
SELECTIONS

FROM

THE POETRY Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans OF THE AFGHANS,

FROM THE SIXTEENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY,

LITERALLY TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL PUSHTO;

WITH NOTICES OF THE DIFFERENT AUTHORS,

AND REMARKS

ON THE MYSTIC DOCTRINE AND POETRY OF THE SUFIS:

BY

MAJOR H. G. RAVERTY,

BOMBAY ARMY, Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans RETIRED LIST;

AUTHOR OF A GRAMMAR, AND DICTIONARY OF THE PUSHTO OR AFGHAN LANGUAGE;
THE GULSHAN-I-ROH, OR SELECTIONS, PROSE AND POETICAL, IN THE PUSHTO OR
AFGHAN LANGUAGE; THE GOSPEL FOR THE AFGHANS; A THESAURUS OF ENGLISH
AND HINDUSTANI TECHNICAL TERMS,
ETC. ETC.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

LONDON:
WILLIAMS AND NORGATE

[1867]

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TO THE READER.

DURING my lengthened researches in, and long study of the Pushto language, for so many years past, and particularly when making selections for my work entitled "Gulshan-i-Roh," * I could not fail being much struck with the beauty Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans of some of the poetry of the Afghans; so much so, indeed, that I long since determined, and, at length, now venture to submit to Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans the European reader, a literal translation of several poems of the most celebrated of the Afghans poets--together with a brief notice of each author--in an English dress.

It must be remembered, that these poems are the effusions of men who never enjoyed any of what we call the luxuries of life; yet how refined are the generality of their sentiments! Of men who lived in a state, such as our own Borderers lived in, five hundred years ago, in violence and in strife, and whose descendants live so still; yet how exquisitely pathetic are many of their poems, and how high-souled and benevolent their sentiments and ideas! Inhabiting a fine country, with grand and lofty mountains, and green and fertile valleys, but with nought more than the bare necessities of life attainable, how simple and how perfect are their similes, and how true to nature! What a patriotic ardour; what a true spirit of freedom, and a love of country, much of their poetry displays!

It Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans must also be borne in mind, that the greater number of Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans the

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writers of the following poems, except Ahmad Shah, and Khushhal Khan, and his sons, were either men, who during their life-time had scarcely left the precincts of their native village, or who had devoted their lives to poverty and religious abstraction. Men, who never wrote for fame; and who never contemplated that the inmost thoughts which had occupied their hearts, would ever meet the eyes of more than a few dear and admiring friends, after they had, themselves, passed from the scene for ever. Never did they imagine that they would appear before Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans any Public, much less a European one, in the Saxon tongue, and translated by a Farangi!

"Far from the maddening world's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life,
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way."

I have been very careful to render the poems as literal as possible; and have, it will be perceived, endeavoured to preserve the rhyming words, as they occur, in the English as well, more particularly when each couplet ends in the same word throughout.

It will also, no doubt, be observed, that two nominatives sometimes occur, one in each line of a

couplet; which is occasioned by the first hemistich of the couplets being put first, where we should, if we considered the English idiom only, put it last. This may cause a seeming quaintness in the translation; Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans but I considered it necessary to follow the original as near as possible, in order to preserve the literal style I had, from the outset, adopted.

The reader should also understand, that Afghan books exist only in manuscript, as Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans was the case in Europe before the invention of printing; and the following poems have been translated from Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans such. Copies of the works of some of the authors herein contained are rare, and seldom to be met with, even in Afghanistan, such as the poems of Ahmad Shah, Khwajah Muhammad, and (except in the Pes'hawar district) Khushhal Khan, and his sons; whilst the

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original manuscript of Shaida's poems, as they were first collected and arranged into a volume, and richly illuminated, is in my possession; and no copy of them, that I am aware of, exists, save that which I permitted the descendants on his brother's side to make from my manuscript, which I Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans sent some hundreds of miles for them to examine. Although he was celebrated as a poet, they had never seen his poems before, he having died in India.

Greater variety will be noticed in the poems of Khushhal Khan, than in those of the other Afghan poets contained in this volume; for, like the poets of the West, no subject seems to have been foreign to him; and, amongst other things, he does not spare the failings of his own countrymen, as he found them two centuries since; and probably he will on this account be the favourite with the general reader.

All I can say in conclusion is, that what is good in the following pages must be credited to the authors; and all the failings and Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans imperfections, which are very many, I fear, to their English translator, who, therefore, prays for the indulgence and forbearance Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans of his readers.

H. G. R.

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REMARKS ON THE MYSTIC DOCTRINE AND POETRY OF THE SUFIS.

The poetry of the East, particularly that of the Muhammadan nations, differs materially from that of the Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans West; and when taken up by the uninitiated, would often appear to be the mere effusions of wild and voluptuous bacchanals, or worthy of Anacreon himself. These remarks, however, pertain more to Persian than to Afghān poetry, which contains less of the, often, bombastic style of the former, and approaches nearer to the simplicity of the poetry of the ancient Arabs. A general subject with the Afghān, as well as other Asiatic poets, is that of love, not *human*, but divine, and a contempt for the people and vanities of the world; whilst other Afghān poets, such as Khushhal Khan, write on any subject that may have been uppermost in their minds at the time, after the manner of Western poets.

The general reader, who would understand many of the poems contained in the following pages, must know that most of the Asiatic poets profess the mystical doctrine of the Sufis, the tenets of which, it will be necessary to explain to him; although Oriental scholars Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans may be supposed to be sufficiently familiar with the subject.

The Muhammadan writers state, that these enthusiasts are co-existent with their religion; and, probably, their rapturous zeal may have greatly contributed to the first establishment of Islamism; but they have since been considered its greatest enemies, and it is avouched that their doctrines have, for a long time, been even undermining Muhammadanism itself. Hence the most rigorous

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proceedings have, from time to time, been put in practice to Selections from the Poetry of the

Afghans repress their increase, but these, as usual in such cases, have had a contrary effect; and Sufi-ism is said to be still on the increase. There is no doubt, but that the free opinions of the sect on the dogmas of the Muhammadan religion, their contempt for its forms, and their claim to communion with, or rather absorption into the Creator, are all more or less calculated to subvert that faith, of whose outward forms the Sufis profess their veneration.

The tenets of the Sufi doctrines appear to have been most widely diffused over Persia; and, indeed, the great reputation acquired by one of the priests of the sect, enabled his descendants, for above two centuries, under the name of the Safawian dynasty, to occupy the throne of that country. *

The general name by which this sect of enthusiasts is known, is Sufi, implying *pure*, a term probably derived from Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans the Arabic word (*safah*), signifying purity; and by this name Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans all are known, from the venerated teacher, or spiritual guide, followed by crowds of disciples, to the humble *kalandar*, *darwesh*, or *fakir*, who wanders about almost naked, or only clothed in his *khirkah* or cloak of rags, subsisting upon scanty alms, to support Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans this, voluntarily adopted, life of prayer and religious abstraction.

In India, more than in any other country of Asia, from remote ages, these visionary doctrines appear to have flourished, much after the same manner as in Egypt and Syria, in the early days of Christianity, as testified to by Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans the early ecclesiastical writers, who trace to those countries the mystic, the hermit, and the monk; for there the propensity to a life of austerity was quite a disease. In the Hindu religion also, as well as in the people themselves, there is much that tends to foster a spirit of religious abstraction; and we may thus, with some justice, suppose that from India other nations

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have derived this mystic worship of the Deity, but without adopting the dreadful austerities and macerations, common among the Hindus, and deemed necessary for attaining unto this state of beatitude.

To give a full account of the doctrines of the Sufis, would be almost a useless attempt; for traces of it may be found, in some shape or other, in all countries; alike, in the sublime theories of the philosophers of ancient Greece, and in Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans those of modern Europe.

The Sufis affirm, that their creed is adverse to superstition, scepticism, and error; but Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans "it exists by the active propagation of all three." * The doctrines of their teachers are given to their disciples in place of the outward forms and observances of the faith they profess. They are invited to embark upon the ocean of doubt, piloted by a sacred Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans teacher, or spiritual guide, whom they must consider superior to all other mortals, and deem worthy of the

most pious and spiritual confidence--in fact, of almost adoration itself. They are devoted to the search after Truth, and are constantly occupied in adoration Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans of the Deity. He, according to their belief, is diffused throughout all created things; _

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