



## BŪSTĀN

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**BŪSTĀN**, in early sources referred to as *Sa'dī-nāma*, a moralistic and anecdotal verse work consisting of some 4,100 *maṭnawī* couplets by Shaikh Moṣleḥ-al-Dīn Sa'dī, completed in 655/1257. The date is given by Sa'dī himself in his preamble, and from some indications in two verses it may be surmised that the work was in fact completed between 2 Šawwāl/13 October and 29 Du'l-ḥejja/20 December and perhaps more precisely on 30 Du'l-qa'da/21 November of that year (for discussion of arguments concerning the exact date of completion, see G. M. Wickens, tr., *Morals Pointed and Tales Adorned*, p. 250 nn. 114-15). *Būstān*, though often rendered as "Garden of Fragrance" or "Pleasure Garden," really has a more concrete meaning, such as "Fragrant Herb Garden" (on the meaning of the title, cf. S. Naficy, "Būstān," in *EI*<sup>2</sup> I, p. 1345). The *Būstān* is the best-known poem of its general kind in Persian literature and is in many ways unique.

As is indicated in the lengthy (and routinely subdivided) preamble, the work is dedicated to Sa'dī's patron at the time, the Salghurid *atābak* of Fārs, Abū Bakr b. Sa'd b. Zangī (r. 623-58/1226-60), but his son Sa'd and more particularly his grandson Moḥammad b. Sa'd are also praised (on Sa'dī's patrons see M. Qazvīnī, "Mamdūḥīn-e Sa'dī," in *Sa'dī-nāma*, special issue of *Majalla-ye ta'līm o tarbiyat*, 1316 Š./1937, pp. 726-33). It is divided into ten chapters, the titles of which are actually given in the preamble. They provide at least an approximate guide to their respective contents: 1. on justice, good management of affairs, and good judgment; 2. on beneficence (i.e., charitable acts above the call of strict duty); 3. on love, intoxication, and passion; 4. on



humility; 5. on acceptance (i.e., of God's will); 6. on contentment (i.e., with limited material possessions); 7. on the world of edification (in effect, about restraint or self-control); 8. on gratitude for being in good estate; 9. on repentance and taking the right course; 10. on close communion (with God).

Sa'dī himself may have valued the *Būstān* somewhat above his lighter and more generally popular prose-and-verse *Golestān*, which he produced a few months later, probably partly from unused material originally considered for the earlier work. In both works a very high standard of elegance, fluency, color, and effectiveness is maintained throughout, but the *Būstān* is undoubtedly of more serious purpose and tone. Although it does contain twenty to thirty significant stories (out of the 160 specifically designated as "tales" in this writer's translation; see Wickens), most of the narratives are short, and many are fairly incidental to the discursive text. The important component is the argument, though the work is generally contemplative, rhapsodic, and exhortatory, rather than closely reasoned in any philosophical sense.

The *Būstān* may be perceived as inculcating a code of behavior that is a paradoxical combination of the realistic and pragmatic with the mystical and high-minded; taken as a whole and literally, it includes undoubted contradictions. But, especially in the first chapter, it contains passages of particular frankness, even of courage, addressed (albeit usually in partially disguised form) to rulers and other people in authority in the poet's time (see, e.g., Wickens, p. xxi).

A good deal of the material purports to be drawn from direct personal experience (most notably, perhaps, the famous story of the desecration of the idol in Gujerat). Henri Massé, in his work on the potential correlation of Sa'dī's life and writings (see bibliography below), makes a rather positive judgment on this point. The majority of Persian critics, however, consider such stories to have been invented by Sa'dī in order to illustrate his views and therefore consider them hardly to be taken literally for the reconstruction of his life (see 'A. Qarīb, ed., *Golestān*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1310 Š./1930, p. *yh*; and Mīnovī, *Naqd-e ḥāl*, Tehran, 1351 Š./1973, p. 333). This is not to suggest that Sa'dī meant to mislead. If he had, he would—in his small, close-knit world—soon have become a byword for exaggeration and untruth, whereas in fact he was a respected, even revered, figure in his later years. But whatever his personality may have included of learning, wisdom, mystical yearning, and adventurousness, he was first and foremost a literary craftsman and a creative



artist. His chief concern, whether arguing a case or telling a tale, was to be lucid, witty, persuasive, and almost forcibly immediate. It is this last quality that sets his work off from so much in the classical Islamic literatures (even the prose works) that is wholly abstract and idealized. Sa'dī saw his own world distinctly and vividly, and he brings us as intimately into it as a poet can do at a remove of more than seven centuries, thousands of miles, and enormous cultural, scientific, and technical change. The other striking aspect of his immediacy is the note of originality he nearly always succeeds in sounding: Wherever his material comes from, and much of it is rooted in Islamic tradition derived from Koranic precepts and the words and deeds of the Prophet Moḥammad, he almost invariably makes it his own by a subtle, and occasionally not so subtle, process of assimilation and revivification.

The *Būstān* remains a much-quoted work, even though the quotations are not always accurate or acknowledged. In this respect it exemplifies something of that thorough blend of national wisdom and linguistic sense that is represented in English by the Bible and the works of Shakespeare.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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There are literally innumerable manuscripts, as well as both lithographed and printed editions emanating from Iran and the broader Persian cultural sphere. The most recent critical edition, with commentaries, is by Ġ.-Ḥ. Yūsofī, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1363 Š./1963. Well-known earlier editions include those of the famous scholar and statesman M.-'A. Forūḡī (d. 1322 Š./1943; ed. Tehran, 1316 Š./1937), which has been reprinted many times, and of K. H. Graf (Vienna, 1858). Other noteworthy editions are by 'A. Qarīb, Tehran, 1328 Š./1949; E. Amīrkīzī, 2nd ed., Tabrīz, 1312 Š./1933; N. Īrānparast, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973; R. Aliev, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968, with commentaries and notes; and M.-'A. Nāṣeḥ, Tehran, 1354 Š./1975. Translations into various Western and other languages are also numerous, but most of them are out of print and virtually inaccessible. For a listing of such translations up to the year 1919 see H. Massé, *Essai sur le poète Saadi* (Paris, 1919; 9th ed., tr. Yūsofī and M. Ḥ. Mahdawī Ardabīlī, Tehran, 1364 Š./1985, with notes and commentary not always in agreement with those of the



author), pp. 33-35 (for translations of fragments see pp. 38-41); this study is also a reference work that is virtually exhaustive up to the date of publication. For subsequent researches on Sa'dī after publication of Massé's work, see J. D. Pierson, ed., *Index Islamicus*, s. vv.; Ī. Afšār, *Fehrest-e maqālāt-e fārsī*, s.vv.; and Y. M. Nawwābī, *A of Iran II*, Tehran, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 447-62. Graf published a fairly good German version (*Moslicheddin Sadi's Lustgarten*, Jena, 1850). G. M. Wicken's English version, under the title *Morals Pointed and Tales Adorned* (Toronto, 1974; repr. 1978), contains an introduction, extensive commentary, and further bibliographical information. A perceptive monograph on Sa'dī's thought and poetry is 'A. Daštī, *Dar qalamrow-e Sa'dī* (In the realm of Sa'dī), Tehran, 1338 Š./1959.

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