



# HELĀLI ASTARĀBĀDI JAGATĀ'Ī

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**HELĀLI ASTARĀBĀDI JAGATĀ'Ī**, Mawlānā Badr-al-Din (Nur-al-Din), accomplished Persian poet of Turkish origin (b. Astarābād, ca. 874/1470; d. Herat, 936/1529). Helāli spent his early years in his native town, before moving, in around 895/1491, to Herat, where he became a member of the literary circle of Sultan Ḥosayn-e Bāyqarā (q.v.). In particular, he became a close associate of 'Ali-Šir Navā'i, who took him under his protection. He performed the Hajj with Jāmi and also came to know Sām Mirzā Šafawi well. Though often thought to be a Shi'ite, Helāli was certainly a Sunnite in religious affiliation. He stayed at Herat during the critical period when the city was claimed by the two rising powers, the Safavids and the Uzbeks. The conquest of Herat by the Uzbek khan, 'Obayd-Allāh, led to Helāli's public execution at the city's public square (*čahār-su*) in 936/1529, an act which the sources present as an example of 'Obayd-Allāh's tyranny. The execution was accompanied with the distraint of all his properties. The reason commonly adduced for his execution, carried out apparently by a certain "Sayf-Allāh" (the chronogram "Sayf-Allāh košt" = 936), was that he was charged with being a Shi'ite. However, the most likely reason is to be found in certain derogatory verses, originally composed by him against Shah Ṭahmāsp but subsequently directed against 'Obayd-Allāh Kān, which end with *kāfer bāšam agar mosalmān bāši* (I am an infidel if you're a believer!; Dickson, 1958, pp. 159-60; Golč'in-e Ma'āni, *Tāriḳ*). Helāli is buried in Herat near Faḳr-al-Din 'Ali-Šafi b. Ḥosayn-e Kāšefi, in a modern mausoleum built to replace the original tomb at the public square



where he had been executed (Golčín-e Ma'āni, 1964). Helāli had a daughter, called Jamāli (Ḥejābi), who went on to become an accomplished poet in her own right, renowned especially for her ghazals (Szuppe, 1996, pp. 126-27).

Helāli's literary output is rightly considered as among the most refined and original examples of Persian literature from the first half of the 16th century. Although one can detect the formal adherence to classical models, represented not only by Ḥāfeẓ but also by poets such as 'Ārefī, Jāmi, and Kamāl-al-Din Ḳojandi, Helāli's work, similar to his life, displays a directness and immediacy which is quite unique in this period. His poetry is well-known in Central Asia, in particular in Tajikistan, where it is still recited by folk singers (*hofiz* [*ḥāfeẓ*]; see Bečka, pp. 500-501).

The *Divān* is Helāli's principal work. It has been edited several times, and it has also received critical attention from Sa'id Nafisi, who has published, except for the *Laylā o Majnun*, the best scholarly edition of Helāli's works (1959). Further editions have been published in India and Iran. The *Divān* includes numerous ghazals, some qasidas, *robā'iyāts*, and smaller fragments of verse.

Helāli also wrote three *maṭnawis*, all of which are of uncertain date. According to Kamol Ayni (1957, pp. 74-77) the *Šāh o darviš* (often called *Šāh o gedā*) was most likely written between 904/1499 and 913/1508. This work was written in response to the charge, leveled by Helāli's rival, 'Abd-Allāh Hātefi (q.v.), that he was unable to write a *maṭnawī*. It was dedicated to Badi'-al-Zamān Mirzā and has been generally well received, though Bābor found it rather shallow and immoral (*Bābor-nāma*, p. 290, fols. 181a-181b). This work is predominantly mystical in content, which may account for its popularity, even outside of the Persian-speaking regions. This popularity is attested by the fact that it has often been reproduced in illustrated manuscripts (Arnold, 1926; Ådhal, 1995). The *Šāh o darviš* has been translated into German by Ethé (1870), and one translation into Turkish by Ḥamdi is reported by Kāteb Čalabi (I, 1067) as well as by Sa'id Nafisi (1958, p. 19, intro.).

With regard to the other two *maṭnawis*, the *Şefat al-āşeqin*, which is divided into 20 chapters, each describing a human quality, was written as a response to the *Maḳzan al-asrār* by Neẓāmi, probably after 913/1508. The third *maṭnawī*, *Laylā o Majnun*, is extant in only one late manuscript at the British Museum Library (Or. 319; Levend, 1959, p. 88), in contrast to the other two, which are found in numerous manuscripts. Ivanow (1926, p. 147, no. 175) has brought attention to the existence also of a treatise on rhyme by Helāli, entitled *Resāla-*



ye *qāfiya*, which was inspired by Šams-e Qays (The Asiatic Society of Bengal, ms. II 528). Although he is renowned for his writings in Persian, Helāli did also write some verse in Turkish (Navā'i, p. 53).

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