

IN PRAISE OF MUHAMMAD [I]: URDU POEMS

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Every day, millions of Muslims, following the injunctions of the Qur'an, recite the ṣalawāt, a formula invoking blessing on the Prophet Muhammad whom they affectionately call ḥabīb Allāh, God's beloved. They also recite, in virtually every language of the Islamic world, touching devotional verses praising the virtues of their beloved Prophet. Out of love for him, every year, since at least the thirteenth century, they have celebrated the maulid, the Prophet's birthday, with great pomp and rejoicing.

Although Islam is a monotheistic faith, professing total submission and obedience to the One Almighty God, yet veneration of Muhammad, God's last messenger to humanity, has become an important aspect of Islamic religious life. Muslims see in him the model or paradigm for all human conduct, the perfect man whose lifestyle is most worthy of imitation. In the words of the Qur'an, he is "a beautiful model" (uswa ḥasana) whose example is to be followed by the faithful. Throughout Islamic history, members of the Muslim religious intelligentsia have collected and commented on accounts of Muhammad's actions and sayings (the ḥadīth), establishing legal codes for Islamic societies and pietistic norms for individual believers. Many of them have written elaborate theological and historical treatises on the nature and character of the Prophet's mission. Those with more mystical dispositions have indulged in high-flown esoteric and abstract speculation concerning his spiritual and mystical status. At a more popular level, veneration of the Prophet has become so widespread that in many regions of the Islamic world it is one of the cornerstones of Islamic religious practice and, indeed, the mark of its uniqueness.

Muslims have expressed their devotion to the Prophet Muhammad in many different ways. Among the Muslims of South Asia

poetry provides an extremely popular and effective means of expression so that in every major language of the subcontinent there are many touching verses extolling the virtues of Muhammad. All classes of Muslims, from the educated elite of the major urban centers to the illiterate peasants in the agricultural fields, could and did engage in the pious and devotional acts of composing and reciting these poems. Naturally, the literary quality varies greatly from the refined and well-rhymed compositions of accomplished poets to the comparatively unsophisticated and repetitive lyrics sung by village women. Furthermore, the ideas they express about Muhammad, as we shall see, do not agree with the "official" doctrinal conceptions of Islamic prophetology espoused by theologians. They are simply utterances of pious souls expressing through language and imagery, the love and devotion they feel in their hearts for their beloved Prophet.

In Urdu, generally regarded the language of Islamic civilization in the subcontinent, poems and songs in praise of the Prophet Muhammad are called na'ats. They constitute such a significant literary genre that every Urdu poet, no matter how minor he or she may be, has composed at least one na'at. The term na'at is a general term referring to any poetic composition that glorifies Muhammad, regardless of the specific form it utilizes. Thus, traditionally, a na'at could be written in one of several forms: the qaṣīdah, a panegyric of 20-100 verses with a monorhyme consisting of one letter or word employed at the end of every line; the rubā'ī or quatrain with the rhyme scheme a, a, b, a; the maḡnawī or a long poem of rhyming couplets; the musaddas, a poem of six-line stanzas; the sīḡarfī, an "alphabet" poem in which each line or stanza begins with a different letter of the alphabet; the bārāmāsa, a "twelve-month" poem or "lover's calendar" in which the poet assumes the role of a young lady of longing and expresses the lover's feelings of the beloved (in this case, Muhammad) with the changing seasons of the year. Frequently, Urdu na'ats employ more popular forms associated with public musical performances such as the qawwālī, a mystical folk song, with a rhythm steadily increasing in its tempo, in which

certain phrases are constantly repeated during singing by a chorus; or the ghazal, a love poem with a monorhyme, 5-12 verses in length, generally sung by a solo singer. By poetic convention, the last verse of each na'at, its form notwithstanding, contains the poet's "pen-name" or takhalluṣ. Over the course of time, the composition of poetry in praise of Muhammad has become such a significant literary activity that even Hindu poets writing in Urdu, influenced by the Islamic environment in which they lived, have been inspired to write na'ats. Some of these na'ats are indeed so fervent in their expression of devotion that one cannot tell that they were written by non-Muslims. At a broader level, na'ats have pervaded popular South Asian culture to such an extent that several contemporary Hindi/Urdu motion pictures feature, as part of their musical repertoire, songs sung in Muhammad's honor.

Given the enormous size and variety of the na'at corpus in Urdu, we have included here only a few representative selections culled from the following sources: a published collection of Urdu na'ats, entitled Armaghān-i na'at (A Gift of na'ats); sound recordings of a qawwālī, two na'ats and a song from an Indian motion picture, available on cassette tapes or phonographs; and a printed anthology of na'at poetry composed by Hindu poets.

What are some of the more important themes present in this selection that help us understand the special relationship between the composers of these eulogies and their beloved Prophet Muhammad? Perhaps the leitmotif of Prophet-oriented piety in Islam is the expression of love for Muhammad. In our selections, the poets fervently express their powerful, all-consuming love and devotion using a range of symbols and ideas. Many have been influenced in their expression by a popular ḥadīth (saying of the Prophet) that the relation of the faithful to the Prophet is like that of children to a father, a most revered and exemplary elder in the family. Not surprisingly, just as one would turn to a dear relative or a friend for assistance, it is customary for many Muslims to beseech the kind Prophet for his guidance in solving every problem no matter how mundane. So common is this tendency in popular Islamic piety to turn to the Prophet in times of dif-

ficulty that it manifests itself in popular Hindi/Urdu films dealing with themes set in an "Islamic" milieu. For example, the song we have included below is from *Mughal-e-Azam*, a film set in the court of the sixteenth-century Muslim Emperor Akbar, during which the wrongly imprisoned heroine Anarkali sings to the Prophet of her tragic plight: *be kas pe karam kījīe, shāh-i madīnah* (Be kind to this destitute one, O Lord of Medina!). The symbol of the Prophet's shelter and protection, as our *qawwālī* selection illustrates, is his cloak or shawl (*burdā* in Arabic, *kamlī* in Urdu). It was an Egyptian poet, al-BUṢĪRĪ (d. 1298), who first honored this cloak by composing a moving eulogy of the Prophet and naming it the *Burdā*. Legend has it that al-BUṢĪRĪ was inspired to compose this poem, later translated into many different Islamic languages, when, in a dream, the Prophet cured him of an illness by throwing his mantle on his shoulders.

Another striking, and for some, surprising aspect of the relationship of love between the Prophet and his devotees is its highly intimate and personal nature. Many poets clothe their feelings and emotions for the Prophet with language borrowed from the profane realm of human romance while appropriately avoiding any explicit eroticism. They see themselves as intoxicated with Prophetic love, and entangled in Muhammad's tresses; they yearn and pine to be with their beloved just as earthly lovers long for their mortal beloveds. It is in this context that they express their longing for the Arabian city of Medina, the site of the Prophet's last resting place and tomb. A poet elaborating on this theme, a standard topos in *naṭīyya* poetry, might express his or her desire to undertake the arduous journey from the subcontinent to Arabia or, if unable to go in person, request the wind or a bird such as the crow to deliver a message of love. Significantly, even Hindu poets of *naṭ*s talk about going to Medina and fulfilling their love for Muhammad. As one of them puts it: "Love of the Prophet is not conditional on being Muslim; Kaṣṣārī is Hindu and yet he seeks Muhammad." In fact, many *naṭ* poets claim that love for Muhammad is universal. Since he is God's beloved (*ḥabīb Allāh*), all of God's creatures, from the angels

and the animals to the birds and trees, are engaged in expressing their love for him, each species in its own way.

In addition to Muhammad's role as a friend, helper, and beloved, his followers have been grateful to him for conveying the message of Islam to the world. Hence it is only natural that he is frequently conceived as a guide and leader to the truth. He is a shining lamp that illumines the road of faith through the darkness of infidelity. Alternatively, Muhammad is the pilot who can navigate the fragile boat of human existence, through the whirlpools and sandbanks of this world, to the heavenly shore.

But far more central to the conception of the Prophet is his role as intercessor for the entire Muslim community. *Na'ats*, in not only Urdu but every Islamic language, are filled with warm verses asking the Prophet for his mediation at the Day of Reckoning when every soul has to account for its actions before the Creator. Relying on traditions that highlight Muhammad's kindness and generosity and Quranic statements that have been interpreted to mean that he has been granted a special status by God (17:79) or that he was sent as a "mercy to the worlds," (21:107), many Muslims have come to hold that a believer who trusted and loved the Prophet would be protected in the hereafter by him. The notion that even a sinner who sincerely attests to the existence of one God will be saved by Muhammad's intercession has led many Muslim poets to utter countless prayers and verses with moving words to implore the Prophet not to withhold his intercession from them.

However earnestly Muslims may express their hope for the Prophet's intercession, there is one sure way of ensuring this end: the recitation of the *ṣalawāt*, or the imploring God to bless the Prophet and his family. According to the Qur'an (33:56), God and His Angels "pray upon" or bless the Prophet; can humans do any better than follow the Divine example? According to popular belief, for every blessing on the Prophet, the reciter is elevated by ten degrees and is credited with ten good actions. Ultimately, then, since the recitation of the *ṣalawāt* becomes an activity that brings much benefit to the reciter, it is hardly

surprising that na'at poets frequently call for blessing on Muhammad.

Finally, the na'ats also reveal a mystical dimension to the veneration of the Prophet. The main impulse that gave rise to speculation about Muhammad's spiritual status was the story of his mysterious night journey and ascension to heaven (the mi'rāj). The climax of the Prophet's travels through the spheres was a face to face meeting with God. This journey, often interpreted metaphorically, provides for mystically-minded Muslims the prototype for the ascent of their own souls to higher spiritual realms. The mystical aspects of Muhammad's prophethood was further elaborated by the concept of the Light of Muhammad, conceived of as a metaphysical principle in pre-eternity out of which God created the entire universe. This light was the fountainhead of all prophetic activity, first manifesting itself in Adam, then in all other prophets until it found its full expression in the historical Muhammad. Indeed, some of the Prophet's devotees went as far as to claim that Muhammad was in fact the ultimate cause of creation. As proof, they cited an extra-Quranic revelation in which God says to the Prophet: *laulāka mā khalaqtu'l-aflāka* ("But for your sake, I would not have created the spheres"). Speculation on the spiritual and mystical status of the Prophet even centered on one of his popular names, Aḥmad. There is extra-Qur'anic saying, according to which God declares: *Anā Aḥmad bilā mīm*, "I am Aḥmad without the letter m, that is Aḥad, One." This seemed to prove to many, especially in the eastern Islamic lands, that Aḥmad-Muhammad is separated from God only by a single letter!

Not all Muslims have been comfortable with the intense veneration accorded to the Prophet, as illustrated in these poems. The elevation of his status beyond that of an ordinary human being, they feel, compromises the basic Islamic principle of *tawḥīd* or the oneness of God who has no partners or associates. For them, the axis of Islam is not Muhammad but God and His Word as revealed in the Qur'an. Muhammad served simply as God's chosen messenger and faithful servant. There is a story that a

Muslim claimed that his soul was so filled with love of God that there was no room left for the love of the Prophet. The Prophet, tradition alleges, gave him the reply: "He who loves God must have loved me." Whether or not this story is true, it underscores a concept with which all Muslims would agree -- the Prophet's special relationship to God, his special status as God's last Prophet, as God's beloved, as God's chosen one. Notwithstanding his rank, Muhammad has remained for centuries a person to whom Muslims from diverse social and cultural backgrounds could turn and express their love, their admiration, their sorrows, their joys, and their hopes. As Shakil Badāyūnī, a prominent contemporary Urdu poet, puts it:

My wish is this that when I die, I still may smile
And while I go, Muhammad's name be on my tongue.

Selections from *Armaghān-i na't* (A Gift of na'ts)

(Note: Above each of the poems occurs the poetic pen-name of the composer with the page number from the text in parentheses. See bibliography for complete citation of the work.)

Khalīl [292]

Morning breeze, what good news do you bear that every bud is blossoming?
 Here the tulip flutters, there the basil quavers;
 From somewhere rises the exclamation "Glory be to our Lord" and elsewhere there is the roar "Blessings be upon him!"
 Everywhere the birds chirp in praise of God; the nightingale sings;
 Now the peacock cries, then the pigeons coo;
 Here the parrots with their elaborate melodies, there the young, tender rose full of fragrance!
 The king of the two worlds is born; today is the birthday of the chosen one [Muhammad].
 The entire universe shines from the radiance of Muhammad's light; God created him unique for nowhere has such a handsome being been seen
 Even the angels and the *hurīs* [paradisical virgins] are dazzled by his sparkling beauty.
 Whether through *Tāhā* or *Yāsīn* or *Mūzammil* or *Mudaththir*¹,
 Ahmad's [Muhammad's] name shines in the entire Qur'an like a sun.
 He has secured the great creation and all prophets yearn for him.
 He went on the *mi'raj*² to which the heavens are witness;
 He will have his community forgiven for he is the intercessor of the day of reckoning.
 If there is the hope of "do not despair"³ then why does this sinful heart palpitate so?

¹These are some of the names or epithets for the Prophet that Muslims claim to have discovered in the Qur'an. *Tāhā* and *Yāsīn* are the mysterious unconnected letters appearing at the beginning of chapters 20 and 36 of the Qur'an. There has been much speculation about their meaning but several scholars have claimed that they refer to the Prophet. *Mūzammil* and *Mudaththir* are from the divine addresses to Muhammad found in the introductions to chapter 73 (*yā ayyuhā'l mūzammil*, "O you enwrapped one") and chapter 74 (*yā ayyuhā'l mudaththir*, "O you covered one").

²*Mi'raj* -- ascension to the highest heaven; a significant spiritual experience in the life of the Prophet Muhammad.

³A reference to Qur'anic Chapter 39, verse 53, which says, "Do not despair of God's mercy. Surely God forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful."

He is the final Prophet of time; he will give us the water of kauṣar⁴ to drink.

I am a victim of the pain of separation, I no longer have the strength to wait.

Grant me just a glance of you in my dream for the strength of my eyes is faltering.

May God grant that the soul leaves the body reciting the durūd [blessings on the Prophet];

He who is absorbed in the love of Ahmad, he soars like a bird.

[O Prophet] your kindness to me will be complete when you summon me to Medina,

For on account of separation from you, the afflicted Khalīl yearns eagerly day and night.

Saif [171]

Arise! arise! for the famous king comes,

God's specially chosen one comes.

Even the highest heaven bows to the ground,

As angels descend one after another.

All this is good fortune for the community of sinners,

For today it's consoler comes.

Let us enhance our vision and see the manifestation of his beauty,

For that high exalted king comes into the world.

Creation has been blessed with a brilliant dignity,

For he is one who conceals and veils all blemishes.

Saif, for all sinners there will be mercy without exception,

For the special intercessor of the day of reckoning comes.

Dāgh [125]

Free me from sorrow, O Muṣṭafā [God's chosen one],
To you I plead, O Muṣṭafā.

May destiny not trample me,
May I not be disgraced, O chosen one.

May my tongue constantly utter your name,
May my heart remember you always, O chosen one.

May I never abandon the way of virtue,
May it never become one of tyranny and injustice, O chosen one.

May God bestow on me the courage
that I may fulfill His commands, O chosen one.

May I remain, on the day of judgement, [nothing but]
A seeker of assistance from your essence, O chosen one.

May a glance of your favor fall on him,
So that Dāgh may remain happy, O chosen one

⁴Name of a fountain and river in paradise.

Luṭf [117]

Intercessor for mankind, O intercessor for mankind
 Forgive me, O intercessor for mankind.

To whom else should I plea, O redresser of grievances,
 But to you, O intercessor for mankind.

O king, where should he go, abandoning your door,
 This supplicant of yours, O intercessor for mankind.

My every sin you will have
 Forgiven by God, O intercessor for mankind.

In both worlds, yours is the protection,
 There is none other, O intercessor for mankind.

For God's sake, don't forget me
 On the day of recompense, O intercessor for mankind.

Save me from [the torments of] hell,
 For God's sake, O intercessor for mankind.

Lord, may I die in Medina,
 That is my prayer, O intercessor for mankind.

In my grave, too, assist me;
 O my Muṣṭafā, O intercessor for mankind.

You are aware of what I desire;
 What [else] can I request, O intercessor for mankind.

Lord this is my heart's desire,
 This is my hope, this is my passion, praise God, O intercessor for
 mankind:

As in this life I have enthusiasm for
 composing poems (naṭ) for you, O intercessor for mankind,

May I continue after death in paradise
 for ever and always, O intercessor for mankind.

In the Qur'an, God Himself praises you,
 From place to place, O intercessor for mankind.

Let aside humans, even angels cannot compose
 Praise poems worthy of you, O intercessor for mankind.

Call Luṭf to Medina now,
 So that he does not have go from door to door [like a beggar], O
 intercessor for mankind.

Nashtar [180]

Day and night, I am occupied with praying for God's blessing on the Prophet,
 For I am servant of the seal of prophets.
 Do not withhold from me the glance of generosity,
 I am yours whether I am good or bad.
 I, too, should have a mi^crāj, o master of the mi^crāj,
 For I am intoxicated by the night of the mi^crāj.
 The Prophet David is envious of my melodies,
 For I am the singer of the streets of Medina.
 Why should I not be proud of my love?
 For as a lover of the Prophet, I am a rival of God.
 Nashtar, I am free from both worlds,
 Even though I am a prisoner of the tresses of God's Prophet.

Nūrī [315]

There has come a sign from the unknown that I should praise Ahmad [Muhammad];
 Friends, neither in my pen nor tongue is there the ability or capacity for this.
 My mind and speech are perplexed: if I am to recite, what should I recite?
 How can I praise him who is loved by God Himself?
 This pride, my dignity, they rely on your being,
 The outcome of my life is but a spark of your love.
 He is the Prophet, entirely mercy, consoler of the community;
 He has been so kind to us that [out of embarrassment] we can hardly raise our heads.
 No one in this world shares in pain and sorrow like him;
 O soul, after God, refuge lies in his being.
 May my na^t be accepted and I be allowed to enter his presence:
 Whether it be a revelation of the holy door or a vision or a glance.
 I would sacrifice heart and soul if I have the good fortune of his presence;
 My soul would be in ecstasy, the sign of [true] desire.
 My prayer is that on the day of resurrection, my master should say to me:
 Nūrī, what is this fear? Surely you are not unprotected!

Qamar [282]

Whoever has longing for Muhammad in his heart,
 Wherever he be, he is in Medina.
 Even the roses do not possess such a fragrance
 As there is in your sweat, kind sir!
 Noble sir, the wealth [resulting] from obedience to you
 Remains in the treasuries of Muslim hearts.
 Thinking of you is a part of faith;
 Pleasure lies in drinking from the goblet of [your] love.
 Qamar, whoever does not possess love of Muhammad,
 He is neither among the dead nor the living!

Sā'il [163]

For how long will longing remain in my heart for Medina?
For how long can my restless heart sigh: ah! Medina!

May I die in Medina and let my grave be in Medina;
Carry me to my grave for I am desirous of Medina!

Come, sit yourself in my heart for it is the sublime heavenly throne;
But if you wish, my bosom could become Medina!

O Lord, my heart craves for Yathrib;⁵
O Lord, my mind is melancholic for Medina.

O eye of imagination! it is enough for you that
Seated at home, in my sight appears Medina!

O God! Sā'il's yearnings are constant day and night;
At every moment, my heart contains passion for Medina!

Firaqī [74]

If I were to be born in Medina, how great would that be!
If I were to die while on Muhammad's street, how great would that be!

O heart, do not waste your life frivolously in the streets of the
[earthly] beauties,
If you were to visit Medina, how great would that be!

O Majnūn, you became infamous for giving your heart to Lailī,⁶
If you were to give your heart to the Prophet, how great would that
be!

On the last day, O Lord, if I am to be an indigent beggar,
If I were [instead] a supplicant at the Prophet's threshold, how
great would that be!

Firaqī has set his sight on the science of logic and eloquent expres-
sion;
If it were the science of the Prophet's ḥadīth,⁷ how great would that
be!

⁵Yathrib -- the pre-Islamic name for the city of Medina.

⁶Majnūn [Qais] and Lailī [Lailā] -- a pair of Arab lovers, renowned throughout the folklore of the Islamic world.

⁷Ḥadīth -- an account or saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad; as a genre, the ḥadīth are an important source of Islamic law, second only to the Qur'an.

Khalīl [167]

O God, give me love for he who is the ruler of Medina.
 Muhammad is his name, the crown of the prophets, the king of the
 virtuous;
 Muhammad the qiblah⁸ of the two worlds; the Ka‘bah⁹ of the soul;
 The friend of the destitute; the one who cures the afflicted!
 What good fortune for the [Muslim] community that it found the beloved
 Prophet.
 The guardian of the orphans; the asylum for the poor.
 Even in the face of countless misfortunes what do [Muhammad's] pas-
 sionate lovers have to fear?
 Whoever is a martyr for the Prophet is protected by God.
 I proceed to the day of resurrection with only the thought of Muham-
 mad,
 For this is the only means of forgiveness; not obedience, not piety.
 The shadow of the Exalted has made a wonderous impression on the name
 of Muhammad,
 For he is the nourishment of human souls, the medicine for the
 afflicted.
 Seeing this king's mount, even the angels say:
 He is truly the pride of the two worlds, the beloved of the Divine.
 What rank do I possess to proclaim this love for whom
 God Himself is the praiser, to whom Divinity Itself is devoted.
 The rank of prophethood has been given to those dear to God:
 They are all brothers of Muhammad, indeed Muhammad is the pride of his
 brothers.
 My desire is to visit your tomb -- fulfill it if you desire:
 For me it is most difficult [to accomplish], for you most easy.
 None can go astray while following you,
 Because those footsteps are the lamps on the road of faith.
 O Creator, for the sake of Ahmad [Muhammad] and his family, forgive
 me;
 The heartbroken Khalīl seeks absolution from You.

Nazīr [93]

Yóu are the ruler of this world and the next, O Muhammad the chosen!
 You are the leader of the Muslims, O Muhammad the chosen!
 You are the governor of the stable religion, O Muhammad the chosen!
 You are the qiblah of those with firm conviction, O Muhammad the
 chosen.

On the night of the mi‘rāj, you illuminated the heavens;
 On account of your footsteps the highest heaven and divine throne
 became luminous and radiant;
 The color and fragrance of the paradisaical rose-gardens increased
 markedly;

⁸Qiblah -- the direction of prayer for Muslims.

⁹Ka‘bah -- the black cubical monument in Mecca, the site of
 the annual pilgrimage for Muslims from all over the world.

In a place yonder that is beyond the imagination of the angels
You are the reigning prince, O Muhammad the chosen

O seal of the prophets, even God calls you His beloved,
And to you, with the [divine] revelation, comes Gabriel most respect-
fully.
Which prophet had attained such an [exalted] status as yours?
You belong to that ocean which is the most sacred ocean of prophethood
You are a unique pearl, O Muhammad the chosen

You are the emissary of the Righteous One and the best of mankind;
The master of each of the two worlds and the intercessor for the day
of reckoning;
Your exalted essence is the fountain of kindness and generosity,
Not only for Naḡīr, but for all you are the asylum for assistance:
[Just] as here you are [with us]; there too you will be, O Muhammad
the chosen.

Salīm Aḥmad [266]

My state was very precarious;
Nothing appealed to me;
I was extremely tormented, besides myself;
It had been ages since I last celebrated;
Sorrowful emotions wandered freely through my heart;
Dust had settled on the mirror of my soul;
I was suffering from an affliction;
My very inner being was sick;
In this way life flowed by.
Then, suddenly, one day I received the good news of a cure:
The greeting of life came to me,
For my tongue uttered the name of Muhammad.
Muhammad, the repose of the hearts of the destitute,
Muhammad's name is comfort for the soul,
The rose of God's garden,
Muhammad is eternity without beginning, Muhammad is eternity without
end,
Muhammad who praises [God] and is praised,
Muhammad who bears witness and is also attested,
Muhammad the lamp, Muhammad the illuminating,
Muhammad the bearer of good news, Muhammad the warner,
Muhammad the sage, Muhammad the word,
Muhammad on whom be thousands of salutations and greetings.

Selections from sound recordings of naḡts

A naḡt by Akbar Mīraṭhī (recited by Khursheed Aḥmad)

(Note: The chorus of this song is in Arabic)

The wearer of the crown of mercies the ruler of the two worlds
The one who ascended the highest heaven the protector of the reputa-
tion of sinners:

Chorus:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

I have this yearning to go to his door so that rivers of tears may flow

That I may reveal the wounds in my breast and, facing him, proclaim:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

O God, fulfill this prayer: I may go to the door of the master
After having sung some na't I may bow my head and recite:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

Afflicted with pain and sorrow, I have come from afar
Taking great pride in you, [I recite] with outstretched arms:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

Knowing you to be an effective refuge I have come to your door
Protector of God's creation Please accept my greetings:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

Yes, may this wish be fulfilled that when I am in God's presence
You be clearly present on the side so that from here the cry rises:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

The shore of sorrow is distant O leader of God's universe!
Grant us protection quickly so that our boat crosses [the ocean of existence]:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

Listen to this addicted lover Listen to the sponsor of this gathering
Listen to the hearts of the audience Listen to Akbar, the sacrificed:

O prophet, peace be upon you; O apostle, peace be upon you.
O beloved, peace be upon you; blessings of God be upon you.

Song from motion picture **Mughal-e-Azam**

O solver of difficulties! I have a complaint, I have a complaint:
Even though I am devoted to you, yet my world is destroyed.
Be kind to this destitute one, O Lord of Medina.
My destiny adverse, my boat has run into a powerful eddy,

Be kind to this destitute one, O Lord of Medina.
 Now is the time for your assistance to counteract the danger;
 The stories of my heart are not hidden from you,
 This helpless trapped one is fraught with wounds.
 Be kind to this destitute one, O Lord of Medina.
 O you with the tresses, the armies of affliction have come;
 For God's sake, save my sinking boat;
 As a result of these storms, living is so difficult,
 Be kind to this destitute one, O Lord of Medina.

A Qawwālī by Sabri Brothers

We, too, know that there is a retribution for sins;
 But the concealer of our sins is God Himself.
 If it is appropriate for an ascetic to have pleasure in the enjoyment
 of worship,
 Then, on our part, we may engage in praise for Muhammad.
 O God, I do not ask for the wealth of this world or the next;
 I do not ask for a crown, a throne, or worldly rule;
 O God, nor do I ask for paradise.
 In my petition to you, O God, I ask that you fulfill only this:
 That whenever my heart craves for him, Muhammad should know.
 Qais selected a Lailī¹⁰ of passionate blandishment;
 Farhād¹¹ selected a queen of elegant charms;
 Handsome Yūsuf selected a Zulaikhā¹² of splendour;
 In this manner, everyone selected their own sweethearts;
 But we, the poor, selected Muhammad, the chosen one!
 But we, the poor, selected Muhammad, the chosen one!
 But we, the poor, selected Muhammad, the chosen one!
 Abū Bakr accumulated sincerity;
 ‘Umar accumulated the wealth of justice;
 ‘Uṣmān accumulated the grandeur of generosity;
 ‘Alī accumulated, in the field of battle, bravery;¹³
 But he with the cloak [Muhammad] gathered under it the community of
 Muslims!
 But he with the cloak [Muhammad] gathered under it the community of
 Muslims!
 But he with the cloak [Muhammad] gathered under it the community of
 Muslims!
 I sacrifice myself completely for Muhammad's elegance and charm;

¹⁰See note 6.

¹¹Farhād -- a celebrated Iranian lover who to please his
 beloved Shirīn dug through an immense mountain with his bare
 hands.

¹²Yūsuf-Zulaikhā -- The patriarch Joseph and his lover,
 Zulaikhā, whose passion is much celebrated in Islamic literature.

¹³Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uṣmān, and ‘Alī -- four close com-
 panions of the Prophet who, after his death, succeeded each other
 as the first four caliphs of the Islamic world.

From the beginning of time to the time of prophethood, my heart is consecrated to you;
 Every human, out of affection for him with the cloak, declares:
 I have abandoned the pleasures and delights of both worlds,
 Instead I have procured intimacy with the holy Prophet.
 Maqbūl and Farīd, in the Qur'an is found this truth:
 None is higher than the Prophet in this world.
 God be my witness, the breath of life has entered my soul,
 For merely by sitting and reciting na'at in honour of the Prophet
 We have attained paradise! We have attained paradise!

A na'at recited by Qārī Wāhid Zafar Qasmī

The light of dawn radiates from your face and the lustre of the evening glows from your tresses!

My dear sir, as Prophet you are exalted; your grandeur is pre-eminent in its perfection.
 With proof and evidence, he brings the astray to the [true] path.

My master is a treasury of blessings, my lord is a store-house of mercy;
 A guide for the entire community; a leader to the divine law.

Holy is his lineage, exalted is his pedigree; before him the entire Arab religion is respectful.

With a sign from his finger, trees moved; with his permission, stones began to talk;
 And the moon split into two pieces when he pointed his fore-finger!

The trusted [angel] Gabriel came to him on the eve of the night journey, bearing God's message;
 God summoned him to the throne and granted him the honor of [divine] proximity.

All the sins of the community have been forgiven;
 All previous registers [of sins] have been cleared;
 For Muhammad is our lord, indeed on his name rests our glory and endurance.

Chorus: Allāh Hū Allāh Hū Allāh Hū Allāh Hū; there is no god but God!

Selections from Hindū shu'ara kā na'atiyyah kalām (an anthology of na'ats composed by Hindu poets)

(Note: Above each of the poems occurs the poetic pen-name of the composer with the page number from the text in parentheses. See bibliography for complete citation of the work.)

Kaṣarī [64]

Call me to Medina, O Muhammad!
 Show me your street, O Muhammad!

Don't make me cry from separation, O Muhammad
 Don't torment your lover, O Muhammad!
 People say that my love for you is insane;
 What else can I say, O Muhammad?
 So radiant is the brilliance of your manifestation that I cannot open
 my eyes,
 [Nevertheless] your image is eternally present, O Muhammad!
 God is your lover and you are God's;
 I sacrifice myself for you both, O Muhammad!
 In God's creation, none is like you,
 For next to God, you are unique, O Muhammad!
 I care not at all for kings,
 For I am a supplicant at your door, O Muhammad!
 I do not associate with drunkards nor am I inclined to ascetics,
 What is this state of mine, O Muhammad?
 May God forgive me on account of you,
 May my prayers be granted, O Muhammad!
 [Even though] your Kauṣarī lives among Hindus,
 Yet in darkness is found the water of immortality, O Muhammad!

Kauṣarī [146]

I loved Muhammad even when this universe did not exist,
 There was only void, nothingness; neither Eve nor Adam were there,
 Nor the moon, the sun, the sky, the stars, the earth, the ocean;
 Neither the rose nor the rose-garden; even the dew-drops were not
 there!

The [governing] principle for the revolution of time was the word
 annihilation;
 Happiness was totally non-existent and sorrow uncreated;
 The register of births and deaths was still closed;
 Neither were there parties of happiness nor the houses of mourning!

A confused picture album was this worthless world,
 No one was yet king and there were no coins or dirhams.
 Water and fire were dissolved in the art of dissolution;
 Neither was there humility in the dust nor any life in the wind!

The secret of love between lover and beloved was concealed;
 Neither were they friends, intimates and confidants.
Kauṣarī, then, too, I loved the chosen one:
 Just as much as I do now, not any less.

Shād [132]

My heart is madly in love with Muhammad!
 The star of good fortune shines [on me].
 Only he enjoys the love of the Prophet,
 In whose eyes he [Muhammad] is contained.
 There is no rival for you, nor will there ever be;
 This much has been seen, this much has been understood.
 Just as the Lord of the Universe is only one,
 So God's beloved, too, is unique.

Between **Aḥad** (The One) and **Aḥmad** (Muhammad) there is only this difference:¹⁴

One became the servant while the other is the Lord.
Some call me an infidel, others, a Muslim,
Let them say whatever comes to mind.
I am a monotheist, a gnostic, a mystic true,
On my situation has been the grace of the Lord.
O **Shād**, only by reciting **na^ct**
Have you attained this honour, acquired this dignity.

Shād [66]

The splendour present in the two worlds is on account of the king of nations;
Everything is manifest through his existence.¹⁵
We are supplicants at your door, indeed, we are your slaves;
Our desire is neither paradise nor its gardens.
If granted your grace, this unhappy one would rejoice;
My aggrieved heart of sorrow is prostrate with pain.
"Do not despair" provides comfort for me;¹⁶
I hope only for your grace and bounty.
He will not know the secret of annihilation and eternity
Who thinks the purpose of humankind is existence and non-existence.
My desire is to remain constantly at your door;
I have no desire for wealth, worldly rank or pomp.
O **Shād**, in your **na^ct** you have made roses blossom well;
This branch has flourished and blossomed on account of your pen!

Fānī [157]

I am in love with Muhammad, what should I do?
What should I do to meet him, what should I do?

The streets of Medina are paradise for me;
I desire the garden of paradise, what should I do?

If I were to obtain my heart's desire,
How thankful I would be for the blessing, for the mercy!

O **Fānī**, I am a supplicant of the chosen one;
What other expression of belief can I make?

¹⁴This line refers to an extra-Qur'anic saying, according to which God says: **Anā Aḥmad bilā mīm**, "I am Aḥmad without the letter **m**, that is Aḥad, One."

¹⁵A reference to an extra-Quranic revelation in which God says to the Prophet: **laulāka mā khalaqtu'l-aflāka**, "But for your sake, I would not have created the spheres."

¹⁶See note 3.

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