1 *A Garden Lost*
Grief and Pain in 1857 shahr āshob *Poetry*

The Uprising of 1857, and its aftermath, is a watershed event in the history of colonial South Asia. Much has been written on its significance, both for the British and Indians, in terms of population and landscape, relationships and imaginaries. Urdu-speaking elites, particularly, saw their world crumble as quickly as the buildings around them. Many were imprisoned or openly, often collectively, executed. Muslims, thought by the British to be more responsible than Hindu subjects, were usually expelled from Delhi, one of the epicentres of the Uprising, forced to leave their belongings and properties behind.[1] In the aftermath, British officers seized a vast quantity of goods, known as the 'Delhi Prize'. When the government finally agreed to restore the confiscated properties, most Muslims, who were forbidden within the city walls until 1862, were unable to claim theirs back.[2] Like many courtiers, Ghalib (1797–1869), who had been appointed poet laureate of the Mughal court of Delhi from 1854 to 1857, lost his primary source of livelihood. He gave heartrending accounts of his degrading situation and of his daily struggle to survive in his diary, *Dastanbū*, as well as in his letters. On 31 December 1859, he wrote to his friend Husain Mirza: 'Say to yourself: We were never nobles; rank and wealth were never ours; we had no property, and never drew a pension'.[3]

[1] N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 22; according to Gupta, the measure was partly attributed to the British fear of an epidemic.

[2] Home Department, Public, 14 May 1858, no. 97, Proceedings of the Committee assembled at Delhi on 22 January 1858, p. 59 (about the auction of the confiscated goods): 'The Committee however do not anticipate many, if any, claims will be made on the property remaining to be disposed of, as the bulk of the prize was taken from the houses of Mussalmans [*sic*], and their owners being excluded from the town as outlaws, have no opportunity of claiming their property'.

[3] Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, *Ghalib, 1797–1869, vol. I: Life and Letters*, p. 226. Ghalib, *K̲h̲uṭūṭ-e Ġhālib*, vol. 2, p. 608.

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The collapse of the fortunes of Urdu-speaking elites was reflected by the devastation of cityscapes. The finest monuments of Lahore, Agra, Lucknow, and Delhi were destroyed or rehabilitated as chapels, hospitals, railway stations, post offices, or military quarters,[4] 'symbolic of the invincibility of British power'.[5] In Lucknow, while Begum's Kothi (Nawab Amjad Ali Shah's first queen's palace) was used as a post office, many of the Nawabs' buildings were simply pulled down and the city's finest gardens destroyed: Charbagh became a railway station and Alambagh developed as a new colony.[6] Lakhnawis lamented that 'Panch Mahala, Sangi Mahal, Hasan Manzil, etc. and other grand buildings which came under 1500 feet radius of the fort have been razed to the ground. Imambara Hasan Raza Khan, Masjids, etc. were bulldozed to the ground level'.[7] The city was unrecognisable.

In Delhi, the transformation was as dramatic: after 1857, most of the crowded areas around the Red Fort were entirely demolished. The palaces of the Nawabs of Jhajjar, Ballabgarh, Bahadurgarh, and Farrucknagar; the haveli of Nawab Wazir; Akbarabadi Masjid; and many madrasahs were destroyed.[8] Explosions were conducted in March 1859 within the fort itself and most of the remaining buildings were requested for military use. Henry Cole, curator of Ancient Monuments, reported in 1882 that 'the great pillared *Diwan-i Am*, with its fine marble mosaic canopy and throne, is used as a canteen, and on the right of the throne is a bar for serving out liquor! To the left of the throne is an enclosure of bamboo screen-work in which Nubbi Bux keeps a soldiers' coffee shop!'[9]

As Anthony King has shown, demolitions after 1857 were often justified by new colonial ideas in urban planning that mainly aimed at maintaining hygiene and control, and at dividing the urban space between public and private spheres, and native and colonial populations. After the Uprising, the colonial state began to remodel the city by introducing Western technology (railways and later electricity),

[4] See *First Report of the Curator of Ancient Monuments in India for the Year 1881–82, Simla, 1882*, pp. xxiii and xxiv.
[5] *Lahore Chronicle 1858,* 15 May 1858, p. 309 quoted by N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 26.
[6] K. Hjortshoj, *Urban Structures and Transformations in Lucknow*, pp. 102–103.
[7] N. Masood, 'Discovery of Lost Glory', p. 4.
[8] K. Hjortshoj, *Urban Structures and Transformations in Lucknow*, p. 27.
[9] *First Report of the Curator*, p. xxiv. For more on the British occupation of the Red Fort in the aftermath of 1857, see M. Rajagopalan, *Building Histories*, pp. 25–51.

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sanitising the town (through waste disposal or water supply systems), and modifying the structure of the walled city in creating two distinct and separated spaces: 'one colonial, and primarily military and administrative, the second indigenous, and primarily residential, commercial and industrial'.[10] Apart from racial segregation, one of the most important transformations under British rule was a new emphasis on public spaces: narrow alleys gave way to wide streets, and private gardens to public parks, a novelty that, as Jyoti Hosagrahar demonstrated, did not remain devoid of tension and conflict.[11] Ghalib, who had remained in Delhi during the events, described his despair at seeing the urban landscape manifesting concretely the end of an era. In one letter dated 2 December 1859 to his friend the poet Majruh, he wrote: 'If you are coming, come along. Come and see the new road through Nisar Khan's Chatta, and the new road through Khan Chand's Lane. Come and hear how Bulaqi Begum's Lane is to be demolished and an open expanse cleared to a radius of 70 yards from the Jama Masjid. Come and see Ghalib in all his despondency (*afsurdah dil*). And then go back'.[12]

In this chapter, I investigate how the events were remembered in the decade immediately following 1857 by looking at Urdu poems that described and lamented the devastation of Delhi.[13] The poems were mainly gathered in the compilation entitled *The Lament for Delhi* (*Fuġhān-e Dehlī*, 1863), on which my analysis is based – with a couple of additions in the 1931 enlarged collection *Faryād-e Dehlī* (*The Complaint of Delhi*).[14] Although historians have noticed the existence of *shahr āshob* poetry on 1857, it has generally been neglected in comparison to other sources of the period that have been seen as more

[10] A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development*, p. 209.

[11] J. Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism*.

[12] Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, *Ghalib. 1797–1869*, p. 224; Ghalib, *K̲h̲uṭūṭ-e Ġhālib*, vol. 1, p. 369.

[13] J. T. P. de Bruijn, T. S. Halman, and M. Rahman, 'Shahrangiz', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 212 quoted by S. Siddique, 'Remembering the Revolt', p. 48. It is noted about Persian *shahr āshobs* that they could also be expressed in prose. Sunil Sharma prefers to see *shahr āshob* as a topos, rather than a 'genre' (S. Sharma, 'The City of Beauties in Indo-Persia Poetic Landscape', p. 73). See also F. Lehmann, 'Urdu Literature and Mughal Decline', p. 127.

[14] Badayuni added nine other contemporary poems found scattered in various poets' *diwāns* and *kulliyāts* to Kaukab's material. The anthology strangely omitted two of Aish's poems but added poems by Husami, Hali, Shamshir, Safir, Abbas, Ghalib, Farhat, and Majruh, some of which were composed after Kaukab's edition of 1863. Hali's poem, for instance, was composed and recited in 1874.

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factual. It is only in the last decades that Urdu *shahr āshob* poetry has begun to receive more attention.

This chapter re-assesses this body of texts through a careful analysis of their vocabulary, motifs, and imagery, and highlights their originality compared with previous *shahr āshobs*. Although mid-nineteenth-century poets claimed continuity with the Urdu *shahr āshob* tradition and scholars have generally emphasised pre- and post-1857 connections,[15] the poems of *The Lament for Delhi* also introduced new ways of expressing grief. Through a complex emotional vocabulary and the distinct use of elegiac (*marṡiyah*) literary devices, pain and rupture were emphasised in various ways by the poets and were echoed by a strong attachment to the city's ruined materiality. Ultimately, through the image of the garden, it was a tradition, a political culture that was mourned, along with an ideal vision of enlightened Muslim kingship.

1 *The Lament for Delhi*: Compiling *shahr āshob* Poetry after 1857

In 1863 – six years after the Uprising and a year after Muslims were readmitted into Delhi and former king Bahadur Shah Zafar passed away in Rangoon – the poet Tafazzul Husain Kaukab (1833–1873/4)[16] published an anthology of poems on 1857 entitled *Fuġhān-e Dehlī* (*The Lament for Delhi*)[17] by the Akmal ul-Maṯābeʿ publishing house.[18] *The Lament for Delhi* gathers fifty-nine *shahr āshob* poems written in Urdu by thirty-eight poets,[19] all lamenting the devastation

[15] Kaukab clearly traced the genealogy of 1857 *shahr āshobs* back to Muhammad Rafiʿ Sauda's verses, thus overtly claiming continuity with pre-1857 *shahr āshob* poetry.

[16] We do not know much on Kaukab, besides the fact that he was a disciple of Ghalib and an excellent friend of the poet Salik. Kaukab had two sons and two daughters but three of them died in their early years. See M. Ansarullah, *Jāmaʿ-e tażkirah*, vol. 3, pp. 467–9.

[17] Tafazzul Husain Kaukab, *Fuġhān-e Dehlī*; Nizami Badayuni, *Faryād-e Dehlī*.

[18] The publishing house was managed by Sayyid Fakharuddin and was situated in Hakim Mahmud Khan's haveli in Ballimaran since 1858. It issued an Urdu weekly entitled *Akma ul-Akhbār* from 1869. See N. A. Khan, *Hindustānī Pres (1556 tā 1900)*, p. 176.

[19] All but three poems are in Urdu: two are in Persian and one is bilingual Persian-Urdu. So Yamame counts 63 poems by more than 40 poets but he might have taken into account the poems added by Nizami Badayuni in 1931. S. Yamame, 'Lamentation Dedicated to the Declining Capital', p. 53.

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of Delhi (and, to a much lesser extent, of Lucknow) in 1857. The anthology is divided into three 'sparks' (*sharār*): the first contains four pre-1857 poems (the collection opens with one poem by Bahadur Shah Zafar and three by Sauda); the second, fourteen poems on 1857 in the *musaddas* form with one chronogram (*tārīḵẖ*) by Sozan; and the last thirty-eight *ġhazals* and two *qiṯaʿs*. In each section, the poems are arranged according to the alphabetical order of their authors – though the most eminent poets are listed first – and every poet is introduced by a couple of lines in Persian indicating his name, and sometimes the names of his father and *ustād* in the manner of *tażkirahs*.

In the Persian foreword, Kaukab described the compilation as a 'new' (*navā'iṇ*) type of anthology (*guldastah*) that interwove 'the tears (*ashk*), sighs (*āh*) and heart-burnings (*soz-o gudāz*) of the people of Delhi'.[20] As a matter of fact, *The Lament for Delhi* was presented as an attempt to record the collective grief of the post-1857 period by publishing poems that circulated orally and could otherwise have been lost. In the chronograms[21] presented at the end of the book, Kaukab's work was indeed described by Salik as 'the strange (*ʿajīb*) book […] with which both the educated and uneducated will agree'[22] hence stressing that it mirrored the shared feelings of the time. Kamil further described in his chronogram that:

jab yeh kī tālīf Kaukab ne kitāb
jis se ẕāhir hū'e ḥāl-e ahl-e hind
yūṇ kahī tārīḵẖ Kāmil ne bah saʿī
daftar-e ranj-o malāl-e ahl-e hind (1279 hijrī).

When Kaukab compiled this book,
From which the condition of the people of Hind was revealed,
Kamil thus composed its chronogram as the endeavour
to record the grief and anguish of the people of Hind (1863).[23]

If *The Lament for Delhi* thus seems to constitute a conscious memory work, the exact way in which the poems were collected, however, remains obscure. In his preface to the book, while emphasising the thriving of oral *shahr āshob* poetry after 1857 despite the decline of

[20] See the preface of *Fuġhān-e Dehlī* (ed. 2007), p. 1.
[21] For more information on chronograms (*tārīḵẖ*), see M. A. Farooqi, 'The Secret of Letters: Chronograms in Urdu Literary Culture'.
[22] See Salik's chronogram: *hū'ī tālīf yeh ʿajīb kitāb*.
[23] Kamil, *jab yeh kī tālīf Kaukab ne kitāb*.

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state patronage,[24] Salik described Kaukab's efforts in the gathering and publishing of these poems:

It is obvious that when poets are in abundance and such a revolt (*inqilāb*) arises, no seal can be put on the mouth that could restrain speech. And there is no force on the heart that could prevent from feeling pain (*dard*), no manifestation of pain (*iẕhār-e dard*) that could not be expressed poetically. […] In this city, lots of *musaddases* and *ġhazals* have been composed on this topic, but no one had thought about gathering them and about making a substantial anthology for the public out of them. […] Munshi Muhammad Tafazzul Husain Khan, *ta<u>kh</u>alluṣ* Kaukab assembled them with extreme effort and, looking from place to place, had them asked for. He organised them in a compendium, gave it to print to the publishing house Akmal ul-Maṯābeʿ and entitled it *The Lament for Delhi*.[25]

While the compiling of anthologies by post was apparently not uncommon after 1857,[26] Pasha Khan has argued that elements from the poems give evidence of the 'existence of a community of poets interacting amongst themselves' rather than 'of a scattered set of materials which Kaukab ha[d] brought together for the first time'.[27] He noted that almost all of the *ġhazals* of the collection were composed in the same *zamīn* (rhyming element) – 'ān-e Dehlī' which conveniently rhymes with the title of *Fuġhān-e Dehlī* – and also detected examples of intertextuality.[28] He thus pointed to the possibility of the poems being the result of a *ṯaraḥī mushāʿirah*, a poetic assembly that is 'patterned', that is when the rhyme is previously set, a common practice at the time.[29]

Other scholars have indeed argued that the content of *The Lament for Delhi* stemmed from an organised context of composition. Malik Ram, for instance, noted about the context of the compilation that 'after the bloody disturbance of 1857, when peace and calm was re-established in the city the citizens likely (*ġhāliban*) held a *mushāʿirah*

[24] See C. M. Naim, 'Mughal and English Patronage of Urdu Poetry', p. 269.
[25] Kaukab, *Fuġhān-e Dehlī* (ed. 2007), pp. 40–1.
[26] *NNRNWP&O for 1864*, p. 51, for instance, mentions the undertaking of a certain 'Jewalanath' from Delhi who had gathered ninety pages of Persian poetry 'written from various stations and sent by *ḍāk*' in the prospect of publishing an anthology.
[27] P. M. Khan, 'What Is a Shahr-Ashob', p. 1.
[28] Ibid. Ahsan's *maqṯaʿ* directly quotes an extract from Rizwan's *ġhazal*.
[29] Ibid. See also S. Siddique, 'Remembering the Revolt', p. 77. The mention of the patterned nature of Kaukab's poem, for instance, appears in M. Ram, *Talāmiżah-e Ġhālib*, p. 469.

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during which the major master-poets of the time cried over the devastation of the city'.[30] If, as Ram said, the *mushāʿirah* was held when the situation had improved and after Muslims were readmitted into the city, that would probably date the event just after 1862. Poems of the collection, however, have been attributed to different dates of composition by Badayuni. For instance, Raqam's and Afsurdah's poems are said to date from 1858, and Dagh's *musaddas* is supposed to have been composed in 1859–1860.[31]

The attribution of the poems to one poetic event, while plausible, seems restrictive. Signs of intertextuality in poems that are set in different patterns and the internal mention of oral recitation may also point at the continued liveliness of *shahr āshob* performances in the aftermath of 1857.[32] In his commentary on *shahr āshob* poetry, Arifi indeed argued that 'the tradition of *āshobgo'ī* was still present a few years after 1857'.[33] Even as Urdu poets relocated to their hometowns, to smaller towns (*qaṣbahs*) emerging as new urban centres[34] or to regional courts where patronage was still provided, poetic milieus that sustained the composition of *shahr āshob* poetry undoubtedly persisted. Hyderabad, Alwar, Rampur, Jaipur, and Tonk emerged as popular destinations.[35] Until 1874, when Shivdan Singh died, the court of Alwar employed several of the poets whose poems are gathered in the anthology like Majruh, Salik and Zahir.[36] Communities of poets were thus still close-knit and active, and scholars have shown that the period immediately following 1857 was indeed particularly creative from an artistic point of view.[37]

[30] M. Ram, *Talāmiżah-e Ġhālib*, p. 469. The same idea also came up during an informal discussion with Dr. Mohammad Feroz Dehlawi, retired professor of Urdu on 24 November 2013.

[31] N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 6 and p. 28. About Dagh's poem, see S. M. A. Zaidi, *Muṯʿālah-e Dāġh*, p. 247.

[32] For examples of intertextuality, see, for instance, Tajammul, *Phirte chalte jo meṇ ā niklā beshahr-e Dehlī*, verse 20.

[33] A. Arifi, *Shahr Āshob*, p. 10.

[34] M. Ram, *Talāmiżah-e Ġhālib*, p. 239; N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 56; R. Khan, 'The Social Production of Space and Emotion', p. 622; R. Khan, 'Local Pasts: Space, Emotions and Identities', p. 699.

[35] M. Ram, *Talāmiżah-e Ġhālib*, pp. 474–9.

[36] Ibid., p. 240.

[37] I am thankful to Katherine Butler-Schofield for pointing this out to me during the Urban Emotions workshop (St John's College, Oxford, 27 February 2016). See R. D. Williams, 'Hindustani Music between Awadh and Bengal, c. 1758–1905'.

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Although the compilation emphasised the unity and similarity of the poems, enhanced through the shared rhyme, and thus a recurring vocabulary, differences in the authors' expressions and sensitivities can be uncovered. The poets of the anthology evolved in the same literary milieu of interaction (and competition),[38] and the majority of them belonged to the Muslim *ashrāf* of Delhi with some being friends or even kin,[39] except for Lala Ram Parshad Zahir being a Hindu Khatri (and Farhat in *Faryād-e Dehlī* a Kayasth) and some originally coming from other cities like Lucknow, Hyderabad, Agra, Benares, Panipat, and Bijnor. Most were amongst the most famous poets of the time (Sheftah, Azurdah, Salik, Aish, Dagh, and Ghalib) but some would have been of humbler or unknown origin (like Sozan, and Husami,[40] said by Badayuni to have earned a living from storytelling without having had a proper education),[41] sometimes making mistakes of grammar and pronunciation.[42] The poets nonetheless belonged to different generations, earned their living in diverse ways and had distinct experiences of the Mughal court and of the city.

For instance, while Hakim Agha Jan Aish, known for his satire of Ghalib, came from a famous family of physicians and was at the service of the king,[43] Mufti Sadr Uddin Khan Azurdah (1789–1868) held important official posts in the British administration. A figure in the Delhi intelligentsia, he was a member of the Delhi College and the principal Chief Justice of Delhi from 1841. In 1857 Bahadur Shah wished to appoint him as city magistrate, a proposition that he refused, considering the Uprising to be 'ill-advised.'[44] His links with the Mughal court and a (forged?) signature on fatwas

[38] See, for instance, the famous argument between Ghalib and Aish. N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 68.

[39] Dagh and Shaʿiq are brothers, like Rizwan and Salik, and Saqib and Talib.

[40] The second edition of *Fuġhān-e Dehlī* added Husami's poem to Kaukab's initial material but there is some debate around authorship: while Nizami claims that it was the rare work of an otherwise unknown poet, Naeem Ahmad argued that it was from the pen of Bahadur Shah Zafar (N. Ahmad, *Shahr Āshob*, p. 181). For a detailed comparison and discussion of Zafar's and Husami's versions, see A. Arifi, *Shahr Āshob*, pp. 233–40, who argued against the attribution to Zafar (see Ibid., p. 238).

[41] N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 19.

[42] Kaukab, *Fuġhān-e Dehlī* (ed. 1954), p. 8.

[43] See a description in M. H. Azad, *Ab-e Hayat*, trans. and ed. F. W. Pritchett, pp. 378–9; M. H. Azad, *Āb-e Ḥayāt*, p. 463.

[44] S. Liddle, 'Azurdah: Scholar, Poet, and Judge'.

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encouraging jihad against the British led colonial officials to suspect him of sympathy with the *mujāhidīn* and put him on trial. He was eventually released, but had lost his job and half of his property in the process.[45] Part of this situation appeared in his *musaddas*, in which he both recalled the sophistication of the court and of the king, as well as attributed the responsibility of the Uprising to the Fort.[46] The very first couplet of his *musaddas* opened with:

āfat is shahr meṇ qileʿh kī badaulat ā'ī
wāṇ ke ʿamāl se dillī kī bhī shāmat ā'ī.

Misfortune befell on the city because of the royal Fort,
As the result of its misdeed, Delhi too was afflicted.[47]

The sympathies unveiled in the poems thus reflect each of the authors' personal situations, loyalties and, probably, hopes for the future. When Saqib (~1840–1869), son of Nawab Ziauddin Ahmad Khan Loharu,[48] appointed honorary magistrate of Delhi by the British, greatly praised British town improvement projects, Ghalib (1797–1869), resentful towards the British with whom he struggled to secure a pension, saw them as guilty of the bloodshed.[49] Contrary to what some scholars have argued, post-1857 *shahr āshobs* did not seem unanimously anti-British although, of course, censorship was most carefully enforced at the time.[50]

2 1857: Transforming the *shahr āshob* Genre

All the poems of the anthology invariably belong to the *shahr āshob* genre. In Urdu, it was essentially characterised by a particular mood, sadness, and especially a particular subject, the city.[51] In the Islamic world that 'had an overwhelmingly urban focus'[52] the city was usually celebrated through

45 See A. Powell, 'Questionable Loyalties: Muslim Government Servants and Rebellion', p. 93.
46 R. Jalil, 'Reflections of 1857 in Contemporary Urdu Literature', p. 122.
47 First verse from Azurdah's *musaddas*, *āfat is shahr meṇ qileʿh kī badaulat ā'ī.*
48 N. Badayuni, *Faryād*, p. 18.
49 See Ghalib's *ġhazal*, *baskeh faʿāl māyurīd hai āj*, in Badayuni, *Faryād-e Dehlī*.
50 S. Siddique, 'Remembering the Revolt', pp. 67–76.
51 F. Lehmann, 'Urdu Literature', p. 127.
52 M. Hermansen, 'Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory in South Asian Muslim Biographical Literature (Tazkirahs)', p. 5.

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the vivacity of urban life and its idealised moral order: cities were often described as gardens of paradise on earth and conveyed particular ideas of harmony and virtue. Although *taẕkirahs* and travelogues often described urban landscapes, in one way or another, the genre of *shahr āshob* or *shahr angez* in the Turkish and Persian traditions, which was greatly appreciated in the late Timurid and early Safavid periods,[53] consisted in humorously praising a city by describing the positive uproar caused by its many beautiful young citizens (*shahr āshob* literally meaning 'city-disturbers'). The genre portrayed, sometimes satirically, the inhabitants of various professional, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.[54] The representation of the city as a space where moral values and behaviours were epitomised eventually highlighted the morality and righteousness of its ruler. Seventeenth-century Persian *shahr āshobs* composed in India by Kalim Kashani, Munir Lahori, and Fani Kashmiri, for instance, served to exalt the greatness of the Mughal Empire by describing peaceful cities characterised by the diverse composition and impeccable morality of their inhabitants.[55]

From the eighteenth century, the genre was adapted in Urdu.[56] With the decline of Mughal power, poets increasingly resorted to it to portray the social disarray of north Indian cities. Whereas Turkish and Persian *shahr āshobs* were primarily composed in honour of the 'city-disturbers', the function of the city-poem radically changed to describe and lament the 'disturbed city' and the confused state of affairs of different classes of inhabitants. Such poems were written about Delhi, Agra, Hyderabad, Awadh, Bihar, and Rohilkhand,[57] with the first of this kind having probably been composed by Jaʿfar Zatalli (1659–1713), the famous satirist who was sentenced to death for having ridiculed the king Farrukhsiyar in one of his verses.[58] Often preserving a humorous and satirical tone,[59] Urdu *shahr āshobs*

[53] J. T. P. de Bruijn, T. S. Halman, and M. Rahman, 'Shahrangiz', H. A. R. Gibb (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, online version.
[54] See the description of Tabriz by Lissani in A. Bricteux, 'Pasquinade sur la ville de Tébriz, par maître Lissani de Chiraz'.
[55] S. Sharma, '"The Errant Eye" and Mughal Pastoral Poetry'.
[56] The first poem in this trend was probably the *Maṣnawī-e āshob-e Hindustān* composed in Persian by Bihishti at the end of the reign of Shah Jahan.
[57] N. Ahmad, *Shahr Āshob*, p. 10.
[58] On Zatalli's 'obscene' and satirical poetry, see S. R. Faruqi, 'Burning Rage, Icy Scorn: the Poetry of Jaʿfar Zatalli'.
[59] I. Hasan, 'Later Mughals as Represented in Urdu Poetry: A Study of Qa'im's Shahr Ashob', p. 132.

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described the disorder and chaos of a 'world turned upside down' and the fall of moral values attached to the Indo-Persian culture.[60] Along with satirical critiques of the power in place, which recalled insult poems (*hajw*),[61] realistic depictions of misery, hunger, and exile were intertwined with complaints about the reversal of fortunes, with morally and occupationally inferiors rising in status.[62] This new development, along with the fact that *shahr āshob* writers usually employed plain and simple language, led the Urdu genre to be considered 'democratic' and historical by later scholars,[63] the change in fortunes pointing, for instance, at the growing social tensions between Hindu commercial groups and the Indo-Persian gentry during the eighteenth century.[64]

Arthur Dudney has recently argued that the Urdu genre was in fact a construction of later critics and editors, early Urdu *shahr āshobs* being in fact *hajw* poems.[65] He thus maintained that mid- and late nineteenth-century poetry 'owed more to engaging with colonial literary aesthetics than to a precolonial Urdu and Persian tradition'.[66] While this is maybe a step too far, if one examines Urdu *shahr āshobs* from Zatalli's to *Fuġhān-e Dehlī*'s poems,[67] a progression in the imagery deployed is indeed noticeable. The earliest poems that display some of what would become the classic imagery of 1857 *shahr āshobs* unsurprisingly emanate from poems deploring the sack of north Indian cities by Nadir Shah (1739) and Ahmad Shah Abdali (1756). At the time, the poems focused on the city proper. Urdu poets gradually abandoned their satirical tone and the caricature of all types of citizens to become more emotional and lament the city's devastation.[68] Sauda (d. 1781) and Hasrat (d. 1793) both wrote *shahr āshobs* on Shah Jahanabad,

[60] C. M. Naim, 'A Note on Shahr Ashob', p. 42.

[61] For more on that, see, for instance, I. Hasan, 'Later Mughals as Represented in Urdu Poetry: A Study in the Light of Shahr Ashobs from Hatim, Sauda and Nazir', pp. 131–53, or the work of Abdullah Chishti at Jamia Millia Islamia.

[62] M. Rahman, 'Shahrangiz'.

[63] See, for instance, C. R. Petievich, 'Poetry of the Declining Mughals: The Shahr Ashob', p. 105.

[64] C. Bayly, 'Delhi and Other Cities of North India during the "Twilight"', p. 132.

[65] A. Dudney, 'Literary Decadence and Imagining the Late Mughal City', p. 192.

[66] Ibid., p. 188.

[67] Naeem Ahmad collected pre- and post-1857 *shahr āshobs*, on which I have based most of my analysis for pre-1857 poems (N. Ahmad, *Shahr āshob*).

[68] See Mir Taqi Mir, *Zikr-e Mir. The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet*.

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which already talked, albeit allusively, about Paradise, Doomsday, and the city of the past, but it is only gradually that those elements became central and typical of the language of later *shahr āshob* poetry. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Rasikh's *maṡnawī* on Patna (d. 1822) contained a typical description of various types of professions (farmers, traders, soldiers, lawyers) intertwined with the nostalgic recollection of the city as a garden.[69] Mushafi (d. 1824) and Nazir (d. 1830) also used natural metaphors to describe Delhi's and Agra's decline, but Rangin (d. 1835/6) still composed his *maṡnawī* on the emblematic listing of professions. In 1857, as we shall see, such lists yielded to the powerful evocation of garden landscapes.

The 1857 *shahr āshobs* were in continuity with these developments of the Urdu tradition, but also reached a climax of nostalgia by narrating collective pain and highlighting rupture. The poems expanded on elements that were already in the bud since the mid-eighteenth century, and even more so from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and cultivated them to a new level. It was no longer only a matter of the world being upside-down, or of cobblers undeservingly wearing gold-embroidered shoes:[70] the whole population, civilisation even, had been devastated was and unable to recover. Several elements in the poems conveyed the idea of trauma and definite rupture with the past: the style of the poems themselves, set in the *musaddas* and *ġhazal* verse forms (also used for the performance of collective mourning); the vocabulary (enhancing longing, physical pain, and indelible scarring); and the imagery used (the ruined garden, the apocalypse).

Before analysing them, however, I should note that the Delhi poems gathered in *The Lament for Delhi*, which form a quite homogeneous lot, were not the first poems displaying these new developments: the political turmoil of 1856 and 1857 in northern India seems to have acted as a catalyst. Perusing the *shahr āshobs* assembled in Naim Ahmad's chronological compilation,[71] one poem, and others thereafter, appears strikingly similar to those of Kaukab's anthology: a

[69] N. Ahmad, *Shahr Āshob*, p. 150: 'This garden is now full of thorns; Alas, autumn has come to such a spring': *yeh gulzār ab ho gayā k͟hārzār, k͟hizān ho ga'ī hā'e iskī bahār*.

[70] To cite a verse from Jur'at, 'In the Presence of the Nightingale', (S. R. Faruqi) p. 3, and N. Ahmad, *Shahr Āshob*, p. 133.

[71] N. Ahmad asserted that the poems have been classified according to chronological order, but dating poems is, more often than not, a difficult task.

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musaddas on the devastation of Lucknow by Mirza Muhammad Raza Barq. Besides the use of similar imagery and vocabulary, Barq's poem is also the first *shahr āshob* written in the *musaddas* verse form in Ahmad's collection (previous *shahr āshobs* were usually set in *mukẖammas*, *maśnawī*, *ġhazal*, or *qaṣīdah* form). This does not seem to be a coincidence, and in fact, it is plausible that the style of 1857 *shahr āshob* poetry on Delhi was heavily influenced by literary and political developments that occurred first in Lucknow. Lucknow may have been the branch out of which the Delhi variety of *shahr āshob* poetry bloomed.

Barq was not an ordinary Urdu Lakhnawi poet. Born in Lucknow probably around 1790, he had become *ustād* and companion of the last king of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah. After Wajid Ali Shah's deposition in February 1856, he followed him to Matiya Burj, and, when fears that rebels might rally around Wajid Ali Shah spread in 1857, Barq was imprisoned with his king at Fort William College. That is where he died on 17 October 1857.[72] His *musaddas*, Ahmad tells us, was composed only a few months before his death. All of the characteristics of 1857 *shahr āshob* poems on Delhi, which I will detail below, were already present in his poem, and in other such compositions by Lakhnawi peers, like Aman Ali Sahr (d. 1857) and Mir Muhammad Jan Shad (d. 1899).[73]

2.1 Shahr āshobs *as Secular* marśiyahs

One of the innovative ways in which 1857 poems departed from previous *shahr āshob* tradition was the adoption of particular literary devices which participated in representing 1857 as a rupture and in expressing collective pain. *Shahr āshob* writers generally resorted to a language and framework that was particularly efficient in conveying grief and tales of common dispossession: the *marśiyah*. While the *marśiyah* – from the Arabic root *r-ś-y* (literally, 'oration in mourning'[74]) – is to be found in the secular Arabic lamentations traditionally recited at the time of the funeral for the mourning of the deceased or

[72] Barq, *Intikẖāb-e ġhazaliyāt-e Barq*, pp. 5–8.
[73] See N. Ahmad, *Shahr Āshob*.
[74] M. Trivedi, 'A Genre of Composite Creativity: Marsiya and Its Performance in Awadh', p. 194.

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at the loss of cities like Baghdad or Cordoba,[75] the genre in Urdu and Persian was mainly used in a religious context to commemorate the martyrs of Karbala and especially Imam Husain. Only from the later part of the eighteenth century and especially in the mid-nineteenth century were *shahr āshobs* composed 'in a new way, in which the "colour" of *marṡiyah* was prominent.'[76]

From 1857, *shahr āshob* writers used the *musaddas* and *ġhazal* verse forms almost exclusively: of the fifty-nine poems of *The Lament for Delhi*, fifty-two (i.e. almost 90 per cent of them) are either *musaddases*[77] or *ġhazals*. Salik's description in the preface supports the idea that the poets' use of the *musaddas* and *ġhazal* was consciously made, as both verse forms accentuated the feelings of loss and despair, and linked the memory of the Uprising with practices of mourning:

If you look carefully, every *musaddas* is an elegy (*marṡiyah*), and every *ġhazal* is a requiem (*nauḥah*). Who has the power, listening to them, not to cry? Whose heart is not brimming with blood because of this pain (*dard se k̲h̲ūn*)? When one listens to someone's verses on that matter, his ears go dumb (*kān gung ho jāte haiṇ*), he has knots in his stomach (*kalejah munh ko ātā hai*), he remembers his own hardships and that crossing of the desert comes in sight again.[78]

The *ġhazal* originated in Arabic poetry from the panegyric (*qaṣīdah*). The poets of the Hejaz traditionally used it to describe the deserted encampment and to express sorrow at separation.[79] As amorous poetry, it also reflected on the transience of love and on the pain of loss. It was one of the most fashionable styles of poetry at the time and was used for a variety of purposes, including for *nauḥah*s (requiems) as Salik emphasised in the preface. The resort to the *ġhazal* enabled nineteenth-century *shahr āshob* writers to emphasise human finitude. They described the destruction of Delhi allegorised in the figure of the lost lover or of the deceased in a more abstract and condensed tone by elaborately using classical images of loss like autumnal gardens and extinguished candles.

[75] Ch. Pellat, 'Marthiya' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
[76] 'Shahr Āshob', in *Urdū Dā'irah-e Maʿārīf-e islāmiyah*, p. 820.
[77] The *musaddas* is a six-stanza metre on the model 'aaaabb ccccdd'; see G. Schoeler and M. Rahman, 'Musammat', in H. A. R. Gibb, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, online version. The adoption of this meter for *shahr āshobs* was an innovation of the time; 'Shahr Āshob', in *Urdū Dā'irah-e Maʿārīf-e islāmiyah*, p. 825.
[78] Kaukab, *Fuġhān-e Dehlī* (2007), pp. 40–1.
[79] R. Blachère and A. Bausani, 'Ghazal', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

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The adoption of the *musaddas* form was even more explicit for the expression of collective suffering. The *musaddas* was originally developed in the Shia kingdom of Awadh for the elegies devoted to Imam Husain and his relatives martyred at Karbala, which were especially recited during the month of Muharram. In nineteenth-century Lucknow, the *marṡiyah* was indeed 'invariably' in the *musaddas* form.[80] The *musaddas* under Mir Anis (1803–1874) and Mirza Dabir (1803–1875) was increasingly considered 'the most suitable form for a marsiyah'[81] and had become the fundamental characteristic of nineteenth-century Shia elegies. As C. M. Naim argued, the change was most probably linked to the fact that 'the marsiyah moved indoors' and poets abandoned singing for declaiming (*taḥt ul-lafẕ*).[82] The genre usually consisted in the commemoration of the hardships suffered by the martyrs of Karbala, with detail and realism. In general, the *musaddas* was used in *The Lament for Delhi* to describe the devastation of Delhi in more detail, sometimes even describing the hardship endured by different categories of people, in a classical *shahr āshob* stance.

Azurdah, for instance, gave one detailed account of the fortunes of the nobility in his *musaddas*. First recalling the delicateness of the Mughal court, he lamented its ruin, and finally ended with the memory of two of his friends, the poets Sahba'i and Sheftah, who had been killed and sent to jail by the British, respectively[83]:

zewar almās kā sab jin se nah pahnā jātā
bhārī jhūmar bhī kabhī sar peh nah rakhā jātā
gāch kā jin se dūpaṭṭah nah saṇbhālā jātā
lākh ḥikmat se uṛhāte to nah oṛhā jātā
sar peh woh bojh lī'e chār ṯaraf phirte haiṇ
do qadam chalte haiṇ mushkil se to phir girte haiṇ.

Those who could not endure the weight of diamond jewellery
And found the *jhūmars* on their foreheads heavy
They could not even manage the embroidered scarf

[80] Ch. Pellat et al., 'Marthiya', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
[81] C. M. Naim, 'The Art of the Urdu Marsiya', p. 102. [82] Ibid.
[83] Sheftah's property was confiscated, and he was sentenced to a seven-year imprisonment by the lower court, which, however, was eventually dismissed (K. C. Kanda, *Masterpieces of Patriotic Urdu Poetry*, p. 6).

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They tried but failed after a thousand attempts,
Now they go everywhere carrying burdens
When they walk a few steps with difficulty they then fall.[84]

roz waḥshat mujhe ṣaḥrā kī t̲araf lātī hai
sar hai aur josh-e junūṇ sang hai aur chhātī hai
ṭukṛe hotā hai jigar jī hī peh ban jātī hai
Muṣt̲afā K̲h̲ān [Sheftah] *kī mulāqāt jo yād ātī hai*
Kyuṇkeh Āzurdah nikal jā'e nah saudā'ī ho
qatl is t̲araḥ se bejurm jo Ṣahbā'ī ho.

Every day, sadness leads me to the barren desert
to beat my heart with great insanity.
My wounded heart and soul are shattered,
When I remember encounters with Mustafa Khan [Sheftah].
How wouldn't I become insane, Azurdah,
When the innocent Sahba'i has been murdered this way.[85]

The use of the *ġhazal* as *nauḥah* and of the *musaddas* as *marṡiyah* for *shahr āshob* poetry was a deliberate choice made by 1857 poets to emphasise suffering. Along with the adoption of the forms usually used for Shia elegies, *shahr āshob* writers adopted the elegists' tasks of weeping and making others weep (*ronā aur rulānā*). With heartrending descriptions of massacre and misery declaimed in a particular way and tone, the Shia *marṡiyah* aimed at generating a particular collective mental and emotional state of mourning, considered religiously rewarding. The main quality of *marṡiyahs* is indeed that of evoking emotions (*haijān k̲h̲ez*) in an audience.[86] With this collective emotional 'contagion' (or 'collective effervescence'), it aimed at reinforcing sentiments of group belonging and solidarity.[87]

Post-1857 *shahr āshob* poetry assuredly shared these characteristics. The poems of *The Lament for Delhi* and *The Complaint of Delhi* swarmed with comparisons between *shahr āshob* poets and elegists (*marṡiyahk̲h̲wāns*) and pointed to a similar context of recitation during which both the poet and the audience would burst into tears.

[84] Azurdah, *āfat is shahr meṇ qile'h kī badaulat ā'ī*, verse 3. [85] Ibid., verse 11.
[86] M. Trivedi, 'A Genre of Composite Creativity', p. 198; A. Bard, '"No Power of Speech Remains": Tears and Transformation in South Asian Majlis Poetry', p. 156.
[87] C. von Scheve, 'Collective Emotions in Rituals.'

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Hali, for instance, indicated a clear equivalence between *shahr āshob* and Shia performances (thus hinting both at the intensity of *shahr āshob* poetry and at the inappropriateness of the situation):

bazm-e mātam to nahīṇ, bazm-e sukẖan hai Ḥālī
yāṇ munāsib nahīṇ ro ro ke rulānā har giz.

It is not a mourning assembly, but a poetic symposium, Hali,
It is not appropriate to grieve others with your tears.[88]

With the typical use of interjections of sorrow (*wā'e, hā'e, ḥaif*, etc.), *shahr āshob* writers could transmit deep emotions to the audience and induce collective expressions of mourning but applied to a different, non-religious, context.

The reference to the effect of verses on the audience is an enduring theme in the poems. At least one verse of every poem was dedicated to the description of its capacity to make listeners cry, as Salik had anticipated in the preface. In these two examples from Aish's *musaddas* and the *maqtaʿ* (the final verse) of one of Salik's *ġhazals*, the poets evoked the pain of listening to narratives of 1857:

nahīṇ aisā ko'ī dil jo nahīṇ is ġham se do chār
kis ke dil meṇ nahīṇ is ġham kā yeh batlā'o to kẖār
sun ke is ḥāl ko sīnah nahīṇ hai kis kā figār
kaun aisā hai jo is ġham se nahīṇ zār-o nizār
kaunsā dil hai jo is ġham meṇ giriftār nahīṇ
kaunsī āṇkh hai is ġham se jo kẖūṇ bār nahīṇ?

There is not one single heart not traumatised by this sorrow,
Tell me, in whose heart there is no distress,
In listening to this condition, whose heart is not breaking
Who is not agonising because of this sorrow
Which heart is not struck by this grief
Which eyes do not shed tears of blood because of this woe?[89]

sun ke har shiʿr peh kyuṇkar nah hoṇ āṇkheṇ namnāk
sālik-e ġhamzadah hai marṡiyahkẖwān-e Dehlī.

In listening to every verse, how can eyes not fill with tears?
Salik, afflicted, becomes the *marṡiyakẖwān* of Delhi![90]

[88] Hali, *jīte jī maut ke tum muṇh meṇ nah jānā hargiz*, verse 30 (*Faryād-e Dehlī*).
[89] Aish, *kyā kahūṇ is falak-e shoʿbdagār ke nairang*, verse 2.
[90] Salik, *rū-e jannat meṇ bhī ham kar ke bayān-e Dehlī*, verse 14.

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By interweaving emotions and memory in such a powerful way, and by making conspicuous links with Shia rituals, *shahr āshob* poems probably generated similar responses from their audience. The composition and recitation of *shahr āshob* poems in the aftermath of the Uprising may have released some of the tension generated by the trauma in inscribing the experience into collective memory, thus 'allowing the pent-up emotions of loss and mourning to be expressed' through collective acts of commemoration.[91] The fact that *shahr āshob* poems, like Shia elegies, could have been recited or chanted in a way supposed to arouse and heighten emotions could also have resulted in the trope of the 'weeping Hindustani' lamenting the end of the Mughal world, notably developed in early twentieth-century Bengali literature.[92]

2.2 The Language of Grief

The emotional vocabulary deployed in 1857 poetry contains an array of emotions like dishonour (*ābrū, ruswā'ī*), bewilderment (*ḥairānī*), fear (*ḍar*, *k̲h̲auf*), restlessness (*andeshah*, *bechainī*, *beqarārī, taṛap*), helplessness (*bebasī*), and patriotism (*ḥubb-e waṯan*). Compared to previous *shahr āshobs*, the mention of helplessness and surprise seems to be a new addition. One emotion, however, conspicuously dominates: grief. As Sylwia Surdykowska noted in her study of sadness in Iranian culture, its significance is reflected by the richness of its vocabulary in Persian.[93] The same is true in Urdu. Many words convey sadness in the poems, creating a complex and broad semantic and affective web of sorrow. Among the most frequent words are *ġham*, *andoh* (grief), *māyūsī*, *muẕṯar* (despair), *alam*, *ranj*, *dard* (pain), *afsos*, *ḥasrat* (regret), *malāl*, *fasurdagī/afsurdagī* (depression), *saudā* (melancholy), *pareshānī*, *tang* (distress), and *shikastagī* (with the idea of brokenness). Cognates of some of those words also add to the terminology of sadness, such as *dardangez*, *dardmand*, *ġhamgīn*, *ġhamnāk*, *ġhamzadah*, *ġhamzadagān*, and *ġhamkadah*. The variety of words used for sorrow is remarkably broader in 1857 *shahr āshobs*

[91] J. C. Alexander, *Cultural Trauma*, p. 5.

[92] For instance, the figure of Murad Khan in Dilipkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Bhārater Saṅgīta Guṇī*, Part II, pp. 15–27, quoted in R. Williams, 'Hindustani Music between Awadh and Bengal, c. 1758–1905', p. 248.

[93] S. Surdykowska, 'The Idea of Sadness', p. 69.

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than previously. Among those, the one that appears repetitively, and through derivatives, is the Arabic word *ġham*, an inclusive and generic term for grief in Urdu.[94]

To understand its meaning in the poems, it is useful to explore the terms and expressions that are used alongside it. In the collections, *ġham* is intimately linked to the physical experience of pain and implies different body reactions: tears (*ashk* 'tear', *ronā* 'cry', *rulānā* 'make others cry', *dil-e giryāṇ* 'weeping heart', *dil rotā hai* 'the heart cries', *baḥr-e ġham* 'ocean of grief', etc.), sometimes made of blood (*chashm se k͟hūn* 'blood from the eye', *k͟hūn ke daryā* 'rivers of blood', etc.)[95]; one's liver being cut to pieces (*jigar kaṭ kaṭ ke girtā hai*, *tukṛe jigar*); being sick (*munh ko kalejah ātā hai*, *kalejah munh ko ublā ātā hai*); eating or drinking one's heart and blood (*k͟hūn-e jigar pīnā*); tearing one's collar to pieces (*girebān chāk*); or being pale and emaciated (*ġham se safed honā*, *ġham se zār-o nizār honā*). Grief is also said to generate two paradoxical responses: both the irrepressible need to lament (*fuġhān*; *faryād*; *josh-e shikāyat*, *nālah*, *shikwah*, etc.) and the impossibility of speaking at all (*ġham se sākit honā*; *k͟hāmosh*; *munh se kuchh bāt nah nikālnā*). The vocabulary of blood and tears, and of vitals being broken, cut to pieces (*dil/jigar-figār*, *k͟hastah dil*), twisted, burned (*sozāṇ*, *sok͟htgān*), or eaten is graphic. Hearts transform into kebabs (*dil-kabāb*). The image is not new, but in this context *ġham* is nothing like 'sweet sorrow' (*ġham-e shīrīn*),[96] nor it is an exclusively mental state of depression, but an emotion linked with acute physical pain.

Some of the expressions quoted above apply to both grief and love. The burning sensation illustrates emotional intensity, and love and sadness thus share a common vocabulary of flame and smoke. Amorous sadness is indeed a prevailing theme in classical Urdu poetry, which most beautifully unfolds in *ġhazals* through a whole system of conventions. As Frances Pritchett notes, 'the garden's death in autumn, the bird's nest struck by lightning, the candle burnt out overnight, and the withering of the rose are images of ultimate separation and loss'.[97] A poetic allegory epitomises this: *dāġh*, the burn mark, the scar, which

[94] 'Gham', in J. T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu*, p. 173.
[95] The image of crying tears of blood is already a topos of Arabic poetry lamenting the loss or ruin of cities. M. Hassen, 'Recherches sur les poèmes inspirés par la perte', p. 44.
[96] S. Surdykowska, 'The Idea of Sadness', p. 73.
[97] F. W. Pritchett, 'Convention in the Classical Urdu Ghazal', pp. 67–8.

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is left imprinted on the heart (*dil*, *jigar*, *sīnah*). The literal meanings of *dāġh* in Urdu are a (dis)coloured mark (a bleach mark, a stain), or a scar from a wound or burn. In a more figurative sense, *dāġh* also means sadness, shock, and grief at the loss of a loved one.[98] It is the painful remnant of passionate love when it has vanished. The image of the scar blends the memory of the beloved with grief, and interiorises both pain and a yearning for reunion.

In the last couplets of his *ġhazal*, Ghalib uses an allegory suggesting a collective of mourners who meet and share the same grief. Doing so, he alternates fire and water, between the internal burning in the first couplet quoted (*jal kar*; *sozish-e dāġh*) and the collective tear-shedding in the second (*ro kar*; *giryāṇ*), to end, in the *maqtaʿ*, with the idea that trauma is indelible:

gāh jal kar kyā kī'e shikwah
sozish-e dāġh hā'e pinhāṇ kā
gāh ro kar kahā kī'e bāham
mājrā dīdah hā'e giryāṇ kā
is ṯaraḥ ke wiṣāl se yā rab
kyā miṭe dil se dāġh hijrāṇ kā?

Often we complain in pain about
The agony of hidden scars,
Often together we shed tears and tell
The tale of wailing and lamentation,
With this kind of union, O Lord,
How is erased the scar of separation?[99]

One traditional metaphor for the scar of separation in Turkish, Persian, and Urdu literature is that of the poppy (*lālah*). Also translated as tulip with a similar cup shape, Mélikoff has shown that *lālah* rather evoked the wild red anemone or the poppy.[100] Wild flower *par excellence*, the poppy is the opposite of the *gul* (the rose), the cultivated flower and the flower of Prophet Muhammad. Yet, because of its spelling – which is an anagram of 'Allah' – the *lālah* has also enjoyed a particular status in art history, often decorating mosques and mausoleums.[101] But usually the *lālah* is a metaphor for the suffering heart, its redness evoking

[98] 'Dāġh', in *Urdū Luġhat Tārīḵẖī Uṣūl par*, vol. 8, pp. 946–7.
[99] Ghalib, *baskeh faʿāl māyurīd hai āj*, last three couplets (*Faryād-e Dehlī*).
[100] I. Mélikoff, 'La fleur de la souffrance', pp. 341–60. [101] Ibid., p. 348.

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blood and its black centre a burn. According to popular Iranian traditions, Mélikoff tells us, Adam's tears made *lālahs* bloom after his fall from Paradise, symbolising his suffering of being separated from God, just like the tears of blood of Majnun were compared to poppies.[102] The *lālah*, as a symbol of *dāġh*, represents the pain of love, and the common poppy is indeed also sometimes called *lālah-e dāġhdār* (the *lālah* that bears a scar).[103] In his poem collected in Nizami's *Complaint of Delhi*, Safir Dehlawi evokes the image of the scarred poppy and other flowers of the garden, each of which interiorises and characterises *ġham* in its own way:

hai yāsmīṇ hī ġham se nah kuchh zard aur zabūṇ
sosan bhī pīṭ pīṭ ke hotī hai nīlgūṇ
lālah ke dil peh dāġh hai pītā hai apnā k̲h̲ūṇ
aur gul kā jaib chāk to ġhunchah hai sarnigūṇ
nargis ko is ke sog meṇ yarqān ho gayā.

From grief, the jasmine is pale and weak
The iris has become black and blue from beating
In great agony, the poppy drinks its own blood,
And the rose's petals are ripped, the rose bud overturned.
In mourning, the narcissus is jaundiced.[104]

The garden, with its shade trees and fragrant flowers, the place where a poet meets his lover, became incredibly central to the expression of grief in the poems. Love and the garden had traditionally been linked in Persian and Urdu poetry, with nature often mirroring the emotions of the poet, as in Safir's couplets above. Ali Akbar Husain noted that Deccani garden descriptions, like Nusrati's *Garden of Love* (*Gulshan-e ʿishq*), usually 'serve to record and mirror the moments of joy and despair, of spiritual awakening, or the kindling of love'.[105] William Hanaway also highlighted the harmony between the poet's emotions and garden landscape, trees and flowers expressing, and mimicking, human emotions in Persian poetry.[106] As a place of love

[102] Ibid., p. 349. [103] M. Aghamohammadi, 'An Apology for Flowers', p. 34.
[104] Safir, *kyā āsmān āj bad-uʿnwān ho gayā*, verse 4, in *Faryād-e Dehlī* (2007), p. 51.
[105] A. A. Husain, *Scent in the Islamic Garden*, p. 165.
[106] W. Hanaway, 'Paradise on Earth: The Terrestial Garden in Persian Literature', p. 56. See also J. S. Meisami, 'Poetic Microcosms: The Persian Qasida to the End of the Twelfth Century', p. 146.

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(and sometimes despair), the garden soon became by extension a metaphor for the beloved, with its roses recalling the beloved's cheeks, narcissis her/his eyes, hyacinths beautiful dark curls, and the cypress her/his slender silhouette.[107] *Shahr āshob* writers clearly identified their lost beloved as the Delhi of the past, and thus naturally resorted to garden imagery, as we shall see in the next section. Aish, in the following *ġhazal*, described how garden flowers reminded the poet of the beloved in very typical garden imagery.

pahnī sosan ne hai nīlī poshāk
khā ke ġham-e mātamiyān-e Dehlī
pech khātī hai yeh sumbul kar yād
zulf-e purpech-e butān-e Dehlī
lālah ho dāġh bah dil kartā hai
yād-e k͟hāl-e pariyān-e Dehlī
yād kar kar ke hai nargis hairāṇ
nighah-e k͟hūsh nigahān-e Dehlī.

The iris is wearing blue (mourning) garments
Sharing the grief of the mourners of Delhi
The hyacinth is coiled by recalling
The entangled curls of the beloved of Delhi
The poppy changes its mark in memory
of the beauty spot of the fairies of Delhi
The narcissus is astonished, remembering
The barren gaze of the beautiful-eyed of Delhi.[108]

In 1857 *shahr āshobs*, Urdu poets thus used a specific vocabulary of sorrow and classical poetic images of afflicted love to narrate a tale of collective grief. *Ġham* was expressed through a complex set of images and contrasts, which accentuated physical pain and projected idealised sensations of blissfulness into the past. Doing so, they created rupture.[109] One of the most interesting and notable innovations of post-1857 *shahr āshob* poetry was its focus on the city *of the past* as much as, if not more than, the city of the present, unlike traditional

[107] M. Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin*, p. 127.
[108] Aish, *mil ga'ī k͟hāk meṇ shān-e Dehlī*, verses 16 to 19.
[109] Rupture, and its related feelings of loss, is often linked to the arrival of modernity or to the aftermath of revolutions and of the fall of empires and is what characterises nostalgia for most scholars; see S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p. 7 and D. Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias*, p. 10.

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Urdu *shahr āshobs*. The use of the past tense was generalised as poets lingered on descriptions of paradise lost. The juxtaposition of images of glorified past and of dreadful present influenced the representation of 1857 into the early twentieth century. Khwajah Hasan Nizami, for instance, interspersed his *Ġhadar-e Dehlī ke afsāne* ('Stories of the Rebellion of Delhi', from 1914)[110] with 'then and now' drawings similar to those depicted in *shahr āshob* poems, hinting at the intermediality of these motifs.[111]

3 The Garden That Was Delhi: Eulogising Mughal Political Culture

Cultural rupture was emphasised in various ways, but one of the most significant images was the ruined garden. If the metaphor of the garden was already used in pre-1857 *shahr āshobs*, 1857 poetry extended it remarkably. In fact, allegorising the city as a garden became the core of most poems, which focused on beautiful waterways and fragrant flowers soon wasted by autumnal winds and dust. This is of course apparent from the poems' vocabulary. Besides the use of terms evoking garden landscape (*bāġh*, *gulshan*, *lālahzār*, *chaman*, *gulistān*, *chamanistān*, *bistar-e gul*, *farsh-e gul*, etc.), an elaborate lexicon detailing various types of flowers, trees, fruit, birds, sounds, and scents is employed and opposed to a vocabulary of wilderness (*wīrān*, *waḥshat*, *jangal*, *dasht*, *bayābān*), autumn (*k̲h̲izān* or *zāġh* and *zuḥal*, crows and the planet Saturn, both announcing the change of season) and dust (*miṭī*, *k̲h̲āk*, *ġhubār*). Through its landscape and seasonality, the garden symbolised both the place and temporality of nostalgic longing. As D. Fairchild Ruggles indeed noted, in Islamic traditions, the ruined garden is 'one of the most powerful, romantic metaphors for the passage of time'.[112] Through the growth cycle of trees and plants, and through the daily cycle of sunlight,[113] with the alternate blooming of day and night flowers, the garden enables one to grasp the experience of time and change in a most sensorial way.

However, I argue that the use of garden imagery also more importantly suggested the perfection of Mughal sovereignty. The city

[110] For a study of the work, see M. Schleyer, 'Ghadr-e Dehli ke Afsane'.
[111] Khwajah Hasan Nizami, *Ġhadar-e Dehlī ke afsāne. Ḥiṣṣah Awwal*, pp. 42, 50, and 98.
[112] D. Fairchild-Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*. [113] Ibid., p. 6.

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described in the poems was made of the urban landscape, but also of its inhabitants and especially of the court. The court-city was allegorised in the image of the garden, which was also a traditional symbol of secular power. Describing cities through garden imagery was not uncommon in Islamic literary cultures, as nature invariably evoked the perfection of paradise.[114] Paradise became the archetype for earthly gardens, which were conceived as its rival. One of the most famous examples is the legend of Iram, or the city of the Pillars (mentioned in Surah 89), which 'captured the imagination of poets throughout the Islamic world'.[115] In a bid to surpass the beauty of paradise, the South Arabian king Shaddad created the garden of Iram. God warned the king against challenging Him and eventually destroyed the garden.[116]

Comparing Delhi, or any Muslim city, to paradise was not only a literary trope but also a tool to legitimise and praise its rulers.[117] Julie Meisami indeed argued that it was a standard part of Persian panegyrics to depict garden scenes, to the extent that they were sometimes labelled 'garden *qaṣīdahs*'.[118] Building on pre-Islamic Iranian

[114] As Hämeen-Anttila argued, nature in the Qur'an was also usually mentioned in relation to paradise (J. Hämeen-Anttila, 'Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry', p. 136). Lange shows that paradise was also often described in worldly terms (C. Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, p. 3). See also A. Al-Azmeh, 'Rhetoric of the Senses: A Consideration of Muslim Paradise Narratives', p. 223 and A. Schimmel, 'The Celestial Garden in Islam', p. 18.

[115] D. Hanaway, 'Paradise on Earth', p. 46.

[116] Earthly gardens caught the imagination of many, and different interpretations also emerged as to where Adam and Eve's primordial garden was located. Since the garden of Eden refers to both the primordial garden and to the eschatological one promised to believers in the Qur'an, some have argued that it was located in heaven – Adam and Eve are ordered by God to 'descend from paradise' (e.g. Surah 20, 123) – while others have situated it on a mountain top. Because of the mention of peacocks and snakes in paradise, which are indigenous Indian species, South Asia emerged as a likely location (A. Schimmel, 'The Celestial Garden', p. 20). Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka was said to bear the footprints of the first man.

[117] Inheriting these traditions of describing imperial cities as gardens, Indian Muslim authors had described Delhi as the Garden of Eden since Amir Khusrau (1253–1325) at least. See *Qiran al-Saʿdayn*, pp. 22–3, quoted in M. K. Hermansen and B. B. Lawrence, 'Indo-Persian Tazkiras', p. 167, and C. Ernst, 'India as a Sacred Islamic Land', p. 556.

[118] Already in Arabic panegyrics, the enclosed garden symbolised the world and the court, but even more so in Persian. In the eleventh century, Nasir Khusrau, for instance, described the Fatimid court in Cairo in typical garden imagery that was also later used by Urdu *shahr āshob* poets. See J. S. Meisami, 'Poetic Microcosms', p. 166.

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beliefs but also on Quranic traditions, the Islamic garden symbolised the king's (or the patron's) fitness, generosity, and justice. The beauty of the garden, its abundance of fruit and flowers, its sophisticated flowing canals and waterfalls, all extolled the king's ability to control nature, to reproduce paradise on earth, and to link 'heaven and earth, divinely ordered cosmos with justly governed world'.[119] The garden was an ultimate symbol of kingly power,[120] and it was not uncommon for medieval Muslim kings to commission miniature representations of themselves sitting in gardens[121] – Mughal miniature painting also contributed to the tradition.

In agricultural societies with arid or semi-arid climates, the ability to create gardens and thus to master irrigation denoted remarkable skill but also a complex system of central administration.[122] The garden represented the quintessence of irrigated culture. It was not used only as an aesthetic landscape but as a space for food production and botanical experiments.[123] With society and the army depending mostly on agricultural revenues, agriculture and irrigation were considered essential elements of royal ideology in ancient Iranian culture. As Maria Subtelny showed, the concept of the 'good king' was intrinsically linked to the good state of the land, and the king was often described as a 'good gardener'.[124] *Pairidaēza* in Avestan or *bāġh* in Persian, the enclosed garden was since Antiquity, as Stronach argued, a 'political statement' and a 'potent vehicle for royal propaganda'.[125]

In Mughal culture too, gardens were essential elements and symbols of courtly life. As Farahani, Motamed and Jamei argued, as a nomadic and nature-loving people, 'the Mughals used their charbaghs as no other great dynasty has used gardens. Neither decorative adjuncts to a palace nor intended simply for visual enjoyment, gardens were used in place of buildings'.[126] Since Babur's arrival in South Asia, gardens had acquired an important status. Riding from garden to garden in

[119] Ibid., p. 145.
[120] J. S. Meisami, 'Ghaznavid Panegyrics: Some Political Implications', p. 34; J. S. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, p. 292.
[121] M. Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin*, p. 104. [122] Ibid., pp. 29–52.
[123] Ibid., p. 101 and A. A. Husain, *Scent in the Islamic Garden*.
[124] M. Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin*, p. 69.
[125] D. Stronach, 'The Garden as a Political Statement', p. 171.
[126] L. M. Farahani, B. Motamed, and E. Jamei, 'Persian Gardens: Meanings, Symbolism, and Design', p. 3.

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Central Asia, Babur's discovery of India's lack of running water was a shock, which he strove to overcome. Under his rule, as he illustrated in his memoirs, 'in disorderly Hindustan, plots of garden were seen laid out with order and symmetry, with suitable borders and parterres in every corner, and in every border rose and narcissus in perfect arrangement'.[127] Walled gardens were conceived as delightful open-air palaces,[128] whose architecture and orderly planning reflected and legitimised the new order of Mughal rule in India.[129] As in Persia, but to an even greater extent, gardens were instruments for the legitimacy of power and were also the place where court rituals were celebrated.[130] Gardens were commonly used for public audiences, wine parties and entertainment, political talks, horticultural experiments, and religious rites.[131]

Despite their role in urbanisation and their construction of fine capital cities, the Mughals like the Timurids and Safavids (under whose rule *shahr āshob* literature thrived) were incredibly mobile and retained a nomadic way of ruling.[132] In his *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656–1668*, the French traveller Bernier observed that 'the whole population of Delhi is in fact collected in the camp, [...] it has no alternative but to follow [the court and army] in their march or perish from want during their absence'.[133] Until 1739, Mughal emperors spent around 40 per cent of their time in tours of one year or more.[134] When emperors left with their camp, the city was emptied of its population and dramatically declined, since the entire court (including women, cooks, water-carriers, craftsmen, etc.) followed the emperor. Abul Fazl described in his *A'īn-e Akbarī* the size of each encampment, which required for its carriage '100 elephants, 500

[127] Babur, *Babur Nama: Journal of Emperor Babur*, p. 278.
[128] E. B. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India*, p. 97.
[129] E. Koch, 'My Garden Is Hindustan: The Mughal Padshah's Realization of a Political Metaphor', p. 160.
[130] M. Alemi, 'Princely Safavid Gardens: Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display', p. 125.
[131] E. B. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden*, p. 97. See also A. A. Husain, *Scent in the Islamic Garden* and C. B. Asher, 'Babur and the Timurid Char Bagh: Use and Meaning'.
[132] A. Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, p. 77.
[133] Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656–1668*, pp. 280–1, quoted by S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 68.
[134] S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 97.

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camels, 400 carts, and 100 bearers'.[135] Massive tents were erected as the entire court moved from one place to another, forming a veritable 'tent city' with palaces, streets, and bazaars.[136] As Stronach and Subtelny noted for ancient Persia, one may argue that in Mughal India too 'it was the architecture of the garden that incorporated the palace and not the contrary'.[137] In 1648, the imperial camp/garden as symbol and assertion of Mughal power was so essential that it served as archetype for the construction of the Red Fort of Delhi.[138] As a matter of fact, the palace buildings often reproduced a natural environment, incorporating botanical elements in their architecture with tree-like columns or colourful ever-blooming pietra dura (*parchīn kārī*) flowers.[139] Even in the capital city, tents were still erected in and around buildings, and awnings and canopies were rigged to the palaces until 1857.[140]

In 1857 *shahr āshobs* the descriptions of Delhi as a heavenly garden strongly built on this traditional imagery. They often evoked celestial bodies, fountains, trees, legends like the garden of Iram, and other symbols of eternity (Jamshed's cup, the Water of Life, the elixir of immortality). Although only a couple of passages in pre-1857 *shahr āshob* poetry evoked paradise, from Barq's *musaddas* (1857?) onwards, virtually every 1857 poem mentioned one or several paradisiacal elements. The vocabulary for (earthly and heavenly) paradise was rich: *k͟hūld, gulshan-e k͟huld*, *chaman-e k͟huld*, *k͟huld-e barīn*, *firdaus*, *janān*, *jannat*, *bihisht*, *gulshan-e Riẓwān*, *roẓah-e Riẓwān*, *ḥūristān*, *haft āsmān*, *maqām-e aman*, *k͟hudā kī panāh*, and so on but also *Iram-e k͟huld*, *parīstān*. Adam and Eve were sometimes mentioned, along with houris, fairies (*parī*), angels (*farishtah*, *malā'ik*), male servants (*ġhilmān*), the gatekeeper Rizwan, the heavenly fountain Tasnīm, the spring of Haiwān, the T̲ūbā tree, and so on.

[135] Abul Fazl, *The Ain-i Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann, p. 47.
[136] A. Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, p. 80. See also F. Robinson, *The Mughal Emperors*, p. 129.
[137] M. Subtelny, *Le monde est un jardin*, p. 104.
[138] See P. A. Andrews, *Felt Tents and Pavilions*, p. 903 and E. Koch, 'My Garden Is Hindustan', p. 161.
[139] For instance, D. Fairchild-Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*, p. 84. See also E. Koch, 'Flowers in Mughal Architecture'.
[140] P. A. Andrews, 'The Generous Heart or the Mass of Clouds', p. 151. The continuance of the use of tents under Shah Alam II and Bahadur Shah Zafar is, for instance, attested in Munshi Faizuddin, *Bazm-e āk͟hir*.

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Pre-1857 Delhi was idealised as an earthly paradise, sometimes as the centre of Creation and as a most sacred place that rivalled the Islamic city of Mecca. Opening his *musaddas*, Safir, for instance, compared the Delhi of the past to Mecca and to Heaven, asserting its past exalted status:

Yeh shahr baʿd Makkah ke sharaf ul-bilād thā
yeh shahr jumlah shahroṇ meṇ mīnū sawād thā
sākin har ek is kā bihishtī nazhād thā
har ko'ī waṣl-e yār kī mānind shād thā
thā bāġh ab ujaṛ ke bayābān ho gayā.

This city was the noble city after Mecca,
This city was more heavenly than all other cities combined,
Its every inhabitant was of heavenly origin,
Everyone met like cheerful friends,
Now this garden has been ruined and became a desert.[141]

In her investigation of Indian *tażkirahs*, Marcia Hermansen noted that the sacralisation of cities was a way of memorialising Islam in the urban space and affirming Muslim identity through the configuration of new centres and circuits of pilgrimage.[142] Indo-Persian elites had in fact compared Delhi to a little Mecca (*k̲h̲urd-e Makkah*) since the beginning of the Muslim rule. In *shahr āshob* poems, however, the sacralisation of the pre-1857 landscape seems to do more than define space as a memorial of religious piety. The objective was to show that Delhi once surpassed the garden of Iram and rivalled Paradise – it was the envy (*rashk*, *ġhairat*) of Iram, or of Heaven, as many poets illustrated. They did not try to exalt places of pilgrimage and worship as in *tażkirahs*, but to show that the entire Mughal city was the place of God's manifestation. Urdu, the language of Delhi, was compared to Arabic, the language of God spoken in Heaven:

hu'ā iskā jo faṣiḥān-e jahāṇ se nah jawāb
goyā Qurāṇ kī zubāṇ hai yeh zubān-e Dehlī.

In the world there was no rival to its eloquent people,
As if it were the language of the Qur'ān, the language of Delhi.[143]

[141] Safir, *kyā āsmān āj bad-uʿnwān ho gayā*, verse 2.
[142] See M. Hermansen, 'Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory'.
[143] Sipihr, *miṭ gayā safḥah-e ʿālam se nishān-e Dehlī*, verse 10.

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In Kamil's *musaddas*, typical of many 1857 poems, the whole of Delhi was described as God's world of pleasure and (the Red Fort especially, with its glowing red sandstone) as Mount Sinai, one of the places of God's appearance on earth.[144]

tamām gulshan-e ʿaish-o surūr thī Dehlī
tamām ʿishrat-o farḥat ẕahūr thī Dehlī
tamām maṯlaʿ-e k͟hūrshīd-e nūr thī Dehlī
tamām ġhairat-e ṣad koh-e ṯūr thī Dehlī
har ek kūchah yahāṇ kā thā ik makān-e ʿaish
yeh shahr thā keh ilāhī ko'ī jahān-e ʿaish.

All of Delhi was a garden of luxury and pleasure,
All of Delhi was a manifestation of gaiety and joy,
All of Delhi was like the glittering sunrise,
All of Delhi was the envy of a hundred Mount Sinai.
Here's every street was an abode of luxury,
This city was one of God's worlds of pleasure.[145]

As this passage illustrates, pre-1857 Delhi was often described with a vocabulary of joy and radiance, with every day resembling the day of Eid and every night Shab-e Barat. It was a world of luxury (*ʿaish-o ʿishrat*), splendour (*shān-o shaukat*), pleasure (*mazā*, *musarrat*, *luṯf*), and happiness (*nishāṯ*, *ṯarab*). Delhi's inhabitants were described as perfect (*kāmil*, *ahl-e kamāl*). It is notable that the world of Delhi was also described in terms of material wealth, recalling the wealth promised in paradise, with much insistence on jewellery (e.g. *jauhar*, *gauhar*, *zewar*, *motī*), embroidered clothes, perfume, and adornments (*ʿiṯr*, sandalwood, *mehndī*, *singhār*). In another example from one of Salik's *musaddases*, different elements of Delhi were gauged in relation to paradise, only to stress that the Mughal city surpassed it.

zamīn-e past yahāṇ kī thī āsmāṇ manẕar
har ek żarrah yahāṇ kā thā mehr kā hamsar
yahāṇ kī k͟hāk thī aksīr se bhī kuchh bahtar
yahāṇ kī āb meṇ āb-e ḥayāt kā thā aṡar
nasīm-e k͟huld se bahtar simūm thī yāṇ kī
yeh woh chaman hai keh dunyā meṇ dhūm thī yāṇ kī.

[144] The Fort, like the Sinai, is red in colour: when God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, he appeared surrounded by red light.
[145] Kamil, *tamām gulshan-e ʿaish-o surūr thī Dehlī*, verse 1.

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Here low earth was equal to the Heavens,
Here every particle was like a shining sun,
Here dust was even better than elixir,
In here water had the power of the Water of life,
Here Simoom [a dust-laden wind] was better than the paradise's breeze,
This is the garden whose fame was known to the world.[146]

The comparison of the Red Fort to Mount Sinai, of Delhi to God's paradise, served to praise Mughal rule metaphorically yet purposefully. The emperor's gardens were a matter of political legitimacy and, as the sovereign was able to create and maintain landscapes that matched the heavenly paradise, his title as God's shadow (*ẕill-e ilāhī*) on earth was confirmed. The ordered setting of the garden acted as a microcosm centred on the figure of the emperor. The garden-court incorporated traditional theories of Islamic architecture, in which the emperor was conceived as the *axis mundi*, the imperial fort acting as a 'symbolic centre of a nested hierarchy: city, empire and universe'.[147] This, of course, was extended to the urban landscape too, since it was initially conceived on the camp's model. Perceived as both the macrocosm of man and the microcosm of the empire, the city was likened to human anatomy (perhaps thereby alluding to the body of the emperor) – with the main market acting as its backbone, the palace as its head, the great mosque as its heart, smaller streets and buildings as ribs and organs, and walls defining the body.[148] Such theories are reproduced in *The Lament for Delhi*, in one of Ahsan's *ġhazals*:

chāndnī chauk ko sīnah kaheṇ aur qileʿh ko sar
masjid-e jāmaʿ ko ṯhahrā'eṇ miyān-e Dehlī.

Let's call Chandni Chowk the breast, and say the Fort's the head,
And let's imagine Jama Masjid is the waist of Delhi.[149]

146 Salik, *jahāṇ meṇ shahr haiṇ jitne jahāṇ jahāṇābād*, verse 3.
147 S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. xiv.
148 N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture*, p. 93 quoted by S. P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 35.
149 Ahsan, *hā'e woh log jo the rūh-o rawān-e Dehlī*, verse 3, trans. Pasha Khan, columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt_pasha_fughan.pdf, p. 4.

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As Soofia Siddique has shown, the metaphor of the body was an important image in Mughal ideology. Political authority was asserted through the 'ritual and relational hierarchy of the different parts of the body' that materialised in the ceremonious giving of the *k͟hilaʿt* (honorific robe), which incorporated subjects in the body politics.[150] Rosalind O'Hanlon argued that the just emperor and his norms and values were seen as agents of cohesion in the articulation of the different bodies composing the empire and regulating the different spheres of the kingdom, household, and individual.[151] The Mughal emperor was the symbolic centre of the garden city and of the empire as the 'divinely ordained focus […] of society',[152] and the poems largely perpetuated this vision.

4 Doomsday in Paradise: Loss of Sovereignty

The destruction of the orderly paradise of Mughal Delhi was commonly compared to autumn, to death, and to the apocalypse in the poems. As Annemarie Schimmel noted, the identification between the beloved and paradise 'was all the more appropriate as the poets liked to compare the day of separation to the day of resurrection which extends over centuries, and in which the greatest tumult takes place',[153] Here, of course, 1857 *shahr āshobs* again built on traditional poetic expressions of loss, but, once more, extended them powerfully by resorting to rich apocalyptic symbolism. Besides describing the events of 1857 as a catastrophe, oppression, and injustice, with terms like *āfat*, *hangāmah*, *fitnah*, *inqilāb*, *balā*, *mājrā*, *shāmat*, *jafā*, *barbādī*, *sitam*, *muṣībat*, and so on, a more explicit vocabulary referred to the end of times: *nālah-e ṣūr* (the sound of the apocalyptic trumpet), *malak al-maut* (the angel of death), *qayāmat*, *qayāmat-e ṣuġhrā*, *ṣubh-e qayāmat* (doomsday, resurrection), *roz-e jazā* (doomsday), *roz-e mauʿūd* (the promised day), *ajal* (the appointed time), *ḥashr*, *maḥshar*, *maḥshar-e ġhadar*, *ḥashr kā maidān*, *roz-e ḥashr* (the day or place of final judgment), and *nār-e dozak͟h* (the fire of hell). In Islamic eschatological

[150] S. Siddique, 'Remembering the Revolt', p. 50 quotes B. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', p. 168. See also B. Cohn, 'Cloths, Clothes, and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century', pp. 114–5.
[151] R. O'Hanlon, 'Kingdom, Household and Body History', p. 889.
[152] F. W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 29.
[153] A. Schimmel, 'The Celestial Garden', p. 19.

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traditions, the apocalypse is usually predicted by the blowing of the trumpet, the apparition of lesser signs or warnings (*ʿibrat*) like natural disasters, the disintegration of morality, and then of greater signs (the arrival of the Antichrist, his fight with the *Mahdī*). Then follows resurrection (*qayāmat*), the gathering for the final judgment (*ḥashr*), and the crossing of the bridge of Sirat to reach either the Garden or the Fire.[154]

The shock of 1857 and of its aftermath was pictured as the end of times that abruptly concluded Islam's sacred history. Besides comparing the events to Karbala, some poets, like Dagh, also inscribed Delhi's experience within Prophetic history to emphasise fracture. In one instance, he referred to the Prophet Ilyas (Elijah) as the only figure who could have escaped from the events, and, indeed, Ilyas is traditionally seen as a non-mortal prophet with an eschatological dimension, since he predicts the arrival of the Messiah.[155] In another example, Dagh illustrates that everyone cries upon the separation with Delhi, even the sky, so much so that even Noah's ark would not have survived the flood of tears:

Zamīṇ ke ḥāl peh ab āsmān rotā hai
har ik firāq-e makīṇ meṇ makān rotā hai
nah ṯifl-o aurat-o pīr-o jawān rotā hai
ġharẓ yahāṇ ke lī'e ek jahāṇ rotā hai
jo kahī'e joshish-e ṯūfān nahīṇ kahī jātī
yahāṇ to Nūḥ kī kashtī bhī ḍūb hī jātī.

The sky now cries at the earth's condition,
Every house cries on the separation with its occupants.
Not (only) babies, and women, old and young cry
In short, the whole world cries for Delhi,
They say that the violence of this tempest is unfathomable,
Here even Noah's ark would sink too.[156]

The events of 1857 were interpreted as death, with the corporeality of the city (encapsulated in the city's material landscape) disappearing to leave only its soul (or its recollection): *gumān-e Dehlī* as most poets

[154] For more on Islamic eschatological representations, see J. Smith and Y. Haddad, *Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*; N. and N. Rustomji, *The Garden and the Fire*; S. Günther and T. Lawson (eds), *Roads to Paradise*.
[155] See, for instance, P. Lory, 'Elie', in M. A. Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Dictionnaire du Coran*, pp. 244–6.
[156] Dagh, *falak zamīn-o malā'ik janāb thī dillī*, verse 11.

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told. With cosmic signs of apocalypse occurring in the poems – particularly tempest (*ṯūfān*) and windstorms (*bād-e tund*), earthquakes (*tazalzul*), a rain of fire (*āg kā barsā*), and the split of the earth (*zamīn-shaq*) – Shah Jahanabad fell into nothingness (or *ʿadmābād*).[157] It was the ultimate separation. While the Day of Resurrection would also traditionally imply reunion with God/the beloved, in the poems here analysed, the Delhi of the past was predominantly described as utterly annihilated. As Delhi surpassed paradise, paradise would pale in comparison, so paradise was lost, so much so that even the otherworldly paradise cried over the loss of Delhi.[158] The violence of the rupture only strengthened the yearning for pre-1857 times.

Many poems tried to explain the events of 1857, to understand why 'doomsday had come before doomsday' (*qayāmat ā'ī qayāmat se kis lī'e pahle?*) as Mubin asked in one of his *musaddases*.[159] The question of why misfortune occurred had been raised by *shahr āshob* poetry well before the events of 1857. As Shamsur Rahman Faruqi noted in his commentary on Jurat's (d. 1810) *shahr āshob*, the sky was often pointed out as 'the traditional perpetrator of crimes of injustice in Urdu poetry'.[160] One of the words for the sky, *charḵẖ*, also means a turning wheel and is a metaphor for time. The idea of the wheel of fortunes, or of fate, was occasionally invoked in Nazir's or Jauhri's verses,[161] as in 1857 poems (*gardish-e taqdīr*, *muqaddar*, *qiṣmat*, *naṣīb*). Usually, 1857 *shahr āshobs* built on convention and blamed the cruel old sky for its injustice and malice (*pīr-e falak*, *charḵẖ-e kuhan*, *falak kī barbādī*, *falak kā ẕulm*, *falak-e kīnah*, *charḵẖ-e bad-kesh*, *charḵẖ-e badbīn*, *charḵẖ-e sitamgar*, etc.); others accused the cold, boisterous winds of winter. Of course, the reference to the sky or to the climate alluded to the change in season that brought autumn to the garden.

Some expressions such as *zuḥal kī ānkh* ('the eye of Saturn') or *naẕar-e ḵẖaṣm-e falak* ('the enemy sky's eye'), along with general

[157] For instance, in Sabir's *ġhazal baskeh bedād se ṭūṭe haiṇ makān-e Dehlī*, verse 12.

[158] Lange explains in his studies of Islamic eschatological traditions that paradise 'remains accessible, even during one's life on earth', with prophets and mystics sometimes flying to the heavens. Generally speaking, he argues, the Quranic paradise 'co-exists with this world'. C. Lange, 'The Discovery of Paradise in Islam', p. 7.

[159] Mubin, *pasand-e ḵẖāṯir har ḵẖāṣ-o ʿām thī Dehlī*, verse 18.

[160] Jur'at, 'Jurat's Shahr-ashob' (S. R. Faruqi) p. 13.

[161] F. Lehmann, 'Urdu Literature and Mughal Decline', p. 130.

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mentions of the evil eye (*naẕar*, *chashm-e badbīn*), also introduced the idea of jealousy and alien malevolence as the cause of ruin. This resonates particularly with the metaphor of the garden, since gardens are traditionally enclosed in Islamic traditions, and protected from the outside world.[162] As Farahani, Motamed and Jamei argued, this introversion is also incorporated into architecture, so that the eyes of strangers cannot peek easily into Persian gardens.[163] An unauthorised glance into the garden's cherished and well-guarded wealth was thus a powerful symbol. Soofia Siddique has argued that the sky in fact symbolised British oppressors for *shahr āshob* poets, who were particularly wary of colonial censure and retaliation. Given the historical context and the literary conventions too, despite the compelling idea of the external gaze, it is difficult to assess how much of this hypothesis is true. In some of the poems, the Rebels – called *Tilange, kāle* (black), or *bedīn bāġhī* (faithless rebels) in the poems – were condemned.[164]

When explaining decline with the conventional image of the cruel sky, the latter's anger was often emphasised. Other poets attributed the anger to God (*k̲h̲udā kā qahr, qahr-o ġhaẓab, ġhuṣṣah*) and explained that Delhi's devastation was God's command (*faʿāl-e māyurīd* 'The Accomplisher of what He intends', *Allāh kā hukm*). The anger at Delhi could be read as a second example of God's wrath at human attempts to rival paradise on earth, as in the case of the garden of Iram. But divine or heavenly anger was also attributed by some poets to human wrongdoing and sin, and to the absence of fear of God or lack of faith. In one of his *musaddases*, and the only poem with a chorus, Mubin insisted on the fact that the people of Delhi brought the misfortunes upon themselves by their own attitude, interestingly exonerating both the British (white) and the rebels (black):

Ẕulm goroṇ ne kiyā aur nah sitam kāloṇ ne
ham ko barbād kiyā apne hī āʿmāloṇ ne.

The white have not afflicted us, nor the black,
We have ruined ourselves by our own deeds.[165]

162 J. S. Meisami, 'Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition', p. 231, or A. Schimmel, 'The Celestial Garden', p. 16.
163 L. M. Farahani, B. Motamed, and E. Jamei, 'Persian Gardens', p. 8.
164 On the question of guilt and responsibility for 1857, see also R. Jalil, 'Reflections of 1857 in Contemporary Urdu Literature', pp. 121–4.
165 Mubin, *dil ġhanī rakkhā sak̲h̲āwat peh nah zar wāloṇ ne*, chorus.

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In any way, 1857 *shahr āshob* writers seem to have articulated a discourse on the loss of power that was symbolised by the apocalypse or the autumn that had devastated a perfectly ordered garden. The garden was the city of Delhi but, more profoundly, the city of Mughal power. In his long *musaddas*, Zahir Dehlawi indeed stated that apocalypse had come on the 'House of Timur' (*k̲h̲āndān-e Tīmūr par qayāmat ā'ī*).[166] A couple of verses before, he qualified Mughal rule, which he calls 'Caliphate', as a ruined garden:

nihāl-e gulshan-e iqbāl pā'emāl hū'e
gul-e riyāẓ-e k̲h̲ilāfat lahū meṇ lāl hū'e.

The trees of this prosperous garden have been trampled
The flowers of Caliphate's garden have been reddened with blood.[167]

Delhi poets who represented the pre-1857 city as an earthly paradise undoubtedly lamented the loss of the Mughal court, without being overtly sympathetic to the Delhi king. As a matter of fact, the figure of Bahadur Shah Zafar did not appear often in the poems. One notable exception was Zahir Dehlawi's *musaddas*, which directly referred to the king in rather laudatory terms, despite the latter's trial for treason in 1858.

kahāṇ woh k̲h̲usraw-e ʿālī naẕar bahādur shāh
kahāṇ woh sarwar-e neko-siyar bahādur shāh
kahāṇ woh bādshāh-e dādgar bahādur shāh
kahāṇ woh dāwar-e wālā gauhar bahādur shāh
kahāṇ se bāġhī-e bedīn ā ga'e hā'e hā'e
keh nām us kā jahāṇ se miṭā ga'e hā'e hā'e.

Where is the regal benevolent Bahadur Shah?
Where is the courteous monarch Bahadur Shah?
Where is the king of justice Bahadur Shah?
Where is this eminent just sovereign Bahadur Shah?
Alas, wherefrom did these unfaithful rebels come,
Alas, who have erased his name from the world?[168]

[166] Zahir, *farishtah maskan-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, verse 30. Divine light was supposed to have descended from Timur to his Mughal descendants. See, for instance, F. Robinson, *The Mughal Emperors*, p. 7.
[167] Zahir, *farishtah maskan-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, verse 23.
[168] Ibid., end of verse 24.

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The garden, just like imperial monuments, represented the power of Mughal rule and its ability to order the world, an order that was shattered in apocalyptic cataclysm. Despite resorting heavily to metaphors of the city as a garden, 1857 *shahr āshobs* also provide evidence for the increasing significance of the built landscape, as I have shown elsewhere.[169] While ruins were already used as a motif to enhance despair in Mir's and Sauda's verses, they usually remained metaphorical, abstract, and anonymous.[170] Writers of 1857 *shahr āshob* extended the description of the ruins of nameless houses and buildings to the mention of specific monuments by name, sometimes with a description.[171] While Western influence may have accentuated the change in conceptions of the urban, the growth of a sense of place and the emotional investment in the architectural environment were most probably inspired by both the changing nature of Mughal political power from the eighteenth century onwards and the collective expression of grief.[172] As Margrit Pernau argued, such descriptions, like Syed Ahmed Khan's description of the garden of Hayat Bakhsh in the Fort, starting with a comparison to paradise and ending with a depiction of its pitiful present state, allowed 'for the transfer of emotions from the rich archive of poetry onto the experience of a concrete space'.[173]

The theme of the ruins reminding people of the ephemeral nature of human existence was not new and had already given birth to the ancient Persian literary theme of the 'warning' (*ʿibrat*), which also appeared in *shahr āshobs*. Ebba Koch showed how popular the theme was in Akbar's epigraphy, as the emperor inscribed the sites of the conquered territories of the Faruqi kings or of the sultans of Mawa. One such epigraphical poem composed by Nami at Mandu illustrated: 'At Dawn I saw an owl sitting on the pinnacle of Shirwan Shah's tomb. Plaintively it uttered the warning: 'Where is all that glory and where

[169] E. Tignol, 'Nostalgia and the City'.

[170] See, for instance, Sauda, *Mu<u>kh</u>ammas-e shahr āshob*, verse 28.

[171] The poet Shamshir mentioned the Khas market, and Mirza Aziz evoked the Lal Diggi, also known as the Ellenborough tank (1846) in their *ġhazals* (Shamshir, *kaise kaise hū'e barbād makān-e Dehlī*, verses 7 and 8, and Mirza Aziz, *jannatī dekh ke kahte haiṇ <u>kh</u>izān-e Dehlī*, verse 13).

[172] See E. Tignol, 'Nostalgia and the City', pp. 568–72. About Western and indigenous pictorial representations of the urban landscape, see S. Waraich, 'A City Besieged and a Love Lamented', pp. 153–4.

[173] M. Pernau, 'Fluid Temporalities: Saiyid Ahmad Khan and the Concept of modernity', p. 110.

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all that splendour?"[174] This type of inscription, she emphasised, was 'employed in a dialectic way to commemorate as well as to symbolise conquest and appropriation of land'.[175] In 1857, the reflective theme of the warning hints at the fact that poets commemorated the change in political power too.

5 Conclusion

The poems on 1857 all developed a language of collective grief through different literary devices: the poetic meters of the *ġhazal* (as *nauḥah*) and *musaddas* (as *marṡiyah*), the deployment of a rich vocabulary of suffering, and the resort to the image of the garden with its inherent representations (paradise, separation from the beloved, apocalyptic chaos).

By adopting the style of the *marṡiyah* and conventions usually associated with mourning and Shia rituals in a non-religious, secular context, 1857 was collectively represented as a historical and cultural rupture that obliterated Mughal identity – the abundance of verbs like *miṭnā* 'to be erased' or *miṭānā* 'to erase' is remarkable. The constant references to orality and to the impact of *shahr āshob* verses on the audience hinted at the fact that *shahr āshob* poets cultivated a culture of '*āshobgo'ī*' which implied collective commemoration and communal weeping. These elements were not entirely new to Urdu poetry, but their full development and combined use became typical of later *shahr āshob* poetry.

In the poems, the expression of *ġham* built on a rich poetic vocabulary of pain and love. But poets did not use a vague depressive mood; rather, they expressed acute physical pain in its most corporal manifestations. The language was graphic: it was all blood, burn, and decomposition. Some poets went so far as to identify the victims of 1857 as a 'people of suffering' (*ahl-e dard*).[176] Loss was apprehended through the poetic pain of amorous separation, where Delhi acted as the beloved, which only left a burning scar (*dāġh*) on the lover's heart. With the grief of loss also came an idealisation of the Delhi of the past.

The garden, a conventional and natural setting for the expression of romantic suffering, was also deployed as an undeniable symbol of

[174] J. Horovitz, 'Inscriptions of Dhar and Mandu', pp. 26–7, quoted by E. Koch, 'Shah Jahan's Visit to Delhi prior to 1648', p. 29.
[175] Ibid.
[176] See, for instance, Zahir, *farishtah maskan-o jannat nishān thī Dehlī*, verse 27.

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kingly power in the poems. Resembling the garden descriptions of many medieval Arabic and Persian *qaṣīdahs*, 1857 *shahr āshobs* most certainly articulated a discourse on power. After all, Kaukab's *Lament of Delhi* opened with a poem by the former Delhi king Bahadur Shah Zafar. Similar poetry by Lakhnawi poets, like Barq and others during the same time frame (1856–1857), is perhaps more obviously conceived as straightforward praise to Wajid Ali Shah, but Zahir Dehlawi, who was closely associated with the Mughal court and later wrote a prose account of the events of 1857,[177] nonetheless clearly described the beloved garden in terms of Mughal sovereignty.

As scholars like Daniela Bredi have noted, the choice to remember pre-1857 Delhi as a Mughal city was, however, not entirely accurate.[178] Although the Mughal king still reigned over the Red Fort, his influence had become mostly symbolic and his resources were limited. After Shah Alam II's difficult return to Delhi in 1774 and the British occupation of Delhi from 1803, the proverb used to mock the Mughal 'empire' as stretching only from Delhi to Palam.[179] Delhi from 1803 to 1857 was very much governed by the British, who controlled what happened in the city and fort. Arsh Taimuri remembered in his *Qilaʿh-e muʿallah kī jhalkiyāṇ* (1937, see Chapter 5) that the Mughal court had to obtain permission from the British resident every time the king planned to leave Delhi, even to spend a few days in his hunting lodges on the outskirts of the city.[180] Since their annexation of Delhi in 1803, the British had pacified the territory and made it thrive again.[181] They had adopted the Mughal way of life and manners; founded the Delhi College; and stimulated and commissioned artists, poets and scholars while managing the city. The city bloomed again in what Andrews called the 'Delhi Renaissance'.[182]

In an article arguing against the idea of Muslim estrangement from the British and hostility towards Western knowledge before 1857,

[177] Zahir Dehlawi, *Dastān-e ġhadar, yaʿnī hangāmah-e 1857 ke chashamdīd ḥālāt;* Zahir Dehlavi, *Dastan-e ghadar: the tale of the mutiny*, trans. R. Safvi.
[178] D. Bredi, 'Nostalgia in the Re-construction of Muslim Identity'.
[179] As the Persian saying goes, 'Ṣulṯanat-i Shāh ʿĀlam, az Dehlī tā Palam.' Palam is now a southwest suburb of New Delhi.
[180] Arsh Taimuri, *Qilaʿh-e muʿallah kī jhalkiyāṇ*, p. 48.
[181] *Fraser Papers*, vol. 33, AF to his mother, p. 338, 6 December 1811, on the Ganges quoted by W. Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty*, p. 74.
[182] N. Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires*, p. 6.

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Mushirul Hasan emphasised the fact that during the Delhi Renaissance, Muslim elites had in fact begun to adapt to Western ideas and power, and had little interest in the Mughal king and his fort. He further argued that 'not many shed tears over the collapse of the Mughal Empire or the defeat of Bahadur Shah, a decrepit old man who took refuge in Urdu lyrical poetry'.[183] Further, as Syed Ahmed Khan's *Āṡār uṣ-Ṣanādīd* illustrated, Shahjahanabad's built heritage was already in a state of disrepair before the Uprising.[184]

Shahr āshob poems in the aftermath of 1857, however, wailed over the end of the Mughal world. As Daniela Bredi put it, the Delhi Renaissance period was indeed usually read by Indo-Muslim elites as 'an imagined place embodying the final splendour of the Mughal age'.[185] Recently, Nishtha Singh has shown that the sedentarisation of the Mughal court in Delhi enabled the development of a 'city-centered patriotism' (Dehlviyat),[186] in which the role of the emperor was revived so as to become a 'Dehlvi institution', precisely at the time when 'he was most powerless in administrative terms'.[187] As Ghalib indeed lamented in a letter when remembering the world before 1857, 'all these things lasted only so long as the king reigned'.[188] Poets of 1857 *shahr āshob* usually did not shed tears over Bahadur Shah specifically, but over the Mughal court/garden of which he was a symbol. The profound longing for the pre-1857 period as a time of Mughal splendour certainly did not wait until the 1930s to develop.[189]

Shahr āshob poets also expressed the shock of 1857 with a greater emphasis on the city's built landscape, which concretely gave evidence for the extent of the devastation. The Mughal city was always described as a sacred space of order and pleasure that had been trampled upon. Ruined buildings were used to cleverly echo collective grief when human life had been lost. The poems' new emphasis on buildings and urban planning projects reflects the growing preoccupation with

[183] M. Hasan, 'The Legacies of 1857 among the Muslim Intelligentsia of North India', p. 111.
[184] See M. Rajagopalan, 'Loss and Longing at the Qila Muʿalla', pp. 233–54.
[185] D. Bredi, 'Nostalgia in the Re-construction', p. 145.
[186] N. G. Singh, 'Dehliviyat: The Making and Un-making of Delhi's Indo-Muslim Urban Culture', p. 5.
[187] Ibid., p. 11.
[188] R. Russell and K. Islam, Ghalib, p. 291, quoted by F. W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 21.
[189] D. Bredi, 'Nostalgia', p. 146.

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the protection of heritage sites and town improvement measures in the aftermath of the Uprising. If some poems appraised positive urban changes under British rule, the large majority lingered on lamentations over urban destruction. Other sources, such as Ghalib's letters and the *Native Newspapers Reports*, well highlight the fact that after 1857, issues around urban development were often raised by Urdu litterateurs and editors who frequently lamented and opposed the destruction of some garden, mosque, or ancient gate. Although Chapter 3 will explore the early twentieth-century political implications of urban planning by the British government, Delhi's monuments had already acquired much importance as reminders of Mughal power.

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