

Verse Narrative from the Bazaar of the Storytellers*

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INTRODUCTION: *BADALAS* AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

The South Asian subcontinent has a long indigenous tradition of verse narratives. The most famous of these are the two Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, which have been told and retold in later vernaculars not only in South Asia but also in Southeast and Central Asia.¹ The South Asian vernaculars have in addition their own local narratives, which have also been receiving scholarly attention during the last several decades. Like the Sanskrit epics, these too have usually been associated with Hinduism, although they are known and enjoyed by residents and visitors to South Asia, regardless of religion.²

During the past millennium, Islam has also been active in various parts of South Asia. Islam brought the classical traditions of Arabic and Persian; the latter was of particular importance to the development of Urdu language and literature as well as other literatures in the vernaculars of predominately Muslim areas of South Asia. The most famous verse narrative in Persian is Firdawsi's *Shah-nama*, ("Book of Kings"), an epic of some 50,000 couplets completed c. 1010 A.D. For its author, this epic was a form to be sung, "And now my narrator . . . compose me a tender tale, in words that shall make good sense and which the minstrel's genius may set to music."³

While Persian has the oldest attested tradition of narrative singing in the family of modern Iranian languages, the singing of verse narratives also exists as a living tradition in an Iranian language spoken in South Asia. This language is Pashto, an eastern Iranian language of present-day Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan, which today preserves a tradition in the singing of verse narratives known as *badalas*.

With the advent of cassette recording technology, a thriving business in the singing and recording of these narratives has now also developed.

The center for this is Peshawar's Bazaar of the Storytellers (Qissakhwani Bazaar) in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). The storytellers (*qiṣṣa-khwāns*) are no longer seen in that bazaar, though they may be seen on streets of other cities. However, on the footpath of the broad street of Qissa-khwani and in the shops of the narrow lanes behind it, there are now dozens of vendors of cassettes.⁴ Included in these cassettes, and those of other shops scattered throughout the NWFP are these *badalas*, labeled by the title of the story and the name of the singer, and usually one cassette (both sides) in length. Several singers are particularly popular and account for the majority of titles; many stories are available by more than one singer.⁵

Traditionally, these *badalas* were sung in villages; some of the stories now sold on cassettes can also be found in the earliest extant Pashto manuscripts.⁶ Professional singers of these stories now sing them for private gatherings of Pashto-speaking audiences at weddings and other special occasions not only in the NWFP but sometimes as far away as Karachi.⁷

The titles generally consist of one or two names; if one name, it is usually a man's and the story involves conflict. If there are two names, it is usually a man's and a woman's and the nominal subject is romance. Some of these romances are found elsewhere in the Middle East, and have come into Pashto probably from Persian, perhaps via Urdu. Thus there are Pashto versions of Shirin and Farhad, Laila and Majnun, and Yusuf and Zulaikha.⁸ There are also *badalas* with heroes (and heroines) specifically identified with Pashto-speaking communities of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, in these the hero is usually a khan. These include Adam Khan and Dur Khanai, Fatah Khan and Rabiya, and Jalat and Mahbuba, plus others often attributed to Pathans but perhaps from other sources.⁹ Modern "romances" take new twists reflecting the changes in society, and hero and heroine elope by car rather than horseback in attempts to avoid family feuds and tribal justice.¹⁰

Some of the stories of conflict are also borrowed from the Middle East. Stories about Ali, the first Shia Imam, are very popular and sometimes even run to three cassette tapes in length. Mir Khatam / Hatam, said to be a son of Ali's paternal uncle (Hamdani 1981: 74), has become a folk hero, and stories relating to the battle of Karbala are available from a number of singers. However, most stories of conflict are concerned with the Pathans. Some are purely tribal, closely paralleling anthropologist's case histories, as revenge is carried out over

generations. Others are stories which can be traced to specific events of the 19th and 20th centuries; most of these involve conflict with the British.¹¹ Perhaps the most widely known in Pakistan is the story of Ajab Khan, who kidnapped a British officer's daughter from a Kohat bungalow in 1923 (killing her mother in the process) to take revenge on the British for their violation of purdah of the women in his village. This event, dramatized in an movie made in Pakistan some years ago, was retold in national magazines and newspapers there in 1983 when the girl, now an elderly woman returning to visit the scene of her kidnapping and her mother's grave, was given a warm welcome in the NWFP. Kipling's "Ballad of East and West" ("Oh, East is East . . .") has its Pashto counterpart, where Kamal the Border Thief becomes Kamal Khan, an upholder of Pathan tradition taking revenge on the British for killing his brother. The latest stories are about heroes of Afghanistan in their battles with the Russians, reflecting the current political situation.

A small percentage of these verse narratives find their way into print; perhaps three dozen were available during autumn, 1983, in the form of little booklets of 40 to 100 pages with brightly illustrated covers which were sold for a few rupees.¹² The largest selection was available in and around Qissa-khwani Bazaar; copies can also be found for sale in little shops or on the footpaths of towns elsewhere in the NWFP. Some of the stories have also been printed by the Pashto Academy with more dignified covers plus footnotes and introductions; these have not generally been the versions sung on the cassettes found in the bazaars.

Perhaps the most extensive source of stories is the singers themselves. Printed versions, often in tatters, and composition books filled with hand-written verses are kept locked safely in their tin trunks. Many of these narratives have been memorized by the singers; one singer offered a money-back guarantee if he missed a couplet in a narrative for which he no longer had a printed copy. Singers can and do extemporize these stories, but the best known versions of the stories—those sung by professional musicians either in private performances or for sale in cassette form—divide the labors of composition and singing.

The formal construction of these *badalas* is remarkably consistent, despite the variety of subject matter and the number of different poets who write them.¹³ They are made up of couplets, either rhyming couplets, as in a Persian *masnavi* (*aa, bb, cc*, etc.) or with an end rhyme (*aa, ba, ca, da*, etc.) like a *qasida* or *ghazal*.¹⁴ The couplets are grouped into units at the end of which there is a couplet with the poet's name, paralleling a tradition of both Persian and Urdu *ghazals*. After this signature couplet, a new set of couplets begins which will usually change

in end rhyme (if rhyming couplets were being used) or sometimes change the type of rhyme scheme itself.

As well as marking formal changes in verse patterns, these signature couplets have at least three functions: (1) for discourse: in providing formal points at which the poet can identify himself and state his views; (2) for structure: in dividing the structure of the narrative into smaller units, the "building blocks" of which the narrative as a whole is constructed; and (3) for performance: to provide convenient breaking points in performance for instrumental interludes or for breaks in the performance itself—tea, a meal, or a night's sleep.

The first two functions can be seen in the following translation of some portions of a story by Ali Haidar, whose pen-name is Joshi, a folk poet from Smela but living in Takht-i Bahi in 1983. It is a story of conflict with a tribal framework, and hinges on the rivalry of paternal cousins, a notable feature of Pathan society.¹⁵ At least two printed Pashto versions were available in 1982, and at least three commercially produced tapes were also available in 1983.¹⁶ This version is taken from a Lok Virsa tape sung by Ihsanullah and recorded by Mumtaz Nasir in 1982; the couplets are numbered to permit the reader to gauge the proportions of untranslated couplets, which are summarized in brackets.¹⁷

This story consists of twenty-six units; all the signature couplets have been included here with Roman numerals for references of this paper. The couplets of section I use an end-rhyme scheme based on *-and* (couplet 1: *qand* "sugar" and *khwand* "taste"; 2: (*Hari-*) *éand*; 3: (*bu-*)*land* "tall", through 10: (*tsar-*)*gand* "plain(ly)"). Section II has rhymed couplets (11: (*ca*)*yān* "clear" and *khān* "Khan"; 12: *yād* "memory, mind" and (*Ram-*)*dād*, through 25: *úcat* "up" and (*ijā-*)*zat* "permission"). Section III also has rhyming couplets; there are about an equal number of rhymed couplets and end-rhymed couplets in the story as a whole.

TEXT: THE STORY OF RAMDAD KHAN¹⁸

1. I'll tell you a story as sweet as sugar.
While listening, see how it tastes!
2. Lend ear to it! There was a young man named Ramdad.
He was living in the village of Harichand.
3. Everyone got pleasure from his face—
Wheaten complexion and courageous, tall in stature.
4. At the time Ramdad turned twenty,
There was no one so lucky as he.
5. His reputation for generosity spread in all directions;

- He passed his life with head held high.
6. Brave men please everyone except their cousins;
 'Those cousins finally made trouble for him.
 7. Is there ever room in hearts of cousins
 When one is miserable, the other so honored?
 8. 'They found enemies for him in place after place,
 Though Ramdad had not liked doing wrong from the
 start.
 9. 'There is this proverb, "One who is boxed in battles himself
 out,"
 So the brave Mohmand put a sword under his arm.¹⁹
 10. Just keep yourself from them, Ali Haidar!
 Don't plainly treat the enemy as trifling! (1)
 11. Now for you I'll make the whole story clear;
 'There was no doubt about Ramdad Khan's courage.
 12. Keep in mind the other brother named Ghazan:
 Ghazan was senior to Ramdad in age.
 13. A talebearer among them was making mischief,
 "Hey, Ramdad, I'm telling you the truth!
 14. Yesterday I heard about your cousins;
 Many people are stealing around in search of you!
 15. I've told you in private the secrets of your cousins;
 Keep to yourself, don't trust enemies.
 16. 'They tell this thing to one and that to another;
 In a little while they'll desolate their house."
 17. Ramdad then said, "Ghazan, my brother,
 Let's either take our household and go from this land,
 18. Or allow me my wish, older brother—
 Have the fun of seeing me fight tomorrow.
 19. 'The cousins have plotted for my death;
 'They're setting snares for me in place after place.
 20. Death will indeed thus once come at the end;
 I'll go to fight tomorrow, if you agree.
 21. Either I will put the enemies beneath the earth,
 Or the time for my turban will have passed away.
 22. Either I will scorch myself upon the sword,
 Or I will put them beneath black earth."
 23. 'Then Ghazan said, "All right, don't be patient,
 I don't think that you should be constrained."
 24. Night passed, God help us, morning comes;
 Ramdad Khan and Ghazan go off to fight.
 25. O Ali Haidar Joshi, they got up!

- They left, they're getting their parents' permission (II)
26. Ramdad Khan and Ghazan prepared for battle;
They went, they stood before their parents.
27. These words came from his lips,
"Our dear father, learn of this!
28. Our cousins have harassed us in our homeland.
They've made a decent life difficult for us.
29. They're laughing and mocking us everywhere:
We sit ashamed on our beds like thieves.
30. They don't understand the strength of my sword.
If they did, then they wouldn't act this way.
31. Give me permission to go after them, father!
My brother will go with me, not stay home."
32. His father said to him, "Ramdad, my son,
Make your heart patient, don't go to fight!
33. Pack up the household, leave for another village;
Make an effort to harm no one!
34. If you brothers both are thus united,
All the land will be a garden rose for you.
35. I'm a graybeard, children, heed my prayer!
Don't refuse this request of mine!
36. It's better, Ramdad, to be meek, but if that can't be,
May your sword not fall behind in blows."
37. Now Ramdad packs up the household, Ali Haidar!
No back talk to his father came from his lips. (III)
38. The tree which gives fruit by God's power,
Suffers being hit by stones every time.
39. No one throws stones at a fruitless tree,
For there would be no good or worth in that.
40. It was quite difficult, yet he would not anger his father;
Ramdad migrated from his village.
41. He built a fort in Koper;
Hear the new tale after that, young man!²⁰
- [*The Ranizai do not want him there, and he wants to fight back.*]
53. His father has given him permission, he has mounted his
horse;
Each one will demonstrate with strength.
54. O Ali Haidar, people were surprised!
With what miracles will Ramdad fight! (IV)
- [*The fight takes place, Ramdad is victorious, but instead of killing off the survivors, he invites his captives home for a banquet.*]
71. O Ali Haidar Joshi, a mistake is being made!

Real men never like such acts. (V)

[*The guests go home, and then invite Ramdad to their village. Asaf Khan now takes Ramdad's side, but Zebani still regards him as an enemy.*]

89. Tell the story thinking well, Ali Haidar!

Don't let it go off uncharted. (VI)

[*Asaf Khan has his son swear to watch over Ramdad, and offers an invitation as Ramdad is about to leave.*]

104. O Ali Haidar, Asaf now called out,

"Whether it's afternoon or night, don't worry!" (VII)

[*Ramdad's enemies, including Zebani, invite Ramdad's cousins to come and join in fighting Ramdad, who will now be helped by Asaf. Ramdad learns of this, and knows he'll have to fight.*]

122. Pathans don't see their own death, Ali Haidar!

On a point of honor they jump from a cliff. (VIII)

[*A total of over hundred men, including Asaf and his son, are gathered to fight.*]

132. Now Ramdad goes off to fight, Ali Haidar!

His goodness is remembered by Asaf Khan. (IX)

133. Ramdad went and stood in his line;

His enemies were all in danger.

134. He says, "All will go under the earth today,

Or all will be filled up with the blood of Ramdad."

135. I heard this proverb from long ago:

'Though a cousin can't yet clean his nose,

136. A cousin never fears a cousin,

'Though one's of eagle's weight, the other, a pigeon's.

137. A cousin never becomes yours, is the proverb;

Don't be misled by his clothes, he is thief at heart.

138. Ramdad Khan goes out at the head of his troops;

With him are the upright men of Asaf Khan.

139. On the other side, his enemy's power

Is equal in both young men and weapons.

140. 'The troops' leader on the other side was known as Zebani;

He was then opposite Asaf Khan.

141. Ilam Khan was Zebani's full brother;

He thought himself superior to Asaf in strength.

142. Asaf Khan and Ramdad were on one side;

Zebani was in front of his group.

143. Whether it was Ilam Khan or Marjan or Isa Khan,

You count them! Musa Khan was with them too.

144. I've mentioned a few leaders at first;

They all were opposite Ramdad.

145. Coming face to face, they fought until twilight;
Blood was dripping from every limb of Ramdad.
146. Fine youths were lying in their blood;
Only eight or ten survived.
147. Only a few were left in Ramdad's group too;
They also were scarlet red with blood.
148. The mother of Kamal became a martyr in this;
She was put in grave in a front of the fort.
149. Both groups were equal in young men;
They fought face to face, playing with each other's heads.
150. Both Ramdad and Ghazan's eyes were red;
At night they climbed up into the Kachai fort.
151. Thus came a scream, Ali Haidar Joshi,
"Ramdad is climbing high up in the fort." (X)
- [*Ramdad destroys the enemy fort, and then he entertains his people*]
167. The guests took leave of him, Ali Haidar.
A time so fine will never come again. (IX)
168. Things were cheap everywhere at that time,
Whether it was rice or ghee or chicken.
169. Good cotton cloth cost an *anna* a yard,²¹
There were no machines, the weaver used to make it.
170. God's kindness was on those people;
Friends were truly devoted to friends.
171. The reason is that intentions were open;
People didn't slander one another.
172. But go now, you won't find friends anywhere.
If one is found, he won't come to your door.
173. But I'll quit! I'll go after the story again;
I'll make a try with Ramdad and Ghazan.
- [*A year passes and Ghazan goes back to his village.*]
179. Ali Haidar of Smela is saying these words.
What outcome will result from Ghazan's going! (XII)
180. At the time that Ghazan mounted his horse,
His sister pleaded much with him:
181. "The sun is setting, the dark of night is ready.
Spend the night comfortably in my house!
182. Some ten or eleven hundred people are waiting for you,
So pass the night at home, not in the grave."
183. Ghazan then said to her, "My sister, Zargara,
The cousins will taunt me tomorrow;
184. 'Ghazan is staying there out of fear!'
Because of the taunting, I'm going on my way."

[*The cousins surround him, as his sister had warned.*]

189. He killed three persons, Ali Haidar,
And Ghazan too fell face down on the earth. (XIII)

[*When Ghazan's horse returns, they go to find his body.*]

202. When Ghazan was found, Ali Haidar,
Alas, alas, the verses about him are burning. (XIV)

[*Everyone was now afraid to fight Ramdad, who wanders around, grieving over his brother. When Asaf Khan cautioned him not over-confident:*]

228. Ramdad said, "I by myself am greater than they.
I'm a lion in this world, Asaf Khan.

229. If anyone sees me with eyes awake,
They'll not sing *badalas* again, by God.

230. If I'm caught asleep, Asaf Khan,
Then don't put the blame on my sword."

231. When Ramdad Khan said that, Ali Haidar,
Asaf Khan talked, laughing. (XVI)

[*Five or six years pass; then his enemy hears that Ramdad naps under a chenar tree.*]

249. The heart of the poet, Ali Haidar, is in pain over this.
I think he shouldn't die while sleeping. (XVII)

[*His sister, Zargara, has a bad dream:*]

259. In her sleep, Ali Haidar, she was calling out:
"Get up, get up! Why are you laying there unaware!"
(XVIII)

[*His enemies succeed in shooting him and go to his house.*]

268. The enemies returned from it, Ali Haidar!
As a group, they attacked Kopar. (XIX)

269. After the death of Ramdad Khan, of enemies,
The eyes were red: listen to this, friends!

270. They entered the fort of Ramdad Khan,
They looted Ramdad's house; that was their wish.

271. They brought out from it much wealth and weapons;
They divided this legacy of those brave men.

272. Ramdad was lying languid-eyed upon the earth.
As if dyed red with his own blood.

273. Briefly, his property is divided into three parts;
After that, the women are distributed.

274. There was one wife of Ramdad and two of Ghazan;
The battlefield was empty as men all laid hands on them.

275. There's not just one cousin that I'll remind you of;
Marjan was the head of them all, I heard.

276. Shah Khan said, "Wife of Ramdad, get up!

323. In olden times, such ladies did not come into the world;
The modern ladies will ruin your house, people!
324. Now make a ruba'ci on this, Ali Haidar!
Don't let the evil eye come quickly to these verses.
(XXIII)
325. Lord, let no one be a husband to a slut!
A well-born man gets sick of life with her.
326. Bravo for Mirokhila in her widowhood!
She passed her life in modest respectability.
327. A well-born wife is very dearly gotten;
Unfaithful wives are cheap wherever you look.
328. Now I'll explain to you the situation about Ramdad;
Each man among the Mas'uds was making lament.
329. "O Ramdad, your heart was like a lion's;
Every man would leave the field to you.
330. You'd learned every style of swordplay;
All the Ranizai were awed by you.
331. Get up, get up, so I can pay you a visit!
You must have left with many longings in your heart.
332. Neither son nor daughter was born
On whom we could revive love for your life.
333. We said many would be lying dead with you.
Broiled by the gun on your shoulder belt.
334. Your own pride has struck you down, Mohmand youth,
You never were afraid of anyone!
335. Whether it was horses, cows or buffalos,
Your cousins have taken them off to Harichand."
336. Thus it happened, Ali Haidar of Smela!
They took off the bier of Ramdad, they went off. (XXIV)

[After further lament for Ramdad, the narrative turns to his sister, Zargara, who is being taunted for allowing her brother's killer to walk about unavenged. She gets Mas'uds and Safis to help her and the fight begins.]

361. That was the time without laws, Ali Haidar;
There was no English government in it. (XXV)
362. Ilam Khan was captured in that fight;
The Mas'uds and Safis were completely surrounding him.
363. Blows came down on him from every side;
He became powerless, quite wounded in the end.
364. At that time the sister of Ramdad Khan came up to him;
She had in her hand some knife or sword.
365. Ilam Khan said to her, "Listen, Zargara!
I too was a lion like Ramdad.

Khan by Muhammad Husain, the poet assures the listeners that there are not five grains (lit. one *miṣqāl*) of falsehood in his story. In tales not dealing with local events, a poet may say that he found the story in a book, and may even cite the language (e.g., Urdu in the case of Gul and Sanobar by Aman Gujerati) in which his source was written. There are no claims of originality or creativity where subject matter is concerned.

A third level of discourse is between the performer and audience; this will vary according to the type of performance. The performer may make decisions regarding the choice of story as well as the portions of that story to include, the length of musical interludes, and the additions of non-narrative passages. These decisions may depend on the purse of the sponsor, and also on the audience's reaction during performance. Even within the rather limited time-frame of commercial tapes, performances of a given version of a particular story vary considerably. Narrative units may be omitted or couplets from several units joined together (as in section XXV above at a private performance: see n. 14); sometimes there appears to be a pattern of dropping alternate couplets from an existing folk text. Other additions can include advertisements for the shop producing the cassette, sung with no change in rhythm or melody.²⁴

The Narrative Structure. These units ending with a signature couplet provide the poet-writer with a set of building blocks for his total composition. The first section commonly introduces the main character(s) and gives a general background, as in the story above. This is sometimes preceded by a section recounting how the story came to be written or, if it is a religious story, a section praising God and the Prophet. Once the story starts, the sections each tend to be units of action or to focus on one or two particular characters. The signature couplet is like a chapter ending, and folk texts in fact often have section titles and/or numbers following these signature couplets.

These units frequently end with a change in physical location that either has just taken place or is imminent. Thus in the preceding story of Ramdad, he leaves his original village (III), he goes off to fight (IV), guests leave (VI), Ramdad leaves (VII), and Ghazan leaves (XII). Sometimes the departure is from this world: Ghazan dies (XIII), Ramdad's wife dies (XX), he dies (XXI), and his killer dies (XXVI).

Many of these scenes fall into natural groupings. Thus a departure is usually the end of a decision-making scene; this departure may be to a battle, planned or unplanned, and the resulting death—the hero, or a friend of his, or an enemy (preferably British)—provides

another breaking point and a chance for the poet to comment appropriately on the circumstances.

The scene then shifts to those who will carry out the next sequence of action. The victor may himself bring home the good news, to be followed by a victory feast (section V above combines a battle and a dinner given by the winner to the loser; X has a battle, with the victory feast in XI). News of a death may be carried home by the loser's friend or his horse (XIV) and a scene of lamentation follows logically; plans for revenge may be another succeeding sequence. The news of defeat may be carried by telephones and telegraphs, relaying to the British headquarters the latest of Pathan deeds in the NWFP, and this too leads naturally to plans for another expedition and battle.²⁵

Physical scene shifts are not the only events that occasion the conclusion of a section. A hero may spend time in thought and decide not to fight; the conclusion of the thought process is the end of a mental battle. He may also seek relief from his customary obligations by retreat, for example, to a neutral tribal area or over the border to Kabul. Sooner or later, however, conflict comes again and the sequence is repeated. These sections thus form sets of units from which a number of these *badalas* are constructed.

The tales of romance—which, despite the billing of both hero and heroine in the title, are still basically about the heros—are likewise built up from the smaller units.²⁶ An encounter between lovers replaces a battle and the ensuing scene of tears may be for separation from a still-living lover. Later events of the stories usually ensure that the lovers not only do not live happily ever after, and a number of battle sequences occur in the romances too.

Sometimes the units do not have physical movement but rather provide a way to focus on a single character. This may be a mother or friend in a lament (XXIV), a wife protesting (XX), or a protest followed by the poet's comments on it (XXIII). A letter and reply, for example, provide similar sequences.

What is perhaps as interesting as the use of building block construction is the poet's choices about what are *not* stopping points. Battles are, for example, complete units which are generally not broken up. The hero's failures (death excepted) tend to be downplayed. In the story of Chamnay Khan, it is not the hero's imprisonment but his escape that is the end of a scene. In the story of Ajab Khan, the climax of a scene is the decision to kill Mollie Ellis's mother, a deed distasteful to a Pathan hero. The signature couplet has Ajab Khan with knife in hand, an almost cinematographic representation. The actual killing is done at the beginning of the following scene, as part of the scene

leading to the more significant act of Mollie's kidnapping.

These narrative units ending with signature couplets thus contain sequences of action, many of which fall into patterns predictable not only in their logical sequence but also in their placement within the narrative unit.²⁷ The signature couplet then brings the story back to the poet-audience relationship, from which point it can continue with another sequence of actions.

Couplet construction. One noticeable point about the construction of the couplets in these narrative units is that they are generally complete units of thought (i.e., enjambment is rare). Exceptions tend to be pairs of clauses joined by a conjunction, often of an "either . . . or" type (as in 17 and 18), or linked modifying clauses (135–136) with flexibility in placement limited only by rhyme patterns.²⁸ Furthermore, not only is each couplet usually complete itself, but within the couplets, the hemistichs are usually complete clauses with a finite verb; some rare exceptions can be seen in couplets 3, 139, and 335 above.

Hemistichs with complete clauses imply at least two verbs per couplet, and many couplets have three and even more verbs in them.²⁹ These stories are highly verbal in character—long on action and short on adjectives and imagery.

The couplets also have their own word-order patterns, and these can be seen in translation most clearly in couplets which involve discourse of the characters.³⁰ The most common pattern is for discourse to begin in the second half of the first hemistich of a couplet. Less frequently, it starts in the beginning of the second hemistich and only rarely (never in this translation) does it start in the second half of the second hemistich (e.g., rarely will the hemistichs like those of 9 be found in reverse order). Once started, the discourse usually continues to the end of that couplet; if longer, it then usually continues in units of full couplets.³¹

Furthermore, the couplet position of the verb used to introduce speech is not independent of the choice of the verb. If *wayal* "to say" is used, it usually occurs at the beginning of the first hemistich of a couplet.³² When the entire couplet is discourse, and the verb of speech is in the second hemistich of the preceding couplet, some other verb of speech is often used, as is also the case when the discourse begins in the second hemistich. Or, put another way, if discourse is to start mid-hemistich, this is usually marked by a preceding verb *wayal*; in the remaining cases, the beginning of a hemistich will mark the beginning of the discourse.

Other couplets often show their own repeated patterns too, pat-

terns which are not fixed absolutely, but rather fall into categories which soon become familiar to singer and listener, and therefore contribute to similarities of structure within the narrative units.

These Pashto *badalas* are thus a genre in which couplets, patterned but generally independent of each other and themselves often composed of shorter clauses, are grouped together into sequences which form narrative units with endings defined by signature couplets. It is a flexible form, which accommodates various levels of dialogue and a wide variety of subject matter. And it is an oral form which has succeeded in adapting itself to modern recording technology, so that listeners today have a wide variety of stories to hear at the time and place of their choice which they can purchase in the Bazaar of the Storytellers.

NOTES

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This paper was originally presented for an Association for Asian Studies Panel, titled "Heroic Narrative. Style and Structure," organized by Prof. Bruce Pray in 1984, and I thank both my fellow panelists and the audience for their comments. A book-length set of translations of these Pashto verse narratives is in preparation with the help of a grant from the United States' National Endowment for the Humanities. The abbreviations, CX, AX, and A-D refer to the stories about Chamnay Khan, Ajab Khan, and Adam Khan-Dur Khanai, respectively, which will be included therein; the numbers are the tentative couplet numberings.

Spellings are more or less consistent with Platts' *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*, but macrons and other diacritics have generally been omitted except in parentheses and for specifying rhyme schemes.

1. I use "vernacular" for languages and dialects native to a region; it is intended to contrast with both literary / classical languages and "national" languages. In Pakistan, Pashto is the official regional language of the NWFP. A number of Pashto speakers in Afghanistan and Pakistan also have Persian as a second language. The national language of Pakistan is Urdu, and university classes are usually in English.

2. The forthcoming *Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India* includes not only a new collection of recent studies (mostly Hindu-related) but also an introduction by Stuart Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan providing historical perspective on folklore studies in South Asia and noting the need for more studies of non-Hindu traditions (ms. p. 38).

3. Levy, 1967: 81 (Persian text: Vullers 1877-1879: II, 523: 1-2). This implies a two-step process involving a speaker (*sukhan-gū*) and a singer (*sarāyanda*):

the type of music referred to (*rāmish*) is also a word used in a compound (*rāmish-gar*) equated with "minstrel" (see Boyce 1957: 24ff.) The functional split between poet and singer is also discussed by Levy (1969: 31) who uses the term *ravi* (*rāvi*) for the singer. The latter is used by Pashto folk poets, particularly at the beginning of a new section after, for example, a digression (CX 57: "The *rāvi* resumes the story, hear the account!") or where there is a shift in location (AX 148 "The *rāvi* says that when Ajab Khan came home . . ."), but the term seems to imply the source of the original story, not the poet or the singer of that particular version. The only major study I have yet seen on modern performance of the *Shah-nama* is on the coffeehouse prose recitations which are interspersed with chanting of the verses (Page 1977: 118, n. 1). Narrative singing in Persian of Afghanistan (Dari) has been studied by Sakata (forthcoming). It appears to be an Iranian tradition dating to pre-Islamic times which survives in several modern Iranian languages (Boyce 1957: 42-45).

4. The bookshops are found on the right side of the street (coming from Kabuli Gate) today, and in the maze of lanes behind it are the shops whose owners are the major sellers and producers of these cassettes, and sometimes the commissioners for versification of the stories. Several musicians have "studios" on upper floors of buildings in these lanes, and writers of these *badalas* pass through the bazaar at various times, thus creating a network of business, friendship, and sometimes kinship relationships.

5. An interview in Dec., 1983 by Lok Virsa's Mumtaz Nasir with the owner of the Sherbaz Khan Music Center of Qissa-khwani Bazaar concluded with one side of the 30-minute tape devoted to a listing of singers and titles of *badalas* in stock. There were over 400 different choices with over 130 titles by the most popular singer, and over fifty by two other singers. Altogether there were twenty singers represented in the *badala* stock, mostly singing alone, but some listed in combination.

6. See Blumhardt (1965); these early texts date only to the mid-17th century.

7. The *badalas* themselves sometimes mention the singing of *badalas*, as in 238 above. The traditional setting was a men's guest house (*hujra*), maintained by wealthy individuals and used for entertaining, relaxing, and sleeping, but now being replaced by sitting rooms (Lindholm 1982: 22). A village performance might simply have a singer playing his rebab, accompanied by a drum consisting of a large clay pot (*mangai*).

Professional singers have always been available for hire, and with modern transportation, they are no longer dependent on local patronage. The professional musicians typically have a group consisting of one singer and two instrumentalists, one on a rebab, a stringed, plucked instrument, and one on drums usually *tabla*; a harmonium may also be included.

There are also a number of singer-poets, who improvise and sing these stories; even singers working from texts make a number of major and minor changes while singing.

No study has yet been done on the distinctive music style of this form of narrative singing; an anonymous article asserts that the melodies of *badalas* are "based on some raaga, mostly Peelu or Zila" (*Pakistan Quarterly* 1962: 22). The meters of Pashto poetry are based on stress (MacKenzie 1958); a system with fourth syllable stress fits well into rhythmic patterns in music consisting of 8, 12, or 16 beats.

8. There were at least three printed Pashto folk texts of Yusuf and Zulaikha available in 1983; they generally seemed to parallel the version by Jami in Persian with the couple's rejuvenation at the end. The story is popular in other vernaculars of Pakistan: see Jatoti 1980: 4, 48, for Sindhi and 11, 13, 16, and 39 for Punjabi. But the story's popularity is not limited to Muslim countries; a musical version by Lloyd

Weber and Tim Rice with lyrics in English ran for almost two years on Broadway in New York as "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."

9. Jalat Khan and Mahbuba is said to be of Persian origin (Johnson 1982: 68) but has now been assimilated into Pashto. A more deceptive case is the tale of Yusuf Khan and Sher Banu, whose title likewise appears consistent with a Pashto origin and whose negative development was taken as "un des premiers critères permettant d'identifier un conte comme spécifiquement pashtun" (Johnson 1982: 71). However, the author gives his source as a Persian book whose handwritten pages were being used to wrap medicine (cf. interview of Ali Haidar Joshi by Mumtaz Nasir (Lok Virsa: unpublished field interview translated into Urdu: Jan. 25, 1982: 3-5)).

10. Thus a fairly recent story about Taj Muhammad and Namru tells of the elopement of Taj Muhammad with Namru, whom he had wanted to marry before forced to marry someone else. Problems with arranged marriages and the question of polygamy have been the subject of some discussion in women's magazines (e.g., "Second Marriages: another bid at happiness" anonymous article in *She*, Dec. 1983: 46-48).

11. Blackburn (1978: 136-137) cites historical ballads in Tamil with protagonists who die fighting with the British or who defy local social authorities. There are several differences between these heroes in Pashto and his in Tamil; in particular, the Pathan hero is usually a khan (a title indicating its possessor is one of the landowning elite of a village) and, as a Muslim would, not be associated with a local deity (cf. 147).

12. For a listing of some of these folk texts in Pashto as well as other languages of Pakistan, see Jatoi (1980). Pritchett (1981) has done a historical study of these folk texts in Hindu and Urdu.

13. While working on a selection of twenty folk texts, I have found almost as many authors, whom I believe to be still living. Several prolific authors have been interviewed; tapes of the interviews are held by Lok Virsa.

14. Infrequently, both forms appear in the same section. Thus in section V above, the section begins with an end-rhyme pattern and then switches to rhymed couplets for the remaining thirteen couplets of the section. In section XXV, there is likewise a switch but in this case a change of end-rhymes: (the first twelve couplets end with *-ār* (*wār*, *tayār*, etc.) and the last thirteen couplets end with *-ang* (*jang*, *nang*, etc.). This appears to result from the singer's joining of two different sections of text with the omission of some intervening couplets, including the signature couplet. See also the discussion of three forms by Hamdani (1981: 74).

15. In Pathan society, the emphasis "on the role of male cousins . . . is pervasive in all socio-economic dealings" (Ahmed 1977: 17). The violence depicted in this translation is not unusual; Lindholm (1982: 67) found that seven of seventeen killings of men by men were either of close cousins or their servants, and many other fights ended just short of death. Upon the death of a man and his sons, his property reverts to his brothers and their male children. This practice of inheritance through males only thus provides a strong economic basis for cousin rivalries. In this translation, "cousin" should be everywhere understood as paternal cousin (*tarbūr*); some of my informants suggest "enemy" as a more accurate translation.

16. One text (Hamdani 1981: 308-336) has an accompanying version in Urdu; a second text has been published by the Islamic Bookstore (Islami Kutub Khana, no date; 64 pp.; purchased, 1982, for Rs. 2; cover page title: *Nawe Qissa da Ramdad Khan Manzare* ("The New Story of Ramdad Khan the Lion")). The latter version has fifteen couplets about the hero's sister, Zargara, following the translation above.

It also has other interspersed verse forms, including the *rubai* referred to in couplet 324 above. The commercial cassettes of the story were by Wahid Gul, Fazli Qayyum, plus a third labelled "Rahmdad Khan and Pir," by two singers, Muhammad Jan and Ghulam Nabi.

17. There are several breaks in my copy, which may or may not be present on the original tape. In this story, couplet 168 has been added to fill a tape gap and the last two couplets are added where my tape has been cut off in the middle of a musical line. These three added couplets are taken from the Islamic Bookstore folk text which the tape follows fairly closely; each signature couplet usually corresponds to the end of a section (*parak*) in that text. No attempt to indicate musical interludes has been made in the translation.

18. The hero's name (*rāmdād*) is not related to the Hindu name, (*rām(a)*), common to the South Asian subcontinent, but is a Perso-Arabic compound whose first element (*rahīm* "mercy, compassion") has compensatory vowel lengthening with the dropping of an aspirate, a common linguistic phenomenon in Persian and Arabic borrowings into Pashto.

19. Mohmand refers to one of the Pathan tribes; others in this translation are the Ranizai, the Mas'uds, and Safis.

20. In this story, "fort" translates *qal'a*, a word usually used in South Asia to mean a (military) fort, but also used in some *badalas* for a house or cluster of houses. With their courtyards surrounded by high, thick walls, these houses give a fortress-like appearance, hence the translation here.

21. An *anna* was 1/16 of a rupce. The Pakistani rupce was about 18/US\$1 in 1985.

22. The translation here follows the Islamic Bookstore text.

23. For the use of story materials for social comment in other Iranian traditions, see Page (1977: 79-80), who gives examples from coffeehouse reciters of the *Shah-nama* that are similar to some of the comments in Pashto *badalas*.

24. For examples of some changes in texts, the insertion of *Ya Qorban!* and of an advertisement, see Johnson 1982: 25-26, 81, and 87.

25. These sequences have some parallels to the type-scenes in Middle English romances examined by Wittig (1978: 112-113, Table 6), which are divided into Plan, Scene, Challenge, Battle, and Death.

26. The length of the units seems to be somewhat longer in the romances; furthermore, the popular versions of the romances generally seem to have been written somewhat earlier than those which focus on conflict, whether tribal or with the British. Giving the relatively recent development of recording technology, it is difficult to say whether there has been an underlying change in the length of these narrative units, or whether this is the result of a gradual process of dropping of some signature couplets so that formerly separate units of an original composition are now conflated. This seems to have occurred, for example, in section XXV above, where it might have passed unnoticed if the rhyme schemes of both sections had been rhyming couplets instead of end-rhymes.

27. In general, the narratives are linear in time. One exception is Gul and Sanobar, which has a frame story. Another recent exception is a story about the Storytellers' Bazaar, in which the hero, Habib Nur, is told a story about his father which took place before he was born. The telling of the story functions as a flashback technique, where the listener is taken back in time, rather than forward, as would have been the case if the father's story were told first and then the son's followed that.

28. The independent clause is the first half of 136, but the last halves of 135 and

136 could be inter-changed if the rhyme scheme were an end-rhyme.

29. Thus in the first twenty-five couplets, for example, only one couplet (3) has only one verb, four couplets (2, 15, 17, and 20) have three verbs; and three couplets (9, 23, and 24) have four verbs.

30. Pashto has an underlying SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) word order; whereas English has SVO. The punctuation marks, including quotation marks, are not found in the Pashto text, and have been added for the translation. One conventional alternative for a quotation mark is a discourse-marking particle, such as *iti* in old Indo-Aryan or the particle *ki* of (New) Persian which has been borrowed into Hindi/Urdu. Pashto has a particle (*ci*) functionally similar to that of Persian which is often used with certain verbs of speech. The position of the discourse within the couplet appears to decrease the need for a discourse marker: only in one couplet (23) of this translation is discourse preceded by the particle which in turn is preceded by the standard verb of speech (*wayal* "to say"); in one other couplet (9), the particle introduces a proverb.

31. Some exceptions do occur; for example, with discourse within discourse, or with an answer in the second half of a couplet (221), or where the poet adds a phrase (275).

32. Although the use frequency of the discourse particle (cf. n. 3 above) in the 19th and 20th century South Asian narrative has not (to my knowledge) received comment, a lack of diversity of verbs of speech has been noted by Pritchett 1981: 165. For verse forms modeled on or borrowed from Persian prototypes this should perhaps not be surprising. The *Shah-nama*, for example, uses forms of one verb, *guftan* 'to say', the great majority of the time, regardless of the impression given by translators. Thus Levy (1967: 134-136) has thirteen cases of discourse (excluding four quotes in quotes); in ten of these, the Persian text has *guft* "said" (3rd sing.). However, the translation has "said" only five times and "saying," "retorted," "returned," "inquired" and "replied" once each. In the case of a 20th century oral prose narrative in Persian taped in Herat (Mills 1975), one verb (*guftan*) is used for discourse 99 out of 100 times (the exception being "to ask"). In the Pashto text of this translation, some form of *wayal* is used to introduce discourse nine times; it has always been translated with some form of "to say."

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