KHWAJA MIR DARD
1720-1785

KHWAJA MIR DARD belonged to a family of divines and nobles. Born in Delhi in 1720, he lived the retired life of a dervish, and did not leave the capital even in the worst days which forced others to seek refuge in other cities. He received early instruction in theology from his father, and inherited the main traits of his character, piety, nobility, and love of poetry from him. He joined the army, but gave up his military career at his father's behest, and retired to a life of sufism at the early age of twenty-eight. In another ten years his father died, and Dard became the head of two religious orders as well as of his influential family. An embodiment of culture, he stood in no need of favor or flattery, and frowned on patronage.

He was a well-known musician, and held musical soirees three times a month at his house which attracted the best singers of the city, and there were many in Delhi, the love of music being at its height, the Emperor Shah Alam himself being a great lover of the art. His religious gatherings were attended by notable sheikhs and sufis of the day. He also held a literary meeting once a fortnight at which he read out some of his own works, and where Mir and other well-known poets recited their poems. He was held in high esteem by everyone, and even Sauda was unwilling to stand comparison with him:

O Sauda, change the rhyme,
And rewrite this ghazal:

Disrespectful fool, seek not
Comparison with Dard.

Dard is the author of eight books and tracts on sufism and religious subjects, and a volume of verse, all in Persian. He left only one short volume of poems in Urdu, consisting of less than two thousand she'rs. He wrote only when the mood took him, and held the highest conception of poetry. He was a believer in monism, and his experience was intuitive. His system had no place for sensuousness and worldly love. Yet he achieves sincerity and a unique intensity of emotion which are expressed with great beauty of word and image.

Mysticism has been an essential part of oriental sensibility. The religious background, philosophic discipline, and the uncertainties of life have inclined the poets to mystical thought; and there has been no poet, except Sauda and Dagh perhaps, who has not been influenced by it. But Dard's vision is purely mystical, and he remains the only consistent suf'i poet in Urdu, for which reason he has suffered an eclipse today, as no one has the aptitude for high seriousness and spiritual fervor. Yet the sense of eternal sadness found in some of his poems has seldom been surpassed, and brings him close to that great master of sorrow, Mir, who was his close contemporary, and who speaks of Dard with the greatest respect in his account of the poets. And with Mir he is ranked a great lyrical poet. He died at the age of sixty-six in 1785. His pseudonym means 'pain'.

The loved one's irresistible ways
Have lured my heart,
Although I knew how tricky was
Their art.

Man was made to bear the pangs
And pain of love;

126 POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

127 KHWAJA MIR DARD
For other fealty angels were
Enough.
The eyes themselves were wandering,
But then, alas,
Their wandering ways have waylaid too
My heart.

So long as life remains
I'll search for thee,
And so long as I live
This will my prayer be.
For thee, dear love, alone
My soul aspires,
And all my longing is,
Beloved, thy desire.
Where has my heart, O Dard,
Cast its eye?
Wherever I behold
I see no one but thee.

Blame was all
That we received;
What we were born for
Never achieved.
Is it a storm,
Or is it life?
We die of living
And the strife.
I do not care
For flowers, O breeze;
They bloom a moment,
Then they cease.
So like a spark
Is beingless being;

It's just as well
I've lived my term.
Farewell, my friend,
I've seen the show
Of the earth and now
Must homeward go.
Time moves and soon
We shall be gone;
So fill the cup,
Let wine flow on.
Do you perchance,
O Mir Dard know
Wherewith we come
And whither go?

When I could not see Thee and all Thy majesty,
I do not care if I saw the world or did not see.
Pain, affliction, suffering, sorrow, grief and blame,
I've known them in Thy love and all their agony.
And yet when with the wounds of love I gloved like a tree
Lit up at night, you did not care to come and see.
I was myself a veil upon the loved one's face,
For when I looked there was no veil 'twixt me and Thee.
Night and day, O Dard, I'm looking for the one
Whom no one in the world has seen or hopes to see.

Whether school or mosque or tavern,
Kaaba or the temple,
You were the master everywhere
And we but only guests.
Alas, the foolishness! It was
Proved at time of death
That all we saw was but a dream,
A tale all that we heard.
When I was free of cares you had
Dwelt within my heart
Which now remains the dwelling place
Of vain and futile thoughts.
Forget, be glad, remember not
Those bygone days of old:
What use relating now if, Dard,
The friend was there or not?

They say the rose garden
Was struck by Autumn, alas,
I had a friend residing there—
A lonely blade of grass.

RUBAI
In vain, in vain, my love, to the river bank you go,
Look into the mirror’s face instead, and lo!
Your eyes are swimming thus with inebriety
As though a boat were rowed against the water’s flow.

RUBAI ENLARGED
These flowering fields you love so much
And which receive
Such tender care from you, relate
A different tale to me.
For when the flowers fade, the buds
Contemplate
And say: Like them we too one day
Shall wilt away.

130 POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

MUKHAMMAS
All those who are of inmost self aware
Never look at appearances here.
The fire of love is present even in stone,
It’s not the heart that burns with it alone,
Glowing in every rock you’ll find this fire.
Give up discourse with men and quiet be,
Desire only the soul’s serenity.
Seek joys of union in a state of wonder,
Look for guidance in your heart’s own mirror.
Each eye can see if sincere is desire.
Though life has decked out all its market place,
The seeking eye can always see that face.
You should not walk a step carelessly here,
But cross the mountain gently till all’s clear,
Each stone is the glass-makers’ workshop here.
Each rose that blows points to the object of sight,
The hyacinth decks the tresses of the night.
When I reflected, all astonishment,
Then fell apart the veil of hue and scent,
And I saw Spring in full refugence there.
Distance makes no difference, far or near,
Be not overwhelmed with despair:
All this is no more than the mirror of fancy,
Out of the eye see as the eye should see;
You travel only to your own self here.
Hidden behind each weakness lies the strong,
In each defect perfection all along;
For no one in the world is bad or faulty,
Each has goodness, virtue, piety;
The fault lies in concealing virtue here.

1 A poem of five-line stanzas.
O Dard, the secrets of Eternity
Cannot be known to wily preachers, earthy.
Never without humility will they
Reach where the wings of my fancy find their way,
For mortal flesh arrests all flight here.

It is the anguish of your love that fills
My heart with light and beauty night and day.
There’s constancy in pain as though in the sting
Of the bee its antidote were hidden away.
O Solomon, do not be proud or vain,
Not different from ants’ wings are throne and sway.
Believer I am not in man’s free will,
His life is pre-ordained, let come what may.
Just look around and see the show of Love:
One has arrived, another cast away.
The candle and the moth embrace, are close,
But parted are the bulbul and the rose.

Of human life there is no certainty;
It will depart unnoticed, silently;
For I have seen this wide, wide universe,
It’s all a faint footprint wherever you see.
Be gentle once, O cruel one, for soon
Things may decay and change entirely.
You may destroy the heart, but don’t forget
That it’s the seat of God’s great majesty.
Annihilation’s all the eye beholds,
The bubble solved for me this mystery.
When all this universe from you alone
Takes form, why should you yourself hide from me?
Your wits are wandering, it seems, that’s why
From this world you expect stability.
Turn not your face away from any one
If your heart has the mirror’s purity.
But lost is the heart and can nowhere be found,
For no one knows in whose search it could be.
And I am searching for it on my part,
Carrying this wound deep in my heart.

A poem in which the last line of each stanza carries a different rhyme.

According to legendary belief if the shadow of this bird falls on anyone he becomes a king.
MOHAMMAD TAQI MIR

1723–1810

MOHAMMAD TAQI MIR was born at Agra in 1723. His father was a dervish, and in his childhood Mir received instruction from him and his devoted friend and disciple Syed Amanullah, and spent most of his time in the company of dervishes. His father died when Mir was only eleven, but even at this age the advice he gave his son was, as became a sufi and dervish, to make love his aim in life. “My son,” said his father, “take to love, for love alone rules the earth. Had there been no love the scheme of this universe would have remained imperfect. Life without love is full of anguish, and to lose the heart in love is the height of perfection. Love creates and love destroys. Whatever there is in the world is the glory of love. . . . Life is short-lived; never neglect your training, for there are many ups and downs in this path; walk with eyes wide open. . . . Become a bulb of a flower that is perennial. . . . Consider leisure a boon, and try to know thyself. . . .”

Mir inherited many of the qualities of his father whom he described as a “pious person and a devotee of love, with a warm and sympathetic heart. He was firm of character and difficult to please. . . . His eyes were full of understanding and he lived in a state of unconcern.”

After his father's death Mir had to earn his own living, and he migrated to Delhi. His father had left his only treasure of two hundred books to Mir’s elder half-brother, and only debts

to Mir. In Delhi some kind friends helped him, and one gave him education, another meals in exchange for lessons Mir gave him. But life for a young lad was difficult. His own half-brother intrigued against him and talked ill of him to his uncle who had given Mir a bed in his house. This was perhaps instigated by a love affair he had with a married maiden of his family which, having become known, turned his relatives against him. Mir fell ill and lost his reason. He began to see a strange face in the moon which haunted him day and night and fanned the fires of madness. He describes this malady, its course and cure both in his autobiography and in a verse tale, Illusion and Dream.

When he got well at last and completed his education, he started writing and became popular. He managed to fend for himself through the patronage of nobles, both Hindu and Muslim. But times were hard. The state of Delhi in the middle of the eighteenth century was deplorable. The Mughal Empire was tottering, and received a severe blow from the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739, which was followed by the invasions of Ahmad Shah Durrani from 1748 to 1756, and the raids of Marathas and other unruly tribes. Already sensitive with sorrow, Mir was deeply affected by the fate of the city and wrote:

Thieves and robbers, Sikhs, Marathas,
Kings and beggars, all desire:
They alone have peace who've sought,
Penury only is wealth here.

Nobles came to power and lost their positions. No wealth or stability remained. The emperor became a puppet in the hands of the rebels or invaders and, after the treaty of 1765 with the East India Company, a nominal king.

At the age of sixty-six Mir eventually left Delhi, which he loved dearly. He went to Lucknow where Asaf-ud-Daula, the nawab of Oudh, gave him a pension, and there it was that he died in 1808 at the age of eighty-eight, still pining for Delhi. His poetry is a true reflection of his experiences and life. It

1 Zikr-e-Mir, the autobiography of Mir.  
2 Ibid.
was his very breath, and there is nothing artificial or professional about his art. He was primarily a poet of love, a theme that had been impressed upon him even in childhood. In his attitude to love, Mir goes beyond the physical and enlightens the nature of Reality, defining, at the same time, the essence of his transcendentalism:

In one breath you have consumed
The cosmos and the world:
O Love, there is Love
To consume thee as well.  

It is in the verses on the heart, however, of which he is the greatest poet, that Mir’s real mind can be studied, and through which he expresses a whole philosophy of love and life. These poems are not merely symbolical, nor are others in Mir, or based on mere poetic convention. They contain a whole body of thought, a message to his generation and humanity to awaken to a fuller way, a deeper realization, of life.

Mir is a romantic, as great a one as William Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, with whom he is contemporary, and shares the creative quality of an imagination which believed in, and saw, the invisible hand behind all things visible. This is not just religious faith, as in Mir Dard whose poetry is the expression of the mystical comprehension and belief in the oneness and unity of God. In Mir it is the principle, the very soul of life, an intuitive realization of the unseen order, imaginative awareness of a cosmic unity which gives to things identity and name. The English poets did not possess this quality of the imagination which gave to Mir the insight and consciousness of an almost physical presence of the transcendental spirit, in the colors of the garden, the motion of the stars, the anguish of the bulbul’s heart, in the same way as he sees the intensity of his emotions in physical form.

His transcendentalism is so complete, his conception of the Beyond so clear that he can see beyond the act of creation:

This lamp was bequeathed to me
When neither breeze
Nor air had even been
Created in the world.

He has a clear picture in his mind of the nature of Beauty and the cause of Existence. Reality to him is a straight line from the Beyond to the Beyond, broken in the middle by a series of accidents which resulted in the egress deviation of creation. This accidental deviation into the world of imperfect reality causes all his sorrow and lies at the root of his great dejection. But the consciousness of the legacy of Love and Light sustains his heart and inspiration; and the knowledge that he will finally meet the lost trail and join it with the accumulated vitality of the experiences of accidental birth, leads to the triumph of his imagination.

The passing events, therefore, communicated to him something more positive, a philosophy of the nature of Reality:

Put each step here
With the greatest care:
This manufacture
Is the workshop, alas,
Of the maker of glass.

It is, thus, illusory, but with a difference. The illusion has a dual aspect, refractional and celestial, this-worldly and other-worldly, physical and transcendental, as elsewhere in Mir. He lived in two worlds, one celestial and divine, the other worldly. The celestial surrounded him on all sides. The world he saw as a vain and transitory place, a mere caravanserai, and his suffering as something abstract but in the form of a material object with a separate existence of its own.

He is no less philosophical towards Nature, for which he
has a deep, an intimate feeling bordering on the reverential, like Wordsworth's. It awakens in him deeper emotions, both beauty of objective sights and awe of hidden powers. With the delight of a child living in a world of birds and flowers, Mir calls to his aid his inseparable friend, the bulbul, to sound the note of warning:

With blaze of roses' color, Mir,
The garden is on fire;
The bulbul sounds a warning note:
Go past, O Sir, beware!

Never before Mir, and never since, has poetry been so sheer and inspiring, never has poet reached the hidden powers of creation, the source and fountainhead of inspiration so divine, compelling of love and life. Not even Wordsworth or Shelley or Keats reached the mysterious heights of which Mir writes with such simplicity and grace:

From door to door in the land of Love
Has spread the flame and fire of Hell:
Inflame us not, dissembling preacher,
This fire is not confined to earth.

This was the world he lived in, the pitch at which he felt and breathed. He created a burning beauty from the intensity and sensitiveness of his nature, and used language with a sorcery that weaves a net of light around words, discarding the suspect and less perfect, making Urdu illustrious and noble.

The deep and permanent effect the work of a poet creates on the minds of others is the real criterion of his greatness. In this, as in other qualities of language and imagery, Mir has no rival. Never before and never after him has imagination gripped a poet with such intensity, and in every aspect Mir stands out as the greatest lyrical and romantic poet of the subcontinent, and is worthy of a place of honor in world poetry.

He has left a book on the poets in Persian and an autobiography, also in Persian. His collected Urdu poems, consisting of six Divans, run almost into 50,000 lines, and range from ghazals and rubais to satires and odes of praise and mathnawis on various subjects including cats, dogs, birds, cockfights, as well as his own love affairs and themes both personal and descriptive; but in the ghazal lies his real greatness. There have been no two opinions about his work, and he has been talked of with the greatest respect. His pseudonym means 'Leader'.

1

Borrowed is all glory
And light from his effulgence,
Mirrored in the sun
Too is his reflection.

By reaching my own self
Alone could I find God;
It's only now I've learnt
How far from truth I was.

The one whom celestial nymphs
Envy was within
Us, Mir. If we did not know
It was then our own fault.

2

Yesterday I chanced to step
Upon a skull that lay
Broken and shattered in the dust
With despair and decay.

"Walk with open eyes and see,
O heedless one," it said;
"I too was once upon a time
A proud and haughty head."

138 POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

139 MOHAMMAD TAQI MIR
What is the life of the rose?
I asked the bud.
It listened, but for answer
Smiled in bloom.
Within the heart the drop
Of blood is a tear;
But when to the eye it comes
Creates a storm.

My heart's afflictions and its pain
Could not be cured, I tried in vain;
Useless were all remedies,
And futile were the potions that I drained.
My youth I spent in grief and tears,
And in old age I closed my eyes,
As though I had kept awake all night
And when the morning came I could not rise.
We, the helpless, are accused
Of independence, alas, the shame!
You act as it pleases you
And yet we are the ones who get the blame.
All that we are allowed to say
In the affairs of the universe
Is to pass our days in grief, and spend
Our nights in anguish weeping silent tears.
Why do you ask the faith of Mir?
He sits in the temple, it is said,
A caste-mark on his brow, having lost,
None knows when, the faith of Mohammed.
I held her silver hands in mine
Then suddenly I let them go,
For I had put my faith in her
False promises before too long ago.

It was no easy task to rid
That scared and terrified gaze
Of wild despair; and those who tamed
Her had indeed performed a miracle.

Right from the evening it burns
Low and dim;
My poor heart has become
A pauper's lamp.
Who has the heart to hear
The tale of Mir?
The mood of the company
Is strange and grim.

Whoever safely went
From the stopping-place of horizons?
Each traveler had his goods
Plundered on the way.
Each wound of my heart pleads
For justice and redress
To the lord of Resurrection
For your injustices.
Breathe gently here, for soft
And delicate is the task
Of shaping glass in this
Workshop of horizons.

Ever since the heart was created
The body has been ablaze;
So fell this spark
The mantle went up in flames.
Now like the full moon the fire has spread
All over me; before,
The skirt alone
Had burnt like the crescent.

8
The kingdom of the heart
Where you had ruled supreme
An age, now lies, alas,
Deserted and in ruins.

9
Last night I heard a strange
And harrowing tale, my love,
Which brought tears to the eyes
Of listeners, everyone—
The tale of Mir’s affliction.
You keep awake in vain,
O Mir, for everyone
Is lost in slumber here;
And those who they said were
Alive were unconcerned.

10
When in the throes of madness
The noise of my
Shackles was all
I heard at all.
I lived in the garden then
As the bulbul; plaints
Were all the wealth
Of contentment.
It did not stay for even
A while, as if
The season of flowers
Was a bulbul’s whistle.
The heart has now no peace
Or rest, whereas

11
Once remembrance
Of the past was sweet.
It went as bent the back
With age, life
Was a traveler
Over the bridge.
When I enquired I learnt
That happy days,
O Mir, were just
A rose’s scent.

12
That leaven of my soul is like
The philosopher’s stone so hard to find,
And yet with love’s excess
I am restless like the mercury.
The heart was never free of pain
That I could remember the friend;
And now the joys of love
Lie forgotten like a dream.

Within the soul’s great silences
No consciousness or sense or breath
Remains. These possessions
Were swept away by a storm that came.
There was the day when love had surged
Within me like a wave; but if
You see the eye bedewed
Now, it’s a vortex and whirlpool.

The red of the flaming rose
Set the garden ablaze, O breeze,
I heard in prison the news
Of home and burned with memory.
Ask me not of the brief
And fleeting life of this world’s crowd;

142 POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

143 MOHAMMAD TAQI MIR
How shall I describe the haste
Of this fast moving assembly?
I only wept or made
The others cry, and thus was spent
My life, O fellow-singers
Why talk of happy friends to me?

The entire garden of the world
Blossomed forth except
This wondering one:
What we had thought to be the heart
Was only a painted bud.
This world of no foundations lies
Along the path of a flood
Of accidents;
So do not ever wish to build
Upon this desolate ruin.

My heart could never win your heart,
A thousand pities, alas;
This glass has waited all its life
To come into contact with a stone.

The heart was filled to flowing
With thoughts of cup and wine;
My house was filled with water
Like mirror with sunshine.

Though in the ocean of life
You now enjoy yourself,
At death you’ll know that this
Existence was a bubble.

The claws of the bulb and rose
Petals grew side by side:
A picture of the Day of Judgment
Was the garden close.

Think of the hopes and fears
Of the moment when you come
To realize that this world
Was nothing but a dream.

His ways are strange: sometimes
He is stranger even to friends:
One should be indifferent
Or in devotion intense.

Do not be crushed, O bulb, bulb,
By violence for nothing,
Wild grass was also once
Intimate with the garden.

Of which sea of loveliness
Is this the ruffled hair?
The ocean’s wave appears
To my eyes familiar.

Where are the rose, the tulip,
The lotus, jasmine, the white rose?
How many friends, alas,
Have vanished in the dust.

Who should I go and tell
How listless is the friend?
I’ve always found him so
Indifferent to everyone.

The heart has like a mirror
Acquainted me with the face
Of a universe.

POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
The sorrow of parting, unfulfilled
Desire for union, wish
For love: I took with me
A tumult even to the grave.

The object of creation
Unfathomed, unknown remains:
A world has searched for it and searched,
And lost itself in vain.

Whoever in this tavern
Was said to be informed
Was only ignorant;
My love for knowing the heart,
Has remained unfulfilled.

At every step there was
His stopping place, and yet
The frenzied madness of search
Never left me for a moment.

All of them disappeared,
Sense and strength and patience:
But you, O wound, remained
Forever in the heart.

How many resolutions
I carried in my head,
But when I came before her
Not one was remembered.

I just remained attached
To the rosary, alas;
My improvident hand, O Mir,
Never went up to the flask.

For days the thought of parting
Had haunted my afflicted breast;
Now it was pain, and now a wound,
At times a blow, at times a thrust.
At dawn the happy, happy world
Was no less kind than on the night
Of sorrow, for the lamp was turned
To smoke, the moth reduced to dust.
Yet if annihilated was
The heart, it was but just as well,
For sometimes it was with the heat
Of love a burn, sometimes a hurt.

I lost awareness of the heart
In my own cares on the night of love:
I had no pride nor liberty,
Nor patience, peace of mind, nor rest;

When, if I raised my eyes to look,
A stream of blood flowed from my heart,
For just then that unfailing dart
Pierced instantly right through my breast.

The heart has lost all joy; the same
Old pain, the same old grief remains;
For since it has taken to the hunt
With wounds alone it has concern.

If ever you chance to pass that way,
O breeze, then tell her: Faithless one,
But sad and lonely Mir alone
Was in your garden a prickly thorn.

We are travelers along the road
Of death as life itself;
We'll go away and leave not trace
Behind us in the world.
We now depart, the admirers
Of this picture gallery,
And once gone we shall never return
To our old forms again.
O Mir, think not so much of her,
Forget, for you will not
Succeed in obliterating her,
O fool, from memory.

Nowhere did I ever meet
A man desirous of the heart;
I never found a buyer for this
Commodity in the world.
You do not know the ways of seeking,
Or else the whole world is the friend;
For where is it that I did not
Find him ever present?
Leaning like a picture against
The wall I spent my days and nights,
Yet never once found admittance
Into her company.
With the wonder of love I even became
The mirror itself, but even then
I could not view or look at her
To my sad heart’s content.

Lost in dream I slept
Close to the morning, alas,
I woke up when the caravan
Had gone away too far.

This world is only conjectural,
Here that alone exists which you
Believe to be.

Why must you turn away from us,
The beggars of love? We come when you
Are benevolent.
The greatest sinner, Mir, was he
Who first adopted love as his
Religion.

Upturned were cups and spilt
The flask of wine;
Here in my drunkenness
Was uproar, noise,
And revelry.
There is reason for the heavens’
Ceaseless motion,
For this alone moves the chariot
Of the earth
At dusk and dawn.
It’s at such gatherings
That lives are lost,
For Beauty does not spare
And love does not
Know economy.
The days when the eyes had streamed
Like torrents are gone;
And now this country between
The rolling rivers
Lies seared and dry.

I chanced to see one day
The grave of Solomon,
And found these words engraved
There upon a stone:
"O haughty ones, this head
Was held once high with pride,"
But turned at last to dust
For ants to crawl upon."
—Men care for you so long
As you are alive, and when
You cease to be they never
Even think of you again.
How many friends, O Mir,
Departed from this world,
But no one ever grieved
And no one mourned for them.

I grieve in my frenzy for the heart
For love has come
But only now when I have torn
Away my dress.
That beauty never came to me
Even in dream, although
I waited all my life for her,
Yet all in vain.
Whoever has been fortunate
To drink a drop of the wine
Of joy has remained inebriated
Till the Day of Doom.
Love of beauties made the heart
Lose all its self-control,
Though once it had a say in the affairs
Of divinity,—
A heart, which morning and sunset,
Was like a throbbing wound;
The heart from which the soul itself
Had felt distressed;
In caring for which I spent my life.
Yet which, on the contrary,
Full of eternal grief and pain,
Had remained disturbed.

By sorrows and calamities
Afflicted, overwhelmed
By thousands of desires it only
Shut itself up.
Yet when it moved it was like blood
Flowing through the eyes, and if
It remained within the burning breast,
It was a wound.
Him the obliterating ones
Took away from me,
So that no drop of blood was left
As a memory.
He went to her lane and lost himself,
And did not answer once,
Although I called out: 'Mir, O Mir,'
Again, again.

I could not save the heart
From the burning hell of absence;
The house burnt right before me, yet
I could not put out the flames.
The city of the heart was a wondrous
Place, but when she left
It fell to ruins and never again
Was filled with bustle and life.

In every street and bylane
They talk of me to this day;
The tale of my love's still
On every tongue today.
Although no more than dust,
We're all important, Mir,
Greater than any power
Is our authority.
The thought of the garden's plight cut me
To the very quick, and turned
Each bud into a heart
Bursting with desire.
Whether I looked at the rose, the sun,
Or at the moon or in
The mirror, everywhere your face
Alone was visible.
I had been so filled with desire
For love that to this day
The world remembers and resounds
With my unforgettable tale.
The rose had surely loved to madness
Some ravishing beauty,
That's why it wears today a dress
Patched with hundred stitches.
Although I did not see myself
That aimless wanderer, sir,
I did see a feeble cloud of dust
In every lane and street.

It's only the dawn of love, the way winds up the hill;
Weary not, ahead lie many hardships still.
The morning's caravan is ringing with the cry:
"Awake, O idlers, we are leaving, you sleep still."
Barren is this land, never grows green here the grass;
In vain you sow the seeds of desire, toil and till.
These are the wounds of love, they will never disappear
Even if you try to wash them, they are unwashable.
Time, O Mir, is jealous of Joseph's beauty;
So do not waste it, never has it returned, nor will.

Did I not tell you, avoid the path
Of temple and mosque?
And now this quarrel for ever remains
Between the Hindu and Muslim.

It matters not, O breeze,
If the rose's color fades;
With life's iniquities
I've lost all power and will.
What care I for the joys
Of festivity? Having seen
The saki's eyes I've journeyed
Ahead of the lovers of wine.
The moment the sword of love
Is raised the cowards will run
Away. You'll hear that I
Alone could bear the brunt.
I'm left with no more sense
Or sight to see you, proud love;
Desire for knowing has made
Me oblivious of my self.

I did see the moth go up
To the lighted candle,
Then nothing else besides
A startled flame.
The life of the company
Was only a wink;
The cup departed taking
With it the eye-bedewed.
If a hundred roses bloomed
It mattered not;
How long ago was it
That I went to the garden?

Between the two main destinations
Of union and parting, in the path
Of love, God only knows
Where the poor heart lost its life.

My eyes are dry of tears
Only when blood flows
From them and wets my face.
My senses are intact,
But when the loved one comes
I lose all consciousness.
My only friend in grief
Was fortitude which now
Has stopped befriending me.
Not one desire left
My heart, and I bewail
And weep for all that's not.
The one condition for love
Is desire, or else who is there
Who doesn't know how to feign?
There's much I wish to say
To you, dear love, but words
Fail to come to my lips.

My precious life was spent
Lamenting for the heart
Which, suffering from the plague
Of making love, could never
Remain happy or well.

In endless caravans had men
Once traveled along these roads;
Now they are gone and not a trace
Or mark is left of them.

The clanking of the chain is now
Not heard, nor seen the flocks
Of gazelles. The desert seethed with life
But only during my madness,
Why should not Urdu be devoid
Of sense and color and meaning
When Mir be dead and Sauda who
Remains be like a drunkard?

The commodity of the heart
Has neither worth nor price,
I've gone and shown it round
The universe.

The heart which is no more
Than a tiny drop of blood,
Has brought calamities
To the world.

The gallant and the brave
Died in the beginning;
Who reached the ultimate
End of love?

I now depart, O Mir,
From the temple. We shall meet
If only God would bring
Me back again.

This world is not, as you may think,
A place of revelry:

POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
Each rose within this garden is
A wine-cup filled with blood.

44
It was in search of you they lost
Their lives, one and all;
It is my turn now to embark
On the journey of losing life.
Once we go like the candle we shall
Depart from the company;
Then you will try to look for us
And search, but search in vain.

45
Last night within my dream
I saw her drunken eye:
When I awoke in the morning
A wine-cup was before me.

46
As a mirror on which has set
The image-destroying rust,
My failure to win love never
Reached the state of view.

47
Neither does the heart remain
Whole, nor sense nor consciousness:
The flood of love has swept away
With it whatever I possessed.

48
The Spring of life is only a wink
Of the glass, O bearer of the cup;
The moment the eye shuts, know, alas,
The last round has been drunk.

49
Why should one care to unpack
In this caravanserai
When our departure is certain
At dawn or close of day?

50
Locked up within the prison I
Have no concern with flowers or trees;
May you enjoy a walk in the garden
Day and night, O breeze.

51
What matters it, O breeze,
If now has come the Spring,
For I have lost them both,
The garden and my home.

52
Her drunken eye led to the ruin
Of the busy monastery,
And now in all confusion lies
The workshop of piety.

53
The heart was always the enemy
Of love. Where there is now a wound
There was once a cloud of dust.
Like a word it was erased
From the page of life, my heart was once
Unique in the world's register.

54
Look at the bulbul and the rose
With eyes that can discern:
A walk in the rose-garden
Is not without significance.
The rose is a memory of some
Fair face, O heedless one,
The bulbul a remembrance
Of one who sang with melody.

O keeper of the tavern,
Without me, the drunken one,
There will remain, alas,
No joy in drinking wine.
And when I pass away the glass
Will sob convulsively
And shed red tears of wine.

Love's secret had remained concealed:
The feebleness of my heart
Has now exposed it to the world, alas.
Carrying the noise of me and mine
They have departed; their
Tale has sent sad hearts to sleep at last.
When I asked about the vagabonds
Of love, the breeze swept up
A handful of dust and flung it in the air.
What was there I did not possess
In eternity? But fates
Were unkind and only gave me a broken heart.

Be not deceived by the surge
Of the ocean of this world,
O Mir. It's nothing. From
A distance though it seems
Water, mirage it is.

If one has the eye this world
Is like a house of mirrors:
Within the walls the face
Is visible.
These are only the wiles
Of the elements; all four
Are full of artifice,
Tricks and guiles.

On whose assurance shall I pass
My life in love?
Only a weary heart is mine,
And even that
Is caught in the whirl of calamities.

At times the rose, at times the hue,
At times the scent of the garden,
Never does that multifarious one
Appear to view as one.
Acquaint yourself and fill your eyes
With the beauty of the friend's
Variability, for otherwise
You cannot see him as one.

Love is pain and cure
As well, O preacher, you
Can never know
What is love.
Without love harmony
And joy will disappear;
The poets are true,
God is love.
It is no longer one whose noise
Had echoed in the heavens,
The tumult of the plant has now
Reached beyond the skies.

I've known the indifference
Of the rose, the love of the bulbul;
Now only a handful of feathers remain
In the garden in place of the bulbul.
The Spring has come and blows
Everywhere the rose;
But empty remains in the garden
Forever the place of the bulbul.

Caressing one another noise
And uproar rise with swelling waves;
What secret in the ocean, O Lord,
Inspires them with such ardent love?
The surging wave an arched eyebrow,
An eye indeed is every bubble;
And if some sweet one's talk is the pearl,
A sweet one's ear then is the shell.

A crowd of love's torments
Accompanies my breath.
Even to the other world I take
A tumult with me.
There surely is a reason,
O Lord, for this rotation
And endless whirling: Love fills the entire
Space of heavens.

What did the morning breeze
Whisper to the rose?
It tore the cloak of forebearsance
To shreds at once.

Without you, O Saki, never could I
Regain my senses, and often felt
A stranger in my own land.
The candle and moth are just a few
To die, there have been many with souls
Aflame within this garden.
In the fire and fever of love that rages
I've lost it too, O Mir, for only
An illusion remains in the mantle.

We're not as simple as we seem:
It's only when the sky revolves
For years that from the curtain of dust
Man appears.

From door to door in the land of love
Has spread the fire and flame of hell;
Inflame us not, dissembling preacher,
This fire is not confined to earth.
I raised it up to the very sky
With thought sublime, it's not, O Mir,
For everyone to use this rhyme
And words to such perfection.

The object of our search
We know ourselves alone;
Apart from our own selves
We take existent none.
All grace and humility
To us alone are drawn;
The object of our worship
We consider man alone.

Reality without us
Would never have taken form;
Men of sight acknowledge
Man as the worshiped one.

We had appeared to view
Our splendor alone;
But then, this mystery
To a chosen few is known.
If even after death,
He is found, then think how well
We've done, O Mir; we take
The loss of life as gain.

70
If ever sad and lonely Mir
I chance to meet upon a day,
How I would like to talk to him
Of many things, I used to say.
So, I met him lost in thought,
Morose and silent, as he walked
With measured steps towards the woods
And empty places yesterday;

And gently rubbing past him like
The breeze, I whispered in his ear:
"O sad and aimless wanderer,
Have you no home or place to stay
Or live in, that you wander thus
By yourself in the desert woods?
Is there no place for you in the city,
And must you wander night and day?

Open your blood-filled eyes and look;
Take care of your health and happiness.
Who'd wish to lose sweet contentment
And throw coveted peace away?
Your precious tears are so like pearls,
But they are wasted in the dust;
Like rubies are your feeling heart's
Pieces, scattered, thrown away.

How long will you wander thus and live
In utter desolation?
Is it not best to die than live
A life of deadness and decay?"

Then at this grief welled up in him
Suddenly, and he said to me:
"Does in this world a man like me
Ever make a home or wish to stay
In one place? It's a matter of shame
For us wanderers to be thus addressed.
So, be careful and never again
Venture and dare such words to say.

Location of place and fixed abode
I have forgotten all, but this
Advice I still remember which
A sage had given me one day:
If your impress is left upon
A place, withdraw you then your heart
From it, for never a wanderer
Has house or home or place to stay."

How many and many a man who came
With great ambition, hopes, and dreams,
Never lived for long, and leaving name
Nor trace went out and went away.

71
Who am I, my fellow beings?
A soul consumed.

162 POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
A fire rages in my breast,
I am aflame.
My ecstasy has brought me out
Into the open;
In fact, I am one who is close
To the mystery.
From me is glory on the lip
Of the sea of words;
A hundred-hued my wave, I am
The moving soul.
My wrist each morning grapples with
The wrist of the sun;
On me rest shadows and the hair
Of beautiful ones.
Who once has seen me is enamored
Of me, I am
The reason for the ecstasy
Of the heart of the world.
Do not unnecessarily
Make me speak;
I have a hundred blood-stained words
Under my tongue.
The grief for saplings of the garden
Has made me ill;
In this world worn with Autumn I am
An autumnal song.
The heart's desire keeps me disturbed
And all forlorn;
Do not pursue me, God alone knows
Where lost I am.
No more than illusion is my life,
Futile and vain;
But even you, alas, are weary
And tired of me.

We travelers on the road to death
Have lived here long and late:
The little leisure we have had
Like dawn is inadequate.
Who in this temple of idols should
We ask for meaning then?
For images of man are many
But man there is not one.

The cup's rotation has
More movement than the heavens;
I'll always keep the skies
Supplied with circling motion.

If pure is the heart why should it not
Be the beloved's audience hall?
If one has the mirror why should it
Then not be worth the view?

One day I walked into the shop of those who blow the glass
And asked: O makers of the cup, have you perchance a glass
Shaped like the heart? They laughed and said: Thou wanderest
in vain,
O Mir, each cup thou seest, round or oval, every glass
Was once a heart that we have melted on the fire and blown
Into a cup. That's all thou seest here, there is no glass.

Serenely I walked along my own
Path, O Mir, alone;
For nothing by way of love has he
Started caviling at me!
In your assembly last night
I stood alone and all
Silent like a painting
Hung upon a wall.

78
How much had happened on the earth
Before us, even then
We too, the heedless ones, have here
Achieved much in our turn.
Desire for union, parting’s pain,
Dream of love’s fair face,
All this remained within my heart,
And more, upon my death.

Grievs and sorrows, anguish, pain,
And in my heart, alas,
The wound of parting, with me went
So much from the universe.
What care you for decay or growth
Of life upon the earth?
The dust of many, so many, was used,
How much was created or made?
I was alone the unfortunate
Who did not get from life
The least thing, otherwise, O Mir,
The world gave much to the world.

79
Ask me not of the heart’s
Realm, and the ruin of its palaces;
Sorrows, you will learn,
Have destroyed all its loveliness.
When she beckoned to me
With eyes inebriated, she killed
All sweetness of wine and felled
The foundations of the tavern itself.

I asked the rose at dawn:
How did the bulbul in affliction fare?
It pointed to some feathers
That lay scattered in the garden: There.

80
Swirling in circles I see
Waves of wind, O Mir;
The Spring, it seems, arrives,
For there a chain I see.

Not lanes but illuminated
Leaves of a manuscript
Were lanes of Delhi, a portrait
Was every face in the street.

Perhaps the rose is making
Ready to depart;
For like the bud the bulbul
Looks sad and heavy of heart.

81
Strange appears the garden
In Autumn, alas;
So went the Spring as though
We had never known each other.
There were no dirges when I
Was not in love
With you; my heart was then
A heart, no house of mourning.

Many a caravan
Of beauty’s land
I asked; but none possessed
The merchandise of love.

The lamp was bequeathed to me
When neither breeze
Not air had even been
Created in the world.
My tale remained, alas, untold within my heart,
None here could understand my language or my art.
How like the sound of the bell I drift from thee, alone;
Thou carest not for me, O heedless caravan.
A footprint obliterated on the sand am I,
No news is heard, O travelers, no trace of me.
Far from the object of my search have I remained;
This precious life was wasted, all lost, nought gained.
How like a poor man's thoughts my dreams in search of thee
Have wandered everywhere to end in futility.

We could not laugh or open out
In this garden, like the dawn;
Whatever leisure we had, Mir,
Was only one short breath.

A thousand words lie under the dust
Unsaid within my heart;
Death never allowed me even a breath
To speak a word, alas.
I am not the only one in the world
To be wonder-struck and speechless;
The whole of creation had its lips
Sealed, and lost its face.

Since I've assumed this form of life
I've never known a moment's rest
Or peace; I wish my eyes
Had never opened from my dream
In happy nonexistence.

The passion of the burning heart
Did not abate although I shed
Tears day and night:
Flames envelope me, I burn, and rivers
Flow from bedewed eyes.

We should have freely known the garden
Like the intimate scent of the rose;
We would have wafted then with the breeze,
And breeze itself we would have been.
Being all desire from head to foot
Has made a slave and servant of me;
Or else, had I been heart all free
Of desire, God I would have been.
What be they like, O Lord, who wish
To be admitted to bondsmanship?
I am filled with shame to think of it
That ever God I should have been.
Though such we are now that we have
A claim even on the Maker's pride,
If we had been entirely
Our own, what would we then have been?

Instead of oil love feeds
With the bulbul's blood
The lamp of the rose.
Walk in this garden, O Mir,
HURRIEDLY, for Autumn's
In pursuit of the rose.

Our life is like a bubble,
A mirage all this show.
With heart's eye see the world,
It's all a dream, no more.
The softness of her lips
Is only meant to be
Felt, so like it is
The petals of the rose.
O Mir, within those eyes,
Sleep-heavy and half awake,
Resides, it seems, the entire
Drunkenness of wine.

89
Nonexistent are men
Within this world;
I would gladly sacrifice
Godship for men.

90
The one whom we are seeking
Is present in everything;
Who therefore should we seek
And search for nothing?
An inn of selflessness
Is this universe,
Take heed and quickly come
Into your senses.
It is the capital
Of life's market place.
So bid for only the heart
And nothing else.

91
I never knew happiness
For more than only a few
Moments in this world;

Cry over the morning's laughter
In the garden like the dew.

92
You'll only make me sad
If you neglect me now;
But when I cease to be
You will remember me.
And when you'll read my verse
With some intelligence,
You'll call Mir a master
Of style, O men of letters.

93
May it be you or I
Or Mir, each one is held
Captive by her ringlets.

94
If you have yourself come to God,
The others too are seeking Him;
However different be the ways
The destination is the same.
The eye, the eyebrow, mining airs,
Loveliness, the curls of hair,
The mole, the mark,—trials are many,
Who knows what happens, the heart is one.

95
Put each step here
With the greatest care,
This manufactory
Is a workshop, alas,
Of the maker of glass.
No man has ever
Permanence here,
For every hour and minute
He's journeying away
From power and sway.

96
In one breath you have consumed
The cosmos and the world:
O love, there is love
To consume thee as well!

97
The victims of that warrior
Were never known to recover;
Whenever the flowers appeared
In the garden their wounds they bared.
Those beauties, who but only
Last Spring had held such sway
Over the heart, lie crushed
By the force of night and day.
Death did not allow
Me time for even a word;
How much there was within
My heart I never said.
An atmosphere of painting
Was there before you were;
Time's cruel hand has dulled
Those patterns, paint, and color.
All zest for life had died
Within me long ago;
A striking look from that eye
Has raised old storms anew.
Love's miracle has kept
Me alive and active still,
Or else I could not have borne
Life's sorrows, hurts, and ills.

98
My heart is filled to overflowing
Like a glass, O bearer of the cup,
If the flask of wine were brought to me
I'll fall upon its neck and cry,
And cry my fill.

99
A beggar I came and cried my say:
"May you live happy, and happy stay."
And now in search of what I know
Not, I cast all joys away.
I worshiped you and made you God;
My task is done, I go my way.
I spent my life in cares of verse
And raised this art to heights none may.

100
It's all dust like the quicksand,
There is no water here;
The stormy sea of this world
Is nothing but a mirage.
If even you now saw
This city of the heart
You'll wonder how long it has
Remained uninhabited.

101
Remained I all my life
Inebriated
With the wine of my heart's blood.
The bud has learnt to open
Sleepily
From the drunkenness of her eyes.

172 POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

173 MOHAMMAD TARIQ MIR
There was so much in love,
O Mir, to do,
I myself, alas, withdrew.

102
The moments of happiness
Within this world were few:
Now weep for the smiling dawn
Of the garden like the dew.

End of Diwan One

FROM OTHER DIWANS

103
It was but until yesterday
I had kept you hidden in my heart
Like a bud.
But when the roses bloomed today
Each one of you admired their grace.
So full is her ocean of loveliness
That from the crest to the very trough
Of the stormy wave.
Wherever the eye of desire falls,
There's joy and joy and love's embrace.

104
This is the time when fresh, green leaves
Appear upon the trees;
And branch and twig of plant and shrub
Are bent with bloom and seed.
With blaze of roses' color, Mir,
The garden is on fire;
The bulbul sounds a warning note:
"Go past, O sir, beware."

105
If you like to visit the garden, go
Now, for this is the month of Spring,
The leaves are green and flowering trees
Are in full bloom. The clouds hang low,
And gentle rain is falling.
The heart feels like a throbbing wound,
The tears have turned to one red flood,
This crimson-faced poppy of love
Dries up life and drains all blood.

106
Come into the garden
Where hearts will be refreshed.
There I shall speak of sorrows
That befell the loving heart,
And sing to the birds
My woe-filled plaints,
Relate to the rose the tale
Of my afflicted soul.
Desire not nor seek
The love of the beautiful,
For the sweetness of their lips
Is poisoned death:
They'll both speak ill
Of you, and join to conspire
To ruin your life entire.
Although that beauty,
True rival of the Spring,
Thinks that vernal is
The color of our love,
On leaves that sere
In Autumn, I
Shall write the sorrowful tale
Of my heart, as sad and pale.

174 POEMS: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

175 MOHAMMAD TAQI MIR
None knows since when the sea
Of life is turbulent;
The waves leap high, then on
The shore come to an end.
Someone seemed to be
There though no one called
Even when I looked around
And called out anxiously.
Yet surely some beauty lies
Hidden behind the sky:
The stars wink constantly
And smile at her all night.

VALI MOHAMMAD NAZIR
1735-1830

VALI MOHAMMAD NAZIR was born at Delhi in 1735, and though he migrated to Agra during the disturbed days preceding Ahmad Shah Durrani's invasion of 1756, he looked back to Delhi as his home. He was the youngest of many children born to his parents, who had all died at birth or in childhood. His father was well connected, but lost his fortune, and Nazir had to face a good deal of hardship and poverty. Yet, as in affluence, so in altered circumstances, he lived a life of dignity and happy resignation, earning his livelihood by teaching. He refused various offers of service from ruling chiefs, and supported his family from his meager income as tutor. Asaf-ud-Daula, the nawab of Oudh, once sent him money and the fare to Lucknow which Nazir accepted, but could not sleep all night for fear it might be stolen. He called the messenger who had brought it the very next morning and returned the money, saying that, since by keeping it he had lost his sleep, accepting it would allow him no peace; and he did not go to Lucknow. He had left Delhi to escape the vagaries of life and the invasions of the city by adventurers, but he saw worse suffering during the tyrannical rule of uncivilised Jats at Agra. Nevertheless, his poetic vision retained its keenness and his zest for life remained unabated.

Nazir was a realist, the most realistic poet any language could be proud of, a poet of the people and Man, writing about their joys and tribulations in poems intense with thoughts of pleasure and the sadness of Time that destroys all