

2:5 The impact of the *Musaddas*

The *Musaddas* certainly seems to have had the desired impact on its 'onlie begetter', to judge from the letter which Sir Sayyid wrote to Hali on 10 June 1879 from the Park Hotel in Simla, to thank him for sending five copies of the First Edition (Ahmad Khan 1924:166; trans. based on Naim 1981:111):

From the moment the book reached my hands I could not put it down till it was finished, and when it was finished I was sorry that it did. It would be entirely correct to say that with this *Musaddas* begins the modern age of poetry. It is beyond me to describe its elegance and beauty and its flowing quality. I am amazed that this factual theme, which is devoid of lies, exaggeration, and far-fetched similes—things that poets take pride in, has been expressed by you in such an effective and eloquent manner...

Modestly objecting only to the fulsome praises lavished upon himself in the Introduction, Sir Sayyid does go on to acknowledge his role in the poem's inspiration:

I was the cause of this book, and I consider that my finest deed. When God asks me what I have done, I will say: nothing, but I had Hali write the *Musaddas*.

The opening paragraph of Hali's Second Introduction describes the more general enthusiasm which the original *Musaddas* aroused so widely in the community in the early 1880s, in an excited summary account whose credibility is increased by Hali's natural modesty. Even the perhaps unlikely seeming claim of this quite abstract poem being acted out in dramatized performances is solidly confirmed by Sir Sayyid's report in his *Safarnāma-e Panjāb* of 1884 (Sandilavi 1960:263-4):

The Muslims of Amritsar had actually built a theatre like the Parsis. There is a dramatic representation of the Muslims' decline, one part of which is extremely affecting. A curtain is opened to reveal the sea moving and a ship with a sleeping crew caught in the storm and sinking. Then this passage of the *Musaddas* is sung 'There is a boat caught in the whirlpool...'

The man or woman who sings these stanzas (i.e. M275-M276) indicates at each point how the ship is on the point of sinking. Such an atmosphere is created that people burst into tears.

Although much work would be needed to establish just which groups of Muslims outside the immediate circles of Sir Sayyid's followers and admirers were affected by it, it does appear that for a few years at least a quite unprecedented phenomenon was unleashed in northern India. For this mass *Musaddas* mania to have spread as it did, in a way clearly quite different from the elite's reception of earlier Urdu poetry, many factors needed to be in place. They included the rather recent changes to the education system, to communications and to publishing, as well as the more general cultural and ideological shifts among the Indian Muslims in the decades immediately following 1857. But the mania would not have happened at all had the *Musaddas* not had for a new public the rare quality of articulating a whole new vision which is possessed by only a very few literary works in any generation. Some reflections upon this quality, which was indubitably possessed by the *Musaddas* for all its indubitable flaws, may be found in the pages briefly devoted to it from diverse, not always very sympathetic viewpoints by historians in English of Urdu literature.³⁷

More vivid testimony to the impact of the *Musaddas* is yielded by the numerous parodies, imitations and parallel exercises which it inspired. These derivative poems—and very many more were certainly produced and published than the fourteen examples illustrated below—collectively demonstrate the extraordinary speed and power with which the *Musaddas* created an entire new poetic universe of its own, within which writers from often quite surprisingly diverse sections of Indian society felt it natural to explore issues which Hali had opened up in the verse format he had created. This inspiration continued for at least a quarter of a century, until the *Musaddas* finally became very dated, following the great changes in Indian political climate and concomitant literary fashions after the First World War.

The earliest imitations (Sandilavi 1960:277-85) in some ways remain the liveliest. They were produced as counterblasts to its 'nature-ism', the term so loaded at the time with both theological and aesthetic implications. Soon after the publication of Hali's poem, one Maulavi Salim ud Din Jaipuri 'Taslim' completed his own *Musaddas*, with the chronogrammatic titles *Hadiqat ul mazhab* 'The Garden of religion', 'Urūj un nazm' 'The Zenith of poetry', etc. (all yielding the year AH 1301 = AD 1884). Published in 1887, this craftily mixes the old language of rhetoric with a parody of the new style which it criticizes (ibid.:278):

Tasāmuḥ ke lafẓon meḥ hai jā ba-jā bal
Ma'ānī meḥ hai phūke-pan kī lagī kal
Adā bad-tavāra hai tarkāb mukhtal
Tayaqqun nahīn hai to sunye mufaṣṣal

³⁷ Cf. Bailey 1932:95-6; Saksena 1940:215-6; Schimmel 1975:226-7; Sadiq 1984:266-9; Matthews et al. 1985:100-3; Russell 1992:123-7.

*Ki har lafz-o misra' na'e rang par hai
Har ik shi'r-o band jude dhang par hai*³⁸

A similar stance is adopted in the anti-Musaddas published in 1901 by another cleric, Qazi Muhammad Faruq Chiryakoti. Entitled *Musaddas-e 'Avāli*, following the usual practice of naming these productions after their author's pen-name, this manages to work in a quotation (from M249) into a combined attack on Hali's understanding of both poetry and religion (ibid.:279):

*The shi'r āp ke peshtar silk-e gauhar
Hu'e āj sandās se kyon vo badtar
Jab āne lagī us meñ bad-bū-e nechar
Hu'e ek dam meñ vo garde sarāsar
Vo ash'ār ta'vīz-e dūl hīz-e jāñ haiñ
Jo islām ke vāsif-o madh-khwāñ haiñ*³⁹

The *Musaddas-e Hāziq* of 1906 by a Professor Ghulam Hazrat Khan is on a much larger scale than either of these. Indeed, its 360 stanzas make it longer than Hali's *Musaddas* itself, and allow the poet to launch his attacks on 'nature' and all its execrated works across a very broad front. The 'nature-ists' are themselves mocked for their supposed mocking rejection of the basic practices of Islam (ibid.:280):

*Dimāghoñ meñ paidā huā ye khalal hai
Ki kahtā har ik necharī muhtazal hai
Tamaskhur ke qābil namāz āj kal hai
Muhazzab ko'ī us pa kartā 'amal hai
Rukū'on meñ do hāth ghutnoñ pa dharnā
Surīñ jānīb-e charkh stidoñ meñ karnā*⁴⁰

When it comes to 'natural poetry', Haziq is particularly scornful of Hali's disregard for the old niceties of rhyme. While rounding off a nicely contrasted pair of idioms, the clumsy rhyme of the final couplet is an unmistakable dig at the way so many of Hali's stanzas seem to end with this type of rather plodding and anticlimactic over-emphasis on weak rhyming phrases (ibid.:281-2):

³⁸ Words of uncertain meaning are awkwardly used everywhere, and the meanings are insipidly contrived. / The expression is clumsy and the construction confused. If you don't believe this, listen to it in detail: / Every word and hemistich is in a new style, every verse and stanza is in a manner apart.

³⁹ Before you arrived, verses were necklaces of pearls, so why have they today become worse than a cesspool? / It was when it became filled with the stink of 'nature' that they suddenly became so foul.— / Those verses which praise and eulogize Islam are a talisman of the heart and an amulet of the soul.

⁴⁰ Their brains have become deranged, so that every wretched nature-ist says, / 'Prayer is a joke these days. Does any civilized man perform it?— / Putting two hands on the knees in the actions of kneeling, and raising the bottom to heaven in the actions of prostration!'

*Qavāfi ki jin par madār-e sukhan hai
Unhīñ se hu'ī in ko paidā jalan hai
Qavāfi haiñ arvāh gar shi'r tan hai
Na hon gar qavāfi to kyā khāk fan hai
Jame khāk ash'ār meñ rang un kā
Qavāfi se hai qāfiya tang un kā*⁴¹

Nor does the specific content of Hali's *Musaddas* escape attack. Haziq uses Hali's own notorious infatuation with Western ideas to combat his criticism (in M235) of the way Muslim philosophy continues to be based on Plato and Aristotle, beginning with a few choice 'Hindi'-isms (ibid.:282):

*Sanbhālo zarā choñch yārān-e nechar
Na jā'o nīkal pā'e-jāme se bāhar
Falātūñ kā hikmat meñ thā kaun ham-sar
Aristū se thā falsafī kaun barh-kar
Unheñ sārā Yūrap bhī māne hu'e hai
Jahāñ un ke rutbe ko jāne hu'e hai*⁴²

Not all Hali's early imitators were inspired by the wish to detract from his poem, although there was less pressure upon supporters to compose amplifications of its grand statement than there was on opponents to contradict or belittle it. Within the immediate Aligarh circle, one graceful supplement was penned by Sir Sayyid's younger disciple Shibli Numani (1857-1914). Appointed Lecturer in Persian and Arabic at Aligarh College in 1882, Shibli made a youthful name for himself as a poet, with his *masnavī* entitled *Subh-e umīd* 'The Dawn of hope' (1884). At a public performance by Aligarh students in 1890, he followed this up with a short *Qaumī musaddas* delivered in the passionate and affecting style for which he was famous. This substitutes the rather longer lines of the familiar *ramal* metre (*fa'īlātun fa'īlātun fa'īlātun fi'lun*) for Hali's *mutaqarīb*. Its conclusion fills a conspicuous gap in Hali's catalogues of the far-flung scenes of past Muslim glories with a mention of Delhi (Shibli 1892:18):

*Marv-o Shīrāz-o Safāhān ke vo zebā manzar
Bait-e Hamrā ke vo aivān vo divār vo dar
Misr-o Gharnāta-o Baghdād kā ek ik patthar
Aur vo Dihli-e marhūm ke bosīda khandar*

⁴¹ He has a burning hatred for rhymes, which are the basis of poetry. / Rhymes are the soul to verse's body, and if there are no rhymes, then where on earth is the art? / May his verses be covered with dust—such is his style, because rhymes are too much for him.

⁴² Just watch your beaks, you friends of 'nature', and keep your trousers on. / Who was the equal of Plato in wisdom, and who was greater as a philosopher than Aristotle? / All Europe—even—honours them, and the world recognizes their rank.

*Un ke zarroñ meñ chamakte haiñ vo jauhar ab tak
Dāstāneñ unheñ sab yād haiñ az-bar ab tak⁴³*

As Shibli hands the stage over to the students, he takes his leave with a donnish reference to the 'endless tale' mentioned at the start of Hali's First Introduction (ibid.):

*Un se sun le ko'ī aḡsāna-e yārān-e vaṭān
Ye dikhā dete haiñ āñkhoñ ko vuhī khwāb-e kuhan
Terī hī nām kā ai qaum ye gāte haiñ bhajan
Tere hī naḡma-e pur-dard ke argan
Pūchhū hai jo ko'ī un se nishāñ terī
Ye sunā dete haiñ sab rām-kahāñ terī⁴⁴*

Shibli's short poem is a far more graceful performance than that later achieved in the work of a former Aligarh student, the 92-stanza *Musaddas-e Khasta* published by Maulavi Muhammad Akramullah of Gujranwala in a cheap edition for the benefit of the general public. This author supplements Hali's catalogues of ruin with references to the rivers of his native Punjab and to the recent British victories in Egypt and Sudan (Khasta 1895:16):

*Na Gangā na Jamnā na Satluj na Jihlam
Na Danyūb Tegs ke mālik rahe ham
Judā ho ga'e ham se sab yār-o hamdam
Huā Misr-o Sūdāñ meñ kis kā ye chihlam
Va kam-bakht ham hī musalmāñ haiñ yāro
Ham apne ki'e par pashemāñ haiñ yāro⁴⁵*

Even more provincial is the *Musaddas-e 'Ulvi*, published by Munshi Tahavvur Ali, a police inspector from Budaon. Couched very much in Hali's plainly Arabicizing style, the modest call to action issued in its 60 stanzas is to support the construction of a local madrasa, a project here imagined to enjoy angelic favour (Ulvi 1899:9):

*Parē phir nazar tum pai jinn-o bashar kā
'Ināyat ho har āñ khair ul bashar kā*

⁴³ Those fine vistas of Marv, Shiraz and Isfahan, those palaces, walls and gates of the Alhambra, / Every stone of Egypt, Granada and Baghdad, and the decayed ruins of our lamented Delhi— / All still have jewels glittering in their dust, all still remember their stories by heart.

⁴⁴ Hear from these some story of our dear fellow countrymen, as they display to us that ancient dream. / It is to you, oh community, that they sing their hymns, as the organs of your sorrowful tale. / If anyone asks them for a trace of you, they recite the whole of 'your endless tale'.

⁴⁵ Of Ganges and Jumna, of Sutlej and Jhelum, of Danube and Tagus we are no longer masters. / All friends and companions have parted from us. For whom is this mourning in Egypt and Sudan? / And it is just we Muslims who are wretched, friends, repenting what we have done, friends.

*Munavvar ho har khisht dīvār-o dar kā
Khulī āñkheñ rah jā'eñ shams-o qamar kā
Malā'ik kahañ phir to āpas meñ mil-kar
Subh-o shām dekh ā'eñ Oldan ko chal-kar⁴⁶*

Another dimension of Hali's *Musaddas*, which tends to be played down by modern South Asian critics, is its outspoken loyalism to the British Empire. This loyalist sentiment remained widespread in Indian society until the First World War, during which it received crude expression in the little *Musaddas-e Ahmadi* published as a pamphlet by Sayyid Shah Ahmad Husain of Barh near Patna. This is itself a loyal demonstration of the vices of Hali's style at its most prosaic (Ahmad Husain 1916:3):

*Haqīqat meñ hai ye gavarmāñ 'ādil
Ra'iyat-navāzī meñ hai farḡ-e kāmīl
Yahāñ 'aish-o sāmāñ aisā hai hāsīl
Ki hai jhoprā bhī yahāñ 'aish-e kāmīl
Piyēñ pāñī ik ghāt par sher-o bakrī
'Adālat hai aisī siyāsāt hai aisī⁴⁷*

The same attitude governs the equally short *Musaddas-e 'Aziz*, by Mirza Aziz ud Din Ahmad of Ghazipur. Written in Shibli's *ramal*, though with none of his poetry, this stern warning to the Indian Muslims not to trust the Turks—the word is made to seem less friendly by here being spelt according to its English pronunciation—was published too late to affect the course of the war (Aziz 1919:4):

*Tark ke nām se ab sakht hamēñ nafrat hai
Kyoñ na nafrat ho ki Jarman se use ulfat hai
Ham musalmāñoñ meñ Tarkī kī kahāñ 'izzat hai
Zer-aḡar ho gayā Jarman kā ye be-ghairat hai
Bhā'yo Tark ye Tarkī nahīñ Jarman hai ye
Ham musalmāñoñ ke arām kā dushman hai ye⁴⁸*

⁴⁶ May jinn and men look on you kindly, and may you continually experience the favour of the Best of Men. / May every brick of its walls and doors be filled with light, and may sun and moon keep staring at it wide-eyed. / Then may the angels gather together and say, 'Let us go and visit Oldan [?] every morning and evening!'

⁴⁷ In truth, this government is just, quite unique in looking after its subjects. / There is so much to enjoy here that even a hut here is a place of delight. / Lion and goat drink at the same watering-place, such is the justice, such is the policy.

⁴⁸ Now we have great hatred for the name 'Turk'. Why should we not feel hatred when he is friendly with Germany? / What honour does Turkey have amongst us Muslims? It is shamefully under Germany's influence. / Brothers, this Turk is nothing to do with Turkey but is German, hostile to the ease of us Muslims.

After the end of the war, when atrocities like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar helped destroy loyalism's former appeal, much of the spirit seems to have gone out of *Musaddas* writing too. The tradition is just kept alive by one or two last poems, like the *Musaddas-e Ni'mat*, a sustained anti-Shia polemic by Maulavi Nimatullah Amrohi of the Muradabad Anjuman-e Ishaat-e Islam. This subverts Hali's rhetoric to narrowly sectarian ends (Nimat 1920:29-30):

Agar mazhab-e rafī ba-haq hai to ḥazrat
Sivā chand shī'ōn ke nārī hai ummat
Na mahfūz qur'ān na kāmīl risālat
Na kuchh farz ham par na vājib na sunnat
Imām aur qur'ān haiṅ donoṅ ḡhā'ib
To bas dīn-o imān haiṅ donoṅ ḡhā'ib⁴⁹

The circle of inspiration surrounding the *musaddas* form, which began with Hali's transfer of Shiite elegy to a larger historical stage, here reaches its wretched close. An alternative route of influences is suggested by the *Musaddas-e Kausari* (Kausari 1903). This is not a true imitation at all, but a straightforward Shiite *marṣiya*—though written in Hali's *mutaqarib*—by one Daluram, a formerly fanatical Hindu converted to ardent Shiism while a veterinary student in Lahore.

A less complicated line of descent runs from the Hali of the Supplement to the last identified full-scale imitation. This is the *Musaddas-e Latif* by Maulana Abdul Latif from Sonapat, not far from Hali's home town of Panipat. Its 250-odd verses are embellished with an ample panoply of footnotes to its copious Islamic references. A work of unselfconscious conservatism, it goes for such obvious targets as the Western headgear still then being sported by Indian Muslims to the disapproval of the orthodox (Latif 1936:8):

Hu'e sare Yūrap pai dūl se shaidā
Ṭarīq-e hudā chhor baithe sarāpā
Libās aur sūrat ko badlā kuchh aisā
Nazar sab lage āne bil-kul naṣārā
Kamīs aur patlūn-o sūt ab liyā hai
Bare fakhr se sar pai haiṅ ik rakhā hai⁵⁰

⁴⁹ If the Shia school is right, sir, then apart from a few Shias the whole community is condemned to hellfire. / The Quran is no longer preserved, nor the perfect Apostleship, nor are duties, obligations and example laid upon us. / When Imam and Quran both disappear, then religion and faith both disappear.

⁵⁰ Their hearts have all been filled with passion for Europe, and they have entirely abandoned the way of True Guidance. / Their clothes and appearance have changed in such a way that they have all started to look just like Christians. / They have now put on a shirt, trousers and suit, wearing with great pride a hat upon their heads.

Although Hali too had much to say about Europe, albeit from a diametrically opposed perspective, his *Musaddas* had much less to say about India, whose Hindu inhabitants appear only as industriously charitable role models for their Muslim fellow countrymen (M134-M137). Some of these gaps were filled in the *Musaddas-e Yās* by Faqir Muhammad Ashiq of Jullundur Cantonment. Its extended plea for Hindu-Muslim unity finds room for suitable references to Indian history, like the religious tolerance of the Mughals (Yas 1916:12):

Vo Akbar vo Shāh-e Jahān kī hukūmat
'Adālat se jin kī thī khush-dīl ra'īyyat
Na ḡhāirōn pai sakhtī na qaumī rī'āyat
Barābar thī qānūnī sab par riyāsat
Vazīr un ke hindū musalmān the donoṅ
Mushīr un ke hindū musalmān the donoṅ⁵¹

Given the exclusively Muslim concerns of Hali's *Musaddas*, it is perhaps most surprising of all to discover the existence of analogues written from an exclusively Hindu perspective. The later rise of Hindi causes these poems now to seem something of a curiosity. Nevertheless, they do testify most interestingly to the once far more widespread cultivation of Urdu, even of so untraditional and so communally focused a poem as Hali's. At a traditionalist—and loyalist—Sanatan Dharm meeting held in the Chandni Chauk in Delhi in 1890, the year of Shibli's performance in Aligarh, Lala Kidari Lal 'Nirbhai Ram' recited to great applause a 100-stanza poem composed in the same *hazaj* metre as Hali's Petition. Later published as the *Musaddas-e Nirbhai prakāsh*, this offers the assembly a diagnosis of the ills of the Hindu community couched in thoroughly familiar terms (Nirbhai Ram 1890:3):

Jalsa to khush' kā hai par afsos yihī hai
Jo dharm kī hālat hai vo pazhmurda hu'ī hai
Socho to sahī kaunsi vo bāt na'ī hai
Jis vāj se ye bel harī sūkh ga'ī hai
Ai bhā'īyo ḡhāirōn hī kā sab khoṭ nahīn hai
Apne bhī kalejōn pai charj choṭ nahīn hai⁵²

A much more ambitious production is the *Musaddas-e Kaifī* or *Bhārat-darpan* 'The Mirror of India' by the then well known Delhi poet Pandit Brij

⁵¹ The government of Akbar and of Shah Jahan, whose justice made the hearts of their subjects happy, / When there was no harsh treatment of others or partiality shown to their own community, when there was a policy of legal equality for all, / Their ministers were both Hindus and Muslims, their advisers were both Hindus and Muslims.

⁵² Although this is a happy event, one does nevertheless regret the feeble state of the Hindu faith. / So think to see what new thing has caused this flourishing vine to wither. / Brothers, all this is not just the fault of others, and our hearts did not receive this wound just like that.

Mohan Dattatreya 'Kaifi' who was associated with the Jullundur branch of the reformist Arya Samaj. Some 400 stanzas in length, this outdoes the *Musaddas* itself in the abundance of its additional materials, which include preface, marginal subject headings and notes embracing citations from Sanskrit, Gurmukhi and English sources, all reproduced in their original scripts. Closely modelled on Hali's poem, this *Musaddas* describes the past glory and the present ruin of India from an Arya Samaji viewpoint. Deploying the usual lists of evocative names to recall the golden age, the language is noteworthy for its mingling of the occasional Sanskritism (e.g. *dharmātmā* 'righteous') with a quite skilful imitation of Hali's style (Kaifi 1905:32):

*Jo rāje yahān ke the dharmātmā the
Na zālim the vo garchi jang-āzmā the
Jahān-dār sach much vo zill-e khudā the
Khalā'iq kī bihbūd par vo fidā the
Bahut the yahān Bikram aur Ikshvākū
Na thā ko'ī Zāhhāk yān aur Hulākū⁵³*

In his treatment of less happy later times, Kaifi—just like Hali—particularly deplores the disunity of his community. The purpose here, however, is to establish the Arya Samaji agenda of restoring the modern multiplicity of castes and sub-castes to the fourfold class system of the Vedas (ibid.:45):

*Birahman na mihmān birahman ke ghar ho
Na chhatrī hī chhatrī se shīr-o shakar ho
Na do vaish kā mel bā-ham-digar ho
Ho chaukā idhar ek to ek udhar ho
To phir qaumiyyat kaisī aur qaum kis kī
Barhegā vo kyā khāk ye gat ho jis kī⁵⁴*

Fairly soon after Kaifi's poem, the equally long and heavily annotated *Musaddas-e Shafaq* by Munshi Lalita Prashad 'Shafaq' was published in Kanpur, towards the other end of the Punjab-United Provinces area where the *Musaddas* fashion remained chiefly centred. This too is an Arya Samaji poem, and is actually subtitled *Madd-o jazr-e Ārya*. Like Kaifi, Shafaq too uses quite a number of Sanskritisms, as in the second verse of his poem, on the language and cosmic function of the Vedas (Shafaq 1910:1):

⁵³ The kings here were righteous, not tyrannical although experienced in war, / Rulers who were truly the shadow of God, devoting themselves to the welfare of His creatures. / Here there were many Bikrams and Ikshvakus, here there was no Zahhak or Hulaku.

⁵⁴ When one Brahmin will not be a guest in another Brahmin's house, nor will a Kshatriya get on well with another Kshatriya, / When two Vaishyas will not join together, when if one cooking-square is on this side, the other will be over there— / Then what sort of community identity is this, and whose is the community? How can one who behaves like this hope to progress?

*Sirishī kī vedōn kī ek ibūdā hai
Zabān chārōn vedōn kī sab se judā hai
Jise kul zabānōn kā mākhaz kahā hai
Vo hai dev-bānī kalām-e khudā hai
Haq-o sulh āghāz-o anjām un kā
Hai san'at ba-zāt-e khud ilhām un kā⁵⁵*

Linguistic adaptation of a quite different kind is involved in translation, as opposed to adaptation. As a work with an urgent message conveyed in a straightforward style, Hali's *Musaddas* might appear ideal translation material. That more translations into other South Asian languages do not appear to have been issued—or at any rate to have survived—is doubtless a reflection of the very wide spread in India of Urdu at the time, particularly as a language for the propagation of Islamic themes. The free Muslims over the North-West Frontier were, however, just outside the reach of Urdu. This audience, which was always very much in the minds of nineteenth century Indian Muslim reformers, was designed to be reached by a translation into accentual Pashto verse in an *aabbcc* rhyme scheme by Hali's friend Maulavi Ghulam Muhammad Khan Popalzai, published in 1893 (Popalzai 1961). Hali sent this to the Amir of Afghanistan, along with copies of his other works and a letter which discounts any other achievements which may have come to the Amir's notice, claiming credit only for 'having made something useful of Asian poetry, which had been something quite useless' (Husain 1966:200-1).

A Gujarati translation of the entire Second Edition, including the Supplement, into *musaddas* stanzas was undertaken for the betterment of the Gujarati Muslims by Nana Miyan Rasul Miyan (Miyan 1907). Being so fully integrated into the Urdu cultural area, the Punjabi Muslims had less need of a version in their own language. There is, nevertheless, a Punjabi translation dating from about 1930 which is of quite some interest in its own right. Apparently the first such exercise to have been undertaken for mainly literary motives, it was the work of Chaudhari Sir Shihab ud Din (c.1865-1949), long-time Speaker of the Punjab Assembly and a great enthusiast for the Punjabi language at a time when it was generally unfashionable to be so. After alluding to the popularity of the *Musaddas* among Hindus and Sikhs as well as Muslims, his preface describes the translation as an act of service to the Punjabi language rather than as a means for awakening the Punjabi village population. A preliminary recitation of some verses at a meeting of the Lahore Anjuman-e Himayat-e Islam is said to have provoked the enthusiasm of Shihab ud Din's literary fellow knights, Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Shaikh Sir Abdul Qadir, who both continued to encourage him to complete his task (Shihab ud Din n.d.:4-5). Shihab ud Din's version is deliberately nativist in intent. It is

⁵⁵ The origin of creation and of the Vedas is one. The language of the four Vedas is quite separate from all others, / And is called the source of all languages, it is *dev-bānī*, the word of God. / Truth and peace are their alpha and omega, and creation is in essence inspired by them.

composed in the native *baint* metre, using three lines—divided by the caesura—per stanza, so that the rhyme scheme is now *-a-a-a*. It is also purist in its vocabulary, thus sometimes successfully avoiding the awkward juxtapositions of different registers in Hali's original, but only at the aesthetic cost of seeming to over-domesticate the challenge of Hali's message. An idea of the structure and style may be gained from the version of M3:

*Eho hāl is qaum dā vich duniā
Berā vich ghumman jidhā gheriā ai
Kandhā dūr te qahr tūfān jhulle
Hune jāpdā pūr nigheriā ai
Sutte ghūk muhāniār sane sārē
Pāsā ik ne vī na pheriā ai⁵⁶*

No literary translation into English appears to have been undertaken. In the preparation of our own academic version we were unable to consult an anonymous English translation published in Karachi in 1975 (Naim 1981).

Outside Urdu, therefore, the impact of Hali's *Musaddas* has been only somewhat feebly felt. Once it was articulated within its own literary tradition, however, the vision of the *Musaddas* ensured that the future would never be the same again. Hali's own later poetic oeuvre was inevitably greatly shaped by his most successful and original creation. If the artistic failure of the Supplement shows the crippling effect of too close an imitation, two other important poems show how Hali was able to return to the *musaddas* form to more powerful effect, in each case with the inspiration that comes from working in a different metre.

Artistically the finest is the elegy for Hakim Mahmud Khan of 1892, which broadens into a powerful lament for the old Delhi and which is substantively Hali's own poetic swansong. Its 86 stanzas are written in the longer form of *ramal* (*fā'ilātun fā'ilātun fā'ilātun fā'ilun*), whose stateliness is here put to fine effect (*Divān*, pp.218-9):

*Daur-e ākhir meñ ki terā tel thā sab jal chukā
Bujhte bujhte thā kuchh ik tū ne sanbhālā sā liyā
Khāk ne yāñ terī phir agle vo la'l-e be-bahā
Jin se roshan ho gayā kuchh din ko nām aslāf kā
'Ahd-e māzī kā samāñ āñkhoñ meñ sab kī chhā gayā
Khwāb jo bhūlā huā muddat kā thā yād ā gayā⁵⁷*

⁵⁶ Precisely this is the state in the world of that community, whose boat is surrounded by a whirlpool. / The shore is far and a fierce storm rages. Just now, it seems, the whole crew is swallowed up. / Still all the sailors are fast asleep, not even one has turned over. (Compare the transliteration of the original stanza on p. 31 above.)

⁵⁷ In the last age, when your oil was all burnt, you just restored the dying flame. / Your earth again produced those former priceless rubies, lending a few days' lustre to the name of our forbears. / The whole period of the past again came before our eyes, and we remembered the vision we had so long forgotten.

Just as this elegy develops that aspect of the *Musaddas* which looks to the past with sadness, so too does the earlier *Nang-e khidmat* 'The Shame of service' build on the didactic side which is turned towards the present with anger. Written in 1887, this addresses more successfully than the Supplement the consequences for the community of relying upon state employment. Its refusal to shape up to the self-reliance demanded by its destiny leads it into a purely utilitarian view of education, and a spirit-destroying aping of Western manners. The metre this time is the lighter version of *ramal* used in Shibli's imitation (Sandilavi 1960:270):

*Haq ne shā'ista-e har bāb batāyā thā hamēñ
Ek hī dām meñ phañsnā na sikhāyā thā hamēñ
Rasta har kūcha-o manzil kā batāyā thā hamēñ
Zīna har bām pa charhne kā dikhāyā thā hamēñ
Aisā kuchh bāda-e ghaflat ne kiya matvālā
Tauq khidmat kā liyā aur gale meñ dālā⁵⁸*

A quarter of a century later, exactly the same poetic form was to be used in the first major statement of a new articulation of their destiny addressed to the Indian Muslim community by the greatest Urdu poet of the generation after Hali's. This was the *Shikva* 'Complaint' recited by Iqbal at a meeting of the Anjuman-e Himayat-e Islam in Lahore in 1911. Just as the *musaddas* form of its 31 verses deliberately recalls Hali's masterpiece, so too does Iqbal's title echo that of yet another strophic poem by Hali, the *Shikva-e Hind* 'The Indian complaint' of 1887 in which he used the *tarkīb-band* form to explore once again the decline of the Muslims, this time in connection with the debilitating influences of the Indian climate. Iqbal's complaint, though, is an absolute one, grandly addressed not to India but to God (Matthews 1993:36-7):

*Kyon musalmānoñ meñ hai daulat-e duniyā nā-yāb
Terī qudrat to hai vo jis kī na had hai na hisāb
Tū jo chāhe to uthe sīna-e sahrā se hubāb
Rah-rav-e dasht ho sili-zada-e mauj-e sarāb
Ta'n-e aghyār hai rusvā'ī hai nā-dārī hai
Kyā tire nām pai marne kā 'ivaž khwārī hai⁵⁹*

⁵⁸ God made us capable of every occupation, and did not teach us to be caught in only one trap. / He taught us the route of every street and stage, and showed us the stair to reach every roof. / It is just the wine of obliviousness which has intoxicated us, taken the collar of service and put it round our necks.

⁵⁹ Why do the Muslims find the riches of the world unobtainable? Your power is, after all, without limit and beyond reckoning. / If You wish, You can make water bubble up from the desert, and the traveller of the sands is buffeted by the waves of the mirage. / We suffer the insults of strangers, infamy, impotence. Is this wretchedness the return we get for dying for Your name?

Here at last, it may be suggested, the impact of the *Musaddas* finds its truest resonance, not in more or less mechanical imitation or translation but in a wholesale re-creation. Iqbal's extensive stylistic remodelling of Hali's poetic idiom successfully allows a full place to the grander register of Persian vocabulary. He was thereby able to construct a viable post-Halian rhetoric for serious Urdu poetry, through which he was able to convey an even more ambitious vision than Hali's of the way in which an understanding of the Indian Muslims' past might hope to remove some of the uncertainties of their present by helping to reveal the grandeur of the divinely appointed destiny again awaiting them.

3:1 Decline and progress

In both his Introductions to the *Musaddas*, Hali makes explicit the hortatory character of the poem. He ends the First Introduction by defining the aim of his composition:

This poem has not...been composed in order to be enjoyed or with the aim of eliciting applause, but in order to make my friends and fellows feel a sense of outrage and shame.

The Second Introduction refers to the subject matter of the poem as consisting 'largely of criticism and blame'. Something of the didactic flavour of the poem is also conveyed by Hali's footnotes, which explain in textbook style locations, scenes, and references. Given this conception of the *Musaddas* as an instrument of reform, it is perhaps not surprising that the poem is in part structured around a series of contrasts or oppositions. The main opposition in the poem is between decline and progress, and Hali's vision of broad historical movements in the *Musaddas* is to a large extent based on this opposition. The depiction of time in the poem needs to be seen, at least in part, in terms of the interaction between the poem's moral rhetoric and its rhetoric of temporality.¹ It is to the latter that we now turn.

Something of the complexity of structure in the poem's depiction of temporality is suggested by Abdul Haq, when he notes how Hali at the very beginning of the poem provides a glimpse of the contemporary condition, thereby preparing us for the future sections, and then immediately takes the reader to the original home of the *millat*, that is, the pivotal period of the Jahiliyya and the rise of Islam (Abdul Haq 1976:114). These broad movements of progress and decline correspond to the sections into which the poem is structured. Thus the poem opens with a brief section on the degenerate state of contemporary Islam (M3-M6) and then shifts to the past achievements of Islam (M7-M104), but this latter section contains a sub-section on the barbaric state of pre-Islamic Arabia (M8-M22). The section on the past glories of Islam is followed again by a long section on the decay of Islam, with a particular emphasis on the decline of Indian Muslims (M105-M281). Once again, though, this section contains pieces on European progress (e.g. M131-M133, M171-M175), and on the progress of other Indian communities (M134-M137), as well as another point of contrast between early and contemporary Islam (M226-M228). The overall result is an interleaving of pictures of progress and its antithesis, the antithesis being either decline or the barbaric infancy of society. This interlocking of images of progress and decline is evocative of the

¹ We have taken the phrase 'rhetoric of temporality' from De Man (1983:187-228). For some illuminating discussions of 'Islamic' historical narratives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Smith 1957:41-92, Ahmad 1967:77-102, and the brilliant exposition in al-Azmeh 1993.