



AMĪR ḲOSROW DEHLAVĪ

AMĪR ḲOSROW DEHLAVĪ, NĀṢER-AL-DĪN ABU'L-ḤASAN (651-725/1253-1325), the “Parrot of India,” the greatest Persian-writing poet of medieval India. Son of Amir Sayf-al-dīn Maḥmūd, a Turkish officer, and an Indian mother, he was born in Patiali and early displayed his poetical talent, encouraged by his maternal grandfather, ‘Emād-al-molk. His master in poetry was Šehāb-al-dīn Maḥmera Badā’ūnī, who had written religious and panegyric verse. Ḳosrow took service with Sultan Balban’s family, accompanying his son Boḡrā Khan to Bengal and later his eldest son to Multan. There the prince was killed by the Mongols in 683/1284 and the poet captured. Afterwards he went with the governor Ḥātem Khan to Oudh and returned to Delhi in 688/1289. He was a favorite of Sultan Jalāl-al-dīn Ḳalĵī (689-95/1290-96) and of his assassin ‘Alā’-al-dīn Ḳalĵī (695-715/1296-1315), under whom he wrote most of his works. After enjoying the favor of Qoṭb-al-dīn Mobārakšāh (716-20/1316-20), Gīāt-al-dīn Toḡloq (720-25/1320-25), and for a short time Moḥammad Toḡloq, Ḳosrow died in 725/1325. One should not blame him for his shifting allegiances in a confused political situation; this was the normal practice of medieval poets.

The ease with which Amīr Ḳosrow wrote enabled him to turn his pen to ever new subjects. Musician and scholar, he was as prolific in tender lyrics as in highly involved prose and could easily try to emulate all styles of poetry which had developed in Iran, from Ḳāqānī’s forceful *qaṣīdas* to Neẓāmī’s *Ḳamsa*. His contribution to the development of the *ḡazal*, hitherto little used in India, is particularly significant. The young poet collected his first *dīvān*, *Toḥfat al-seḡār*, verses written up to his 19th year, in ca. 672/1273; about 683/1284 the



Wasf al-ḥayāt was collected, and around 693/1293-94 the *Ġorrat al-kamāl*, poems written between his 34th and 43rd years. Like his other *dīvāns*, this one contains a prose introduction which is particularly important because of autobiographical details. In 716/1316 Kosrow collected the *Baqīya-ye naqīya*, and shortly before his death the *Nehāyat al-kamāl*. All of these contain *qaṣīdas*, *tarjī*'s, and other forms of poetry.

Amir Kosrow's knowledge of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Hindi enabled him to produce exotic puns, wordplays, and stunning literary tricks so that W. Berthels with full right speaks of his "powdered style." This peculiarity is visible not only in his lyrics and panegyrics but also in his numerous epics. Between 698/1298 and 701/1301 he wrote with great ease an imitation of Neẓāmī's *Ḳamsa*, which comprises *Maṭla' al-anwār*, *Majnūn o Laylā*, *Šīrīn o Ḳosrow*, *Ā'īna-ye Sekandarī*, and *Hašt behešt*. The work was often illustrated in later times, but in spite of its artistry lacks the flavor of Neẓāmī's work. More important is Kosrow's contribution to a new genre of poetry, the historical epic. In 688/1289 he poetically elaborated the meeting of Boḡrā Khan with his estranged son Kayqobād in Oudh (*Qerān al-sa'dayn*); two years later he described four major victories of Jalāl-al-dīn Ḳaljī in *Meftāḥ al-fotūḥ* (part of *Ġorrat al-kamāl*). Perhaps the most famous epic of this group is *Dowalrānī Ḳazer Ḳān*, the *Ašīqa*, which tells the love story of Ḳēzr (Ḳazer) Khan, 'Alā'-al-dīn Ḳaljī's son, and a Rajput princess and was enlarged after Ḳēzr Khan's tragic end in Gwalior (715/1315). In 718/1318 the poet produced a particularly artistic work, *Noh sepehr*, where the nine spheres are represented in nine different meters; its descriptions of Indian culture, customs, languages, and festivals are an excellent source for our knowledge of medieval India, though all of Kosrow's works bear traces of Indian influence, whether in form (e.g., the "rain song") or vocabulary. In 720/1320 the *Toḡloq-nāma* was written to celebrate Ġiāt-al-dīn Toḡloq's achievements. Amir Kosrow also composed remarkable prose works. The *Ḳazā'en al-fotūḥ* (711/1311), sometimes referred to as *Tārīḳ-e 'Alā'*, describes 'Alā'-al-dīn Ḳaljī's conquests. More interesting is the *Ejāz-e Ḳosravī*, a work on epistolography, the first four parts of which were collected in 692/1292; completed in 719/1319, it displays the author's immense philological talent and gives a good picture of Indian life to the patient decipherer.

Kosrow is praised as having invented Hindustani music; he may have done so, but none of his works in this field has been preserved. In any case the musical flow of some of his *ḡazals* has made them favorites of musicians up to our day.



He is also credited with poetry in Hindi, but discussion about the authenticity of the fragments ascribed to him is continuing. He uses Hindi with perfect ease and plays with them; the riddles and conundrums under his name may well be his. He is noted for his versatility and his remarkable rhetorical skill. He had a keen eye and ear, as is understood from his descriptions of the peculiarities of his homeland.

Besides being an elegant courtier, Amīr Ḳosrow was also interested in Sufism; from 671/1272 onward he was attached to Neẓām-al-dīn Awliā', the great Češtī saint of Delhi, who lovingly called him Torkallāh. He devoted a number of poems to Neẓām-al-dīn, though otherwise a Sufi flavor is difficult to detect in his writings. A small collection, *Afẓal al-fawā'ed* (719/1319), is said to contain sayings of Neẓām-al-dīn collected by Amīr Ḳosrow. Ḳosrow died shortly after his master and was buried close to him; his tomb in its present shape was finished in 1014/1605 and is still visited by large numbers of people. In honor of his 700th anniversary (a number chosen casually) India, Pakistan, and the USSR convened national and international congresses in late 1975.

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