

**BADYI', THE ODES OF
SHEIKH MUSLIHUD-
DIN SA'DI SHIRAZI**

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Badyi', the Odes of Sheikh Muslihud-Din Sa'di Shirazi by Sir Lucas White King & R. A. Nicholson

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SIR LUCAS WHITE KING & R. A. NICHOLSON

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Badāyi'

The Odes

of

Sheikh Muslihud-Din Sa'di Shirazi.

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When Sir Lucas King asked me to write an introductory note to his translation of Sa'di's Odes, I agreed to do so on the understanding that my remarks should be entirely general in character. It is not for me to discuss questions with which an editor is expected to deal, and any adequate literary criticism would involve research in directions hitherto unexplored. But I have read the greater part of these poems and will attempt to say, in a few words, what I think of them.

Although their subject matter has much in common with that of the Gulistān and Bustān, the proportion between the ethical and mystical elements is not the same. Here Mysticism predominates, and wordly wisdom falls into the background. Yet Sa'di's ruling passion, the desire to instruct and please, seldom fails to make its influence felt. Many of the Odes are purely didactic meditations on old age, false friends, the vanity of human wishes, and so forth; and even in the mystical poems this tendency is very marked. It leads naturally to a terse and epigrammatic manner of expression, in which Sa'di shows consummate skill. Unlike Horace, he seems to have found it easy to say old things in a new way (*proprie communia dicere*), a fact which may explain why the Odes are so highly valued by Persian critics, who have always regarded originality of form as supremely important. European readers should bear in mind that point of view; otherwise they are likely to be dissatisfied. The best mystical poetry is not produced by men of Sa'di's type. Where he draws from his mature experience and his varied knowledge of the world the results are admirable. His philosophy may be shallow, his morality often unedifying, and his veracity under suspicion, but we are eager to listen to a man who has lived

so largely, and whose conversation affords such excellent and profitable entertainment that we can forgive him everything. When he comes forward as a mystical poet, the case is altered, and we have the right to ask whether the Odes in which he sings of Divine Love express his true feelings and aspirations, or whether they only serve to display the versatility of his genius.

It is certain, at any rate, that Sa'di, though he had studied the doctrine of Sufism and was thoroughly familiar with the ideas and imagery of Sufi poetry, was not a Mystic in the sense in which 'Attar and Jalāluddīn Rūmi were. He was too fine an artist to leave enthusiasm out of the picture, but "God-intoxicated" is the last epithet one would think of applying to him. His poems do not suggest that he knew the higher stages of the mystical life except by hearsay, and his treatment of the subject must seem conventional and superficial to those who compare him with the great Mystics of his own country, including Hafiz. While granting that he may have been sincere in his sentiments, personally I cannot do more than give him the benefit of the doubt. On the other side, the literary merit of the Odes is beyond dispute. They contain some of the most exquisite poetry in Persian literature, and if they lack the deepest inspiration, they abound in moral and spiritual ideas created, perhaps, by others, but moulded into perfect shape by a masterhand.

Reynold A. Nicholson.

ERRATA.

Ode	1 & 2	Line	13	Read Sa'di for Sâdi.
"	2	"	4	Omit the comma after <i>mue</i> in Note 2.
"	3	"	3	Read face for fa.
"	4	"	8	In Note 3 Gulshani raz should be in Roman.
"	7	"	10	Add of after snare.
"	8	"	2	Omit the before kings.
"	11	"	1	Insert a comma after city.
"	14	"	3	Read Atâbeg for Atâ Beg and <i>fitnah</i> and <i>fattân</i> in Note 2.
"	15	"	11	Change full stop to comma after Ka'bah.
"	16	"	10	Read fit inmate for fitinmate, and in Note 3 Her for his.
"	21	"	1 & 2	Read Her for her.
"	21	"	4	Read traveller for travaller in Note 3.
"	26	"	4	Omit the brackets at the end of note 2
"	27	"	1	<i>Are</i> after <i>Hûrul'ain</i> in Note 1 should be in Roman.
"	27	"	5	Read Jurjâni for Turjâni in Note 2.
"	28	"	5	Read fallen a prey to.
"	29	"	4	Read celestial for celstial in Note 2.
"	29	"	7	Omit the exclamation mark in brackets.
"	34	"	4	Read <i>adâb</i> , and <i>mu'âmilât</i> in Note 2.
"	34	"	10	Insert a comma after enemies.
"	52	"	7	Omit the Note number in this line.
"	55	"	8	Add Note number 5 to this line.

”	57	”	7	Insert a comma after said.
”	64	”	2	Read which for wich in Note 2.
”	65	”	8	In Note 2 read Byzantine for Byzantive.
”	71	”	9	In Note 4 read a truce for ā true.
”	72	”	5	In Note 2 read sar darvā for sadarvā.
”	84	”	6	In Note 4 read black for block.
”	84	”	10	In Note 7 the last sentence should be read as part of the previous Note.
”	86	”	2	Read that for thaat.
”	”	”	7	Read chattels for chattles.
”	103	”	4	Insert a comma after memory.
”	107	”	9	Insert a bracket before from.
”	108	”	1	Supply Note number 1 to this line.
”	110	”	3	Supply Note number 2 to this line.
”	113	”	4	Supply Note number 1 to this line, and change <i>sail</i> to <i>hasil</i> in Note 1.
”	122	”	7	The bracket should enclose (= the Beloved) only.
”	129	”		Change the Note numbers in this Ode as follows, 5 to 6, 6 to 7, 7 to 5.
”	133	”	2	Read Bahram for Shahpur in Note 1.
”	142	”	4	Read powerless for powerful.
”	157	”	1	Omit the second own.
”	174	”	6	Add a bracket at the end of this line.
”	179	”	3	Add a bracket after <i>buhār</i> in Note 2.
”	181	”	2	Read vampire for vaimpire.
”	186	”	5	Omit the comma after boor, and place it after is.

1. Praise be to God, the Lord of both worlds, for His abundant bounty! May His name be honoured and glorified!
2. He is the surety for (His creature's) sustenance by reason of His beneficence, and liberality, whether they do good deeds, or not.
3. How wonderful is the greatness, the power, and the everlastingness of Him, who is the Creator of mankind, generation after generation! 1
4. Genii, men, and all created beings collectively prostrate themselves before Him in adoration and abasement. 2
5. Blessed is he, who seeks Him, and cursed is he, who forsakes Him! May perdition befall him, who adopts a substitute for Him!
6. How many indications are there of His might among created beings, and in the Heavens too there are verily signs for the possessor of wisdom,
7. Which are clear to him, whose eyes are anointed with the knowledge of the merciful God.
8. He drives along the clouds, when the hills are sterile, causing them to become fresh spring pastures after being dry.
9. He has in His mercy produced trees from seeds, and by His power has created man from a clot. 3
10. He is a Patron, before whose comprehension the power of the imagination is baffled and helpless, and to whose apprehension people cannot find the right way.

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1. Several of the titles given here to the Deity are included the 99 names of God (*Asmā ul hasnā*), such as, al'Khalīq, al'Azīm, al'Qadir, as'Samad, al'Aziz, al'Muhaiman etc.
 2. An excellent article on Genii may be consulted in Hughes's Dictionary of Islam.
 3. Cf. Alquran Surah xvi—3.