

Quotations for ‘Local Universality of Poetic Pleasure: Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān

Ārzū (1689-1756) and Persian Literary Theory’

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1.

Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān Ārzū, *Majma‘ al-nafā’is*, 1750-51: Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān: This sinful servant hopeful of God’s mercy, Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān, Ārzū by pen-name [*takhallus*], has been taken up with learning [*tahsil-e ‘ulūm*] ever since he grew aware, and was a student till he was fourteen. After that, in keeping with youth’s ardor and from an excess of naïveté, he conceived an inclination for the composition of poetry [*goftan-e ash‘ār*]. A year later he presented his compositions [*afkār*] to Mir, the master of poetry (may God forgive him). Hardly two months had passed when differences arose [between them] and, taking solitude for his teacher, he busied himself with the study of silence. It so happened that Mīr Ghulām ‘Alī, Ahsanī by pen-name, of the noble rank of Sayyid and whose circumstances [*ahvāl*] have been set down previously, came by this humble one’s home and, with no personal motive or interest, applied himself to the training of this humble one. In those days when he [i.e. Ārzū] was sixteen years old, he first showed him the following ghazal whose opening distich was:

Seeing a knot in his scattered hair,

Like the whirlwind does my breath knot up in my throat.

And this opening distich too he looked over:

Whose trap is this ringlet upon ringlet of hair?

Who tamed the flirting gazelle of your eye?

After a short while, he [i.e. Ārzū] grew busy with other affairs and shut the shop of poetic composition. Afterwards, the Emperor Hazrat Muhiyuddīn Muhammad Aurangzeb ‘Ālamgīr’s victorious army happened to move towards the Deccan. After nine months of travel and not reaching the aforementioned army, he reached Gwāliyar, supplicating the Prophet for assistance and in the company of the Prince Muhammad ‘Azam Shāh who, after his father’s death, had ascended the throne and advanced on Hindustān from the Deccan. On his [i.e. Ārzū’s] late mother’s orders he [i.e. Ārzū] stopped a while in that city till a great battle broke out between the aforementioned Prince and his elder brother Qutbuddīn Muhammad Mu‘azzam Bahādur Shāh. Muhammad ‘Azam was killed and Bahādur Shāh became Sultan. In the meanwhile, this servant came to Akbarābād from Gwāliyar and, on account of the time’s upheavals and a lack of appreciation among long-time members of the royal household [*khānazādān-e qadīm*] as well as the advent of the newly rich, he spent a few years in study [*kasb-e ‘ulūm*], taking currently studied texts to the Master of Intellects and the Knowledgeable in the Roots and Branches Hazrat Maulānā Imāduddīn well-known as Darvesh Muhammad (may God keep his secrets). Then, heeding his mother’s summons, he went to Gwāliyar. Only some months had

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passed when the revolutions [*gardish*] of the Sultanate that is the picture of the Day of Judgment arose again and Bahādur Shāh passed away while his sons fell at each other till Muhammad ‘Azīm‘usshān, the second son, Muhammad Rafī‘usshān, the third son, and Jahān Shāh, the fourth son, were killed and the first son Muiz‘uddīn Jahāndār Shāh won, ascending the throne while this humble one returned from Gwāliyar to Akbarābād during the reign of Jahāndār Shāh. Then war broke out between the aforementioned Jahāndār Shāh and the late Muhammad Farrukh Siyar, second son of Muhammad Azīm‘usshān. Jahāndār Shāh fled towards Dehli and Muhammad Farrukhsiyar, conquering the imperial throne, advanced on the capital Shāhjahānābād Dehli. Reaching it, he had his uncle killed, apparently to avenge the deaths of his father and brother, and then spent some years with pleasure, success and generosity. In the early years of the reign of the late Muhammad Farrukh Siyar this humble one went to Dehli in discharge of courtly service [*khidmat*], complacently spending some years in contentment. **In the meanwhile he had also sometimes been busy practicing [*mashq*] poetry.** Since the Sayyids of Bārhā had out of loyalty killed the late emperor Muhammad Farrukhsiyar, my services were suspended and I remained unemployed for some days. After... Muhammad Nikusiyar (son of Muhammad Akbar, son of the emperor ‘Ālamgīr) who had been upheld as emperor by those in the fortress of Akbarābād, destroyed the affairs of the Sayyids [of Bārhā] so that, after the death of Rafī‘uddarajāt (son of Rafī‘usshān) whom they had placed on the throne in place of Muhammad Farrukhsiyar, they had to set out for Akbarabad. It so happened that after the imperial army reached Akbarabad Rafī‘uddaulah also attacked. Taking refuge, the Sayyids wrote to Sayyid Najmuddīn ‘Alī Khān their younger brother who was Subadār of the Suba of Shāhjahānābād. Secretly summoning the Prince Roshanakhtar, son of Jahān Shāh, they placed him on the throne with the title of Muhammad Shāh. The fort of Akbarābād, too, was conquered, during which upheaval this humble one reached Akbarābād in the service of his elders and familiars. A short while later, by the good graces of the late Navāb Mirzā Khān (may God forgive him), he was appointed to one of the offices of the region of Gwāliyar where he went and spent about a year. After Sayyid Husain ‘Alī Khān, the late Commander of commanders, was killed by one of the Mughals, Navāb Muhammad Amīn Khān, and the Prime Minister Sayyid Abdullāh Khān Qutbulmulk went to war and was captured and the Emperor Muhammad Shāh, who is these days called Firdaus Ārāmgāh, came into firm possession of the kingdom and Caliphate, **this incapable one came in that same year to Dehli from Gwāliyar and spent days upon days there so that it has now been thirty three years that he has lived in that excellent city.**

2.

Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān Ārzū, *Dād-e sokhan*: Thus it is evident that the utterances [*qaul*] of a non-Iranian or non-Central Asian are authoritatively exemplary [*sanad*] if he has exerted himself perfectly in the pedagogical imitation of masters [*tattabu’*] and kept the company [*sohbat*] of competent speakers [*sāhibān-e muhāvira*]. But attaining to this rank demands the utmost labor [*mashaqqat-e tamām mikhwāhad*].

3.

Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān Ārzū, *Khiyābān sharh-e gulistān-e sa‘adī*: **God** [*khudā...alakh*]...and so forth till the end of the passage: This word is one of the names for the Almighty [*bārī ta’ālā*], officially [*haqīqatan*] meaning ‘the self-originating’ [*khud āyandeh*] which is an implicit reference [*kināyat*] to the Necessary Existent [*vājib al-vojūd*], as scholars [*ahl-e tahqīq*] have said, and figuratively [*majāzan*] meaning ‘master’ [*sāhib*] and ‘owner’ [*mālik*], having become current in this sense [i.e. ‘owner’] while the first meaning [i.e. ‘master’] fell out of use [*mahjūr*]. Some say this is incorrect because the phrases ‘the house of god’ [*khāna-ye khudā*] and ‘the government of God’ [*daulat-e*

khudā] and suchlike indicate that it means ‘master’ [*sāhib*]. They also say ‘the master of the world’ [*khudā-ye jahān*] and *khudāvand* and ‘master of its properties’ while *khudāyagān* means ‘master’ [*sāhib*]. I say that the detailed answer to this is to be found in other texts such as [my] *Sirāj al-lughat*. Know that they do not apply [*itlāq*] this word to any other than the Almighty Being [*zāt-e bārī*] unless in conjunction with a thing such as ‘master of the village’ [*deh khudā*] and ‘master of the house’ [*kad khudā*]. Just as they do not apply the word *rabb* in Arabic without predication [*izāfat*] to any other than Him the Almighty, such as in ‘the master of the country’ [*rabb al-dār*] and ‘master of the throne’ [*rabb al-‘arsh*]. However, since the names of God [*asmā’ allāh*] are descriptive [*tausīfī*] and it is incorrect, without a commentator’s permission, to apply them to Him the Almighty, is calling the Almighty by this name absolutely [*mutlaqan*] difficult? It might be answered that its application depends on a person’s juridical disposition [*bar mazhab-e kasī’sī*]. That is, on whether he does not regard the names of God to be descriptive at all [*asmā’ allāh rā mutlaqan tausīfī nadānad*] or whether he applies these names to avoid committing any impropriety. Thus in his *Fiqh akbar* did Abū Hanīfa, upon whom be peace, regard as permissible the application of the word ‘god’ [*khudā*] and other Persian names, the details of which I have mentioned in [my] commentary on [Nizāmī Ganjavī’s] *Sikandarnāma*”.

4.

Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān Ārzū, ‘Attiya-ye kubrā va muhibat-e ‘uzmā: nakhostīn risālāt be zabān-e fārsī dar bayān va ma‘ānī: **Metaphorics** [*bayān*]: is the discipline in which is discussed the representation in words of a thing by another thing [*ilm’īst ke dar ān bahs karde mīshavad az lafz be hikāyat-e chīzī az chīzī dīgar*]. It is evident that humans are naturally disposed to representations for they delight in them. This is why you see that people delight in seeing and contemplating the forms and images of unpleasant animals although they find seeing the thing itself unpleasant. And it is evident that a complete visual image [*mutlaq-e naqsh*] too is not cause for such pleasure [*nishāt*] because seeing the visual images of unseen animals does not give much pleasure [*iltizāz*]. Thus the pleasure [*lizzat*] human natures take in representations is neither in visual images nor in their referents. Therefore linguistic utterances comprising representations [*hikāyat*] are more pleasurable and delightful. Thus it is that representation is the foundation of poetic utterance for it is founded on the imagination, not knowledge that is certain [*muhākāt asās-e kalām-e shi’r’īst, zirā ke banā-ye ān bar takhyīl ast na tahqīq ke yaqīnī ast*]. Thus linguistic utterances containing representations cast a spell on hearts and are wondrous to them, especially poetry [*shi’r*] because rhythm [*vazn*] has much to do with this.

5.

Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān Ārzū, ‘Attiya-ye kubrā va muhibat-e ‘uzmā: nakhostīn risālāt be zabān-e fārsī dar bayān va ma‘ānī: Humans have faculties [*quvvat*] named the imagination [*mutakhayyila*] and the intellect [*mutafakkira*] among whose distinctions are **the combining of forms and meanings, their elaboration and appropriation and the invention [*ikhtrā*]** of things that in actuality do not exist. And this either occurs by means of the faculty of fantasy [*quvvat-e vahmiyya*] – in which case it is called ‘imaginary’ [*mutakhayilla*] – or by means of the faculty of the intellect [*quvvat-e ‘aqliyya*], then being called ‘intellectual’ [*mutafakkira*]. Thus a non-existent [thing] that is composed by the imagination out of matters it has comprehended by the external senses belongs to ‘the sensibles’ [*hissiyāt*]. ...And a thing invented by the intellect out of itself belongs to ‘the intelligibles’ [*aqliyāt*]

6.

Sirājuddīn ‘Alī Khān Ārzū, *Musmir*: Metrical harmony between the two hemstitches of a distich [*bayt*], indeed the concordance [*tavāfuq*] of every one of the distiches of a ghazal or a *qasīda* [i.e. a

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genre of purposive panegyric], is necessary. Balance in a matter of ecstasy [*mauzūniyat dar amr-e vajdānī*] is necessary because the ear of every person of balanced nature recognizes it [*gūsh-e har mauzūn tab' ān rā dar miyābad*] and does not depend on knowing scansion...In fact, scansion is intended to instruct an unbalanced nature.

7.

Shams-e Qays-e Rāzī, *Al-Mu'jam fi ma'āyir ash'ār al-'ajam, 1221:* Rather, the original purpose of this art is the knowledge of the kinds of poetry and the recognition of correct and defective meters. For composing [*goftan*] poetry is by no means obligatory [*vājib*] but the knowledge of metrical distiches and pleasant meters is necessary [*lāzim*] for ennobling the sensual soul [*sharaf-e nafs*] and understanding commentaries on the Creator's Word (may His power be glorified) and the meanings of the reports of the Prophet (benedictions upon him and his family)...And if lapses should occur in some distiches... or a letter or word should be accidentally omitted the litterateur trained in prosody [*adīb-e 'arūzī*] can rediscover its correct aspect by virtue of his awareness of meters and knowledge of the rules of their elements.

8.

Sirājuddīn 'Alī Khān Ārzū, *'Attiya-ye kubrā va muhibat-e 'uzmā: nakhostīn risālāt be zabān-e fārsī dar bayān va ma'ānī:* Although a comparison is the similarity of two things under a certain description [*vasf*], this is not just any description [*mutlaq-e vasf nīst*] but that which is conventional among that people. For example, Iranian poets [*shu'arā-ye pārs*] compare the color of gold to a lover's face in contrast to the poets of India. The latter compare the eye to a fish in contrast to Iranians [*pārsīyān*] while Arabs [*tāzīyān*] compare a lock of hair to a finger in contrast to Iranians. These distinctions become apparent after a study of the books of masters.

9.

Sirājuddīn 'Alī Khān Ārzū, *Musmir:* The basis of the linguistic purity of an utterance lies in its frequency of usage...The opinion of recent Arabic rhetoricians is that it is not possible for an individual to know the entirety of a language because of its antiquity [*taqādum-e 'ahd*]. Therefore, they said linguistic purity is an utterance's freedom from the mutual repulsion of letters, unfamiliarity [*ghārabat*] and contrariness to the rules of word formation [*qiyās-e laghvī*]...The mutual repulsion [of letters] is because of their heaviness on the tongue and difficulty in pronunciation, this matter depending on time, not on the proximity to or distance from the organ of pronunciation [i.e. the tongue], as some Arabic scholars have said.

10.

Sirājuddīn 'Alī Khān Ārzū, *'Attiya-ye kubrā va muhibat-e 'uzmā: nakhostīn risālāt be zabān-e fārsī dar bayān va ma'ānī:* Some of the recent [poets] do not deploy the technique of exemplification [*tamsīl*] in their poetry and do not like it that of others. This is because in this way the meaning becomes clear and obvious whereas they seek [*matlab*] abstruseness and subtlety [*ghumuz va diqqat*], going so far as to use improbable and abstruse comparisons so that the mind comprehends the meaning [*ma'nī*] after much contemplation and endless thought [*ta'mull-hā-ye bisyār va fikr-hā-ye bīshomār*], the meaning being one unknown to those who know poetry [*sokhandānān*]. The recent [poets] call those distiches in which subtle comparisons and difficult meanings occur and which do not deploy the technique of exemplification [*tarīq-e tamsīl*] distiches in the technique of the imaginary [*tarz-e khiyāl*]. This kind [*nau'*] is extremely pleasant to natures provided it is not carried to the point of meaninglessness.

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11.

Lālā Tek Chand Bahār, *Bahār-e ‘ajam*, 1739: Adab: to keep in view or bear in mind the limit [*hadd*] of each thing. It is a metaphor that means “a desirable method or mode” and is used to with the words “to do” and “to give” and “to receive”, the latter with the sense of ‘to receive a reprimand’.

Hadd: direction and side...a kind of legal-theological punishment [*siyāsāt-e shar‘ī*] in which sense it is used with the words “to strike” and “to receive”; and with the word “to acquire” is a metaphor for “attaining perfection”.