



## MUSHFIQI, ABDURAHMON

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**MUSHFIQI, ABDURAHMON** (Mošfeqi, ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān), Tajik poet (b. Bukhara, ca. 1525; d. Bukhara, 1588). Little is known about his life. Orphaned as a child, he was taken in by an artisan family in Bukhara and thus he grew up among the working population of the city, a circumstance that deeply influenced his poetic vision. He attended a madrasa, where he studied astronomy, astrology, and philosophy, but he gave his heart to poetry and practiced this profession for the rest of his life. While at the madrasa he cultivated the powerful, but his humble origins and his predilection for satire stymied his efforts to secure a patron. Influential persons paid him little attention despite the panegyrics he wrote in praise of them (Karimov, pp. 115-16).

His fortunes improved somewhat after he left Bukhara for Samarkand in 1564. There he obtained a post as librarian to Sultan Sa‘id (r. 1568-72), but he lived modestly, as he was rarely paid. He wanted to return to Bukhara, and in 1572 in a panegyric *qasida*, he sought the approval of Abdullah Khan (‘Abdallāh Khan), the effective ruler of the khanate, but he was ignored. Instead, he traveled to India in 1577 in search of patronage, meeting the Mughal emperor [Akbar](#) in Delhi and composing *qasidas* in his honor, but all to no avail. In 1578 he returned to Samarkand. By this time he had achieved fame as a poet, and Abdullah Khan at last saw the wisdom of welcoming him to his court. There he became an influential figure, gaining recognition as “king of poets” (*malek-al-šo‘arā*) and spending the last decade of his life in relative peace and comfort.

Mushfiqi was a productive poet who worked in a variety of genres and



subjects. The results were two divans of *ġazals*, one of *qasidas*, and one of satires. Both divans of *ġazals* were compiled in Samarkand: the first, of 2000 distiches (*bayts*) in 1566 and dedicated to Sultan Sa'īd, and the second, of 2100 distiches, in 1578. Each also contained *robā'īs*, *qet'as*, and *moḡammases*. The divan of *qasidas* consists mainly of poems written before Abdullah Khan's formal reign (1583-98). The divan of satires was compiled in 1558 during Mushfiqi's studies at the madrasa and contained works in prose as well as *qasidas* and other genres. He was the only Tajik poet to have compiled a separate divan of satires (Hodizoda et al., p. 111). The *ġazals* and satires link him to the tastes and moods of the urban world, whereas the *qasidas* stamp him as a court poet.

Mushfiqi also wrote three *maṭnawīs*. *Soqinoma* (*sāqi-nāma*), short and mystical, and *Jahonnoma* (*jahān-nāma*), dedicated to the military exploits of Abdullah Khan, are conventional pieces. *Gulzori Iram* (*golzār-e eram*), written in 1571-72 and consisting of 1140 distiches, at first glance also seems conventional; it is about two lovers who must overcome numerous obstacles to achieve true happiness. Mushfiqi, however, has given his main characters figurative names describing human emotions and other qualities, and he allows each to play a role in keeping with his or her name (Mushfiqi, 1958, pp. 267-85). His model was Fattāḥi's romantic allegory, *Ḥosn o Del*, but his story is closer to popular tales and his style accessible to a wider audience (Ahrori, pp. 217-20).

Mushfiqi was at once a satirist, a court panegyrist, and a devotee of romantic love. His immensely popular satirical poems, which belong mainly to his early years, were personal rather than social. He directs them at individuals from his own social surroundings: artists, other poets, and artisans, and he was usually light-hearted and playful (Ahrori, pp. 173-99). Because they portrayed living human beings and real-life situations and because the characters spoke the language of the people, the poet himself became a figure of folklore, "Molla Mushfiqi," not unlike the Naṣreddin Hoja or Naṣreddin Afandi of traditional anecdotes. So identified with this humorous verse did he become that it almost obscured his more serious work (Aini, p. 141). Sometimes he did not write to amuse others or to settle a personal grudge, but rather turned his satire against the higher ranks of Bukharan society, qadis, mollas, and mystics, to castigate greed, ignorance, and cruelty.

As he matured, Mushfiqi generally refrained from such open criticism of the rich and powerful because he was either seeking the patronage of rulers or



had gained an official post, as in Samarkand and Bukhara. Although he wrote poems in praise of many public figures, ‘Abdullah Khan was the special object of his flattery (Ahrori, pp. 154, 157-58), as in *qasidas* celebrating the khan’s capture of Tashkent in 1579 and his victory over the governor (*ḥākem*) of Turkestan in 1583. Mushfiqi went so far as to laud Abdullah Khan’s reign as unmatched for the pleasures of life and creativity it had bestowed on his people (Karimov, pp. 116-17). Yet, on rare occasions, he could be critical. In one of his most famous poems, “Taqsimi meros,” (Dividing the Inheritance) he condemned the unjust nature of contemporary society. Toward the end of his life in a *qasida* addressed to Abdullah Khan, he complained about oppression and the unbearable suffering of the poor caused by officials and others at court. Nevertheless, he praised Abdullah Khan as a defender of the downtrodden in the hope, apparently, that he could thus be persuaded to soften his harsh rule.

In his *ḡazals*, Mushfiqi assumed yet another guise, that of the poet of love. His mastery of form and language is striking and his portrayal of the lovers is natural and elegant. The love his poems reveal is neither allegorical nor divine. It is the personal and down-to-earth love of a man and woman, whose full range of emotions he portrays in flowing verses.

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