



ĀHĀR ONŞOR

ĀHĀR ONŞOR (Four elements), an autobiographical work in prose by the poet and Sufi Abu'l-Ma'ānī Mīrzā 'Abd-al-Qāder Bīdel (1054-1138/1644-1720), who probably began work on it in 1094/1682 and completed it, according to the concluding chronogram, in 1116/1704 (*Kollīyāt*, pp. 301, 588). The book consists of a short preface and four chapters (*onşors*), each with a conclusion (*kātema*). Although throughout the entire work autobiography is mingled with descriptions of Bīdel's mystical and metaphysical experiences and with approximately 18,000 of his verses (*Gol-e ra'nā*, fol. 106), each chapter is focused in a general way on an aspect of his life. In the first he describes meetings with a number of Sufis and dervishes during his youth; in the second he deals with his own poetry and the art of poetry in general; in the third he discusses a number of metaphysical, theosophical, philosophical, and Sufi topics; and in the fourth he recounts the wonders of his time and events of his own life. What emerges is the self-portrait of an extraordinary person, gifted since boyhood with unusual spiritual power.

Āhār onşor is the most reliable source on Bīdel's career and helps to clear up much of the confusion about his life in accounts by contemporary and later biographers. It contains an intimate picture of his family, as well as details of his early life, his extensive travels in India, and his contacts with the Sufis who shaped his career: in particular, Shah Molūk of Benares, Mawlānā Sayyed Maḥmūd (d. 830/1435), Shaikh Kamāl, Shah Kābolī, Shah Yaktā Āzād, Shah Fāzel and Shah Abu'l-Qāsem. References to contemporary events (e.g., the power struggle among the sons of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahān and its



consequences) and personalities (e.g., the contemporary painter Anup Āatr) lend the work additional value as a historical document. The prose style is extremely difficult and ornate. A few years later a pupil of Bidel, Lālā Seo Rām Dās Hayā (d. 1144/1731), wrote *Golgašt-e bahār-e eram* after the model of *Āahāronőor* (Kvoőgū, p. 183).

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