



ĠAZĀLĪ MAŠHADĪ

ĠAZĀLĪ MAŠHADĪ (b. Mašhad, 933/1526-27, d. Ahmadabad, Gujarat, 27 Rajab 980/3 December 1572), poet laureate in Persian (*malek-al-šo'arā'*) at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar (q.v.). Nothing is known about his family background, even his real name is unknown. His birthdate is known from a reference in one of his poems (*Dīvān*, fol. 86; 'Abbāsī, p. 52; Hādī, p. 30). During his youth he went to Qazvīn and joined the court of Shah Ṭahmāsb (r. 930-84/1524-76) for some time. From his poems it appears that Ġazālī also visited other Persian cities, including Tabrīz and Kermān. In 958/1551-52 he was sent by the shah to Shiraz in order to satirize K̄vāja Amīr Beg Kajajī, keeper of the royal seal, who had earned the shah's displeasure for allegedly claiming in Shiraz that he had power over the stars. Due to his liberal thinking, however, Ġazālī was soon accused of heresy and, fearing for his life, left his native country for India (Badā'ūnī, *Montakab*, tr., Ranking et al., III, p. 239). Traveling by sea, he reached the Deccan, where he tried unsuccessfully to win literary patronage. He was later invited by K̄n(-e) Zamān 'Alīqolī Khan Šaybānī, the governor of Jaunpūr, who sent him one thousand rupees and some horses to join his service. Ġazālī remained in 'Alīqolī Khan's service until the latter's violent death in his abortive revolt against Akbar (974/1567). Ġazālī was among the servants of the deceased who fell into the hands of Akbar and who were retained by him in his service. He must have already come to Akbar's attention, since he had in 966/1558-59 dedicated to him a collection of his poetry (*Dīvān*, preface to *Āṭār al-šabāb*, fol. 53a); he may have also enjoyed the support of some trusted dignitaries of the empire whom he had praised in his poems. Whatever the reasons, his fortunes rose speedily, and in 975/1567



he was appointed as the first poet laureate, an institution introduced by Akbar. Subsequently he lived a life of comfort and material well-being until his death in 980/1572 (Badā'ūnī *Montakab*, tr., Ranking et al., p. 240). He was buried in Ahmadabad at Sarkhēj in a cemetery reserved for princes and men of rank.

Ġazālī's relations with fellow-poets were not always pleasant. Both in Persia and in India he engaged in poetical altercations with his contemporaries, exchanging insults. He, however, maintained friendly association with Fayzī Dakanī (*Majma' al-foṣaḥā'* IV, p. 47), who succeeded him as Akbar's poet laureate and commemorated his death in a poem (*Kollīyat-e Fayzī*, Aligarh Muslim University ms., fol. 286b; Golčīn-e Ma'ānī, *Kārvān* II, p. 937).

Estimates vary as to the extent of Ġazālī's poetic output, ranging from 50,000 to 100,000 couplets. A rare manuscript of his *Dīvān* in the British Library contains around 12,000 couplets, including *qaṣīdas*, *ġazals*, *maṭnawīs*, *qet'as*, *robā'īs*, *tarkīb-bands*, and *tarjī'-bands*. His *qaṣīdas* are not confined to eulogies of rulers and nobles, but treat other subjects as well, including praise of God and the Prophet, mysticism, and personal experiences and observations. Among the individuals panegyricized are Shah Ṭahmāsb, Khan-e Zamān, and Akbar, who stands out as the poet's principal recipient of praise. Most of the *qaṣīdas* follow the tradition of the 15th and early 16th century poets, but there are also specimens modeled after earlier masters such as Kāqānī Šarvānī (d. ca. 595/1198) and Amīr Ḳosrow Dehlavī (d. 725/1325).

Ġazālī's *ġazals* deal primarily with mystical and philosophical themes. They are characterized by sensitivity of feeling and felicity of expression. Among Ġazālī's *maṭnawīs* the most important piece is *Naqṣ-e badī'*, a mystical poem of about one thousand couplets composed after the model of Neẓāmī's *Maḳzan al-asrār*. According to *Haft eqlīm* (II, p. 212), it was composed while the poet was working for Khan-e Zamān, but he may have begun working on it earlier, since its prologue contains a *qaṣīda* addressed to Shah Ṭahmāsb. It is reported that Khan-e Zamān rewarded Ġazālī with one gold coin for each of its couplets (Gōpāmavī, p. 510). Ġazālī was a poet of great merit and distinction, whom Abu'l-Faẓl 'Allāmī praises as "unrivalled in depth of understanding and sweetness of language" (*Ā'īn-e akbarī*, tr., I, p. 568), and Badā'ūnī, with some reservations, regards his poems as "superior to those of any of his contemporaries" (*Montakab*, tr. Ranking et al., p. 240). According to Zabīḥ-Allāh Šafā, Ġazālī was "a poet seldom equalled by anyone during the entire 10th/16th century" (*Adabīyāt* V/2, pp. 704-5).



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- S. 'Abbāsī, *Ġazālī Mašhadī: Ḥayāt awr kārnamē*, Lucknow, 1978.
Ātaškada II, pp. 471-75.
- Esmā'īl Pāšā Baġdādī, *Hadīat al-ārefīn*, Istanbul, 1951, p. 812.
- Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan E'temād-al-Salṭana, *Maṭla' al-šams*, Tehran, 1362 Š./1983, II, p. 727.
- Ġazālī Mašhadī, *Dīvān*, MS London, British Library, Add. 25,023.
- A. Golčīn-e Ma'ānī, *Tadkerahā* II, Tehran, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 669-70.
- Idem, *Kārvān-e Hend*, 2 vols., Mašhad, 1369 Š./1990, II, pp. 932-51.
- Qodrat-Allāh Gōpāmavī, *Natā'ej al-afkār*, Bombay, 1336 Š./1957.
- N. Hādī, *Moġalōn kē malek-al-šo'arā'*, Allahabad, 1978, pp. 23-71.
- Ḳayyāmpūr, *Soḳanvarān*, p. 419.
- Lačhmī Narā'in Šafīq Awrangābādī, *Šām-e ġarībān*, ed. Akbar-al-Dīn, Karachi, 1977, p. 195.
- Modarres, *Rayḥānat al-adab* III, pp. 151-52.
- Nafīsī, *Nazm o naṭr* I, pp. 414-15; II, p. 820. Rieu, *Persian Manuscripts* II, pp. 661-63.
- Šafā, *Adabīyāt* V, pp. 700-13. Šāhnavāz Khan Ḳvāfī, *Bahārestān-e soḳan*, Madras, 1958, pp. 410-12.
- Sālek Nā'inī, "Ġazālī," *Armaġān* 12, 1310 Š./1931, pp. 338-39.