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ACCULTURATION OR TOLERANCE?
INTERFAITH RELATIONS IN MUGHAL NORTH INDIA, C. 1750

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Introduction

A recurring issue in both popular and scholarly discourse on the history of Islam, and on dealings in both the past and present between Muslims and non-Muslims, is that of the relative degree of “tolerance” or “intolerance” shown by Muslims to their neighbours in a variety of social and political situations. In South Asia, and more particularly in India, much sectarian energy has been devoted over the past century and more to showing that Islam was in fact deeply intolerant by its very nature, and that the history of the rule by various Muslim dynasties in South Asia was marked by incessant coercion, bloodshed, iconoclasm and conflict. Such a view obviously carries a considerable charge in contemporary politics, and hence what is at stake is far more than a refined scholarly contemplation of the past and its panorama. On the other hand, there exists an equally considerable body of work seeking to demonstrate that Islam was deeply tolerant and accommodating, whether in the context of the Mediterranean or in Asia. Even a relatively sceptical and conservative analyst of the Islamic past such as Bernard Lewis has been known to write that “there is nothing in Islamic history to compare with the massacres and expulsions, the inquisitions and persecutions that Christians habitually inflicted on non-Christians and still more on each other,” adding besides that unlike the case in Christendom “in the lands of Islam, persecution was the exception.”

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Summing up a wide body of material on the linked questions of religious coercion (īkrāḥ) and tolerance, Yohanan Friedmann has suggested

1Lewis, *The multiple identities of the Middle East*, p. 129.
lately that if in certain areas — such as the Arabian peninsula in early Islamic history — there was an “uncompromising attitude to idolatry” linked to a desire for “absolute hegemony” on the part of Muslim rulers, in other areas, “in which a Muslim minority initially ruled over a religiously heterogeneous population,” the situation was more frequently one of what he terms a “more lenient approach.”

If demography did indeed hold a significant part of the key, we would certainly expect that in a region such as South Asia, where Muslims remained a statistical minority from 1000 to 1800 CE, we would see more leniency and compromise than in lands further to the north and west. Naturally, this does not entirely rule out the possibility of sectarian conflict in Mughal India either, as a number of writers have observed; rather, it sets certain limits to the nature and extent of such conflict.

However, when groups coexist for long periods of time, we would also expect some significant degree of change or movement to occur, rather than a simple reiteration of initially defined attitudes. When one sees a more dynamic understanding of interfaith dealings, the prospect which immediately arises is the idea of “acculturation.” Originating in the 1880s, and given much respectability by Robert Redfield and Melville Herskovits from the mid-1930s to the publication of the latter’s monographic study on the subject shortly thereafter (reissued in 1953), it then fell into disuse until being revived in the mid-1970s by the French historian and anthropologist Nathan Wachtel, a specialist in the interaction of the Spanish and Inca empires in the Andes. Redfield and others had defined acculturation as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.” Wachtel was more cautious, pointing to how acculturation could be the result of conquest and imperial domination (as in the Andes), but that groups could also come into “continuous first-hand contact” without any tangible changes being produced; these then were phenomena of what he saw as cultural disjunction, as opposed to other situations of what he termed integration, assimilation or syncretism. For our purposes, what is of significance is that tolerance can accompany disjunction, whereas acculturation as a process is quite another order of things.

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3 This is the subject of a good part of an earlier work by Alam, *The languages of political Islam in India*, c. 1200–1800.
4 See Subrahmanyan, “Before the Leviathan.”

The fashions of more recent decades have seen a move away from this particular vocabulary, and instead we are insistently told to favour concepts such as *mestizaje* (or *métissage*) and “hybridity.” At the forefront of those championing the former usage is French historian Serge Guizinski (a specialist of colonial Mexico, whose work has most recently focused on the imperial Habsburgs), while the latter boasts such powerful champions in the academy as Homi Bhabha, whose empirical examples are almost exclusively drawn from the history of the British Empire. However, the dominant usage apparently requires today that “hybridity” should only refer to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization,” which then rules out other, non-colonial, forms of contact and interaction, as well as their products. No substantive aspect of the interaction between the Mughals and their South Asian subjects can properly be dealt with using this vocabulary; and indeed, it would seem to rule out most of the history of the early modern world from its ambit.

The world of the “*munsfi”*

In this essay, our attempt will be to address the issue of the relative importance of themes of “tolerance” and “acculturation” in Mughal North India, thus revisiting problems that have occupied Yohanan Friedmann at several points in his distinguished career. However, rather than dealing with normative or theological materials on the question, our approach will take a different tack, drawing upon the body of first-person narratives in Persian from the Mughal domains. Amongst these, travel narratives are an important sub-category, as we have striven to show in a number of our earlier essays. Further, such texts were not confined to the limits of the Mughal world alone, but instead could link the Mughal empire with its neighbours to the north and west. Thus, it is clear that there was a sizable audience in West and Central Asia for accounts of life in Mughal India at the height of its “glory.” For the empire of the Mughals under Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan was in many respects the most powerful, in fiscal and economic terms at least, of the three “Gunpowder Empires,” and to doubt a major object of curiosity in these very terms. One can imagine that the scribal and bureaucratic class in the Safavid and Safavid domains wished to know what the experience of life really was like over on the “other side” of the political divide, and it is
in the terms of this matrix that we may imagine the principal part of the readership of such accounts as those mentioned above. This sets them apart therefore from the readers of late sixteenth or early seventeenth-century accounts like those of Abū al-Fayḍī Fayḍī or Asad Beg Qazwī, who are far more likely to have been restricted — until the nineteenth century transformed the terms of engagement — to the denizens of the Mughal empire, and hence principally concerned with the questions that those texts raised and grappled with: how a courtier dealt with imperial power, what the true nature of imperial ideology was, how an envoy should comport himself in varied and troubling circumstances.

But matters changed with the passage of time, and with the emergence of texts from a far more informal register. It is obviously both simplistic and problematic to posit in an abrupt fashion the emergence of a “public sphere” (whether bourgeois or not) as the Mughal empire attained maturity. The issue of the emergence of a “middle class” in the Mughal empire has in the past been the subject of some debate, with some authors arguing that the middle professions (nearly physicians, scribes, painters, upper artisans and the like) had come by the seventeenth century to constitute a distinct social group in the Mughal domains. Whether this is true or not, what is certain is that it was possible by the late seventeenth century to command a readership within the towns and cities of the Mughal empire through the production of texts that claimed a set of innovative objects, as well as poetry and literary reflection that pushed aside the received canon of the Persian world while claiming to speak in a “fresh” voice. It is with these newer authors that we are primarily concerned here. One of them was a certain Nāk Rāi, an obscure figure from the Mughal bureaucracy, while the greater part of the essay will deal with a far more celebrated figure, Rāi Ånd Rām “Mukhlīs.” These texts take us, as it were, into the heartland of Mughal affairs. For their authors did not venture into some distant domain, but stayed within the empire of the Timurids, travelling in the one case as far as the Deccan, and in the other staying at the very core of the Mughal domains. Yet, these are important materials, and far more than one reason. In the first place, they demonstrate that travel was by this time seen as far more than the business of visiting distant and exotic lands; it could also be a matter of discovering and valorizing the nearby and the familiar. A second issue is that of the identities of the authors, for both Nāk Rāi and Ånd Rām were “Hindūs” who had become proficient in the manipulation of Persian letters. Writing a travel text was for them a matter of demonstrating their virtuosity in letters, and also a significant occasion to reflect on who they were, and what place their own communities (Kṣatriyas and Khaṭrīs) had in the world of the Mughals. Travel thus became a mirror which they could use to indulge not in some narrow navel-gazing, but in a far broader reflection on how the Mughal world was constituted by the time the empire had reached a phase of maturity.

The first text that we shall briefly discuss here does explicitly use the word “travel” (safrār) in its title. It comes from the pen of a seventeenth-century member of a scribal family, Nāk Rāi by name, and seems to emerge from a context in which Persian scribal skills were being ever more widely disseminated and available to increasing numbers of Khaṭrīs, Kṣatriyas, and even some Brahmins. We are aware that as early as the reign of Akbar, Khaṭrīs such as Todor Mul had featured in a prominent place in the revenue administration, but the seventeenth century saw their numbers growing apace, while the post-1700 period saw a veritable explosion in their ranks. Earlier historians have noted this fact while surveying the writings of authors such as Bhumīs (author of the Tārīkh-i-dilkashī), who accompanied the Mughal armies into the Deccan in the latter half of the seventeenth century. However, Nāk Rāi — whose text is really a Bildungsroman of sorts with a thread of travel running through it — has thus far escaped the attention of historians of the Mughal period. Our discussion is based on a single manuscript of his work10; the text is entitled Tadhkirat al-sofar wa tarnūf al-tasfar (“Account of Travels and the Gift of Success”).

Nāk Rāi’s text is written in a deliberately difficult and flowery Persian, evoking the style of the celebrated Shaykh Abū al-Fayḍī, ideologue of the court of the emperor Akbar. It begins with the praise of God and of the “pen,” and the theme that is initially treated is thus not travel but (in high rhetoric) rather speech (sukhan) and writing. The first page and a half of the manuscript is hence devoted to an exegesis on the initial term bism-Allah al-raḥmān as-rahim, addressed through the construction of its letters, and the idea of justice that it embodies, a sure measure of

9 Of obvious utility for our discussion, though dealing with a later period, is Bayly, Empire and information, pp. 180–211.
10 Khan, “The middle classes in the Mughal empire,” also published in Social Scientist, No. 49, August 1977. The work by Maddison, Class structure and economic growth: India and Pakistan since the Mughals, is singularly misleading in this respect. For more useful is Bayly, Rulers, townspeople and bazaars, pp. 101–96, passim.
11 Compare the relatively unreflective and utilitarian works by others, such as Balbūr, Insān-i Harkaran.
12 For one such example, see Paruqī, Chanda Bhan Brahmān; and more generally, Abīd Allāh, Adabījāt-i Fārisāīn mein Hindūsān ka hīṣa.
13 For a discussion, see Alam and Subrahmanyan, “The making of a munshi.”
14 Nāk Rāi, Tadhkirat al-sofar, Sāhkār Jang Museum and Library, Hyderabad, Accession no. 1019, MS no. 7.
The extent to which Nék Rái was acculturated into an Islamicised milieu. There follow some verses and rhymed phrases in praise of God, and we then move from speech (sukhan) to the pen (qalam) in the space of a few lines, as well as to an elaboration on the subject of the craftsmanship (talawī-i san'at-i masuevari) of God. It is of interest to note that throughout this part, the use of Arabic phrases is quite limited, as if the Persian has been deliberately purged of them. It is only once the initial framing in terms of the wonders of God's creation has been dealt with, that the proper text of Nék Rái's narrative begins. This hānd section is extremely artful and clever, and even manages deftly to incorporate the name of the reigning monarch ʿĀlamgīr into it. A sample of it runs as follows.

The account [that follows] of the disturbed conditions of this sinful faqīr, who with the help of fortune and the support of thoughtfulness has entered the alley of the pen and the field of paper to venture a description, is because of the grace of God. May this account be able to apply the koil of experience to the eye. It is like a light-giving lump in the night of thought. Just as the movement of the pen brings light onto the blank page, may this account bring light to the night in the city of transitory being. This is a pious account (dhikr-i khayr):

[Verse]:

Agarche nék niyam, khāk-i pā-i nēkānam
ṣaʿāb ki tishna bemānām, sīfāl-i raihānām

Even if I am not pious, I am the dust of the feet of the pious.

No wonder I am not thirsty: I'm an earthen pot of basil.

The play here is obviously on the author's own name, Nék Rái, followed by an indication perhaps of his own (non-Muslim) identity, with its reference to a plant that is commonly used in Hindu domestic pūja.

Nék Rái then explains the title of his text Tadhkīrat al-safar wa tuḥfat al-safar: on the one hand, it contains some reports of travel; and on the other hand the town of Dār al-Ṣafar (or Bījāpur, in the Deccan) appears in it. We then move to the beginning of his account proper, or the ʿaḥād-i dāštān.16

In the thirteenth regnal year of Aurangzeb, or 14 Dhū al-Hijja 1080 (5 May 1670), on a Thursday (here we find some additional astrological
details), Nék Rái declares that he was born in the city of Amanābād-Allāhābād; this corresponds, he states, to the year 1726 Šamvat of Rājā Bīrāmājīt, the calendar preferred by the Indian Brahmīns (ba nazīk-i barahmaṇān-i hind). The double calendrical location is not without its significance. This city in which he was born, he notes, is also called Prayāg. The town has excellent buildings, and is on the banks of the river Ganges. A Brahmin astrologer was called in at his birth by his father and grandfather, and on his advice the child was called Nék Rái. This name had some effect, in the sense of allowing him access to science and culture (ʿilm wa aḏab) as well as honour, distinction, and a good rank (maṇṣab) already in his youth. He mentions the zāʾīḥa or astrological chart made at his birth, which he reproduces in the text; it is in the Indian style, though the version he reproduces has Persian names and terms in it. Nék Rái then proceeds at some length to give an explanation of the chart, and the extent to which it has in fact influenced his life, as well as things that might have happened (but which in fact did not). The astrologer who produced the chart was a certain Dēbī Datt, a Brahmin, as noted above.

We come then to a description of Allāhābād (taṣṣīf-i sawād-i bālda-i Ilāhābād). Nék Rái tells us that he will provide a view of the town that will not only educate, but also show his command over the very art of description. It is not just any town located on a river, he notes, but one that brings salvation to all of Hindūstān. Its lanes and bazaars are wonderful, and in each instance in the description, the metaphors he uses relate to water. The town has a fort made of stone, both powerful and beautiful, and built by the emperor Jalāl al-Dīn Akbar. It reaches up to the sky, but its reflection also plunges the water. Its walls are as strong as the sadd-i sikandārī, Alexander's wall against Gog and Magog, inside it is a complex called the Chihil Sutān, with buildings of marble, which seem to emerge from the water itself. The town has many famous gardens such as the Jahnārā Bāgh. There follows a long mention of storms on the Ganges, which happen every hundred years or so; they are as powerful as the storm of the time of Noah, and bring destruction, uprooting trees, and causing flooding everywhere. Nék Rái now pauses to congratulate himself on the excellence of his own text; his own description, writes the immodest author, is as if he is weaving silk, even as his pen moves on silken paper.

We need not follow the text here in all its details. What is of particular significance for us is the singularly complex character of the world his author inhabits. His family is closely linked by ties of clientship to that of the great noble Lāhwardī Khān Ja'far governor of Ilāhābād, and his son Aman Allāh Khān. Besides Ilāhābād-Prayāg, Nék Rái's family

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16 Nék Rái, Tadhkīrat al-safar (Hyderābād MS), f. 3b.
owns houses in Mathurā, Benares and Gorakhpūr, lending him naturally to cite a verse from Sādī:

Whoever came [to the world], built a new house.

He then left, and another took care of it.

As scribes, accountants and specialists in complex tasks of household management (manshi), the males of the family tend to lead peripatetic lives along with their noble patrons, at times accompanied by their wives and families, at others leaving them behind. The young Nēk Rāī duḥ begins his formal education at the beginning of his sixth year, in keeping with tradition (az rū-i rasam wa ‘ādat) with the first letters on a tablet (laugh-i abjadkhwānī). Some of these early years are spent in Agra, where Nēk Rāī’s teacher was a certain Durvesh Muhammad Jaunpurī. Two years into his training, he begins to enter into the world of Persian literature properly speaking, and has his first reading of Shaykh Sādī; soon after, he also moves to Delhi, and is married off to the daughter of a certain Dayā Rām, son of Bhagwān Dās Shuṣṭār.

But the peripatetic life of the manshi continues, attached as Nēk Rāī’s father is to a master in Mughal employ. This takes the family briefly to Jaunpur and Ilahābād, and they also visit the important centre of Kachchua, and the tomb of the powerful Chishtī Sūfī saint Shāh Ashraf Jahāngīr. There is no doubt in Nēk Rāī’s mind that this shrine has great power, for it is a place where diseases that are reputed incurable can be treated. Indeed, it turns out that Nēk Rāī’s own paternal uncle, Pratāp Mal, had an alcohol problem and had become dry like a stick. No doctor could cure him, and finally he was brought to Kachchua. Some ceremonies were performed for three months (involving offerings of milk etc.), and he then miraculously recovered his health. In a similar vein, we gather that Nēk Rāī has a considerable desire to the shrine in Mehrauli of another great Chishtī saint, Ḥadrāt Khwāja Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtīyār Kākā.17 Here too we have a measure of the in-between world that he inhabits.

Nēk Rāī returns soon after to Delhi, continuing his education with a certain Shaykh Khayr Allāh, nephew of Durvesh Muhammad, his earlier teacher. He studies the Gu³stān and Bāstān of Sādī, the Tābi‘ nāma and the Sikandar nāma of Nizāmī, and the departure of Khayr Allāh from the city, he pursues further studies with a certain Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ḳadir Lāḥaurī, who he declares further was one of the best-educated men of his time. However, the link with this master is in turn interrupted as Nēk Rāī is obliged for a time to reside in Mathurā, further south.

It is while in Mathurā that Nēk Rāī suggests for the first time that relations between Hindus and Muslims in Mughal India may at times have been fraught with tension and conflict. Having first praised this town which “stains the hearts of people” (as noted by the poet Mullā ‘Ali), he notes that the river plays a prominent role there, with extensive steps (ghatās) of stone leading to it. Sacred-thread wearing Brahmins (zunūrdarān-i Hind) come from afar to reside here, and at that time were some two thousand in number. However, it is said — he writes — that when the Rājpūt chieftain Bīn Singh Dev Bundela at the time of Akbar killed ‘Allamī Shaykh Abū al-Faqīl near Gwalīyar at the behest of Prince Salīm, in appreciation for this Salīm (when he came to the throne) gave over all the goods of Shaykh Abū al-Faqīl to the Rāja. The Rāja requested the Sulṭān for permission to use this money, which was a large sum, to make an impressive place of worship (mu‘bad) reaching up to the sky there. This was, so he claimed, in the interests of the pursuit of the spiritual, for thousands of people would come there in pilgrimage, and festivals and fairs would be held there. This went until the time when the emperor ‘Alamgīr, “in consideration of matters external to spirituality” decided to tear it down. The act was carried out by Husayn ‘Ali Khān who was the funjdar of Mathurā, and he “made a mosque from the temple” (az mu‘bad masjid tarteṭ hīyī).18 Nēk Rāī is ironically disapproving of this act, and in this context cites a verse ostensibly of the seventeenth-century poet Chandrabhān “Brāhman,” mentioning him by name:

Behin karāmat-i batkhāna-i murā‘ ay shaykh
ki chūn kharāb shanād khāna-i Khudā gardad.

Look at the miracle of my idol-house, o Shaykh!

That when it was ruined, it became the House of God.

This leads Nēk Rāī into a rather extended discussion of wahdat al-‘awdād and wahdat-i adīyān, the Unity of Being and the Unity of All Religion, which must be read as an implicit criticism of these acts during the time of Mughal rule. Remove the dust of bigotry from the cheek of the Beloved, he remonstrates; don’t trust what you see, which is mere appearance (zahrī-bīnī). What is the difference after all between the stone and glass, though one may break the other? The religion of ‘Īsā and the religion of Mūsā seem to be different, but when you really look into it, they are the same. The appearance of each letter may be different, but when you put them together in a word, they gain a different sense.19

17On the cult of this saint, see Kumar, The present in Delhi’s pasts, pp. 43-45.
18This episode is reported for January 1670 in Mughal chronicles; see Sāqī Mīrād Khān, Mā‘ārīr-i ‘Ālamgīrī, p. 60.
19Nēk Rāī, Tathkharāt al-safar (Hyderabad MS), fl. 18 h.
The wave, the drop, and the bubble seem different of course, but are they really so? The possibilities of reconciliation between apparent opposites is also cited by him through a verse from Rûmî: those who are prisoners of colour will make even Moses fight with himself, while those who have gone beyond colour (bi-rang-i) can reconcile even Moses and the Pharaoh.

Nâk Râi’s own account of his education suggests that these are more than mere words. It is while in Mathurâ that he completes the Târîkh nâmâ and the Sîkandâr nâmâ; and he now begins to read Abû al-Fadl’s letters, Jâmi, and the Mu’âmmariyât-i Husaynî. He continues to visit Sûfî shrines such as that of a certain Sayyid Ghâlib Shâhîd in Gorakhpûr, which he says is so miraculous that lions frequent it without harming humans, as in the proverb where the lion and the sheep coexist. As his literary horizons expand, he reads the Qiûrân al-su’dâyûn of Amîr Khusraw and other texts. But this does not mean that he entirely leaves behind his “Hindâ” heritage. Visiting the town of Awadh, he takes time to provide a description of the place. This is the place, he declares, where Râm and Lachhman were born and, he notes, “our people” (mâ mardum) are attached to the faith of these gods, so that he feels obliged to give the reader a rapid version of the story of Râmachandra. At the age of ten, Râm had learnt the sacred sciences from Bishwâmîtra, and — not unlike Nâk Râi — began to bring out a hundred concepts from his pen. Then he went to the court of Râjâ Janûk, and won the hand of Sîtâ at her swayarwar by bending the legendary bow. Throughout this passage, as elsewhere in his writings, the characteristic obsession with the letters of the Persian alphabet pursues Nâk Râi. The marriage of Râm and Sîtâ takes place, and they return to Awadh, meeting Parshurâmun in the way. But once in Awadh, problems begin with his mother. Râm is obliged to leave the town and go into the forest in exile (bîshagardî) with Lachhman and Sîtâ, heading towards the Deccan. In this context, Nâk Râi recounts the incident of the golden deer, leading to the futile chase of it by first Râm and then Lachhman, and Sîtâ’s kidnapping by Râvan to Lankâ. Hanûmân is now rapidly brought into the text; he leaps over the sea (daryâ-i shor) to go and find her. Hanûmân sets fire to the town of Lankâ and returns. With his army of monkeys, Râm then builds a bridge over the sea, and reaches the island of Lankâ. The battle begins, and Râvan’s son Indrajit wounds Lachhman. Hanûmân then flies off to find the miraculous Sanûjvînâ herb, and brings back a mountain a thousand leagues away in the wink of an eye. Eventually, as the story proceeds to its breathless finale, Râm kills Râvan with an arrow and sends him to Hell (mûsîl-i jahannum), and Râm, Lachhman and Sîtâ return to Awadh. Râm begins to rule, as his father has died meanwhile. When his end approaches, it is written in the history-books (ki chirnàiche

dar tawârikh-i Hind) that he gathered together some persons and left the town, in the direction of the Sarais of Eternity. Even today, writes Nâk Râi, when one comes to Awadh, one feels an unseen presence here, and the people of his own party too felt it. There is clearly no obvious choice that has to be made between devotion to Rûmî or to a Chishti saint (or even several of them). Indeed, Nâk Râi’s rather eclectic tastes even run to a devotion to the shrine in Makampur of the famous Bâtût al-Dîn Madârî, known as Shâh Madâr, reputedly of the silsila of ‘Abd al-Qadr Jîlâmî.20

Where do the sources of Nâk Râi’s thinking lie? In fact he makes no secret of where he derives many of his ideas. For in this period, he devotes himself in readings from the letters of Abû al-Fadl, as well as completing the other texts that he has mentioned earlier. It is here, he tells his readers, that his knowledge of Abû al-Fadl becomes deeper, and he even cites some crucial passages and aphorisms from his letters (az qulam-i ‘ullâmây shaykh Abû al-Fadlî in nikât-i shand), including reflections on the question of religion (mudháb); there is clearly a continuity between this and the earlier passage on wa’dat al-wujûd. The continuing influence of Abû al-Fadl on the munshî class is evident, not only in terms of his political philosophy but also in his understanding of the working of a bureaucracy, and the seven key principles for the functioning of a state. In a similar vein, Nâk Râi quotes from the Mu’âmmariyât-i Husaynî, and from Jâmî, but these seem to be less important for him than his quotations from Abû al-Fadl.

We may pass over the rest of the text, which is more significant in terms of literary and fiscal history than for the purposes we have in mind here. It is important for us to note that Nâk Râi’s text is not quite a conventional travel-account, for despite its explicit use of the word safar in its title, it comes rather close to an autobiography, or at least a partly-autobiography. Ending when the author is still in his early twenties, it performs three tasks all at once. First, it gives one a clear sense of the life of the munshî, constantly shuttling between one position and another, whether in response to his master’s will or to other exigencies relating to employment. Thus, the point is that travel is central to such a life, as we move from Allâhâbâd, to Mathurâ, to Ágra, to Delhi, and on to Gorakhpûr, not to speak of brief sojourns in a variety of other places, and fleeting glimpses of pilgrimage centres and other places that are barely experienced before we are off on yet another trip. If we were to map Nâk Râi’s movements in the first fifteen years of his life, we would find ourselves drawing a dense set of often overlapping lines that extend down the Indo-Gangetic heartland of the Mughal empire. The second

was the personal friend of a number of scholars, most notably Khun-i Arsii, the well-known critic, poet and lexicographer. Anand Ram wrote extensively, and has left behind a large number of works, including Badri’i waqi’i-i Muhammad Shabbi, a well-known history, which includes a personal memoir of Nadir Shah’s invasion of Delhi in 1739. Other works from his prolific pen include texts on epistemology, a manual for scribes and officials, collections of anecdotes, poems and mathnavis in both Persian and the vernacular, as well as a major work on lexicography, the Mir’at al-istilab. Mukhliš is also the author of some 10,000 verses and has left behind two diwans, one of ghazals and the other of quatrains (rubā’i).

Anand Ram’s family was closely associated with the Mughal court at the time of the emperor Muhammad Shab (r. 1719–48), and his grandfather, Gujaratt Rāi was already an influential man, who had reputedly arranged the marriage of the great noble Khun-i Dawrānī Samsān al-Dawla. His son, and Anand Ram’s father, Lāh Haidar Ram, was in the service of darā’i i’timād al-Dawla Muhammad Amin Khān Chīn Bahādur, father of Qamar al-Din Khān. We are thus particularly fortunate in his case to be able to trace details of his family and circle of friends, and to place him squarely in the context of literary and political life in mid-eighteenth century Shāhjahanābād-Delhi.

A major source of materials on Anand Ram is his own account, Badri’i waqi’i-i Muhammad Shabbi. Unfortunately, complete manuscripts of this text are rare; one of the few extant examples makes it clear that the account runs from the month of Rajab 1145 to 11 Jumād II 1161 (December 1732 to June 1748). Mukhliš himself died in 1164/1751, and it would appear that he worked on this text intermittently from at least 1152 to 1161 AH. At the outset of the work, Anand Ram informs the reader that one day, in spring, while he was seated alone, it suddenly occurred to him that in the past, the masters who had laid the foundations of the science of history wrote about the lives of others and incidents relating to them. But they wrote little about themselves. So Anand Ram thought: “If I describe my own condition, it will not be devoid of pleasure (haf). Rather, it would enhance the hearts’ delight of

Introducing Anand Ram “Mukhliš”

This brings us to the next text which concerns us, the so-called Sufar nāma-i Mukhliš. As briefly mentioned above, the text is in fact the handiwork of Rāi Anand Rām (1699–1751), known by the pen-name of “Mukhliš” (the “sincere”), the wealthy member of a Khatri family from Delhi (but originally from Sodhara, near Wazirābād, in the Punjab), who is generally recognised as one of the foremost stylists of Indo-Persian letters in the eighteenth century together with Mirzā ‘Abd al-Qadir Bākī, Ghulam ‘Ali Azīd Bilgrāmī and Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Ali Khān-i Arzū. He

21For examples, see Siddiqui, “Khulāṣat-us-siyās,” and Hasan, “Nīpūr nāma-i munnīshī: a valuable collection of documents of Aurangzeb’s reign.”
22Anand Rām, Sufar nāma-i Mukhliš.
poets and impeccable men of sentiment, who are themselves intoxicated with joy (arbāb-i ṣunān-un bālī ki sar khushān-i nashān-i kanāl and)." The work thus contains an account of events during the reign of Muḥammad Shāh, but remains rather personal, including a brief account of a journey (sārg) to Brindaban, the "abode of love" (dār al-‘isq), as well as accounts of travel to Gaṇḍi Muktāsār and Bangār.

A number of the major biographical dictionaries (taṣdīkān) of poets of the eighteenth century also have notices on Anān Rām, and all of them clearly identify him as belonging to the community of the Khāṭris or "Chhatris." One of these writers, Aqā Husayn "Alī Khān ‘Iṣq ‘Aṣkhābādī, wrote in his contemporary work, Nashter-i ʿisq: thus of the "Hindūs of the time," he was the best littérateur, adding, "Mukhīs, Anān Rām, son of Rāja Ḥriday Rām, belongs to the brave community of the Chhatris, who have since the beginning shared in the rulership of Hindūstān. He is a resident of Sodharā, which is in the vicinity of Labore." A slightly later author, Ghalam "Alī Azāʾī Bilāgrāmī, in his Khaṣāna-i ‘āmūrā, added in a similar vein, "Mukhīs, Anān Rām, belongs to the community (quwān) of the Chhatris, to whom the rulership over the people of India pertains since ancient times." These writers also make it clear that Mukhīs was first trained in poetry by Bīdīl, and then became a disciple of Khān-Ārāzī after Bīdīl's death.

The same biographical dictionaries provide us some more penetrating personal details on Mukhīs's life and lifestyle. Thus, Anān Alī Sandīlīt, in his Mukhaṣan al-gharābūṭ states: "On account of his fatness, he [Mukhīs] was excused from daily attendance on the emperor, and another person was sent in his place. He used to enjoy life, with leisure and music (ʿaysh wa ṣawāra). In his house in Shāhjahānābād, poets and the learned used to gather regularly." It is also reported that he died eventually of breathing problems (nasīf al-ṭamār), perhaps on account of his corpulence. We also learn of Anān Rām that, in the Mughal court-politics of the time, he was reckoned to be close to the Tūrīn nobles, and had for a time been the wakāl of Anwar al-Dīn Khān of Gopānā, later Nawwār of Arcot. It also appears that Mukhīs had emerged into a quite staid middle age from a rather dissolute youth. Thus, when he was young, Mukhīs was a compulsive gambler (he played ganja), and his father greatly disapproved of this. The family was rather wealthy and influential already in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Besides the fact noted above that his grandfather had arranged the marriage of Šamsūn al-Dawla, Lāh Hriday Rām had even arranged for the same noble to be made governor of Ahmedābād, and had advanced Rs. 50,000 as surety on the occasion.

Further details emerge from a rather curious manuscript from the British Library, entitled Murāqqa-i Mughlis, or "The Mukhīs Album," made up of samples of his writing. This manuscript contains autograph documents that were apparently put together for that very reason, rather than for their literary quality. Thus, one of the letters documents the sending of mēnā (fruits) by Mukhīs to his master, the waṣīr Qamar al-Dīn Khān; another documents the sending of harīrā (chutney) and aṣbār (pickles) made with Decancī masālā to the same noble, sent through his son Kiṣāḥ Rām; a third is a note to Qamar al-Dīn Khān's wife (Begām Şāhīs) concerning the receipt of baskets of mangoes. Occasionally, the letters detail financial transactions such as the arrival of a bill-of-exchange (hūndū) of Rs. 40,000 that had been demanded by the waṣīr, or the affair of a slave-trader (burāṣ-ī faṣīh) who had stolen the son of a certain barber. But the letters, with their incessant references to mangoes, fruit, and cooked food, certainly buttress the image of Mukhīs as an inveterate banīvīnt. This is an aspect that we shall have occasion to remark time and again in the Safar nāma, to which we now turn.

The travel account narrates the imperial expedition against 'Alī Muhammad Khān Rohilla (d. 1749), the founder of the eighteenth-century Indo-Afghan regional state based in Rāmpūr, in 1745. It begins in the first month (Muṭarram) of the year 1158 AH (February 1745), and ends some four months later, at the close of the month of Jumādá I of the same year; the account itself was eventually completed on 12 Rāṣmād 1158 (8 October 1745). Anān Rām, who wrote the text (in its Rāmpūr manuscript) in his own hand, notes that his own title for it was Aḥhār-i safar-i Bangār ("Account of a Journey to Bangār"), and the present title is in fact a modern editor's interpolation. The text is on the face of it a very matter-of-fact, day-to-day description, of this long and rather slow-moving expedition, where nothing of terribly great political consequence actually took place. It is notable for its relatively simple and direct style, and we can sense that Anān Rām did not wish to display all the literary skills and devices that we know he had at his disposal. It is thus at times a curiously personal text, not in the sense of reflecting its author's emotions or moods, but rather in its accumulation of petty personal details, including how much Anān Rām spent for a number of trivial transactions. Now, quite unlike travellers from Iran or Central Asia (to say nothing of Europe), Anān Rām was travelling in an area that was for him rather familiar culturally speaking, and in which he may have even travelled before. Thus, there is much less of

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28 Anān Rām, Murāqqa-i Mughlis by Roq Anān Rām Mughlis, Editor's introduction, pp. 8-10.

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30 Anān Rām, Murāqqa-i Mughlis, Introduction, p. 15, based on Budā'ī waṣīrī.
exotic colour in this view of the upper Gangetic valley than local detail, much more of pointillism than impressionism.

Let us briefly take note of the politico-historical context, namely the Mughal polity as it stood after the humiliating defeat by Nādir Shāh. In the face of a Mughal centre that appeared weak and uncertain, other challenges had begun to arise from locally anchored chieftains in northeastern India, amongst them from the Indo-Afghans (Rohillis) of the region east of Delhi. There were two factions in the Mughal court with respect to this campaign.\textsuperscript{31} That of Qamar al-Dīn Khān, the wāzīr (with whom Anānd Rām had been intimately associated as his wāzīr since 1729-30), on the one hand, and that of Saḍdar Jang, best known as the governor of Awadh, on the other, had opposing views concerning the Rohilla threat.\textsuperscript{32} Qamar al-Dīn was content to let the Rohillās be, whereas Saḍdar Jang, who was directly threatened in Awadh by their growing military power, was keen on taking a strong stand against ‘Alī Muhammad Khān. The undercurrents of this quarrel come through in this account, and can be profitably read with attention to detail by aficionados of Mughal court-politics in the era.\textsuperscript{33} The name of minor officials in the court also come to light in the process.

Anānd Rām comes through in this text as someone who was fond of the good things of life, notably food, and creature comforts. He also notices matters of religious interest, and provides valuable testimony on the socio-religious attitudes of those who were brought up in the Indo-Persian culture in northern India in the early eighteenth century. The account thus begins with the heading: “The setting out (mudawwājāh shudan) of the Hadhrat Zalil-Allāh Muhammad Shāh Bādsbāsh Ghażī to Gāṛh Muktēsār in the manner (ba tāriq) of a pleasure-trip (ṣayr), and for hunting. The presence of the writer of these words, the jagār Mukhīs, in this auspicious company, on account of the favour of the times.”\textsuperscript{34}

Earlier historians often used this text to examine relations within the court, or even the socio-economic conditions in the areas through which Anānd Rām passed. However, we may note that the account periodically takes on a more personal tone, alternating with other passages that are largely restricted to official events. For example, Anānd Rām writes that his own initial intention had been to stay behind in Delhi and send his sons with the imperial party. Yet, after the preliminary description of the imperial departure, he pauses to speak of how he came to make his own trip, and adds somewhat wryly: “I leave this account at this point, to set down an account of myself (mājārā-i khwād), which is the [real] reason for recording these lines.” He notes that if it were a matter of merely going as far as Gāṛh Muktēsār, this was something that he and other people in Delhi did anyway every year in the month of Kārtik (we note that — as with Nek Rāi — there is a switch in the calendrical system of reference). His account then continues, with the fresh caption “A description by the writer of these letters, engaged in writing about wonders” (ahwāl-i rāqim-i ḥurāf, ba ḍastā-i nawīsī māṣāf).

“At first, I had thought it reasonable to stay back in the city, and that Rāi Kripā Rām and Rāi Fath Singh [his sons], who with the grace of God, are adequately familiar with the affairs of the darbār-i mu'alla, should go along with the auspicious retinue (ṭikāb-i so'ōdat). For this journey, if it is to end in Gāṛh Muktēsār, was not to be more than a pleasure-trip and for hunting. Every year, most of the people of Delhi in the month of Kārtik travel in order to have a bath in the Ganges, and there they arrange happy feasts. But it so happened that when preparations were being made, it occurred to me that it was not advisable for me to remain in the city. In the first place, I would have to bear the suffering (alam) of separation from my sons who had never been apart from me. Secondly, I had never been separated from the retinue of the Master (khudāwānd-i nī'māt). At this time, when there is the possibility of a fight, were I to remain behind, people might accuse me of being self-centred (khwād-dūr). Therefore, I too decided to set out on the voyage and started preparing things (yasāq) for the trip.”

We notice the characteristic nervousness that he might be taken for a coward, a theme that Mukhīs pursues later in the text as well. When Anānd Rām was more or less ready to leave, on that very day a letter arrived from Zakariyā Khān, the governor of Lahore, to the effect that Nādir Shāh had reached Attōck to chastise the Yusufzā'ī Afghans, and then planned to go on into Kashmir. Anānd Rām thought it was incumbent on him to be the first to inform the emperor of this, and hence decided to send his son Fath Singh post-haste to Dhappā. Anānd Rām notes that he gave his son Rs. 21, on the occasion of his departure, to ward off the evil eye. Here are practices that seem to be common enough in the Mughal court, in which both Hindu and Muslim nobles and notables participate without any great sense of difference.

\textsuperscript{31} On court-factions leading up to this period, see Chandra, Parties and politics at the Mughal court, 1707-1710.

\textsuperscript{32} For Mughal politics in this period in the context of Awadh, see the earlier discussion in Alam, The crisis of empire in Mughal North India, pp. 263-70, passim.


\textsuperscript{34} Anānd Rām, Safar nāma, pp. 1-3.
Eventually Ånad Rām himself does set out from Delhi, again handling money — eleven ehuṣīf and a hundred rupees — to his retainers and slave-girls (farzandīn wa kawātīn), by way of ensuring auspiciousness (shuqdīn). He also breaks coconuts to the same end, again a measure of the sort of intermediate cultural space that he inhabits. Yet it is clear that some of his closest friends and companions may be found amongst the Muslim elite of the court. Thus, we hear of “my dear brother Mir Najm al-Dīn, son of the late Mir Sharaq al-Dīn ‘Ali, who had as pen name ‘Pauvā’ [Message],” who accompanied him on the voyage. Similarly Ånad Rām’s food habits are eclectic and include kabābīs and mutton do-piyāsā (a preparation with onions), as well as khichī, a preparation with rice and lentils. Nor is he averse to recent innovations, indulging himself periodically in a few fresh cups of coffee (qahwa). Happy enough to write in Persian, he is also an accomplished poet in the mixed idiom of rākhta. One of his own verses that he cites during the voyage, and which seems to epitomize at a linguistic level the forms of acculturation that run through the whole text, is as follows:

Khālq kān tīshnāgī dīdar tuqūn gū bhū dīt hāi
‘arq seten tere chāhī-i-dhaqān goyā gūlābī hāi.

Thirst bubbles up in people

to see your flower-like face

Even the sweat that collects in the creases

of your chin is rose-flavoured.

Exchange of pleasures and poetry are thus a part of this courtly intellectual’s way of life, making it clear how well integrated he is into the Mughal court and its ways. But the text also takes on a slightly different flavour when Ånad Rām arrives at the banks of the river Ganges. For here he underlines the satisfaction of being able to return to the holy river again, after an absence of two years, which he expresses in a quatrains:

O Mukhlīs, I left the city for the jungle.

I bore the sufferings of the journey.

In the year 1158, hundreds of thanks,

that I could again bathe in the Ganges.

The next day, when the rest of the imperial party arrived, Ånad Rām nevertheless took the time to bathe in the river, performed the rituals to which he was habituated, and took a vow that so long as he was at the banks of the Ganges, he would not think of meat. This nicely captures Ånad Rām’s Khāṭri culture, caught between his mutton do-piyāsā and his temporary vegetarianism.

Enough has been said so far to give the reader some flavour of the style and nature of this account, as well as the type of reflection it contains on the acculturated milieu of the Khāṭris and Kāyasthas. Rather than dilate on the details, we shall now proceed to highlight some of the passages that appear to us to have a greater interest. One of these concerns the visit by Ånad Rām’s party to the town of Sambhal. Ånad Rām provides a description of the principal features of the place and notes that on the town’s far side stood a high dome, that was at one time a temple called Har Mandal. Of this it used to be said (in the vernacular saying from the Sikh Dasam Granth reported by Ånad Rām):

Bhāy bāse Sambhal ke
ke Harji har mandal āvenye
Great is the fortune of Sambhal

where Harji (Śiva) will come to the Harmandāl.

This reflects a sort of millenarian legend that one day, the god Śiva would return in the flesh to Sambhal, which was thus privileged by this association. When Bābur took Hindūān, writes Ånad Rām, he gave Sambhal as a jāgīr to his son Humāyūn Mīrzā, and he converted this ancient building into a mosque, so that it was now the jāmī masjid of the town. “Earlier too it was a place of worship (‘ibādīt-kade), and even now it is a place of worship,” concludes Ånad Rām calmly, as if this were the most natural of things, noting that the high dome (gumhād) of the mosque was similar to that of the temple. He even cites the chronogram inscribed on one of its arches, noting that it was constructed on Bābur’s orders by a certain Hindu Beg. Further, Ånad Rām notes the existence of a tank, now in poor condition, but still thought to be holy, where people came and bathed. Brahmanas and flower-sellers still showed up there in numbers to sell flowers and recite shlokas. The tank was almost dry, but people bathed in it still, using the sludge from it. Ånad Rām dryly notes a verse in Persian that states:

35 There is unfortunately no good study to date of the introduction of coffee into the Mughal domains. For comparative materials, see Hatto, Coffee and coffeehouses.
36 Ånad Rām, Safar nāma, p. 16.
37 We turn to the later travel-account by Mukhlīs with a description of his journey to Gaṇḍī Muktēśwar, begun on 5 Dhū al-Qu’dā 1160 in the following sections.
38 For an earlier brief mention of the Har Mandal, see the late sixteenth-century account by the Mughal chronicler and courtier Abū al-Fadl, A‘īn-i Akbarī, vol. 2, p. 366. For details of the mosque, also see Asher, Architecture of Mughal India, pp. 28-29. Asher misreads “Hora” (Śiva) as “Hari” (Viṣṇu).
39 Ånad Rām, Safar nāma, p. 48.
After this, in place of tears,
the heart come out,
When the pond's water dries,
earth comes out.

The parallel with the attitude of Nek Rāi faced with the events at Mathurā is quite notable. Neither denies the existence of inter-faith violence in Mughal times, but each seems to wish to suggest that it is not the essential feature of their understanding of how the polity functions. Ånand Rām is apt to approach the matter more obliquely, and with a more marked sense of irony than his predecessor. He also is apt to make rather self-deprecating comments regarding his own community, who are caught between cultures in more sense than one, including their uncertain status as merchants, skilled in accounts, and yet not devoid of martial or political pretensions.

Ånand Rām's sense of irony enables him at times to indulge in a curious sport, namely citing religious texts metaphorically in a thoroughly worldly context. At a certain point of his return journey, when he is abandoned on the banks of a river, he even quotes some esoteric Vaishnava bhakti verses of separation in Braj Bhashā, in order to summarize his plight at this time:

Alas, alas, says Uddhau, tears come to my eyes,
as evening approaches, and with it comes my own loneliness.

Having given up Gokul, and renounced Mathurā,
with Brindāvan in my sights, I'd forgotten my own village.

The poet Debdhara says, it saddens me
to think of the separation from my dwelling.

I boarded the boat of Love, but the boatman let me down.

O lord of Braj! I'm marooned between you and the shore.

Accompanying Ånand Rām across the modest terminus of his first travel-account has meant that we need to roam a bare few hundred miles in the heartland of Hindūstān. Still, such texts certainly carry wider implications, of which we may mention a few. In the first place, it appears to us that these texts can fruitfully be read as part of a body of works of a non-exoticist nature that seem to be a growing feature of this period, and which our Ottomanist colleagues have equally remarked.11 Again, it is striking that such travel accounts as that of Nek Rāi and Ånand Rām are so closely linked with the scribal milieu of the court. Any explanation for the emergence of this literary form cannot base itself solely on the notion of a shift in the objective conditions of literary production; we need equally to look into a series of issues of a formal nature, having to do with the internal logic (and evolution) of genres in Indo-Persian literature.

Some observations may equally be in order on the tone and content of the text. Ånand Rām “Mukhlī” appears in this text as he wishes to be seen, as a sometimes ruefully self-abnegating, but always self-indulgent and highly acculturated, gentleman of leisure, caught up on account of the alchemy of politics in a campaign in which he himself is not about to take active part. It is one of the enduring questions of early modern South Asian elite culture, how the (at times) conflicting claims of statecraft and merchant activity could be reconciled by groups that sat astride these domains.12 One of the solutions that exists, theoretically at least, is to deflate the paradox from the very outset, by stating that no such zone of ambiguity existed in terms of social activity, and that the division of labour was clear. But Ånand Rām’s life and writings give the lie to this presumption.13 Such men were surely aware, as Ånand Rām’s reflections show, that they were seen by others as ill-suited to the rigours of battle, and were vulnerable to mockery as mere shopkeepers. The text demonstrates that there was no simple solution to this “identity crisis.” But the writing of the text, in a cultured and measured Indo-Persian (with its fair share of Indian vernacular words and phrases) was itself a form of response, even though Ånand Rām obviously strove, as we have noted, to write in as simple and direct a style as possible here. For here was the product of a process of acculturation that gave the mastery of Persian letters not merely to an Indian (rather than a native of Herāt, Nishāpūr or Isfahān), but to one of the Khatri.14 If this

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11 For a comparative perspective, see for example Kafadar, “Self and others.”
12 The question is discussed in the context of southern India in Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyan, Symbols of substance, pp. 44–56, passim. A frequently cited work on the subject that differs radically in its interpretation is Pearson, Merchants and robberies in Gujarat.
13 For an earlier discussion, see Alam, The crisis of empire, pp. 168–74.
14 For a brief discussion of the Khatri role in Persian literary life at Delhi, see Blake, Shahjahana, pp. 138–112, 130–34.
gives us pause for reflection, it must have done the same to detractors of Ánand Rám and his ilk in the eighteenth century as well. Self-mockery and self-promotion could thus be two sides of the same coin, as much for communities as for individuals.

The further travels of Ánand Rám

Roughly two-and-a-half years after the account discussed above, Ánand Rám was once more on the road. This later voyage, even more modest in its extent than the earlier one, yielded a text with the title Ahwâl-i sañfar-i sīlāzā râzû (“An account of a thirteen-day voyage”), or Wâqâ’t-i sañari Gângâ (“Account of a trip to the Ganges”), which survives in a unique autograph manuscript that is not without its share of curious puzzles. The manuscript comes from the collection of “Nawâb Mumâr-al-Dawla Mufâkhkhur-al-Mulk Husâm Jang Mister Richard Johnson Sahib Bâlâdur,” which is to say the celebrated Richard Johnson (d. 1803),65 earlier it was owned — as indicated by a title page seal from 1188 AH — by a certain `Ibâd Allâh. This second Sâfar nâmâ is bound together with a section of Ánand Rám’s other text, Badâ’i’ waqâ’ti’, dealing with political events in Delhi and Lahore in 1748, and having in particular to do with the movements of `Ambâd Shâh AbdÂl. The travel was actually done — so it would seem — in the days from 5 Dhîl al-Qa’dâ to 17 Dhîl al-Qa’dâ 1160 AH, but the text was completed and revised on 1 Dhîl al-Ra’dâ 1160, i.e. 4 December 1747. However, Ánand Rám himself makes an uncharacteristic slip in the text, dating it to 1156 AH, which is impossible from circumstantial evidence (such as the mention in the text of Nâdir Shâh’s death, which occurred in 1747).

The travel-account here, which was concerned with the simple matter of accomplishing the Kûrtik pilgrimage to the Ganges at Garh Muktâsâr, begins with very few frills or preliminaries, and after the usual “Bismillâh” invocation, we enter the text directly.

“Having sent out the baggage in advance on 3 Dhîl al-Qa’dâ 1160 [6 November 1747], corresponding to 5 Kûrtik-i Hindî, I then set out from Shâhâjâhâbâd on Thursday, the 5th of the same month, late in the morning accompanied by my brother Râj Singh Râm, and my sons Râj Kûriâ Râm and Râj Fâth Singh. As several of our relatives were with us, we had acquired several horsemen and foot soldiers from my master [Qamar al-Dûn Khân], and they came along with us as we set out at a gradual pace. At noon, we arrived at the banks of the Jamunâ, and from amongst my friends in the town, only my kind brother Lâl Bijây Râm, my dear brother Mr. Najm al-Dûn ‘Alî Khân, my very dear Kashmîrî Mal, and the one close to my heart Jaswant Râj, were able to accompany me. On the banks of the river, we spread our carpets, and I instructed my servants to organize the crossing of the river.”

But this proved to be a slightly complicated task, setting the tone for a journey that — although simple in appearance — in fact turned out to be full of small annoyances. The party had ten to twelve cihákâras (or carts) with goods, besides as many wagons and pack-animals, an elephant, horses, and camels, a medicine-chest (dâwâ’-i-khâna), and palanquins, and all this amounted to quite a lot when crossing a river. It was hence late afternoon by the time they were able to make their way to the other side. At this point in its course, the river Jamunâ was in three channels. Two sections had to be crossed by a boat for the men and horses, and the third could be forded on foot. But while crossing the last section, one of the badly-behaved camels managed to get his load snatched, and the clothes that were laden on the camel’s back became all wet. That day, some of the party wanted to stay put on the river bank at Ganj Shâhâbdara. But since the advance party had already set up their tents at Ghâzîuddîn Nagar (Ghâzîbâd or Ghâzî Nagar), the party that brought up the rear eventually had to move ahead quickly. They passed the garden of the noble Mâdîr-al-Dawla, where unfortunately one of the carts with tents broke down. Some of the soldiers were hence left behind to take care of the problem. Later, Ánand Rám came to hear that these soldiers had had to keep thieves at bay all night long, with their arrows and firearms. Clearly, the environs of Delhi were not quite safe at this moment; all one had to do was cross the river, and one could find oneself surrounded by bandits. In the middle of the night, Ánand Rám’s party eventually reached Ghâzîuddîn Nagar. Here, they were able to eat a
tasty *khichdi*, reminiscent perhaps of the previous journey, and they all fell fast asleep.

Before leaving Delhi, there had been some discussion of the different types of tents that would be carried. A certain type of larger tent was to be shared by the other brothers, a smaller one was set aside for Ánand Rám, and a very large one (of four units) for the women and children. But since the wind was a bit chilly at that time of the year, and one of the tents had been left on the way, there was some inconvenience. Ánand Rám takes the occasion to cite a metaphorical verse concerning how the eleventh-century conqueror Mahammad of Ghaznavi had spent a night wrapped up in layers of fur, while a poor traveler had spent a night nearby by the warmth of an oven (*tanūr*). And who could say whose night had been better spent?

On Friday, 6 Däh al-Qa‘da, somewhat into the day, the party set out from Gházūddin Nagar. Here introducing a parenthesis in the narrative, Ánand Rám reflects on how when he was young, he had been able to get up early in the morning. But with advancing age and graying hair, he finds this harder to do. And if he wakes up too early now, he has to have a nap in the afternoon. This has him recall a verse attributed to Ibráhīm Adham:

Awake o Adham, drink up your wine.
At dawn, it's had to be drunk from sleep.
Awake, and taste the morning wine,
for you'll never experience it in your dreams.

Since the clothes had been soaked in the river crossing (and had to be dried) and one of the carts had broken down the previous day, this explained their late start that day. At any rate, they eventually reached Dāna, and stopped there for a while and had a drink of coffee and a snack. Later in the day, the party moved on to Dhamma — retracing their earlier journey of 1745 — where they set up camp, and got together with their friends to gossip (*shukhat-i gap*) around a small bucket-like (*minqal*). Rather than waiting for his coffee-maker (*qahwashdi*), Ánand Rám decided to prepare the coffee himself in order to rid the party of their tiredness. This act brought to his mind a verse of Mírza Šāhāb, on the pleasures of life.

Hot coffee, a hot bath, some meaty soup,
and the intoxication of opium,
a waving peacock's tail in sight,

and some prepared tobacco.

Such then were the good things of life as seen from the perspective of a Sháhjáhánábādī bourgeois in late Mughal India. Ánand Rám notes that he is a great fan of both coffee and the water-pipe (*kurūkā*), and why not: for one like him whose heart had been burnt (*dīl sakhta*) could only enjoy other burnt things like roasted coffee and tobacco! He then enters into a brief description of different sorts of tobacco and their use, some of which are genuine and others less so. A certain Mulkhīs Kháñ and Rāh Allah Kháñ, both high nobles from the time of Anangzab, had differing views and preferences in the matter. An anecdote on the matter completes the digression on tobacco, and is followed by a few remarks and poems on the subject of coffee. One of Ánand Rám’s own verses on the subject runs:

Even though wine makes the heart rejoice,
at length it creates dissension.
My heart is drawn towards coffee
for it smells to me of a roasted heart.

After all these reflections, Ánand Rám notes that he ate something and went off to sleep, only to awake on the next day, Saturday. He set off after a late morning bath, and arrived in Hāpy, and after crossing this town, halted for a time in a mango orchard. Once again, coffee was drunk here, and though he had planned to eat there, the man who was carrying the food had gone ahead of them. Ánand Rám was hungry by now, and began to feel rather grumpy at the carelessness of his servants. So, they set out, and halting at a few places, eventually reached Maudī’ Bāksar late in the evening.

On the other side of this town was the hospice (*takiya*) of a holy man, a certain Mast Rám Faqīr Udāsi, a chosen disciple of the well-known Bām Dargāh, a site with a well attached to it. This Mast Rám was still young but had decided to renounce this world, and devoted himself to the search for God. The signs of divinity were evident on his forehead, writes Ánand Rám, and he was in the habit of distributing gifts of watermelon, sugarcane, pumpkin and a special sweetmeat – all of which they termed *garad*. He was also extremely hospitable to all sorts of passing travellers, and his kitchen was open to one and all. Ánand Rám and his party were thus able to benefit from his generosity, as the two were already known to each other. Ánand Rám promised that he would stop there on his return trip as well.
On Sunday, 8 Dīlā al-qa’da, before sunrise, the party set out once more, and managed by late morning to reach their destination at Gaṛh Muktēsār. They went through the fair (mēla) there, and the settlements (akhārā-hā) of the sannyāsī mendicants, eventually reaching the village of Pot where the farther limits of the fair were, at some time and a half leagues (kos) from Gaṛh Muktēsār proper. A piece of land had been found by the advance party, but Ānand Rām did not care for it as it was on low ground. He hence sent his son Fath Singh to find a place on the banks of the river Ganges, which was on a bit of an elevation. Fath Singh went to the far end of the mēla, but apparently could not find any appropriate spot. Ānand Rām then went out wandering himself, and did find a spot but there was already a lean-to (tambū) there made of chin cloth. He then inquired, and found that it belonged to a certain Bhūpāt Rām Baqghāl — who had dealings with the soldiers of the Mughal army (topkāhānā), and who also had some pretensions to being a warrior. But how could a mere merchant have such pretensions? Just hearing this absurd notion brings out a mocking Hindī verse from Ānand Rām’s repertoire.

Māie makhī ke tāngī tōrūn
aur tūrūn kuchchā sāt.
Mukkāc mār pāpar tōrūn to sāhī kā pūt.
I can break the legs off a dead fly;
and snap a thread of raw cotton.
With my fist I can crush a papadom,
which shows I’m the son of a merchant.

Ānand Rām hence had his elephant tethered nearby, went up to Bhūpāt Rām, and asked him courteously to vacate the land so that he could use it. But the merchant was puffed up with pretension, as if he was in the service of the grandees of the empire. He hence replied rudely, and Ānand Rām now lost his temper. He ordered his men to throw out Bhūpāt Rām, and even though a crowd gathered, he was expelled summarily. Another tent was still in the vicinity, which inconvenience them. But this tent, it turned out, belonged to one of the Bārba Sāyids of Mīrampūr — men who could not be trifled with (unlike the merchant). Ānand Rām hence decided that it was best not to tangle with him, and thought that since he had come on a pleasure trip, it was better to negotiate. He hence sent out one of his servants, Muhammad Fādil, a clever and smooth-tongued man, to deal with the Sāyid. But the Sāyid, whose name was Atal and who was also a faqīr, proved quite adamant, insisting that he was content where he was, and warning them that he was not a mere merchant (baqghāl), who could be frightened off.

A diplomatic solution was eventually found. For it turned out that the Sāyid was known to a certain Uljāmī Lāl (brother of the diwan of Bhorī), who was known in turn to Ānand Rām. This talking point allowed the negotiation to proceed, and after much flattery, the Sāyid eventually withdrew his tent, allowing Ānand Rām and his party a free space. Their elaborate tents were now set up, with larger and smaller chambers. A small garden was set up with the flowering plants the party had carried along, and a separate bathing area (hammām) was also created to the left of the main tent. The setting up of these tents was a rather elaborate affair, and all of this lasted practically the whole day.10

Once these matters had been settled satisfactorily, it was time to think of the river Ganges, for the party needed to have access to boats for an excursion. It was the custom in the fair, writes Ānand Rām, to set up a line of boats like a royal flotilla, with broadcloth tents in the middle. On moonlit nights, people had the habit of sailing out on the river in these boats. It was also a wonderful sight to look out on to the tents that were pitched on the river, where women and young boys all danced to the sound of drums. It was as if a colourful town had been set up on the banks of the water. But Ānand Rām had also seen a number of fighting boats break out on account of the excesses of such occasions. Ānand Rām notes that he had already asked the faujdār of Gaṛh Muktēsār, who was a kudārī-posh (a “hat-wearer,” perhaps meaning an Iranian Qzilbash from Nādir Shāh’s time), and a companion of the great notable Shafrar Jang, for some boats that he and his party could use. Despite the fact that this man was unbearably arrogant by nature, he eventually sent a boat to Ānand Rām, who went on to arrange two others of his own. These boats were made ready, with chintz from Bandor Masulipatnam and other valuable cloths being used to set up a tent in the interior.

On Monday, 9 Dīlā al-qa’da, Ānand Rām awoke and following his routine, bathed, and then went on to take a dip in the river, which he refers to respectfully as “Gaṅghā-ji.” He goes on to write:

“The people of Hind (ahl-i Hind) state that one must first bathe outside [the river], and one’s body should be cleansed of the pollutants and dirt. After that, one should bathe in the holy water (dar āb-i tirīth). This is because one owes this much courtesy as a sign of respect to the holy spot (tirīth).”

Ānand Rām now gave some money to the Brahmins there, and also

10 Ānand Rām, Waqī’s sayr-i Gaṅghā, I, 7.
performed some other rituals as were required on the occasion. Fed from these, he ate, and in the night went out on a river expedition with his friends. Anand Rām and his intimates were in one boat, and the soldiers were asked to follow in the other boats in case of necessity. Since the night was quite advanced, most of the people in the tents on the river were already asleep. After midnight, the party eventually returned home. The next morning a cold wind began to blow, accompanied by rain. An improvised verse is cited on the occasion.

Clouds appeared like jagis and sanyāsīs,
and everyone has become the Ganga and the Jammā.

On the sixth day of the trip, 10 Dhū al-Qu‘ad, a Tuesday, Anand Rām reports that he awoke, bathed and went to the tent of his friend Swāmī Rām, with whom he chatted, and had some coffee. This was a quiet day, mostly spent reading papers relating to his household, signing them, and looking after such matters. In the evening, a set of letters that had been written on the previous day arrived from Shāhjahanābād. The news conveyed in them was that Amir Bīg Khān, resident in Peshawar, had written to the Mughal emperor, telling him that following the killing of Nādir Shāh, Naṣīr Khān, the local governor, had fled and Ahmād Khān Afgān Qandahārī had become ruler. It had hence been decided to send out a Mughal force towards the Punjab. Anand Rām declared that he became quite concerned on hearing this news, foreseeing troubled times once more.

On the seventh day, Wednesday, 11 Dhū al-Qu‘ad, when the sun had risen somewhat in the sky, Anand Rām decided to visit the fair after having had his usual bath. His particular intention was to meet a certain Thākūr Sādānand Jīn, and making his way through the bazaar, the jewellers’ quarter, and the settlements of the sanyāsīs, he eventually reached the tent of Sādānand. A few days earlier, the latter’s younger brother Sahajānand — himself a man of spiritual qualities — had died, and this was a concomitant visit to Sādānand. The two men were the sons of a certain Thākūr Bakht Mal and considered to be great ascetics who had given up the world. The brothers are both greatly praised by Anand Rām for all their positive qualities. Their usual residence, it is noted, was in Hardwār where the last resting place (sammādhib) of their father too was to be found; this was an elegant and well-constructed building that was generally considered to be a holy spot. Once a year, out of consideration for his followers, Sādānand himself was in the habit of visiting Shāhjahanābād after the Kārtik Mēla, and after spending the spring festival of Holt there, eventually returned to Hardwār. This Sādānand was always surrounded by fifty or sixty other ascetics, and besides feeding them he was always ready to feed visitors with bread from his tanūr oven, lentils (mung dāl), and spinach. He also wore a special ring with a mirror, the meaning of it being that every man’s heart should be as pure and shining as a mirror, so that the rays of God’s light could shine through. It turns out from Anand Rām’s extended description that Sādānand was a Khāṭir Sūrī from Jalālpūr in the Punjab, and belonged to the Udāsi sect; Anand Rām himself, being a Khāṭir from the Punjab, no doubt felt a particular affinity to him. It was only some hours later that Anand Rām could take leave of him, and after returning home, had a meal and went to sleep.

Since his childhood, Anand Rām notes, he had been in the habit of taking a siesta (gāyālā). If he did not have one, the rest of the day was ruined. So, after waking, he went out of the tent, and looked out at the moon and the boats on the river from the yard. A description of the fair (kārūnīyat-i nēla) follows here, which is curiously ethnographic in nature. Anand Rām notes that the Ghar Mulkēsār nēla was the most colourful in all of Hindūstān. Sanyāsīs fagās gathered there a month before its start, and settled there. There were distinct camps (akbārās) of various groups and fagās, with thatched roofs, and they tried to outdo each other in their innovative decoration. There was a raised central part in each akbāra, called the pāhānka (where a flag was flown), with smaller enclosures around. The materials of worship (adāndār-i parastāsh) such as conches, were also kept at the centre. The sanyāsīs got together every morning and evening and discussed questions regarding notions of renunciation (ābāhs-i sanyās) and other issues, besides carrying out their ceremonies. Anyone who wished to give them a donation dropped it into a circular vessel, of which one sanyāsī was in charge, and he then spent all his time counting the money. Mukhīs remarks cynically (and perhaps revealing his own Vaishnavite hostility to these largely Śaiva renouncers) that rather than having any real worship, these places have become mere centres for the collection of money (chakhrā-i tahsīl). He then also remarks on the fact that Hindū fagās are of different types. Rather than dilute on these differences, he takes note in particular of the existence of two groups (fagās): the sanyāsīs and the bāgārās. Quarrels had been going on between them for years, and the result was that whenever they got together, there was always fighting and bloodshed. Of

\[30\] Anand Rām, Wazīq-i sār-i Ganga, 8. 10a. Compare the descriptions of the customs of the Hindus in Mirza Muḥammad Ḥasan Qāhil, Ḥalt i tamaqha, "Qāhil" (1758/59–1817) was in fact a converted Khāṭir, originally called Dīvānī Sāghi, who had been born in Delhi, and who died in Lakhnau. He knew both Arabic and Persian and was a disciple of Mirza Muḥammad Bāqir Kirmānshāhī, under whose influence he converted at the age of fourteen to Twelver Shi‘ism, though he kept the conversion hidden for two years. The text was written in the late eighteenth century.

\[31\] A well-known incident between two ascetic groups, in which the Mughals came
the two, the boyātās were somewhat better and less quarrelsome, and so they had in recent years decided not to come to Ghār Muktārān any more, whereas the sanyāsīs were there in their thousands, some of them behaving like real kings with flags and armed retainers (sākht-i 'alam va fašāh). Some were also real merchants (sāndigār va faṭār), who tried to dominate the fair and the people there.22 Again, Ānand Rām notes, within the sanyāsīs themselves, there were distinctions. Some went about totally naked save for a grass mat to sleep on and a small piece of sackcloth to cover their heads. Here, Mukhīlīs is rather dismissive of them, “Having become oblivious to the real purpose of such renunciation, they believe that these external things constitute spirituality and asceticism,” he writes.

Mukhīlīs now recalls what he considers an apposite story about Sarmād, the ascetic who was close to Prince Dārā Shāh in the mid-seventeenth century. He too had been in the habit of going about naked. When ʿĀlāgār-Aurangzāb became the ruler, he sent one of his intimate nobles to make enquiries about Sarmād. This noble returned with the following verse.23

Bar Sarmād-i barahna karāmāt muttaḥamāst
Kashf-i ki zāhir ast dar ā kashf-i 'awrat ast

To accuse naked Sarmād of miracles
is itself a form of calumny.

For the only miracle that he reveals
is that of his bare private parts.

Mukhīlīs notes nevertheless that Sarmād was a good poet, as can be seen from the evidence of the quatrains he wrote. On the matter of his execution by ʿĀlāgār he is equivocal, noting that some people claim that he was killed like al-Hallāj, because he spoke against the shariʿa.

Returning to the fair, Mukhīlīs notes the distance between the village of Takrī and Pot, some seven or eight leagues (kas). People came from

all the nearby cities such as Murādābād, and congregated on the banks of the river. Even well-born people from Shāhjāhānābād came there with their tents and establishments, and the shops here were set out with wonderful and diverse goods. Young boys and girls danced there by way of entertainment, and there were also acrobats, and well-spoken storytellers (qiṣṣa-khwātān-i khwāsh haqqār) in some numbers. Even a sad heart was gladdened, writes Ānand Rām, in the face of all this. After their baths, beautiful fairy-like women sat at the edge of the river and lit lamps; with sandalwood and flowers, they worshipped the river goddess Gangājī. These women were in general so beautiful that those whose glances met their eyes found the rewards of both this world and the hereafter (dān va dānāyā). A poet (perhaps Mukhīlīs himself being coy) had hence said:

O fairy-faced women on the banks of the Ganges,

On the day of your bath, a mere glance towards your admirer

is far better than all your lamp-offerings (dān).

O God! Take a message to Shubbā Karān
that I'm a daršānī Hindī,

and I've come to your shop for darshān.24

Mukhīlīs's pen now takes him to another anecdote, this one from the time of Jahāngīr. It is said that one day, he writes, the emperor Jahāngīr went bird-hunting in a boat on the river Jamnā. On his return, he saw a beautiful woman who — after having had a bath — was seated on the banks of the river. It was the day of a solar eclipse, and she was offering some coins as alms. When the royal flotilla came near her, the emperor asked for something for himself as well. She took off her gold necklace with a moon pendant and gave it to him. He accepted it with no hesitation and said (in Hindīvi), “Be happy (sukhi ruho),” and went back to his palace. When he went in, he said to the empress Nūr Jahān, “My life, a strange thing happened today,” and recounted the details — handing her the necklace at the end. She replied, “She did her work very well. First, she was on the banks of the Jamnā, a holy spot (tirath). Second, it was the day of a solar eclipse. Third, she gave an offering of gold. Fourth, the person she gave it to was the emperor of Hindīstān (Chīntrāpata-yi Hindūstān). And as for Your Honour, don’t be oblivious to the fact that you now have a heavy burden on your shoulders. Take care of it as soon as you can.” She then looked in the mirror, and saw

22See the useful discussion of these varied groups in Pinc, Peasants and monks in British India, pp. 23–17. For the situation of some of these groups in the late eighteenth century, also see Pinc, “Who was Himmat Bahādur?”

23The anecdote is attributed to Zafar Khān Khwāja Aḥsan Allāh in Shāhāwār Khān, Maʿāthir-ul-amrāt, vol. 2, p. 1019. For Sarmād, reputedly a Jew who had converted and become a maṭbāh, also see Bernier, Travels in the Mughal empire, AD. 1636–1668, p. 317.

24On the concept of darshān, see Ech. Daršān.
that there was a black spot on her neck. The emperor then called for Brahmins versed in the Vedas and other texts, and had them perform rituals of expiation until at long last that black spot disappeared. The implication of the somewhat obscure anecdote appears to be that the blemish had appeared because Jahāngīr had trifled with the virtuous Hindī woman on the river-bank and wrongfully accepted the necklace.

We are now in 12 Dhū al-Qa’dah, the eighth day. At dawn, a cold wind was blowing, but Anānd Rām still went in a boat some distance along the banks of the river, watching the beautiful women bathing and sitting on the banks. On his return, he also saw a handsome young boy dancing, whose appearance inspired some poetry in him. When the sun had risen higher, he returned to his tent, bathed, and — since it was the eve of Purnima (the full moon) — he followed the necessary rituals. After a meal, he had his usual siesta; in the afternoon, the bhābā Ḍābī Sarat Rām came to pay him a visit with a small jar of oil and an offering of sugarcane for Anānd Rām. This is an occasion for Anānd Rām to tell the reader of this Bābā. He notes that this man was of the same community (hām-qawm) as himself, that is to say a Khātrī. He lived on the other side of the river from Gaṅgh Muktēswar, where he had his hospice (takīya) as an ascetic and renouncer. Through the offices of Bakhtāwar Khān, Ḍārogha of the wazīr Qamar al-Dīn Khān — who was, we have noted, Anānd Rām’s own master — he had influence over the wife of the latter and had ceased to be that much of an ascetic, and even deviated from the path of divine trust (taswīkāt). As an example of this, he had made a garden in Gaṅgh Muktēswar for the wazīr’s wife. But even so, it was thought that he was much better than most of the money-grubbing faqīrs around. After this meeting, Anānd Rām set out once more in the evening, to look out at the lights on the river. For on this night, lamps were being lit everywhere, creating a beautiful effect on the water. Beautiful women were placing these lamps in a red piece of paper, and floating them out on the river. They also sang songs in praise of Gaṅghī, in a form of worship.55 At midnight, Anānd Rām at last returned home where the people in and around his own tent too — such as Muḥammad Azam and Subhjanī Toshakhānī — had arranged for a pretty display of lamps and lights.

Anānd Rām clearly enjoys these outings on the water a great deal, and says that it gave him the feeling of a ruler on a travelling throne (takhzt-i raunān). Indeed, he recalls that the emperor Bihār had written in his memoirs of crossing the water himself, prancing boats above all other forms of transport in terms of their comfort — whether for sleeping or even for writing. The next day, Friday 13 Dhū al-Qa’dah, was the day of the full moon, so that he awoke before dawn and had his bath and also performed the other rituals that were required as best he could. Since it had been decided that they would return on the 14th, it was also now time to start wrapping up the tents, except for three or four of the smaller ones. By this time, more than half of the people who had been at the fair had also left for their homes. On Saturday, 14 Dhū al-Qa’dah, the fair itself finally came to a close, and the faqīrs and ordinary people all dispersed, closing up their tents, and burning down all the temporary structures. Nothing was left now, except the burnt skeletons of those buildings. It was a sad sight, as if a garden with flowers and green plants had been rendered desolate. In Anānd Rām’s eyes, it was as if a dream had come to an end, as if so many Aleppan mirrors had shattered.

Disturbed and “wonderstruck” (in the formulaic language he is prone to use from time to time), Anānd Rām now set out on his way back, first reaching Baskar and the establishment of Bhāt’s Mast Rām Darvish Udāsi, the same ascetic whom he had also met on the way to the river. He sent Anānd Rām the usual gifts of watermelon, pumpkins, sweets, pīm, and curds. Anānd Rām then set out to Dāsma. Now, since the day he had left Shāhjahlānaibād, Anānd Rām had not even thought of eating meat, which turned out to be quite splendid. On Sunday, 15 Dhū al-Qa’dah, the carts, camels etc. were sent off towards Hāpur, while the party rested for a time in a garden on the banks of a stream. From there, they made their way to the establishment of another well-known ascetic, Bābā Dargāhī Darvish Udāsi, in the village of Biserī, at some three leagues distance from Baskar. By late morning, they arrived there and visited the Bābā, who lived in a small house on an earthen bed, in utter simplicity. This was a man who had undergone much penance, and purified himself like the purest gold. In Anānd Rām’s view, his forehead radiated wisdom and enlightenment. His daily food was some dry nān (bread), and a bit of salt. Here then was the opposite of the showy and fraudulent ascetics who have been commented upon in the context of the fair. This dervish also offered food to travellers, and he had a great following among the other Udāsi ascetics. Not only this, but he was also something of a philanthropist, and had also made small bridges on the Kāli Nadī and other rivulets, and had wells dug for the general benefit. Some people believe that he was an alchemist, for how else could he get hold of such resources? But Anānd Rām claims that all this stems purely from this great ascetic’s purity and virtue. He too showed great affection on the occasion of the visit to Anānd Rām, and

treated him well, offering him and others in his party fruit and other things, including cloves and cardamom. Áanand Rām had brought him a message from Qamar al-Dīn Khān, which he then conveyed, and the ascetic then sent back a fitting reply; it turned out that the nāzir had asked him to pray for the emperor (who was to die in 1748), which he agreed to do.

After this brief visit, the party made its way to Qasba Hāpur through a rather circuitous route, which — even if it had been taken by error — allowed them to look at mustard fields in flower, and other pleasing sights. By late afternoon, they reached Hāpur at last, somewhat tired after this exertion. But the advance party was already there, and had set up the tent where Áanand Rām could rest. Then, on Monday 16 Dīn al-Qa'da, they reached Dāmas, and pitched a tent by a well. Here, a bonfire was made for the night, and a restful evening was spent with friends, drinking coffee as usual. Áanand Rām’s brothers Rāj Sulhpat Rām and Rāj Basant Rām had sent him food from the town. By chance, the camp of Kunwar Jīvan Mal, son of Rājā Balsht Mal, was right next to their tents, and some food was also sent to him. At a certain moment in the night, Áanand Rām’s servant Dondū was distributing the ḫānum that they had received from the saint Bābā Dargāh when a certain Ganga Dās, the son of Madhūrī Lāl Kāyāshta, the chief accountant (mīnākẖāb) of Shāhjahānābād, whose tent was also nearby, arrived in the camp. His visit was not welcome, but had to be borne, and he had to be offered something. These small and unpleasant rivalries from the court cast a slight shadow on what otherwise had been a pleasant evening.

On the next day, Tuesday, they made their way to the garden of Madhūrī al-Dawla, where Áanand Rām instructed the gardener to improve the water flow into the flower-beds; the party rested and snacked, then moved on. On the road, Áanand Rām’s brother Rāj Sulhpat Rām met them, as he had come from the city out of eagerness to meet his brother. The brothers embraced, and Áanand Rām recited some verses in his honour.

I am so happy to return home,

it’s as if I am back in Delhi from the Deccan.

By the time they reached Shāhjānahābād, the banks of the Jamna river, it had become dark. Again, the unsafe character of the vicinity of the capital city became clear. Some mounted robbers approached them from the left, but since the party was well-protected, they fled rather than enter into combat. Then, leaving Mir Najīn al-Dīn ‘Alī Khān and Muhammad Fādīl behind, Áanand Rām went ahead. At length, his party reached the river and crossed it quite easily, as everything had been prepared in advance. But one camel and two horses were left behind for a time. The horses were presently brought across, but the noisy and obstinate camel refused to get on board the boat despite the best efforts of the boatmen. Then on account of the efforts of the servant ‘Abd Allāh and Lālī Bijay Rām, the camel at last consented to cross at the end of a few hours. By midnight that day, Áanand Rām was thus able to return home, though many others of the party only came in later. At home, the usual plain rice and lentil khīchṛī was made ready, and a meal was had. Praises were given by all to God, and verses are set down in his honour. Áanand Rām concludes:

“Since we were with our relatives, and there were also some problems with the loss of goods, we did experience some inconvenience on this journey, but it passed. But that aside, the days we spent in the fair were full of the pleasure that we had hoped to experience.”

He then adds a reflective verse, perhaps indirectly stemming from the extended dealing with ascetics he had in the previous two weeks.

Worldly goods are the cause of your helplessness;

they result in harm and humiliation.

The palace of your comfort stands on an unstable base.

The extent of your desire for worldly things creates anxiety in proportion.

Though he has restrained himself in this account (as opposed to the earlier one) from his constant preoccupation with food, as he does in next, Áanand Rām cannot quite resist the temptation. He thus notes that a pickle or preserve made from a kind of yam (zunīn-qand) was a specialty of this fair, and that he had bought back twenty loads of it. Five were sent to the Nawwāb Qamar al-Dīn Khān, five to his wives, and some of the others were sent around to other friends. The text closes on 24 Dīn al-Qa’dā, two hours into the morning, written (as he notes) in his own hand, at Áanand Rām’s old residence in Shāhjahānābād.

Concluding reflections

The three texts that we have considered in this essay present various samples from the corpus of Mughal travel-writings, all touching in some
measure on the issue of interfaith relations. Though somewhat similar, at first glance, to the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century travels of Fayḍi or Asad Bēg, in fact they inhabit a rather different register and are far more concerned with the play between the experience of travel and the acculturated subjectivity of the author than these earlier authors. Thus, Nek Rāi wishes his readers to understand how he gained his education, how he came to be who he was by his early twenties, with travel being an essential part of that experience. Ānand Rām's two texts offer us a fascinating study in contrasts. The first, which is far more oriented towards the court milieu, reflects constantly on a very polished ambiance, and the place of this portly Khāṭrī in it. In his accounts of his travels of 1745, Ānand Rām is not afraid to deploy sarcasm, and throughout makes use of irony that he turns upon himself and his community. This reflexive irony is somewhat less in evidence in the later account. The milieu that is under consideration is also a different one, for we hear far more of ascetics and renouncers in the travel to Gāṛh Muktēsār than we have in the previous account. Ānand Rām can be unrelenting in his sarcasm here, but the tone is a sadder, less boisterous one, as if he has grown far more world-weary. One is led to understand at the end of the account that, after all, "the palace of your comfort/stands on an unstable base." Yet, at the same time the account must be seen as a novel one, since it defines a conception of a voyage largely undertaken for pleasure which is quite unusual. If the travels in the imperial camp in 1745 have something of an aspect of a coruscate about them, the later trip to Gāṛh Muktēsār is something else: an excursion where the ostensible religious motive barely conceals a notion that its author is on a sort of brief vacation, a leisurely outing from the humdrum life in Delhi.

The intended readership for these accounts is a matter of some interest. It is clear that both Nek Rāi and Ānand Rām understood that they were in an interesting situation, where many of their Muslim readers might be mystified by a fair number of the references they made. Thus, Ānand Rām sets out to explain to the reader small aspects of his pilgrimage, the organisation of ascetic sects, and other details; Nek Rāi even feels obliged to provide the reader an elementary version of the plot of the Rāmāyana! At the same time, Ānand Rām seems to assume that his reader is comfortable not only in Persian but in the north Indian vernacular that we have termed Hindāvī (as indeed in comprehending poetry in the mixed rēḥlā). This implies that he did not expect to be read outside of India, and was probably not too concerned about the fact that some parts of his writing might have been opaque to readers in Iran or Central Asia. This is a point of view that differs markedly from that of Fayḍi a century and a half earlier, who clearly intended his writings to be accessible as much to readers from Qazwīn and Bukhārā as from Delhi and Āgra. Mukhlīs may be seen here as making an implicit plea for the legitimacy of "Indian usage" (isti'ā'ī i Hind) in the writing of Persian, which would reveal itself not only through the diction and metaphors employed, but even in terms of introducing an Indic vocabulary (with citations in rēḥlā and even Bṛj Bhashā) into a Persian text. The fact that such a posture was assumed is also significant in view of the tensions between Iranian visitors to India and the environment in which they found themselves, itself a major theme of the eighteenth century. Virulent debates on such issues broke out in the middle years of that century, of which one particularly celebrated example centers around the figure of Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali Haḍīn Lāḷī (1692-1766 [?]), whose dismissive point of view on Indian poets and poetry was hotly, and famously, contested by Ānand Rām's friend and mentor Khāṇ-i Ārūz.

What is particularly evident in these texts is that the world of the Mughals was seen through them as comprising a highly complex mixture of elements and attitudes, literary traditions and religious inheritances. There was no contradiction here between breaking coconuts as a way of warding off the evil eye, and visiting the shrine of a Sufi saint — a matter that will come as no surprise to anthropologists who observe popular religious practices in northern India even today. To be sure, the theological niceties of such dealings had not always been worked out, and at the same time, periodic incidents arose that challenged the degree of comfort that men such as Nek Rāi and Ānand Rām could feel. Yet, it is clear that they did not simply feel that they were in a tolerant milieu as opposed to a coercive one. Rather, they found themselves caught up in a tide of acculturation that they could not (and often did not wish to) resist; the real option open to them was to seize hold of the possibilities and use them to their own pragmatic ends.

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50 For the debate between Ārūz and Haḍīn, see the section on "Indian Persian versus Iranian Persian" in Alam, "The culture and politics of Persian in precolonial Hindustan," pp. 171-86.


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A PEACEFUL JIHĀD? SOUTH ASIAN MUSLIM PROSELYTISM AS SEEN BY AHMADIYYA, TABLĪGHĪ JAMĀ’AT AND JAMĀ’AT-I ISLĀMĪ

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This paper deals with the connection between holy war (jihād) and proselytism (now usually called da’wah or tablīghi) among the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent (or South Asia) and their diasporas in the colonial and post-colonial periods. From the beginning of the 19th century, the conjunction of Muslim reform movements and the British presence, accompanied by a wide display of Christian Protestant missionary activity, made proselytism a pressing question for both the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority.

Among the Muslims, the association of holy war and proselytism was first brilliantly illustrated by a charismatic leader, Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (1786–1831): from 1818 on he combined systematic missionary work for the reform of Islam in Northern India with a spectacular jiḥād launched from the North-West frontier of what is now Pakistan. But it was left to Mīrāj Ghulām Aḥmad (c. 1838–1908), the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, to bring this connection to a theological level, as Yohanan Friedmann has emphasized in his study of the Ahmadi thought in which peaceful preaching is presented as a substitute for military jiḥād in modern times².

Yohanan Friedmann dealt with the historical background of this connection. I consider here its further development through two other South Asian proselytizing movements born in the 1920s and now active all over the world: Tablīghī Jamā’at and Jamā’at-i Islāmī. Have they, as the Ahmadiyya did, completely severed the connection between holy war and proselytism? Or did they maintain a connection between these two concepts? And if they did, to what extent?

Let us introduce the three movements dealt with in this paper. The

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¹A first draft of this paper was presented at the international workshop on Transformations of South Asian Islamicate Community in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 23–26 May 1996.