

Prize-Winning *Adab*:
A Study of Five Urdu Books
Written in Response to the
Allahabad Government
Gazette Notification

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The officers of the British East India Company had started taking interest in the education of Indians even in the eighteenth century, but it was not until 1813 that a clear mandate in that regard was announced. That year, for the first time, a clause was inserted in the East India Company Act, declaring that "it shall be lawful for the Governor-General in Council to direct that . . . a sum of not less than one lac of rupees (Rs. 100,000) in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."¹ Although ten years went by before any action was taken, the next four decades saw the rapid development of an educational system that included both private and government institutions, catering to the traditional literary classes of both Hindus and Muslims. A major controversy developed, during this initial period, on the question of the medium of instruction. A group of so-called "Orientalists" wanted to continue with the traditional medium of classical languages (Arabic, Persian, and

1. Quoted in Y. B. Mathur, *Women's Education in India, 1813-1966* (New York: 1973), p. 4.

Sanskrit), whereas another group of "Anglicists" wished to use English. Eventually, the "Orientalists" lost to the "Anglicists" at the level of higher instruction. At the levels of primary and secondary education, they lost to regional vernaculars that, in turn, remained inferior in status to English.

In 1854, the Education Despatch from the Board of Control in London further directed the East India Company to expand its efforts, leading, among other things, to the establishment of regional departments of public instruction and the institution of universities in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. The despatch emphasized the "importance of encouraging the study of the vernaculars as the only possible medium for mass education. . . . [It] further advocated the promotion of female education and Muslim education, the opening of schools and colleges for imparting technical instruction, and insisted on a policy of perfect religious neutrality."² In North India, the effects of these policies were felt with the extension of the British authority over Delhi and the North-Western Provinces after 1803, over the Punjab after 1849, and over Oudh after 1856. The abortive revolt of 1857 did not significantly slow down the process; the policies of the Company were affirmed and continued by the Crown.

The decline of "Oriental" learning, the increasing awareness on the part of literate people of the range of scientific knowledge available in English, and the need to provide school texts in regional vernaculars, led a number of individuals and associations to produce translations as well as original works in Urdu in the realm of what was seen as *ilm* (knowledge, science), as opposed to *shir* and *dāstān* (poetry and tales). It is interesting to note that just when the teachers and students at the famous Delhi College (for the instruction of the natives) were engaged in translating into Urdu books on analytical geometry, optics, and galvanism, Goldsmith's *History of England*, selections from Plutarch's *Lives*, and Abercrombie's *Mental Philosophy*,³ the traditional *munshīs* at the equally famous College of Fort William (for the instruction of British officers) were busy putting into simple Urdu the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī, the *Tale of the Four Der-vishes*, the *Tale of Amīr Ḥamza*, *Singhāsan Battīsī*, the *Shakun-*

2. Ibid., p. 7.

3. 'Abd al-Haqq, *Marḥūm dihli kālij* (Delhi: 1945), pp. 141-43.

Moral Conduct and Authority: The Prize of Adab in
South Asian Islam

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talā of Kālidāsa, and a selection of stories from the *Arabian Nights*,⁴ the books that the British thought were necessary to learn "the language and the manners of the people of Hindustan." The aim of the people at Delhi was to promote *‘ilm* in India through the medium of the vernaculars, whereas John Gilchrist of Fort William desired to "form such a body of useful and entertaining literature in (Hindustani), as will ultimately raise it to that estimation among the natives, which it would many years ago have attained among an enlightened and energetic people."⁵ The work at Fort William dwelt upon the achievements of the past; the work at Delhi College was concerned with the needs of the present and the future.

The two aims were not necessarily in conflict—the syllabi of courses at Delhi reflected that fact—but as the motives behind education became increasingly utilitarian and the nature of education itself came to be defined by the British, a dichotomy between literature (now referred to as *adab*) and science (now referred to as *‘ilm*) began to be felt by many of the newly educated Muslims. It was at this time that the lieutenant-governor of the North-West Provinces, Sir William Muir, issued his momentous call for useful books in the vernacular. Its text follows.

Allahabad Government Gazette, Notification No. 791A, dated the 20th August 1868.

It is hereby announced that, with the view of encouraging authorship in the language of the North-Western Provinces, the Hon'ble the Lieutenant-Governor is pleased to make it known that rewards will be given for the production of *useful works in the vernacular, of approved design and style, in any branch of science or literature.*

For this end, the writing may be original composition, or it may be a compilation, or it may be even a translation from books in any other language. Theological treatises will not be received, nor treatises containing anything obnoxious to morality. There is no other condition either as to the subject or treatment. The theme may belong to history, biography, or travel, science, art, or philosophy; it may be a work of fact or of fiction, and may be composed either in prose or verse. In short, the only condition is that the book shall subserve some useful purpose, either of instruction, entertainment, or mental discipline; that it shall be written in one or other of the current dialects, Oordoo or Hindee, and that there shall be excellence both in the style and treatment.

Neither is there any restriction as to the author, whether in respect of birth, place of education, or residence.

4. M. Atique Siddiqi, *Origins of Modern Hindustani Literature* (Aligarh: 1963), pp. 159–60.

5. Gilchrist to College Council, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 127.

The reward will, as a rule, in each case be one thousand rupees; but it may be more, or it may be less, according to the merits of the work. The Lieutenant-Governor will be prepared to give at least five such prizes in the coming year.

Books suitable for the women of India will be especially acceptable, and well rewarded.

The Government will ordinarily be prepared to aid in the publication of any meritorious work by subscribing for a number of copies. Such assistance will be exclusive of and in addition to the rewards now promised.⁶

Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī, the great poet and biographer of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, describes this announcement as one "for which Hindustan will always be grateful." He continues, "Though the awards stopped after a few years, the effect of the announcement itself was like a current of electricity. It galvanized all the people who possessed, to whatever degree, the talent to compose and compile in the vernacular, but did not know how to put it to good use."⁷ It is difficult for us to establish the accuracy of Ḥālī's judgment—we do not have access to any list of either the applicants or the winners—but there is no denying the announcement's significance from another perspective. Within the heartland of Urdu, it was the first and perhaps the most widely disseminated declaration of official support for "useful" literature in general, and for books for women in particular. It also established the fact that the Government of India was the new patron of learning, that the patronized learning was to be put to use for the general good as conceived by it, and that it had the power not only to approve certain ideas through rewards and disapprove others through neglect, but also to disseminate the approved ones through the educational system—the books so favored being purchased for libraries and prescribed for various examinations.

It is our purpose in this study to examine five Urdu books that won different prizes under the terms of this announcement. One of the five fell into oblivion rather quickly; another fared better, and went into at least three printings; the remaining three, all by

6. *Allahabad Government Gazette* (India Office Records V/II/1248), pp. 349–50. Emphasis added. The author is grateful to Miss Maureen Patterson of the University of Chicago for her help in obtaining a copy of the notice.

7. Alṭāf Ḥusain Ḥālī, *Hayāt i jāved* (Lahore: 1965), p. 323. Ḥālī also suggests that the initial impulse for instituting such awards may have come from Sir Sayyid, who broached the subject in an address presented to Sir William Muir on behalf of the Scientific Society at Aligarh, on May 9, 1868.

one author, have stayed in print since they first appeared, two of them having been a part of the syllabi of instruction for many generations of Urdu speakers. We shall try to identify the reasons for their appeal, or nonappeal, to their British patrons and native readers. In that process we shall also compare them with such classics of *adab* as *Gulistān*, *Akhlāq i nāsirī*, and *Qābūs nāma*.

We shall begin by looking at the book that gained the least success: *Natā'ij al-ma'ānī* by Mirzā Maḥmūd Beg Rāḥat, published at Agra in 1874.⁸ Rāḥat was a Mughal from Delhi. He began his professional life as a soldier in Skinner's Regiment, later joined the service of Akbar Shāh II (d. 1837) as the *ʿāmil* of a village, and finally became a confidant and courtier of Nawwāb Jahāngīr Muḥammad Khān of Bhopal (d. 1844). After the Nawwāb's death, Rāḥat returned to Delhi to live a life of retirement, but the Mutiny of 1857 forced him to leave home again in search of patronage. We know that he went to Patiala and wrote a book of poems, some of them praising the local rulers, but apparently did not get what he desired. He died sometime before 1881.

While in Patiala, Rāḥat took his book of poems to a publisher, who agreed to publish it but advised him to abstain from such efforts and instead write a book "in prose . . . in the clear language of everyday speech, with contents beneficial to the general public," which could then be submitted to the authorities as per the Gazette Notification no. 791A. "For then," the publisher friend continued, "the patronage of these ocean-hearted pearl-throwers and the munificence of these pearl-raining clouds in the sky of generosity, will remove that dust of unhappiness which the unappreciativeness of the people of this age has cast on the mirror of your disposition."⁹ Rāḥat was quick to respond and very soon put together a book, containing some events that had happened to him as well as some stories that he had heard. He called it *Natā'ij al-ma'ānī* [Conclusions (full of) intrinsic qualities].

The book consists of sixty-seven stories arranged into five chapters, preceded by the traditional benedictory sections, including one honoring Queen Victoria, and followed by a short,

8. Maḥmūd Beg Rāḥat, *Natā'ij al-ma'ānī*, ed. Gauhar Naushāhī (Lahore: 1967). The biographical and bibliographical information presented here is based upon Professor Naushāhī's valuable introduction.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 28. The printed text has two errors: "1891-A" for 791-A and "August 1864" for August 1868. The source of the errors is not clear.

prayerful conclusion. According to Rāḥat, the first chapter has stories dealing with the *ʿadl* (justice) of the rulers, the second, the *sakhāwa* (generosity) of the wealthy, the third, the *shujāʿa* (bravery) of the soldiers, the fourth, the *chālākī* (cunning) of officials and retainers (*ahl i kār*) and thieves, and the fifth contains entertaining tales that "earlier wits have told before nobles and kings." At the end of most stories Rāḥat has added a *qitʿa* of two couplets to point out the moral or "conclusion" that is to be drawn from that tale. The stories are all quite entertaining, several of them describing events that happened to the author himself, but their edifying nature is often a bit dubious. His concluding couplets, therefore, often appear forced, and are of generally poor quality. That is somewhat surprising, inasmuch as Rāḥat was the disciple of no less a poet than Mu'min, and wrote better verse elsewhere. The prose of the stories exhibits some literary pretension, but not to an excessive degree. The language is closer to the prose of the storytellers of Fort William than to that of the *dāstān*-narrators of Lucknow. In that sense it is relatively simple and colloquial. Nevertheless, it is still the language of a learned man, who could not help but write as if for other men of worldly knowledge and experience.

The book did receive some reward, as is indicated in a publisher's note at the end, but perhaps only a nominal one, because no sum is indicated. No copies of the book were bought by the government, nor was it ever prescribed for any examination. The author, apparently, uses the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī as his model, arranging his stories into chapters and adding aphoristic couplets at the end of each story. He writes with approval of such virtues as justice, generosity, bravery, presence of mind, sweetness of discourse, and the like—all well-known themes of *adab*—but his scope remains limited. He is neither comprehensive nor sharply focused. His tales convince us that he must have been an excellent courtier, but by the same token he is not the kind of edifying author that the new educators would have approved of. He does not talk of useful new sciences; rather, he suggests a life in which the wisdom of age and experience counts for more. Even the Englishmen who appear in his tales appear as rulers and soldiers, in no way different from the Indian protagonists. The milieu of baronial courts and the celebratory tone in which it is—quite successfully—depicted by Rāḥat had little appeal for earnest English civil servants and eager Indian wage earners.

The next book to be discussed is *ʿAql o shuʿūr* [Intellect and

sagacity] by Maulawī Sayyid Nizām ad-Dīn, son of Maulawī Sayyid Amīr ‘Alī, probably of Lucknow, published in Lucknow in 1873 by the famous Newal Kishore Press.¹⁰ According to an inscription on its title page, it was awarded a prize of Rs. 300/—, and three hundred copies were bought by the government for its Department of Public Instruction. Another inscription, in English, runs: “Aql-o-Shu‘ur, For Indian Girls, Boys, Ladies and Gentlemen.” Encyclopedic in conception, it is an amazing cornucopia of both fact and fiction. Some idea of the ambition behind it, and the style of its execution, can be had from this excerpt from its preface.

Nizām, of humble name and little fame, begs to submit to his alert readers, the keen seekers of knowledge, that for a long time this recluse of the house of despair remained hidden behind seclusion’s veil, and despite possessing a tongue of flame, cared little for fame, choosing to be mute like a candle. . . . The anguished heart shed many a tear, and the sickened soul was gripped with fear, lest the gale of ignorance extinguish the lamp of learning, plunging into darkness the heavens a-turning. A storm of indiscrimination raged on all sides; the barge of discernment sank out of sight. No one cared, none gave a hoot, to listen to men of merit, to give ear to their suit. I wept for my talent, so fine yet so battered; I cried out this verse as my hopes lay shattered.

Whom can I show my mind, so gallant?
This age, alas, has no patron of talent.

But Allāh be praised, the notice issued by the English Government, so firm and determined, instigated me to add glory to my name, and gave me an occasion to indulge in expression, and for sooth obtain fame. Verily, the Nawwāb Lieutenant-Governor Bahādūr acted like a messiah . . . Consequently, hoping for a reward, and bearing in my heart a desire for the general good, I began this book. . . . The name of this treatise, full of merits, is ‘Aql o shu‘ūr. Its every phrase has a benefit, hidden, and its every chapter has a purpose, given. Without a doubt, it is an elixir for those who are parched for learning, and without any reservation it can be taught to ladies and children. The author has divided it into an Introduction, ten Chapters, and a Conclusion. The Introduction is called *Tajallī i nūr* (Lights and Splendor), the Chapters are called ‘*Uqūl i ‘ashara* (The Ten Intellects) and the Conclusion is titled *Jauhar i fard* (The Singular Substance). The meaning of Knowledge and Ignorance, the nature of Reason, single letters and compound phrases, the counsels of the wise and the advice of the learned, the rules of morphology and syntax, logic and ethics, rhetoric and prosody, refinements of speech and elegance of expression, Geography and History, Arithmetic and Geometry, Physics and Chemistry and Astronomy, marvels of

10. Sayyid Nizām ad-Dīn, ‘*Aql o shu‘ūr*, 3d ed. (Lucknow: 1914).

the world and the world of fantasy, the history of the Freemasons, the secrets of mesmerism and electricity, the wonders of the steam-engine and telegraphy, electro-plating, compass, thermometer, photography, the art of calligraphy and drawing, letter-writing, horsemanship, swordsmanship, gymnastics and wrestling, disputation and debate, etc.—all of these subjects, subtly and carefully, have been transferred from the tablet of my heart to the surface of these pages.¹¹

The above list is merely a summary of the contents. To enhance the fascinating quality of the book, the enterprising author has provided numerous line drawings, probably of his own making, to illustrate the text.

The text is cast in the form of a tale, whose characters carry allegorical names. In the Land of Freedom, in the city called the Abode of Learning, ruled a king, whose name was Embodied Intellect. He had a son, Cherisher of Wisdom. When the prince reached the age of six, the king asked his five ministers to suggest some plan of education for him, and eventually accepted the advice of his fifth minister—a genie—called Word-Fathoming Sagacity. The minister then flew off to the region of Qāf to bring an old friend of his named Sage of the Age. It took this sage five years to instruct the prince in all branches of learning, and the king evaluated his progress in a public examination at the end of every six months. Thus each of the ten chapters is in two parts: in the first, the sage covers a range of topics as he instructs the prince; in the second, the prince ranges over a number of related—and not so related—subjects as he answers his examiners. At the end the king abdicates in favor of his son, the sage returns to his mountain peak, and we all live happily every after.

The book must have gained some popularity, for it went through at least three printings, the third in 1914. But it could not possibly have been a prescribed textbook in schools; its sales must have been to libraries and individual men, and they were boosted by the fact that the government bought three hundred copies for its own institutions. It does not have much in it to appeal to women and girls, who are, in fact, never mentioned in the text after the inscription in English on the title page. It is primarily a book for adult males, for the “gentlemen” of the author’s time, and it is easy to see its appeal for them.

First, in language and style it is not unlike the *dāstāns* that were extremely popular in that area at that time. Its narrative

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

structure is that of a tale; its prose is flowery and rhyming, interspersed with verses in Persian and Urdu; and it makes use of many elements of the supernatural. Even its long lists of the names of flowers, foods, countries, and so on, are like those that the traditional storytellers were fond of reeling off at any opportunity. It is a quest story—a quest for knowledge, in this case—and its prince-hero undergoes tests—not trials by fire, in this case, but public examinations, much like interviews for jobs.

Secondly, it contains basic information on a great many "wonders" of Western civilization, such as the railway, telegraph, and photography, not to mention the Freemasons.

Thirdly, it does not denigrate the traditional branches of learning, such as prosody, letter-writing, and astrology. In fact, it delineates them in much detail.

Fourthly, it also purports to be a guide of a more practical nature, explaining to its readers how to do electroplating, make electric cells, take photographs, and survey land, activities not quite providing the *hunar* (skill) that a prince may need to possess to earn a living, but practical nevertheless. In spirit, of course, this is like what the princely author of *Qābūs nāma* had in mind when he taught his son how to be a musician, an astrologer, or even a merchant.

Fifthly, it is indeed the first book of its kind in Urdu: a compendium of "useful information" for ordinary curious persons. If nothing else, it provides them with such exciting, though rudimentary, facts on a vast array of subjects as would add to their self-esteem and self-assurance in the company of the better educated.

Finally, even while celebrating the glories of *ʿaql* (intellect)—each of its chapters is called an *ʿaql*—it does not question any of the social or religious constructs of its time. Religion, society, science—they appear in a state of peaceful coexistence in this book. It does not challenge any of its readers' beliefs, nor even their superstitions. The *ʿilm* (knowledge; science) of *ṭilismāt* (supernatural mysteries) is as seriously dealt with as are the *ʿulūm* of physics and astronomy. Its world view is traditional: theistic and hierarchical. Although its author carefully avoids making any overt mention of religion—there is hardly any quotation from the Qurʾān or *ḥadīth*—he takes the supreme authority of God as given. He is careful to tell us that there are two types of *ʿaql*: *ʿaql i maʿād* (the *ʿaql* of the hereafter), whose fruit shall be

received after death, and *ʿaql i maʿāsh* (the *ʿaql* of living), which is useful in this world. That he devotes his book entirely to the latter is, no doubt, due to his narrow interpretation of the condition in the Gazette Notification against "theological treatises." Likewise, though he declares that all classes of men should pursue *ʿilm*, his book deals only with the *ʿulūm* of the gentry. It contains, for example, no mention of such "hand-soiling" occupations as agriculture and trade. Its ethics are similarly traditional. The author has incorporated in it material from numerous earlier books of *adab*, and constantly appeals to the authority of the past to underscore the validity of his remarks.

It must therefore have appeared as a near-perfect book to many of its gentlemen readers of that time who, secure in their religious beliefs and confident of their social habits, but curious about Western technical achievements, must have found it as much comforting as it was informative. As for the British, if they were not totally beguiled by its scientific airs, they were still right in giving some reward to a pioneering enterprise of such magnitude. Needless to say, as education spread and literary tastes changed, as the "wonders" became commonplace and the traditional *ʿulūm* lost their value in the job market, the same qualities eventually made it quite irrelevant to the new gentry. What the new *sharīf* folk wanted was provided to them by Nadhīr Aḥmad, three of whose many award-winning books will be considered below.

Nadhīr Aḥmad (1830–1912) was a man of remarkable talent. Born in a family of *maulawīs* and *muftīs* of Bijnore, he studied Persian, Arabic, and other traditional subjects, first with his father, then later under other *maulawīs* in Bijnore and Delhi. A chance encounter led to a scholarship to study at Delhi College, where he joined the Arabic class, studying calculus, trigonometry, algebra, geography, and natural philosophy, along with Arabic literature. That course of study lasted eight years. Because of the objection of his father, he did not study English at that time, but made up for it later. He began his professional career as a *maulawī* of Arabic, but soon moved on to be a deputy inspector of schools in the Department of Public Instruction. Later, by displaying his genius in translating the Indian penal code into Urdu, he was nominated to the Revenue Service and became a deputy collector in the North-West Provinces. Still later, he rose to high administrative positions in Hyderabad state. Throughout his

life, along with his professional work, he continued to write and translate. In the annals of Urdu literature he is deservedly given a very high position, not only for writing the first "novel" in Urdu, but also for writing some of the most influential books in that language.¹²

The three books under consideration are his first three novels: *Mir'āt al-ʿarūs* [The mirror of the bride], first published in 1869, *Banāt an-naʿsh* [The daughters of the bier], first published in 1872, and *Tauba an-naṣūh* [The repentance of Naṣūh], first published in 1874.¹³ Together they formed for him "a syllabus for the instruction of women: *Mir'āt al-ʿarūs* for teaching household arts (*umūr i khānadārī*), *Banāt an-naʿsh* for teaching useful facts (*maʿlūmāt i ḍurūrī*), and *Tauba an-naṣūh* for teaching piety (*khudā parastī*)." ¹⁴

Mir'āt al-ʿarūs was begun in 1865–66 as a reader for his daughter and was completed in 1867–68. The book became very popular among the female relatives of the author. He even gave a copy of it to his daughter as part of her dowry. Later, it was submitted in competition, and in 1869, the first year of the awards, won for the author not only the full prize of one thousand rupees but also a watch as a personal token of appreciation from the lieutenant-governor. The government purchased two thousand copies of the book for its institutions and recommended its inclusion in school syllabi.

Banāt an-naʿsh followed in 1872 and won the prize of five hundred rupees. The author called it the second part of *Mir'āt*,

12. A number of books have appeared in Urdu on Nadhīr Aḥmad and his various novels, but by far the best and most comprehensive is by Professor Iftikhār Aḥmad Ṣiddīqī of the University Oriental College, Lahore: Iftikhār Aḥmad Ṣiddīqī, *Maulawī Nadhīr Aḥmad Dihlawī: aḥwāl o āthār* (Lahore: 1971). It is an invaluable source of insights into the social, religious, and literary issues that were of concern to the Muslims of India in the nineteenth century. In English, one can consult with much benefit Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (London: 1964), pp. 316–25, and Shaista Akhtar Banu Suhrawardy, *A Critical Survey of the Development of the Urdu Novel and Short Story* (London: 1945), pp. 41–65.

13. The following editions of these novels have been used in this study: *Mir'āt al-ʿarūs* (Karachi: Sultan Hasan & Sons, 1963); *Banāt an-naʿsh* (Lucknow: Tej Kumar Press, 1967); and *Tauba an-naṣūh* (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqī-yi Adab, 1964); this carefully edited edition also has an introduction by Professor I. A. Ṣiddīqī.

14. Nadhīr Aḥmad, in his preface to *Fasāna i mubtalā*, ed. Ṣadiq ar-raḥmān Qidwāī (New Delhi: 1971), p. 9. There is some internal evidence to suggest that the series was planned.

but it was not a sequel.¹⁵ It merely expanded upon some events that were briefly mentioned in the first book. In its preface, Nadhīr Aḥmad said "*Mir'āt* was intended to teach ethics (*akhlāq*) and good housekeeping (*khānadārī*). This book does the same, but only secondarily; its primary concern is with scientific knowledge (*maʿlūmāt i ʿilmī*). Now remains the topic of religious piety (*dīndārī*). If time allows . . . that too, God willing, shall be presented next year."¹⁶

He kept his word and presented for competition in 1873 his masterpiece, *Tauba an-naṣūh*. It won him the first prize again, came out in 1874, and has not been out of print since. Matthew Kempson, the director of public instruction at that time, liked it so much that he translated it into English and published it in London in 1884.

Both *Mir'āt* and *Tauba* have been a permanent part of the syllabi of Urdu schools from their first publication. *Mir'āt* has had many imitators, and its main motif of two sisters, one good and the other bad, has been used in innumerable novels and stories aimed at the female audience. It has been translated into several Indian languages, and an English version came out in London in 1903. *Tauba*, a superior and more complex book, has had no imitators, but it was itself an imitation of Daniel Defoe's *The Family Instructor*, part I. Nadhīr Aḥmad felt no need to acknowledge that fact, nor did his English admirers. They were right. Borrowing the bare plot from Defoe, Nadhīr Aḥmad made it his own by developing better, more believable characters and by creating a compelling air of authenticity through accuracy of description and naturalness of dialogue. By any measure, his book is a far superior work of creative imagination than Defoe's.

Mir'āt, in the days of its greatest popularity, was simply known as the story of Akbarī and Aṣgharī. These are two sisters living in Delhi: Akbarī, the elder, married to a man named Muḥammad ʿĀqil, and Aṣgharī, the younger, still living with her mother but engaged to be married to ʿĀqil's younger brother, Muḥam-

15. According to Muhammad Sadiq (*A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 323), *Banāt* is based on the *History of Sandford and Merton* by Thomas Day, "a pedagogic [story] that came in the wake of Rousseau's *Emile*." This fact was never acknowledged by Nadhīr Aḥmad or his English patrons. One is also hard put to understand the significance of the title of the book, which refers to a constellation of stars (Ursa Major) and literally means "the daughters of the bier."

16. *Banāt*, p. 2.

mad Kāmil. The fathers in both families live on their jobs, away from Delhi. Akbarī is illiterate, ill-tempered, and absolutely without any talent. Soon after her marriage she demands a house of her own, but once installed, quickly manages to make a mess of it. Aṣgharī, on the other hand, is literate, sweet-tempered, and multitalented. Before her marriage she runs her mother's house, and after her marriage, transforms the life in her husband's quarters. She first rids the house of a thieving maid, then slyly gets her husband to mend his ways and obtain a job. She starts a school for girls in her house, brings Akbarī and 'Āqil back into the fold, and carefully arranges the marriage of her sister-in-law into a wealthy family.

Nadhīr Aḥmad never explains just why the two sisters turned out to be so different from each other. He seems, however, to imply that while Akbarī had taken after her mother, who remains nameless in the book, Aṣgharī was like her father, appropriately named Dūrandesh Khān (Farsighted) and may have received proper instruction from him at an early age. They also correspond with each other, a fact that forcefully brings out the importance of literacy. Aṣgharī's innate good nature, some proper upbringing, and a degree of education have made her a paragon of virtues. Just as her calmness never gives way to hysteria, so does her sharp mind never fail to come to her rescue. The most outstanding thing about her is her practical bent of mind (*ḥikma i 'amālī*). She is a remarkably practical person and a meticulous planner. She dominates the book. Her own father and brother are only marginal characters, whereas the three male members of her husband's family have much to say and do in the book, yet all three of them are totally inept and impractical compared with her. She leads them and they follow. She is also shrewd enough to know when to be direct and when subtle. She is always right, and this does begin to annoy us. Because she is always serious and never invites us to laugh with her, we may catch ourselves inclined to laugh at her. That we do not quite do so is only a proof of Nadhīr Aḥmad's success in impressing us with his ideal *sharīf* woman. Aṣgharī was Nadhīr Aḥmad's beloved heroine, and he had to write a second book, *Banāt*, to tell us all that he had wanted to tell about her.

Banāt is ostensibly the story of Ḥusn Ārā, a spoiled girl from a rich family, who is sent to Aṣgharī for instruction. It presents Aṣgharī as the ideal teacher. To underscore that role she is gener-

ally referred to as *ustānījī* (lady teacher). An equally important role is also played by a protégée of hers, her sister-in-law Maḥmūda. Together they inculcate good values and habits in Ḥusn Ārā, and also expand her knowledge in terms of facts of geography, history, and general science. They also teach her and the other girls in Aṣgharī's *maktab* how to cook, sew, and manage household budgets. The facts are conveyed through stories and interpolated comments; the skills are taught through playing with dolls and through small projects. *Banāt* apparently presents Nadhīr Aḥmad's ideal of a school for girls: run by an individual or two, catering to a small number of students (carefully selected for their aptitude), and self-supporting. The teacher receives no salary—as a *sharīf* lady, Aṣgharī could not be expected to charge a fee. The girls do handicrafts, which are sold to raise funds for school expenses. As for the syllabus of this ideal school, Nadhīr Aḥmad gives a detailed description of it at the end of *Banāt*, when he describes what Ḥusn Ārā had learned in her approximately three years there.

When Ḥusn Ārā joined the *maktab* she was a little over ten years old. As her thirteenth year ended, the family in Jhajjar began to press for marriage. In the meantime, Ḥusn Ārā had learnt to read the Qur'ān, and, since she regularly read two sections every day, knew it as if by heart. As for Urdu, she could read and write with no difficulty. Even her handwriting was fair. Urdu translation of the Qur'ān, *Kanz al-muṣallā*, *Qiyāma nāma*, *Rāh i najāt*, *Wafāt nāma*, the story of the King of Rūm, the story of the *Sipāhizāda*, the miracle of the King of Yemen, *Risāla i maulūd sharīf*, *Mashāriq al-anwār*—these were the religious books that she had read. In addition she had studied the fundamentals of arithmetic up to the fractions, the geography and history of India, *Chand pand*, *Muntakhab al-hikāya*, and *Mir'āt al-'arūs* (all by Nadhīr Aḥmad). She could read Urdu newspapers. In addition to reading and writing, she had learned all the arts (*ḥunar*) that a woman needs to manage a household. She had also learned as many useful facts (*ma'lū-māt i muḥīda*) as would be sufficient to add comfort and pleasure to the rest of her life. But what she had learned from books was only a thousandth part of what she had learned from Aṣgharī and the other students.¹⁷

Banāt begins with the arrival of Ḥusn Ārā at the *maktab* and ends with her departure, but it is not a chronicle of her educational progress. It is mainly concerned with the early days: how Aṣgharī and Maḥmūda slowly induced her to give up her bad

17. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

habits and gave her a taste of the fruits of education. These are the titles of some of the chapters: Husn Ārā's contempt for the other girls and how Maḥmūda cured her of it; Maḥmūda makes Husn Ārā understand that those who are rich are also the needier; Husn Ārā begins to get up early; the meaning of true generosity; some fun with arithmetic; air pressure; magnetism; the need for civilization; some description of the English people; the geography of Arabia and the ways of the Bedouins.

Compared with *Mir'āt*, *Banāt* is dull and didactic. It has no story to hold our attention. All through it, Nadhīr Aḥmad, the deputy inspector of schools, is in the forefront; Nadhīr Aḥmad, the novelist, displays himself only in some of the conversations where his command of the subtleties of feminine speech becomes evident. It was rightly given a lesser award. Moreover, it has not been as popular, though it too has remained in print.

Two major concerns inspire most of Nadhīr Aḥmad's fiction: the uplift of *sharīf* women and the proper upbringing of *sharīf* children. Together they form the foundation of what is critically important for him: the family. For him, the enrichment and fulfillment of the lives of individuals can take place only within the context of a family, within which each member has his or her share of responsibilities, that share determining the individual's worth. The uplift of an entire society, according to him, can come about only if its constituent members—the individual families—are first brought to a state of enlightenment. (Nadhīr Aḥmad, of course, assumes society to be hierarchical, and focuses his attention on *sharīf* families.)

Sir Sayyid, the great educationist-reformer and a senior contemporary of Nadhīr Aḥmad, in order to transform his Muslim compatriots, wanted to duplicate in Aligarh the corridors of Oxford and Cambridge—and perhaps also the cricket fields of Eton and Harrow. Nadhīr Aḥmad, for the same purpose, sought to change the life in the courtyards and kitchens of ordinary homes, and frequently presented glimpses of English domesticity for the edification of his readers. What first-hand experience he had of it is not clear, probably very little and even that misunderstood, such as his understanding of the “royal powers” of Queen Victoria, who is often mentioned in exaggerated terms in his novels. In *Banāt* there is a long section describing the virtuous and happy life of an English family that bears no resemblance to reality. These people, however, serve a useful purpose in his scheme,

just as does the English lady doctor in another novel. They provide strong, intelligent, and practical women as models for emulation.

Four of Nadhīr Aḥmad's seven novels are concerned with the problems of women. *Mir'āt* and *Banāt* deal with the difficulties caused by their lack of proper education, an area wherein, according to Nadhīr Aḥmad, they were themselves mostly to be blamed. The other two books are concerned with the pain and suffering that their male-dominated society inflicts on them, by allowing men to have a second wife (*Muḥsināt*, or *Fasāna i mubtalā*, 1885), and by not allowing widows to remarry (*Ayyāmā*, 1891). In each of these four novels, Nadhīr Aḥmad presents at least one major female character who impresses us by being different from the prevalent image and self-image of Muslim women. These creations of Nadhīr Aḥmad are amazingly dynamic people, possessing sharp and practical minds. In each instance, they are more competent, stronger, and more effective than almost all the male characters. Even the best of the men tend merely to preach. They have power and wield it, but we get the impression that if pressed to answer, these men may not be able to justify the authority and superiority they claim.

Nadhīr Aḥmad holds that “the cart of life cannot move an inch unless it has one wheel of man and another wheel of woman.” He writes,

No doubt God created woman a bit weaker than man, but He gave her hands and feet, ears and eyes, wit (*‘aql*), understanding (*samaḥ*) and memory (*yād*) equal to any man. The boys make use of these gifts and become *‘ālim*, *ḥāfiẓ*, *ḥakīm*, craftsmen, artisans, experts in every art and craft. The girls waste their time in playing with dolls and listening to stories, and remain devoid of *ḥunar* (talent; art). However, those women who recognized the value of time and put it to good use became famous in the world just like men. For example, Nūrjahān Begum, Zeb an-nisā' Begum, or, as in our days, Nawwāb Sikandar Begum and Queen Victoria, who have run, not just some small household, but an entire country, even the world.¹⁸

He reminds women of the popular opinions held about them: women are faulty of intellect (*nāqiṣāt al-‘aql*); women are crafty and sly; they are obstinate and fickle; if women (*zan*) had deserved any better they would have been called *ma-zan* (don't beat!) instead of *zan* (beat!). Seeing no hope for their relief from

18. *Mir'āt*, p. 15.

the seclusion of *parda*, which would allow them knowledge through experience, he concludes that the only way for women to improve themselves is through education. "Education has more importance for women than for men."¹⁹

In giving such importance to women, in allowing them the inherent capacity to be coequal with men in almost all matters, and in laying such emphasis on women's education, Nadhīr Aḥmad was going against the prevalent views. The greatest Muslim educator of that time, Sir Sayyid, wrote hardly anything concerning women and was in fact not in favor of "wasting" any national effort on their education. The education of husbands and sons was of far greater importance to him. He believed that the benefits of education would eventually filter down through them to women. We are not suggesting that Nadhīr Aḥmad's was a lone voice—there were many others who expressed sorrow at the plight of women—but it was certainly the most radical and far-reaching. The radical nature of Nadhīr Aḥmad's ideas becomes clear when we compare them, on the one hand, with the views on women in such popular classics of *adab* as the *Qābūs nāma* (eleventh century) and the *Akhlāq i nāsiri* (thirteenth century), and, on the other, with the opinions of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī, a younger contemporary and one of the most influential Muslims of twentieth-century India.

The two medieval classics²⁰ are, of course, directed toward men. They pay attention to women only insofar as men need wives to perpetuate their line and look after domestic chores; problems also arise because men sire daughters as well as sons. Although these treatises allow that women can be chaste and kind, thrifty and efficient, and adorned with wit and honesty—for these are the qualities to be preferred in a wife—the underlying attitude is somewhat misogynistic. Although women can be the best of friends, they can also be the worst of enemies (*Qābūs*). Women cannot be trusted, so one should not share one's secrets with them, nor should one consult them in every matter (*Akhlāq*). You should not marry a wealthy woman, for she will look down upon you, nor a beautiful woman, for she will be faithless, nor a nonvirgin, for she will tend to compare

19. Ibid., p. 25.

20. Kaikaus ibn Iskandar, *Qābūs nāma*, Sa'īd Nafisī, ed. (Tehran: 1342 Shamsi), pp. 95–99; Nāsir ad-Dīn Muḥammad at-Tūsī, *Akhlāq i nāsiri* (Lahore: 1952), pp. 212–21.

you with other men all the time (*Qābūs* and *Akhlāq*). Do not give yourself into the hands of your wife though she may be a paragon of virtue and beauty (*Qābūs*). Do not fall in love with your wife, but if you do, hide it from her (*Akhlāq*).

As for daughters, according to *Qābūs*, they are better not born, but if born, they should be either by the side of a husband, or in the lap of a grave. Their education is to be limited to domestic chores and the rites of religion. Interestingly, whereas the earlier book, *Qābūs*, is not against women being taught how to read, the later one, *Akhlāq*, is bluntly against it. As for learning how to write, that is forbidden by both. Writing is perhaps seen as a more active and dynamic expression of the self and the intellect than mere reading, and women are not considered to have either in a positive sense. It is significant that in both the books the first instruction concerning sons is that they should be given good names. This does not obtain in the case of daughters.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī's *Bihishtī zewar* is directed toward Muslim women, and may be the first book of its kind in Islamic *adab* literature.²¹ First published in 1905, it was written at a time when female education was rapidly making progress in India, and Muslim women themselves were playing an active role in that process. Whereas Nadhīr Aḥmad had intended his novels to be useful to all women, Thānawī is concerned with the needs of Muslim women alone. According to Thānawī, women, through their actions, affect not only their children, but also their husbands; thus what they do or do not do affects the society as a whole. He then reasons:

Poor faith (*bad i'tiqādi*) gives birth to bad ethics (*bad akhlāqī*), bad ethics produce bad actions (*bad a'mālī*), bad actions lead to bad interaction with others (*bad mu'āmalagī*), which is the root of all evil in the society. Since the opposite of something is its antidote, it is evident that the cure in this case is the knowledge of religion (*ilm i dīn*).²²

Accordingly, his syllabus for women includes the Qur'ān (vocalizing of the Arabic, and understanding of the Urdu translation), rules of *fiqh* insofar as they concern women, and some

21. Muḥammad Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī, *Bihishtī zewar* (Lahore: n.d.). The edition used here is popularly known as the *Tāj bihishtī zewar*, after its publishers, Taj Company Ltd., Lahore. It is based on the definitive edition published by Maulānā Shabbīr 'Alī in 1925, but differs in pagination and some arrangement of the text. It is perhaps the best-printed edition.

22. *Bihishtī zewar*, sec. 1, p. 3.

essentials of domestic bookkeeping, health care, cooking, and other such things. No history or geography for him, nor the wonders of the heavens. According to him, women should be taught how to read, for that will improve their language, strengthen their faith, and make them better homemakers. As for the art of writing, it has its uses too, such as keeping of accounts and communicating through letters, but it should be taught only to those who are not bold (*bebāk*) by nature. Otherwise it may be harmful. "After all," he concludes, "writing should not be more dear to you than your honor (*ābrū*)."²³

Thānawī is against the newly opened *zanāna* (all female) schools and the books that were taught there. He strongly disapproves of the newly emerging "feminine" literature, including the four novels of Nadhīr Aḥmad mentioned above. Near the end of *Bihishtī zewar*, he lists the names of some "harmful" books and includes the four novels. He then adds: "These four books contain some discourses that teach discernment (*tamīz*) and proficiency (*salīqa*), but they also contain discourses that weaken faith (*dīn*)."²⁴ Inasmuch as Thānawī does not elaborate further, we can only speculate about the objections he may have raised. The obvious ones would be: (1) Nadhīr Aḥmad's equating of Islam with other religions; (2) his praise of the Christian English at the cost of Muslim Indians; (3) his making fun of certain types of *maulawīs*. But we will not be far wrong, perhaps, if we add to that list (4) his depiction in the two later novels of the sensual aspects of marital ties and the emotional needs of women and (5) his portrayal of highly capable and dynamic women, who tower over the men around them.

As noted earlier, Nadhīr Aḥmad is concerned with Muslim women's lot as a whole, and not merely with the corruption of their religion. He believes in the efficacy of education as a given universal, and feels no need to anchor his espousal of it in the Qur'ān and *hadīth*, as does Thānawī. Nadhīr Aḥmad sees women as victims of their own lack of initiative as well as of the unmitigated authority of men, and champions their cause. He perhaps feels very close to them; he portrays them well in his novels. He feels no need to improve their language; in fact, it is his command of their idiom that makes his dialogues ring so

23. Ibid., p. 80.

24. Ibid., sec. 10, p. 54.

true. With reference to women, Nadhīr Aḥmad displays an attitude and opinions that must have appeared radical to the orthodox of his time. It would be wrong, however, to think of him as one who took his religion lightly. On the contrary, Nadhīr Aḥmad stresses again and again that religion—any religion—has to be at the core of a person's being, to generate for him or her the values to live by. Within the context of Islam, that is Thānawī's belief too. It is no surprise, then, to find him giving full approval to Nadhīr Aḥmad's third novel, *Tauba an-naṣūh*: he lists it among the books it would be beneficial for women to read.²⁵

In his preface to *Tauba*, Nadhīr Aḥmad declares:

In this book we discuss that duty of mankind which is called "the upbringing of children" . . . [which] does not amount merely to giving them nourishment so that they grow big, or teaching them some profession so that they can earn a living, or arranging their marriages, but also includes the polishing of their morals (*akhlāq*), the improvement of their dispositions (*mizāj*), the reform of their habits (*ʿādāt*), and the correction of their ideas and beliefs (*khayālāt aur murtaqidāt*).

Further:

My intention was to prove to people the importance of instruction in good ways and fine morals, and do so without underscoring religion (*bilā takhṣīṣ-i madhhab*). But to separate goodness (*nekī*) from religion would be like trying to separate the soul from the body, the fragrance from the flower, the light from the sun.

He then goes on to stress that though his book was not without religious discourses, it contained nothing that could hurt the religious sentiments of other communities. "Thus, though the story is about a Muslim family, even the Hindus, by changing a few words, can benefit from it."²⁶

Tauba is about Naṣūh, a *sharīf* Muslim of Delhi, and his attempts to reform the ways and manners of his family members by inculcating in them a deep respect for their religion, its rituals as well as its ethics. Naṣūh takes on this task after himself going through a radical transformation under traumatic circumstances. In a cholera epidemic, Naṣūh loses his father and another relative; soon afterward he, too, falls ill. On his sickbed, he is filled with self-pity at having to die when he still has so many

25. Ibid., sec. 10, p. 53. I am indebted to Professor Barbara Metcalf for bringing Thānawī's comments to my attention.

26. *Tauba*, pp. 5–8.

things to take care of in this world. As the doctor's medicine puts him to sleep, Naṣūḥ has a dream: he sees himself as if present in the *kachahrī* (court of justice) of God. There he encounters his deceased father, who tells him of the exactitude and severity of God's judgment, and the need to inspire one's acts on Earth with the true sense of piety in order to fully discharge the individual and social responsibilities laid down upon mankind by his Creator. Recovering from the illness, Naṣūḥ launches his campaign. He finds a willing ally in his wife, Fahmīda, who had already had a poignant and instructive encounter with their younger daughter, Ḥamīda. The older daughter, Naʿīma, however, does not take to religion easily. She goes off to stay with an aunt, whose religious household eventually has the desired effect on her. Of the sons, the younger two, ʿAlīm and Salīm, accept Naṣūḥ's program readily, because they had already found influencing factors outside their own family: in one case, a book of moral principles given by a Christian missionary, and in the other, the company of a poor but pious schoolmate. It is the eldest son, Kalīm, who proves to be the most obstinate. He challenges the authority of his father and the importance of religion in one's life. He runs away from home, has several misadventures, and returns repentant, but dying. With his death ends the book.

It is not our purpose here to provide a critique of *Tauba* as a novel; we are concerned only with the didactic aspirations of the book. To that extent, it will suffice to look closely at only one major theme: the tussle between the reforming old-new and the recalcitrant young-old, represented by the father and the son respectively. Naṣūḥ is older in age, and exercises his traditional authority as the father; his emphasis on religion can also be called old-fashioned. But his reforming efforts are directed at such cherished cultural values as he had himself lived by until that eventful dream. These same values, however, are obstinately held onto by Kalīm, his father's son in more ways, perhaps, than the author realizes.²⁷ In fact, Kalīm sees no reason for change. He is already living by the values a person of his background and position—i.e., a *sharīf* young man—is expected to have, with the

27. Kalīm's obstinacy in his ways is identical with Naṣūḥ's rigidity in his reforming zeal. Both require some traumatic experience to bring about a change in them.

full knowledge and, therefore, tacit approval of his father. He is popular as a poet. He is ranked high among the players of chess, backgammon, cards, and other games. His pigeons are among the best in the city, and none can beat him in a kite-flying match. He is well-read, and he can write well. As he tells his mother, "Just as there are other sons of respected and *sharīf* families, so am I one. If I am not better than all, I certainly am not worse than any."²⁸ He regards his father's demands as unfair, and leaves home to seek his fortune on the strength of the talents he possesses and cherishes. He leaves British India and goes to a small native state, and when his poetry does not get him far, he becomes a soldier, only to be mortally wounded in his first skirmish.²⁹ In contrast to him, his "reformed" younger brothers do very well indeed: one gets a job in the Education Department, the other becomes a practitioner of *yūnānī* medicine.

Kalīm is by no means an uneducated person; on the contrary, he is well-read in Persian and Urdu classics. We are told that he is popular in the city as a poet. In his conversation, Kalīm is shown as constantly quoting poetry. He thinks poetry adds force to his arguments, and marks him as an educated man. In a clear sense he lives up to his name. But Nadhīr Aḥmad has only contempt for that kind of "education"; he regards it as useless for this world and harmful for the other. In his authorial voice, he says: "Kalīm was cursed with poetry" (*kalīm par shāʿirī kī phiṭkār thī*).³⁰

As for the books that Kalīm had read and collected, Nadhīr Aḥmad has Naṣūḥ destroy them in what may be one of the most horrifying scenes in Urdu novels. After Kalīm has left the house, Naṣūḥ inspects his rooms, and finds a large cabinet full of books in Urdu and Persian. They consist of "false tales, foolish discourses, obscene ideas, vulgar subjects, all far removed from decency and goodness."³¹ And so he has the full cabinet dragged

28. *Tauba*, pp. 179–80.

29. Kalīm goes to Daulatabad, ready with a panegyric, but when he arrives there, he finds that the English have already curbed the powers of its wastrel ruler and set up an administrative council manned by pious and competent people. Kalīm decides to become a soldier, a foolish decision made out of vanity, which, according to Nadhīr Aḥmad, is "another accursed habit of poets."

30. *Tauba*, pp. 265, 326.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 253. Nadhīr Aḥmad's opinion of classical Urdu literature, particularly poetry, was not different from that of his contemporary Ḥālī, who described it in his *Musaddas* as being "worse in stench than a latrine."

outside and burnt to ashes. What Lord Macaulay had only hinted at in his famous Minute, Nadhīr Aḥmad has Naṣūḥ put into action. That conflagration symbolizes, more than anything else, the rejection of the "old" by the "new," of literary excellence in favor of social usefulness, of "metaphor" in favor of "realism." It must have left an indelible mark on the minds of many generations, for nearly seventy years went by before anyone found fault with Naṣūḥ and saw Kalīm as a victim of circumstances, as a "strange mixture of good and evil."

In his preface to *Tauba*, Nadhīr Aḥmad quotes the following verse (33:72) from the Qur'ān:

Lo! We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! he hath proved a tyrant and a fool.³²

In a footnote, Nadhīr Aḥmad explains "trust" to mean *ʿaql*, variously translated as intellect or reason. It is the loss of this *ʿaql* that has led, according to Nadhīr Aḥmad, to the dreadful state in which the Muslims of India find themselves. The rise of the British, conversely, is due to their making full use of their *ʿaql*. In *Banāt*, Aṣgharī tells her girls: "The British are embodiments of *ʿaql*, otherwise they couldn't have come here, thousands of miles from their home, and become kings."³³ Nadhīr Aḥmad is nonetheless devoutly religious, having come to his faith after a period of anguish and doubt in his youth.³⁴ Faced with the question of reconciling religion with reason, he shows his characteristic inclination to be practical: he ignores it, at least in these three prize-winning books.³⁵ Consequently, these books are readily acceptable to the average Indian Muslim, who can easily see that he requires *ʿaql*, to succeed in this world, and religion, to redeem him in the hereafter. If religion leads to good habits, which in turn lead to success here, so much the better for religion. In fact

32. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān*, (Mecca: 1977), p. 450.

33. *Banāt*, p. 198.

34. Rām Chandra, Nadhīr Aḥmad's favorite teacher at Delhi College, a Hindu, had converted to Christianity in 1852, and Nadhīr Aḥmad very nearly followed suit. Siddiqī, *Maulawī Nadhīr Aḥmad Dihlawī*, pp. 66-68.

35. Later in his life, Nadhīr Aḥmad translated the Qur'ān into Urdu and also wrote a more formal *adab* book, *al-Ḥuqūq wa al-farā'id* (in three parts). The former became quite popular for a while, but the latter never caught on. Unfortunately, neither was available to me at the time of this writing.

it may appear that success and rewards are of decisive importance in Nadhīr Aḥmad's vision. He wants his readers to receive their due reward in this earth as well as in heaven. After all, he makes a point of letting us know the heights of success his "good" people do reach.

In Khānum's Bāzār there stands a huge mansion built by Aṣgharī. In fact, the neighborhood is named after her. That lofty mosque in Jauharī Bāzār that has a well and a tank was built by her too, as was the entire colony of Tamīzgunj. In Maulawī Ḥayāt's mosque, twenty travelers are fed daily through her generosity. She also built that *sarā'ī* for travelers in Quṭb Ṣāhib. It was she who distributed five hundred copies of the Qur'ān in one day in the mosque of Fatehpuri, and it is from her house that one thousand blankets are given to the poor every winter.³⁶

Compared with the achievements of Aṣgharī, the heroine of the *ʿaql* books, the success of Naṣūḥ's "good" children is not especially outstanding, but nevertheless, success it is.

Before it all happened, 'Alīm was having a hard time passing even the Entrance examination. Now, however, he passed his B.A. One excellent job after another was offered to him, but he, due to his good nature, chose the Department of Education, so he could be of benefit to his compatriots. The other son, Salīm, when he grew up, became a *ṭabīb* of such eminence that even now the finest *ṭabīb* of Delhi practice medicine using his prescriptions. As for Ḥamīda, that saint-from-birth, she memorized the Qur'ān and studied the *ḥadīth*. Indeed, all the interest in education that you see among women of the city, is entirely due to Bī Ḥamīda.³⁷

What is also noteworthy here is a certain apparent split or separation. *ʿAql*, guide to the steam-engine, telegraph, and efficient households, is extolled in *Mir'āt* and *Banāt*. There is no mention in them of the need to say one's prayers regularly. The prayers are highlighted in *Tauba* which, in its turn, stays away from the wonders of modern science. The Qur'ān, the Word of God, and Nature, the Work of God, are pragmatically kept separate. Unlike his great contemporary Sir Sayyid, Nadhīr Aḥmad feels no need to demonstrate a tight fit between the two, at least not in these three books, his most popular ones. Here the natural world and the world of the supernatural seem to exist in perfect harmony, neither encroaching upon the territory of the other—a reassuring concept for the average Muslim then, as it is now.

36. *Mir'āt*, p. 77.

37. *Tauba*, pp. 347-48.

The medieval classics display a more holistic attitude. Beginning with the concept of the Oneness of God, they extend it to perceive unity within all phenomena. They develop a concept of *ʿishq* ("love") to describe what they perceive as an interrelationship between all beings as well as between their multifarious expressions of themselves. Such *ʿishq* finds no mention in these novels of Nadhīr Aḥmad, nor, for that matter, in Thānawī's book. (It appears again later in the writings of Muḥammad Iqbāl, 1877–1938.) Similarly, the earlier books, written for the nobility, came out of societies where the temporal authority was a part of the community of believers: the world belongs to God, and the country and command belong to the king, but the king himself can be said to be a "slave of Allāh." Nadhīr Aḥmad, on the other hand, writes for the emerging middle and lower-middle classes of wage-earners in a society where, not too long ago, the cry of the town crier used to be: "The world (*khalq*) belongs to God, the country (*mulk*) to the King, and the command (*ḥukm*) to the Company Bahadur."

To conclude, these novels of Nadhīr Aḥmad are just the right kind of success stories that the Muslims of India needed to hear in the trying years after the failure of the Mutiny and the dissolution of all symbols of their temporal power. Separating the world of God from the world of Caesar—in effect though not, perhaps, in intention—and suggestive of an Islamic version of the Protestant ethic of success, these novels are precisely the kind of *adab* that both the rulers and the ruled seem to have desired at that particular time in history. This explains their success.

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The *Adab* of Musicians

BRIAN SILVER

An examination of the lives of a number of prominent—and not so prominent—musicians in the tradition of Hindustani music discloses divergent styles of individual action. Given the syncretic nature of musical culture in the northern Indian subcontinent, the Muslim musician propagating an art at least partially Hindu in origin provides an interesting subject for an exploration of the meaning and implications of *adab*.

To begin with, the fact that Hindustani music has been an overwhelmingly oral tradition ensures that there can be no recourse to basic texts (such as the manuals considered elsewhere in this volume) that might explain in detail proper conduct for professional musicians. The search for a musical *adab* leads us instead to the existence within that oral tradition of a genre of exemplary stories, sometimes legendary, that serve a major didactic role in the nurturing of "proper" behavior by professional or aspiring musicians. Yet even here there is no unified, absolute standard of behavior, for the question has been complicated not only by the rich synthesis of Hindu-Muslim cultural elements, but also by the existence of divergent musical lineages, called *gharānās*—which to some extent espouse different principles of music and musical etiquette—as well as by the effects of the