



## 'ABD-AL-JALĪL BELGRĀMĪ

'**ABD-AL-JALĪL BELGRĀMĪ**, major 17th/18th century Indo-Muslim litterateur. He was born at Belgram in 1071/1661. His father, Mīr Aḥmad, was a noted calligrapher and philologist belonging to the Vāseṭī Sayyeds who had emigrated to Belgram in 614/1217-18 (Āzād Belgrāmī, *Sarv-e āzād*, Hyderabad, n.d., p. 256). After receiving his basic education at home, 'Abd-al-Jalīl traveled to various cities in Uttar Pradesh. He stayed in Lucknow for five years, joining the circle of those devoted to the famous Naqṣbandī Shaikh Ḡolām, though he subsequently became the disciple of Sayyed Yāsīn Ḥamavī (Belgrāmī, *Ma'āṭer al-kerām*, Agra, 1910, p. 258). From Lucknow he went to Bihar and stayed in Patna as the guest of the *dīvān* (civil governor) Shah Ḥosayn. After a brief stay there, he returned to his native Belgram. In 1104/1692-93, 'Abd-al-Jalīl set out for the Deccan, but his trip was ill-fated and he had to return to Belgram after a very short time. In 1111/1699-1700 he undertook a second trip to the Deccan. During this journey he presented a set of chronograms in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Hindi, written to celebrate the emperor's victories, to Awrangzēb while the latter was staying in a military camp at Islampuri (Belgrāmī, *Kezānaye āmera*, Cawnpore, 1971, p. 553). The following year he was given a *jāgīr* in Rasaipur near Belgram, after which he was appointed the *bakṣī* and *vaqā'e'-negār* (q.v.) of Gujarat, a position he held till 1116/1704-05, when he was appointed the *vaqā'e'-negār* of Bhakkar (*Ma'āṭer al-kerām*, p. 261). Though largely unaffected by the political unrest following Awrangzēb's death, 'Abd-al-Jalīl did lose his job once at the instigation of Mīr Jomla, who had misunderstood a quatrain the poet had written in praise of Farroḡ Sīar. But with the help of the Sayyed brothers, 'Abd-al-Jalīl regained his former position,



which he relinquished only in 1130/1717-18 to his son Mīr Moḥammad. In 1132/1719-20 he returned to Belgram after an absence of sixteen years but soon left again for Delhi, where he died in 1138/1725. His body was sent back to Belgram, and he was buried next to his father (*Ma’āṭer al-kerām*, pp. 261-66).

‘Abd-al-Jalīl represents the apogee of Indo-Muslim literary versatility. Not only was he thoroughly acquainted with poetics and prosody (*fonūn-e še’r o ‘arūz*), but he composed poetry in four different languages: Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Hindi. He is especially noted for his skillful chronograms, which anticipate those of his grandson, the renowned **Gōlām-‘Alī Āzād Belgrāmī**. A *ḥāfez* of the Qur’ān, ‘Abd-al-Jalīl was also an expert in exegesis and Hadith. In music and philology he was sufficiently knowledgeable to have written books on both subjects (Sayyed Aṣḡar-‘Alī Belgrāmī. *Fārsī-e Belgrām*, Hyderabad, 1347/1928-29, pp. 11-22).

As a writer, ‘Abd-al-Jalīl was prolific, but most of his works have not survived. Of those extant, several are *maṭnavīs*. The best known is *Maṭnavī dar ‘arūsī-e Farroḡ Sīar*. Composed in 1127/1714-15 to celebrate the wedding of the emperor Farroḡ Sīar and Rājā Aḡīt Singh Rathaur’s daughter, this *maṭnavī* never reached its royal patron. In despair, ‘Abd-al-Jalīl almost destroyed his own composition but later changed his mind. What he preserved has endured as a masterpiece of the Indo-Persian poetic tradition. It conveys a lucid picture of various marriage customs practiced by the Mughals. Details concerning wedding dresses, various kinds of food, fireworks, dancing, and music are narrated in a style that is at once compressed and mellifluous. In 1137/1724-25, ‘Abd-al-Jalīl composed another *maṭnavī* on the model of *Maṭnavī dar ‘arūsī-e Farroḡ Sīar* to commemorate the wedding of Eršād Khan, the son of a Mughal noble who was also a friend of ‘Abd-al-Jalīl. Still another *maṭnavī* was written in *rīkta* or mixed style, being half Persian and half Hindi. It bears resemblance to Malek Moḥammad Jā’esī’s *Padmāvat*, after which it is appropriately named (Rieu, *Pers. Man.*, p. 1036b I).

The most remarkable of ‘Abd-al-Jalīl’s verse compositions was a dictionary in verse drawing upon Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Hindi sources. *Jawāher al-kalām* (*Cat. Bankipore* VIII, p. 143) is a unique testimony to ‘Abd-al-Jalīl’s mastery of all four of the languages in which he composed poetry. His interest in Hindi poetry is especially notable: It culminates a tradition among Indo-Muslim litterateurs which began with Amīr Ḳosrow and reached its high point during the reign of Akbar in the *Padmāvat* of Malek Moḥammad Jā’esī and the Hindi *dīvān* of ‘Abd-al-Raḡīm Ḳān(-e) Ḳānān.



Among ‘Abd-al-Jalīl’s extant prose works are a selection of essays, *Enšā-ye Jalīl*, and a collection of letters, *Roq’āt-e Jalīl*. The former was written in highly embellished, arabicized, and rhymed Persian prose. It is an account of ‘Abd-al-Jalīl’s journey to the Deccan. It sheds light on the early life of its author and provides useful information on Awrangzēb’s armies stationed in the Deccan. ‘Abd-al-Jalīl gives a first-hand account of one of the *darbārs* held at Islampuri, at which Awrangzēb conferred a *manṣab* (pay rank) on ‘Abd-al-Jalīl. The *manṣab* was later increased, when the poet composed chronograms in Arabic and Persian on the capture of Basantgarh, a stronghold of the Marathas. *Enšā-ye Jalīl* also includes an account of the subjugation of the Maratha fort at Suttara, but ends on a sad note with the depiction of Mughal armies devastated at Khawaspur due to unexpectedly heavy floods.

In literary style, *Roq’āt-e Jalīl* starkly contrasts with *Enšā-ye Jalīl*. Addressed to his only son, Mīr Moḥammad, the text is simple, straightforward, anecdotal, and personal. In describing the multifaceted life of ‘Abd-al-Jalīl—his avocation of book collector, the excitement and occasional disappointment of his own literary pursuits, his patronage of Hindi poets, his relations with the Mughal aristocracy, and even his financial affairs—the *Roq’āt* exemplify 18th century Indo-Persian prose at its best. It is small wonder that they influenced ‘Abd-al-Jalīl’s grandson, Ġolām-‘Alī Āzād, and helped to mold his terse but expressive prose style.

The ‘Ālamgīrī period of Indo-Persian poetry is usually noted for two trends, the composition of *maṭnavīs* and a renewed interest in Hindi on the part of Indo-Muslim poets. Each trend found lofty expression in ‘Abd-al-Jalīl’s verse. Later, Ġolām-‘Alī Āzād Belgrāmī inherited the rich legacy of his grandfather and transmitted it, in magnified splendor, to subsequent generations of Indian Muslims.

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