Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture

ABDUL HALIM SHARAR

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PAUL ELEK LONDON

To the late Muhammad Amir Ahmad Khan,
Raja of Mahmudabad,
one of the last from old Lucknow

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values are subject to new pressures which demand new answers. How a society responds to this attack on its established values determines its future. Like an individual, it can respond in two ways. Either it accepts these new challenges and becomes increasingly amenable to reason which opens the door to further evolution. Alternatively, the challenge can be rejected and reason becomes subservient to tradition. In this way society and traditional values ossify and the value system and the civilization based upon it acquire an inward-looking character. In the Kirkegaardian view, it becomes perverted in the sense that it becomes unable to offer a re-statement of its sense of values and ceases to be creative. Kenneth Clark's comment seems meaningful in this context: 'If one asks why the civilization of Greece and Rome collapsed, the real answer is that it was exhausted.'* Such a process, in the civilization described here, seems to have been accelerated by colonialism, which had a debilitating effect on the political and economic values of Indo-Islamic society. Indeed, these values were completely eroded and Indo-Islamic society was left with the mere outer forms of social life and its appurtenances. The value system of the Mughals became, consequently, further stifled, and conformism developed, leading to a search for reassurance either from the external forms of the civilization of the new rulers or relapse into the protective shell of ancient beliefs. The Muslims continued their own practices, rituals and way of life; however, this existence was artificial and lasted only as long as the protective shadow of the colonial power. When this was removed the colonized people were helpless in the face of new challenges from outside, because their value system was not equipped to cope with such problems.

Thus the civilization crystallized in Lucknow collapsed almost totally as soon as the British left India in 1947. The partition of the country into the two separate States of India and Pakistan, the abolition of the Zamindari[211] system, the adoption of Hindi[530] as the State language in U.P., renamed Uttar Pradesh, and a business-like attitude brought about by the beginnings of the new technological civilization—all this caused sudden and violent change in the established order. The younger generation evolved a new outlook compelled by the need to survive. A substantial number emigrated to Pakistan, mainly to Karachi and its neighbourhood, and started a new life.

It may be worthwhile to mention here two works which offer some fictional insight into the process of collapse of the civilization that reached its apotheosis in Lucknow. The first is Ahmad Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi*,† which describes the life of Mir Nihal and his milieu in Delhi, and the attempts of different individuals to come to grips with the new life-style which had come to prevail, the failure of their efforts and their relapse into traditional habits. The second is Attia Hosain's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*,‡ which is set in Lucknow and describes the decay of traditional socio-cultural values under the impact of economic change, family patterns being the prime victim.

Not surprisingly, Lucknow has now changed almost beyond recognition. Yet the past echoes. Could it be that culture is what remains when all else is forgotten?

* *Civilization: A Personal View*, London 1971, page 4.
† London 1940.
‡ London 1961.

A Note on Abdul Halim Sharar (1860–1926)*

In Lucknow during the middle of the nineteenth century lived the hakim[52] Tafazzul Husain, a scholar of Islamic religion and Arabic and Persian literature. He was married to the daughter of Munshi[49] Qamar ud Din employed in the Secretariat of the Court of Wajid Ali Shah (see Chapter 8). Their son Abdul Halim, born in 1860, when he grew up adopted the pen-name[187] of Sharar, the Spark, by which he is most commonly known. His Islamic studies entitled him to use the title Maulana.[95] His full name, then, was Maulana Abdul Halim Sharar.

In 1856 Wajid Ali Shah had been exiled to Matiya Burj, Calcutta. In 1862 Sharar's father also joined the court of the exiled king. After spending the first nine years of his life in Lucknow, Sharar joined his father in Matiya Burj in 1869 and stayed there until 1879. During the last two years of this period he occupied the post formerly held by his grandfather, who had now retired.

In accordance with established custom, Sharar began his studies privately at home. We may reconstruct the following picture. He started to learn the Arabic and Persian languages from his father and continued this along with the study of their literatures and certain subjects of Islamic theology under at least three other scholars. He then began a course of instruction with a hakim in the Indo-Greek medicinal system, but did not complete it.

Even in this period of his early education, Sharar was interested in Urdu literature and in trying his own hand at writing. Urdu newspapers, which were published at this time, attracted him and he started to contribute at an early age to the columns of the Lucknow newspaper *Avadh Akhbar*[343] as its Matiya Burj correspondent. He also found time to be interested in music and in other aspects of the leisure-orientated life around him in Matiya Burj. Sharar's father is said to have been afraid that his son might plunge too deeply into the idle and frivolous life which prevailed in the exiled community. Hence he sent him back to Lucknow in 1879 when he was nineteen years of age. Back in Lucknow, Sharar continued single-mindedly in his course of Islamic religious instruction with the famous Maulvi Abdul Hai at the Firangi Mahal seminary.[96]

* The facts about Sharar's life here given have been derived mainly from Saxena (see Bibliography) and from Askari's *Tarikh Adab-e-Urdu*, which is actually a translation of Saxena's *History of Urdu Literature*, in which Askari has incorporated additional information. A note in this translation (p. 425) states that the account of Sharar's life was read and approved by Sharar himself. Hence the dates given there have been considered the more reliable.

In 1880, when he was twenty years old, a marriage was arranged for him, as was the custom. His bride happened to be his first cousin. About this time Sharar became deeply interested in Hadis,[243] the tradition of the Prophet. To pursue his studies in this field he went for a short while to the religious seminary in Delhi where the study of Hadis was more advanced than in Lucknow. The same year he returned to Lucknow and joined the staff of *Avadh Akhbar* as assistant editor at a salary of thirty rupees a month.

He started to write under the guidance of an Urdu writer, Munshi Ahmad Ali, well known for his contributions to the magazine *Avadh Punch*.[241] Ahmad Ali influenced Sharar by his own style, with its emphasis on correct structure of a sentence, elegant and highly stylized prose. It was against this flowery and formalized Persian style that Sharar later revolted and created his own simple and easily comprehensible style, which was better suited to the historical, social and political topics of his essays. His contributions to *Avadh Punch* covered a wide range of subjects and they rapidly became famous. Highly praised by leading men of the time was his essay 'The Soul'.

Having become, through these articles, a writer known wherever Urdu was spoken, Sharar was now offered various appointments in Hyderabad[42] and other Muslim States in India. These he did not accept at this stage, perhaps because, as with most Lucknow inhabitants, the idea of settling elsewhere did not appeal to him.

In 1882 Sharar started his own Urdu magazine *Mahshar*, 'Day of Judgment', taking the pen-name of Abdul Basit Mahshar, which was actually the name of one of his friends (see Chapter 11). This magazine was an important venture, since it was in the pages of *Mahshar* that he perfected and polished his own style, intended, as he himself stated, to adapt the style of Addison to essays in Urdu.

In 1884, however, the journal ceased publication, and Sharar accepted an appointment as *Avadh Akhbar*'s special correspondent in Hyderabad. He stayed there for six months before resigning his position and returning to Lucknow. Here he wrote his first novel, *Dilchasp*, 'Fascinating', describing some of the social evils and customs of his society. Although the first part of the novel received some praise for its style and for the depiction of human hardship, it was generally regarded as rather heavy and didactic. However, the second part of the novel, published a year later, was more polished and enjoyed a much more favourable reception. Sharar next translated into Urdu the English version of the Bengali novel *Durgesh Nandni* by Bankim Chandra Chatterji. By this time his reputation in Urdu prose had become established.

In 1887, encouraged by his two literary friends Maulvi Bashir ud Din, editor of *Al Bashir*, and Munshi Nisar Husain, publisher of *Payam-i-Yar*, Sharar began to publish in Lucknow his famous sixteen-page monthly magazine *Dil Gudaz*,* 'Quickener of the Heart' (see Chapter 11), which won popularity within the first year of publication. Several hundred copies were sold throughout India every month, and some copies managed to reach as far as Mecca, a considerable achievement for an Urdu literary journal of those days. This journal, with its many deaths and re-births, lasted as long as the life of Sharar himself and

* Details about *Dil Gudaz*, including citations from Sharar, have been obtained from *Mazamin-e-Sharar*, Vols I–IV, Saiyyid Mubarak Ali, Lahore, n.d. This work in eight volumes edited by Sharar himself is a collection of his short prose works, mainly from *Dil Gudaz*.

became inextricably part of his existence. It was his greatest achievement, and much of his most important work first appeared in it, including his essays on Lucknow which are the subject of the present translation. In an article introducing the journal, Sharar states his aim as being 'To stir people through the imagination by an effective description of their historic past and present-day conditions' (Vol. I, p. 6). In the last issue of 1887 Sharar re-states the purpose of his journal, adding 'to infuse a new style into Urdu prose and to add a new richness to its literature'. He commented further: 'No doubt many people have condemned its style but there are others who have well appreciated it.' *Dil Gudaz* was written almost entirely by Sharar himself and for many years there were practically no other contributors.

The subscription was raised from one to two rupees in 1888 when the journal was doubled in size by the addition of another sixteen pages to each month's issue. These pages were reserved for serializing Sharar's historical novels. The first of these was *Malik ul Aziz Varjinia*, then *Hasan Angelina* in 1889 and *Mansur Mohana* in 1890: many others followed. The plots of these works are woven around events in early Islamic history and the stories are told in such a way as to depict the value of religious teachings and the noble ideals and conduct of the early adherents to the faith. Sharar's deep interest in Islamic history led him to found a second journal in 1890 under the name of *Muhazzab*, 'Refined', the main purpose of which was to publish an account of the life and teachings of leading religious figures of Islam.

In 1891, in order to meet his financial obligations, Sharar was obliged to suspend his literary activities, including publication of both his journals, and to accept an appointment at two hundred rupees per month with a certain dignitary in Hyderabad State who later became Chief Minister. The latter's younger son had been sent to Eton College at an early age, thus missing traditional Islamic religious instruction and education in Indo-Islamic culture. Sharar was employed to go to England in order to provide this education and supervise the boy's upbringing from an Indo-Islamic point of view. The trip did not take place until 1895. In the period between 1891 and 1895 Sharar stayed in Hyderabad but managed to publish a few issues of *Dil Gudaz* from Lucknow in 1893. When he did eventually arrive in England in 1895 the visit was significant for Sharar's own literary activities. During the fifteen months of his stay he improved his English, which he had started to learn on his own in India, and learnt some French. He was able to observe Western civilization at first hand and this influenced his general outlook; he also produced some articles about his specific experiences, such as 'The Eastern and Western Parts of London and Lucknow' (Vol. II, pp. 564–70). In England, too, he completed his novel *Flora Florinda*, later published in India.

Returning to India in 1898 he resumed publication of *Dil Gudaz* from Hyderabad. In it he started to serialize historical materials including his work on the life of the daughter of *Imam Husain*,[106] some points of which agitated members of the Shia community. As a result the Government of Hyderabad discreetly asked Sharar to discontinue the series, which he did by stopping publication of the journal itself. However, he returned to Lucknow in 1899 or 1900, resumed publication of the journal there and completed the controversial life. Sharar remained on the payroll of the State and was allowed to spend his time

in Lucknow, working on his writings. This activity culminated in the publication, probably in the pages of *Dil Gudaz* in the first instance, of his novel *Firdaus-e-Barin*, written earlier in Hyderabad; the second volume of *Ayyam-e-Arab*, an account of Arabia before Islam; a translation of Sir John Cox's *History of the Wars of the Crusades* and *Daku ki Dulhan*, a translation of an English novel. This was not all. The same year, in 1900, he started his periodical *Purdah-e-Asmat*, which denounced the custom of purdah[208] as practised by Muslims in India. The journal stopped publication after a year but this concern, and that for some other social evils, became the subject-matter of his two novels *Badrun-nisa ki Musibat* and *Meva-e-Talkh*, as well as of a number of others.

In 1901 Sharar again had to suspend publication of his journals when he was summoned to Hyderabad. On arrival there he found that the political situation had changed and was no longer favourable to him. The Chief Minister had been retired and died a few days later. Another patron had also lost his job. The financial affairs of the State were looked into by the British Government of India. One Mr Walker appointed to this task saw no need of maintaining Sharar on the payroll of the State. The son of the deceased Chief Minister, however, offered Sharar his patronage and maintenance and the new Chief Minister promised to reinstate him to his earlier position when circumstances permitted. Sharar stayed on in Hyderabad until 1904 before he decided to return to Lucknow. By June 1904 he was back in Lucknow and had again resumed publication of *Dil Gudaz* and a new periodical, *Ittihad*, 'Unity', the aim of which was to bring about a better understanding between Hindus and Muslims. This journal lasted only a year and a half. *Dil Gudaz* now had another sixteen pages added to make room for Sharar's additional historical works. His critical account of some Christian institutions, *Tarikh Hurub-e-Saliba*, 'History of the Crusades', was serialized in 1905 in these pages, as was his novel *Shauqin Malka*, 'The Amorous Queen'; the novel *Yusuf-o-Najma* was serialized in 1906 along with the first part of *Tarikh-e-Sindh*, a history of Sindh under the Muslims.

Beginning with the issue of February 1906, besides the sixteen pages reserved for literary and philosophical essays, novels and historical writing, another eight pages were added to the journal under the heading *Biographies of the Heroes of Islam*, making a total of fifty-six pages per number. The journal was suspended yet again in 1907, when Sharar went back to Hyderabad to take up an appointment as Assistant Director in the Education Department on the invitation of the new Chief Minister. In July 1908 *Dil Gudaz* was published again in Hyderabad, together with instalments of the *History of Sindh*, Part II and another new novel, *The Life of Aghai Sahib*. Several months later many changes were made in the form and content of the journal itself, The page size was enlarged in order to allow the use of bigger and clearer lettering, the historical series and the biographies were discontinued and the forty pages allotted to them were given over to essays and articles. As before, sixteen pages were reserved for instalments of Sharar's novels. The publication was suspended yet again in 1909 when Sharar was ordered by the ruling Nizam[42] to leave the State, probably as the result of something he had written.

In 1910 the journal again resumed publication from Lucknow and Sharar invited other writers to contribute to the essay section which had been especially enlarged for this purpose, but the chief contributions to the journal remained

the work of Sharar himself. By the end of the year the monthly circulation had risen from four hundred during the first few years of publication to fourteen hundred. The price per copy was further raised. Thereafter the journal seems to have flourished until Sharar's death in 1926. In 1918 the new ruler of Hyderabad invited Sharar to write his biography but later changed his mind in favour of *A History of Islam*, for which Sharar received a salary of six hundred rupees per month. He was allowed to stay and work in Lucknow. This history was in three volumes, and the first volume when published was included in the curriculum of the Osmania University of the State, and probably remained so for a considerable time.

Sharar died in Lucknow in December 1926. After his death his son took over the editorship of *Dil Gudaz* and continued to publish it for a few years in Lucknow though he himself kept his job in Hyderabad. It was still flourishing in 1929 when Askari wrote his account.

Sharar revealed very little about his private life, a characteristic shared with other writers of his generation. As he himself said, 'The world is my story. My own is nothing.' (Vol. I, p. 304.) When he occasionally mentions his own affairs it is to explain delay in the publication of *Dil Gudaz* because of the illness of his son or the suspension of the journal between his different jobs and preoccupations. For him, as for other Urdu writers of his time, wife, children, family and employment to a great extent were private matters not to be shared with outsiders, and in any event they were of secondary importance compared to what really mattered, the world of ideas, religion and literary pursuits.

Nevertheless the picture that emerges of him is that of a strong personality, persevering and daring in his ideas. He was a partisan throughout. He was partisan in his religion and a conformist to the values of his society. This did not, however, overrule the scholar in him. When he had things to say against popularly held religious beliefs he expressed them, even though this meant unpopularity. Similarly, he continued to express his social ideas forcefully though this resulted in long and fierce controversies. In literature, too, he took his own stands and expressed them forcefully.

Sharar was a most prolific writer. A short list of his important works can be found in Askari (p. 134) who calculated the total published books to be one hundred and two in number. Besides his lifelong association with *Dil Gudaz* he edited and published eight other literary journals of varying lifespan. This enormous output, covering an extraordinarily wide range of subject-matter, along with its literary quality, made him unique among his contemporaries.

Apart from the large number of his essays, which cover topics ranging from 'A Pair of Shoes' to 'The Himalayas', Sharar's work can be classified as follows.

1. Histories such as *The History of Sindh* and *A History of Arabia before Islam*, all of which are connected in some way with Islam. Although these show considerable scholarship in Islamic literature, they are not the works of a professional historian and have often been described as lacking in objective evaluation. Some of Sharar's historical works, however, which appeared only in the pages of *Dil Gudaz*, introduced wider horizons to the reader and remain important even to this day. Examples include the translation into Urdu of the Arabic

classic *Memoirs of Ibn-e-Batuta*;[342] extracts from *Ajaib-ul-Hind*, 'The Wonders of India', the memoirs of a Zoroastrian later converted to Islam who wrote about his impressions of India as a traveller in the tenth century; the translation from an Arabic source of the encounter of Alexander the Great with the Raja of Kund in India; and especially the account of the last King of Avadh and his entourage, left incomplete at his death.

2. Biographies of many important figures in the history of Islam, among which accounts of certain less well-known personalities are of special interest.

3. Historical novels, the plots of which are based on heroic or dramatic events in the history of Islam, like *Mansur Mohna* which deals with the early incursions of Mahmud Ghaznavi into India, and *Malik ul Aziz aur Varjina*, dealing with the encounter between Richard Coeur de Lion and his 'noble and chivalrous Islamic rival', Salah ud Din. There are also *Shauqin Malka*, 'The Amorous Queen', which deals with the affairs and intrigues of Louis VII of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine when they led the second crusade against the Muslims after the latter had reconquered Odessa, and *Maftuh Fateh*, 'The Conqueror and the Conquered', set in the year 850 when the Muslims had entered Southern France and their leader won the heart of a French lady by his noble and chivalrous deeds.

Another group of similar novels on the theme of Christianity are *Muqaddas Naznin*, 'The Holy Fair One', set in the tenth century, in which a woman is elected Pope through the intrigues of the priests, and *Flora Florinda*, which describes the supposed moral degradation of Christianity in Spain during the fourteenth century, especially in convents and monasteries. The material of these novels, even when based on historical facts, as with *Flora Florinda*, and not imagination, is heavily influenced by Islamic fervour, and little attention is paid to the details of historical setting. There is additional reason for the glorification of Islam besides Sharar's religious zeal: Saxena (p. 335) describes how Sharar was disturbed by the anti-Muslim bias in Scott's *Talisman* and set out to put things right.

4. Social novels which have as their subject-matter Muslim customs which needed reform. *Badr-un-Nisa ki Musibat*, 'The Tragedy of the Bride', and *Agha Sadiq ki Shadi*, 'The Wedding of Agha Sadiq', describe the tragedies which sometimes occurred as a result of certain practices relating to marriage and purdah.[208]

A general characteristic of Sharar's novels is that they were written more in the spirit of journalism than that of creative writing. But in spite of imperfections in the unfolding of plot and characterization, they were a definite step forward in the historical development of the modern Urdu novel. Sharar developed further the new trend in the Urdu novel along with Sarshar,[342] Nazir Ahmad[344] and others by plotting his stories on the model of English novels. Sequences of events were interlinked and reference was made to actual life, which was a break from the traditional 'romances' based on mythological tales. From this time onwards novel-writing in Urdu became established and flourished, in popular as well as literary form.

5. Sharar's poetry and drama include *Shahid-i-Wafa*, 'Martyr of Loyalty', *Shab-i-Gham*, 'The Night of Sorrows', and *Shab-i-Wasl*, 'Night of Bliss', all written in the manner of the day and offering little that is original.

Sharar's contributions to Urdu literature are many. He introduced a simple

style which he adapted to the different types of material he dealt with. The established practice of writing rhythmic prose with repetitious abundance of synonyms and flowery Persianized similes and metaphors was already under attack by some of his contemporaries and he gave it a further blow, modelling his sentences on English syntax. Explaining his point of view in *Dil Gudaz* in 1887, he pointed out that in all developed languages of the world different styles were employed to present different types of ideas, and that any given style was incapable of handling diverse topics. There is no doubt that he succeeded in his efforts and created a style for himself which became popular, and other writers quickly followed his example.

Shrara was an active social reformer, occasionally showing a political conscience as well. The social reforms dear to his heart were the purdah system and education for Muslim women. These he took up not only through his literary works but also by justifying his stand in religious polemics. In this way he contributed strongly to creating an atmosphere which led in 1910 to the founding of a college in Lucknow by Justice Karamat Hussain for the formal education of Muslim girls on modern lines. This school and the one opened by Abdul Rahim Balbalah in Bombay at about the same time seem to have been the first Muslim educational institutions of the kind. Others followed later.

Sharar, a bookish man, like so many of his literary contemporaries remained personally aloof from everyday and political life. However, he seems to have been fully aware of what was happening around him. The pages of *Dil Gudaz* contain frequent references to such events as the Allahabad Exhibition in 1910, King George V's visit to India in 1911, the failure of the Lucknow Municipality to supply the residents with water in 1916, as well as major political developments such as the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the end of the Muslim Caliphate in Turkey at the end of the First World War, but he writes of them in a detached manner. The same lack of involvement appears in his writing about the Indian National Congress, which had begun to be a political force in the country at this time, as well as the Muslim Educational Conference which was the arena for Muslim political activity, though he mentions these from time to time in *Dil Gudaz*. One question, however, with which he seemed very concerned was the problem of understanding between the Hindus and Muslims. He was eager to receive contributions to his journal from Hindus about Hinduism, and to make their history, religion and culture known to the Muslims. Reviewing the work of *Dil Gudaz* at the end of 1887 Sharar writes: 'There is a serious defect in *Dil Gudaz*. It is becoming more and more engrossed in the affairs of Islam to the exclusion of other points of view. We would be grateful, therefore, for the assistance of our Hindu friends in this matter, to add distinction to *Dil Gudaz*.' Although little interested in politics, Sharar seems to have been dissatisfied with the way the Indian National Congress of his time was treating the problem of Hindu-Muslim differences. He wrote in *Dil Gudaz*: 'Whether we support Congress or not, one very sad thing which we do notice about its activities is that it seems to be creating more differences between Hindus and Muslims than existed previously.'

Abdul Halim Sharar is remembered today as a pioneer of the modern Urdu novel, a historian of refreshingly wide horizons, and an essayist equipped with a profound knowledge of Arabic, Urdu and Persian literatures and Islamic

theology. *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* can be said to be a fulfilment of its author's life's aims. The work has long been recognized by Indo-Islamic scholars as a primary source of great value, a unique document, both alive and authentic in every detail, of an important Indian culture at its zenith. And in many a Muslim household in the Indian sub-continent today this work may be found, read and studied by the older and the younger generations, as a reminder of and an introduction to their past.

The Present Edition

The work here translated is a collection of essays which originally appeared as articles under the title of *Hindustan Men Mashriqi Tamaddun ka Akhri Namuna* (literally, 'The Last Example of Oriental Culture in India') in the Lucknow journal *Dil Gudaz* over a period of years from 1913 onwards. These essays were later included in one of the volumes of the author's collected short prose, *Mazamin-e-Sharar*, edited by him and published in Lahore not long before his death.

The original series of articles seems to have met with a mixed reception. As early as 1915 in the last issue of that year, Sharar writes in *Dil Gudaz* that the series had been started two years earlier and would probably take another two years to complete. In the following year he wrote: 'We do not set out deliberately in these articles to praise Lucknow; any such impression which we may give is unintentional. We do however verify the accuracy of the material put before our readers. Much more remains to be said about Lucknow.' The series in fact continued over a rather longer period than the four years envisaged by Sharar in 1913. With no access to the actual files of *Dil Gudaz*, even if they exist anywhere, I have been unable to ascertain when the series was completed. Possibly it was shortly after 1920. The volume of *Mazamin-e-Sharar* containing these articles has been reprinted many times, mainly in Lucknow, but later in other places too. The text taken for the present translation is that published by Nasim Book Depot, Lucknow 1965 under the title 'Lucknow's Past', which had appeared in earlier editions as a subtitle. Chapter headings have been added to distinguish the various topics treated. These are, however, approximate, as topics tend to overlap between the essays.

The translation of a work such as this poses many problems. The Urdu text is rooted so deeply in the life, religion and culture of the people described that its translation into another language compels the translator to transpose one culture into another. It is not merely a straightforward description which can be restated in simple prose, but rather a record that itself expresses a complex pattern of living and that requires a high degree of precision in translation. For this reason cuts and departures from the original text have been kept to a minimum, and the present translation has been kept as literal as possible, strangeness and all. The reader should also bear in mind that the original was not written according to the conventions of modern dissertation.

The system adopted for annotation is as follows: brief explanations within the body of the translation have been incorporated where necessary to make the text comprehensible to the general reader. At the same time, it was decided to

retain the original nomenclature in detail for the sake of accuracy, and this is the subject of much of the extensive annotation that follows the text. In the text itself, square brackets are used to indicate only the most obtrusive editorial interpolations.

Consistency in transliteration is of course impossible to achieve without recourse to phonetic notation. Urdu words and names are spelt as far as possible according to Urdu pronunciation, and with a minimum of diacritical notation. Some older English spellings which have become established—especially proper names—have, however, been retained. In the simplified system of spelling adopted, the reader's convenience has been given priority over strict phonetic consistency.

As early as 1927 the present work was described by Saxena as a 'mine of information' (p. 339). With the passage of time and the disappearance of the civilization described, the comment is still more apt. Sharar's account is today quoted as source material by scholars in a wide variety of fields. Thus in providing descriptive detail in the notes the Editor has been largely concerned with furthering Sharar's aim of recording the special characteristics of Lucknow society before rapid change obliterated them entirely.

Sharar wrote this work in the present tense. It is perhaps superfluous to note that the use of the same tense in the present translation would have been misleading as much of what is described now belongs to the past; the past tense, therefore, has here been used. For the same reason it was considered useful to provide some notes describing the course of events between Sharar's time and the present, especially so in the case of Urdu literature. Reference is also made in the notes to other works that provide additional information about Sharar's main topics.

The present edition is the result of a collaboration between the late Colonel E. S. Harcourt and myself. The late Colonel completed a first draft of the entire text after some discussions with myself. His unfortunate death meant not only that the final text of the translation had to be prepared by myself, but also that I was unable to benefit from his suggestions regarding the introduction and notes. I have revised the translation in order to make it as meaningful as possible to the contemporary reader. Sources of information drawn upon in the notes, wherever obtained from printed works, have been cited. However, much information comes by way of oral tradition through the first-hand experience of some elderly persons remaining in Lucknow. I should like to express my particular thanks to these people for their help in saving this information from oblivion. Thanks are due to many who helped in this in various ways, above all: Saiyyid Akbar Ali Rizvi, Naseer Raza, P. N. Mittal, Mrs C. Egan and Dr R. Rothlach. Special thanks are due to Raja Muhammad Amir Ahmad Khan of Mahmudabad for having given so much of his time to enlightening me on a large number of points. It had been my desire to acknowledge his participation by requesting him to write a Preface, but unfortunately he died before the work was complete. It is for this reason that the book is dedicated to him. I should like to express my gratitude also to Maulvi Malik Khayyam d'Ashkelon and Mrs L. Rosenthal.

Fakhir Hussain

Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture

the rhinoceros cared nothing for the strongest of foes and, lowering its head, was able to get under its adversary's belly and rip it open with the horn on its snout; all the entrails came tumbling out and the adversary's days were over. Only rarely did a tiger knock a rhinoceros flat on its back and then tear open its belly with teeth and claws. Generally the rhinoceros managed to kill the tiger with a thrust of its horn.

At one time during the reign of King Nasir ud Din Haidar the tigers were completely defeated by a certain horse. This astounding animal was more dangerous to man than were beasts of prey. It was impossible for anyone to come near it. Its fodder was thrown to it from a distance and if it got loose it was capable of killing people. It would kill any other animal in its path, chew up its bones and mutilate its body to such an extent that it was unrecognizable. With no other solution in sight, plans were made to have it attacked by tigers. Accordingly a tiger named Bhuriya, of which the King was fond and which had been victorious in many combats, was let loose upon it. The horse, instead of being frightened by the tiger, prepared to fight and, immediately the tiger sprang, lowered the front part of its body so that the tiger landed on its back and dug its dagger-like claws into the horse's hind quarters. The horse lashed out so violently that the tiger was turned head over heels and struck the ground some distance away. When the tiger had recovered it sprang on the horse again. The horse employed the same tactics as before and, lowering its forehead, the tiger landed on its hind quarters again. The tiger's instinct was to knock the horse over with its paws and then kill it, but the horse kicked out with its hind legs so powerfully that the tiger landed flat on its back some distance away with a broken jaw. This injury so disheartened the tiger that it turned its back on the horse and started to run away. The onlookers were amazed and another, larger tiger was let loose. It would not face the horse and had to be removed. Now three wild buffaloes were brought in. They too refused to attack the horse which, without being provoked, advanced on one of the buffaloes and kicked it so hard with both hind legs that it fell over. Its two companions started shaking their heads as if in appreciation of what had happened. Eventually the horse was granted its life and Nasir ud Din Haidar said, 'I will have an iron cage made for it and make arrangements for it to be looked after. I swear on my dear father's head that it is a very valiant animal.'

Cheetahs

All beasts of prey were starved for a couple of days before a fight, but with cheetahs great care had to be taken because, fierce and blood-thirsty as they were, they sometimes proved to be cowardly. It was generally believed that they had a desire for adulation like the spoilt sons of rich men. Therefore in the arena, when they wished to fight, they would fight, but if they did not wish to, nothing on earth could make them do so; they would flinch and shrink away when advancing on an adversary. When they did fight, first they sprang with the hope of inflicting wounds but after one or two such attacks they stood up on their hind legs and started fighting with their paws. Their contests were very bloody, with both contestants roaring the whole time and striking out with

their claws. Eventually the stronger one brought the weaker to the ground and tore it apart with its teeth, though itself covered with wounds from head to tail.

Leopards

The leopard is small but despite its size it is said that most of the leopards that fought against tigers in Lucknow were such marvellous fighters that they often were victorious. Fights between leopards were exactly the same as those between tigers. In the course of the fight both antagonists were grievously wounded. The one that was vanquished either fell down and died in the arena or, acknowledging defeat, fled from its enemy.

Elephants

In Lucknow people were particularly fond of elephant fighting. Such was the interest taken that at the time of King Nasir ud Din Haidar there were one hundred and fifty fighting elephants which were never ridden. For fighting purposes it was essential that an elephant should be ruttish, because it would not fight until it was in rut, and even if it should fight, it would not be truly angry or have any urge for victory over its opponent.

Before two elephants were put to fight, a rope was tied around the neck and tail of each. Both contestants, when confronting one another, raised their trunks and their tails, and trumpeting loudly, charged to meet with a terrific impact. They then continued to butt and jostle each other, pushing and thrusting with their tusks, and one realized from the contortions of their bodies what force they were putting into their blows. The mahouts kept striking them with an *ankas*[391] [goad] to excite them to further efforts. Eventually one of the elephants would weaken and, no longer able to stand up to the jostling, fall to the ground. The victorious elephant then usually gashed its victim's belly with its tusks and finished it off. Often when an elephant weakened, it would avoid its antagonist's tusks and run away. The victor then pursued it and if it succeeded in catching up, knocked it to the ground and killed it by tearing open its belly. The only way a vanquished elephant could save its life was by escaping.

Rhinoceroses were often pitted against elephants, but usually these animals did not like fighting each other. If it came to a fight, however, that fight was certainly ferocious. If the elephant managed to push the rhinoceros over the latter would be killed by the elephant's driving its tusks into its belly. If the rhinoceros got the chance to thrust its horn into the elephant's belly it would make a wide gash in the hide. But the elephant with the help of its trunk could stop the horn penetrating too deeply and would thus escape a mortal wound.

Camels

Although as a rule any animal is capable of fighting, none could be less suited to it than the camel. In Lucknow even camels were made to fight each other when ruttish and excited. The camel's bite is well known, but the clumsy way in which they fall is very dangerous for them. They would show their excitement

by discharging froth and saliva. They started their fights by rushing at each other, foaming at the mouth, spitting froth at their adversary's head, discharging mucus and vilifying each other. If one got the chance, it seized its adversary's drooping lower lip with its teeth and pulled at it. The camel whose lip was seized usually fell down and was defeated. Thus the battle ended.

Rhinoceroses

No animal is more powerful than a rhinoceros. It has been fashioned with such a brazen body that neither the tusks of an elephant nor the claws of a tiger are effective against it. Only the skin of its belly is soft, and if any animal managed to attack that part of its anatomy it could destroy it. Otherwise an animal would expend its strength in vain and eventually tire. Then the rhinoceros would drive the horn on its snout into the adversary's belly and kill it.

In Lucknow, rhinoceroses were pitted against elephants, tigers, leopards and against each other. At the time of King Ghazi ud Din Haidar, some rhinoceroses, besides being made to fight, were so well trained that they were harnessed to carts and, like elephants, used to carry people on their backs. The rhinoceros is not by nature a pugnacious animal and avoids fighting whenever possible. If, however, it is baited, it will face an opponent and fight with great ferocity. At the time of Nasir ud Din Haidar there were fifteen or twenty fighting rhinoceroses which used to be kept at Chand Ganj. When their keepers prodded them and set them to fight they would lower their heads, charge and butt at each other. Each tried to rip open its adversary's belly with its horn. They bellowed loudly and banged their horns together. In fighting, their heads met and their horns became interlocked. Then they both started pushing and the one who weakened started to retreat slowly, giving up its ground. If this didn't save the animal, it tried to run away. The stronger continued butting until the weaker one disengaged its horn, turned from the contest and swiftly took flight. If the arena was limited in size, the victorious opponent attacked its antagonist as it fled, knocked it over and killed it by driving its horn into its belly. In large arenas, the vanquished rhinoceros was often able to escape by running away. The keeper, by prodding and beating with burning staves, got control over the victor, stopped its pursuit of its adversary and drove it back. A fight between rhinoceroses depended upon the animals keeping their heads down and protecting their bellies. The minute one raised its head, its opponent could take full advantage of the lapse. On one occasion, a rhinoceros had won a fight and its antagonist started to run away. Seeing this, the victor raised its head. The vanquished rhinoceros immediately ran in like lightning, lowered its head and ripped its opponent's belly.

Stags

Lucknow is probably the only place where these delicate animals were made to fight in order to provide entertainment.* Their fights were very interesting to

* *Author's note:* Maulana Habib ur Rahman Sherwani[161] points out, and I have confirmed this from historical sources, that combats between beasts of prey as well as elephants were staged in Delhi. (This was probably under the later Mughal Emperors.)

watch. Poets liken the beloved to a deer, and even when these beasts are in combat, one is reminded of loving gestures. Confronting one another, both antagonists showed very graceful footwork. Eventually they would strike at each other using their horns both as swords and shields. After this had gone on for some time, their horns would get inextricably locked together and they started pushing and shoving each other until one of them weakened. The one who weakened became so overcome with fear that its delicate legs would shake and its whole body tremble. Its opponent, on the other hand, would become violent and push its adversary right across the arena until they both reached the fence. The defeated stag gave up all hope, tears would fall from its eyes and blood drip from its horns. Disengaging its horns, it would turn from the fight. Then the victor started to gore its body with its horns and the vanquished stag ran for its life. But however swiftly it ran, its adversary kept up the pursuit. This was a race worth seeing, both animals moving at such a pace that it was difficult to keep them in view. The victor showed no mercy and continued to gore its opponent until the latter died of its wounds. Even then it went on striking the corpse with its horns. Eventually it turned away, preening itself upon its victory.

Rams

These are extremely gentle and harmless animals but their butting is terrific. When they fight it is as if two mountains collide, and people made them fight in order to watch them butting. This was not a new practice but had been going on since ancient times. It was started in India by the Baluchis and interest in it spread from Baluchistan to other places. Looking after these animals and training them to fight was usually the duty of butchers and lower-class persons. Nobles and gentlefolk used to send for rams and watch the fights. It is said that Navab Asaf ud Daula and Sadat Ali Khan were fond of watching ram-fighting and Ghazi ud Din Haidar and Nasir ud Din Haidar would often watch the sport. When Wajid Ali Shah was in Calcutta he derived a certain amount of pleasure from it and the Munshi ul Sultan, his Chief Secretary, kept several pairs ready, in the charge of butchers. I have myself seen a strong ram butting so violently that it has split its opponent's skull. When a ram is worsted and cannot stand up against the butting of its adversary, it escapes by swiftly dodging its opponent's attack and running away.

I remember that once a year crowds of British from Calcutta came to see the King's park. On one such day the King, contrary to his custom, came out riding on a sedan chair, and in order to please his guests, ordered that some rams be brought out and made to fight. Soon the noise of butting could be heard but it was nothing in comparison with the noise made by the Europeans in their 'hurrahs' and shouts of acclamation.

In Lucknow, even after the fall of the monarchy, Navab Mohsin ud Daula used to take a great interest in watching ram-fighting. Recently nobles and better-class people have given up the pursuit and now it only exists among the lower classes.