

A *tarjī`band* from *Avadh Panč*, January 27, 1880 (pg 37)
Satirizing the rival newspaper, *Avadh Akhbār*
Translated by Jennifer Dubrow

Not a penny in your pocket and no occupation
Try hard as you can, there's only frustration
Easier than that is this profession
Go make a racket and yell in succession:
Kaabulis and *kachaalus*, a fine array!
Tasty *golgappaas* on display!

When *zarafat* brought neither fame nor glory
You started printing a pointless story
That has no meaning nor gives any delight
We're all better off if you'd simply recite:
Kaabulis and *kachaalus*, a fine array!
Tasty *golgappaas* on display!

Of poets, don't make such a mockery
Or else you'll regret it, now listen to me
What's come over you, are you a fool? Who can tell?
Go and announce at the Captain's well:
Kaabulis and *kachaalus*, a fine array!
Tasty *golgappaas* on display!

What business do you have with poetry anyway?
And don't even talk about writing an essay!
Go peddle your wares through the town high and low
And proclaim in high pitch wherever you go:
Kaabulis and *kachaalus*, a fine array!
Tasty *golgappaas* on display!

No talent yourself, and it's us you attack
What are you thinking, *Laalah* sahib? Get your senses back!
If earning four pennies is your only care
Go to the eighth day fair and declare:
Kaabulis and *kachaalus*, a fine array!
Tasty *golgappaas* on display!

Kaabuli, *Kachaalu*, *Golgappaa*: different spicy snacks generally sold on the street

Zarafat: the humor section of *Avadh Akhbār*

The Captain's well: a popular location for fairs and markets

Laalah: a term of address often used for Baniyas [merchant caste]

The eighth day fair: *āthoN kā melā*, or the big fair that takes place on the eighth day of Holi

Introductory Notes: This poem is from *Avadh Panč*, a humorous literary journal published in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Lucknow. The form of the poem is a *tarjī‘band*, meaning it has a repeating end-line, with 5 stanzas in *musaddas* format (six lines each) of rhyme scheme aaaaaa, bbbbaa, ccccaa etc. The poem above derives from a longer verse-piece in *Avadh Panč*, in which several participants of a fictional *mushā‘irah* lampoon the *Panč*’s main rival, *Avadh Akhbār*. At the time, *Avadh Akhbār* was riding a wave of success, due largely to the incredible popularity of a serialized “novel” called *Fasāna-e Āzād* that was published within it. *Avadh Panč* launched a series of attacks against this “novel” and *Avadh Akhbār* starting in 1880 and continuing through at least 1882.

The poem translated here chides *Avadh Akhbār* as profit-driven, concerned more with making money than the quality of its literature or journalism. Singled out for particular critique are the paper’s *zarāfat*, or humor, section; the “pointless story” that made it successful, or *Fasāna-e Āzād*; and its professed preference for natural poetry (over classical *ghazal* poetry). The poem insists *Avadh Akhbār* would be better off selling snacks on the street than trying to interfere in fine literary matters. Finally, the poem insults the paper’s proprietor, Munshi Naval Kishore, by denigrating him as a *lālah*, or nothing more than a profit-minded merchant.