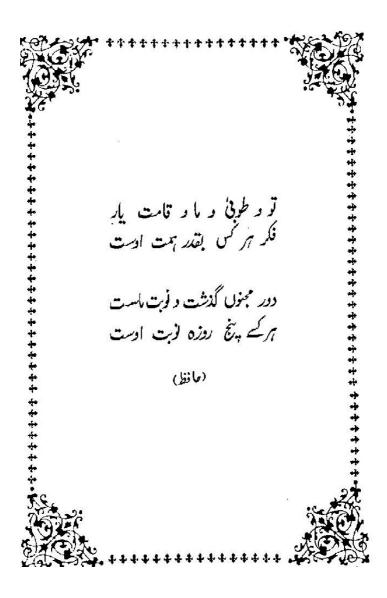
My heart is the secret tent where her love abides

My eye is the mirror-holder that reflects her beauty

I, who never would bend for the sake of the two worlds My shoulders are bent with her kindness





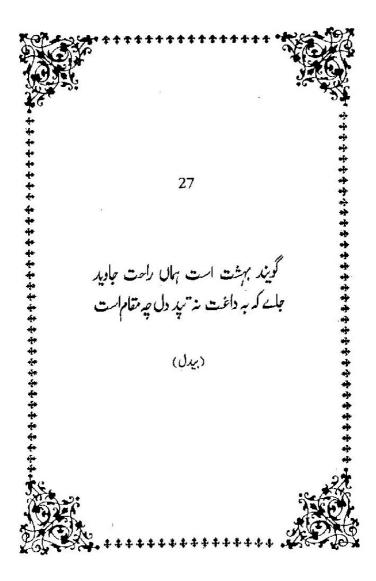


my friend, are absorbed in the thought Of the tree of Paradise And I, in the thought of her noble stature Everyone thinks up ***** *********** according to their reach

The age of Majnun is gone Now it's the changing of the guard for me.

Everybody has a time — span of five days tor six.

(Hafiz)







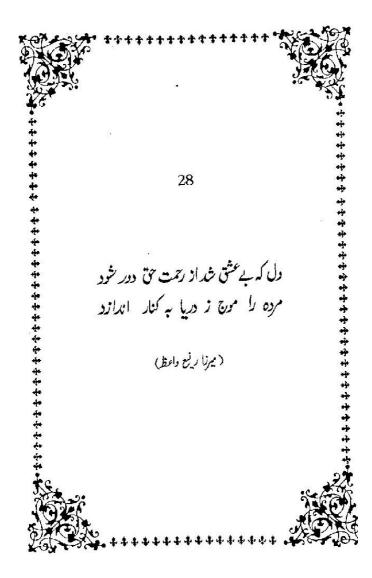
They say Paradise is eternal comfort.

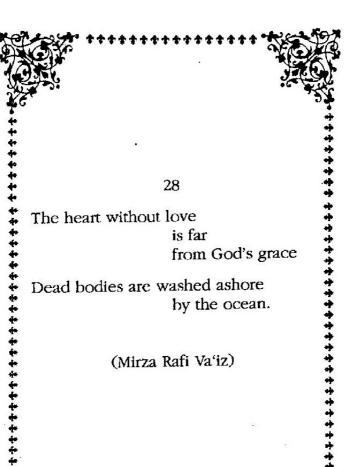
What the hell should one do with a place where the heart doesn't throb and burn with the scar of your love?

(Bedil)





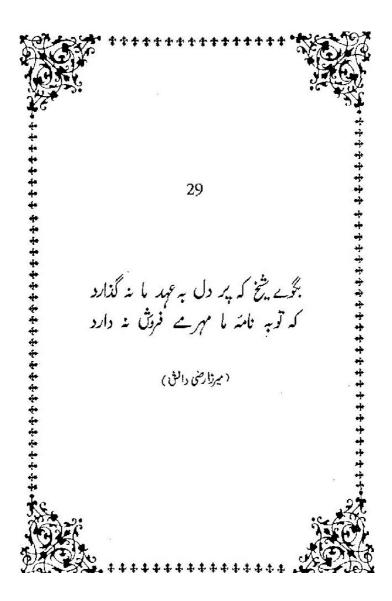




by the ocean.

(Mirza Rafi Va'iz)







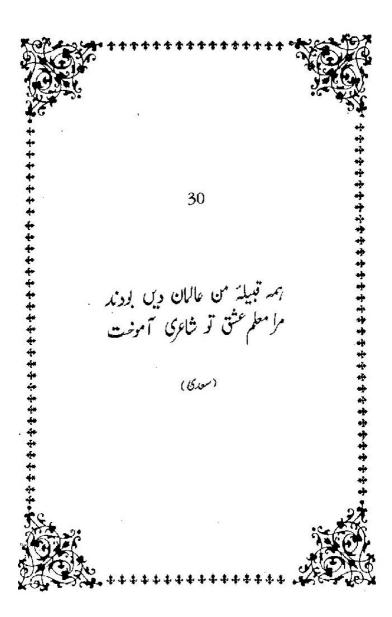


29

Tell the Mulla:
Don't
be too happy at my vow
to give up wine
for my Declaration of Repentance
hasn't yet been ratified
By the wine-seller

(Mirza Razi Danish)







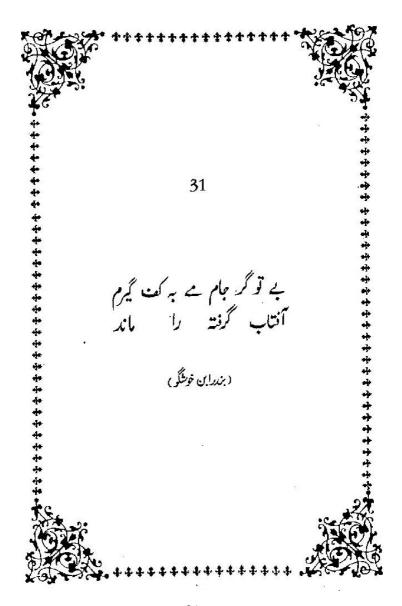
30

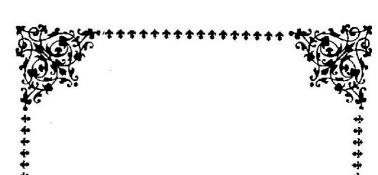
All the rest of my tribe were priests and divines — Your love took charge of my education and taught me

The art of writing poetry.

(Sa'di)



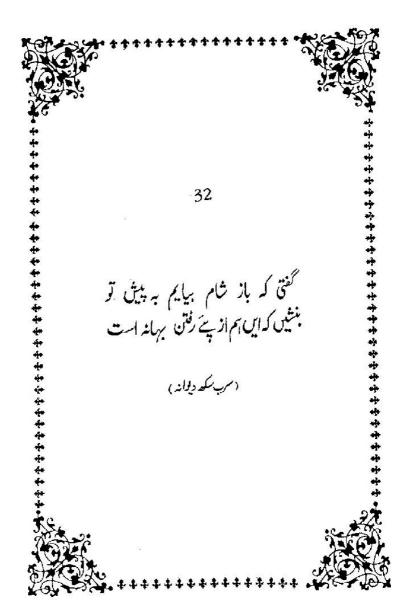


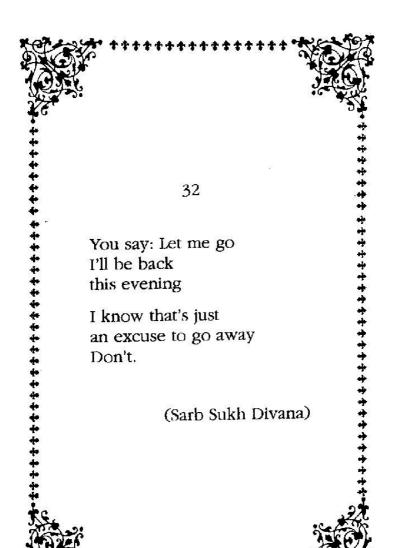


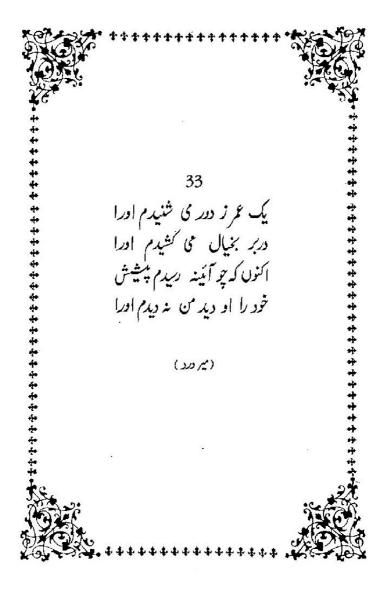
Without you the wineglass in my hand like the sun In eclipse

(Bindraban Khushgo)













A whole lifetime I scented

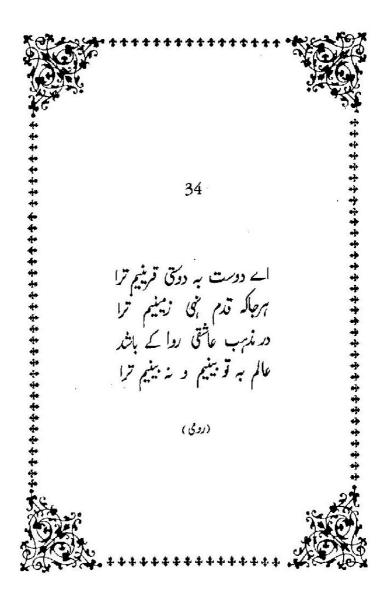
her fragrance from far —
In my mind
I held her close to my heart
like, when I
of her

Now, mirror-like, when I am in front of her She sees herself in me and I don't see her.

(Mir Dard)











I'm close to you, my friend because of friendship

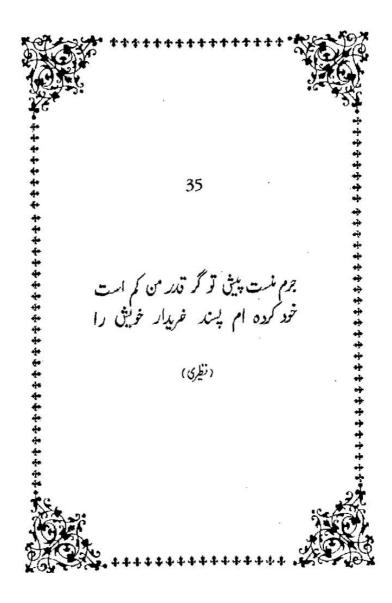
I am the earth you step on wherever you go

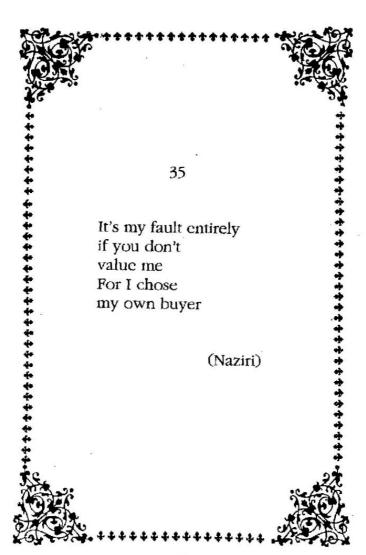
Is it the proper faith of love then that I should see the world through you but I shouldn't see you?

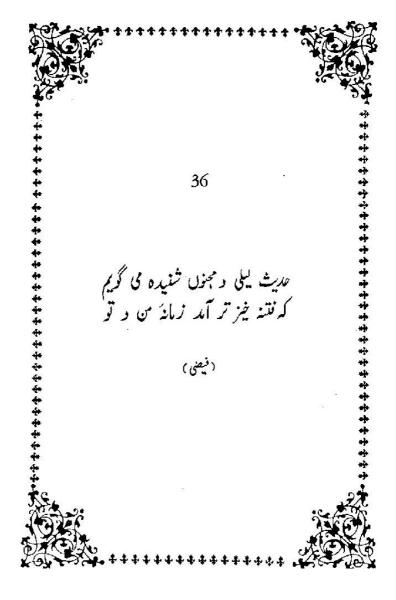
(Rumi)

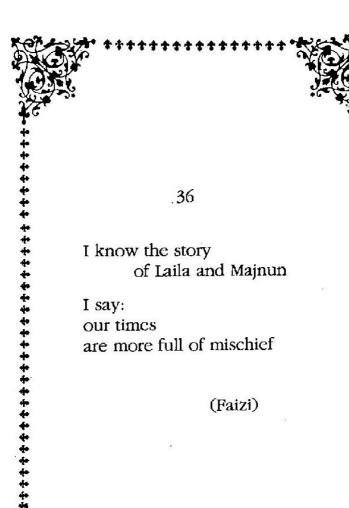








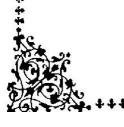


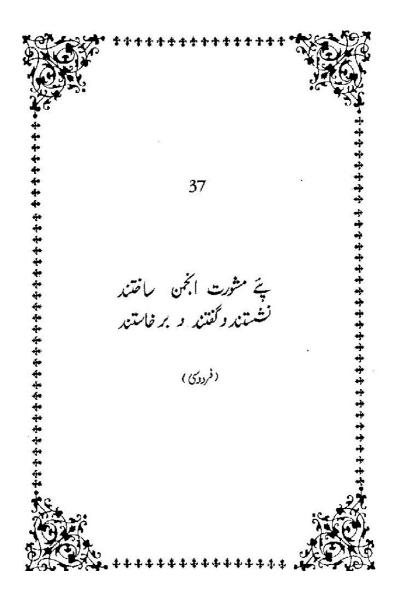


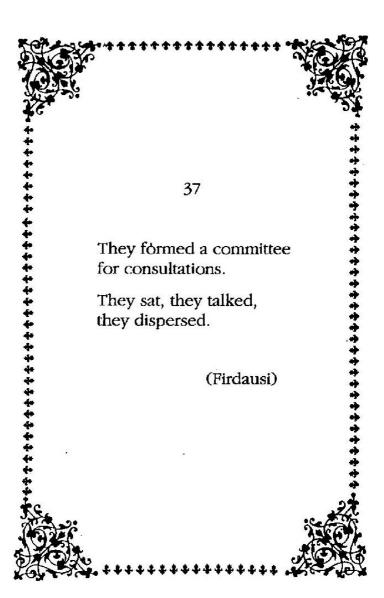
I know the story of Laila and Majnun

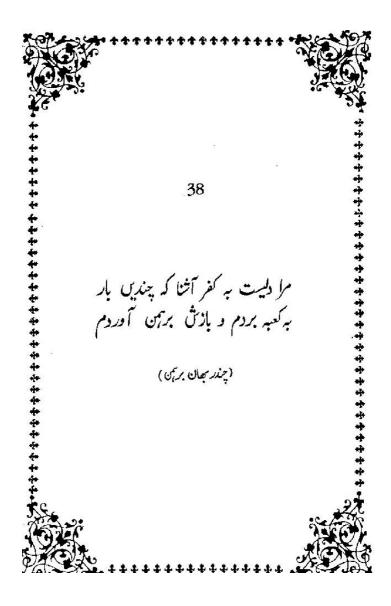
I say: our times are more full of mischief

(Faizi)







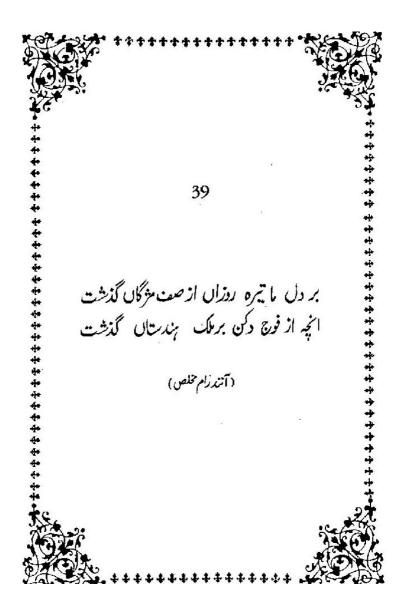




38

My heart is so much in love with heresy that times out of mind I took it to the Ka'ba, yet everytime it came back the same old Brahmin.

(Chandar Bhan Brahman)







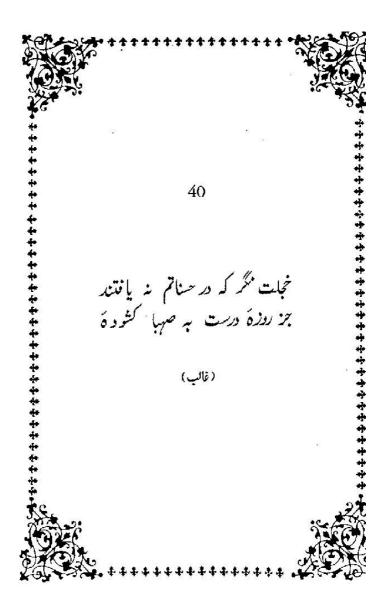
39

To us, black of fortune the array of her eyelashes did what the army of the Deccan did

to the people of the north.

(Anand Ram Mukhlis)



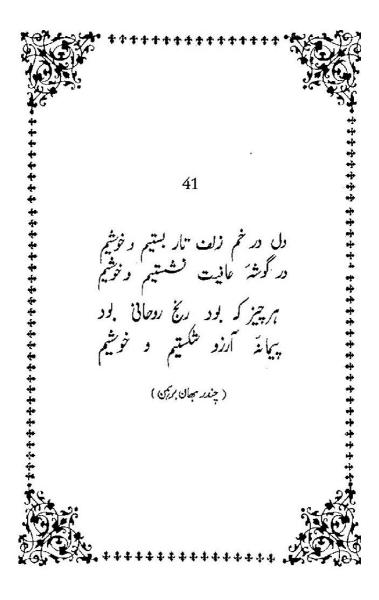




Such shame!
Good deeds they found none
in my record
but a fast correctly kept
though broken
with a glass of wine

(Ghalib)







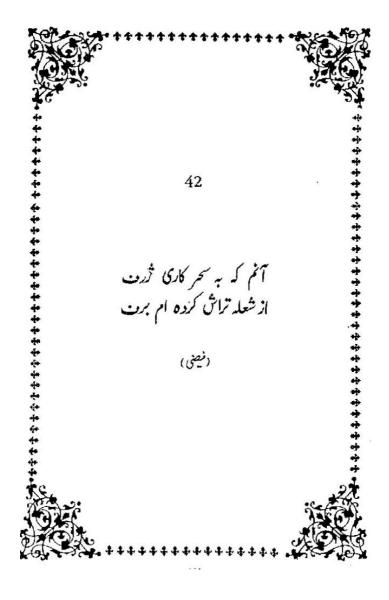
I tied my heart to a curl in her dark tresses and am happy

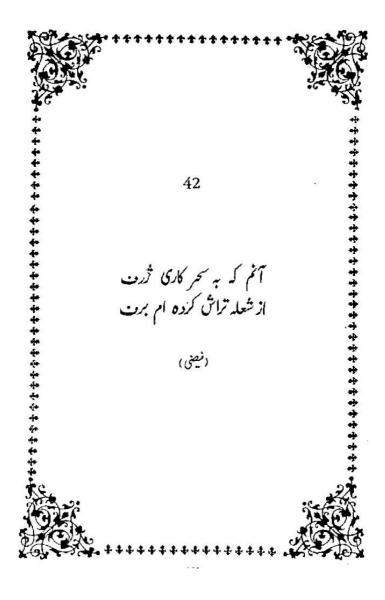
I sat in a peaceful nook and am happy

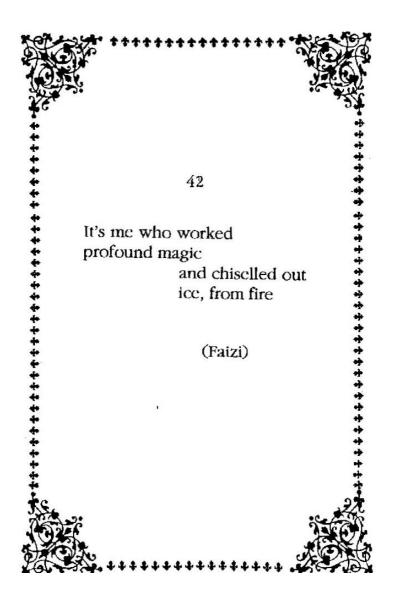
All that the world had was trouble to my soul

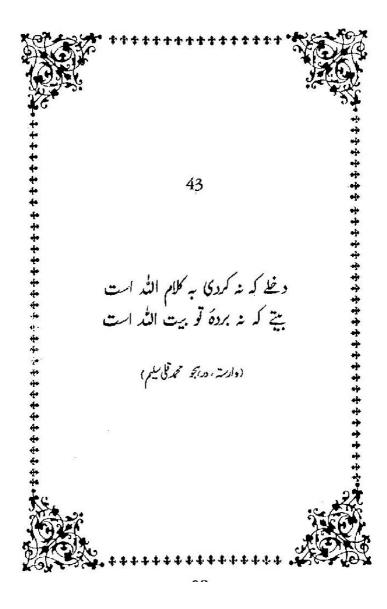
I broke the cup of Desire and am happy

(Chandar Bhan Brahman)











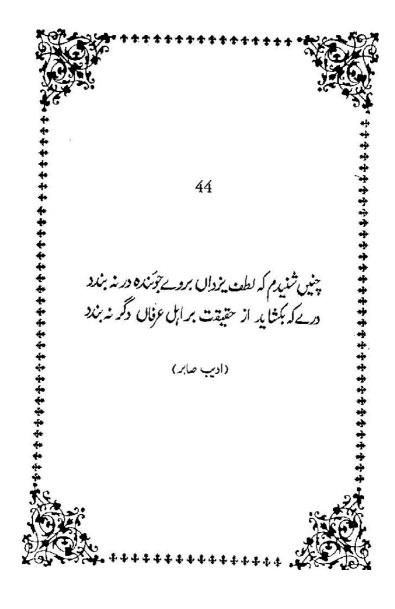


The only text
that you didn't corrupt
is the Koran;
the only construct
that you didn't steal
is the Ka'ba.

(Sialkoti Mal Varasta; satirizing Muhammad
Quli Salim)









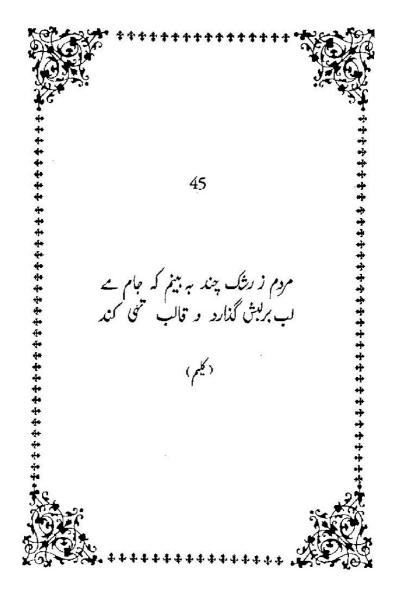


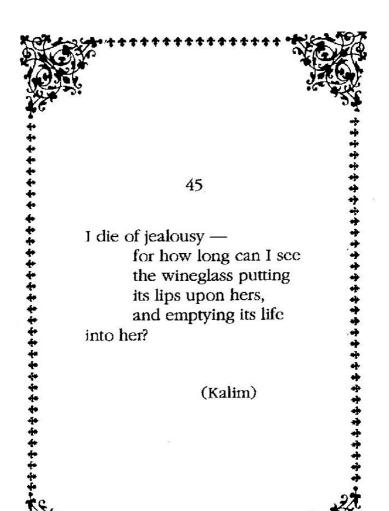
I've heard it said: God's grace doesn't close the door in the seeker's face

The door upon the Truth that he opens on those who know is never shut again.

(Adib Sabir)







**** ************* 46 زن بدست مرد در وتست لقا چوں خمیر آمد بدست نانبا بر شد گاهیش نرم دگه درشت نو برآرد چاق چاتے زیر مشت گاه پهنش وا کشد بر شختهٔ در بیش آرد گھ یک لخت



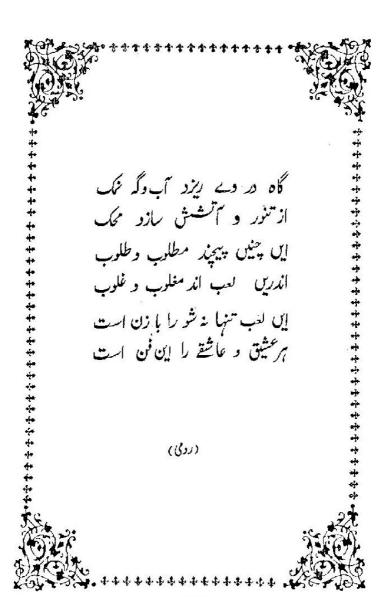


46

Woman in the hands of man when they meet — like leavened dough in the baker's hands.

He kneads her now softly, now hard smack, thwack blow upon blow, he pulls her under his hands sometimes he spreads her wide and open suddenly sometimes he draws her close







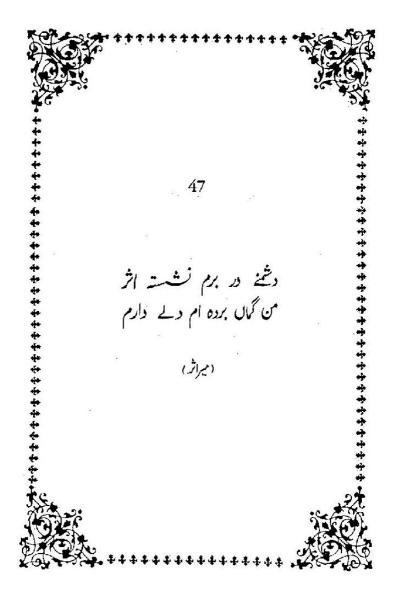
sometimes he puts a bit of salt into her sometimes he pours a bit of wetness into her

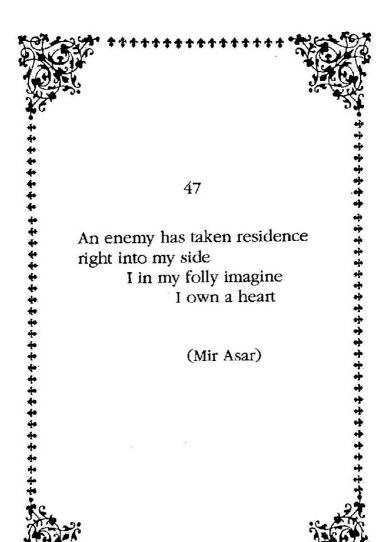
Testing her with heat and fire thus they twist and twine, the seeker and the sought in this game they end up both victor and vanquished;

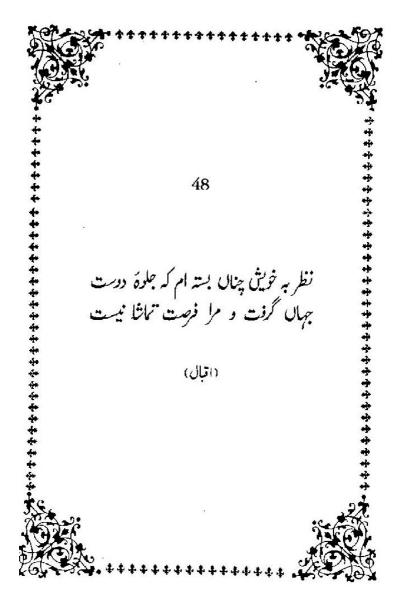
And the game is not for just wife and husband It is rather an art shared by all lovers and loved ones.

(Rumi)











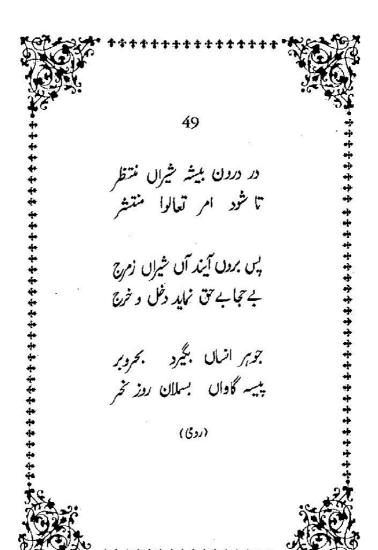


My gaze is fixed upon my own self, so that the loved one's Image has taken the whole world,

but I have no time to stare.

(Iqbal)





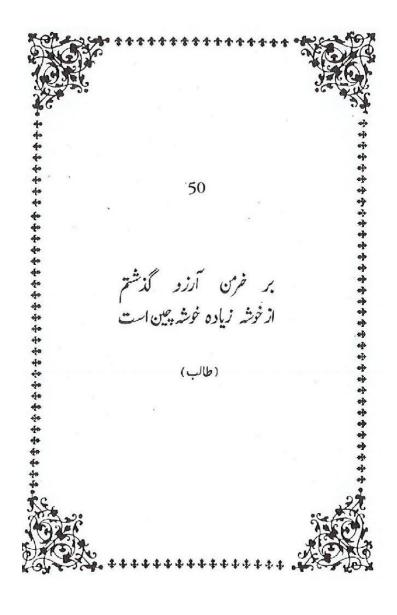


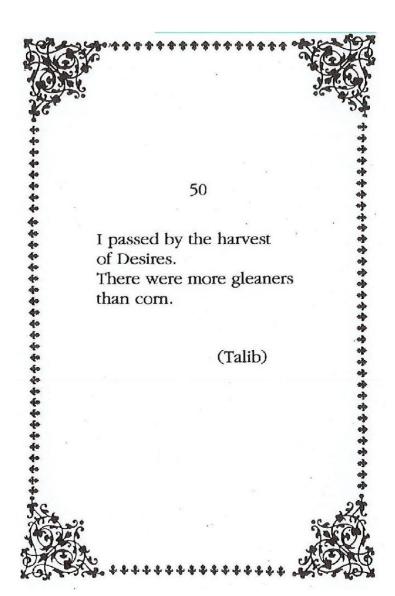
Deep into the bush -tigers
waiting for the command:
Come!

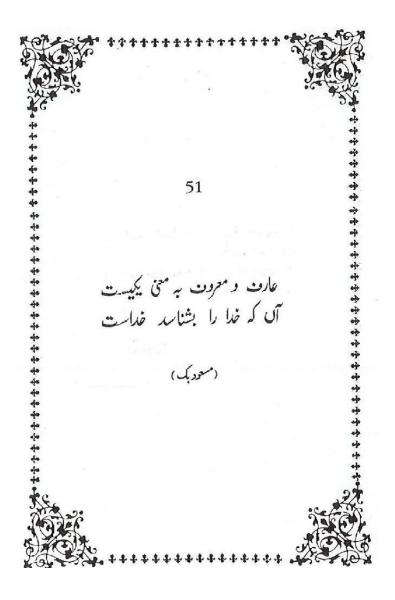
Out from the secret meadow they come those tigers; and God unveiled comes and goes freely among them.

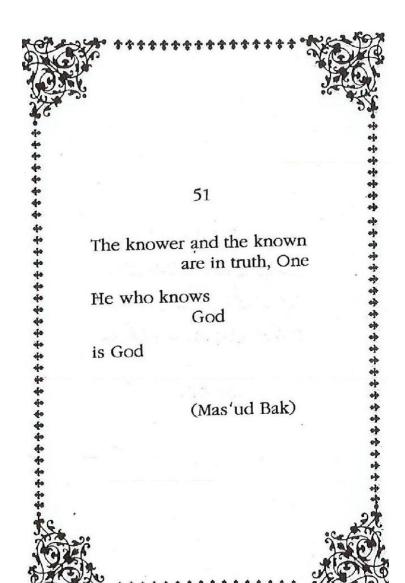
Man's essence overtakes land and sea and pied cattle are slaughtered on that day of Sacrifice

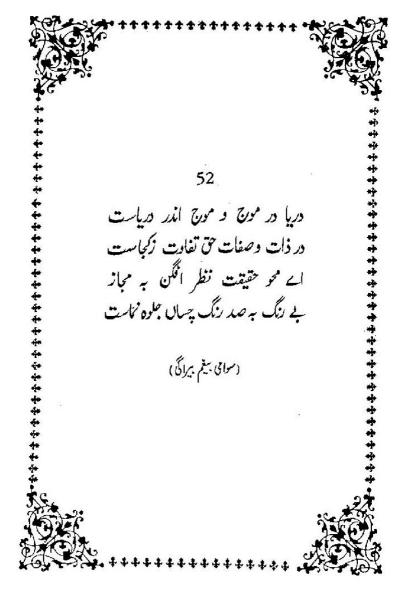
(Rumi)



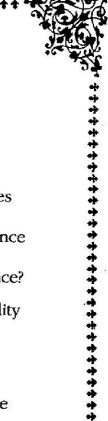










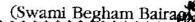


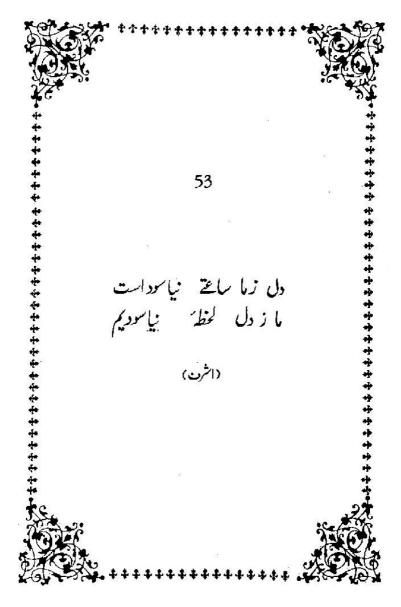
52

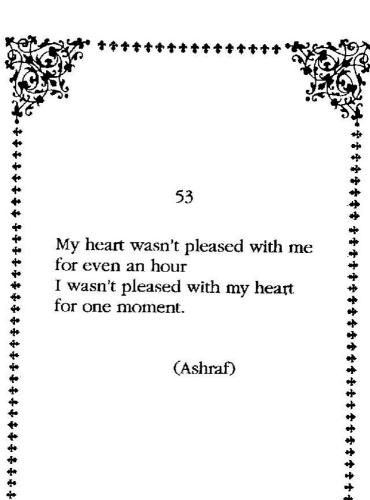
The ocean is in the waves the waves, in the ocean where then is the difference between Attribute and Substance?

You, who are lost in Reality cast an eye on the Tropes as well

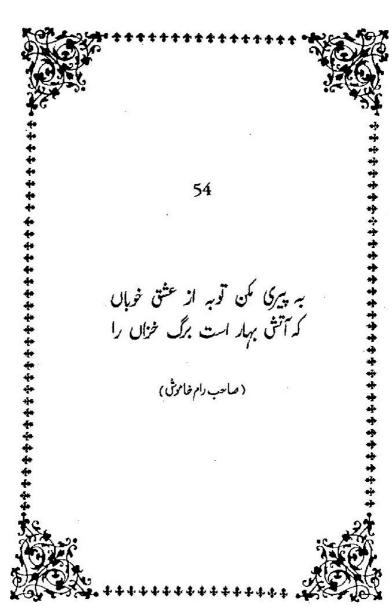
How brightly
The Colourless One
shines
in a hundred
colours







(Ashraf)

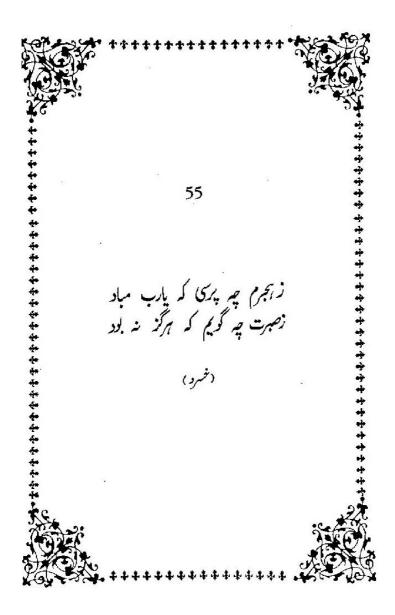


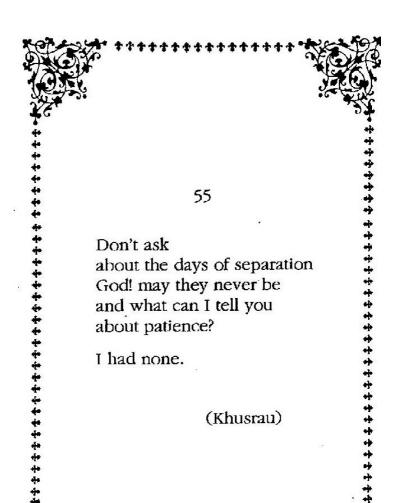


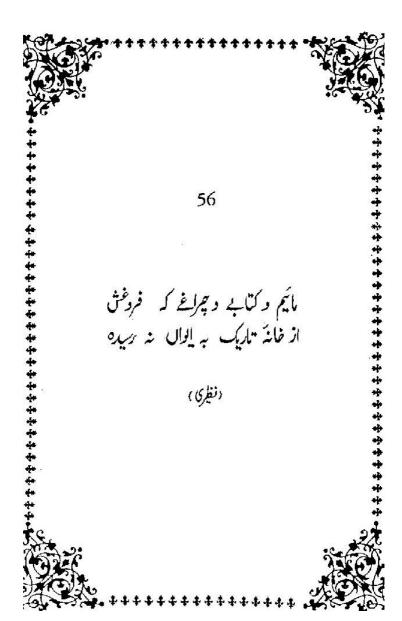


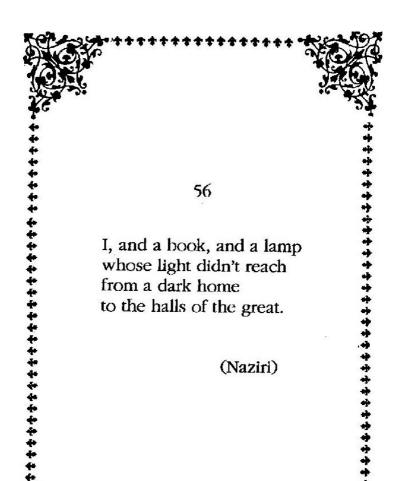
Do not give up loving the lovely ones even when you're old for fire is spring to the yellow leaf.

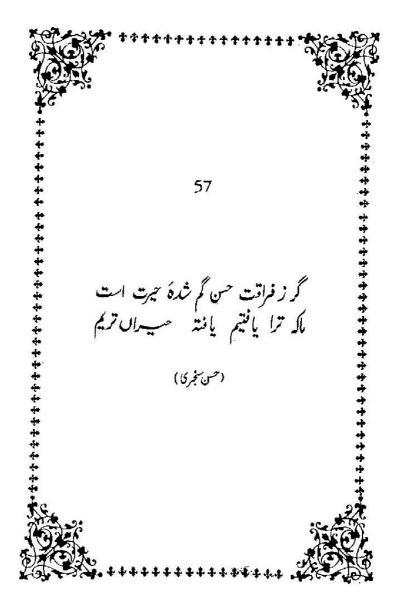
(Sahib Ram Khamosh)

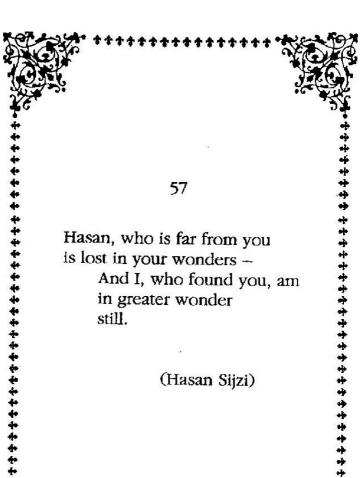








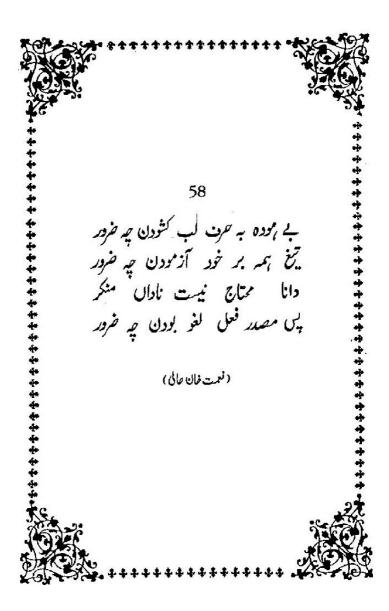




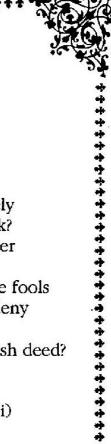
still.

(Hasan Sijzi)







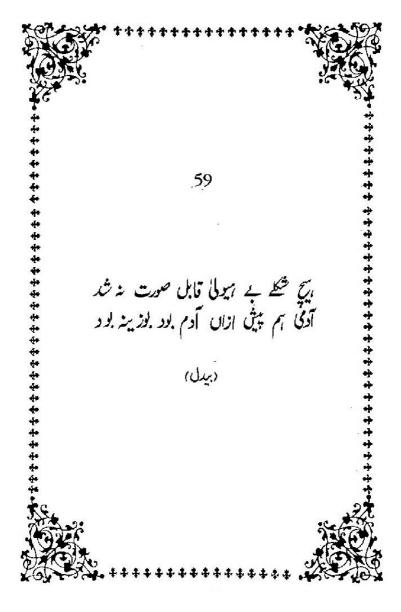


58

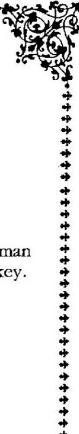
Why open my mouth futilely
to speak?
Why test everybody's dagger
on me?
The wise have no need, the fools
deny
So why be
the subject of a foolish deed?

(Nc mat Khan Ali)







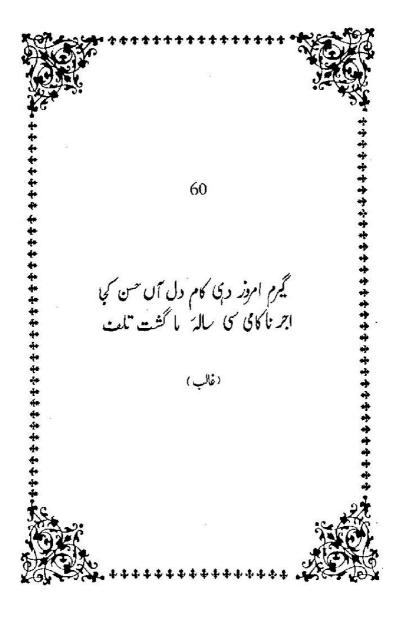


Nothing takes shape without raw material —

Man, before he became man was a monkey.

(Bedil)







·****************



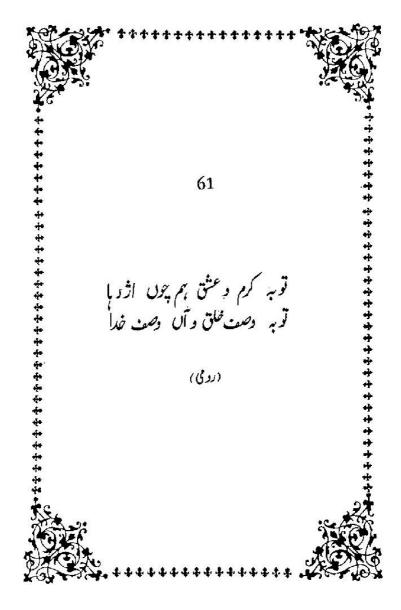
60

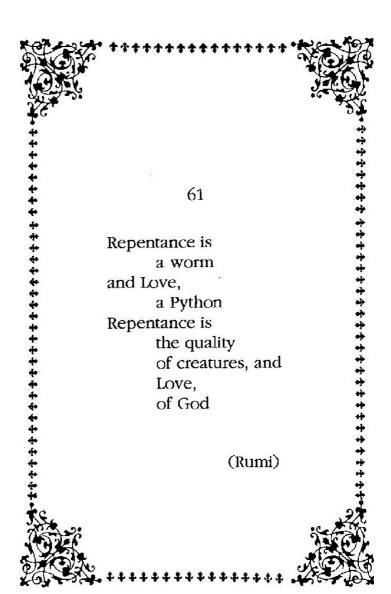
Granted, today you agree to give me my heart's desire; but where is that beauty now?

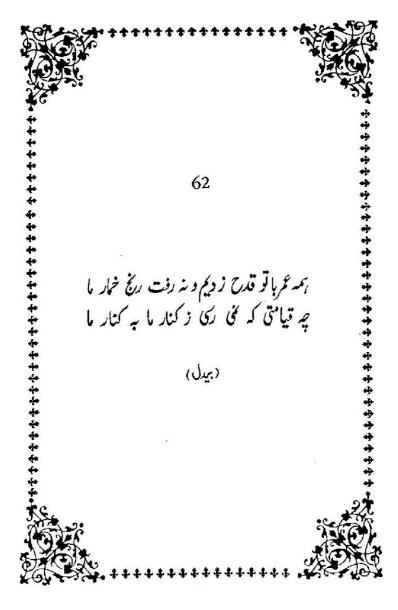
Thirty years of frustration gone to waste.

(Ghalib)













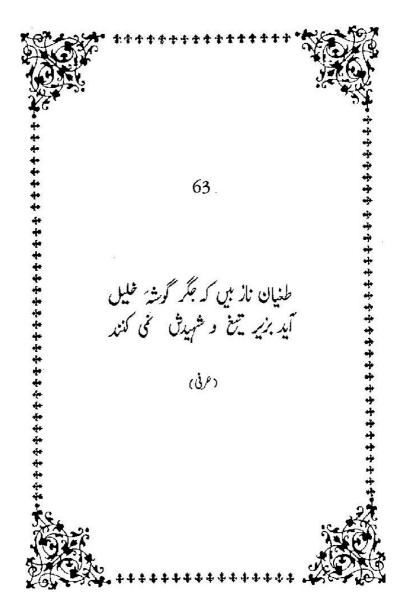
62

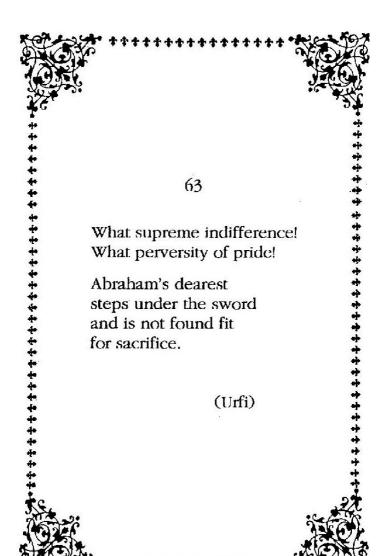
All my life I drank with you and yet the anguish of my thirst is the same. Tell me, How is it that you don't come from me to me?

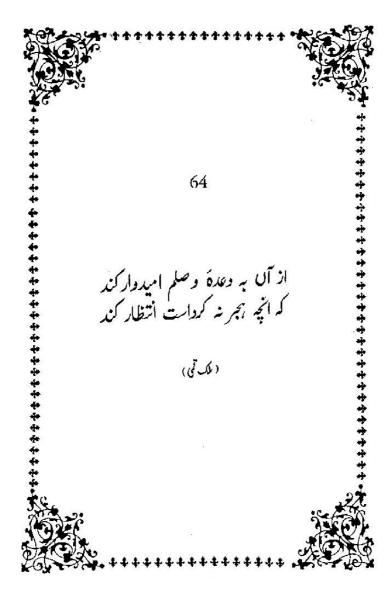
(Bedil)













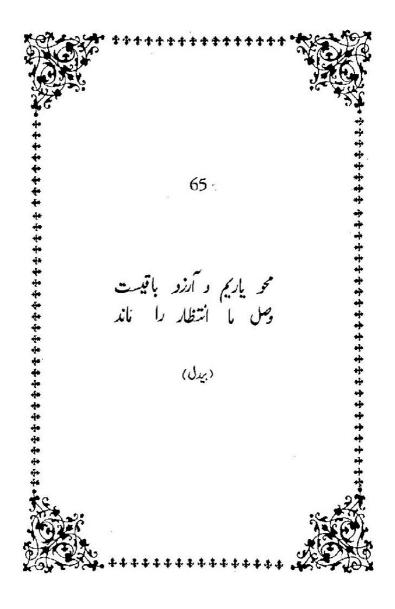


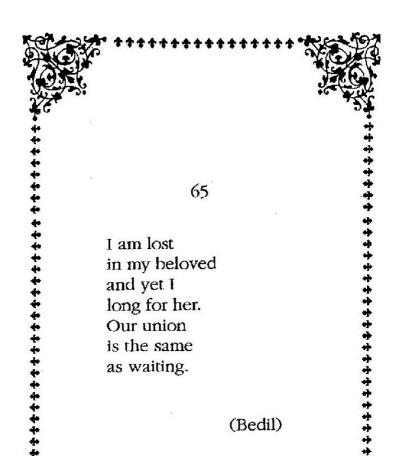
She promises to visit and fills me with hope for she knows that waiting can do what separation couldn't

(Malik Qumi)

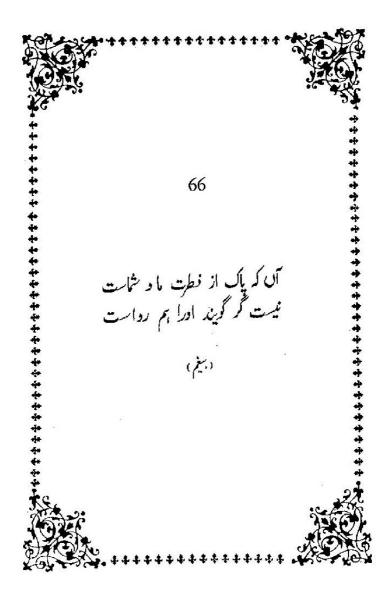


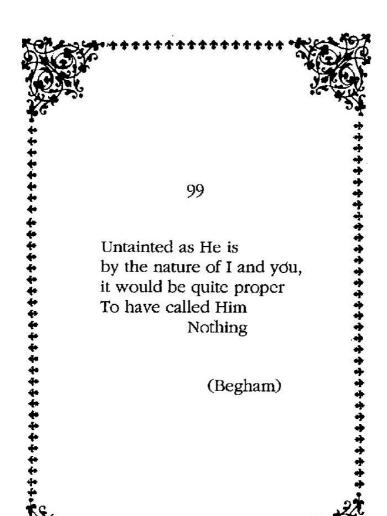


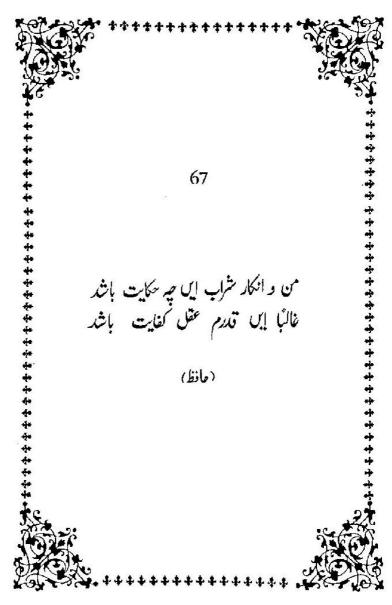


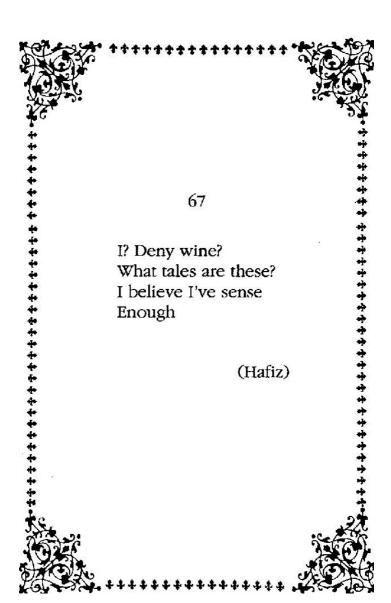


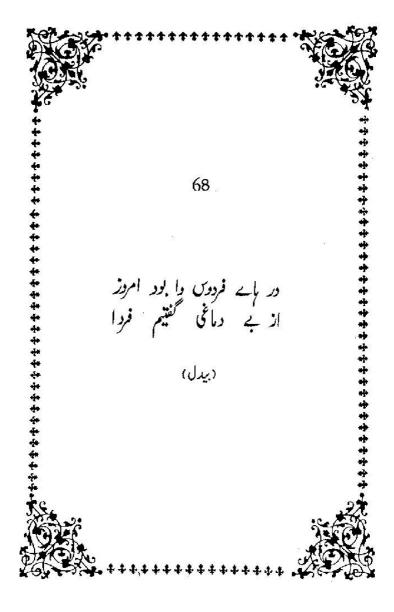










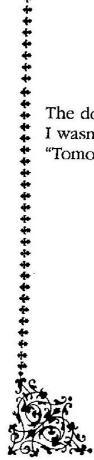




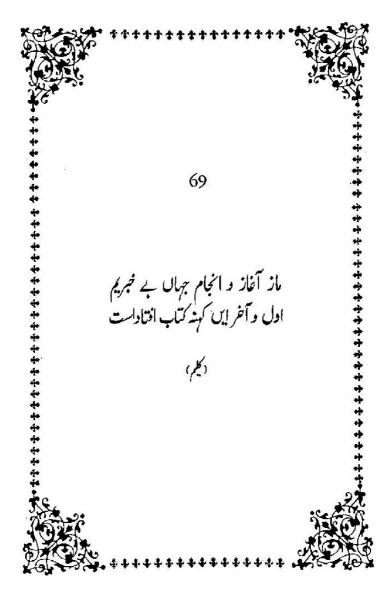


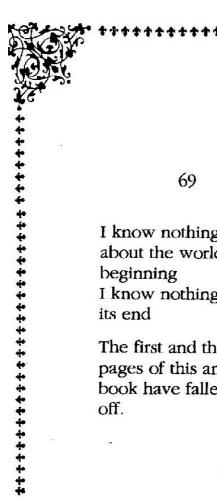
***** The doors of Paradise were open today I wasn't in the best of moods, I said -"Tomorrow."

(Bedil)









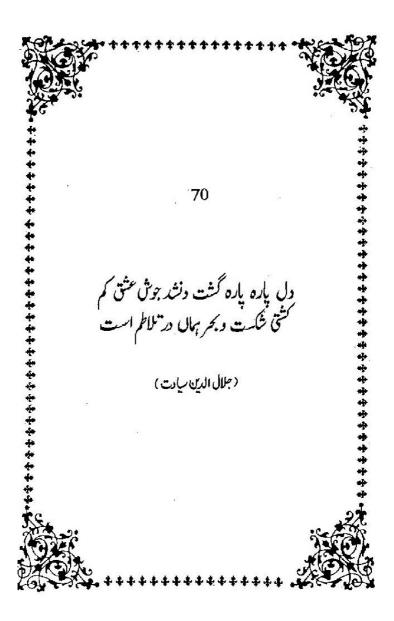


I know nothing about the world's beginning I know nothing about its end

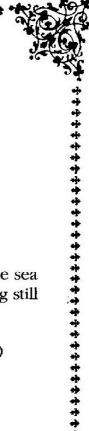
The first and the last pages of this ancient book have fallen off.

(Kalim)









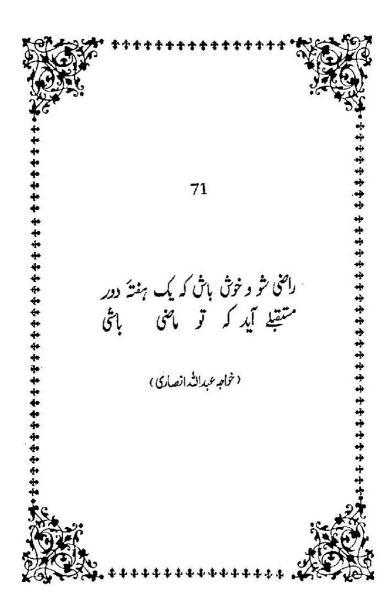
My heart is shattered yet love's ardour is undiminished

The ship is wrecked, and the sea is raging still

(Jalaluddin Siadat)









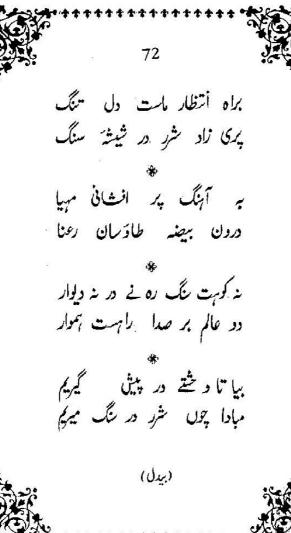


Be content and live happy, for it's only a week away +

The future, when you will be past.

(Khvaja Abdullah Ansari)





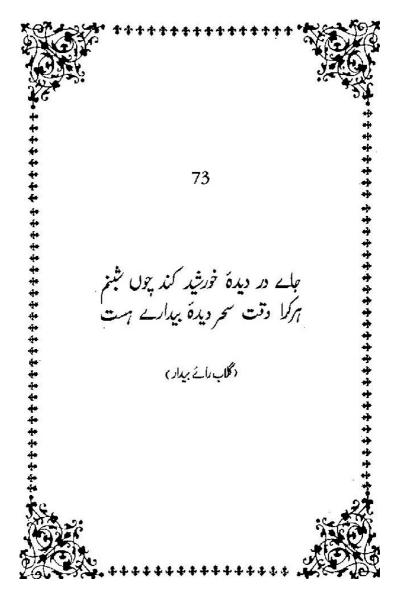
She waits for us, desolate
The fairy-spark
deep in the heart of the stone
like a peri in a mirror

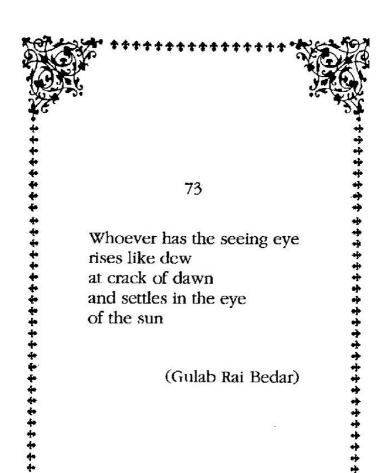
Enclosed within the egg Are young and beautiful peafowl, ready to fly out

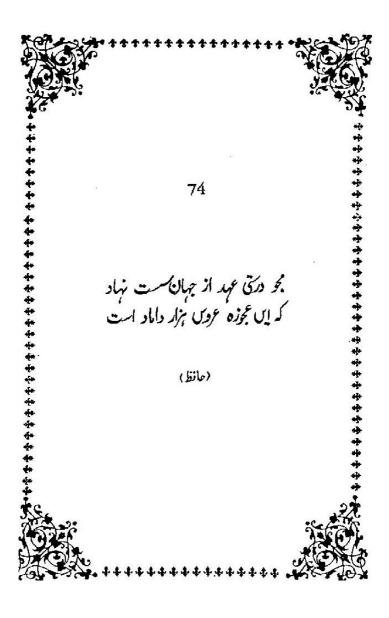
Nothing can be a stumbling block for you. Mountains, valleys, walls -- nothing. Earth and sky spread smooth in the path of sound

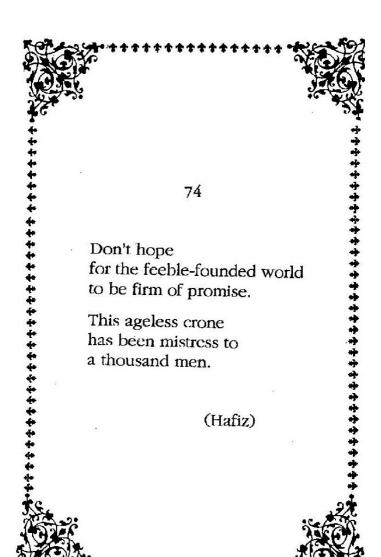
Come, let's fire
a bit of madness together
lest we die like the spark
deep in the heart of the stone

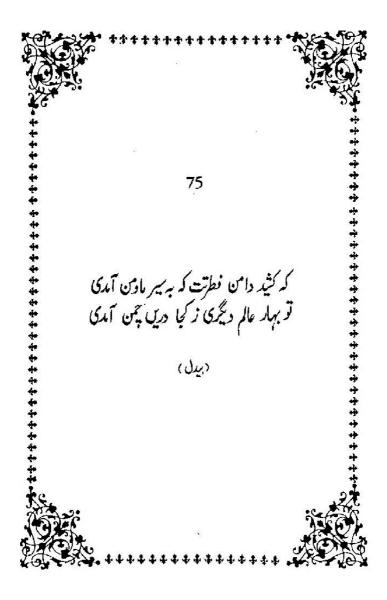
(Bedil)















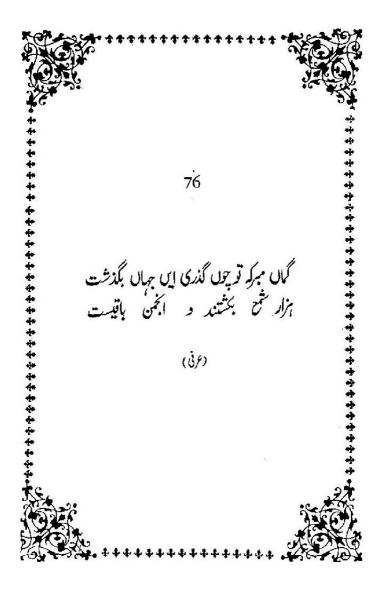
What was it that plucked at the strings of your heart that you came here to divert yourself among such as me, and us?

You are the springtime of another world. How is it that you're here, in this garden?

(Bedil)











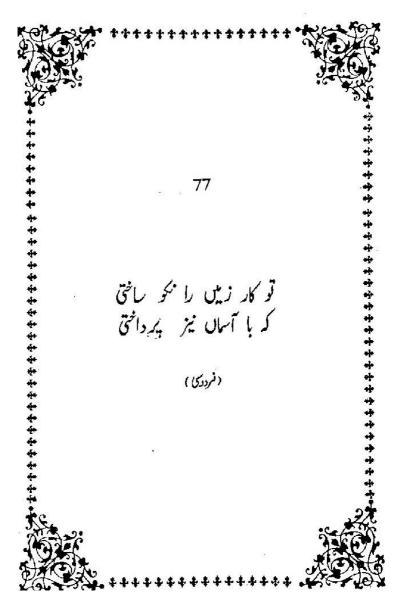
76

Don't imagine that with your passing the world too shall pass

A thousand lights are dead and yet the party goes on

(Urfi)





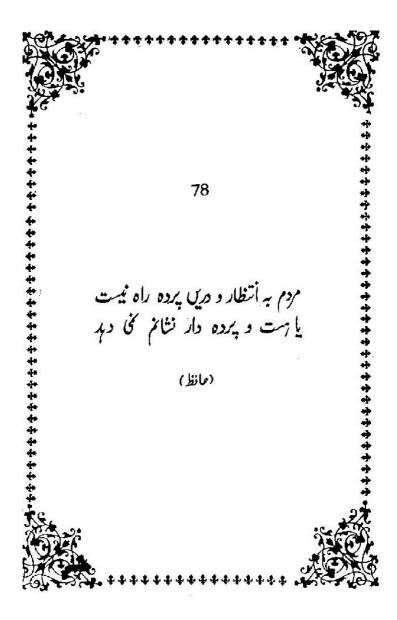


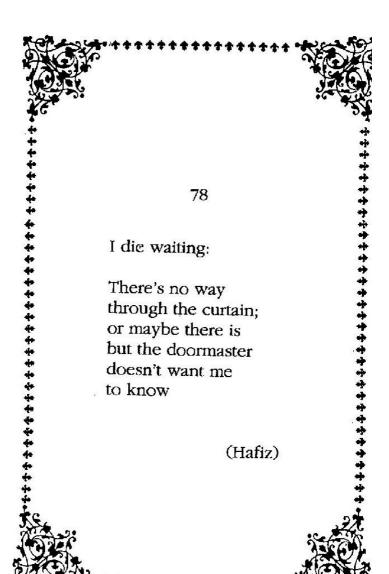


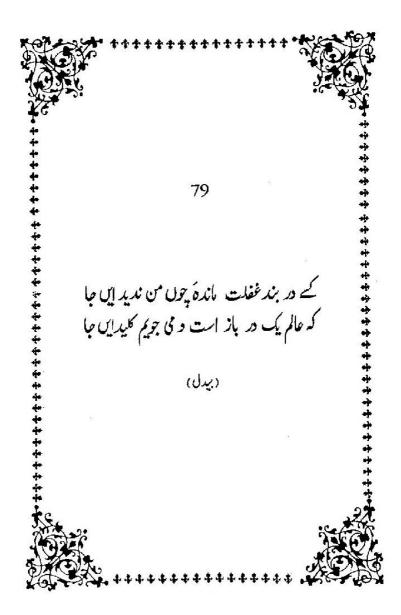
Did you set this world's affairs right that you muscled your way to the sky?

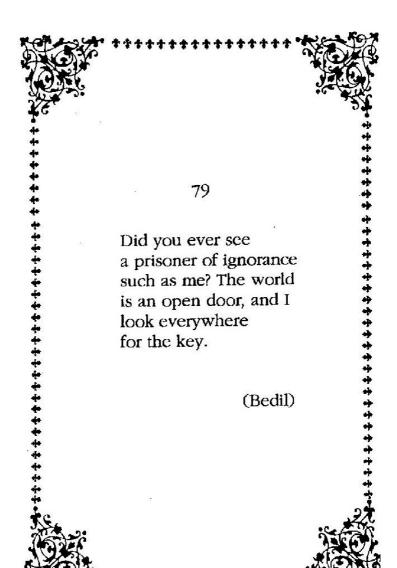
(Firdausi)

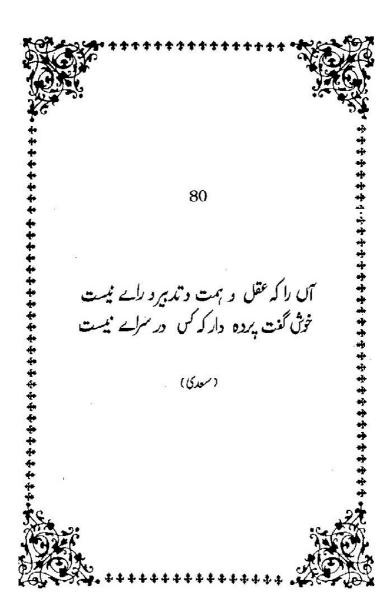


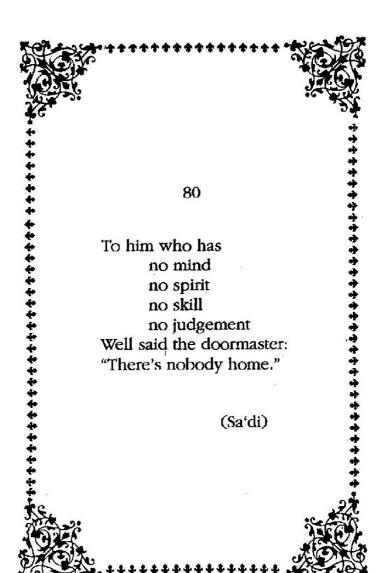


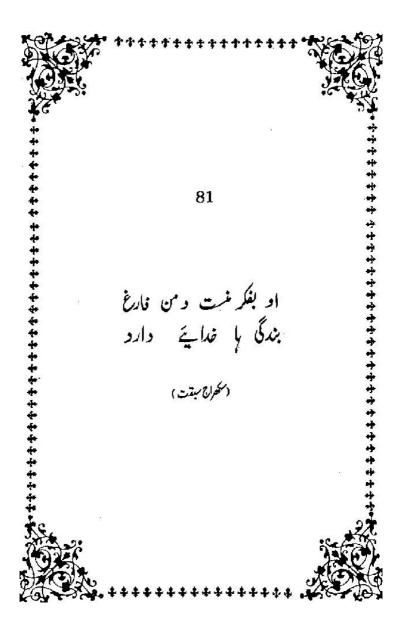


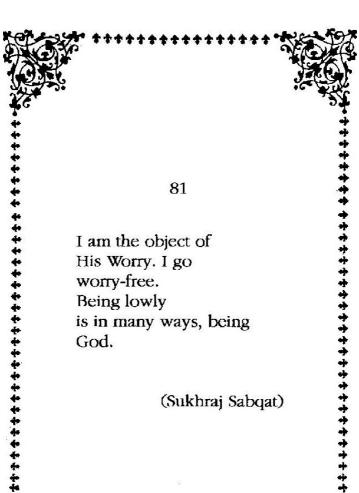








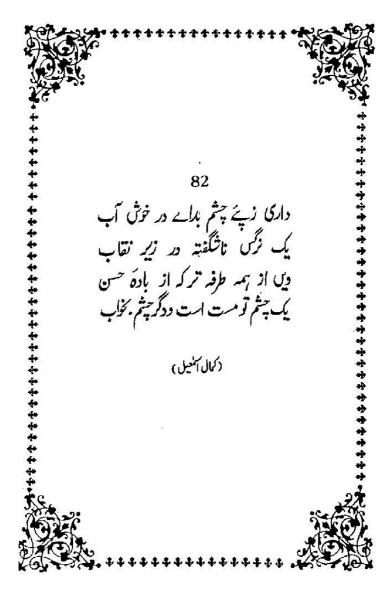




Being lowly is in many ways, being God.

(Sukhraj Sabqat)







·******************





82

To His One-Eyed Beloved

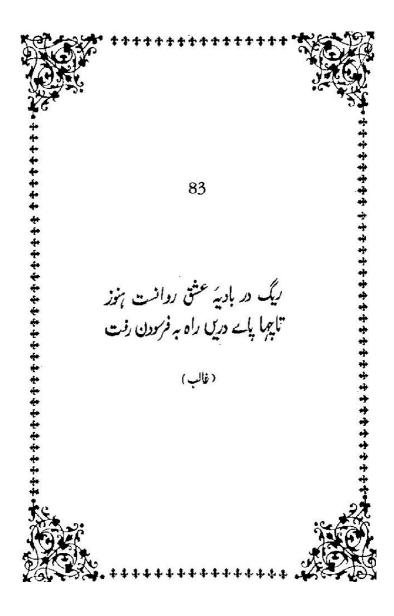
So as to ward off the evil eye —

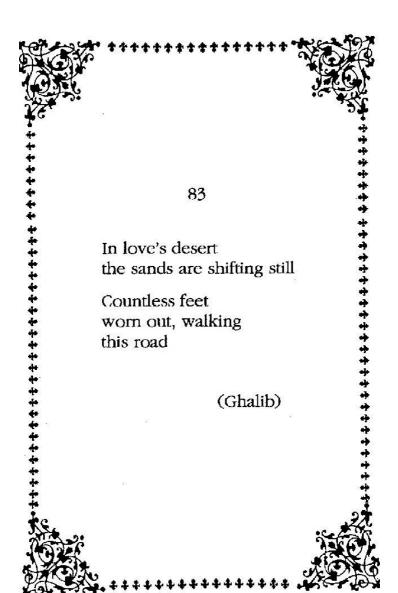
You, O pearl of bright water have an unopened narcissus* behind your veil;

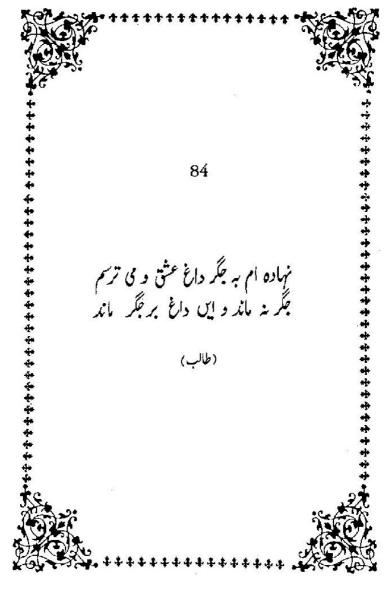
And stranger still: with the wine of beauty one of your eyes is drunk, and the other asleep.

(Kamal Isma'il)

Metaphorically: the eye of the bel







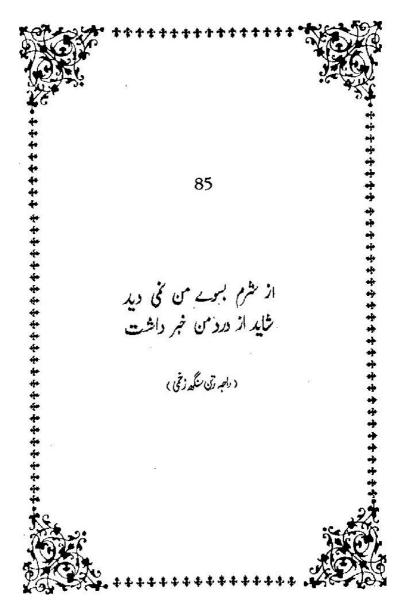


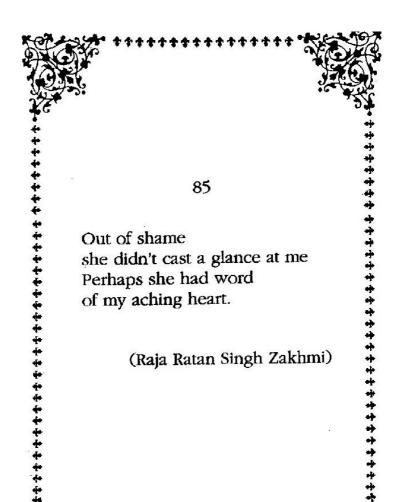


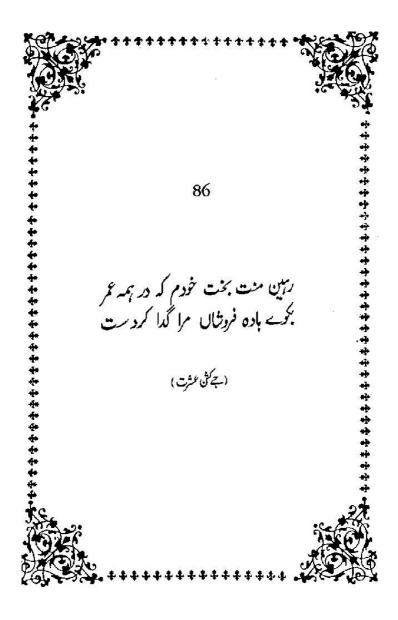
84

I have burned the scar of love on my heart; I fear my heart may not last but the scar on my heart may.

(Talib)









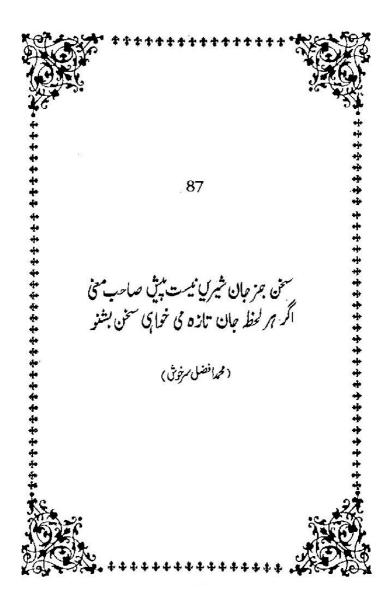


86

I am beholden to my luck — it got me a lifetime job begging in the wine-sellers' street.

(Jai Kishan Ishrat)



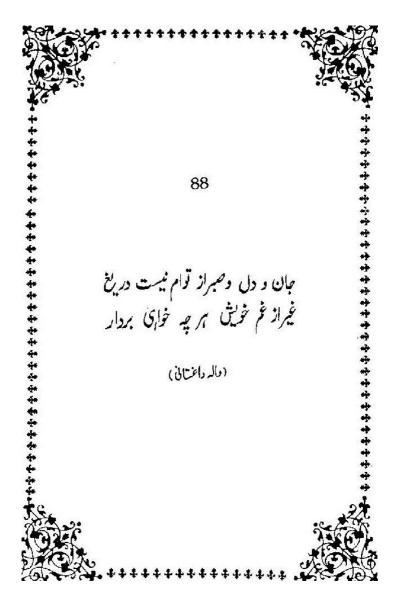




87

For the knower of meanings poetry is nothing but sweet life: if you want a new life for each moment, listen

(Muhammad Afzal Sarkhush)







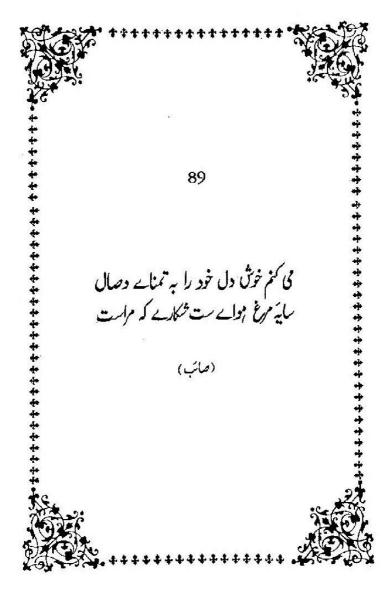
88

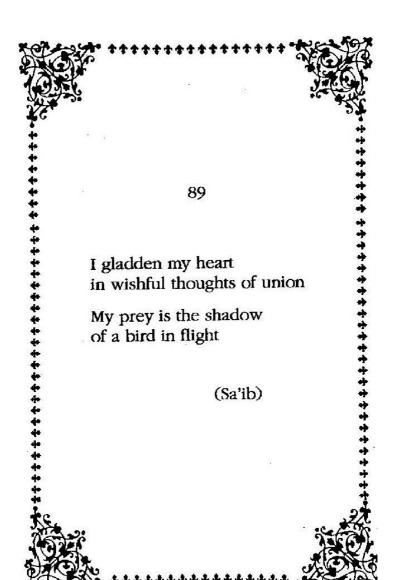
My life, my heart my forbearance, I don't begrudge you any of these — Take all that you desire, leave me the pain of your love

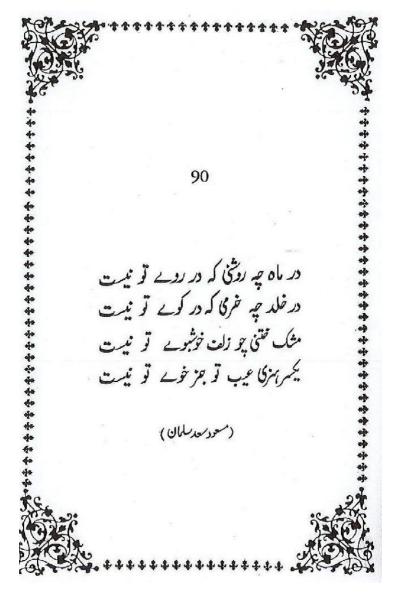
(Valih Daghistani)















90

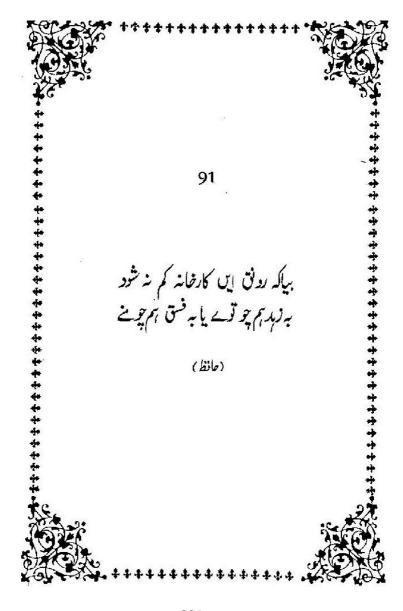
The moon has no luminance that your face doesn't have Paradise has no pleasure that your street doesn't have The musk of Khotan has no fragrance like your tresses

Just perfect from head to toe

But for your disposition.

(Mas'ud Sa'd Salman)





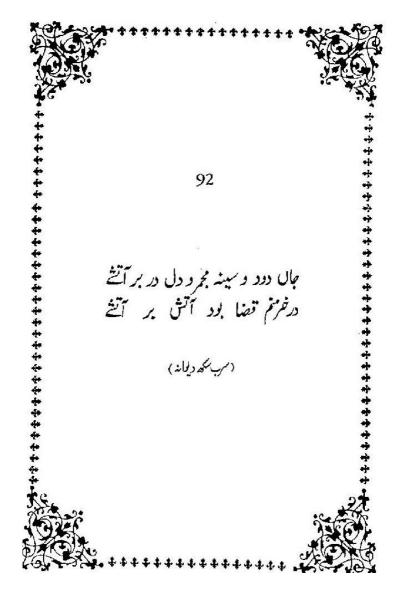




Oh come on
the din and bustle
of this place of public works
won't diminish
by the piety
of guys like you
or the profligacy
of guys like me.

(Hafiz)







******** ********

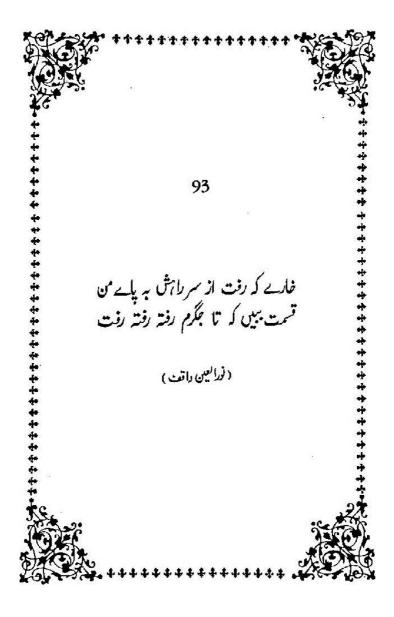


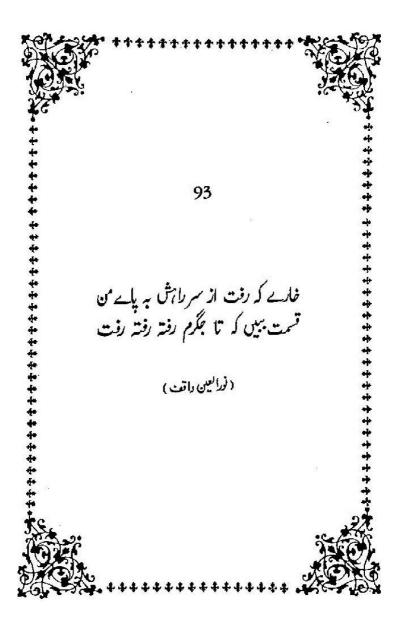
My life a trail of smoke my breast a firebox the heart in my side fire, pure fire

For my harvest the destiny was fire into fire

(Sarb Sukh Divana)









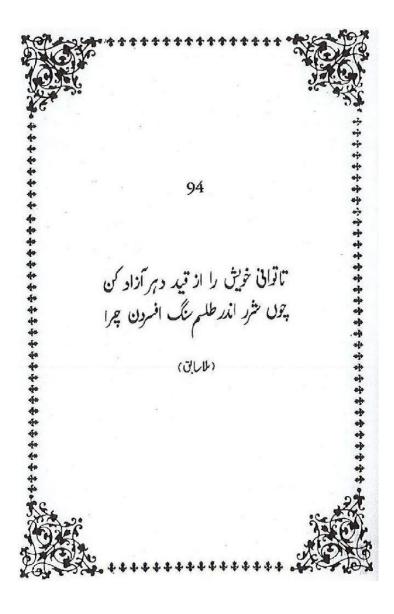


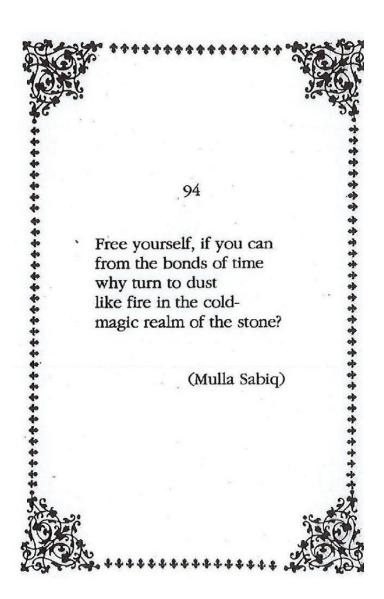
93

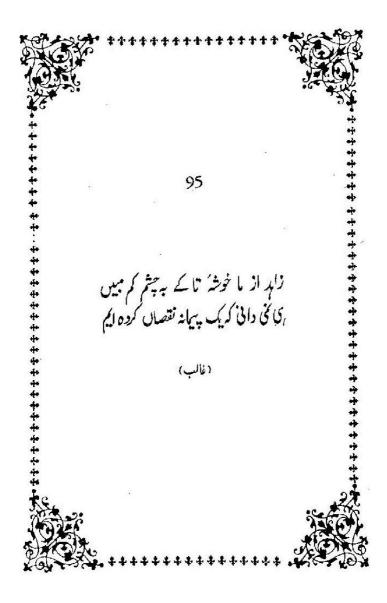
The thorn that pierced my foot as I walked her way — moved up slowly and (what luck!) it reached my heart.

(Nur ul 'Ain Vaqif)











95

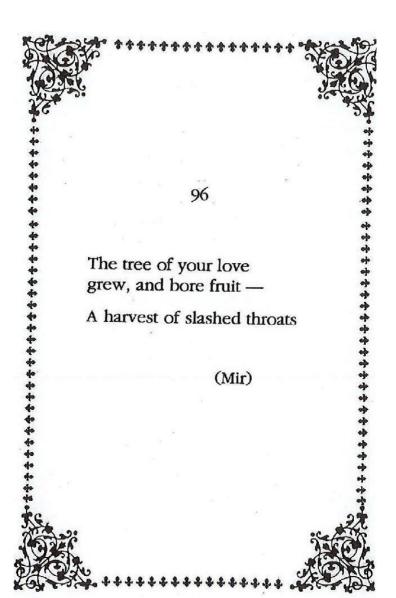
Don't look down upon this bunch of grapes, Mr Pious!

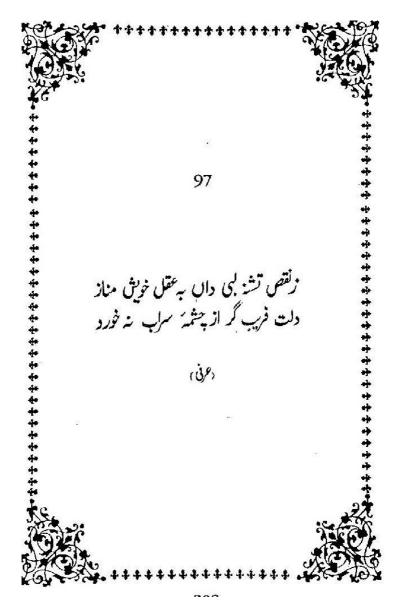
Didn't you know that in presenting it to you I suffered the loss of one whole cup?

(Ghalib)







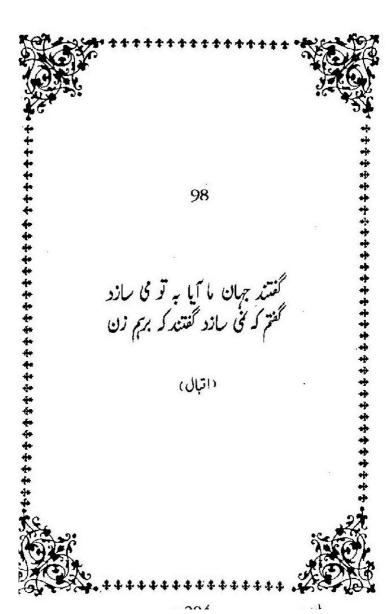




Don't preen yourself
On your wisdom; rather
know it as a fault of your thirst
if your heart wasn't
deceived by
the mirage-river

(Urfi)







He asked:

Is this our world in tune with you?

I said:

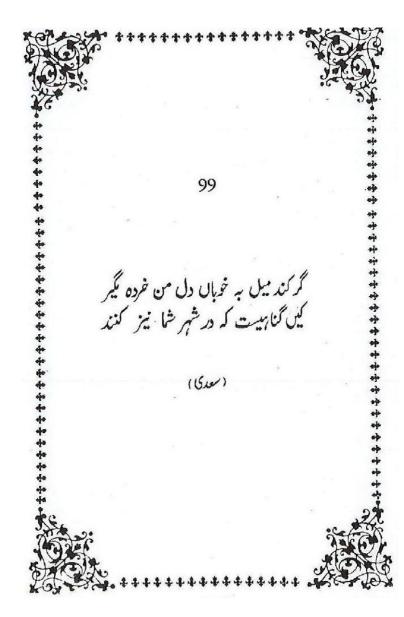
No, it is not;

He said:

Lay it waste.

(Iqbal)





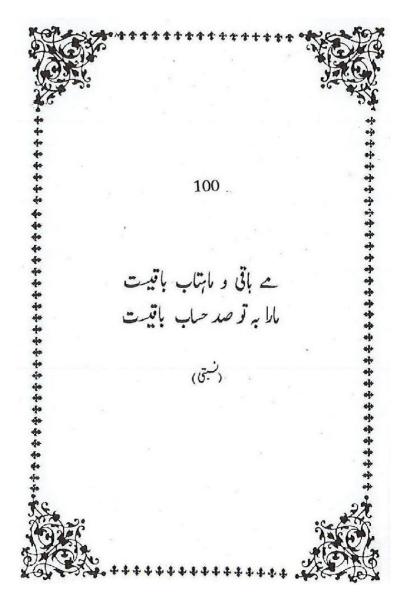


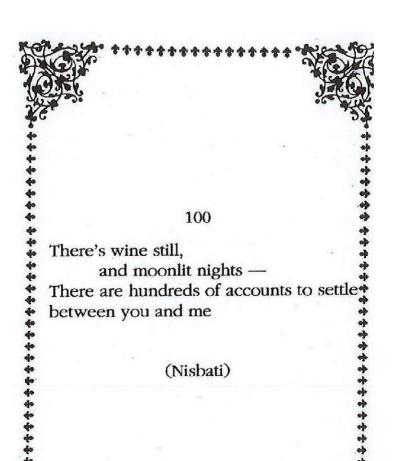


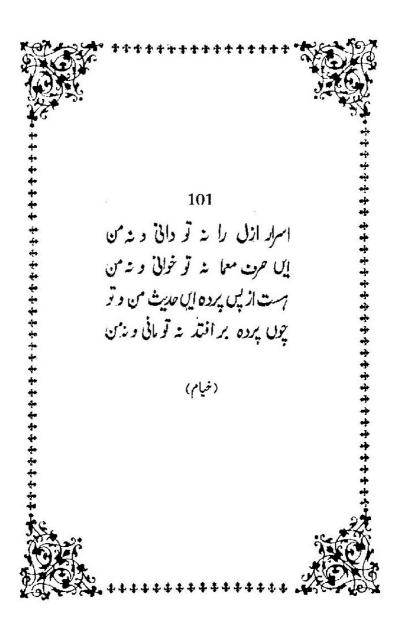
If my heart inclines towards the beautiful ones, don't blame it: it's a common enough sin in your city too.

(Sa'di)











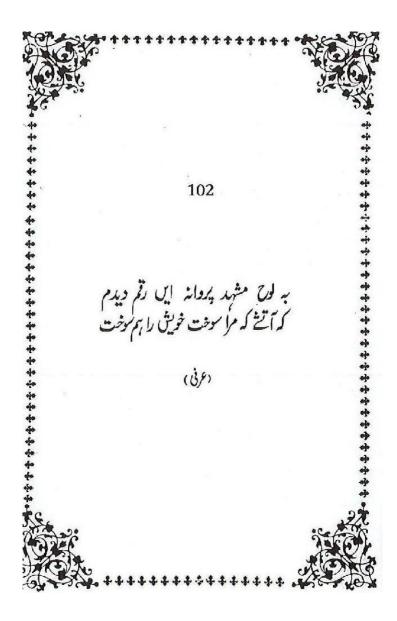


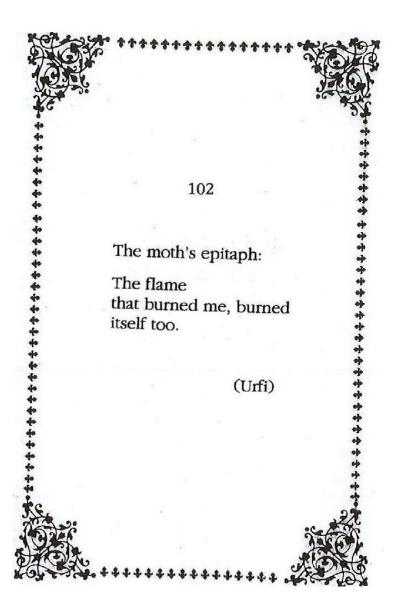
The mysteries of Eternity without beginning
you know not, nor do I
The text of this Riddle
You read not, nor do I
All our exchanges of "I" and "You"
Are from behind a veil
When the veil is lifted
You are not, nor am I

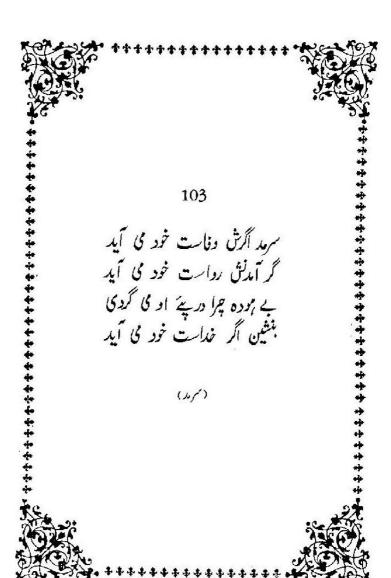
(Khayyam)

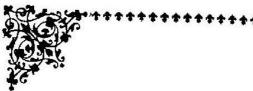










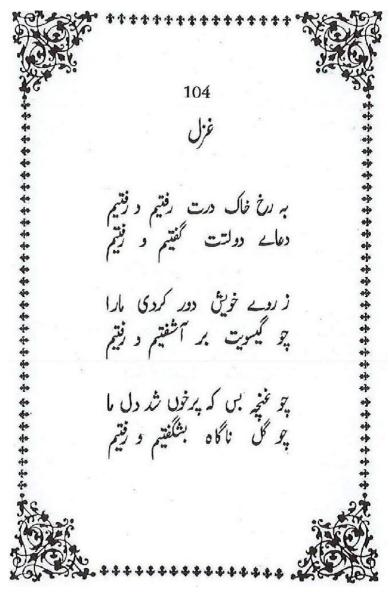


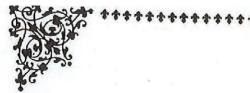
103

Sarmad, if he keeps faith
he'll come on his own
if his coming is right and proper
he'll come on his own
why this futile toil and travel after him?
sit still, if he is God
he'll come on his own

(Sarmad)









Ghazal

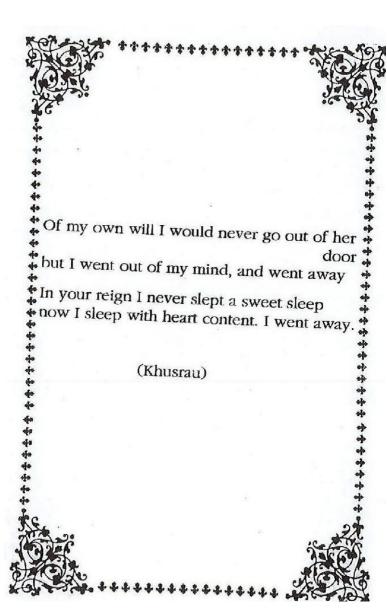
I swept the dust of your doorstep with my face, and went away
I prayed for your prosperity, and went away

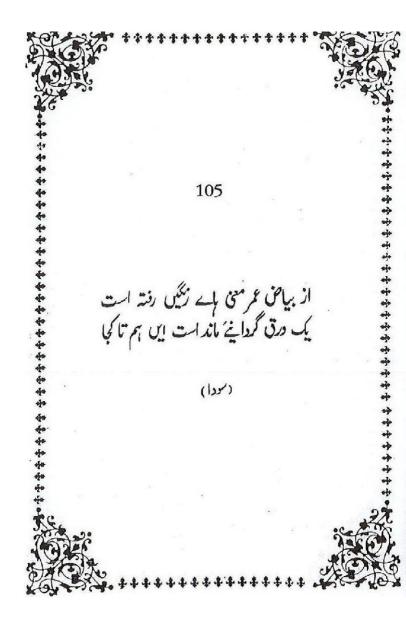
You flung me far from your sight
I became deranged, like tresses unbraided,
and went away

My heart was red-full of blood like a blossom like a rose I bloomed suddenly, and went away









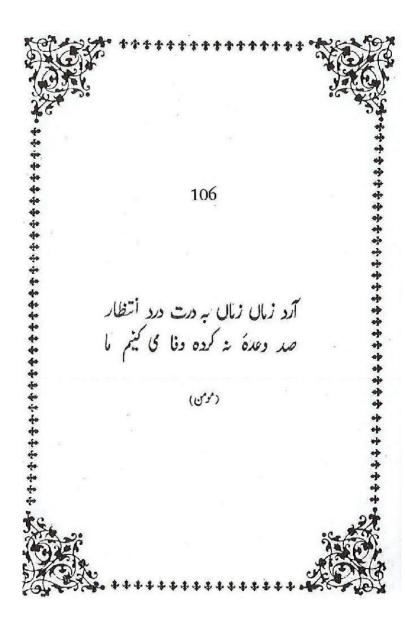


From my life's book all colourful themes are fled; All that remains is me, riffling the pages

And that too, for how long?

(Sauda)

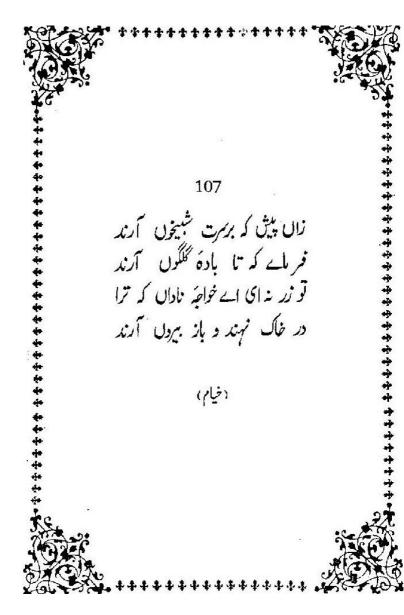


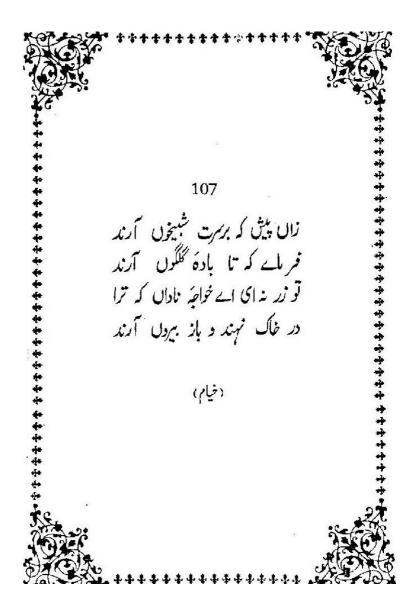




The anguish of waiting drags me to your door, again and again. I fulfill a hundred promises that I never made.

(Momin)









107

Before they send upon you the night of devastation, give the command for the rosered wine to be served.

My foolish master, you aren't gold, to be buried and then dug out again.

(Khayyam)



Index of Poets and Poems

- Abdullah Ansari, Khvaja (1006-1088), of Hirat, in Afghanistan. A major sufi poet, he was also one of the earliest writers of ornate prose. (71)
- Abul Qasim, Shaikh (flourished 17th century), of Gazrun, in Iran. Was noted for his learning too. (16)
- Abu Said Abi Al-khair (967-1049), a leading Iranian sufi, widely regarded as the first Persian poet to express sophisticated mystic themes in poetry. (21)
- Adib Sabir (d. 1143), one of the prominent poets of the early classical period of Persian literature. (44)
- Ali, Ne'mat Khan (d. 1709), official chronicler of Aurangzeb; was a poet and scholar of extraordinary linguistic skill. He made even Aurangzeb a victim of his barbs. The emperor, however, tolerated him with good humour. (58)
- Anvari, Aubaduddin (d. 1187), of Abivard, in Iran. One of the greatest of Qasida writers, and a man of vast learning. (23)
- Asar, Syed Muhammad Mir (1735-1794), younger brother of Mir Dard*, was a distinguished Urdu poet as well. (47)
- Ashraf, Mulla Muhammad Sa'id (d. 1704), of Mazandaran, in Iran. Tutor to Princess Zebunnisa, the celebrated daughter of emperor Aurangzeb; was a poet of great wit and crudition. Died at Münger. (53)
- Asir, Mirza Jalal (1639?-1688?), born of noble lineage in Isfahan; was a major poet of the Indian style. (15)
- Azad, Ghulam Ali (1704-1786), one of the greatest of

- multilingual scholars and poets in the Indo-Persian tradition; born at Bilgram in present day Uttar Pradesh. Among his numerous works is a book on Sanskrit figures of speech not found in Arabic or Persian. (5)
- Bedar, Gulab Rai (flourished 18th century), a Khatri from Punjab, not much is known about him. (73)
- Bedil, Mirza Abdul Qadir (1644-1720), of Patna and Delhi. The greatest poet of the Indian style, also a noted mystic and a major prose writer. He has the status of a national hero in Afghanistan and many Central Asian countries, and was greatly admired by Ghalib* and Iqbal*. (3, 27, 59, 62, 65, 68, 72, 75, 79)
- Begham, Swami Bhupat Rai Bairagi (d. 1720), a disciple of Sarkhush*. Begham wrote highly sophisticated poetry on vedantic-sufistic themes. His main achievement is a long mystical poem closely modelled on the Mansavi of Rumi*. (52, 66)
- Brahman, Raja Chandar Bhan (d. 1663), of Agra. Associated with the courts of Shahjahan and Dara Shikoh, Brahman was the first major Hindu poet in Persian. After Dara Shikoh's death, Brahman retired to Banaras. (38, 41)
- Danish, Mirza Razi (d. 1665), of Mash-had, in Iran. Greatly admired at the courts of Shahjahan and Dara Shikoh for his striking originality. (29)
- Dard, Syed Khvaja Mir (1720-1785), of Delhi. The scion of a family of great distinction, Dard was a profound sufi, an expert musician, and one of the leading Persian and Urdu poets of his day. (33)
- Divana, Rai Sarb Sukh (1728/33-1788), a nobleman of Delhi. His father was a Minister to Shuja'uddaulah. Divana's perfect mastery as a Persian and Urdu poet was a household word in the 18th century. (32, 92)
- Faizi (1547-1595), son of Shaikh Mubarak and brother of the great Abul Fazl, was the outstanding genius at the court of

- Akbar. Friend and rival of Urfi*, his all round talent places him above Urfi in the eye of posterity. (36, 42)
- Firdausi, Shaikh Abul Qasim (940-1020), of Tus in Iran; he wrote the Shahname, one of the world's greatest epics, on the history and legends of Iran. (37, 77)
- Ghalib, Mirza Asadullah Khan (1797-1869), of Agra and Delhi. Often described as the greatest of Urdu poets, he is also the last major poet of the Indian style. In addition, he was a great prose writer in Persian and Urdu, and a fine conversationalist. His poetry has special appeal for the modern reader. (4, 22, 40, 60, 83, 95)
- Ghani, Mirza Muhammad Tahir (d. 1669), of Kashmir, one of the most subtle of the Indo-Persian poets, was greatly admired by Sa'ib*, and by younger contemporaries. (24)
- Hafiz, Khvaja Shamsuddin (1325?-1389), of Shiraz, in Iran. Arguably the greatest Ghazal poet, his reputation has never waned in the six centuries since his death. Goethe was a passionate admirer of Hafiz, and modelled his own Der Westöstliche Divan (1819) on his ghazals. (25, 26, 67, 74, 78, 91)
- Hasan Sijzi (d. 1307), of Delhi, friend of Khusrau*, and a devotee of Hazrat Nizammuddin Auliya. Died at Daulatabad in the Deccan. (57)
- Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad (1877-1938), of Sialkot and Lahore. The greatest Urdu and Persian poet of the 20th century, and perhaps the greatest modern Indian poet, was by training a philosopher and a lawyer. He distinguished himself in the freedom movement too, and is widely believed to be the author of the idea of Pakistan. (48, 98)
- Ishrat, Jai Kishan (flourished 1740's), of Kashmir, appointed to high office in Kashmir by Muhammad Shah. Was a disciple of Khan-e Arzu. (86)
- Kalim, Abu Talib (d. 1651), of Hamadan, in Iran. Poet laureate of Shahjahan, and friend of the Sanskrit literary theorist,

- Panditraj Jagannath; is one of the greatest poets of the Indian style. Spent his last years in Kashmir, by the emperor's permission. (45, 59)
- Kamal Isma'll (d. 1237), of Isfahan, one of the famous poets of the classical age; was known as "the maker of (new) themes". (82)
- Khamosh, Rai Sahib Ram (flourished 1780's), a nobleman at the court of Delhi, went to Banaras (Varanasi) in 1789 and died there after years of distinguished service. (54)
- Khayyam, Umar (1048-1131), of Nishapur in Iran. Edward FitzGerald's translations of Khayyam made both of them famous poets in the West. Khayyam was a brilliant mathematician and astronomer, and may not have written all the Ruba'is attributed to him. The best, however, rank as some of the greatest poems ever written. (101, 107)
- Khushgo, Bindra Ban (d. 1756), a Rajput of high lineage, was one of the brilliant men who frequented the circle of Sarkhush*, Bedil* and Khan-e Arzu. Became a sanyasi towards the end of his life; died in Patna. (31)
- Khusrau, Amir Yaminuddin (1237-1324), of Delhi. The greatest Persian poet of India, also a master musician, soldier, prose writer, folk poet and sufi. His poems are reported to have won the appreciation of S'adi*. Was very close to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. (2, 55, 104)
- Malik Qumi (d. 1615) came from Qum, in Iran, at an early age and became court poet of Ali Adil Shah, of Bijapur. A poet of delicate sensibility, his work influenced many of his successors. (65)
- Manohar (flourished 1570's), son of Raja Lav Karan of Rajasthan and friend of Abul Fazl; one of the earliest of Indian style poets in Persian, is generally known as Mirza Manohar. (6)
- Mas'ud Bak (flourished 14th century), a cousin of Sultan Firuz Tughlaq, he is reported to have been killed in the Deccan because of his unorthodox views. (51)

- Mas'ud Sa'd Salman (d. 1126), of Lahore. One of the earliest of the major Indo-Persian poets and greatly admired by such classical Iranian poets as Adib Sabir* and Sana'i. (9, 90)
- Mir, Muhammad Taqi (1722-1810), of Agra and Delhi, was the greatest of Urdu poets, and bilingual in Urdu and Persian. In addition to poetry, he wrote a remarkable prose autobiography in Persian. (96)
- Momin, Hakim Momin Khan (1800-1852), of Delhi, major Urdu poet, was perhaps an even better poet in Persian. (106)
- Mukhlis, Rai Anand Ram (flourished 1700-1750), a nobleman at the court of Muhammad Shah, was a disciple of Bedil*, then of Khan-e Arzu. (39)
- Naziri, Muhammad Husain (d. 1612), of Nishapur in Iran. Spent much of his life in Gujarat, died at Ahmedabad. Perhaps the great poet of the age of Akbar. Sa'ib* and Ghalib* held him in high regard. (20, 35, 56)
- Nisbati (d. 1688), of Thanesar, India; an extremely fine poet, was a man of great learning as well. (10, 100)
- Rumi, Maulana Jalaluddin (1207-1273), also known as Maulana Rum, or simply Maulavi; composed extempore, but over many years, his vast Masnavi, arguably the greatest mystic poem in any language. Also a distinguished ghazal writer. (7, 19, 34, 46, 49, 61)
- Sabiq, Mulla Muhammad Umar (1722-1810), of Banaras (Varanasi); one of the most learned men of his time and a prolific poet. (94)
- Sabqat, Sukbraj (flourished 1700's), of Delhi, was one of Bedil*'s brilliant disciples. (81)
- Sa'di, Shaikh Muslibuddin (1184-1291), born at Shiraz in Iran, was perhaps Iran's greatest man of letters. Although better known as the author of the inimitable prose classic Gulistan (1258), he is also one of the greatest of ghazal

- poets and a major sufi. (1, 30, 80, 99)
- Sa'ib, Mirza Muhammad Ali (1601-1669), of Tabriz; the best known exponent of the Indian style, is a poet of great metaphoric brilliance. Himself an admirer of Naziri* and Ghani*, Sa'ib is almost universally admired today and is the one poet of the Indian style whose work is popular in Iran. (89)
- Salim, Muhammad Quli (d. 1647), of Tehran, came to India in Shahjahan's time. Died in the Deccan. A poet of great wit and creativity. (17) (Also see 43).
- Sarkhuish, Muhammad Afzal (1640-1714), an officer at the courts of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, he commanded a very high reputation in his time. (13, 87)
- Sarmad (d. 1688), an Armeninan, came to Delhi in the 1680's and immediately attracted attention as a sufi and a poet. Was put to death for his unorthodox ways. (103)
- Sauda, Mirza Muhammad Raft (1713-1781), of Delhi. One of the greatest Urdu poets and a substantial poet in Persian. (105)
- Shibli No'mani (1857-1914), born in Azamgarh, U.P., was one of modern Islam's outstanding scholars; a literary critic, educationalist, historian, philosopher, and freedom fighter of distinction. (8)
- Stadat, Jalaluddin (d. around 1700), of Lahore. A poet of wide range and fine sensibility. (70)
- Talib, Muhammad Talib (d. 1626), of Amul, in Iran; one of the greatest of Indo-Iranian poets, was poet laurcate of Jahangir. Died at a comparatively young age at Ahmadnagar. (15, 50, 84)
- *Urfi, Jamaluddin* (1556-1592), of Shiraz, in Iran, was a prominent poet in the courts of Akbar and Jahangir. A poet of intellectual power and strong imagination, and exemplar par excellence of the Indian style. (63, 76, 97, 102)
- Va'iz, Mirza Rafi (flourished 17th century), of Qazvin, in Iran.

- Also known for his sermons. (28)
- Valib Dagbistani (1724-1756), of Isfahan; his poem on his unfulfilled love for a beautiful cousin is one of the famous love stories in Persian literature. Died in Delhi. (88)
- Vaqif, Nurul Ain (flourished 1740's), came from Batala, near Lahore; was a disciple of Khan-e Arzu. One of the better known Persian poets of the 18th century. (93)
- Varasta, Sialkoti Mal (d. 1766), of Sialkot, author of a short but extremely authoritative dictionary of Persian metaphors and idioms. (43)
- Zahuri, Nuruddin (d. 1616) of Tarshiz, in Iran. A master of ornate prose and also a poet of considerable complexity, he was court poet to Ali Adil Shah of Bijapur. Sa'ib* and Ghalib* were his admirers. (18)
- Zakhmi, Raja Ratan Singh (flourished 18th century), was a nobleman in the employ of Shuja'uddaulah. (85)