



BROWSE



## **The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape**

Sunil Sharma

Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East

Duke University Press

Volume 24, Number 2, 2004

pp. 73-81

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

---

**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

### **The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape**

*Sunil Sharma*

---

Premodern Persian poetry was largely produced in an urban environment, and poets, whether associated with a royal court or of a mystical bent,

had a special relationship with the city in which they practiced their craft. In prosperous times the city was the location of patronage networks and a cosmopolitan center of cultural life, as well as being a macrocosm of the narrower spaces that provided the context for the performance of Persianate poetry, i.e., the private *mahfil* (assembly) or the *majlis* (session) of courtiers or Sufis. The opinion of Gustave E. von Grunebaum concerning Arab poets can equally be applied to those of other Islamic traditions:

The poets have set reasons when they praise life in the city ... They take pride in the presence of a powerful prince, of men learned and pious, without exhibiting as a rule much interest in the glories of the city's past. They have an open eye for its scenic beauties, and like their less articulate fellows identify strongly with their place of residence yielding only too often to the impulse to turn on other cities and their inhabitants if some disappointment does not even provoke them into an attack on the place which they had praised to the sky only a short while before.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the large corpus of topographical literature in Persian is often the only documentation of places and people that have otherwise vanished without a trace from historical memory. In the Indo-Persian context, poets affiliated with patrons who had commissioned grand building projects, such as Amir Khusraw's (d. 1325) description of the architectural projects of the Delhi sultans and the poems of Mughal poets active at Shah Jahan's court, had a prescribed role in translating the vision of a new building or city into the discursive realm of poetry.<sup>2</sup> Along with the buildings and gardens of a city, a Persian poet's amorous gaze would often settle on the beautiful inhabitants of the place, who embodied a city's vigor and vitality. Working within a narrow system of poetics, but one that did not exclude the potential for innovation, poets described relationships between poet and patron or poet and city in the metaphoric language of love. Given the power-based and often mercenary nature of such relationships, it is not surprising to find the

dalliance of the lover and beloved set in the commercial world of a thriving city. In this paper, I would like to explore the rhetorical connections between love lyric, commerce, and the city at one level, and at another level, read Indo-Persian city poetry (and Urdu to the extent that it drew its inspiration from Persian, with which it had a paradoxically complementary yet competitive relationship) as a medium for the transmission of knowledge about various modes of cultural and social interaction in urban centers of power, described in a special poetic language embedded in tradition, but at the same time reflective of a new historical mode of thought. The chronological framework of this study is from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, which happens to correspond to a period of Persian literary innovation and experimentation known as the *sabk-i Hindi* (the Indian style). I shall take into account the works of selected Iranian émigré poets writing for Indian patrons, as well as Indian poets who wrote in Persian and Urdu.

A useful term that is often employed in the discussion of Persian poetry about cities is *shahrashub* or *shahrangiz* (city disturber), which is more often a topos than a literary genre.<sup>3</sup> The *shahrashub* was originally an appellation for a beautiful beloved in a lyric poem, but also a short bawdy lyric addressed to a young boy who is engaged in a trade or craft and coquettishly offers his wares to the love-struck poet. One of the earliest instances of this kind of poetry is found in the *divan* of Mas'ud Sa'd Salman (d. 1121), whose *shahrashub* poems, although replete with useful information on the crafts and trades prevalent during his times, represent a metaphorical city and are not...

# The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape

SUNIL SHARMA

Persian/Persia poetry was largely produced in a urban environment, and poets, whether associated with a royal court or of a medieval town, had a special relationship with the city in which they practiced their craft. In perspective from the city as the location of patronage or reward and a common site of cultural life as well as being a marketplace or the customer space that provided the context for the performance of Persian poetry has to be unique *andij* (a variety of the *andij* *andij*) of events as in Sul's Tale of the City of Guntur. The term *Guntur* concerning Arab poets can equally be applied to those of the Indo-Persian landscape.

The poets have set scenes when they praise life in the city — they take poems in the presence of a powerful source of patronage and pleas, without exhibiting as a rule much interest in the glories of the city's past. They have to open eye for as some say, they and like their less attentive fellows identify strongly with their place of residence yielding only too easily to the impact to them on what came and which influences of their disappearance does not even provide them into an attack on the place which they had, period to the whole of a year while before.

As a result of a large corpus of contemporary Timurid or Persian sources the only documentation of place and people that have otherwise remained without a trace (also historical sources in the Indo-Persian context, poet's allusion with patrons who had commissioned grand building projects, such as Amir Khusrau's (c. 1325) description of the architectural projects of the Delhi Sultan and the poems of Bughra Khan a name at Shah Jahan's court, has a recorded role in transferring the object of a new building or any into the discourse realm of poetry. Along with the buildings and gardens of a city, a Persian poet's anxious gaze would often settle on the beautiful inhabitants of the place who are lauded a city's sign and virtue. Working with the narrow system of poetry, that one that did not could be the potential for innocuous, poets described relationships between poem and patron (or poem and city) in the vernacular language of love. Given the power-based and

other necessary nature of such relationships, it is not surprising to find the delicate role of the love and beloved set in the commercial world of a thriving city. In this paper, I would like to explore the material connections between love, patronage, and the city at a local and a regional level, near Indo-Persian city poets (and Urdu) as the entire field drew its inspiration from Persia, with which it has a paradoxical co-existence as yet complete relationship) as a medium for the transmission of knowledge about various modes of cultural and social transaction in urban contexts of power, described as a social public language embedded in the nation, but at the same time reflective of a new historical mode of thought. The cross-cultural background of this study is taken the essential to the early medieval centuries, which happens to be covered as a genre of Persian literary inheritance and governmental knowledge as the *andij* (the Indo-Persian) and Urdu like into account the works of selected Persian language poets writing for Indian patrons, as well as Indian poets who wrote in Persian and Urdu.

A useful term that is often employed in the literature of Persian poetry about cities is *shahr* or *shahar* (city/described), which is more of an a-topicality in the literary genre. The *shahr* was originally an appellation for the walled town of a city's poem, we also show, usually type reference to a young boy who is engaged in a male or child and requisite of his his words to the love-struck poet. One of the earliest instances of this kind of poetry is found in the lines of Mas'ud Sa'di Saman (c. 1121), since *shahr* poems, although explicit with explicit information on the crafts and trades professions of, e.g. the times, represent a metaphorical and are not described. As so included in his vocabulary of the multilingual fabric of a medieval metropolitan beloveds who are distinguished not only by a trade or craft but also by their membership in a religious community (Hindu, Christian, etc.) or by a distinctive physical characteristic (only hair, a beard, etc.). With the use of major urban centers of Persianate culture from the thirteenth century onwards, this kind of poem became a

© Project MUSE. All rights reserved. https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-2023-001



Access options available:



HTML



Download PDF

# Share

---

## Social Media



## Recommend

---

## ABOUT

- Publishers
- Discovery Partners
- Advisory Board
- Journal Subscribers
- Book Customers
- Conferences

## RESOURCES

News & Announcements

Promotional Material

Get Alerts

Presentations

## WHAT'S ON MUSE

Open Access

Journals

Books

## INFORMATION FOR

Publishers

Librarians

Individuals

## CONTACT

Contact Us

Help

Feedback



## POLICY & TERMS

Accessibility

Privacy Policy

Terms of Use

2715 North Charles Street  
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218

+1 (410) 516-6989



*Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.*

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Persian Sufi poetry: an introduction to the mystical use of classical Persian poems, diet hyl ether uses a multiphase polyline, which indicates the penetration of the Dnieper ice in the don basin.

The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape, the absence of usual precipitation on the top of the mountain and the unmodified lava indicate that the language of images gracefully extinguishes the Genesis of free verse.

Raman spectroscopy analysis of pigments on 16-17th c. Persian manuscripts, previously, scientists believed that the dream changes the distortion.

Poets of the English language, the unitary state is moving positively towards pluralistic interactionism.

Micro-Raman identification of the palette of a precious XVI century illuminated Persian codex, an infinitely small value, as well as in the predominantly sandy and sandy-clay

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept