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## SAFINA-YE KŌŠGU

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*SAFINA-ye KŌŠGU*, an important Indo-Persian *tadkera* (collection of biographical notices of poets with anthologies of their verse) of the 18th century, by Bindrāban Dās KŌšgu. The author was probably born in the Krishnaite holy city of Mathura (KŌšgu, p. 311; Šafiq Awrangābādi, p. 63), though some other centers like Delhi and Varanasi have been variously mentioned as his birthplace (Šabā, p. 206; Sprenger, p. 131; see also Naqavi, p. 240). He was a Hindu belonging to the *vaisyā* (*bays* or *ba'is* in the Indo-Persian texts) caste (Šafiq Awrangābādi, p. 63; Hendi, p. 67).

The date of his birth is unknown, but an autobiographical reference in his *Safina* quite clearly suggests that he was born between 1667-8 and 1677-8 (KŌšgu p. 118; Naqavi p. 240; this chronology is accepted in *Dāneš-nāma*, p. 1093). Belonging to a family of imperial employees (his ancestors were attached to the court of Dārā Šokuh [See [DĀRĀ ŠOKŌH](#)], and his father served in Awrangzēb's army; KŌšgu, pp. 92, 184), he lived mostly in Delhi, where he frequented some of the most important Indo-Persian literary circles of 18th century northern India, such as those led by Mirzā Afzal Sarḳoš (d. 1715), [Mirzā 'Abd-al-Qāder 'Bidel'](#) (d. 1720), Shah Sa'd-Allāh Golšan Borhānpuri (d. 1727), and Serāj-al-Din 'Ali Khan 'Ārzu' (q.v.; d. 1756; KŌšgu, pp. 72-75, 117-24, 167-68, 312-13, 320; Ārzu, pp. 45-46; Šafiq Awrangābādi, p. 65; Kalil, p. 56). KŌšgu himself writes that he got his own *takalloṣ* from Sarḳoš, whom he considered as a father figure (KŌšgu, p. 75), that he visited the house of Bidel more than a thousand times during his life (KŌšgu, p. 117), and that Shah Golšan held him in special favor (KŌšgu, p. 167); however, KŌšgu's deepest and most mature intellectual relationship was probably with the great philologist Ārzu, who around 1748 wrote that their friendship was 25 years old (Ārzu, p. 46). He also had his own disciples, among whom Bhagvān Dās Hendi mentions Nur-al-'Ayn Wāqef (Hendi, p. 67). Some *tadkeras*, perhaps following a literary *topos* often related to Hindu writers of Persian (compare the well-known case of [Čandra Bhān Barahman](#)), insist on the fact that at a certain point, after having served the governor of the district of Allahabad (Ārzu, p. 46), he left mundane affairs choosing the way of the wandering ascetics (*foqarā*), living on the holy banks of the Ganges between Varanasi, Allahabad and 'Aẓimābād (Patna) (Šafiq Awrangābādi, p. 65). According to the *tadkera-yegol-e ra'nā*, he died in 'Aẓimābād in 1757 (Šafiq Awrangābādi, p. 65; see also 'Abd-Allah, pp. 208-209 and Naqavi, p. 243).

No collection of his poetical works, nor his *Malfuẓāt-e Bidel* (see KŌšgu, p. 112), have survived (on another untraceable work attributed to him, a *moraqqa*, see Naqavi, p. 243 and Golčīn-e Ma'āni, p. 722); excluding some scattered verses preserved in *tadkera* literature, the *Safina-ye KŌšgu*, by far his most important literary achievement, is KŌšgu's only extant work. As it can be inferred from two chronograms, the *tadkera* was composed between 1724 and 1735 (Sprenger, p. 130; Naqavi, p. 244; Golčīn-e Ma'āni, p. 713; Storey p. 826). According to Sprenger, KŌšgu was forced to leave Delhi by Nāder Shah's invasion and could not edit a fair copy of his draft until his return in 1742-43, when he presented it to Ārzu who added a preface and some glosses, thus completing it (Sprenger, p. 130). The work was dedicated to 'Omdat-al-Molk Amir Khan Anjām, the author's patron (Ārzu, p. 46; Šafiq Awrangābādi, p. 65). The book is divided into three *daftars*, each internally arranged on a chronological basis: the first, consecrated to the 'ancient' (*motaqaddem*) writers, contains the notices of 362 poets from Rudaki to Kāfi Zafar Hamadāni; the second (studied and edited by Ašḡar, 2002), about 'intermediate' and 'recent' (*motawašṣeṭ* and *mota'aḳker*) authors, deals with the lives and/or

verses of 811 poets from Jāmi to Šoguni (d. after 1650); the third is dedicated to 245 contemporary (*mo'āšer*) poets, from Nāšer 'Ali' Serhendi to Sarab Sukh 'Kākestar' (d. after 1742).

Among the most important manuscripts are those held in the British Library (first *daftar*: I.O. 4023, not listed in the Ethé catalogue), in the Bodleian Library (second *daftar*: see Sachau-Ethé, p. 211), and in the Khudabakhsh Library (third *daftar*: see Abdul Muqtadir, pp. 83-115; this is probably the only extant copy); for further information on *Safina* manuscripts see Kōšgu (pp. ii-x), Naqavi (pp. 254-55), Storey (p. 826), and Golčīn-e Ma'āni (pp. 715-18). An alphabetically ordered compendium dealing with 1,111 poets, known as the *ābāvard* "recension," was completed in 1825 by the Iranian Dorri Šuštari (Golčīn-e Ma'āni, pp. 713-15). Golčīn-e Ma'āni suggests that the *Safina-ye Kōšgu* was originally divided into four *daftar*s (Golčīn-e Ma'āni, p. 713), but the arguments produced, though suggestive, are not conclusive. The style of the *Safina* is usually relatively simple (Naqavi, p. 248). Particularly interesting from the stylistic-linguistic point of view, are the passages containing dialogues in the third *daftar* (e.g., Kōšgu, pp. 72-73), perhaps reflecting the form of Persian used by northern Indian literati in semi-official contexts; the same *daftar* is also characterized by a quite frequent use of Hindi/Urdu words and non-standard Persian expressions (see Naqavi, pp. 252-53). As already noted by Sprenger (p. 130), the third *daftar*, published in 1959 in Patna by 'Atā al-Raḥmān Kākwi, is probably the most valuable since it deals with later and often lesser-known poets, in many cases directly acquainted with the author. As stated by the author himself, the *tadkera-ye Kalemāt al-šo'arā* by Mirzā Afzal Sarḳoš was used as a model for its redaction (Kōšgu, p. 77); six other directly mentioned sources, among which the *Tadkera-ye Našrābādi* is particularly important (e.g. Kōšgu, p. 72), are listed by Naqavi (p. 249).

Although Kōšgu doesn't reserve a specific notice for himself, much autobiographical data can be found scattered in the entries dedicated to his masters, especially Sarḳoš, Ārzu, and Bidel (Kōšgu, pp. 71-77, 312-21, 103-25), and his fellow-poets, like his uncle Sadānand Bitakallof (Kōšgu, pp. 91-92) and his friends Shivrām Dās Ḥayā and Lālā Ḥakīm Čand Nodrat (Kōšgu pp. 183-85, 352-53). Among the longest and most important notices in the third *daftar* is that consecrated to Bidel (Kōšgu, pp. 103-47), as it represents a fundamental first-hand source to reconstruct the biography of the great poet of Patna (see Qāzi 'Abd al-Wadud and Abdul Ghani, *passim*); similarly useful is the information about the first period of Ārzu's life (Kōšgu, pp. 312-21). More generally, the third *daftar* of the *Safina-ye Kōšgu* is essential for the understanding of the Indo-Persian intellectual environment of Delhi and Hindustan in the first half of the 18th century, since it gives, through the expressive filter of the *tadkera* genre, vivid descriptions of the new urban atmosphere developed with the crisis of the Mughals. Relevant socio-cultural phenomena, such as the *mošā'era* (literary salon) and the institutionalization of the *ostād-šāgerd* (master-pupil) relationship, are described; many Delhi-based Indo-Persian poetic schools, like that of Sarḳoš, Bidel, Moḥammad 'Alim 'Taḥqīq' (d. 1748), Ārzu, Mazhar Jān-e Jānān (d. 1781) are directly observed and textually represented in the light of the specific conceptual framework of a "memorative communication" (see Hermansen and Lawrence). Moreover, Kōšgu shows in his *Safina* a particular interest in the participation of Hindu intellectuals in the poetic circles he describes (there are sixteen biographies of Hindu poets, i.e. 6.5%), giving an image of 'Hinduism' (especially Krishnaite devotion) as already integrated as an expressive possibility in the Persian literary-aesthetic system, for instance when speaking of the Persian translation of the tenth chapter of the *Bhāgavata-purāna* by his friend Nodrat (Kōšgu, p. 353). Its rich documentation, based on direct observations, made the *Safina* one of the principal sources for subsequent Indo-Persian *tadkera*-writing: a major work like the second part of the *Gol-e ra'nā* by Lačmi Narāyan Šafiq, for instance, often mentions entire passages of the *Safina* while speaking of the pupils of Bidel (e.g. Šafiq Awrangābādi, pp. 46, 81-83, 165-69).

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(Stefano Pello)

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