



NAW'Ī

NAW'Ī, MOḤAMMAD-REŽĀ ḲABUŠĀNI (b. Ḳabušān ca. 970/1563; d. Borhānpur, 1019/1610), Persian poet, who moved from his hometown Qučān (Ḳabušān) in Khorasan to India and enjoyed the patronage of the Mughals. He was descended from the mystic Shaikh Ḥāji MoḤammad Ḳabušāni. Modern scholars have questioned the statement in some *tadkeras* that he lived for a while in Kashan, where he became a disciple of the great Safavid poet [Moḥtašam Kāšāni](#) (d. 1587). It seems more likely that he left for India at the age of seventeen and only returned to Iran for a few years before permanently moving to the subcontinent (Golčīn-e Mā'āni, pp. 1478-79). At the beginning of his career in India he was in the company of Mirzā Yusof Khan Mašhadi, a patron of the arts who served as a military commander and governor of Kashmir under Jalāl-al-din Akbar Shah (Golčīn-e Mā'āni, II, pp. 1556-57). Later he enjoyed the patronage of the emperor Akbar's third and youngest son, Dāniāl, and after the prince's death in 1604, the patronage of the Mughal general and statesman 'Abd-al-Raḥim Ḳān-e Ḳānān, who was Prince Dāniāl's father-in-law and a patron of the arts and poetry.

The published *divān* of Naw'ī contains poems in all of the major forms: *gāzal*, *robā'i*, *maṭnawi*, *qaṣida* (lyrics, quatrains, rhymed couplets, odes), *tarji'band*, and *tarkibband* (forms of [stanzaic poetry](#)); however, the large part of it is *gāzals* and *maṭnawis*. In the *gāzal* Naw'ī was inspired by the master poets [Hafez](#) and [Moḥtašam Kāšāni](#). His panegyric poems are addressed to Prince Dāniāl, the prophet MoḤammad, and Shi'ite Imams. One of the short *maṭnawis* is a *sāqi-nāma* (quoted by Faḳr-al-Zamāni, pp. 262-79), a popular genre among



Safavid and Mughal poets, which was dedicated to the *Ḳān-e Ḳānān*. Another short *maṭnawī* is about his imprisonment, but the particulars of this episode in the poet's life are not known to us (*Divān*, pp. 283-86).

Naw'ī is best known for his long *maṭnawī*, *Suz o godāz*, which consists of 492 distiches (*bayt*) in *baḥr-e hazaj* meter. It was probably written around 1604, just before Dāniāl's death. This work, in the form of a conventional romance in the tradition of *Layli o Majnun* and *Ḳosrow o Širin*, is centered on a suttee (*sati*) heroine. The whole narrative is described as a simple event witnessed by the poet, perhaps deliberately to add an ethnographic flavor to the work. The story is about two childhood sweethearts, not named in the text, who are going to be married. On the day of their wedding, part of a building falls on the groom and kills him. During the cremation ceremony of the lover by his family, the beloved insists on burning herself on the funeral pyre as a display of her eternal love. Everyone tries to dissuade her but to no avail. Eventually the matter is taken up to Prince Dāniāl, and then even the emperor Akbar attempts to stop her (Figure 1). In the end, however, as a gesture of sensitivity to her cultural tradition, they sanction the deed (Figure 2). The poem ends with a debate (*monāzara*) on the topic of love between a fish and a salamander.

The production of this work would seem to be part of the larger interest in stories of Indian origin at the Mughal court and can be compared to the *Nal o Daman*, a versified romance by the poet laureate Fayzi (d. 1004/1595). The language of the poem is extremely rhetorical and replete with fire imagery, but it cannot be considered a mystical work, as has been done by some (e.g., Coomaraswamy). Based on the political aspect of the poem, it has been suggested that it was composed to promote Dāniāl's low standing in the emperor's eyes (Sharma, pp. 262-63). The work later inspired a number of *sati-nāmas* of a non-courtly nature (*Ḳazānadārlu*, pp. 96-99). There are several illustrated manuscripts of Naw'ī's romance, some in the Safavid style, indicating that the work must have gained a modicum of popularity (*Şafā*, pp. 881-82). The art historian Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (in Dawud and Coomaraswamy, pp. 3-4) introduced the manuscripts of this work in the British Library (Rieu, II, p. 674; for manuscripts, see also Monzawi) and co-authored a partial translation of the poem.

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