The *Shāh-Nāme* Echoes in Sikh Poetry and the Origins of the Nihangs' Name

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Iranian influence on all aspects of Indian literary and artistic culture in Islamic times, first introduced into the subcontinent by conquering Turkish rulers, spread far beyond religious boundaries. Persian became the language of administration and intercommunal intercourse in much of India. One of the lesser known aspects of the Iranian legacy in India is its imprint on early Sikh thinking and culture to which I drew attention in 1999 in an essay on "Ranjit Singh and the Image of the Past."[1]

Some typical Sikh institutions such as the *langar* were set up on lines following the Iranian Sufi model.[2] Important Sikh writings were coloured by Iranian culture, if only in their literary mode.

Such is the case with the *Zafar-Name* ("The Book of Victory"), the epistle in Persian verse written by the 10th Sikh Gurū, Gurū Gōbind Singh, to the Moghul emperor 'Ālamgīr, as Owrang-zīb ("Aurangzeb" to Victorian writers) became known after mounting the throne. The metre, the style with its archaic phrases, and occasionally the mood, reveal the Gurū's close familiarity with the 4/10th century "Book of Kings" [*Shāh-Nāme*]. An even more marked *Shāh-Nāme* influence can be detected in the enigmatic *Fath-Name* ("The Book of Conquest") preserved in fragmentary form.

That the mark left by the *Shāh-Nāme* on these epistles has not been analysed so far is no surprise. The "Book of Kings," a stylized history of the world centred on Iran written by Ferdowsī in fifty thousand couplets, was read and recited in all Persian speaking-courts.[3] Hindustan followed the Iranian model in this respect as in so many others.

The discovery of at least one manuscript of the *Shāh-Nāme* with paintings executed in a thoroughly Hindustani style around the middle of the 9/15th century[4] proves that the Persian literary work was sung in regional courts long before the advent of Moghul rule in 1526. B. N. Goswamy who published the manuscript pointed out the difficulty of determining its precise regional provenance. Nevertheless, the Indian scholar felt "inclined to place this manuscript in middle India," meaning the area of Mandu and Ahmadnagar in the Deccan.[5]

Another manuscript now in the New York Public Library published by B. N. Goswamy as a volume of the "Selections of the *Shah-Name*" illuminated in pre-Moghul times must be left out.[6] Its paintings date from the late 19th or 20th century.[7] But a number of manuscripts in fragmentary condition dating from the later years of Akbar's reign and from Jahāngīr's time prove that the *Shāh-Nāme* was well read at the Moghul court.[8]

Any writer striking a *Shāh-Nāme* note in a court milieu would have been sure to touch a chord, all the more so as the importance assumed by the *Shāh-Nāme* in the Iranian world and in all other lands where Persian was the language of literature and polished usage went far beyond that of a literary work.[9] I have shown in the first of two monographs on the *Shāh-Nāme* that kings and their entourage tried to model their conduct on the attitudes and feats accomplished by the heroic rulers of Ancient Iran as sung by Ferdowsī. Cases of princes reciting verses of the *Shāh-Nāme* as they rode out to combat are reported by historians of impeccable credentials. *Shāh-Nāme* verses were written on the friezes of

glazed revetment tiles that ran inside royal palaces of the 7/13th and 8/14th century.[10] Eulogistic titles such as "The Second Jamshīd," "The Second Rostam," and others coined after the names of *Shāh-Nāme* characters were integrated into the official protocol of rulers who thus felt they were reenacting the deeds of their Ancient Iranian role models. The role of the *Shāh-Nāme* as a behavioural model for kings in part explains the *Shāh-Nāme* tone retained by Gurū Gōbind Singh in the *Zafar-Nāme*, and also by the unknown author of the *Fath-Nāme*. This imprint in turn sheds light on the origins of the metaphorical designation adopted for themselves by the Sikh *Nahang*s (*Nihang*s, as the word is pronounced nowadays in India) the well-known martial community reputed for its fearlessness in combat.

Part One: The *Shāh-Nāme* and Sikh Poetry in Persian

1. The Shāh-Nāme *Echoes in the* Zafar-Nāme

The *Zafar-Nāme* consists of one hundred and eleven Persian couplets, one of which actually paraphrases a *Shāh-Nāme* maxim and names Ferdowsī as its author.[11]

It was written in 1706 by Gurū Gōbind Singh who had already lost his two elder sons at Chamkaur in the armed conflict that pitched the Sikhs against the Moghul armies. As all commentators have noted, this was a response to the treacherous execution of the Gurū's two younger sons by Wazīr Khān, ʿĀlamgīr's military commander, in breach of the solemn oath on the Koran taken by the emperor who personally guaranteed the safe passage of the Gurū and his entourage.[12] In exchange, it had been agreed that the Gurū's forces would evacuate Anandpur, which they did.

The same commentators, however, have given no attention to the literary characteristics of the *Zafar-Nāme*, let alone to the *Shāh-Nāme* imprint.[13]

The *Zafar-Nāme* is composed in couplets with inner rhyme in the *Motaqāreb* metre of the type adopted by Ferdowsī for the *Shāh-Nāme*.

Like any Persian work in verse or prose, the *Zafar-Nāme* begins by celebrating God in a vi-

brant profession of monotheistic faith to which any Muslim would unreservedly subscribe. The first line is slightly surprising:

<div dir="rtl">

کمال کمالات قائم کریم
رضا بخش رازق رهاگو رحیم

</div>

*Kamāl-e Kamālāt-e Qāʾem Karīm
Reżā-bakhsh-e Rāzeq Rahā-gū Rahīm*

Perfection of Perfections, Eternal, Generous
That grants Contentment, that nourishes, that liberates, that is compassionate[14]

An opening couplet is almost certainly missing. One would expect the text to begin with the traditional invocation "In the name of," as is the case with the *Fath-Nāme* (see below). This is probably one of the reasons that induced the editors of the Amritsar version of the *Zafar-Nāme* to consider the *Fath-Nāme* to be part of it. However, as will be seen, this is made unlikely both by the style and the tone.

The wording of the first few couplets is interesting. At times, the Gurū uses Arabic loan words adopted in Persian to convey fundamental Koranic concepts, and at others, he draws mostly or solely on the Persian vocabulary of the *Shāh-Nāme*. In the first line, the qualifiers *Karīm*, "Generous," *Rahīm*, "Compassionate," are Koranic adjectives defining some of the attributes of God—through which man is made cognizant of His Essence to which he has no direct access. In fact all the words, with the exception of Persian *-bakhsh* in the compound *reżā-bakhsh*, "that grants contentment," are Arabic loan words. They convey Islamic notions even when used with a meaning that they do not have in the Koran. *Qāʾim* is to be understood as "standing" in the three chapters of the Koran where it appears. In the present case, it conveys the notion that God stands by Himself in eternity—God, unlike created beings, has no need for support.[15]

Reżā, the Persian pronunciation for Arabic *riḍāʾ*, expresses a concept that is central to Sufism, that of man's contentment with the lot assigned to him by God. In the 6/12th century, Mansūr b. Ardeshīr Sanjī ʿAbbādī Marvazī writes in his section "On contentment" in "On the Virtues of the Sufis" [*Dar Manāqeb-e Motaṣavvefe*]: "know that the [accomplished] man, as he attains certainty, is always contented with the di-

vine decree [*qażā*]. For the Sufis, there is no better attribute than contentment [*reżā*] in all spiritual conditions [*aḥvāl*]."[16] In the second couplet of the *Ẓafar-Nāme*, the Gurū gives precedence to Persian words over loan words borrowed from Arabic.

تهنشاه حوبی ده و رهنمون

که بی گون وبی چون و چون بی نمون

Amān-bakhsh-o Bakhsande-vō Dast^e gīr
Khaṭā-bakhsh-o Rūzīdeh-ō Del-paẕīr

He that Grants safety and Forgives and Succours
That Remits errment and Gives sustenance and
Raptures the Soul[17]

Only *amān*, "pardon," "safety," and *khaṭā*, "error," "sin," are borrowed from Arabic.

In the third couplet, Persian words are exclusively used. This contrasted vocabulary in the opening lines celebrating God is unusual in Persian literature of the period. More precisely, the use of Persian words found in the *Shāh-Nāme* in praise of God, that had long become archaic by the time the Gurū was writing, has no parallel at that time. The intention was evidently to give the second and third lines the ring of the *Shāh-Nāme*, and the aim is achieved:

شهنشاه خوبی ده و رهنمون

که بی گون وبی چون و چون بی نمون

Shahenshāh-e Khūbī-deh-ō Rahnemūn
Ke Bī-gūn-o bī-chūn-o chūn bī-nemūn

The King of Kings that Gives what is good and
leads the way
That belongs to no species, has no cause, and
has no analogy.[18]

The choice of the *Shāh-Nāme* tone is unlikely to be a simple matter of literary preference. There is little evidence at that period of Revivalist tendencies.[19]

The Gurū's motive must therefore be sought in the purpose of the epistle. It was addressed to the emperor, in Persian "King of Kings," *Shahenshāh* or *Shāhenshāh*, which made the *Shāh-Nāme* tone particularly appropriate.

More specifically, the intention was to make the Moghul monarch aware of his scandalous action when measured by the standard of his own Muslim faith. Doing so in the *Shāh-Nāme* style allowed the vehemence of the reproach to become acceptable. As early as the second and third couplets, a thinly veiled allusion is made to the circumstances that prompted the Gurū to send the epistle to ʿĀlamgīr. In the second couplet, God is celebrated as "He that grants Safety," *amān-bakhsh*. *Amān* is a word with multiple connotations. It can be the "pardon" bestowed upon a captive or a person considered to have perpetrated a criminal act. Or it can be the "safe passage" promised in the course of hostilities—both meanings are recorded by the Hindustani lexicographer Qāżī Khān Badr Mohammad Dhār in his Arabic-Persian dictionary.[20] *Amān* is what ʿĀlamgīr had committed himself to grant to the Gurū's sons. It is worth noting here that *amān-bakhsh* is not usually found in the celebration of God.

In the third couplet an equally unusual word is used in praise of the Lord, "Shahenshāh," "King of Kings" or emperor. This title, normally reserved in Persian history for the Shāh of Iran only, was given to Moghul rulers as a bombastic eulogy by their panegyrists.

The juxtaposition at the beginning of the second and third couplet of *amān* and *Shahenshāh*, two words unusual in the celebration of God, is no accident. Together, they reminded ʿĀlamgīr that the only true emperor ("King of Kings") is God and that He does grant safe-passage—in contrast to ʿĀlamgīr who promised it but broke his word.

That the Gurū had in mind Ferdowsī's *Shāh-Nāme* as he wrote his epistle is made explicit by the mention of his name when he cites a maxim towards the middle of his epistle to the emperor:

چه خوش گفت فردوسی خوش بیان

شتابی بود کار آهرمنان

Che khosh goft^e Ferdowsī-e khosh-bayān
Shetābī bovad kār-e Āharmanān

How well did Ferdowsī of the fine exposition say:
Making haste is the work of the devils[21]

This is not a direct quotation, but a paraphrase. Ferdowsī's words are:

شتــاب و بـدی کـار آهـرمـن است

پشیــمانی جـــان و رنـج تــن است

Shetāb-ō baḍī kār-e Āharmanast
  Pashīmāni-e jān-o ranj-e tanast

Haste and nastiness are the work of Āharman
  They are the remorse of the soul and the pain
  of the body[22]

An important subtext can be read into this quotation which points to Gurū Gōbind Singh's close acquaintance with the *Shāh-Nāme* and his frame of mind as he rephrased the moral maxim. In Ferdowsī's text, these are the words of a wise man, Pīlsam, spoken to Afrāsiyāb, the king of Turan and preeminent foe of the Iranians who fight him under Keykhosrow's lead. Afrāsiyāb has just ordered the execution of the Iranian emperor's son Siyāvakhsh (vulgarly "Siyāvush") who has been wounded on the battlefield and captured by the "Turks." Incensed, Afrāsiyāb's own troops protest that spilling the blood of a man who committed no crime against Afrāsiyāb is wrong. But Afrāsiyāb's brother, the evil Garsīvaz who was once humiliated by Siyāvakhsh, insists that the latter must be executed. It is at that point that Pīlsam, the younger brother of Pīrān, advises against the execution and utters the maxim, insisting that Afrāsiyāb must take his time and carefully consider the matter.[23] Two officials, Damur and Garūy, who are scared, side with Garsīvaz and, like him, press Afrāsiyāb to execute Siyāvakhsh. They tell the king of Turan: "You have already crushed his army—Think how this king would act towards you."[24] Full of misgivings, Afrāsiyāb retorts "From him, I myself, saw no crime with my own eyes—But from what the astrologers say—In the end, he will make trouble for us."[25]

In essence, this famous episode of the *Shāh-Nāme* can be read as an allegory of Gurū Gōbind Singh's own experience. Afrāsiyāb like 'Ālamgīr unjustly orders the execution of the son of the king who is fighting him. Afrāsiyāb in the *Shāh-Nāme* is the king of the Turks and the Moghul emperors who prided themselves on their Timurid ancestry were also seen as "Turks."

Obliquely reminding 'Ālamgīr of the *Shāh-Nāme* account of the unjust execution of Siyāvakhsh was particularly subtle. Afrāsiyāb in the *Shāh-Nāme* is acknowledged as a great emperor.

In his wrong doings, he is the victim of fate. While Afrāsiyāb's action against Siyāvakhsh is exposed as criminal, the responsibility for it ultimately rests on his evil brother Garsīvaz and his advisers who panic. Lucid enough to realize that he should not proceed with the execution which is fundamentally wrong, Afrāsiyāb gives in to fear induced by his evil brother and courtiers. The implicit suggestion is that 'Ālamgīr, like Afrāsiyāb, while committing a crime was also the victim of his bad entourage and fate.

The Gurū who so vigorously proclaims his distrust of the emperor denounces in the same breath the *Bakhshī* and *Dīvān*, as liars. The paraphrase of Ferdowsī's maxim found further in the text would have specifically called to mind Afrāsiyāb's bad advisers.

مـرا اعتبـاری بـریـن حـلف نـیست

کـه ایزد گـواه است و یزدان یکیست

نـه قـطره مـرا اعـتبـاری بـر اوسـت

کـه بخشی ودیوان همه کذب گوست

Mará e'tebārī bar-īn ḥalf[e] nīst
  Ke: Īzad gavāh-ast-o Yazdān yekīst
Na qoṭre mará e'tebārī barūst
  Ke Bakhshī va Dīvān hame kaẕb[e]-gūst

I have no consideration for this pledge
  Saying that God is my witness and the Lord is
  One

I do not have an ounce [lit: a drop] of consideration for him
  For the Bakhshī and his Dīvān are all liars[26]

By weaving allusions to the famous *Shāh-Nāme* episodes of Siyāvakhsh's execution into his web of accusations of deceit and breach of faith, Gurū Gōbind Singh achieved a remarkable feat. The accusations founded on the Muslim code of ethics broken by the emperor retained their gravity, but by conjuring up echoes of the heroes of Iranian Antiquity defying each other they were transformed into an epic homily. They remained damning, but not insulting.

More remarkably, the epistle appears to have been meant to deliver two distinct messages intended for different audiences. One was aimed at the Muslim literate elite at court while the other was specifically intended for the emperor.

That the Gurū wished to be heard by Muslims is manifest in the first opening lines. After celebrating God in words partly borrowed from the Koranic vocabulary and partly from the most archaic *Shāh-Nāme* Persian lexicon, Gurū Gōbind Singh composed two couplets in praise of the Prophet. These have so far eluded the attention of scholars.[27] This oversight may be due to the fact that the Prophet is never referred to by his name, Muḥammad, which does not appear in the text as it stands today in printed editions.

Yet their wording rules out any possibility that the two couplets might have been composed in praise of God, as has been taken for granted. They read:

شریعت پرست و فضیلت مآب

حقیقت شناس و نبی الکتاب

که دانش پژوه است و صاحب شعور

حقیقت شناس است وظاهر ظهور

Sharī'at-parast-ō fażīlat mo'āb
  Ḥaqīqat-shenās-ō Nabī ol-Ketāb
Ke dānesh-pazhūh ast-o ṣāḥeb sho'ūr
  Ḥaqīqat-shenās-ast-o ẓāher ẓohūr

Sharī'a-worshipping and endowed with perfection
  Knowing the [hidden] truth and Prophet of the Book
Who seeks knowledge and possesses full awareness
  Who knows the [hidden] truth and whose majesty is apparent[28]

These qualifiers cannot apply to God. The Lord does not "worship," He is the object of all worship. He is the source of the revelation through the Koran on which the *Sharī'a* or Islamic law, as defined by humans, purports to be founded. It is equally unimaginable to say that God *seeks* knowledge. God knows all.

The virtues sung in these two couplets of praise are human virtues and he who possesses them is referred to in crystal clear terms as the "Prophet of the Book" [*Nabī ol-Ketāb*]. Such a phrase, never used in connection with God, can only apply to his envoy, the Prophet, Muḥammad. The "Scripture," *Kitāb,* is the Koran.

These two couplets use the language of Sufi esotericism. Sufi influence was widespread over the court milieu and among Persian-speaking literati at large. It extended far beyond the boundaries of Sufi circles as such. The Sufi wording of the praise of God would have resonated with many Muslims at the Moghul court.

The forceful conviction with which the entire doxology is delivered, enhanced by the musicality of the words and the recurrence of certain phrases which give it the ring of an incantation (*Ẓāher-ẓohūr, Ḥaqīqat-shenās,* when referring to the Prophet) would have strengthened their impact. In these words of praise, the Gurū propounds fundamental tenets that are also those of Islamic mysticism. They are spoken by a saintly, unworldly ascetic, a true "*darvīsh,*" as devout Sikhs themselves called him (see below). This would have been enough to win the respect of the entire Muslim community.

In one passage, particularly the first verse which unfortunately is evidently corrupt (conflicting versions can be read in the Amritsar edition and the website text posted by Wing Commander Jasbir Singh of New Delhi), Gurū Gōbind Singh more specifically uses language that would have appealed to the most militant Muslim factions.

شهنشاه او نگ زیب ثمین

که دارای دور است و اوراست دین

منم کشته ام کوهیان پر فتن

که آن بت پرستند و من بت شکن

Shāhenshāh-e Owrang^e-zīb-e ṣamīn[29]
  Ke dārā-ye dowrast-o ūrāst^e dīn
Manam koshteam kūhiyān por fetan
  Ke ān bot parastand-o man bot-shekan
Bebīn gardesh-e bī vafā'ī zamān
  Pasī- posht oftad, resānad ziyān

The King of Kings precious [?] ornament of the throne
  Who is the sovereign of the age and who has faith
I am the one who killed rebellious mountain dwellers
  They are the idol-worshippers and I am the idol-breaker
Consider the revolution of time devoid of loyalty
  When it turns upside down it causes harm[30]

5

This is a vigorous condemnation, worded with biting irony (that is singularly stronger than the Amritsar version which, instead of the irony-laden *samīn*, "precious," has an unlikely *la'īn*, "accursed," at the end of the first hemistich). It is the culmination of the recurring leit-motiv in the *Ẓafar-Nāme*, a true believer does not break his word, let alone an oath on the Koran. Earlier on, Gurū Gōbind Singh exclaims in verses:

هـر آنکس که ایمـان پـرستی کند

نـه پیـمان خـود پیش و پستی کند

مـن این مـرد را اعـتباری نه ایست

چه قرآن قسم ایست؟ یزدان یکیست

Har ān kas ke īmān-parastī konad
  Be peymān-e khod pīsh-o pastī konad
Man īn mardᵉ rā e'tebārī na-īst
  Che Qor'ān- qasam' īstᵉ? Yazdān yekīst

Whoever worships faith
  But turns his pledge upside down
I have no consideration for this man:
  What kind of a swearer by the Koran is he? God
          is One[31]

The second couplet means that whether you give your word to a Sikh or a Muslim, the oath on the Koran is equally binding. We all worship God who is One—the inference, here, would seem to be that the Gurū acknowledges the Koran as the word of God in keeping with the teachings of Islam.

Interestingly, the reproach heaped upon 'Alamgīr by the Gurū is couched in words that echo those used in the *Shāh-Nāme* to cast approbrium on fighters who break their pledge. When blaming Rostam for having dragged him into the war that the latter wages against Sistan, Esfandiyār exclaims:

نـدانی کـه مـردان پیـمان شــکن

ستــوده نبــاشند بـر انجـمـن؟

Na dānī ke mardān-e peymān-shekan
  Sotūde na-bāshandᵉ bar anjoman?

Do you not know that the braves who break their
          pledge

Are not praiseworthy in the eyes of their
          peers?[32]

The accusations thrown at the emperor are severe. Together, the first two couplets sound like a call to Muslims to reject the authority of an emperor who has turned his back on religion.

The gravity of the indictment makes it the more remarkable as throughout the *Ẓafar-Nāme*, these lines included, another message specifically intended for the emperor is delivered, worded in *Shāh-Nāme* language. It is not confined to the allusion to the *Shāh-Nāme* episode used as an allegory of the historical crime committed by 'Alamgīr in allowing the unjust killing of the Gurū's younger sons—an allegory which implicitly puts part of the blame on the emperor's bad advisors. The second message is equally evident in the maxims that lace the Gurū's discourse to 'Alamgīr. These are mostly worded in archaic Persian with a distinct *Shāh-Nāme* flavour.

After bitterly saying that anyone believing the emperor's oath on the Koran experiences misery and humiliation, Gurū Gōbind Singh coins these first two maxims in couplets 16 and 17:

همـا را کسی سایـه آیـد به زیر

بــرو دست دارد نــه زاغ دلیر

کسی پـشت افـتد پس شیر نر

نــه گیـرد بـز و میش و آهو گذر

Homā-rā kasī sāye āyad be-zīr
  Bar-ū dastᵉ dārad, na zāgh-e dalīr
Kasī poshtᵉ oftad pas-e shīr-e nar
  Na gīrad boz-ō mīsh-o āhū goẕar

If someone becomes the shadow under the Homā
  It is it that controls him, not some valiant crow
If someone falls behind a male lion
  Neither goat nor ewe nor even gazelle passes
          between them[33]

When admonishing the emperor and again alluding to the unjust execution of his sons, Gurū Gōbind Singh urges in pure *Shāh-Nāme* style:

مـزن تیـغ بر خـون کـس بی دریغ

تـرا نیـز خـون چـرخ ریزد بـه تیغ

Mazan tīgh^e bar khūn-e kas bī darīgh
To-rā nīz^e khūn charkh^e rīzad be-tīgh

Do not raise your sword and spill anyone's blood
without regret
Heaven too will spill your blood with its
sword[34]

Towards the end, in a three couplet homily which begins in the then contemporary Persian, Gurū Gōbind Singh breaks half-way through, in the second couplet, into *Shāh-Nāme* mode which utterly prevails in the third couplet:

کسی خدمت آید بسی قلب و جان

خداوند بخشید بر او امان

چو دشمن بر آن حیله سازی کند

بر او خود خدا چاره سازی کند

اگر بر یک آمد ده و ده هزار

نگهبان او را شود کردگار

Kasī khedmat āyad basī qalb-o jān
Khodāvand^e bakhshad bar-ū amān
Cho doshman bar-ān ḥile-sāzī konad
Bar-ū khod Khodā chāre- sāzī konad
Agar bar-yek āmad(e) dah-ō dah hezār
Negahbān^e ū-rā shavad Kerdegār

If someone respectfully presents himself with all
his heart and soul
The Lord grants him safe conduct [*amān*]
When the enemy devises ruses against the latter
The Lord himself devises stratagems against
him
If ten thousand and ten come to confront one
man,
The Creator becomes his Protector[35]

An equally typical *Shāh-Nāme* imprint can be recognised in the narrative passages of the *Zafar-Nāme*. These come in the form of the Gurū's burning memories of the recent event which lead to the killing of his sons in violation of the solemn promise made by the emperor.

In the first evocation of the treacherous assault launched against him by 'Ālamgīr's troops, the Gurū reflects on the bloody battle which he lost to a hugely superior force. In couplets

19–20 (43–44 of the Amritsar edition) the Gurū explains:

گرسنه چه کاری کند چهل نر

که ده لک بر آید بر او بی خبر

که پیمان شکن بی درنگ آمدند

میان تیغ و تیر و کمان آمدند

Goresne che kārī konad cheh'l^e nar
Ke deh lak bar āyad bar-ū bī khabar?
Ke peymān-shekan bī derang āmadand
Miyān tīgh-o-tīr-ō tofang āmadand

When famished what can forty males [= braves] do
As a million pounce upon them without warn-
ing
Who promptly arrive in breach of the oath
Who arrive in the midst of swords, arrows and
guns[36]

Abruptly switching from the third person singular to the first person, the Gurū raises the dramatic tempo in the three couplets that follow:

به لاچارگی در میان آمدم

به تدبیر تیر و کمان آمدم

چو کار از همه حیلتی در گذشت

حلال است بردن به شمشیر دست

چه قرآن قسم را کنم اعتبار

وگرنه تو گوئی من این را چه کار

Be-lāchāragī dar miyān āmadam
Betadbīr-e tīr-ō kamān āmadam
Cho kār az hame ḥīlatī dar goẕasht
Ḥalāl ast^e bordan be shamshīr^e dast
Che Qor'ān-qasam-rā konam e 'tebār
Va gar na to gū'ī man-īn rā che kār!

I could not help charging in
I came determined to shoot arrows from my
bow
When things are past any stratagem
It is religiously licit [*ḥalāl*] to draw one's sword
To what kind of a swearer by the Koran am I to
give credit?
And if not, you tell me: what am I to do with
him?[37]

A pointed contrast is drawn here between the Gurū's war against ʿĀlamgīr, declared licit [ḥalāl] in Islamic law, and the behaviour of a man who took an oath on the Koran and broke it—a crime punishable by death. Ḥalāl, an Arabic loan word, is the qualifier used in canon law, the sharīʿa mentioned earlier. Once again one senses that the Gurū's discourse is intended, among other things, to stir the Muslim community.

After this commentary, the narrative resumes in words and with a rhythm that again give it a strong *Shāh-Nāme* flavour:

بـه رنگ مگس سایـه پـوش آمدند

بیکبارگـی در خـروش آمدند

هـر آن کس ز دیـوار آمد برون

بـخوردن یکـی تیر شد غرق خون

چُـه بیـرون بیامـد کسی زآن حصار

بـخوردنـد تیـر و [بـ]گشتـند خـوار

چـو دیـدم که نـاهـر بیـامد به جنگ

چشیـد [آ]ن یکی تیر من بی درنگ

Be-rang-e magas sāye-pūsh āmadand
  Be-yek bāragī dar khorūsh āmadand
Har ān kas ze dīvār[e] āmad borūn
  Be khordan yekī tīr[e] shod gharq-e khūn
Cho bīrūn biyāmad kasī z'ān ḥesār[38]
  *Be-khordand[e] tīr[e]-o begashtand kh*ʷ*ār*[39]
Cho dīdam ke Nāher biyāmad bejang
  Cheshīd-[ā] n yekī tīr-e man bī-derang

With the colour of flies, they arrived clad in shadow
  Suddenly, they broke into clamour
Any one who came out from behind the walls
  Was struck by an arrow and drowned in blood
When someone came out from behind the ram-
parts
  He was struck by arrows, and was slain
When I saw that Nāher had come to the fight
  That one promptly tasted one of my arrows[40]

Several couplets down, the account of the battle reverts to *Shāh-Nāme* style in somewhat pedestrian manner:

بـسی بـان [بـ]بارید و تیر و تـفنگ

زمین گشت همچون گل [و]لاله رنگ

سـر وپـای انبـوه چـندان شـده

که مـیدان پر از گوی و چوگان شده

تـرنـکار تـیر و تـرنگ کمـان

بـرآمـد یکی هـای و هـوی از جهان

Basī bān [be]- bārīd-ō tīr-ō tofang
  Zamīn gasht[e] hamchon gol-ō [-o]lāle rang[41]
Sar-ō pāy[e] anbūh[e] chandān shode
  Ke meydān por-az gūy-o chowgān shode
Tarankār[42]*-e tīr-ō tarang-e kamān*
  Bar āmad yekī hāy-o hūy az jahān

Eventually, so many javelins rained, and arrows
and bullets
  That the soil took the colour of roses and anem-
ones
Heads and legs piled as thickly
  As if the battlefield had been filled with polo
balls and mallets
The whizzing of arrows and the twanging of bows
  Arose like a clamour from the world[43]

The *Shāh-Nāme* evocation reaches a climax at the end of the *Ẓafar-Nāme*. Gurū Gōbind Singh, inviting ʿĀlamgīr to consider the transient nature of the world of contingencies, rhetorically asks:

کجا شاه کیخسـرو و جـام جـم؟

کجا شـاه آدم؟ سپرد[ه] عـدم

فـریدون! کجا بهمـن اسفندیـار

بـه قلاب دارا بـرآمد شمـار

کـجا شاه اسکـندر و شـیر شاه

که یک نماند[ه] است زنده به گاه؟

Kojā Shāh-e Keykhosrow-o jām-e Jam!
  Kojā Shāh-e Ādam! Sepord [e] ʿAdam
Fereydūn! Kojā Bahman-Esfandiyār!
  Be qallāb[e] [?][44] *Dārā dar- āmad shomār*

8

Kojā Shāhᵉ Eskandar-o Shīrᵉshāh
Ke yek ham na mānd [e] ast zende be gāh

کـجا رسـتـم و زال و اسـفـنـدیـار

کـزیـشان سخـن مـاندمـان یادگار؟

Where are King Keykhosrow and the cup of
Jam[shīd]

Where is King Ādam? He has been given away
to annihilation,

Fereydūn! Where are Bahman and Esfandiyār?
The count ended with Dārā[45][?]

Where are Shāh Eskandar and Shīr Shāh
Not one of whom remains alive on his throne[46]

The memory of the most admired figures of
Ancient Iran as celebrated in the *Shāh-Nāme* is
invoked in traditional manner by the Gurū to
illustrate the vanity of fame. Keykhosrow, the
dominant figure in the dynasty of the Keys (*Key-āniyān* in Persian), leads the Iranians in the
"Great War" against the Turk Afrāsiyāb and ul-
timately defeats him. Jam or Jamshīd of the
mythical dynasty of the Pishdādiyān, is the first
king of Iran according to the *Shāh-Nāme*. In his
cup, Jamshīd sees the reflection of the entire
world. He is the man who taught the Iranians
all the crafts. That Jamshīd and Keykhosrow
should be gone is the ultimate illustration of
the ephemeral character of power. Fereydūn, the
son of Keykhosrow, who was another great king,
likewise vanished. Where are Bahman (his fa-
ther) and Esfandiyār who persuaded the kings
of the world to adopt the Zoroastrian faith and
played such a part in the war against Afrāsiyāb?
Finally came Dārā who, in the *Shāh-Nāme*, is
slain by Eskandar.

This rhetorical way of describing the ferocity
of fate and the inevitable demise of all, high and
low, is itself modelled on the *Shāh-Nāme*. Key-
khosrow thus laments in a famous distich:

کـجا تور ؟ سلم و فریدون کجاست؟

هـمـه نـاپـدیـدند و با خاک راست

Kojā Tūr-o Salm-o Fereydūn kojāst?
Hame nā-padīdand-o bā khākᵉ rāst

Where are Tūr and Salm? And where is Fereydūn?
They have vanished, absorbed into earth[47]

Elsewhere, the Sasanian emperor Khosrow Parvīz
writing to Qobād, asks:

Kojā Rostam-o Zāl o Esfandiyār
Ka'zīshān sokhan māndᵉ mān yādᵉgār

Where are Rostam, and Zāl and Esfandiyār
From whom all that remains for us is words?[48]

The rhetorical questions asked by the Gurū
thus stop at the end of the first cycle of the *Shāh-
Nāme*, that of Ancient Iran steeped in the mist
of myths. The inclusion of Adam, who is given
the title "Shāh," among the towering regal fig-
ures of the past, is highly unusual. If any link
is to be sought between "King" Adam and the
Kings of Ancient Iran, this is probably in Sufi
esotericism.

Adam is thought of by Sufi esotericists as the
Perfect Human [*Ensān-e Kāmel*]. *Sheykh* She-
hāb ad-Dīn Yahiyā Sohravardī, the founder of
the Sufi path of Illuminationism [*Ishrāq*] writes
in one of his parables about "Adam's Kingdom"
[*Mamlekat-e Ādam*] and "The throne of Adam's
existence" [*takht-e vojūd-e Ādam*].[49] In the Sufi
perspective, the title "Shāh" appended to Adam's
name comes naturally.

On the other hand, Sohravardī saw Keykhos-
row and Fereydūn as the true believers in God
in Ancient Iran as the French scholar Henry
Corbin was the first to point out. They practised
in secret the "Religion of God" [*Dīn Allāh*].[50]
Sohravardī and his followers, the Illumina-
tionists [*Ishrāqiyyūn/Eshrāqiyān*] extrapolated
in this respect from a fundamental Koranic con-
cept, that of "the religion of God" so often ig-
nored by official Islam. This is the notion of the
immanent religion, granted by God to mankind
at all times, a concept no doubt as dear to Gurū
Gōbind Singh as to all mystics.

Esfandiyār too appears in one of Sheykh She-
hāb ad-Dīn's allegories.[51] Did Gurū Gōbind Singh
have in mind the Eshrāqī speculations on the
Shāh-Nāme characters when he asked where
they and "Shāh" Adam were? This is possible.
According to the *Dabestān-e Maẕāheb*, the 11/
17th century religious encyclopaedia compiled in
Hindustan by the *Mōbad* Keykhosrow Esfandi-
yār, Sohravardī's works were translated from Ara-
bic into Persian by Farzāne Bahrām b. Farshād.

The *Mōbad* met him in Lahore in 1048/15 May 1638–3 May 1639.[52]

Whether or not the Gūrū had in mind the Sufi allegorical interpretations of the *Shāh-Nāme* characters, he conformed with the age old Iranian tradition in rhetorically asking where the Kings of Ancient Iran now are. From the earliest times, Iranian poets ask similar questions when meditating on the transient nature of power and fame. To mention but the most famous of all, they include Sa'adī, who was as avidly read at the Moghul court of Hindustan as in Iran.[53]

Gūrū Gōbind Singh will have been well aware that asking such questions would stir the Moghul emperor. As he switches, within the same verse, from a semi-mythologized character of Ancient Iranian history to Shāh Eskandar probably meaning Alexander the Great, to a ruler of flesh and blood of modern times relevant to Hindustan, Shīr Shāh Sūrī, the abrupt transition creates a dramatic effect. Whether steeped in ancient legend or still fresh in historical memory, all rulers vanish. The following couplet makes the point more bluntly. Even the greatest among the emperor's own ancestors left this world as definitively as the heroes of Iranian Antiquity. Teymūr ("Timur" in Western writings), from whom the Moghuls were proud to be descended; Bābar ("Babur"), the founder of the Moghul dynasty; Homāyūn who played a major role in introducing into Hindustan the art and literature of the then contemporary Iran; and Akbar are also gone for ever. In its concision, the line must have powerfully resonated with 'Ālamgīr.

کجا شـلہ، تیمور و بـابر کجاست؟

هـمـایـون کجا؟ شاه اکبر کجاست؟

Kojā Shāh^e Teymūr-o Bābar kojāst?
Homāyūn kojā? Shāh^e Akbark kojāst?

Where is Shāh Teymūr? And Bābar, where is he?
Where is Homāyūn? Shāh Akbar, where is he?[54]

The two couplets relating to recent rulers come as punchlines to the entire set of allusions to the *Shāh-Nāme* events.

Apparently, the ringing message of the *Zafar-Nāme* was heard. Negotiations were opened. The emperor invited the Gūrū to come to court and issued an edict [*ḥukm*] ordering governors to es-

cort the Gūrū to safety. Despite the past broken pledge, the Gūrū was on the move when the emperor died suddenly in February 1707. A year later, the Gūrū in turn left this world.

There was a posthumous sequel to the tragic conflict, to the *Zafar-Nāme*, and to 'Ālamgīr's belated response. The Sikhs and the Moghul court were sufficiently reconciled for Sikh troops to fight on the side of 'Ālamgīr's sucessor Bahādur Shāh in 1708. But by then, the Moghul empire was coming apart.[55]

If the *Zafar-Nāme* is the most powerful Sikh poem in Persian sending back echoes of the *Shāh-Nāme* in substance and style, it is not the only one.

2. *The* Shāh-Nāme *Echoes in the So-called* Fatḥ-Nāme

Another Persian epistle versified in the *Shāh-Nāme* metre came to light in the late 19th century. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, the text known today as the *Fatḥ-Nāme* was copied "around 1890" by one Bābū Jagan Nāth Dās from a manuscript then in private possession.[56] Regrettably, the said Bābū Jagan Nāth Dās lost the copy which contained over one hundred couplets, as he later recounted in an unrelated context. Eventually, the author of the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* notice reports, "he reproduced some of the couplets from memory which he sent to Sardar Umrao Singh Majithi (1870–1954), who arranged them in order."

Copying down from memory and "arranging in order" is not the soundest scientific method of establishing the correct version of any text. It leaves the door open to omissions and slight alterations. By the copyist's own account, the text as it now stands represents less than one quarter of the original. Two copies were made. Bhāi Vīr Singh (1872–1957) received one and published it with a Panjabi translation in the *Khālṣā Samāchār* of 16 July 1942.

Sikh scholars may yet be able to trace the original which was owned by Bābā Sumer Singh, *mahant* of Takht Srī Harimandar Ṣāḥib at Patna from 1882 to 1902. A critical edition of the text in its integrality would undoubtedly improve our understanding of the Sikh work. The title by which it was originally known eludes us. Its present denomination, *Fatḥ-Nāme* [*Fāteh-Nāma* in

Hindustani pronunciation], was coined in the 20th century and is retained here for convenience.

Even in its fragmentary form, the *Fatḥ-Nāme* displays some obvious characteristics. Contrary to what the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* states, neither its "style" nor its "language" are really the same as in the *Ẓafar-Nāme*. The composition proceeds in a more systematic manner. There are no abrupt switches from fact to maxims, from maxims to personal admonitions as in the *Ẓafar-Nāme*. Nor are there any repetitions of the same formula in consecutive couplets, which the conventions of Persian poetry do not allow.

As a result the halting tone and vibrant emotion that give the *Ẓafar-Nāme* a compelling poignancy are lacking in the *Fatḥ-Nāme*. The voice is self-confident and at times defiant. The personality of a mystical ascetic comes through in the *Ẓafar-Nāme*. Here, the more aggressive temperament of a military man has left its stamp.

The *Fatḥ-Nāme* opens with an invocation to God that is curiously at odds with the esoteric notions expressed at the beginning of the *Ẓafar-Nāme* and ends with a hemistich challenging ʿĀlamgīr to come and fight like a man, equally different in tone from the objurgations in the *Ẓafar-Nāme*.

There is even a fundamental difference on the metaphysical level between the two works. Throughout the *Ẓafar-Nāme*, Gurū Gōbind Singh delivers professions of faith and maxims to which any Muslim would subscribe. On the contrary, the opening couplet in the *Fatḥ-Nāme* has a militaristic ring to it as well as a touch of material triviality that make it very different from the *Ẓafar-Nāme*:

بــنـام خـــداونـد تیـغ و تـبــر
خـــداونـد تیــر و سنـــان و سپـر
خـــداونـد مــردان جنـگ آزمــا
خـــداونـد اسپـــان پـا در هـوا

Be-nām Khodāvand-e tīgh-o tabar
Khodāvand-e tīr-o senān-o separ
Khodāvand-e mardān-e jang-āzemā
Khodāvand-e aspān-e pā dar havā

In the name of the Lord of the Sword and the Battle-axe

The Lord of the Sword, the Spear and the Shield
The Lord or the Battle-hardened Braves
The Lord of the Horses that Fly in the Air[57]

The writer taunts the emperor, trying to provoke him, in sharp contrast to the *Ẓafar-Nāme*, where Gurū Gōbind Singh claims his distress and outrage. The author of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* defiantly says at the end:

تـــو از نـــاز و نـعمت ثمـر بر خورده
ز جــنـگی جــوانـان نـه برخـورده

To az nāz-o neʿmat ṣamar khoʰede
Ze jangī javānān na bar khoʰede

You have tasted the fruits of comfort and pleasure
You have not had encounters with fighting youngsters[58]

Taken literally, these lines would point to the profile of a writer other than Gurū Gōbind Singh. They suggest a young man, enrolled among the "fighting youngsters" [*jangī javānān*]. That is corroborated by another couplet in which the author of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* unceremoniously tells ʿĀlamgīr how weak he is:

تـــوئی گــرگ بــاران کشیـده اگـر
نَـهــم نیــز شیــری ز دامـی بدر

To'ī gorg-e bārān keshīde agar
Naham nīzʰe shīrī ze dāmī be-dar

You will be a wolf drenched by rain if
I lay at your door a lion [released] from its trap[59]

The wolf drenched by rain is the metaphor of a predator weakened by age. The verse is an allusion to the custom of releasing caged lions on the hunting ground of Moghul emperors. A wet wolf is what the emperor will be, if the writer of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* arrives at his door like a lion, the king of animals, in a fuming rage because he has just been released from a trap.

These would be surprising words, coming from Gurū Gōbind Singh. He too was an ageing man. The words "fighting youngsters" should then be

understood metaphorically. On the other hand, however vehement the Gūrū becomes when denouncing in the *Ẓafar-Nāme* the crimes commited against his sons, he does not utter abuse. Such discrepancies might seem to point to two different authors. Sikhs, such as Mr. Parmjit Singh, explain them by ascribing an earlier date to the *Fatḥ-Nāme*, written immediately after the battle of Cham Kaur, when the Gurū's indignation at the unjust execution of his younger sons was intense.

Interestingly, the connection with the *Shāh-Nāme* is more apparent in the *Fatḥ-Nāme* than in the *Ẓafar-Nāme*. It is evident from the two opening couplets which are modelled on the formulation of the first two couplets in the *Shāh-Nāme*. Both even have a comparable musicality in the final rhymes. See p. 11.

بـنـام خـداونـد جـان و خـرد
کـزیـن بـر تـر انـدیـشـه بر نگذرد

خـداونـد نـام و خـداونـد جـای
خـداونـد روزی ده رهـنـمـای

Be nām-e Khodāvand-e jān-ō kherad
Kazīn bartar andīshe na-g'zarad
Khodāvand-e Nām-o Khodāvand-e Jāy
Khodāvand-e Rūzī-deh-e Rahnamāy

In the name of the Lord of the Soul and the Intellect
Beyond Whom our thinking does not reach
The Lord of [all] Names and the Lord of [all] Places
The Lord who gives nourishment and shows the way[60]

The *Fatḥ-Nāme* rhymes (-*ar*, in the first couplet, -*a* in the second couplet) closely resemble the *Shāh-Nāme* rhymes, respectively -*ad* and -*āy*, or -*ā* as it would often be spelt in the 11/17th or 12/18th century. The most telling indication of an intention to match the style and tone to the *Shāh-Nāme* is the opening in *Be-nām-e Khodāvand-e*, "In the Name of the Lord of," not found in later Persian romances. Taking for example, the five romances of the "Quintet" [*Khamse*] written by the most famous Hindustani poet in Persian, Amīr Khosrow Dehlavī, none has an opening remotely resembling the words of the *Shāh-Nāme*. In Amīr Khosrow's "the Alexan-

drine Mirror" [*Ā'īne-ye Eskandarī*] inspired by Nezāmī's *Sharaf-Nāme* which comes closest in style to the *Shāh-Nāme* among later romances, the first two couplets read:
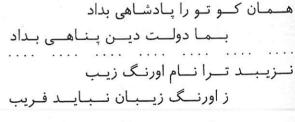
جـهان پـادشاهـا خـدائی تو راست
ازل تـا ابـد پـادشاهـی تـو راست

گشـایـندهٔ چـشم بـیـنـش تـوئـی
نـگـارنـدهٔ آفـریـنـش تـوئـی

Jahān-Pādeshāhā Khodā'ī to-rā'st
Azal tā abad pādeshā'ī to-rā'st
Goshāyande-ye cheshm-e bīnesh To'ī
Negārande-ye āfarinesh To'ī

O King of the World, Lordship belongs to you
In past and future eternity, Kingship belongs to you
You are Him that opens the eye of perception
You are Him that paints creation[61]

The choice of words in a number of *Fatḥ-Nāme* couplets emphasizes the *Shāh-Nāme* tone. This is obvious in an address to ʿĀlamgīr, called here "Owrang-zīb." The third couplet of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* uses the archaic demonstrative of the *Shāh-Nāme*, (*hamān kū*, "he who") and the archaic verbal form *be-dād* instead of *dād*, while the fifth couplet is in perfect imitation of the *Shāh-Nāme*'s style:

هـمـان کـو تـو را پـادشـاهی بداد
بـمـا دولـت دیـن پنـاهـی بـداد
....

نـزیبـد تـرا نـام اورنگ زیب
ز اورنـگ زیـبـان نـبـایـد فـریب

Hamān kū to-rā pādeshāhī be-dād
Be-mā dowlat-e dīn-panāhī be-dād
....

Na-zībad torā nām-e Owrang^e-zīb
Ze owrang^e-zībān na bāyad farīb

He who gave you Kingship
Gave us a rule/state that is the refuge of religion
....

The name Owrang-zīb [Beauty of the Throne]
does not become you
From the Beauties of the Throne, there must be
no deceit[62]

In couplet 7, the harangue to ʿĀlamgīr goes on in pure *Shāh-Nāme* style. It uses the ancient phrase *kerdār-e zesht*, "ugly action," the obsolete noun *seresht* for "nature," "character," and the archaic verbal form *be-dādī* instead of the later *dādī*, "you gave":

<div dir="rtl">
تو خاک پدر را به کردار زشت

به خون برادر بدادی سرشت
</div>

To khāk-e pedar-rā be kerdār-e zesht
Be-khūn-e barādar bedādī seresht

You defined [lit. "gave"] its character for the land
of your father
By your ugly action in spilling the blood of your
brother[63]

Two lines down, in order to describe military movements, the author of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* composed these three couplets that have a truly epic ring worthy of the *Shāh-Nāme* itself:

<div dir="rtl">
ز کوه دکن تشنه کام آمدی

ز میور همه تلخ جام آمدی

برین سو چو اکنون نگاهت رود

که آن تلخی و تشنگیت رود

چنان آتشی زیر نعلت نهم

ز پنجاب آبت نه خوردن دهم
</div>

Ze kūh-e Dakan teshne-kām āmadī
Ze Meyvār^e ham talkh^e jām āmadī
Bar-īn sū chon aknūn negāhet ravad
Ke ān talkhī-o teshnegīet ravad
Chenān āteshī zīr-e naʿalet naham
Ze Panjāb^e ābet na khordan daham

From the mounts of the Deccan, you came thirst-
ing for success
From Meyvar too you came with the bitter cup
[of defeat]
As your eyes now look this way,

That this bitterness and thirst of yours may go
I will light such a fire under the horse shoes [of
your steed]
That of Panjab I shall give you the watering, not
a drink[64]

The "water" here refers to the watering of steel blades. The last couplet means: I shall make you taste the water of the blades of Panjab that cannot be drunk.

As he continues to challenge ʿĀlamgīr, the author of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* says in couplet 15, using the archaic verbal form of the present tense ending with the postposition *hamī* and a *Shāh-Nāme* set phrase, *shīr-e zhiyān* "ferocious lion":

<div dir="rtl">
چو شیر ژیان زنده ماند همی

ز تو انتقامی ستاند همی
</div>

Cho shīr-e zhiyān zende mānad hamī
Že to enteqāmī setānad hamī

As a ferocious lion remains alive
It will wreak its revenge from you[65]

Were it not for the Arabic loan word *enteqām*, "revenge," the well turned out couplet could pass for a *Shāh-Nāme* quotation.

Four lines away, the poet describes the two armies marching towards one another. In three successive couplets he resorts to nearly purely Persian vocabulary. The poetic effect achieved is poor but the attempt at striking a *Shāh-Nāme* tone is reasonably successful. *Āshkārā*, "visible," had long been obsolete by the early 12/18th century. *Razmgāh*, literally "battle emplacement, *Kārezār*, "combat," even longer out of use, both come up several hundred times in the *Shāh-Nāme*:

<div dir="rtl">
به میدان دو لشگر صف آرا شدند

ز دوری بهم آشکار [ا] شدند

میان دو ماند دو فرسنگ راه

چون آراسته گردد این رزم گاه

از آن پس در آن عرصه کارزار

من آیم به نزد تو با دو سوار
</div>

13

Be meydān do lashkar ṣaf-āra shavand
Ze dūrī be-ham āsheᵏārā shavand
Miyān-e do mānad do farsangᵉ rāh
Chon-ārāsᵉte gardad-īn razmᵉ gāh
Az-ān pas dar-ān ᶜarṣe-ye kārezār
Man-āyam be-nazd-e to bā dō savār

In the lists, the two armies fall into ranks
From afar they become visible to one another
A distance of two leagues remains between the
two
As this battlefield is being ordained
Now in that combat arena
I shall come towards you with two horsemen[66]

Whatever the shortcomings of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* which may partly reflect the circumstances of its transmission, its author's close acquaintance with Ferdowsī's *Shāh-Nāme* is evident.

In the *Fatḥ-Nāme* as in the *Ẓafar-Nāme*, the desire to express thoughts or allude to events in *Shāh-Nāme* fashion proves that in Sikh culture, the *Shāh-Nāme* was highly meaningful to the literate elite. The choice of the *Shāh-Nāme* mode would have been deemed doubly appropriate by Sikh leaders, firstly because it was well suited to touch a chord with the Moghul emperor, and secondly because the Gurūs themselves acted like the kings of their community which in turn saw them as "shāhs." This is expressly stated in "The Book of the Treasure" [*Ganj-Nāme*] written by Bhāi Nand Lāl (or Laᶜal as it is spelt in 11/17th century Persian), the great Sikh mystic and court poet to Gurū Gōbind Singh who spent his childhood and early youth in Ghaznī in the south-eastern Iranian area under Moghul control.[67] In it, Bhāi Nand Lāl hails Gurū Gōbind Singh as:

حـــق حـــق آگـــاه گـرو گوبند سنگه
شـــاه شـــاهنشـــاه گرو گوبند سنگه

Ḥaqq-e Ḥaqq-āgāh-e Gurū Gōbindᵉ Singh
Shāh-e Shāhenshāh-e Gurū Gōbindᵉ Singh
Bar do ᶜālam Shāhᵉ Gūrᵘ Gūbind Singh
Khaṣmᵉ rā jāñ-kāh Gūrᵘ Gūbind Singh

Truth, cognizant of the Truth [= God], is Gurū
Gōbind Singh
Shāh and Shāhenshāh is Gurū Gōbind Singh
Of the two worlds, he is the Shāh, Gūrᵘ Gōbind
Singh

Of his foe, he shortens the life, Gūrᵘ Gōbind
Singh][68]

The second hemistich says that the Gurū is the sovereign of the King of Kings (*Shāhenshāh*) himself.

Bhāi Nand Lāl ends his lyrical celebration of Gurū Gōbind Singh by echoing a traditional Sufi tenet: kingship is spiritual kingship. The *darvīsh*, the ascetic that has renounced the world, is the true *shāh*:

حـــق حـــق اندیش گرو گوبند سنگه
پـادشــاه درویـــش گـرو گوبند سنگه

Ḥaqq-e Ḥaqq-andīsh Gurū Gōbind Singh
Pādeshāh-e darvīsh Gurū Gōbind Singh

Truth, that has God in mind, is Gurū Gōbind
Singh
A dervish king is Gurū Gōbind Singh[69]

In short, the *Shāh-Nāme* tone adopted by the tenth Gurū in the *Ẓafar-Nāme* and the marked *Shāh-Nāme* style of the *Fatḥ-Nāme* suggest that Sikhs would have seen the *Shāh-Nāme* as the literary model par excellence for epic poetry.

The continued influence of the *Shāh-Nāme* on Sikh thinking resulted, among other things, in the adoption by a Sikh martial community of a *Shāh-Nāme* metaphor as its name. They called themselves *Nahang*s, pronounced in present-day Panjab "nihangs," "crocodiles."

Part Two: The *Nahangs* and the *Shāh-Nāme*

The image of the crocodile used to conjure up ferocious courage goes back to the beginnings of Persian literature and the noun *nahang*, "crocodile," is entered in early dictionaries. In literature, however, the *nahang* metaphor receives unique emphasis in the *Shāh-Nāme*. There, it is repeatedly used in connection with heroes of exceptional courage and strength such as Rostam. In later times, it continued to crop up at wide intervals and while distinctly rarer after the 7/13th century, it never entirely vanished.

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1. Nahang in Iranian Lexicography

Like many nouns referring to the animal realm, the word *nahang* is omitted in early Persian lexicons such as "The Language of Ancient Iranians" [*Loghat-e Fors*], compiled in the mid-5/11th century by the poet Asadī Ṭūsī, or "The Correct Usage of Ancient Iranians" [*Sehāh ol-Fors*] written in the 8/14th century by Moḥammad b. Hendūshāh Nakhchavānī.[70]

On the other hand, *nahang* is entered at an early date in Arabic-Persian dictionaries. That is the case with *Adīb* Yaʿqūb Kordī Neyshābūrī who wrote the "Book of Adequacy" [*Kitāb al-Bulgha*] in 438/8 July 1046–27 June 1047. Lists of Arabic nouns are arranged by category with their Persian equivalents. In the section on "Wild beasts" [*sibaʿ*], the Arabic *timsāḥ* is rendered as *nahang*.[71] The same translation is repeated in another 5/11th century Arabic-Persian dictionary, "The Stairs" [*Al-Mirqāt*] which is attributed to *Adīb* Naṭanzī.[72] It is worth noting in passing that *Adīb* Naṭanzī vocalises *nahang* with a *fatḥ* or *zebar* over the *ḥā*, leaving no doubt that the correct pronunciation always was *nahang*, not "*nihang*," as present-day Sikhs pronounce the word.

The equivalence of the two words continues to be recorded in later Arabic-Persian dictionaries. It appears for example in "Epitomising the Words" [*Molakhkhiṣ al-Lughāt*] compiled by Ḥasan Khaṭīb Kermānī in 938/15 Aug. 1531–2 Aug 1532.[73]

In Persian dictionaries written in Hindustan, the word makes a notable appearance in the "Support of the Eminent" [*Moʾayyed ol-Fożalā*] by *Sheykh* Moḥammad b. *Sheykh* Lād Dehlavī in 925/1519.[74] It is likewise entered in most Persian dictionaries written later in Hindustan, whether by Indian scholars such as Sarhindī or Iranian literati such as Injū Shīrāzī.

Sarhindī who completed "The Course of the Most Eminent" [*Madār ol-Afāżel*] on 7 Ziʾl-Ḥejje 1001/4 September 1592 under the reign of Akbar begins by saying that the word is found in the *Moʾayyed*.[75] Sarhindī then supplies the gloss "water lion" [*shīr-e ābī*], explaining that it means "the unchallenged heroic creature in water." "It has also been used metaphorically of the sword and the pen." As will be seen below, this reflects the traditional image of ʿAlī's sword with a blade split lengthwise. Sarhindī notes that *nahang* is called *timsāḥ* in Arabic and *sinsār* by "the people of India" [*ahl-e Hind*]. In contrast

to Iranian lexicographers and lexicographers of known Iranian stock writing later in Hindustan, Sarhindī says that the word is vocalized with a *kasr* [short "e"/"i" vowel] i.e. pronounced "*nihang*," adding "and some have said that it has two *kasr*" [meaning: "that it is pronounced *nihing*"].

The monumental "Jahangirian Dictionary" [*Farhang-e Jahāngīrī*] which was completed a quarter of a century later by *Mīr* Jamāl ad-Dīn Ḥoseyn Injū Shīrāzī, the Iranian prince descended from the Injū dynasty, probably had even greater influence among the literati of Hindustan.[76] Like the *Moʾayyed ol-Fożalā*, the *Farhang-e Jahāngīrī* was composed as a dictionary of Persian words intended for readers of Persian poetry from Iran. Only a very few Hindustani poets writing in Persian are cited by *Mīr* Jamāl ad-Dīn. The Iranian lexicographer does not enter *nahang* as such in the main body of his dictionary, but lists three metaphorical phrases including the word *nahang* in the volume dealing with metaphors. They all describe a sword. *Nahang-e zīr-e khaftān* literally means "the crocodile under the hauberk." *Nahang-e siyāh* is "the black crocodile," and *nahang-e hendī* "the Indian crocodile."[77]

Borhān Tabrīzī who compiled one of the most comprehensive Persian dictionaries ever, the "Trenchant Argument" [*Borhān-e Qāṭeʿ*], in 1062/14 December 1651–1 December 1652 dedicated it to "ʿAbdullāh Quṭb Shāh of the Deccan."[78] Other than that, nothing is known about this remarkable lexicographer who wrote a *Dīvān* (collected poems), now lost. Borhān's entry *nahang* is based on the *Moʾayyed ol-Fożalā*. He vocalizes the word on the model of *palang* "leopard,"[79] telling us that by the mid-11/17th century, the pronunciation deemed to be correct, "nahang," remained unchanged in Hindustan as in Iran. Borhān adds two metaphorical designations of swords to those noted by *Mīr* Jamāl ad-Dīn Ḥoseyn. One is *nahang-e sabz*, literally "green/turquoise green crocodile," which metaphorically describes "an Indian blade and sword," and *nahangān-e niyām* "the crocodiles in [lit. "of"] the sheaths" which "metaphorically refers to swords in their cases [*kenāye az shamsīrhāʾī dar gholāf ast*]."

In Iranian encyclopedias, the crocodile is nearly always associated with Egypt, not Hindustan.

Rāgheb Eṣfahānī, writing at the end of the 4/10th century, tersely says in a two line entry on the "crocodile"(*timsāḥ* in Eṣfahānī's original

Arabic version, *nahang* in the 11/17th century by Persian translation): "It is only found in the Nile, in Egypt."[80]

In the 6/12th century, Moḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad Ṭūsī flatly states that "it is found in the Nile River."[81] Abū Bakr Moṭṭahar Jamālī Yazdī makes an identical statement in the *Farrokh-Nāme*, a general encyclopedia aimed at a popular audience completed in 580/14 April 1184–3 April 1185. Driving the point home, he adds: "It is found nowhere else" [*dar hīch jā-ye dīgar na bāshad*].[82]

In the 7/13th century, Zakariyā b. Moḥammad Qazvīnī, the author of the most widely read of all "Most Wondrous Creatures" ['*Ajāyeb ol-Makhlūqāt*] treatises, writes in the Arabic original that it is to be found in the Nile in Egypt and the Indus River, in Arabic *Nahr as-Sind*, "the River of Sind."[83] However, in the Persian version, as recorded in later manuscripts, the name of the Indus becomes altered to an incomprehensible "Arasiye," so printed in 14/20th century editions.[84]

By contrast, the authors of geographical treatises are well aware of the presence of crocodiles in India. The earliest mention in Persian occurs in the anonymous Persian version of Eṣṭakhrī's "Book of Itineraries and Countries" translated from the Arabic original some time in the 5/11 or 6/12th century.[85] Remarkably, this factual knowledge left no mark on the Persian literary tradition.

2. Nahang *in Persian Poetry*

In poetry, the crocodile is a metaphor of the warrior of fearsome courage that no one can stop.

The image occurs several times in the "Book of Kings" [*Shāh-Nāme*], mostly in the set phrase "brave crocodile," [*delāvar nahang*], often followed by other metaphors drawn from the animal reign:

چنین داد پاسخ پسر را پشنگ

که افراسیاب آن دلاور نهنگ

Pashang replied to his son:
  Afrāsiyāb that brave crocodile
Is a male lion in the hunt
  And a war elephant in combat[86]

In another passage of the *Shāh-Nāme*, which appears in the book of Keykā'ūs, the heroic princely warrior Rostam reproachfully says in a letter to the king of Hamavaran:

نه مردی بود چاره جستن بجنگ

نه رفتی بـه سان دلاور نهنگ

'Tis not bravery to seek stratagems in war
  You did not go in like a brave crocodile[87]

Further down in the same book, Ferdowsī briefly describes a single combat pitching the two warriors Pīlsam and Zange against each other:

پذیرفت حمله دلاور نهنگ

درآمـد یکی تیغ هندی بچنگ

The brave crocodile confronted the onslaught
  He charged on, an Indian sword in his hand[88]

Still in the Book of Keykā'ūs, Ferdowsi sings the bravery of Gordāfarīd, the daughter of Gozhdaham who is about to fight Sohrāb. Fitted out like a warrior in armour, she defies the enemy:

به پیش سپاه اندر آمد چو گرد

چو رعد خروشان یکی ویله کرد

که گردان کدامند و جنگ آوران

دلیـران و کارآزموده سران

که بر من یکی آزمونـرا بجـنگ

بگردد بسان دلاور نهنگ

She charged forward in front of the army like a
                              hero
  She uttered a war cry like the thunder that roars
Asking: who are the heroes and the warriors
  The braves and the battle-hardened chiefs
Who will come forth and try me out
  In combat like a brave crocodile?[89]

In the same book of Keykā'ūs, when the invincible Rostam and Sohrāb fight to the finish, they dismount and start wrestling. Then:

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غمی گشت رستم بیازید چنگ

گرفت آن سر و یال جنگی نهنگ

Rostam became annoyed, he lunged forward [lit. extended his hand]
And grabbed that fighting crocodile by its head and hair[90]

Before the single combat that will pitch him against Rostam, Pīlsam imprudently boasts to Pīrān:

اگر من کنم جنگ جنگی نهنگ

نیارم ببخت تو بر شاه ننگ

If I fight that fighting crocodile
I will not, by your good fortune, cause shame to the king[91]

Further on, as he engages Pīlsam, Rostam taunts the Turkish warrior:

ببینی کنون زخم جنگی نهنگ

کز آنپس نپیچی عنان سوی جنگ

You shall now experience such blows from the fighting crocodile
That you shall henceforth no longer clutch the reins charging into combat[92]

In the Book of Keykhosrow, the Turk Tizhāw is about to confront the Iranian warrior Bahrām. His fellow soldiers warn him that they never saw such a fighter:

بسستی بر پهلوان آمدند

پر از درد و تیره روان آمدند

که هرگز نیامد چنین کس بجنگ

بدریا ندیدیم جنگی نهنگ

Weakly they approached the hero
They arrived full of anguish and with darkness in their soul
Saying: never did any such person come to fight
In no river did we ever see such a fighting crocodile[93]

Yet another single battle pitches Rostam against a Turk called Pulādvand. Warned that Pulādvand while wrestling might treacherously use his dagger, Rostam tells his troops that his hands are strong and, indeed:

وزانپس بیازید چون شیر جنگ

گرفت آن سر و یال جنگی نهنگ

And then he lunged forward like a lion
He grabbed the fighting crocodile by its head and hair[94]

In the book of Keykhosrow, the Iranian emperor gets off his horse Shabrang to fight the Turk Pashang. When the Turkish warrior sees Keykhosrow on foot, he in turn dismounts his steed:

پیاده چو از دور دیدش پشنگ

فرود آمد از اسپ جنگی نهنگ

When Pashang saw him on foot from afar
The fighting crocodile came off his horse[95]

Of the numerous couplets in which plain *nahang* is used without any qualifiers when describing a fighter's heroic character, one example may suffice. Gīv, who has downed Tezhāw, accuses him of having harmed the ageing Bahrām and shouts at his foe:

شکار تو بهرام باید بجنگ

ببینی کنون تنگ گام نهنگ

You need a prey like Bahrām at war?
Now you see a crocodile of ardent intentions[96]

Many more verses could be added. There is little doubt that anyone familiar with the *Shāh-Nāme* would have deemed the crocodile metaphor a highly appropriate denomination for fighters of unstoppable courage.

True, the image continued to be used in Persian literature down to Safavid times, but nowhere does it occur with anything approaching the emphasis it received in the *Shāh-Nāme*.

ʿAmʿaq Bokhārī who wrote in Mavara an-Nahr at the court of Samarqand during the second half

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of the 5/11th and the early years of the 6/12th century uses the metaphor in much the same fashion as Ferdowsī. Several of his panegyrics celebrate the Ilak-Khān Shams ol-Molk Abū'l-Ḥasan Naṣr b. Ibrahīm Ṭamghāch who ruled from 460/11 November 1067–30 October 1068 to 472/4 July 1079–21 June 1080.[97]

In one of these, 'Am'aq thus evokes the Ilak-Khān's gallantry and prowess:

ایا گزیده سواری که در صف میدان
شوند مردان پیش زنان آبستن

هزار لشگر باشی تو در یکی میدان
هزار رستم باشی تو در یکی جوشن

نهنگ گو اوباری و شیر آهن خای
هژبر خون افشانی و پیل گو فکن

O accomplished rider in front of whom, in
The battlefield ranks, braves become [like] pregnant women
You are a thousand armies in [but] one battlefield
You are a thousand Rostam in a single cuirass
You are a crocodile that devours bulls and a lion that crushes iron
You are a lion that spills blood, an elephant that tosses heroes in the air[98]

In the second half of the 6/12th century, Aṯīr ad-Dīn Akhsīkatī wrote several panegyrics on the Seljukid Sultan Moẓaffar ad-Dīn Qezel Arsalān who mounted the throne in 581/4 April 1185–23 March 1186 and was killed in Shawāl 587/22 October–19 November 1191.[99] One of these opens with the couplet in the *Moẓāreʿ* metre:

خوش کرد چرخ گوش ممالک بدین خطاب
کآمد نهنگ رزم چو دریا در اضطراب

The celestial sphere did well to turn the ears of the world to this announcement:
The crocodile of combats arrived like a tumultuous stream[100]

Around the same time, Neẓāmī writing at the court of Shirvan, in the present-day Republic of Azarbayjan, also uses the crocodile metaphor when referring to extraordinary courage. In the

Book of Honour [*Sharaf-Nāme*], the poet thus describes the fighter Palangar catching sight of Alexander:

پلنگر که او بود سالار زنگ
بدانست کامد ز دریا نهنگ

Palangar who was the commander of the Zang
Understood that a crocodile had come out of the river[101]

Elsewhere, Neẓāmī recounts the war waged by Alexander against the "Rūsī" ("Russians"). A "Russian" warrior comes out of the ranks to confront Alexander:

کهن پوستینی در آمد بجنگ
چو از ژرف دریا برآید نهنگ

An old warrior rode out to fight
Like a crocodile coming out of the depths of the river[102]

Ferdowsī's set phrase, *delāvar nahang*, "brave crocodile," occurs once in the *Sharaf-Nāme* when the poet describes a fearful "Russian" fighter throwing a javelin at a courageous horseman in Alexander's army:

یکی خشت پولاد الماس رنگ
برآورد و زد بر دلاور نهنگ

He raised a javelin of diamond hue
Steel and threw it at the brave crocodile[103]

Three hundred years later, the great poet *Mowlānā* Ahlī Shīrāzī composed several panegyrics on the first Safavid ruler Shāh Ismaʿīl who mounted the throne in 1502. In one of these, the poet intones in the *Hazaj* metre:

نهنگی چون تو در هیبت اگر چین بر جبین آرد
مجال دم زدن دیگر نماند موج طوفان را

If a fearsome crocodile like you brings wrinkles on one's brow
This leaves no opportunity for the waves of the deluge to blow[104]

The terror inspired by such a fearsome crocodile as the Shāh does not leave the deluge any chance to blow and cause terror.

The metaphor which was also used in prose occurs in historical chronicles. The historian Zeyn ad-Dīn Maḥmūd Vāṣefī gives a vivid account of life at the court of Herat under Sultan Ḥoseyn Mīrzā in the last third of the 8/15th century, and the early years of the 10/16th century. In one passage, Vāṣefī describes a huge reception given in honor of Sultan Ḥoseyn's Vizir, the famous Mīr ʿAlīshīr Navāʾī. It was attended by all the men of letters and important people of the day.

The literati were addressed by their host the day before the minister arrived. In his speech, the host refers to the forthcoming literary joust interlaced with quotations from poets and improvised verses, of the kind that took place in such receptions. His address is couched in "ornate prose" [naṣr-e mozayyan] with its complex array of metaphors and images symmetrically balanced in rhyming phrases:

در بحر زخار مخاصـمه و دجلـه خونخـوار مجادلـه
حريفان نهنـگ سـيرت و ظريفـان اژدهـا طبيعت
خواهيد افتاد و فردا متوجه شما خواهند بود و شما
را هرگز چنـين معركـه عجيبـى و مصـاف مهيبـى
نيافتاده و نخواهد روى نمود.

You will fall into the stream of boasting of disputations and the bloodthirsty Tigris of contests of adversaries that have the temperament of a crocodile and of wits that have the nature of a dragon. Tomorrow, people's attention will be on you. Never did you experience nor shall you ever again see such an astonishing combat and formidable battle.[105]

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

Inspired by a reptilian which was absent from the Iranian world, the crocodile metaphor had a semi-mythical ring in traditional Iran. To many, it must have sounded as fantastic and unreal as the dragon (azhdahā, ezhdehā, azhdar or, in one very early verse, azhdahāk), which also conjured up the image of unstoppable fighters.

Rarer in later literature, the nahang metaphor was perpetuated in the memory of Persian-speaking audiences through the *Shāh-Nāme* which was copied and recited at all Persian-speaking courts, from Turkey to Hindustan well into the 13/19th century. In choosing a *Shāh-Nāme* metaphor to identify themselves, the fierce fighters that the Sikh *nahang*s were—and no doubt still are—remained true to the cultural tradition of Persian-speaking Hindustan upheld by their spiritual leaders, first and foremost among them Gurū Gōbind Singh.

Notes

1. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Ranjit Singh and the Image of the Past," in *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, ed. S. Stronge (London, 1999), pp. 60–73.

2. Ibid., pp. 61–62 and p. 242, nn. 3 and 4.

3. Idem, "Le Livre des Rois, Miroir du Destin," *StIr* 17.1 (1988), pp. 7–46 on the *Shāh-Nāme* as a source of role models and eulogistic titles. See also "Le Livre des Rois, Miroir du Destin II: Takht-e Soleymān et la symbolique du *Shāh-Nāme*," *StIr* 20.1 (1991), pp. 33–148 on the symbolical reconstruction of the palace Takht-e Soleymān under the sign of *Shāh-Nāme*.

4. B. N. Goswamy, *A Jainesque Sultanate Shahnama* (Zurich, Rietberg Museum, n.d.).

5. Ibid., p. 33.

6. B. N. Goswamy, "A Pre-Mughal Shah Nama from Jaunpur," in *An Age of Splendour—Islamic Art in India*, ed. K. Khandalavala and S. Doshi (Bombay, 1983), pp. 122–27.

7. There is no correspondence between the text written over and under the paintings, and the actual images. For example, in fig. 5, p. 127, the text begins at the top *Tahamtan be-kīn andar āvord rūy* and ends at the bottom *Ze pas kard Rostam hamāngāh negāh*, i.e. "Tahmtan pronounced [Tahamtan for the sake of the metre] furiously pounced on him" and "At that moment Rostam looked back." See Ferdowsī, *Shāh-Nāme: Le Livre des Rois par Abou'lkasim Firdousi*, ed. and trans. J. Mohl, 2nd ed., 7 vols. (Paris, 1976), vol. 2, p. 460, l. 328–33.— ed. Jalāl Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, 8 vols. published ("Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh") (New York, 1366/1988–1373/2005), vol. 2, p. 403, l. 309–13 and n. 13. In other words, the text describes fighting episodes while the image shows a royal hunt. This, added to crude stylistic mistakes and inconsistencies, exposes the manuscript as Revivalist work of no great age, possibly of the early 1900s. Judging from photographs, the writing too looks wrong.

8. A list of some important *Shāh-Nāme* Moghul manuscripts or manuscript fragments is given in A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Jewelled Objects of Hindustan," in *Jewellery Studies* (London, 2004), vol. 10, p. 28, n. 3.

9. See Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Livre des Rois, Miroir du Destin."

10. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Les Frises du* Shāh-Nāme *dans l'Architecture iranienne sous les Īl-Khān, Studia Iranica*, Cahier 18 (Paris, 1996), 128 pp., 66 fig., where twenty-one previously unrecorded friezes of large square tiles with *Shāh-Nāme* verses are published.

11. See Shrī Gurū Gōbind Singh, *Zafar-Nāme*, with versified Urdu translation by Nānak Chand Nāzanī (Amritsar, India, 1952), p. 56, couplet 25–p. 142, couplet 134. The first twenty-four verses are taken from the *Fath-Nāme* considered by some Sikhs to be the authentic work of the Gurū, but held by many to be a later work.

12. J. S. S. "Zafarnamah," in Harbans Singh, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, 4 vols. (Patiala, India, 1996–1998), vol. 4, p. 450. See also C. H. Loehlin, *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood* (Lucknow, 1971), p. 55. For a broader context, see J. S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (New Delhi, 1994, first Indian edition), pp. 78–79.

13. Loehlin, *The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 54, writes for example that "It is written in the Persian language, rhymed Persian at that." This is inaccurate. "Rhymed Persian" would describe rhyming prose, the so-called "ornate prose" [*naṣr-e mozayyan*]. Loehlin seems unaware that the *Zafar-Nāme* is po-etry in *masnavī* form, i.e. in couplets with inne rhyme and in a standard metre (*Motaqāreb*).

14. The text quoted here is the Amritsar version Occasional references will be made to the version posted on the Internet by Wing Commander (retired Jasbir Singh under the title *Zafarnama: Zafar-Nāme* p. 56, couplet 25. The first 24 couplets are those of th *Fath-Nāme*. The faulty character of both versions i: illustrated by the very opening line which includes word, *rahāq*, that is not to be found in dictionaries The word *rahā-gū* substituted here is based on the co lour photograph of a page from the manuscript M/82 in the Punjab State Archives in Patiala, India, which owe to the courtesy of Mr. Parmjit Singh. The page calligraphed in a superb *Nasta'līq* script, carries the first three couplets of the *Zafar-Nāme*. The substitu tion of *rahāq-ō/ū* for *rahā-gū* points to the oral trans mission of the text, leading to misunderstandings by reciters with little knowledge of Arabic and Persian.

15. In the Arabic-Persian dictionary compiled ir the 8/14th century by Maḥmūd b. 'Omar az-Zanj as-Sijzī, *Muhadhdhib al-Usamā'*, ed. Moḥammad Ho seyn Moṣṭafavī (Tehran, 1364/1985), p. 260, *al-qā'im* is translated as *pāyande*, "eternal." The same equiva lence is given in the Arabic-Persian dictionary com piled in Hindustan also in the 8/14th century by Qāżi Khān Badr Moḥammad Dhār, *Dastūr al-Ikhwān*, ed Dr. Sa'īd Najafī Asadollāhī, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1349, 1970/1350/1971), vol. 1, p. 487.

16. A concept dwelt upon in Sufi treatises, e.g Qoṭb ad-Dīn Abo'l-Moẓaffar Manṣūr b. Ardeshīr ol-'Abbādī al-Marvazī, *Manāqeb ol-Motaṣavvefe*, ed Moḥammad-Taqī Dāneshpazhūh and Īraj Afshār (Teh ran, 1362/1984), p. 111. See same text under the titl *Manāqeb al-Ṣūfiye*, ed. Najīb Māyel Heravī (Tehran 1362/1983), p. 80. See by the same writer, *Al-Taṣfiye fī Aḥvāl al-Motaṣavvefe* ["Clarification on the Spiri tual Stages of the Sufis"], ed. Gholāmḥoseyn Yūsofi (Tehran, 1347/1968), pp. 88–92 on *reżā* as the "seconc degree" in the spiritual stages [*aḥvāl*] of the Sufis.

17. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 56, couplet 26.

18. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 58, couplet 27. I correct the last word to *bī-nemūn*, following the version posted or the internet.

19. A rare exception is the ode [*qaṣīde*] composec in the 11/17th century by Sa'īdā Gīlānī in the manner of the 6/12th century poet Anvarī at the courts of Ja hāngīr. See *Jahāngīr-Nāme*, ed. Moḥammad Hāshem (Tehran, 1359/1980), p. 272. See also A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Sa'īdā-ye Gīlānī and the Iranian Style Jades of Hindustan," *BAI* 13 (1999 [2002]), pp. 85–86 on the circumstances in which the poem was composed.

20. Qāżī Khān Badr-e Moḥammad Dhār, *Dastūr al-Ikhwān*, vol. 1, p. 70:

Al-amān: To become safe; to keep in good conditior [lit.: "firm," *ostovār*].

On the dates of the dictionary compiled between 726/1320 and 740/1339, see preface pages five–six.

21. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 126, couplet "100." Āharman (for Ahroman), the personification of evil in Mazdaism, is always used in the singular. Here it is given a plural form (*Āharman-ān*) for the sake of the metre.

22. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 398, l. 2410.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 351, l. 2199.

23. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 398, l. 2390–2410.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 350, l. 2180—p. 351, l. 2199.

24. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 402, l. 2442.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 353, l. 2224.

25. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 402, l. 2445–46.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 353, l. 2229–30.

26. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 70, couplet "37" (= 13) and p. 72, couplet 38 (= 14).

27. E.g. *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, ed. J. S. Grewal and I. Habib (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 98–99.

28. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 64, couplets 33 and 34. Previous authors have understood this line to apply to God. *Sharīᶜa* as the Arabic word is written, refers exclusively to the religious law of Islam and "worshipper of [Islamic] Law" is a phrase that would never be applied to God.

29. *Ṣamīn* is tentatively suggested. The *Ẓafar-Nāme* printed in Amritsar has *laᶜīn*, "accursed," "damned": see p. 134 couplet 113 (= 89).

30. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 134, couplets 113 (= 89)–115 (= 91). In the second hemistich of the first couplet, the Amritsar edition has *dūrast^e dīn* ("far is the faith") which I take to be a misreading, possibly deliberate, for *ūrāst^e dīn*, just as *laᶜīn*, "accursed," was substituted for *samīn*, "precious."

31. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 106, couplets 70 (= 46)–71 (= 47).

32. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 4, p. 652, l. 3503.

33. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 76 couplet 40 (= 16) p. 78, couplet 41 (= 17).

34. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 120, couplet 89 (= 65).

35. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 138, couplets 121 (97)–123 (= 99).

36. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 82, couplet 43 (= 19) p. 84, couplet 44 (= 20).

37. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 86, couplets 45 (= 21)–47 (= 23).

38. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 92, couplet 52 (= 28), the first hemistich begins *Ke bīrūn*. I submit *Cho bīrūn* on the basis of Jasbir Singh's website version.

39. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, ibid., the second hemistich begins *Ke- khordand* which is meaningless. I suggest *Be- khordand*.

40. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 90, couplets 50 (= 26) 51 (= 27), p. 92 couplets 52 (= 28), 53 (= 29).

41. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 100, couplet 60 (= 36) omits the letter *vāv* for o, "and," between *gol* and *lāle*.

42. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 100, couplet 62 (= 38) has *tarangār*.

43. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 100, couplets 59 (= 35)–62 (38).

44. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 140: in couplet 128 (= 104) the second hemistich begins *Na enqelāb Dārā* which does not scan. If the diacritical dot over the first letter is placed underneath, making it read *"Be"* and the *alif-nūn* of *enqelāb* is removed, the verse begins *Be-qallab* literally "On Dārā's hook" which is doubtful unless it matches some regional colloquial usage.

45. This is guess work rather than translating. Better scholars may succeed in restoring the original Persian text, evidently altered by successive misreadings.

46. *Ẓafar-Nāme*, p. 140, couplets 127 (= 103)–129 (= 105).

47. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 590, l. 378.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 24, l. 359. I follow the latter where the second hemistich begins *Hame* ("All") rather than *Hamī*.

48. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed, Mohl, vol. 7, p. 382, l. 330.

49. Shehāb ad-Dīn Yahiyā Sohravardī, *Fī Ḥaqīqat al-ᶜEshq yā Moᵓnes ol-ᶜOshāq* ("The Truth of Love or The Lovers' Companion" ["Lover," to be understood as "lover of God" = "mystic"]) in *Sayyed Ḥoseyn Naṣr*, ed., with a French preface and analysis by Henry Corbin, *Majmūᶜ e-ye Moṣannafāt-e Sheykh-e Eshrāq* ("Collected Works of the Master of Illuminationism"), 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1976–1977) vol. 3, p. 270, l. 9–10. For a French translation, see H. Corbin, "Le vade-mecum des fidèles d'Amour," in *L'Archange empourpré* (Paris, 1976), p. 304.

50. See *Sheykh* Shihāb od-Dīn Yahiyā Sohravardī, *Alvāḥ-e ᶜEmādī* ("The ᶜEmadian Tablets"), in *Majmūᶜ e-ye Moṣannafāt-e Sheykh-e Eshrāq*, vol. 3, pp. 186–87.

51. *Majmūᶜ e-ye Moṣannafāt-e Sheykh-e Eshrāq*, vol. 3, pp. 233–34.—Corbin, *L'Archange empourpré*, pp. 193–200.

52. Mentioned by Corbin in his French introduction to vol. 2 of *Majmūᶜ e-ye Moṣannafāt-e Sheykh-e Eshrāq*, p. 61.

53. *Būstān-e Saᶜadī*, ed. Gholāmḥoseyn Yūsofī, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1363/1984), p. 56, l. 558–59:

Who do you know among the sovereigns of the Iranians
From the time of Fereydūn and Żaḥḥāk and Jam
Whose throne and kingdom did not decline
Nothing stays but the Kingdom of God the Exalted

Concerning the manuscripts of Saᶜadī copied for the court in Hindustan, see the *Būstān* copied in admirable Nastaᶜalīq by ᶜAbd or-Raḥīm al-Harawī/Heravī in 1014/1605–1606 in Agra, latterly superbly published by Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts* (Washington, 1992), pp. 339–53. The 1014/1605–1606 *Būstān* was first published by Ivan Stchoukine, "Un Bustan de Sadi Illustré par des Artistes Moghols," in *RAA* 11 (1937), pp. 68–74.

A manuscript of Saʿadī's collected works [*Kolliyāt*] undoubtedly calligraphed and illuminated in the imperial studio during the early 1600s, signed by the same ʿAbd or-Raḥīm Heravī, was published by Anthony Welch in A. Welch and S. C. Welch, *Arts of the Islamic Book: The Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan* (Ithaca, 1982), pp. 191–97. Several imperial manuscripts of Saʿadī's work could be cited.

54. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 142, couplet 130 (=106).

55. On the succession of historical events see Jit Singh Sital, entry *Zafarnamah* in the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, ed. H. Singh, 4 vols. (Patiala, India, 1996–1998), vol. 4, pp. 451–52 and entry Gurū Gōbind Singh, vol. 2, pp. 91–92.

56. See Jit Singh Sital, entry *Fatehnamah* in the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, vol. 2, p. 20.

57. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 18, couplet 1; p. 20, couplet 2.

58. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 52, couplet 23.

59. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 48, couplet 18.

60. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 1 p. 4, l. 1–2.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 1, p. 3, l. 1–2.

61. *Khamse-ye Amīr Khosrow-e Dehlavī*, ed. Amīr Aḥmad Ashrafī (Tehran, 1362/1983), p. 406, l. 1–2.

62. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 22 couplets and p. 26 couplet 5.

63. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 30 couplet 7.

64. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 40, couplet 11; p. 42, couplet 12; p. 44, couplet 13.

65. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 46, couplet 15. The first hemistich incorrectly begins in the Amritsar edition with *chon*, "as," instead of *cho*, required by the metre.

66. *Zafar-Nāme*, p. 50, couplets 20–21, and p. 52, couplet 22.

67. *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, vol. 3, pp. 195–96.

68. Bhāi Nand Lāl, *Ganjnama* [= *Ganj-Nāme*], in *Tasnifat-i-"Goya," Persian Writings of Bhai Nand Lal "Goya," Court Poet of Shri Guru Gobind Singh*, ed. Mahan Singh Gyani (Amritsar, India, Khalsa Samachar, April 1963), p. 113, l. 8–9.

69. Bhāi Nand Lāl, *Ganj-Nāme*, p. 114, l. 11.

70. Asadī Ṭūsī, *Loghat-e Fors*, ed. Moḥammad Dabīrsiyāqī (Tehran 1336/1957). Abū Manṣūr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Asadī Ṭūsī, *Loghat-e Fors*, ed. Fatḥollāh Motjabāʾī and ʿAlī-Ashraf Ṣādeqī.—Moḥammad b. Hendūshāh Nakchavānī, *Ṣeḥāḥ ol-Fors*, ed. ʿAbd ol-ʿAlī Ṭāʿatī (Tehran 1341/1963).

71. *Adīb* Yaʿqūb Kordī Neyshābūrī, *Kitāb al-Bulgha*, ed. Mojtabā Mīnovī and Fīrūz Ḥarīrchī (Tehran, 2535 sh./1976), p. 244.

72. Badīʿ uz-Zamān *Adīb* Naṭanzī, al-*Mirqāt*, ed. Dr. *Sayyed* Jaʿafar Sajjādī (Tehran 1346/1967), p. 106.

73. Ḥasan Khaṭīb Kermānī, *Molakhkhiṣ al-Lughāt*, ed. *Sayyed* Moḥammad Dabīrsiyāqī and Gholām-ḥoseyn Yūsofī (Tehran 1362/1983), p. 14.

74. So named by the editor of Allāhdād Feyżī Sarhindī b. *Asad al-ʿolamā* ʿAlīshīr al-Sarhindī, *Madār ol-Afāżel*, ed. Dr. Bāqer, 4 vols. (Lahore, 1337/1959–1349/1970), in the introduction page *za*. The great Iranian lexicographer Dr. *Sayyed* Moḥammad Dabīrsiyāqī names him simply Moḥammad-e Lād, "Moḥammad son of Lād."

75. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 327.

76. *Mīr* Jamāl ad-Dīn Ḥoseyn b. Fakhr ad-Dīn Ḥasan Injū Shīrāzī, *Farhang-e Jahāngīrī*, ed. Dr. Raḥīm ʿAfīfī, 3 vols. (Mashad, 1351/1972–1354/1975).

77. *Farhang-e Jahāngīrī*, vol. 3, p. 329.

78. Ibn Khalaf Tabrīzī Moḥammad Ḥoseyn *motakhalleṣ be* [known as] Borhān, *Borhān-e Qāṭeʿ*, ed. Moḥammad ʿAbbāsī (Tehran, 1344/1965), preface p. 36.

79. *Borhān-e Qāṭeʿ*, p. 1160.

80. Aboʾl-Qāsem Ḥosayn b. Moḥammad Rāgheb Esfahānī, *Muḥādirāt al-Udabāʾ wa Muḥāwirāt ash-Shuʿarā waʾl-Bulaghāʾ*, ed. Ibn ash-Sheykh Ḥasan al-Fayyūmī Ibrahīm (Cairo, 1326/1908–1909).—Moḥammad Ṣāleḥ Qazvīnī, *Navāder* ("Rarities," Persian translation, 11th/17th c.), ed. Aḥmad Mojāhed (Tehran, 1371/1993) p. 419, l. 11–13.

81. Moḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad *motakhalleṣ* Ṭūsī, *ʿAjāyeb ol-Makhlūqāt va Gharāyeb ol-Mowjūdāt*, ed. Manūchehr Sotūde (Tehran, 1382/2003), p. 607, l. 19.

82. Abū Bakr Moṭṭahar Jamālī Yazdī, *Farrokh-Nāme*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran 1346/1967), p. 107, l. 18–19.

83. Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Qazvīnī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa Qarāʾib al-Mawjūdāt*, ed. printing house of Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Cairo, 1376 H./1957), p. 87, l. 21–22.

84. Zakariyā b. Moḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Mukammūnī al-Qazvīnī, *ʿAjāyeb ol-Makhlūqāt*, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1361/1982), p. 139, l. 7.

85. Abū Esʾḥāq Ebrahīm Eṣṭakhrī, anon. trans., *Masālek va Mamālek*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran, 1340/1961), p. 153, where the river Mehrān in Sind [= the Indus] is said to have crocodiles.

86. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 1, p. 390, l. 111.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq. vol. 1, p. 292, l. 98.

87. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 24, l. 232.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 82, l. 208 ending with *palang* (= leopard) instead of *nahang*, but four important manuscripts used by Khāleqī-Moṭlaq have *nahang*.

88. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 62, l. 690.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 111 in footnote, l. 23.

89. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 96, l. 279–81.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 132, l. 184–85. Mohl's l. 281 mentioning the brave crocodile is missing in Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, who notes p. 132, n. 24 that the couplet occurs in manuscripts *lām-yā* and *bā*.

90. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 166, l. 1149.—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 185, l. 851. I follow Mohl who retains *palang* although several manuscripts have *nahang*.

91. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl vol. 2, p. 454, l. 258—ed. Khāleqī-Moṭlaq, vol. 2, p. 386, l. 244.

92. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 456, l. 289—ed. Khāleqī-Motlaq, p. 397, n. 30.

93. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 690, l. 1548–49.—ed. Khāleqī-Motlaq, vol. 3, p. 93, l. 1099–1100. Khāleqī-Motlaq prefers *be-mostī* to Mohl's *be-sostī* which is also found in two major manuscripts (p. 93, n. 20).

94. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 3, p. 258, l. 1408—ed. Khāleqī-Motlaq, vol. 3, p. 277, l. 2779. I follow Khāleqī-Motlaq who has in the first hemistich *chon shīr-e chang* rather than Mohl's *chon shīr-e jang*.

95. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 4, p. 62, l. 687.— ed. Khāleqī-Motlaq, vol. 4, p. 214, l. 672.

96. *Shāh-Nāme*, ed. Mohl, vol. 2, p. 696, l. 1625. — ed. Khāleqī-Motlaq, vol. 3, p. 97, l. 1174. I follow the latter rather than Mohl who has a meaningless *Shekār-e to Bahrām bāshad be jang* instead of *bāyad*.

97. *Dīvān-e 'Am'aq-e Bokhārī*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī (Tehran, n.d.), p. 31.

98. *Dīvān-e 'Am'aq*, p. 187, couplets 636–38. Nafīsī has *kūh*, "mountain." This would imply the repetition within the couplet of the same word with the same meaning, barely toned down by its inclusion in a compound name, *kūh- owbār* in the first place, *kūh-fegan* in the second. The conventions of Persian poetry do not allow the repetition of the same word in the same verse without a change in meaning. I therefore suggest *kūh*, "mountain," is a misreading for *gaw*, "bull" and "hero." The spelling of *kūh* and *gaw/gow* is identical (*kāf* and *gāf* are not differentiated in early spelling), barring the single letter *hā'* in *kūh*, which is a small circle, often reduced to a dot. Stains in old manuscripts are easily mistaken for a single *hā'*.

99. *Dīvān-e Asīr ad-Dīn Akhsīkatī*, ed. Rokh ad-Dīn Homāyūn-Farrokh (Tehran 1337/1958). On the dates of the ruler, see preface pages eighty-five-eighty-seven.

100. *Dīvān-e Asīr ad-Dīn Akhsīkatī*, p. 16, l. 16 with the warning by the editor that it occurs in only one manuscript. The same ode (*qasīde*) was included in the *dīvān* of Jamāl ad-Dīn Mohammad b. 'Abd or-Razzāq Esfahānī by Hasan Vahīd Dastgerdī in his edition printed in Tehran, 1320/1941, pp. 40–43. In his preface, however, the eminent scholar placed it among the "poems of dubious authorship," specifying that in one early anthology, it appears under the name of Asīr ad-Dīn Akhsīkatī. The two poets were broadly contemporary.

101. Hakīm Nezāmī, *Sharaf-Nāme*, ed. Hasan Vahīd Dastgerdī (Tehran, n.d.), p. 122, l. 2.

102. *Sharaf-Nāme*, p. 455, l. 16.

103. *Sharaf-Nāme*, p. 461, l. 5.

104. *Kolliyāt-e Ash'ār-e* Mowlānā *Ahlī-e Shīrāzī*, ed. Hāmed Rabbānī (Tehran 1344/1965), p. 418, l. 8577.

105. Zeyn ad-Dīn Mahmūd Vāsefī, *Badāye' ol-Vaqāye'*, ed. A. Boldyrev, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1349/1970–1350/1971), vol. 1, p. 406, l. 15–19.